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GERALD O'COLLINS

NANCY HAWKINS

OF MANY THINGS

Here is some great news: The Vatican has given formal permission to begin the canonization process for Walter J. Cizek, S.J. Father Cizek was an American Jesuit (1904-84), the author of *With God in Russia* and *He Leadeth Me* (both originally published by America Press) and, to my mind, one of the great religious figures of the 20th century. If modern-day Catholics know him, it is probably for the harrowing experiences that lie at the heart of his books: the years he spent imprisoned first in Moscow and then in Soviet labor camps in Siberia.

Those two magnificent books (written with the help of Daniel J. Flaherty, S.J.) are perennial favorites among Catholics. The first is a straightforward recounting of what transpired in the Soviet Union. The second, as he said in the book's introduction, represented the answer to the question that many asked after his first book was published: "How did you survive?" *He Leadeth Me*, then, is his spiritual testament.

How did a Pennsylvania-born Jesuit end up in such perilous circumstances? After volunteering as a young priest in the late 1930s to work in Poland, Cizek found himself caught up in the turmoil of the Second World War. When the German army took Warsaw and the Soviets overran eastern Poland, Cizek fled into the Soviet Union along with other Polish refugees.

In 1941 he was captured by the Soviets as a suspected spy. (He was not, of course.) After five years of brutal interrogation in Moscow's notorious Lubyanka prison, he was sentenced to 15 years at hard labor in Soviet camps in Siberia. After that he was released into the general population and found work in small towns in Siberia.

In all these situations he ministered to men and women as a priest—hearing confessions from prisoners in the drafty corners of their barracks or celebrating Masses on tree stumps in the Siberian

wilderness—often in danger of being discovered and executed. After decades out of contact with the West, Cizek was presumed dead by his brother Jesuits until a letter arrived unexpectedly years later announcing his survival. His release from the Soviet Union was negotiated at the behest of President John F. Kennedy.

In October 1963, when Cizek returned from his arduous sojourn in the U.S.S.R., the first place he came to was the headquarters of *America*, then located in Upper Manhattan. A photograph that now hangs in our editorial offices shows a smiling Cizek being welcomed at America House. (A letter from President Kennedy thanking an intermediary for his help arranging the release also hangs on our walls.)

Thurston Davis, S.J., then the magazine's editor in chief, who met Cizek at New York's Idlewild Airport, wrote in *America's* issue of Oct. 26, 1963, about his surprise at his friend's appearance: "In his green raincoat, grey suit and big-brimmed Russian hat, he looked like the movie version of a stocky little Soviet member of an agricultural mission." In that same issue, Cizek wrote a brief but moving statement in which he said, "In spite of seeming failures, I cherish no resentments or regrets for what transpired in the past years."

Father Cizek is beloved among American Jesuits, and those who knew him never fail to mention his great humility. Among the many tributes to him is the naming of Cizek Hall, a residence for young Jesuits in "first studies" at Fordham University. The perhaps-future-saint is buried with his Jesuit brothers at the Jesuit Center in Wernersville, Pa., a retreat house today but once the Novitiate of St. Isaac Jogues, where the young Walter Cizek first heard the stirrings of the mysterious call to go to the East.

JAMES MARTIN, S.J.

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Service of Unity

The Catholic Church in Ireland will receive a much-needed boost of support when the International Eucharistic Congress meets in Dublin in June. In an interview last month, Archbishop Piero Marini, president of the Pontifical Committee for International Eucharistic Congresses, said the congress will be characterized by humility and moderation. These are traits a church chastened by sexual abuse is wise to embrace. The congress will be characterized by a “lack of triumphalism,” the archbishop said, and will be based “on interiority, on moderation.” Prior to the Second Vatican Council, eucharistic processions were a popular feature of these meetings, and they served to highlight the power and influence of the church. Processions will still take place at this year’s congress, but the focus will be on daily Mass. The congress will emphasize “the Second Vatican Council’s teaching that communion is the center of the Eucharist, its primary aim,” the archbishop said.

Planned in conjunction with the lay movement Focolare, the International Eucharistic Congress is expected to draw 80,000 people. The involvement of Focolare will surely help to energize the event. At a time of deep division within the church, in Ireland and elsewhere, a meditation on the unifying power of the Eucharist provides an essential service. Focolare deserves praise for organizing this event in their uniquely understated way. Their devotion to unity serves as a model for the whole church.

Transnational Justice

The demands of survivors for justice in the alleged killing by Staff Sergeant Robert Bales of 17 Afghan civilians, nine of them children, have quieted down. Still, Afghanistan’s President Hamid Karzai has bitterly complained that the U.S. military has failed to cooperate with an Afghan delegation charged with investigating the killings, and he has ordered NATO troops out of Afghan villages and unilaterally advanced to 2013 the date for foreign troops to hand over responsibility for security to Afghan troops. If Mr. Karzai keeps his word, this will be the second time in a year that disagreements over military justice have led to the early departure of U.S. troops at the request of the host nation. Last year’s failure to reach agreement with Iraq on jurisdiction over military offenses led to an unexpected full withdrawal of U.S. troops from that country.

In Afghanistan, as elsewhere, the United States has immunized military personnel from prosecution by a prior

Status of Forces agreement. But in Afghanistan the death of civilians is already a neuralgic issue because of the unintended deaths of civilians in U.S. nighttime drone attacks, though many of them are carried out by the secret and legally insulated Central Intelligence Agency, not by the military.

The military conviction rate for the killing of civilians, in 30 out of 44 cases since 2001, suggests justice can be done. All the same, a great gulf divides Afghan justice under Shariah law and U.S. military justice, which may take years to deliver a verdict. In the meantime, something must be done to heal the breach created by civilian deaths.

As we go to press, news services report that on order of President Obama, the families of those killed in Kandahar have received \$50,000 in compensation and those wounded \$11,000. The standard compensation is \$2,500. The size of these payments is appropriately large, officials say, because the victims were killed outside combat.

iPhone, Therefore I Am

Even as new analysis confirms that bilingualism actually makes people smarter, evidence emerges that U.S. teens are well along the path to a new language all their own. It is not clear, however, that speaking in text (you might know it as txtese or text talk) is likely to have as intellectually salubrious an effect on America’s youth as, say, devoting themselves to Mandarin.

Texting has now become the preferred method of communication among U.S. teens. Pew researchers report that 63 percent of U.S. 14- to 17-year-olds are producing a median of 100 text messages each day. Texting is far and away the preferred form of teen communication, handily beating out those old-fashioned cellphones (39 percent), socializing outside of school (35 percent), social network site messaging (29 percent), talking on landlines (19 percent) and sending e-mail (6 percent).

What are they saying to each other? Who knows? Parents since Seneca have complained that they cannot understand their children’s private language. How many parents, missing an anticipated call from a wayward offspring, have unsuccessfully pondered said child’s Delphic explanation: “rning 2 l8 4 chat; C U l8r.”

All is not lost, however, as even the most ossified of parental cortices can, with a lttl wrk, be retooled for txt speak. A parent bold enough to reach out and txt someone may find texting a valuable line of communication with their kids.

LHM. That’s “Lord have mercy” for you folks who have trouble reading the texts of the times.

In Thy Wounds, Hide Me

‘He is not here. He is risen!’ Two thousand years after the resurrection these words still have the power to startle us. When the women disciples first heard those words, they did not know what to make of them. The Easter alleluia came only after the disciples’ repeated encounters with the Lord. Their first reactions were confusion, curiosity, disbelief. The community was hidden away in fear and grief until Jesus breathed his Spirit upon them. Today, as we grapple with the loss, disillusionment and brokenness in our own lives and in our church, those first encounters with Thomas, Mary and Peter, should be signals for us of the power of the Resurrection to heal and unite us in the body of the risen Lord.

The Easter story is full of paradox and surprise. Consider Jesus’ wounds. Even in his risen glory, Jesus carried with him the signs of his suffering. Yet his woundedness did not prevent him from commissioning the disciples to preach. We too live in a wounded world, riven by sin and division, yet we still find our way to the empty tomb, to proclaim the glory of his resurrection.

The Apostle Thomas was the first to confront Jesus’ wounds. Jesus challenged the doubter to touch his side to confirm that he had risen. Jesus’ wounds are a reminder of his suffering and death. Though he is risen from the dead, Jesus has not abandoned the deepest marks of his life on earth. Far from scolding Thomas when he refused to believe, Jesus invited him to feel his wounds and thus welcomed him back to the community of believers. Like Thomas, we are invited to probe Jesus’ wounds and to proclaim our faith in him. By his wounds, “we are healed.” Jesus’ wounds speak of his patient presence in the frail humanity that makes up the church. In his brokenness, we are made whole.

Jesus’ wounds are also signs of his solidarity with a broken world. They invite us to see the face of God in those who suffer in our world: the victims of war, disease and natural disaster, the victims of torture, exploitation and repressive government. When we fall prey to anger or jealousy, or resign ourselves to apathy, we contribute to the suffering in our world. By allowing a broken relationship to fester or by failing to attend to the poor in our lives, we deepen Jesus’ wounds. The wounds of Jesus in glory are reminders that his Spirit can empower us to bring comfort, healing and justice, just as he did.

In our church, too, we see signs of Jesus’ suffering. The

departure from the church of young Catholics, especially women, is a source of great sadness. Women religious helped build the church, and for centuries mothers passed on the faith to their children. Yet too often today women’s voices, even distinguished ones, are dismissed. Without the support and perspective of women, the Catholic community is a sorely wounded one. Catholic women should know that just as Jesus had remarkable friendships with women during his public ministry, so Christ finds joy in their company today. They should be confident, too, that just as he sent Magdalene as “the apostle to the apostles,” the risen Christ will have pioneering missions for them today among the people of God.

Like Mary and the apostles, we are called upon to proclaim Christ’s rising, but we must not be afraid to accept our own wounds. We are a sinful people, and the church is marred by our sins. Yet these failings must not be an obstacle to our evangelization. How do we move ahead? In his company. There Jesus will bind up our wounds so that we may embrace the joy of the Resurrection.

Think of Peter, who denied Jesus three times on the night of his trial. By refusing to acknowledge his bond with Jesus, Peter placed himself outside the Christian community. But Peter wept over his betrayal, and then Jesus sought him out, invited his love and commissioned him to “feed my sheep.” Peter, the first among the apostles, was always an imperfect disciple. His love for Jesus was not sealed until his death, when he was led, in perfect identification with his Lord, “where he would not go.” Jesus reconciled Peter with the community of disciples. He recognized the wounds of division and healed them. By doing so, he enabled Peter to embark on his ministry. Jesus shows us the path to unity and inclusion.

By meditating upon the Easter mystery, we can discover the healing grace that Jesus brought to the early community of disciples and that he continues to pour out upon us today. Celebrating the Easter story deepens our companionship with the Lord and with one another. Just as Jesus commissioned Mary and Peter and then all those gathered around him in Jerusalem, he continues to commission us to spread his good news with joy to the men and women of our day. The wounded Christ helps us to live in a wounded world. The risen Christ can help us to redeem it.



SIGNS OF THE TIMES

SYRIA

Church Protests ‘Ethnic Cleansing’ In Homs Neighborhoods

Reports of “ethnic cleansing” of Christians in the Syrian city of Homs have begun circulating in the aftermath of an assault on the city by the Syrian army, which drove out most armed elements of the Syrian opposition in mid-March. The Syrian Orthodox Church, which represents 60 percent of the country’s Christian minority, alleges that militant armed Islamists have managed to expel 90 percent of Christians from Homs and have confiscated their homes by force.

According to Orthodox Metropolitan sources, the militants went door to door in the Homs neighborhoods of Hamidiya and Bustan al-Diwan, forcing Christians to flee without giving them a chance to take their belongings. Church leaders say this “ongoing ethnic cleansing of Christians” is being carried out by members of the Brigade Faruq. According to church sources, the Faruq Brigade is run by armed elements of Al Qaeda and various Wahhabi groups and includes mercenaries from Libya and Iraq. In Homs, according to a local source, there are only about 1,000 Christians left, living in hiding and fear in a neighborhood that “is caught between two fires,” as fighting continues between army and rebels.

The warnings issued by the Orthodox Church accompany new concerns from the New York-based Human Rights Watch about the deportment of the Free Syrian Army, army deserters and rebel fighters loosely organized under the opposition Syrian National Council. Western media have frequently noted the numerous flagrant human rights abuses perpetrated by Syrian government forces during the yearlong clamp-down on internal opposition to the regime of President Bashar al-Assad.

Now Human Rights Watch warns of similar abuses by the irregular forces of Syria’s opposition. In an open letter to the leaders of Syria’s opposition, Human Rights Watch noted increasing evidence “of kidnappings, the use of torture and executions by armed Syrian opposition members.” The group urged resistance leaders to “ensure that all opposition members refrain from engaging in these unlawful practices.”

Regarding the reports of ethnic cleansing, the Vicar Apostolic of Aleppo, Bishop Giuseppe Nazzaro, O.F.M., said: “We have no sources to confirm this information directly, but

we can say that these relationships are beginning to break down the wall of silence built up to now by the press worldwide.” He said, “In this situation Islamist and terrorist movements are making headway.”

The vicar apostolic recalled with concern some recent episodes: “Last Sunday, a car packed with TNT exploded in Aleppo in the vicinity of the school of the Franciscan fathers. By a miracle a massacre of children was avoided at the Center of Catechesis of the Church of St. Bonaventure only because the Franciscans, sensing danger, made the children leave 15 minutes before the usual time. Other bombs exploded in Damascus. These are bad signs for religious minorities.”

In Damascus the apostolic nuncio to Syria, Archbishop Mario Zenari, said that a March 21 statement unani-

Members of the rebel Free Syrian Army in Homs on Feb. 29.



mously approved by the U.N. Security Council on the conflict in Syria “should be fully supported, as it is really urgent to put an end to violence.” The United Nation’s six-point plan calls for an end to troop movements and the use of heavy weapons, the progressive implementation of a cease-fire, the distribution of humanitarian aid, the release of those detained arbitrarily, the free movement of journalists and the beginning of political dialogue.

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

New U.S.A.I.D. Rule a Model?

A little-publicized policy directive from the U.S. Agency for International Development is getting a closer look from advocates of



religious freedom and promoters of conscience protections in federal law. The directive offers broad and inclusive conscience protections to faith-based organizations funded by U.S.A.I.D. to operate AIDS treatment and prevention programs and other health care programs around the world, Catholic observers said.

Specifically, the directive bans discrimination against faith-based and other organizations that decide not to engage in activities that violate religious or moral principles, such as condom distribution and education in their use. Advocates of religious freedom see the language in the agency's acquisition and assistance policy directive as a model that could be implemented in all government programs, contracts and grants, with minor changes depending on the programs individual agencies oversee. Such lan-

guage could pertain to federal programs ranging from health care reform to assistance to human trafficking victims.

"[The new directive] expresses quite well what we would have wanted to see, and we are pleased with the constructive process we went through with [U.S.A.I.D.] and they went through with us," said Bill O'Keefe, vice president for government relations and advocacy at Catholic Relief Services.

"It's very important obviously because the church's global health network is critical to addressing the problem of AIDS in many countries. That was recognized in the legislation and now is recognized explicitly in this guidance, so we can at least compete fairly. We're not asking for any preferential treatment. But as the law specified, we wanted to be able to compete fairly without discrimination because of our teaching," O'Keefe said.

He acknowledged that C.R.S. played the leading role in the directive's development. The agency has received hundreds of millions of dollars in federal funding for AIDS services around the world since 2004 and helped almost 700,000 people.

The language in the directive to U.S.A.I.D. staff around the world is explicit in explaining that any organization—faith-based or otherwise, both domestic and international—that is eligible to receive funding for AIDS prevention and treatment

shall not be required to adhere to all aspects of what the agency calls a comprehensive approach to combating the disease. Such an approach includes the distribution of condoms and instruction on their use.

The directive implements the conscience protection mandate that was included in the Tom Lantos and Henry J. Hyde U.S. Global Leadership Against H.I.V./AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria Reauthorization Act of 2008. The law authorized up to \$48 billion over five years to combat malaria, tuberculosis and AIDS. It includes funding for the widely lauded President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief program, known as PEPFAR.

The directive was welcomed by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, which is embroiled in its own dispute with the Obama administration over religious freedom issues and conscience protections on a number of fronts, particularly health care reform. Richard Doerflinger, associate director of the U.S. bishops' Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities, remained cautious, however, noting the directive is limited to specific programs funded by one government agency.



Sister Gladness Ntuli dispenses drugs for AIDS treatment at a C.R.S.-sponsored clinic in Phelandaba, South Africa.

Sex Abuse and Orthodoxy

On March 20 the Vatican released a summary of the findings and recommendations of its official visitation to Ireland. The investigation recognized serious shortcomings in the handling of accusations of sexual abuse of minors but found that today Ireland's bishops, clergy and lay faithful are doing an "excellent" job creating safe environments for children. The investigators found that Irish bishops need to update their child protection guidelines, establish "more consistent admission criteria" for seminarians and formulate policies on how best to deal with clergy and religious "falsely accused" of abuse or convicted of abuse. The investigators also warned of a "fairly widespread" tendency among priests, religious and laity to hold unspecified unorthodox views.

Pope in Mexico, Cuba

En route on March 23 to Latin America, Pope Benedict XVI called for patience with the Catholic Church's effort to promote freedom in Communist Cuba and criticized Catholics who participate in the illegal drug trade or who ignore their moral responsibilities to seek social justice. Responding to a question about human rights in Cuba, Pope Benedict said that the "church is always on the side of freedom—freedom of conscience, freedom of religion." He added, "We want to help in the spirit of dialogue to avoid the trauma and to help move toward a fraternal and just society" in Cuba. Asked about Latin America's dramatic inequalities of wealth, Pope Benedict lamented what he called a widespread moral "schizophrenia" that stresses personal

NEWS BRIEFS

Three people were killed and more than 50 injured as thousands packed St. Mark's Cathedral in Cairo, Egypt, on March 18 and 19 to pay their respects to **Pope Shenouda III**, head of the Coptic Orthodox Church, who died on March 17. • Ken Hackett, who retired in December after 18 years as president of Catholic Relief Services, will receive the **University of Notre Dame's 2012 Laetare Medal** during commencement ceremonies on May 20. • Archbishop Robert J. Carlson of St. Louis, Mo., said the archdiocese planned to appeal a March 15 ruling that affirmed St. Stanislaus Parish Corporation's **control over parish property and assets**. • The Conference of Major Superiors of Men announced on March 19 that **Abbot Giles Hayes** of St. Mary's Abbey in Morristown, N.J., had resigned as president for health reasons, to be replaced by **Thomas H. Smolich, S.J.**, now the vice president • The **Rev. Edward Flanagan** was declared a "servant of God" during a Mass on March 17 at Immaculate Conception Church at Boys Town, as the Archdiocese of Omaha formally opened the cause for sainthood of the founder of the home for troubled youths.



Egyptian Christians mourn Pope Shenouda III

morality while ignoring social conscience. Commenting on the Mexican drug war that has claimed an estimated 50,000 people over the past five years, Pope Benedict said that the church has a responsibility to "unmask evil, unmask the idolatry of money that enslaves man" as well as the "false promises, the lie, the swindle that lie behind drugs."

Destroy All Churches?

All Christian churches on the Arabian Peninsula should be destroyed, said the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, Sheikh Abdul Aziz bin Abdullah, on March 12, in response to a query from Kuwait's Society of the Revival of Islamic Heritage. The Kuwaiti delegation had asked for a clarification from

the point of view of Islamic law on a proposal to ban the construction of new churches in Kuwait. The Grand Mufti, the highest official of religious law in Saudi Arabia—where no churches have been built despite the presence of almost a million Christians—responded by observing that Mohammed believed the Arabic Peninsula must only have one religion. His conclusion was that all churches in the territory must be destroyed. The response went beyond the Kuwaiti proposal, which bans the building of new non-Islamic places of worship. European Catholic bishops denounced the statement as a "denial" of basic human rights for millions of foreign workers in the Persian Gulf.

From CNS and other sources.



Mormons and Charity

Whether Mitt Romney wins the Republican nomination for the presidency or not, his serious-contender candidacy has sparked an explosion of empirical research on Mormons in the United States. In due course, this research should serve not only to enhance public respect for the Mormon minority, but also to give Catholics some clues about how to strengthen their own faith community.

In a report issued in January 2012, “Mormons in America: Certain of Their Beliefs, Uncertain of Their Place in Society,” a research team representing the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life found that most Mormons are regular churchgoers and that more Mormons (73 percent) believe that “working to help the poor” is “essential to being a good Mormon” than believe the same thing about “not drinking coffee and tea” (49 percent).

According to a new study previewed on March 15 by an expert panel convened at Pew’s headquarters in Washington, D.C., most members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints practice what they preach about helping the needy. Led by Ram A. Cnaan, a renowned Israeli-born social-work scholar at the University of Pennsylvania, the study concludes that churchgoing Mormons “are the most pro-social members of American society.”

On average, Mormons dedicate nine times as many hours per month (nearly 36 hours) to volunteer activi-

ties than other Americans do. The comparison stands up even after one subtracts from the Mormon totals the work of young, full-time Mormon missionaries.

Mormons reliably tithe to their churches and also give about \$1,200 annually “to social causes outside the church.” Even Mormons who have relatively low household incomes both tithe fully and give more of their income to assist non-Mormons in need than other Americans do.

What is behind these differences? At the Pew panel, David E. Campbell, a University of Notre Dame political scientist who is a Mormon, quipped that while Mormons are even more “hierarchical” than Catholics, hierarchy is definitely not the answer. Nor, he said, does the fidelity of individual Mormons to particular Mormon religious tenets explain the differences.

Rather, research suggests the secret to filling church coffers and packing the pews while simultaneously stimulating robust ministries that benefit needy nonmembers is what a religion does to induce intrafaith friendships, transcend Sunday-only ties and foster widespread participation in faith-motivated, civic good works for people in need.

Cnaan’s surveys were administered to Mormon congregants in four different regions of the country after their usual three-hour worship services, which are typically followed by many members and their families intentionally socializing together.

Let’s face it, in too many Catholic

parishes, the minority of self-identified Catholics who attend Sunday Mass regularly expect it to take not more than an hour, punctuated by a contrived communal “sign of peace” wave or handshake and followed by a post-Communion dash to the parking lot.

By contrast, last month I attended standing-room-only evening Purim services (complete with costumes, small children running in the aisles and raucous noise at every mention of Hama) at an Orthodox synagogue in New Orleans. I was joined by a small group of Catholic undergraduates who were on an interfaith, service-learning trip.

As one Catholic student put it, hearing the all-Hebrew singing-reading of the Book of Esther took well over an hour but was “a blast,” as was the communal after-party that included eating, drinking, card-playing—and collecting donations for the poor.

Catholic bishops should pay as much attention to how much time churchgoers spend together at or after Sunday Mass as they have recently paid to which words get used (*consubstantial!*) during nearly empty worship services. The bishops should continue to promote annual donations to wonderful Catholic nonprofit organizations like Catholic Charities, which also attract thousands of Catholic community-serving volunteers. They and all Catholics should also strive to make our churches places where ever more Catholics come to worship, socialize and serve neighbors in need.

JOHN J. DIJULIO JR. is the co-author of *American Government: Institutions and Policies* (2012) and other books on politics, religion and public administration.





"THE PASSAGE OF SOULS," BY LOUIS JANMOT PHOTO: REUNION DES MUSEES NATIONAUX/ART RESOURCE, NY/© ARTRES/RENE-GABRIEL OJEDA.

WHAT DOES RESURRECTION
MEAN FOR US?

Our Risen Selves

BY GERALD O'COLLINS

Celebrating at Easter the glorious resurrection of Jesus inevitably causes us to think about our own resurrection. What will our risen existence be like?

One obvious danger is to fill the void with science fiction fantasies or worse. In *The History of the World in 10½ Chapters*, Julian Barnes warns his readers against this excess through an amusing parody of a heavenly existence that consists in indulging in unlimited sex, meeting celebrities and enjoying unprecedented success in sport.

None of us has directly experienced resurrection for ourselves, and that conditions the way we might imagine and conceptualize risen life. Still, we can look beyond the limitations and evils of our present existence and cautiously suggest something about the new, bodily existence we hope for.

Matter and Spirit

As human beings we are bodies. Our bodies insert us into the material world. Each of us becomes a tiny part of the cosmos and the cosmos part of us. People once naïvely assumed that the human body enjoyed far-reaching autonomy and stability; scientists had not yet discovered that our physical life forms a dynamic process of continual circulation between our bodies and the material environment. To adapt a line from the poet John Donne, no body is an island. Through our bodies we constantly share in and relate to the universe.

Modern thinkers stress the spiritual and bodily unity of the human person, our psychosomatic unity. At the same time, a dualism remains between matter and spirit. Such dualistic thinking about our present existence should not steer us, however, toward a Platonic conclusion in which we (as soul or spirit) are “in” a body or “have” a body. Speaking of

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matter and spirit, we need not suppose that these are disparate realities that, like oil and water, will not mix. All matter has something spiritual about it. A pure materiality that would be totally unspiritual seems impossible. On the other hand, all the material in our universe is at least potentially human matter. The spiritualizing of matter takes place continually through breathing, eating and drinking. By being taken into a human body, matter becomes vitally associated with the functions of a spiritual being.

The world of art exhibits a similar phenomenon. Paintings, pieces of sculpture and stained glass windows are material objects. Through being organized and spiritualized in the hands of their makers, works of art can embody a rich cargo of meaning. Christian believers acknowledge a similar process in the life of the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist. A piece of bread and a cup of wine are spiritualized and personalized through the power of the Holy Spirit to become the most intensely real presence of the risen Christ. The use of material substances, like water and oil, in the sacraments visibly connects the bodies of the worshipers with the material universe. But the rites aim higher: to link worshipers with highly personal realities, the body of the church and the body of Christ himself.

Matter can be understood and interpreted in many ways. Physicists know it as mainly empty space, the field of several basic forces. Subatomic particles appear as either mass or energy. Nevertheless, breathing, eating, drinking, painting, celebrating the sacraments and other human activities disclose another face of matter: its potentiality to be spiritualized and personalized.

Resurrection from the dead will mean the full and final personalizing and spiritualizing of our matter, not its abolition. Through the action of the Holy Spirit, the human spirit will “dominate” matter, in the sense that the body will clearly express and serve the glorified spirit of human beings. Accepting this requires a leap of imagination. We can be helped to make this leap by reflecting on one aspect of risen life: our transformed capacity to communicate.

Here and now our material bodiliness creates the possibility for us to be communicators. With and through our bodies we act, express ourselves, relate to and communicate with others. Without our bodies there would be no language, no art, no literature, no religion, no industry, no political life, no social and economic relations and none of the married love in which verbal and nonverbal communication reaches a supreme intensity. In short, without our bodies we could not make and enjoy any human history. Through our bodies we build up a vast web of relationships with other human beings, with the material universe and with God. Our bodies enable us to communicate, play the human game and compose our individual, personal stories.

At the same time, our bodies place limits on our commu-

nication. Being subject to the constraints of space and time, our bodies set us apart and restrict our chances of relating and communicating. People talk, hug, kiss, make phone calls, send e-mail and text messages, write letters and in other ways try to make up quantitatively for what they lack qualitatively. Through sickness, old age, imprisonment or exile our bodies can bring us radical solitude and terrifying loneliness. Bodily loneliness and breakdown in communication find their final expression when the tomb contains a newly buried corpse or the crematorium someone’s fresh ashes.

Few modern writers have described that irreversible break more poignantly than John McGahern in *All Will Be Well*. He wrote of his mother, who died at the age of 42: “She was gone. She would never answer to her name again. She was gone for ever...gone where I could not follow.”

Our bodies do not merely separate and alienate us from one another, from the world and from God. Through weariness, physical weakness, sickness, sleep and death, they also alienate us from ourselves. Our embodied condition can make us feel not fully free to be ourselves and be with others.

We may usefully imagine the resurrection as maximizing our capacity to relate and communicate. The supreme example here is Jesus himself. As raised from the dead through the power of the Holy Spirit, he now relates to the Father, human beings and the whole cosmos in a manner that has shed the constraints of his earthly existence. Wherever two or three gather in his name, they experience the risen Lord in their midst (Mt 18:20). Nothing reveals more powerfully the new communicative power of Jesus than the Eucharist. It brings his worldwide presence and his offer to share a life that will never end.

To expect resurrection involves hoping that we will be set free to go far beyond the limitations and triviality of so much that passes for communication in this world. We will be liberated to be truly ourselves and to be with others in an enhanced and loving way.

Bodily Continuity and Our History

Jesus’ empty tomb pointed to a transformation of his dead body into a new, risen mode of existence, but it was a transformation that brought no loss of personal identity. The Easter narratives of the Gospels make it credible that when Jesus appeared to individuals or to groups of disciples they could—at times with initial difficulty—recognize him as the same Jesus they had known. Some (transformed) material continuity enabled them to identify the risen one as the Jesus they had known and followed. But the preservation of our individual, personal identity in a risen existence seems more problematic. This requires explanation.

Here and now our bodies ensure our individual continuity and our recognizability as the same person. To be and to be recognized as the same person, we must remain “the

same body.” Despite continual and massive bodily changes, our personal continuity and identity are somehow bound up with our bodily identity and continuity. We are and have the same body and therefore remain the same person. Bodily continuity points to the persistence of personal identity.

Some question the link between bodily continuity and the continuity of personal identity, interpreting the latter in terms of a continuity in mental states—in particular, the continuity of our consciousness and memories. Chains of conscious memories surely have a role in maintaining our sense of personal identity. The memory of what I have personally experienced constitutes the evidence within me of my persisting identity. Yet one’s enduring personhood cannot depend simply upon one’s memory; otherwise loss of memory would entail loss of personal identity. The case of amnesia rebuts attempts to promote memory as the means for constituting and preserving personal continuity in the one, unique life story that is “me.”

Although we may agree that personal identity and continuity remain somehow bound up with bodily continuity, we have to ask: in what sense will we rise with the same body? What counts here as bodily sameness?

Even in this earthly life the enormous and continuous interchange of matter with our environment can make us wonder how correct it is to speak of someone being or having the same body six months before birth and then again at

6, 16 and 60 years of age. As old matter is discarded and new matter is absorbed into a living body, there is a steady replacement of the matter constituting that body. How do we keep the same, numerically identical body all through our lifetime?

We might suggest that our unique genetic structure, which our DNA molecules carry, maintains our body through this life. But at death, with our physical remains dispersed into the environment through the decay or burning of our corpse, how can we speak of any bodily continuity between earthly existence and our risen life?

One answer could be found by noting the connection between saying “I am my body” and “I am my history.” Through our bodiliness we grow in relation to other persons, to God and to the world. Our individual history is unimaginable without our body constantly being “in relationship.” Our personal history expands by all that we do and suffer with our bodies. It is through our bodies that our particular histories are shaped—from conception through to death.

Thinking this way creates some credibility for understanding resurrection as the raising from the dead of our particular, embodied history. In resurrection, the particular, bodily history that has made up the unique story of each person will be brought to new life. In a mysterious, transformed fashion, their risen existence will express what/who

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they as embodied persons were and became in their earthly life. Given the intimate link between our bodiliness and our history, we can say: the same resurrected body means the same resurrected history, and vice versa.

This proposal needs defense. First, if I ask what has made me what I am as a unique individual, it has surely been my embodied history, not the millions of molecules that in a passing parade have at different moments constituted my particular physical existence. Second, my whole bodily history is much more “me” than the physical body that breathes its last, say at 80 years of age. It makes sense to imagine the resurrection as God bringing into a transformed, personal life the total embodied history of dead individuals and so ensuring their genuine personal identity.

This approach also makes very good sense of what happened to Jesus, the prototype of our resurrection. When he rose from the dead, his whole life rose with him. In his risen state Jesus possesses fully his whole human story. His resurrection and glorification have made his entire life and history irrevocably present. Even if they never thought explicitly in terms of the irrevocable presence of Jesus’ earthly history, the four Evangelists wrote their Gospels out of a sense that the earthly life of Jesus had risen with him and remains indispensably significant for his followers through the ages.

This proposal about our continuity being preserved through the resurrection of our embodied history leads to the question: How can the temporal history of individuals, fashioned over a stretch of time, be raised up by God to an existence that is not temporal but eternal?

We might develop here a comparison between the incarnation and the resurrection. Where the incarnation involved the timeless Son of God taking on a temporal existence, resurrection from the dead involves temporal beings (that have been embodied in their unique history) becoming eternal, to the extent that created beings can participate in the divine attribute of eternity. On the one hand, the timeless Son of God, by becoming embodied, could develop his own unique human history. In a similar but not identical way, on the other hand, the embodied historical existence of human beings can, through the power of God to raise them up, become eternalized.

Something of this sharing in eternity shows up in the earthly history of human beings. Time involves not only a succession of earlier and later events, but also has something cumulative about it. More than a mere stream of fleeting moments that disappear, time entails many things coming together and being preserved: memories in the mind, marks on our bodies, webs of persisting relationships with relatives, friends and colleagues at work, etc. Likewise, and much more so, resurrected life will be a gathering up and coming together of a whole, accumulated past. In resurrection, by the power of God our time and history will be summed up and completed.

My proposal about our embodied history being raised up finds support in what Caroline Walker Bynum documented in her classic study, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200–1336*. She illustrated extensively the persistent conviction of many Christians that resurrection would preserve for all eternity their gender, family experiences and the other characteristics and events that identified them as unique human persons and constituted their individual history. In thinking about the resurrection of Jesus and their own resurrection, these rank-and-file Christians were, in effect, insisting that the whole of our history rises with us.

Here then are two, complementary but not mutually exclusive ways of thinking imaginatively about our future resurrection. We must remain cautious when reflecting on something we have not yet experienced. Nevertheless, not knowing everything is not the same as knowing nothing at all. What we do know through faith and reason can make sense of the resurrection for which we hope: God spiritualizing (but not destroying) our material existence and bringing the whole of our earthly history into a new, transfigured life. **A**

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Alive Among Us!

BY NANCY HAWKINS

Often I find myself pondering how it was for the earthly followers of Jesus on the evening of Jesus' death and the next day, which we call Holy Saturday. I picture them huddled in a dark room in a state of shock, unable to eat and utterly depressed. Fear lives in their hearts and they have no reason to go on. They have no hope. Over the past few years I have encountered many people who are living their own Good Friday and Holy Saturday. These good people have lost their jobs, been disappointed in their church, have had to leave their homes and have lost their health care. They have no hope.

It is to both groups that the Easter kerygma is proclaimed: "Jesus is raised in accordance with the Scriptures!" The message assures us that Jesus the Christ is raised and lives in our midst now. He has conquered death, of which we are most afraid, and offers us deep peace and hope. But where do we find this message? In 2012 we do not have the luxury of seeing the Lord face to face. We cannot put our hands into his side, as Thomas did, or eat fish with the Lord on a beach at sunrise. Or can we?

Where will we find the risen Christ? For many, this is a tremendous challenge, yet it is not as difficult as one might think. The promise of faith is that Christ is always with us, even to the end of time. If we take the Gospel message at its word, then we can

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encounter the risen Lord each day. Ours is a world of grace—that grace being God in our midst. It is "amazing" grace, freely given with no strings attached. But we must decide to give ourselves over to this grace and to approach each day expecting to encounter the risen one.

With eyes that are clear and hearts full of hope we will find him alive in the communities that surround us in our world. We always meet the Lord in the breaking of the bread and in the opening of the word, a source of great comfort and spiritual strength. The risen Lord is present to the world in other ways as well.

Communities of Service

Communities of people who serve others in need continually manifest the presence of Christ. The Peace Corps and Doctors Without Borders, for example, reach out to the needy all around the world, especially in nations where there is political unrest and war. They minister in cultures foreign to their own with respect for those they serve. Similarly, thousands of missionaries spread the word of God in foreign lands and bring spiritual comfort to those they meet; they are the risen one among these people.

Closer to home I see the risen Lord in the Stephen Ministry program.

Stephen ministers are lay women and men trained to meet the short-term needs of their church community. They do whatever is needed, from taking people grocery shopping to providing companionship to lonely people. Hospice touches thousands each year. When my father was recently ill, my family and I experienced the support of the hospice program. Not only do these people assist the one who is preparing to die, but they also help those who are in mourning. I remember seeing relief on my mother's face after hospice came to her home. We knew the risen Lord was close.

Last year, when the United States celebrated the 10th anniversary of 9/11, I watched on television the dedication of the memorial near the former World Trade Center. I recalled the first responders, many of whom lost their lives as they climbed the towers, and Mychal Judge, O.F.M., who rushed to the area and became the

first recorded victim of that day. Thousands of people helped to find the bodies of the dead and minister to the police and firefighters—all manifestations of the risen Lord. Many are suffering physically today as a consequence of their works of mercy.

The risen Lord is also present in those who fight for justice and stand up for the downtrodden. In an atmosphere of political neg-



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ativity, it is easy to believe that no one is selfless or focused on truth and justice. But that is not true. Many lawyers are working pro bono for immigrants locked in detention centers who need representation. Advocates for the homeless staff soup kitchens and try to bring healing to the addicted; they also petition the government for laws to protect the needy. Others are organizing variously to speak for justice and truth. I have sometimes seen the risen Lord in diplomats and world leaders who fight for peace and make decisions based on goodness and reconciliation.

Friends, family members or co-workers may be vivid signs of Christ's presence in our own daily lives. It is easy to take for granted those near us. We need to pay attention to how they call us to growth, love us unconditionally, support us when we are down and cheer for us when we achieve. I have encountered the risen Jesus when those I care about challenge me to see new possibilities for my life and to trust that Jesus is with me on the journey. Around children especially—these vulnerable little ones who love to smile, laugh and run freely—I feel the presence of the risen

One. We adults are disarmed in their midst. No wonder Jesus told his followers to let the children come to him.

In Luke's Gospel (4:18-19) Jesus enters the synagogue on the Sabbath and reads from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

All our years are years of favor from the Lord, and communities of service have the power to set people free, which they do every day. As St. Teresa of Avila put it, "Christ has no other hands but yours." Missionaries and others serving in foreign lands, those who sit with the dying or offer friendship and a break from loneliness, leaders for justice, those near us whom we love best—these are the hands, eyes and faces of the risen Lord.

Discernment Tools

Christian tradition offers excellent tools to help us "discern" Christ's presence. One tool is the daily examen, as

St. Ignatius Loyola called it. The examen involves taking time at the end of your busy day to look back and ask God to show you where God has been present. You pay attention to the day's events and the people you encountered. You review your interior moods, feelings, joys, difficulties and loves, noting what makes an impression on you. The basic question of the examen is, "How did I meet God today?" This exercise is best done in quiet as part of one's evening prayer. If practiced regularly, the examen will bear rich fruit. Gradually you may come to anticipate seeing the risen Christ all the time in events and people!

Another tool is to pray over the gifts and fruits of the Spirit listed at 1 Cor 12:3-11 and Gal 5:22-26. One of the functions of the Spirit of Jesus is to fill our lives with blessings and gifts. The communities and individuals we encounter each day are blessings and gifts from God. When we use and appreciate these, we experience the fruits of the Spirit. If you find yourself becoming more joyful, loving, patient, peaceful, kind, trusting, gentle, self-controlled and filled with goodness, you are living in the aura of the Spirit. Then you know you have encountered the Lord in the workings of your day.

We are all on the road to Emmaus. Jesus the Christ comes upon us every day. But often we do not recognize him as we pass him at our jobs and in the supermarket. We read about him in the newspaper and teach him in our classrooms. He comes in all shapes and sizes, colors and cultures. "So much is unfolding that must complete its gesture, so much is in bud," writes the poet Denise Levertov of the Easter season. May we not miss what is blossoming in our midst this Easter.

Tonight, before you pull up the covers, take time to look over your day and perceive where the risen Lord was present to you. Then sing a verse of "Amazing Grace," smile and say thank you. **A**

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EARLE GRAY

Lamenting 'I'll Never Get Out of This World Alive'

As a singer-songwriter who kept throwing grit and squalor into that overproduced candy shop Nashville called country, Steve Earle has had a hand in protecting the authenticity of a unique American musical tradition and in birthing a new one—the more contemporary iteration of “Alt-Country” or “Americana” music. He has lately

taken a shot at acting with a role in HBO’s “Treme” and recently added “novelist” to his impressive C.V.

In a burst of multitasking hubris, Earle released an album and a novel together. The two efforts share a name, “I’ll Never Get Out of This World Alive” (lifted from a Hank Williams tune) and a wizened view of the world and man’s often sad and lonely place struggling in it. Earle’s father passed away as he wrote many of the album’s songs, which may have contributed to the gloom of mortality that hangs over both works. Earle has recently remarried and late in life appears surprised to welcome a new son into the world. You can almost hear his bemused appreciation for this turn of events and the peculiarly creative effort of baby-raising in the album’s few counter-current tunes.

Faith and redemption taunt both the book and the vinyl. But where one succeeds in coaxing nods of recognition and a lopsided smile or two, the other surrenders its narrative integrity to duplicitous moralizing.

Some Great Tunes

The musical incarnation of “I’ll Never Get Out of This World Alive” includes the basics of any recent Steve Earle album. Anyone who has paid the least attention to his career will recognize its overall sound and structure—personal reflection followed by a howl or two at political moons. Earle remains faithful to the American folk tradition, digging deeper on occasion as some tunes tap the cheerful cynicism of Irish folk. But he twists and folds the tradition to his own sardonic devices, firing away at contemporary targets. The album surveys death and recrimination, redemption and gratitude. God and the devil seem to haunt

Steve Earle



Earle's present as he surveys his past and reconsiders his future.

I don't think Earle can make a bad album, and this one includes some great tunes that work at times despite themselves. "Every Part of Me" offers an unfortunate litany of lyrical clichés, but it still charms mostly because of its unselfconscious sincerity. "This City" is a mournful tribute to the often tried but unbroken spirit of New Orleans.

Still, Earle sounds a little listless. The album lacks the energy and some of the passion of other recent efforts, like "Washington Square Serenade" and "Transcendental Blues." Earle's craggy, wise voice is recognizable, but it's distracted and uninspired, not so much properly world weary as plain weary. What should have been a stinging rebuke to the presidential legacy of George W. Bush, "Little Emperor,"

comes across instead as contrived and a little pointless now. Worse, it's hard to listen to. That's especially surprising since another great musical multitasker, T-Bone Burnett, produced the album.

"Meet Me in the Alleyway" channels Tom Waits and touches on personal end-times. On "God is God," Earle assures, "I believe in prophecy/some folks see things not everybody can see/...I believe in miracles," a theme he returns to in his novel. But Earle's flat statement of faith and blessings received, earned or not, troubles a little; there is more resignation than joy in it.

Earle revives on "Gulf of Mexico," a contractual nod to the Irish folk tradition from which he hails and "Waitin' on the Sky," a jaunty exploration of a wayward life, finally redeemed.

(Another Irish-sounding tune, "Molly-o," might have been better left in an archive.) Though "Gulf of Mexico" tracks BP's errant ways and the impact of the great oil spill of 2010 on the working men and women of the gulf, it might have been written a century ago about union organizers, Galway fishermen or highwaymen.

Novel Blues

If the album disappoints, it's mostly in comparison with the high bar set by stronger efforts, but the novel provokes an emotion closer to betrayal. The work suffers from some minor structural disorders. A first-time novelist, Earle doesn't seem to trust his story to tell itself or his reader to figure things out. Some moments are overwrought and overloaded with exposition; some characters seem poured out of a box of literary ready-mix, albeit one that's mouse-gnawed and whiskey-stained. Internal monologues displace narrative action.

"I'll Never Get Out of Here Alive" initially surpasses these drawbacks on chutzpah alone. Earle generally tells this story of addiction, poverty and the miraculous amid the squalor well, probably because it's a place he has inhabited too long himself. He seems to have devised a gravelly variant of a number of familiar American genres. Gritty magic realism meets American pulp. It's as if Albany's William Kennedy and the dime novel maestro Jim Thompson had a bastard child together, though at times the ghostly presence of Hank Williams resembles a morphine-addicted Caspar more than a spectrified Don Buendía.

Earle tells the tale of "Doc" Ebersole, as beat up and beaten down a character as you are likely to meet in San Antonio's South Presa Strip or anywhere else in American fiction. Once the personal physician of the legendary Hank Williams, Doc is now a morphine addict himself, a drifter, supporting his habit by working as the

ALL THINGS NEW

What was so stark

Now glistens green.

What was barren blooms.

What was sleeping awakes.

Who can withstand Him

Who is the Force

Behind the flowering,

The sprouting,

The beating of wings?

This is the third day

And He has the last word.

TERESA BURLESON

TERESA BURLESON is a substitute teacher and freelance writer in Central Texas. Her book, *The Pilgrim's Lyre*, was published in 2003.

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neighborhood's unofficial E.M.T. He is a knife- and bullet-wound healer as needed and an abortionist for the prostitutes who work the streets around his hotel when they get careless. Doc is literally haunted by the ghost of Hank Williams, who has had "a feeling called the blues" since Doc inadvertently killed him on a dark highway years before with an overdose of morphine.

Doc suffers misgivings about his work but rationalizes his commitment to the trade. At least when girls come to him, he reasons, they are not likely to be imperiled by a procedure they're going to undergo anyway. Doc's self-destructive routine is broken by the arrival of a young Mexican girl and her no-good boyfriend, who puts her in a family way and then dumps her on Doc. After her abortion, the girl is too ashamed to return to her family, so she joins Doc in purgatory at the Yellow Rose Guest Home. In this place of exhaustion and despair, she begins to produce small miracles. Graciela begins to experience the stigmata after a chance encounter with Jackie Kennedy. Girls who come to Graciela (get it?) don't return to their trade and more abortions; they return to church.

With Graciela and her perpetually bleeding arm around, Doc is able to kick his habit, his dealer goes straight, and D.O.A.s are restored to life. Eventually the stories of back-alley miracles reach a local priest. While Earle maintains sympathy for his deeply flawed characters, he exempts the parish priest from his kindness. Father Killen's inexplicable, barely contained fury is chalked up to class resentment and some sadistic sisters from his past. His lack of humanity and complexity are driven by the narrative. If an unrepentant abortionist and his assistant cannot be the bad guys, then the perpetually infuriated Catholic priest will have to do.

Earle seems to throw a jumble of Catholic tropes into a blender and hope

for the best when the blades stop spinning; the serene, unquestioning faith of simple folks; rampant Jackie-Kennedy mania; stigmata-infused miracles; a dollop of dying for everyone else's sins; and a hint of syncretism. Someone schooled Earle well in things Catholic. The reader begins to suspect redemption lurking around the corner. Doc is keenly aware that his sins should lead in one direction, if he believed in that direction. Hell couldn't be any worse than some of the places he's known on earth.

All that Roman stuff catches in the craw by the end of the novel, though. Earle's dabbling with things Catholic is deceit disguised as irony. Graciela's deep Catholic faith and mystical connection to Aztec life forces cannot hold off the predetermined course of this narrative, no matter how inexplicable such life-giving spirituality makes her final decision. This is a pro-choice

fable, dressed up with Catholic and Mexican shiny foil. In the novel's denouement, great spiritual forces battle for Graciela's soul; Hank Williams, Nahua spirit-animals and Margaret Sanger reveal themselves, but Jesus never makes the scene.

Then all the Catholic trinkets scattered through the book seem trashy and cruel, particularly Doc's imitation of Christ and Graciela's serene acceptance of her stigmata-punctuated "ministry." Catholic readers can expect to feel used, even angry, to have things they hold sacred exploited, and to such ends. Someone sold Earle a piece of the true cross and he put it in his book; I know it's not real, but I find myself wanting to take even this fake relic back from him.

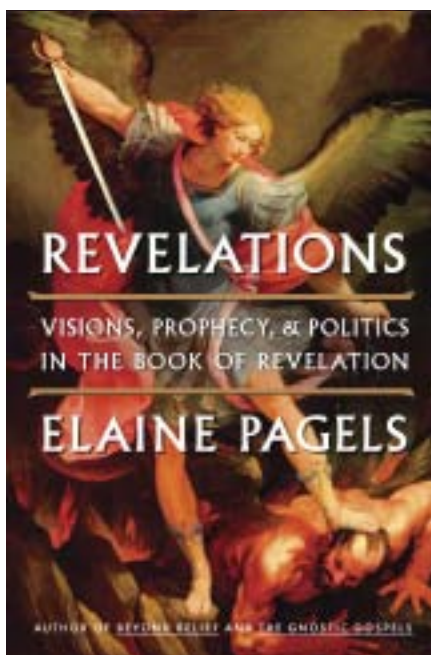
KEVIN CLARKE is an associate editor of *America*.

ON THE WEB

Jake Martin, S.J., reviews two "working girl" sitcoms. americamagazine.org/culture

PHEME PERKINS

WORLD'S END



Revelations Visions, Prophecy, and Politics In the Book of Revelation

By Elaine Pagels
Viking. 225p

In her writings, Professor Elaine Pagels has popularized Gnostic gospels by crafting stories of spiritually gifted individuals whose insights were rejected by a religious hierarchy adept at wielding political power. Orthodoxy, reinforced by Constantine, eviscerated the spiritually creative impulses in Christianity. Readers taken with her earlier books, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent: Sex and Politics in Early Christianity* (1988), and *The Origin of Satan* (1995), will find this territory familiar.

Even though the same ecclesiastical authorities concluded the Christian Scriptures collected for the New Testament with the Book of Revelation, other visions were lost: “Left out are the visions that lift their hearers beyond apocalyptic polarities to see the human race as a whole—and, for that matter, to see each one of us as a whole, having the capacity for both cruelty and compassion.”

As the final word, she says Revelation has the effect of playing a poisonous role in Christianity. New visions and prophetic leaders take on the demonic guise that John of Patmos employed against imperial Rome. Images of the conquering lamb and the whore of Babylon fueled new outbreaks of religious violence against both outsiders and dissenting Christians. In the American Civil War, the Union sang “Battle Hymn of the Republic,” while Confederates depicted Lincoln in the clutches of the great dragon. In a similar way, the great drama of Revelation encompasses both our worst nightmares and the glorious vision of life emerging beyond death.

Roman Catholics have been conditioned by their liturgy to focus on the visions that occur in the heavens, rather than the chaos and destruction on earth below. Angelic hosts praising God, the lamb with a victory flag on the Easter table, the faithful martyrs, the Blessed Virgin (an image intended by John as Israel) as clothed with the sun with Satan under her heel, the church as bride of Christ, and the heavenly Jerusalem lit by God’s presence—all these are the Catholic images. Pagels acknowledges these elements, but she emphasizes the half of the story that is directed toward or on the earth.

Most scholars agree that Revelation was composed around 90 C.E. Since we lack evidence for official opposition to Christianity, the martyrs mentioned in Revelation must be victims of episodic localized violence. Why then the sustained hostility to Roman

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imperial rule? Pagels adopts a minority view that John of Patmos would have identified himself and those churches faithful to his teaching as Jewish, whose observance of ritual purity and adherence to Jewish law was the prerequisite to participation in the heavenly court. His antagonism against “false Jews” in Rv 2:9 and 3:9 is directed against Gentile believers in the Pauline churches of Asia Minor who were not observant Jews.

What connects the Jewish visionary ascetic at war with the internal enemy, Pauline Christians, to the anti-Roman polemic beyond some general concern to avoid seduction by an impure world? For Pagels imagination takes over. She fills in the gaps with her own speculation. By imagining that John of Patmos had fled Judea as the Roman troops devastated Jerusalem and burned its Temple some 20 years earlier in 70 C.E., she reads the book as wartime literature. After all, she argues, another Jewish seer whose visions are found in 4 Ezra confronted the revealing angel with his distress over the ruin of Israel’s hopes at about the same time.

However, in the interests of creating a dramatic scenario, Pagels’ narrative is likely to confuse readers. Other scholars support the thesis that those whom Ignatius of Antioch labels “Jews” engaged in false teaching among Christians are actually followers of Jesus practicing what they consider a Jewish way of life. They also point out that these (Christian) Jews have no ties to the actual Jewish communities in Asia Minor. Ignatius indicates that these believers observe the Sabbath (*Letter to the Magnesians* 9.1-2), while both Ignatius and John of Patmos underline the Lord’s Day (Rv 1:10) as the day of Christian assembly.

Pagels’ sweeping generalizations that line John of Patmos up as a self-identified “Jew,” an advocate of the Hebrew prophetic tradition against Ignatius’ Pauline disdain for the law and hierarchical church order, need

serious revision. Of course this inflated rhetoric is not found in the scholarly paper “The Social History of Satan. Part III: John of Patmos and Ignatius of Antioch—Contrasting Visions of God’s People,” that Pagels gave at Princeton in 2005 and has published twice since then.

If the non-scholarly audience is likely to mix up actual Jews with John of Patmos’s Jesus believers who call themselves “Jews,” the situation becomes even worse when Pagels dumps Revelation altogether in favor of assorted Gnostic revelations. One of the key examples, a widely read *Secret Book of John*, presents a third “John” in the story. He is, in addition to Revelation’s

author, John of Patmos, and John, the son of Zebedee, the disciple whose authority helped secure its place in the canon. The general reader will have a hard time keeping track of the rapid run through second- and third-century revelations and their orthodox Christian counterparts and opponents that takes over half-way into the book.

Revelation comes in and out of the story as the Christians face persecution by Roman authorities. In the end, it is spiritual freedom from all forms of domination by authorities, both civil and religious, that Pagels celebrates.

PHEME PERKINS is professor of New Testament at Boston College.

GERALD T. COBB

INTO THE DEEP

THE CAT’S TABLE

By Michael Ondaatje
Knopf. 288p \$26

Michael Ondaatje set his award-winning novel *The English Patient* against the broad expanse of Italy and Egypt during World War II, but in his newest book, *The Cat’s Table*, he crafts a much more confined but no less richly imaginative setting, that of a cruise ship sailing from Ceylon to England in 1954. The tale opens with the narrator, who shares with the author the name Michael, recalling how, as an 11-year-old, he left his aunt and uncle for a 21-day ocean voyage to be reunited with his mother, who had left the family home some years previously.

This is a beautifully complex novel, filled with the turbulence of youthful

emotions recalled in the relative tranquility of adulthood. The mature narrator treats the voyage as a call to memory and insight: “I try to imagine who the boy on the ship was.” Ondaatje presents vivid slices of the daily shipboard lives of the 11-year-old boy, his cousin Emily and his two companions, Cassius and Ramadhin.

Michael recalls carefree days on the ship, rising before dawn to sneak a swim in the first class pool: “Each day we had to do at least one thing that was forbidden.” He also records, in an examination booklet, snippets of overheard conversations, suggesting that his Ceylonese education in a strict Catholic school has not been interrupted so much as it has been transformed from conventional subjects to lessons in human nature.



The passenger ship *Oronsay*, an actual historical ship of the Orient Line, is something of an ark, its seven levels and 600 passengers representing a diverse cross-section of humanity. The ship contains a below-deck garden, a dog kennel and a mysterious prisoner who is watched closely by a retinue of guards. It exudes the atmospheric complexity of a Freudian dream awaiting interpretation. For example, hidden deeply within its interior is a mural of naked women that the three boys first hear about as a rumor and later discover as a taboo glimpse into their sexual futures. Also circulating through the ship are other rumors, of crimes minor and major, one of which leads to a dramatic confrontation worthy of any oceangoing swashbuckler tale.

The “Cat’s Table” of the title refers to the spot most distant from the cap-

tain’s table in the ship’s dining room, and serves as Ondaatje’s symbol for marginalization and humility. From the humble perspective of the cat’s table, Michael gains insight into the powerful: “Nothing much of lasting value ever happens at the head table, held together by a familiar rhetoric. Those who already have power continue to glide along the familiar rut they have made for themselves.”

The novel features eccentric wisdom figures, like the voracious reader Mr. Fonseka, who “seemed to draw

forth an assurance or a calming quality from the books he read. He’d gaze into an unimaginable distance.... He had a serenity that came with the choice of the life he wanted to live.” Mr. Mazappa, the ship’s pianist, sings bawdy lyrics to introduce the boys to experiences of love and loss that they have no experiential base to grasp.

ON THE WEB

Thomas J. Scirghi, S.J., discusses his new book on baptism.
americamagazine.org/podcast

Michael recalls the first stirrings of romantic and sexual desire: “Where had it come from? And was it a pleasure or a sadness, this life inside me? It was as if with its existence I was lacking something essential, like water.”

Years after his arrival in England, the narrator returns to the voyage as he retells the story to his own children. Memories of his two companions flood into his heart, and he sets out to solve a present-day mystery concerning Ramadhin. He also wrestles with mid-life questions as to whether in the final analysis he has a cold heart, whether he loved his friends enough and whether he has become a distracted, superficial person. An existential emptiness wracks him: “We all have an old knot in the heart we wish to loosen and untie.”

This novel will not quicken the reader’s pulse with breathless high seas adventures, but it does offer powerful revelatory and arresting moments. One might say the book is not so

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much a page-turner as it is a “page-holder” with many moments to savor and to ponder. Ondaatje masterfully captures the stream of consciousness and conflicts that swirl about and within the deepening interiority of a sensitive young boy.

Ondaatje aptly selected for his novel’s epigraph a passage from Conrad’s novella *Youth* dealing with perspective. It reads in part, “This is how I see the East.... I see it always from a small boat.” The 21 days aboard the *Olonsay* prove to be a turning point in Michael’s consciousness. Everything that happens later is perceived by the adult Michael through

this crucial transitional period in his life.

Emily Dickinson famously wrote, “There is no Frigate like a Book/ To take us Lands away.” Ondaatje’s novel offers readers the double literary consolation of providing a book that at one level deals with a literal ship whisking people to far-off lands, while at another level the novel invites us to a more symbolic journey to attain a deeper, wiser awareness of where we have been and who we have become.

GERALD T. COBB, S.J., is associate professor in the English department at Seattle University.

CLAYTON SINYAI

UNION FLIGHT

COLLISION COURSE **Ronald Reagan, the Air Traffic** **Controllers, and the Strike That** **Changed America**

By Joseph A. McCartin
Oxford Univ. Press. 504p \$29.95

The Great Recession—with its consequent sudden collapse in tax receipts—has inspired a fierce nationwide dispute over the rights and duties of public employees. Gov. Chris Christie of New Jersey has earned a certain folk hero status on YouTube with his verbal confrontations with state workers; Wisconsin’s Gov. Scott Walker successfully pressed an initiative to strip state workers of most collective bargaining rights and now faces a recall election as a result. Academics are engaged in a spirited debate over whether government workers are overpaid or underpaid relative to their private-sector counterparts, and federal workers have seen their pay frozen for two years running.

It is an especially opportune time for the appearance of *Collision Course: Ronald Reagan, the Air Traffic*

Controllers, and the Strike That Changed America. In this book Joseph McCartin, a professor of history at Georgetown University, looks back to the origins, course and consequences of the strike by the Professional Air Traffic Controllers’ Organization 30 years ago and shows how a relatively small union of air traffic controllers helped shaped the destiny of organized labor for decades thereafter.

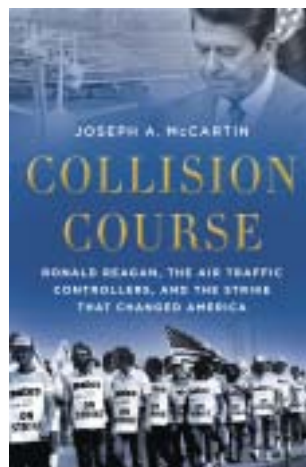
The book is a well-crafted narrative history. The strike was set in motion, McCartin contends, well before Reagan’s election and even before Patco itself was established—the elements were built into President John F. Kennedy’s 1962 executive order granting federal workers the bargain collectively. “Kennedy...issued an executive order intended to placate his labor allies while ensuring that the advent of collective bargaining in the

federal service would alter existing labor relations as little as possible,” McCartin explains. “No federal workers were quicker than air traffic controllers to seize the opportunity to organize afforded by [the executive order]. And none were quicker to discover the order’s inadequacies.”

In the 1930s, 40s and 50s, millions of private-sector workers had rushed to join labor unions and bargain with their employers under the terms established in the 1935 National Labor Relations Act, or Wagner Act. But the N.L.R.A. excluded public-sector employees, and Kennedy’s executive order lacked two vital elements of the Wagner industrial relations system. First, wages and benefits were excluded from the scope of bargaining, confining contract negotiations to peripheral matters. Second, even if workers and their unions could bargain over wages and benefits, they had no mechanism for resolving an impasse. They could neither strike nor demand binding arbitration.

The air traffic controllers formed Patco in 1968 and almost instantly began to bump against the limits of this odd system of labor relations. As the endemic inflation of the 1970s swallowed up any wage increases offered by the federal government, the controllers who saw their real wages declining demanded action. They tried lobbying; they tried sickouts; they tried creative job actions where by meticulously following the F.A.A. regulation they slowed air traffic to a crawl; they tried arcane reclassifications within the civil service system. By decade’s end the controllers had elected a militant new leadership and were quietly preparing to strike.

Interestingly, both the union and the newly elected president took a



number of significant steps in the hope of avoiding a confrontation. Ronald Reagan, a former president of the Screen Actors Guild, had set out not to break Patco but to coopt it; the air traffic controllers, largely military veterans, were the prototypical Reagan Democrats. Patco in turn had defied most of the labor movement by endorsing Reagan in hopes of an acceptable wage settlement. In fact, the new administration showed more flexibility at the bargaining table than Johnson, Nixon, Ford or Carter ever had. But it was too late. Patco members, who had seen their hopes disappointed too many times before, would not settle short of a major breakthrough, and in August 1981 as many as three quarters of the air traffic controllers walked off the job.

Patco had done an excellent job organizing the strike—air traffic would not be restored to prestrike levels for years—but little or nothing to justify its cause before the public or

even other labor unions. When the president declared that the strike was illegal and that any controller who failed to report for duty within 48 hours would be fired, he gained the advantage in public opinion, which he never forfeited. “As president of my own union, I led the first strike ever called by that union,” Reagan explained that first day. “But we cannot compare labor-management relations in the private sector with government.” The air traffic controllers were not employed by a private interest but by the elected government; they had sworn an oath not to strike; they were violating the laws of the land, which he himself was charged to execute. Despite immense costs for the government and the American economy, Reagan never wavered, and the former union president earned a place in U.S. history as the most notable strike-breaker of the postwar era.

Whatever the president’s intentions, private-sector workers soon

became collateral damage of the Patco strike. For decades, firms that valued their reputation had refrained from permanently replacing striking workers, fearing the social consequences. The Fortune 500 chief executive officers watching events unfold were neither historians nor political scientists, and they cared nothing for the distinction between private workers and public servants. What they learned was that the public backlash for breaking a strike would be muted and fleeting. As firms like Phelps Dodge, Greyhound and International Paper imitated Reagan’s “leadership,” workers learned to their sorrow that the code of honor that governed postwar labor relations no longer applied and that every job action could be their last. In that sense, more than perhaps any other, it was indeed a strike that changed America.

CLAYTON SINYAI is a trade union activist and the author of *Schools of Democracy: A Political History of the American Labor Movement*.



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LETTERS

Slathered in Sarcasm

Bishop William Lori, instead of offering reasoned opposition to what he believes was a misguided editorial ("Policy, Not Liberty," 3/5), slathers his response ("Letters," 3/19) with sarcasm. He has served neither himself nor his cause well. Lathering sarcasm is no substitute for saying what focused and good-faith efforts are being made to work out the issue.

Nor does what he "feels" substitute for reasoned argument. The claim that inclusion of coverage for vasectomies "feels...an awful lot like infringement on religious liberty" does not make it infringement. The bishops have yet to offer reasoned logic supporting that oft-repeated claim. The most egregious assertion the bishop makes is: "If the editorial is to be believed, bishops should regard it not as a matter of religious liberty but merely policy that as providers they teach one thing but as employers they are made to teach something else."

With all due respect, this is sheer nonsense. At no time and in no way has the Department of Health and Human Services mandate "made" the church teach anything. The very thing the bishops demand, their religious liberty, permits them to preach and teach loudly and clearly.

RITA HESSLEY
Cincinnati, Ohio

Supreme Decisions

With regard to the Health and Human Services mandate and its "accommodation," the debate is bifurcated ("Policy, Not Liberty," 3/5). One aspect deals with the policy of the U.S. government versus the policy of the Catholic Church. Do women have a right to receive contraceptive services the church pays for? Should the Catholic Church, and others who share its moral compunctions, be forced by our government to pay for

such services through the insurance premiums they pay? These are questions of policy. They are not questions that inhere in the constitutional issue raised by the administration's mandate.

The constitutional questions are of a separate nature and of a higher order of magnitude, a fact that has generally been overlooked. Those questions will not be answered by the chattering class in their opinion columns. They will be certainly and inevitably decided by the U.S. Supreme Court.

(REV.) CHARLES E. IRVIN, J.D.
DeWitt, Mich.

Right to Interfere?

In your editorial "Policy, Not Liberty" (3/5), you alluded to the recent struggle between our church and our government to more clearly define their respective roles in our society. Unfortunately, the church has picked the wrong cause with which to repel what it deems to be government intervention.

The Catholic Church has long since abdicated the moral high ground to condemn "artificial" contraception and forbid Catholics from availing themselves of it. It happened over 60 years ago. In permitting "natural" birth control, which is anything but natural and very unreliable, the church has validated the principle that a married couple may deliberately interfere with the procreative process for the express purpose of preventing the conception of a child. Having this right acknowledged by the church, the issue of method should be simply a matter of personal choice.

RANDY VELEZ
Cooperstown, N.Y.

Trust Mystery

The column by John P. Schlegel, S.J., (Of Many Things, 3/19) was a great reflection on finding God in all places, people and things. I loved his contrast of the expansive view of nature in Omaha with the restricted view of red

brick walls in New York City. Yes, our lives have periods of expansion and constriction, or maybe it just seems that way. Your article assisted me in my quest to accept change and transition in my life now and in the future with grace and trust in the divine mystery. Thank you.

NANCY WALTON-HOUSE
Snoqualmie, Wash.

Ministering Angels

Thank you for “My Sister’s Demons,” by the pseudonymous Jan Monaghan (3/19), a story that describes so clearly and succinctly how addiction to mind-altering drugs (including alcohol) can hurt more people than the addict alone. It can contaminate the mind and spirit, including sometimes even the physical health, of family and friends. It can possess them worse than any demon.

It is good to know there is a way out—detach with love from the addict. That’s easier said than done.

It is also good to know that there is an organization where family and friends of addicts can come together and share their experience, strength and hope with each other. There they can learn a better way of life, to live happy and productive lives, whether the addict continues to use drugs or not. They are angels ministering to one another.

JOSEPH QUIGLEY
Tomakin, New South Wales, Australia

Detach With Love

“My Sister’s Demons,” by Jan Monaghan (3/19), brought tears to my eyes. Al Anon taught me over 30 years ago how to detach with love. Alcoholics Anonymous helped me to deal with my own addiction to alcohol for 20 years. My heart breaks for people who don’t have the gift of sobriety.

The author’s words remind me that it is a gift not to be taken for granted. I do think that many people who suffer with addiction also suffer from other issues, like depression, that further complicate recovery. Those of us who

do not know depression have no idea of the depths of despair of this disease. Yes, depression is a disease, and it is fatal, as is addiction to drugs. My sympathies are with you, Jan, as are my prayers. Your sister is finally resting in peace, and my wish for you and your family is that you find peace.

BARBARA LOFQUIST
St. Augustine, Fla.

Pitiful and Sinful

Re “Montessori Ministry,” by Kyle T. Kramer (3/19): Unfortunately there are many “Hannah” stories in the church today. Some of the details may be different, but pastors and bishops often fail to invite and welcome partners in ministry. The trend is to deny that the Second Vatican Council happened and head back to the future: more Latin, more distance, more men and boys! It is pitiful and sinful to reject the gifts of so many people who are willing to share their call through baptism and the Spirit.

DENISE GILMORE
Kansas City, Mo.

Identity Crisis

In “Occupy the Future” (3/12), Gary Dorrien mentioned that the question

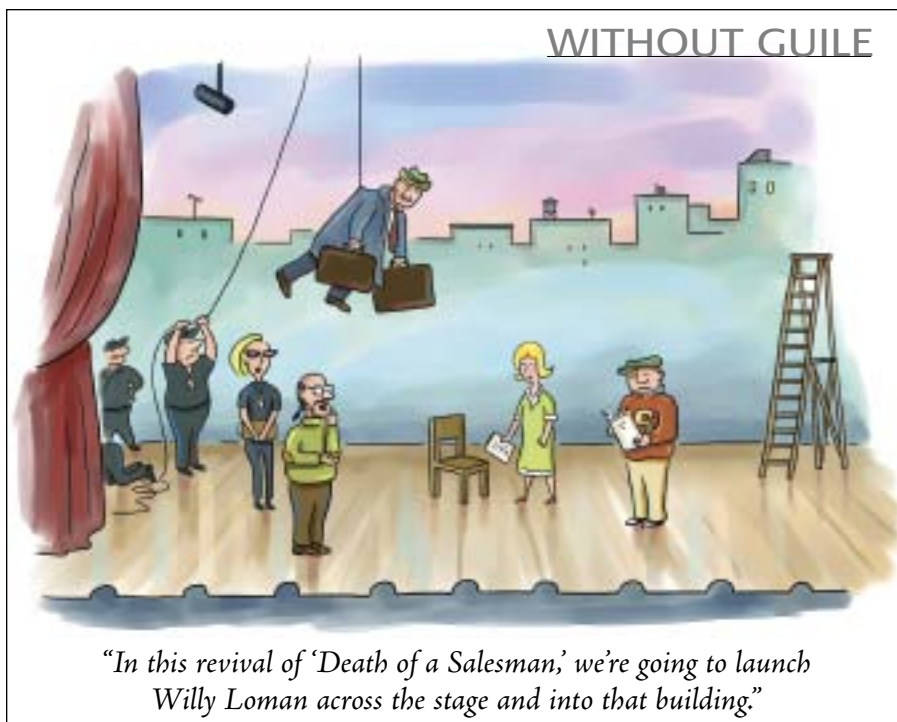
of what kind of country we should be is framed by two alternatives: unrestricted liberty or economic democracy. Of course, when you frame the question in these parameters you are leading the answer. It seems to me the kind of country we should be was established by our Constitution, and that is a representative form of government. Perhaps the question of alternatives should be revised to: maintain our basic identity or radically alter our identity. Under this scenario, the contrast between the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street is seen in the proper context.

All institutions strive to maintain their identity and mission through time. If transformation is too radical, however, there may be a point when that identity and mission cannot be preserved.

JOHN MAYO
San Diego, Calif.

A Final Edit

Thank you for the Rev. Robert E. Lauder’s article “His Catholic Conscience: Sin and Grace in the work of Martin Scorsese” (2/27). I read it with great interest.



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I would, however, like to point out one inaccuracy in the article. It concerns the remark, "too much Good Friday, not enough Easter Sunday." It was made by our parish priest, the Rev. Francis Principe, not my teacher at New York University, Haig Manoogian.

This remark has often been repeated, but seeing it once again in print in **America**, I remembered Father Principe's exact words to me, and I would like to take this opportunity to correct the record.

It was after a small screening of my movie "Taxi Driver" in 1976. My then publicist had invited a small group of friends to the Plaza Hotel afterward, including Father Principe. His response to the movie after the screening was, "I'm glad you ended it on Easter Sunday and not on Good Friday."

This was a personal remark to me, as he knew me well. But over the years it has often been quoted in a shorter version, which has quite a different meaning.

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New York, N.Y.

Correction

John A. Coleman, S.J., reports incorrectly that Catholic Relief Services was denied a contract by the Department of Health and Human Services ("One Nation Under God," 3/12). It was in fact the Department of Migration and Refugees Services of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops that was denied the grant regarding victims of human trafficking.

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Washington, D.C.

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The Breath of God

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER (B), APRIL 15, 2012

Readings: Acts 4:32-35; Ps 118:2-24; 1 Jn 5:1-6; Jn 20:19-31

“Peace be with you” (Jn 20:19)

My interest in Christian truths started in college, when I took seriously the challenge of a theologian who adapted Socrates’ famous line to say that an unexamined faith is not worth believing. That truth continues to deepen in my heart and mind. As a Christian, I have experienced Christ’s overwhelming love for me many times. But I must say the most compelling evidence I have for faith is embodied by the holy people I know. They have a presence that shows they have experienced the peace of Christ and new life in the Spirit. In today’s second reading we hear, “Whoever is begotten by God conquers the world.”

In today’s Gospel the disciples, too, are created anew by the divine breath—the very breath that created us all in the first place: “Then the Lord God formed the man out of the dust of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being” (Gn 2:7). On Easter evening, fearful and behind locked doors, the disciples experienced the risen Lord: “Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, ‘Peace be with you’.... And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’”

Now born “from above” they become entirely formed anew; for “what is born of flesh is flesh, and what is born of the spirit is spirit” (Jn 3:6-

7). Thus empowered by Jesus, the disciples receive the authority to mediate divine forgiveness: “Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them and whose sins you retain are retained.” I do not quite think that Jesus had the sacrament of reconciliation in mind, though that will later be an expression of this empowerment. Rather, envision the disciples (all disciples) manifesting his new, resurrected life and ministry in their own person. Jesus was breathing the spirit of his own mission and authority. Appropriately, in the first reading from Acts we learn that the apostles bore witness to the resurrection “with great power” (*mega dynamis*—think dynamite). This power comes from the Spirit.

But Thomas was not with them and would not believe. Jesus appears again the following Sunday and Thomas not only believes but proclaims, “My Lord and my God!” Thomas’s proclamation of faith is a prophetic bookend to the beginning of the Gospel where we learned “the Word was God” and the “light of the human race” (Jn 1:1, 4). Now enlightened, Thomas makes a dramatic confession.

It would be easy to see Thomas as having been set up for failure. He was told an outrageous story and was expected to believe it without proof. Whenever someone describes a wild religious experience, I wonder how

much of it comes from God and how much from the imagination. Thomas also works as a sort of analog for the post-apostolic church, which did not directly experience the risen Christ. Jesus responds to him: “Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and believed.”

Jesus’ words are, of course, meant both for Thomas and for us. But shouldn’t we, like Thomas, need some evidence to believe? Are we blessed to believe any religious claim that comes along? The truth is, however, that Thomas’s problem was not that he wanted evidence, but that he was blind to the



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- Who is the holiest person you personally know?
- What about him/her makes that holiness evident?
- Pray for one particular grace that would make you holier.

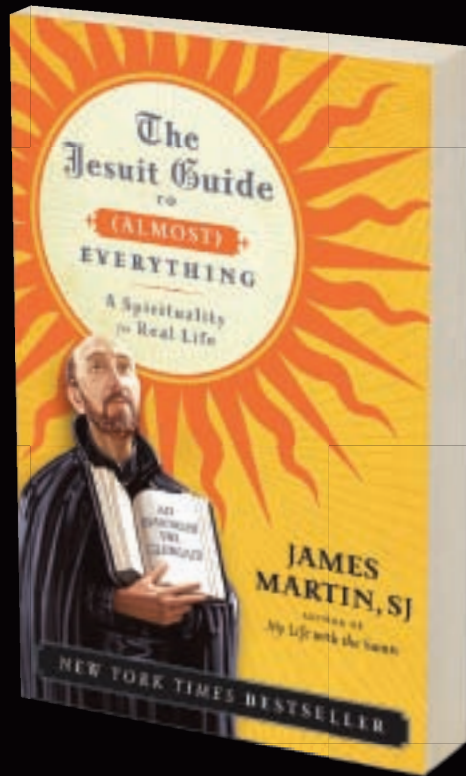
evidence right before him. He should have seen that his companions had become transformed from a group of people who were afraid, hopeless, guilty and powerless into believers who were clear-sighted, courageous and hope-filled; people who were forgiven and empowered to extend that forgiveness to others. Above all, their fear was replaced by the risen Jesus’ gift of peace. The evidence was overwhelmingly present to Thomas. He could have seen it in all that constitutes being a new creation in Christ.

PETER FELDMIEIER

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