America

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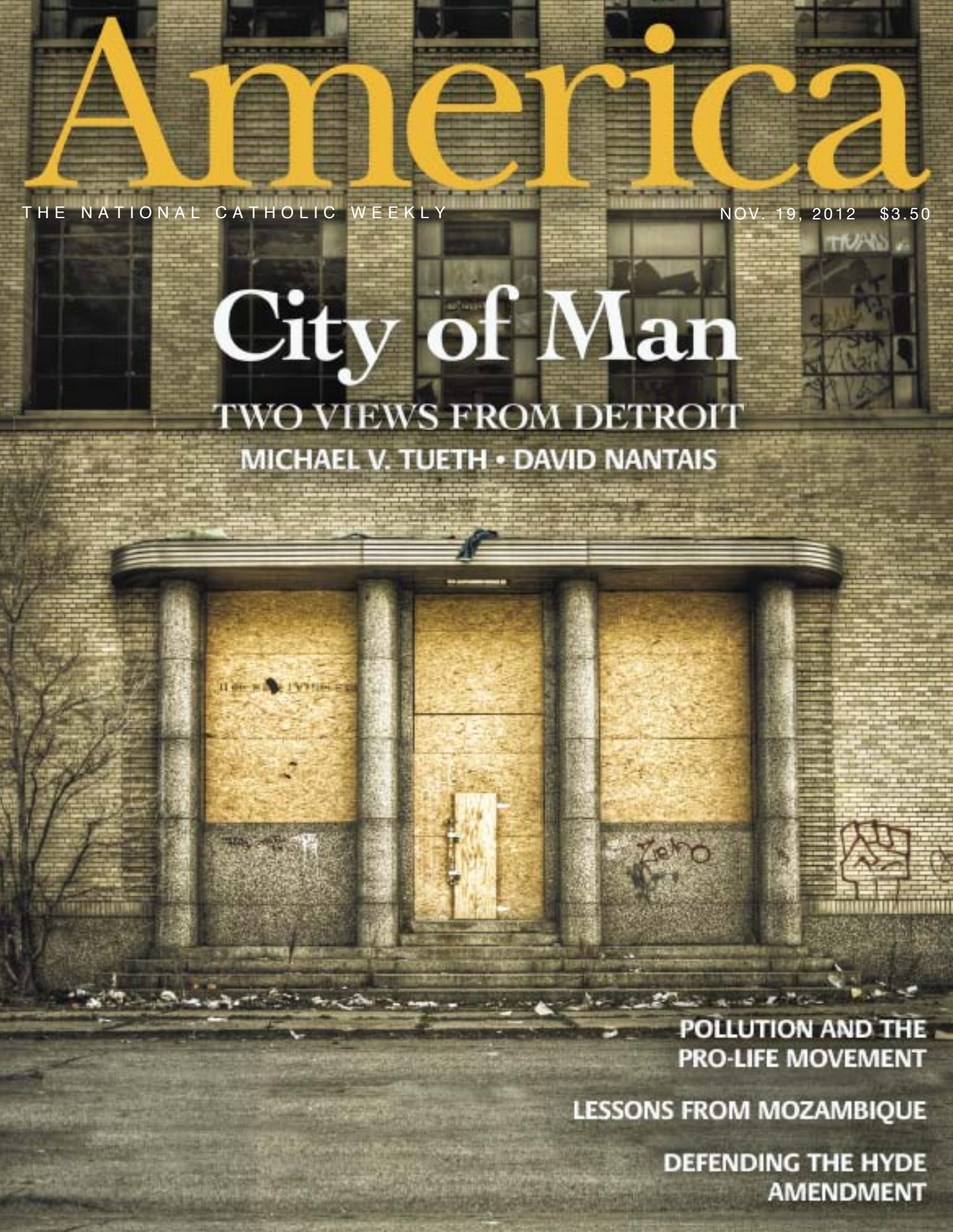
City of Man

TWO VIEWS FROM DETROIT

MICHAEL V. TUETH • DAVID NANTAIS



POLLUTION AND THE PRO-LIFE MOVEMENT

LESSONS FROM MOZAMBIQUE

DEFENDING THE HYDE AMENDMENT

OF MANY THINGS

It was the prettiest of my mother's hybrid irises. I snapped it off and carried it protectively to my destination. When I gave it to her, she smiled and winked. I suspect she knew I had snatched it. She put it on her desk and class began. I looked at that iris all day, fearing what my mother would say. At the bell she put it in front of the Mary statue and said, "You can tell your mother that her flower is honoring the mother of Jesus." And with that, Sister Mary Edwarda, B.V.M., my third-grade teacher, saved my skin—not for the last time.

My paean to religious women was triggered by a recent trip to Iowa for a 50th high school reunion and the occasion to visit some of my boyhood haunts. Like many of you I have been blessed by the presence of "the nuns" in my life; hence this reminiscence.

Two of Sister Edwarda's colleagues made lasting impressions on me. Sister Eugenio was my eighth-grade teacher, principal, moderator of the altar servers and disciplinarian. I knew her in all these roles. When I was caught tasting the leftover altar wine after Mass, I was less than happy with my punishment: I was not allowed to carry the cross at the Easter Sunday high Mass.

The other Dubuque B.V.M. was Sister Grace Ann. She was overseer of the motherhouse property where I worked on the grounds crew. She liked the way I trimmed hedges but was less impressed with my precision in setting headstones in the cemetery. She gave me responsibility and special tasks that built both my confidence and my work ethic.

Our high school was a consolidation of four Catholic academies; so we were taught by a platoon of religious women. There was the duet of Dubuque Franciscans who merited an eternal reward for trying to instruct me in algebra, geometry and physics. To this day I do not know how Sisters Rebecca and Elvira survived that Sisyphean venture.

Sister Florette, a Visitation nun, was the librarian; she was constantly breaking the library's code of silence. She chatted with every student who entered the room, while I was responsible for monitoring the noise level.

Her comrade, Sister Constance, was very special. She moderated the speech and debate programs. It was here that I fashioned my high school persona. Given my need to hold down several jobs, I did not participate in sports. So I joined the speech and debate clubs. The problem was my lisp. After months of patient practice, I entered my first contest against a Jesuit school in Wisconsin. That contest resulted in the first of many gold medals, trophies and certificates gleaned over three years of speech and debate. I even ventured into theater. Sister Constance was just that, a constant presence during those formative years.

This was before Vatican II.

After the council, my life has also been graced by the presence of women religious. During theology, graduate school and university work—as both faculty member and administrator—there were women who were wise philosophers and faithful theologians, as well as ministers in student affairs and campus ministry. Over time, women religious seriously undertook the council's call for renewal. The nuns gradually disappeared from the parish schools. They found other ministries with the poor and outcast, with prisoners and abused women, and in health care and community development.

Over a few beers, my reunion buddies agreed that what we experienced, the ways we were enriched by the presence of the "good sisters" in our education, was not the experience of their children or grandchildren. It was something never to be experienced again. That made all of us more grateful for these extraordinary women.

JOHN P. SCHLEGEL, S.J.

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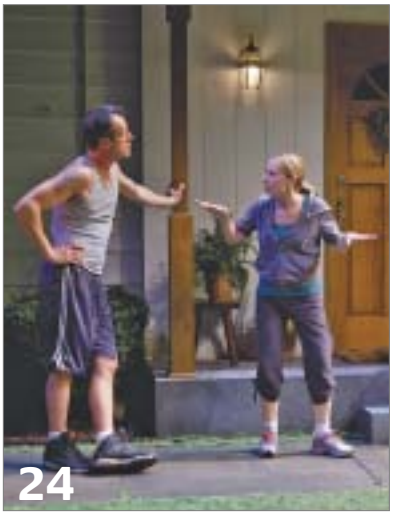

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COLUMNS & DEPARTMENTS

BOOKS & CULTURE

ON THE WEB

Robert Sullivan, right, talks about his book ***My American Revolution.*** Plus, clips from the documentary **"Detropia"** and video reports from Catholic News Service on **Hurricane Sandy**. All at americamagazine.org.

Inhuman Warfare

Drones are finally on the national radar, thanks to a question posed by Bob Schieffer, the moderator of the final debate of the presidential candidates. And not a moment too soon. When the United States launched the war in Afghanistan, only a handful of aerial drones were in use. Today the number exceeds 7,000. In the Middle East, the word *drone* has become synonymous with a uniquely American instrument of terror.

Consider, then, this illuminating fact: The number of aerial drones in Afghanistan is actually surpassed by the number of remote systems on the ground: over 12,000 in all. Most of these devices are used to detonate roadside bombs and other explosives. (Think of the opening scene of the film "The Hurt Locker.") Yet the military is clearly hoping that robotics will play a larger role both in the air and on the ground in future conflicts. The Pentagon recently offered a $2 million prize to the developer who can engineer a humanoid-type robot. They say the product would be used in emergency situations like the Fukushima nuclear crisis. Yet it is not difficult to imagine scenarios in which such robots could be put to more sinister use.

Robotics will have a profound effect on modern military campaigns—as important, perhaps, as the advent of gunpowder. Yet the international community has failed to assess adequately the ethical ramifications of their use. That needs to change quickly, lest humanoid robots become as ubiquitous, and as deadly, as their airborne counterparts.

No PowerPoint, Please

Few Americans have embodied the meaning of the word *intellectual* in the 20th century more thoroughly than Jacques Barzun, the cultural historian who spent most of his career teaching and writing at Columbia University and who died recently at the age of 104. Far from being an "armchair" or "pseudo-" or otherwise detached intellectual, his wide-ranging enthusiasms included the relationship between European and American art, history and literature; the "great books" curriculum for which Columbia University is famous; detective fiction; the ninth-inning collapse of the Brooklyn Dodgers during the 1951 National League playoff series, which he compared to Greek tragedy; and the educational reputation of the Society of Jesus.

Mr. Barzun's *Teacher in America* (1945) is a classic book for educators, and its author was often asked for advice on how to cure the ills of U.S. education. He answered in a lecture, "What Is a School?" published in 2002. His advice is basic: learning demands listening, memorization and discussion. Students should learn to draw with pencil or charcoal and read sheet music. Multiple-choice exams do harm. Schools teach morality by example. Teaching aids are of "dubious use." Classroom technology should consist of a piece of chalk and a blackboard eraser.

In his 877-page masterwork, *From Dawn to Decadence: 1500 to the Present* (2000), he laments the decline of the West, but adds: "Meanwhile, by care and thought and continually revised methods, the Jesuits shone as schoolmasters—unsurpassed in the history of civilization. They taught secular subjects as well as church doctrine and did so with unexampled understanding and kindness toward their pupils." For Mr. Barzun, the intellectual life and basic human kindness were friends.

From Roma, With Love

U.S. Catholics can be forgiven for missing an article in the Vatican's official newspaper, L'Osservatore Romano, published on Oct. 31. Between the serious ravages of Hurricane Sandy, the travails of a presidential election campaign and the lighthearted revels of Halloween, Americans had much on their minds. But the 50th anniversary of the James Bond franchise did not go unnoticed in Rome. No less than a full-page spread was afforded to Ian Fleming's most famous creation, who is also the hero of the new film "Skyfall," starring Daniel Craig. L'Osservatore's film critic, Gaetano Valini, praised Mr. Craig's portrayal of the character known as 007 as "less of a cliché, less attracted by the pleasures of life, much darker and more introspective."

L'Osservatore has been venturing more and more of late into the world of pop culture. In recent years, the newspaper has opined on everything from the Blues Brothers to "Avatar" to the Harry Potter series. In 2010, they memorably pronounced Homer J. Simpson (and his dysfunctional family) to be crypto-Catholics. Admittedly, the newspaper devotes most of its pages to weightier matters, suffering and salvation among them. But the editors of L'Osservatore also recognize the need to seek God in all places, including the realm of film and television, and to interpret that world for believers as part of the new evangelization. The paper's editor noted that the church needs to "pay attention to the popular culture of our time." And to shake things up, we would add—but not stir them.

Changing the Climate

Hurricane Sandy left a trail of destruction and misery in its wake as it barreled its way onto the Eastern Seaboard and ground through the northeastern part of the United States. Perhaps hardest hit was the coast of New Jersey, where Sandy tore through beaches, demolished boardwalks, swept away houses and deposited oceans of sand in resort towns. Gov. Chris Christie called the damage "incalculable." The New York City subways were closed for the second time in their 108-year history, as water swamped underground stations. At one point power was lost to upwards of 8.2 million households in 17 states.

Could anything have been done to prevent the damage? In most places, no. There is not much defense possible against such a titanic storm, which caused damage from North Carolina to Vermont. On the other hand, Sandy was the latest in a series of extreme weather events that the overwhelming majority of scientists say is related to global climate change. Warmer temperatures, the result of several human-made causes, lead to increased evaporation of water, which leads to more moisture in the air, and thus to more catastrophic weather. One recent example of accelerated evaporation: Greenland's surface ice cover experienced a greater thaw during a three-day period last July than in nearly 40 years, according to three independent satellite measurements analyzed by NASA and university scientists.

With at least 179 deaths attributed to the storm in the Caribbean, the United States and Canada, and immeasureable misery visited on millions, it is time to turn our attention to how human actions influence these death-dealing events. The environmental activist Bill McKibben called Sandy a "wake-up call," noting ruefully that "one wrecked subway system, I fear, equals a thousand academic studies." That may turn out to be true. In the days after the hurricane, politicians on the East Coast began to call for greater attention to climate change, citing the alarming frequency of "once in a generation storms."

The decision not to address climate change at all in the presidential campaign now seems foolish. Both Republicans and Democrats deserve blame for this state of events. The former have embraced climate change skeptics while the latter underplayed the urgency of the issue in an election year. The media are at fault too. As the unfairly vilified Al Gore tweeted during the final presidential debate, "Where is global warming in this debate? Climate change is an urgent foreign policy issue."

The sad irony: Now that a horrific storm has battered the East Coast, home to the business and media establishments (including this magazine), there will be growing pressure upon the U.S. government to turn its attention to the problem of climate change. It seems the suffering of the people of Haiti, devastated by Sandy and so many other storms, was not enough to merit action.

There will be a temptation to politicize the events of October 2012, to blame the opposing party for failing to act or anticipate what was essentially a random and unpredictable event. Yet on that road lies failure. Trying to make political hay out of the destruction caused by Sandy will result only in more of the same: disagreement and stalemate. Until climate change is seen as an issue that affects all Americans, indeed the entire international community, we will fail to make progress in addressing its effects. Climate change is an issue that is vital to the common good and should be treated as such.

Here is where the Catholic community can help. In an address in 2006, Pope Benedict XVI emphasized that climate change is not a political issue but a human one: "Today the great gift of God's Creation is exposed to serious dangers and lifestyles which can degrade it. Environmental pollution is making particularly unsustainable the lives of the poor of the world.... We must pledge ourselves to take care of creation and to share its resources in solidarity." That same year, the U.S. bishops helped launch the Catholic Climate Covenant to bring climate change to the attention of all people of faith. The church directs our attention to where it should be focused: on the poor, who suffer the ravages of climate change more than anyone else.

In the wake of Hurricane Sandy, cities near the coast will discuss how to protect themselves from the next storm. Levees, gates and dikes may need to be built in major metropolitan areas, but they cannot turn the tide of global opinion. Climate change is an issue that transcends borders and demands an international response. The United States can and should play a key leadership role in this effort. Perhaps, moved by the plight of the storm's victims and prompted by a renewed commitment from people of faith, it will finally assume that responsibility.

INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Doctrinal Chief Clarifies Church's Intent


Hindu prayers on the Ganges River

Fifty years after the Second Vatican Council launched a new Catholic commitment to interreligious dialogue, work continues to clarify the church's attitudes toward other religions. While some Catholics still look on other religions with disdain, other Catholics seem to believe Vatican II taught that all religions are equally valid paths to God and to the fullness of truth. The new prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith recently said both extremes are wrong.

Proposing that all religions are basically similar means "negating or doubting the possibility of real communication between God and human beings," because the truths of Judeo-Christian faith are not human inventions, but the result of God's revelation, said Archbishop Gerhard Müller, the Vatican's doctrinal chief, in a speech at Assisi on Oct. 29. Not believing that Christ's death and resurrection make Christianity unique among religions is, in essence, the equivalent of denying that God became human in Christ or of saying that Christ's divinity is "a poetic metaphor, beautiful but unreal," the archbishop said.

For decades, popes and Vatican officials have taught that the aim of interreligious dialogue is not to come to some sort of agreement on religious or even moral principles that everyone in the world can accept. For Catholic leaders, the goal of such dialogue is for people firmly rooted in different faith traditions to explain their beliefs to one another, grow in knowledge of and respect for one another and help one another move closer to the truth about God and what it means to be human.

A societal consequence of such a dialogue should be respect for each individual's conscience, more social peace and joint efforts to defend human dignity and help those in need. Among church leaders, concerns for dialogue are not simply academic. Several members of the Synod of Bishops on the new evangelization, held at the Vatican in October, described on-the-ground Catholic-Muslim relations in terms that ranged from true friendship and collaboration to efforts to restrict the freedom of Christian minorities or to exert strong pressure on people from Muslim families not to convert to Christianity. Synod members responded with a formal resolution asking Christians "to persevere and to intensify their relations with Muslims according to the teaching of the declaration 'Nostra Aetate,'" the council document that expressed "esteem" for Muslims, particularly because of their belief in the one God and their devotion to submitting themselves completely to God's will.

The Catholic Church's commitment to interreligious dialogue and its affirmation of things that are good and holy in other religions does not mean the church looks upon the world's religions with rose-colored glasses. In an essay published on Oct. 11, the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council, Pope Benedict XVI wrote about the ongoing importance of "Nostra Aetate" for Catholics in increasingly multireligious societies: "A weakness of this otherwise extraordinary text has gradually emerged: It speaks of religion solely in a positive way and it disregards the sick and distorted forms of religion which, from the historical and theological viewpoints, are of far-reaching importance."

"In a religion that gives prevalence, in an unquestioning way, to the letter of its texts and does not leave room" for questions that seek deeper understanding, the value of the individual conscience is diminished, Benedict said. And where a religion is imposed, violently or not, personal dignity is wounded.

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

The Economic Foundation for 'Peace on Earth'

Blessed Pope John XXIII published "Peace on Earth" on April 11, 1963, in direct response to the Cuban missile crisis, which threatened global thermonuclear war during the tense days of Oct. 16-28, 1962. The Holy See marked the upcoming 50th anniversary year of "Pacem in Terris" on Oct. 24 at the United Nations in New York. The Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations, along with two co-hosts, the Sovereign Military Order of Malta and Pax Romana, sponsored a symposium titled "The Encyclical Pacem in Terris: Its Fiftieth Anniversary and its Relevance to the 21st Century."

A great deal of attention has been paid to the focus on human rights, disarmament and the call to world community in "Peace on Earth." Archbishop Francis Chullikatt, Apostolic Nuncio to the United Nations, noted that Blessed Pope John's encyclical was addressed for the first time in papal history to "all men of good will." Many of the participants at the Holy See's symposium reminded us that in addition to goodwill, an economic system that is grounded in the common good is also indispensable to global peace.

Accordingly, of particular interest, and the source of some controversy, was the focus on global economic issues in "Peace on Earth." Joe Holland, president of the Pacem in Terris Global Leadership Initiative and professor of philosophy and religion at St. Thomas University in Miami Gardens, Fla., addressed what "Peace on Earth" recounted as the errors of "liberal capitalism" and "scientific socialism" that resulted from the individualism of Adam Smith and the materialism of Karl Marx. Holland argued that in "Peace on Earth" Pope John breaks new ground when he "recognizes that a new global era has emerged for the human family with a new global economy. In response, he calls for global governance [a 'worldwide public authority' commensurate in scale with the global economy] directing the global economy to the global common good."

Likewise, Angus Sibley, author of "The 'Poisoned Spring' of Economic Libertarianism," lamented the influence of the Austrian School economists Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich von Hayek, which led to Mises' twin errors that "nothing is left of government if one denies the law of the market" and "liberty is always freedom from government." To the assertion that free-market capitalism is based on the "laws of nature," Sibley said that Pope John denounces this type of error. "Many people," Pope John says, "think that the laws that govern man's relations with the state are the same as those which regulate the blind, elemental forces of the universe." On the contrary, he says, politics and economics must observe those divine laws that "clearly indicate how a man must behave towards his fellows in society."

Sibley believes that Pope John's call for an international public authority must "promote the worldwide common good in matters of economics, society, politics and culture." In his remarks, Archbishop Chullikatt focused on the encyclical's groundbreaking call for an "international public authority," founded on a "new juridical order" that could most effectively bring peace to a troubled international order. Clearly, church teaching holds that subsidiarity is a good governance principle that at times requires larger entities to solve problems that cannot be solved at the local, or in this case, the national level.

JOSEPH J. FAHEY *is a professor of religious studies at Manhattan College and the author of* War and the Christian Conscience *(Orbis Books).*

The Baltimore Agenda

Statements on preaching and ways that bishops can respond to modern-day challenges to church teaching by using new technologies are among the items the U.S. bishops will consider when they gather in Baltimore for their annual fall assembly. Scheduled for Nov. 12 to 15, the assembly also will consider a statement on work and the economy proposed by its Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development as a way to raise public awareness of growing poverty and the struggles experienced by unemployed people. The bishops are also scheduled to vote on a document encouraging Catholics to see Lent next year as an opportunity to return to regular celebration of the sacrament of penance and reconciliation. A statement on work and the economy, titled "Catholic Reflections on Work, Poverty and a Broken Economy," is expected to advance the bishops' priority of human life and dignity to demonstrate the new evangelization in action.

NEWS BRIEFS

Sandy Aftermath: Breezy Point, Queens

As Catholic Charities USA responds to **victims of Hurricane Sandy**, donations can be made online at www.catholiccharitiesusa.org or by calling (800) 919-9338. ✦ Hospitals in the United Kingdom have received £12.4 million (nearly $16 million) for implementing a controversial **end-of-life patient-care protocol** that critics say is a "euthanasia pathway." ✦ "Conscious of the **devastation caused by the hurricane** that recently struck the East Coast of the United States of America, I offer my prayers for the victims and express my solidarity with all those engaged in the work of rebuilding," Pope Benedict XVI said on Oct. 31 at the end of his weekly general audience. ✦ A ruling in Oklahoma that stopped an attempt to **amend the state constitution** to define *personhood* in order to ban abortion will stand after the U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear an appeal on Oct. 29. ✦ Songs in Quechua and Spanish filled the Cathedral of Santo Domingo as thousands celebrated the 475th anniversary of the **Diocese of Cusco,** Peru, the first Catholic diocese in South America, on Oct. 27. ✦ The 2012 Pax Christi **International Peace Award** was presented on Oct. 31 to Archbishop John Onaiyekan of Nigeria.

Journeys of Faith and Hope

Pope Benedict XVI chose "Migrations: pilgrimage of faith and hope" as the theme for the 2013 celebration of the World Day of Migrants and Refugees. On Oct. 29 he issued a message on the global phenomenon of migration. "Faith and hope are inseparable in the hearts of many migrants, who deeply desire a better life and not infrequently try to leave behind the 'hopelessness' of an unpromising future," Pope Benedict wrote. Migration by its nature involves the pain of being uprooted and separated from family, country and possessions, the pope said, but faith and hope allow those who emigrate to face a difficult present if they can believe it will lead to a better future. They are not seeking just to improve their financial, social or political condition, the pope said. People who leave their native countries are hoping to "encounter acceptance, solidarity and help" from those in their new country who can recognize the values and resources they have to offer, he said.

Ceasefire Fails in Syria

More than 500 people were killed in Syria during what had been proposed as a four-day ceasefire to mark the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Adha. The truce never took hold as fighting continued even as humanitarian agencies struggled to deliver relief to those trapped by the conflict. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that Syrian warplanes struck a rebel-held town on the Damascus-Aleppo highway and that fighting continued in a Palestinian refugee camp near Damascus. Heavy fighting around the Syrian city of Homs prevented a U.N. aid mission from delivering food and other relief items to families trapped in the city. "All parties on the ground contacted in advance of the mission expressed in principle willingness to allow aid through the front lines," said a U.N. spokesperson. "However, immediate delivery was prevented by active conflict and logistical complications, such as lack of safe location to off-load the goods."

From CNS and other sources.

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from America magazine

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MARGARET SILF

Unfinished Business

A friend is reminiscing. A chance remark reminds her of her mother's sudden death, many years earlier. At the time, she herself had been far from home; but her mother had stayed in touch by means of regular letters. She pauses in mid-sentence. "There's something I would like to show you," she tells me. She opens a drawer of her desk and brings out a yellowing envelope. "My mother was actually writing this letter to me when she had a stroke, which proved to be fatal a few days later." Her voice falters as she hands me the half-written letter. The poignancy of this legacy stuns me into silence. I think of how death took its author without a moment's warning, leaving a grieving daughter with half a letter.

As we think, in this season, of the "last things," I will be carrying this memory especially in my heart, not only in prayer for my friend and her mother, but also because this incident has made me think about some of the things I would still want to say and write to people I love, or even to people with whom I have had serious differences. But of course, none of us ever thinks that time may suddenly run out, leaving us without even the chance to finish a sentence.

My reflections eventually take me back to the memory of my own father. His death was not a sudden one, but there was unfinished business in his life, nonetheless. He always described himself as an atheist. I never believed him, and neither, I think, did God. What he was rejecting was not God, but merely a series of flawed and sometimes damaging images of God. Such is my conviction on this point that I often feel very aware of his continuing presence in my life, and that presence is always close to another Presence.

I had a powerful reminder of this conviction not long ago during Mass. Nothing in the liturgy was sparking in my soul, until the cantor, a young girl, began to sing "The Holy City," and all at once I was spellbound. My father had always played this beautiful hymn on Christmas Eve. Almost without thinking I walked forward to receive Communion, just as the hymn reached a crescendo and the cantor's powerful voice echoed around the church: "and all who would might enter, and no-one was denied." And there was my doubting, questioning father, so vividly present to the moment. It was an unforgettable experience of communion. In my heart I was not only able to rejoice in the resounding inclusiveness of grace, but also to become profoundly aware that that sacred moment enfolded not only my father and myself, but also my mother, my daughter and her child, their great-granddaughter. Something unfinished had reached its moment of ripeness.

Thirty-year-old Claire Squires was denied her moment of completion. She participated in this year's London Marathon; but just a mile short of the finish line, she collapsed and died. Claire had been running for the Samaritans, a charity that offers support to those who are contemplating suicide or are otherwise in the depths of despair. Her sponsorship promises would have raised £500 for this very deserving cause. But when people heard the news of her untimely death, hearts were stirred all around the world. Within a week, £1,000,000 had been pledged to the Samaritans, in memory of a girl who had steadfastly run the race but not quite finished.

> Advent is a good time for turning vague regrets into conscious acts of love.

Perhaps such a memorial could stand for each of us, in our own way. We run the race, we do our best, we try, but so often we fall short of completion. We don't quite get there. We fall at the last fence. We want to bring a masterpiece to God, but all we manage is a child's drawing, a rough sketch, an unfinished dream. If we think of our shortcomings as a failure, then thinking of the "last things" may well fill us with dread. But what if we could think of them not as something we didn't finish, but rather as a seed whose blossom and fruit we cannot yet see or begin to imagine?

Seen in this light, my friend's unfinished letter becomes an invitation. Is there a letter I need to write, or a call I need to make, to tell someone how I really feel, before it is too late? Advent is a very good time for turning vague regrets into conscious acts of love. And we can be sure that whatever we bring to God in the small change of our lives will be multiplied over and over in the flow of grace with which God responds to the slightest stirring in our hearts.

MARGARET SILF, *who lives in Scotland, is the author of* Companions of Christ, The Gift of Prayer, Compass Points *and, most recently,* Just Call Me Lopez.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/VIKI2WIN

We are leaving our children a toxic world.

Polluting The Future

BY GARY CHAMBERLAIN

Although Mississippi voters defeated an amendment last year that would have defined life as "beginning at conception," efforts to end or limit abortion continue. Earlier this year the state legislature passed and Gov. Phil Bryant signed a law that requires doctors who perform abortions to have admitting privileges at a local hospital and to be board-certified in obstetrics and gynecology. Sociological and psychological data on abortion are commonplace, as are moral and political arguments over the right to life and freedom of choice. But the environmental factors that adversely affect the health of women and developing children garner little attention, even though these factors offer areas of possible agreement between the pro-life and pro-choice camps.

A recent study at the University of California, San Francisco revealed that women in the United States had at least 43 chemicals in their bloodstreams, including cancer-causing agents like PCBs, flame retardants, pesticides and phthalates. Due to a biological process called "biomagnification," by which chemicals in one organism move up in greater concentrations into the next connected organism, it is probable that when any of these women become pregnant, their fetus and newborn will be subject to these contaminants in greater concentrations.

This result appears in the findings of an extensive study of women and children in the Arctic regions. In her book *Silent Snow: The Slow Poisoning of the Arctic* (2005), Marla Cone, a reporter for The Los Angeles Times, followed the trails of contaminants banned in the 1960s and 70s; she discovered their ubiquitous presence among peoples in the Arctic Circle. Far from disappearing, PCBs, DDT and flame-retardants migrate. Winds carry the contaminants east then north to the Arctic

GARY CHAMBERLAIN *is professor emeritus of Christian ethics at Seattle University in Washington.*

Circle through a process in which they rise in warmer temperatures and fall in cold weather. In the Arctic some 152,000 pounds of these toxins arrive yearly in the air, snow, ice or fog and settle in soil, seawater and ocean sediment. Through biomagnification the women who feed on seals, walruses or bears as their main source of nutrition carry concentrated toxins in their blood and breast milk.

In Greenland, Ms. Cone reports, Inuit women carry within their bodies contaminants classified as hazardous waste and more mercury and PCBs than women anywhere else on earth. The Inuit infants are more susceptible to infectious diseases and damage to their developing brains. The alternatives for the women of the Arctic are stark: they have been advised to stop eating whale meat and blubber, their principal dietary food, and to purchase infant formula imported from abroad, which is expensive for them.

"The Arctic's indigenous peoples have become the industrialized world's lab rats, the involuntary subjects of an accidental human experiment that reveals what happens when a boundless brew of chemicals builds up in an environment," writes Ms. Cone. She calls this situation a "moral injustice."

Mercury is one of the most toxic chemicals affecting pregnant women, the fetus and the newborn.

Dire Situation at Home

In the continental United States, the situation for pregnant women and those who nurse their newborns is also dire. Although the Environmental Protection Agency has issued guidelines and regulations for many of the most toxic chemicals, there are some 80,000 registered for use. Of these, fewer than 10 percent have been tested, and many are known carcinogens. In addition, waste dumps and facilities that emit harsh chemicals are often located in poor communities and primarily among people of color. The result is toxic damage.

Native American and Hispanic women are especially at risk. Farmworkers exposed to toxins in pesticides have rates of infant and maternal mortality much higher than the national average. From exposure to uranium and other elements from the mining process, Navajos of the Southwest suffer above-average rates of lung cancer, kidney damage and bone disease. Exposure is also the suspected cause of birth defects among their children.

Newborns among Hispanics in Brownsville and Laredo, Tex., have shown rates of anencephaly, a rare birth defect involving a fetus's failure to develop a brain or skull, three times that of the national average. Possible culprits are pollutants from agricultural and industrial sites along the border with Mexico, particularly from maquiladores, factories that produce items for import to the United States and other countries.

Cancer Alley, an area along the Mississippi River bordering Louisiana, stretches 85 miles from Baton Rouge to New Orleans. It is home to over 160 industrial waste sites, sanitary landfills, chemical factories, waste incinerators and other hazardous facilities, all of which affect the African-American communities nestled along the river, writes Beverly Wright in "Living and Dying in 'Cancer Alley,'" a case study in *The Quest for Environmental Justice: Human Rights and the Politics of Pollution* (2005). In 2002, 10 districts along the Mississippi chemical corridor reported emitting over 169 million pounds of toxic chemicals into the air, land and water, according to Louisiana's Toxic Release Inventory. The results include increases in a variety of diseases among newborns including eye, skin and respiratory problems, along with birth defects.

All of these cases, and many more throughout the world, provide vivid examples of environmental racism: the placement of waste disposal facilities, chemical factories with their toxic waste and even coal plants among communities largely made up of the poor and people of color. Faced with the everyday struggle to provide for themselves and their families, these people often lack the power and representation to assert their right to a healthy environment, inherent in the concept of full human dignity and the common good.

In two encyclicals, "On Labor" (1981) and "On Social Concern" (1987), Pope John Paul II wrote of the "heritage of nature" being "intolerably polluted" as the "direct or indirect result of industrialization…with serious consequences for the health of the population." In his view, the human consequences of such pollution violate the moral laws regarding the full dignity of each person and of all persons. Such situations are instances of what John Paul calls "the structures of sin," sin present in the very social structures of society.

Sandra Steingraber, an ecologist and biologist, reports from her own experience as a pregnant woman on the increased risks to the fetus in her book, *Having Faith: An Ecologist's Journey to Motherhood* (2001). ("Faith" is her daughter's name.) Ms. Steingraber notes: "If the world's environment is contaminated, so too is the ecosystem of a mother's body. If a mother's body is contaminated, so too is the child who inhabits it." She challenges the long-held view that the placenta serves as a barrier to toxins and reveals that pesticides with low molecular weights can cross from mother to fetus.

In addition, carbon monoxide in cities, released from industries, cars and trucks, furnaces and other sources, interferes with the circulation of oxygen in the body and can cause fetal growth retardation. Other major pollutants include PAH (polycydic aromatic hydrocarbons) released into the air from coal burning, diesel, oil, gas and even tobacco, which, if experienced in utero, can result in low I.Q. later in the child's development (Environmental Health, 1/29/10, and Pediatrics, 7/20/09).

The chemical BPA, or bisphonel A, has been used for over 40 years in the manufacture of hard plastic food containers, including baby bottles, sippy cups, baby formula and baby food containers. If the fetus is exposed to a toxic form of BPA during development, the exposure produces possibly harmful effects even at low doses. Senator Diane Feinstein of California added a ban on BPA to the federal food safety act, but withdrew it after intensive lobbying by the chemical industry made certain that other members of Congress would block it.

Even tuna, a rich food source for millions, often contains heavy doses of mercury, a neurotoxin that can damage the brain and nervous system, particularly in fetuses and young children. In the bloodstreams of pregnant and nursing women, mercury can result in birth defects like learning disabilities, reduced I.Q. and cerebral palsy. Each year coal-fired plant smokestacks emit some 100 million pounds of mercury into the air. Another pervasive airborne pollutant, nitrogen dioxide, is correlated with low birth weight.

Joining Forces

Sixty years have passed since Rachel Carson's warnings of toxic pollutants in *Silent Spring*; it has been almost 40 years since the Supreme Court's controversial ruling in Roe v. Wade. Yet the contaminants banned largely because of Carson's work are still around, and the ramifications of the court's 1973 decision still reverberate.

Ironically, Mercury, the Roman messenger of the gods, has returned in the 21st century as a danger, one of the most toxic chemicals affecting women, pregnant women, the fetus and the newborn. Why can't pro-choice, pro-life and other groups concerned with women and children's health join forces to stop mercury and other toxic 20th-century creations that fly through the air, flow in the waters and find home in the soil?

The tragedy underlying our failure to protect vulnerable populations and to care for the environment is that we have known about the results for years, sometimes decades, yet have taken little action. Some attempts have run up against a wall of vested interests. Although protection of the most vulnerable includes protection of the fetus, we must expand our view to include women likely to become pregnant, pregnant women, the fetus, the newborn and the young child—particularly among poor, isolated and marginalized people.

What Marla Cone saw as massive, insidious "moral injustice" and Pope John Paul saw as the "structures of sin" in relation to the consequences of environmental damage are violations of the common good of all. As the late pope notes, the virtue of solidarity means that we are called to commit ourselves "to the good of all, and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all." Perhaps in this respect all the parties involved in the abortion battles could find common ground through solidarity.

Pro-life advocates interested in fetal and maternal health could expand their concerns to include the environmental factors that impede fetal development. Pro-choice advocates concerned that motherhood is freely chosen could expand their concerns to embrace the long-term health of women, lest their choices be "contaminated" by environmental factors in fetal and early childhood development. Let Mercury, whose caduceus of two intertwined serpents symbolizes health, become the messenger who awakens us to hazardous human invention and production. By joining forces to address environmental contamination, these advocates could promote common ground and push for stronger regulations, for the abolition of carcinogens and for continued vigilance over existing contaminants. The messenger could then bear good news to humankind once again. A

Lessons in Peace

The relevance of Mozambique's peace agreement 20 years later

BY MARIO MARAZZITI

The signing of the Mozambique general peace agreement was planned for Oct. 1, 1992. Several African heads of state and government ministers traveled to Rome to join several members of the Sant'Egidio Community, a group of lay people dedicated to prayer, evangelization and solidarity. After 11 rounds of negotiations at Sant'Egidio over 26 months, there remained one basic problem: Who was to control the territory during the transition before the first round of democratic, universal elections? This issue prompted many more questions: Who had sovereignty? How could the guerrillas be assured that the cease-fire would be respected? And how could the government be assured that the areas still under guerrilla control would not break up national unity or signify reduced sovereignty? For three days international mediators worked non-stop with the leaders of each side in Rome.

Many people who offered support—especially in Mozambique, where people were still suffering, dying and hoping—were waiting to find out if there was going to be a true peace or if this was just a dream. Finally, late on Oct. 3, agreement came on the last protocol, and the signing took place the next day, a Sunday. The Mozambique government maintained sovereignty over the entire territory. In practice, the government assigned administration of separate regions to local administrators, whether from Renamo or the government, according to the actual distribution of power. And a commission of Sant'Egidio mediators and representatives of the two sides was created to settle controversial cases.

In those days all you could hear on the streets in Mozambique was uninterrupted radio broadcasts as the silent population waited desperately for good news. On Oct. 4, after evening prayer in Rome's Basilica of Santa Maria in Trastevere with Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, the joy and singing went on for an hour. In Mozambique the nightmare that had claimed one million lives and resulted in millions of displaced and starving people was over.

MARIO MARAZZITI, *a board member and spokesman for the Community of Sant'Egidio, played a leading role in the 26-month-long negotiations between the Mozambican National Resistance (Renamo) and the Liberation Front of Mozambique (Frelimo) in Mozambique. This article is translated from the Italian.*

The Sant'Egidio Method

It all started in July 1990 after years of civil war, famine, suffering, refugees and international failures in Mozambique. The Community of Sant'Egidio had not "chosen" to be a direct player in international diplomacy. It loved the people of Mozambique and was interested in peace as the only chance to interrupt a spiral of violence that claimed so many victims, including some young people of Sant'Egidio.

A health center in Mozambique

Sant'Egidio had worked to mitigate confrontation and the problems faced by the Catholic Church and other Christian worshippers as well as the missionaries based in the country. Sant'Egidio was instrumental to Pope John Paul II's first meeting with President Samora Machel when the president stopped in Rome on his way back from the United Nations. Sant'Egidio passed the "exam" of the Mozambique government when it launched aid programs for the population through the Mozambican chapter of Caritas and local Christians—gaining personal credit with the leadership class trained in Europe at the Sorbonne and the sociology department of the University of Trent, Italy, where the Red Brigades had studied for "revolution."

But the Pax Romana—as the French newspaper Le Monde called it—was not conceived at a table. For years Sant'Egidio had said that "everything is lost in war" and that war was truly "the mother of poverty." Sant'Egidio had explored the possibility of a national effort of dialogue with some Mozambican government representatives when the

PHOTO: COMMUNITY OF SANT'EGIDIO/ISABELLA BALENA

two sides still branded each other "bandits" and "murderers." Sant'Egidio established a relationship with the leadership of an anomalous guerrilla group that had very few international contacts and, therefore, little international bargaining clout.

Sant'Egidio facilitated the first meeting, when each side agreed to the method proposed by Andrea Riccardi, the founder of Sant'Egidio: "Leave aside what divides and start working on that which unites," echoing Pope John XXIII but at a diplomatic level. When the first joint protocol was signed, the sides saw each other as adversaries in the conflict but also considered themselves "brothers of the common Mozambican family" and publicly announced the desire to start negotiations. A Ferrari Spumante wine bottle and a first photo together celebrated the event.

Again in August 1992, during the second round of negotiations, when the two sides could not agree on the choice of one or more governments to act as mediators, Sant'Egidio was officially asked to carry out the role. Along the way the "Sant'Egidio method" gained ground as a practical and historical necessity. The group had many strengths: a mix of knowledge of the problems on the ground; credibility that it had no ambition other than peace and reconciliation; combined action with others and with interested governments, keeping their roles distinct; attention to the human factor as a primary issue in the negotiations; the art of co-existence and friendship; and the ability to decipher languages. These factors developed a common language between the two sides through which mutual demonization gave way to the discovery of a political field to replace military confrontation as a solution to differences of opinion and the forces on the ground.

It was not easy. The 26 months of negotiations seemed long. At the beginning it seemed as though it would be resolved in a matter of months. But a mentality of peace had to be created, a trust that was not yet there. A warrior had to be transformed into a politician. There were military problems of security. Deaths were still occurring. The people were dubious. The missionaries, close to the suffering of the populations, were tempted by impatience. Why so slow? Paradoxically that slowness was one of the secrets of the success of peace and its duration. (Sant'Egidio and Mozambique recently celebrated the 20th anniversary of the peace agreement.) The negotiations themselves were a key to success. To negotiate is to pay attention to the details. The very method of negotiating was a school of democracy for both sides: language, rules, mechanisms and mentalities. And it would become still more useful in the two decades that followed.

Promises, Challenges Ahead

Was this experience a once-in-a-lifetime case? We must ask ourselves this question, because it seems as though it is not possible to automatically apply, with similar effectiveness, the "method" created in Mozambique to other African and international conflicts. Or, we must ask, what conditions are needed to repeat it or make it possible to repeat it? The wars of the past two decades are less often conflicts between states and more often wars inside countries, with many people and governments involved. This increases the complexity and the number of players involved in the peace process.

One complicating factor is the fact that the resolution of

PHOTO: COMMUNITY OF SANT'EGIDIO

Signing of the Mozambique Peace Agreement, Rome, Oct. 4, 1992,

conflicts has become a new field of research. University professorships, research institutes and independent and government-connected research centers have multiplied. When the subjects multiply, there are more available means, but the complexity heightens. There is a sort of "bureaucratization" of paths to peace. It is hard to take into account all the levels that made the "Mozambique case" the model for possible negotiations and success.

In Burundi a path similar to Mozambique's was taken. When the reserved talks started in Rome, the chances for success looked very good, and the path seemed to lead to rapid results. The publicity made it inevitable to transfer the talks to Africa, where all countries interested in peace were given an official role—first Tanzania, then the African Union, South Africa and the European Union. The number of participants on both sides in the conflict grew from two to 18. As can be imagined, the procedures became stymied. Even prestigious and credible international pressure, represented by the visit of then President Bill Clinton to Arusha, with the collaboration of Nelson Mandela, proved insufficient.

In time, delay itself became a critical factor in an official international context. When divisions take place inside an armed group—a likely event due to communication problems, a shift of power on the ground and personal factors—it is possible that a group originally accredited to sit at the bargaining table becomes too weak on the ground, and the strongest faction is no longer present at the negotiations. This jeopardizes the effectiveness of the whole negotiation process. A signed agreement leaves important problems unsettled and does not guarantee a true end to the war and the safety of the population. This is just one example, but a very real risk. The devil is in the details. In the case of Burundi, there were still a lot of details to clear up.

But there are also cases in which the "Mozambique method" becomes timely again, and this is not only because Sant'Egidio has become "African." (It has thousands of members in sub-Saharan Africa.) The reunification of Ivory Coast and the negotiations conducted before the crisis in 2010 by Burkina Faso's President Blaise Compaoré, with the help of Sant'Egidio, were part of events in which the combined actions and components of the "method" demonstrated their effectiveness.

Niger and Guinea, two cases of "preventative peace" created in several rounds at Sant'Egidio in Rome, showed another possible itinerary: emerging from dictatorship and coup d'etat, the first steps with mutually agreed upon rules, elections, the establishment of checks and balances in society and assurances for the opponents and the "losers" in the process of democratization.

This path created two "successful failures." The first was in Algeria, where the Rome Platform and unilateral surrender of arms by the armed faction of the Islamic Front offered some hope and became the foundation, too late and after too many victims, on which Algerian society experienced a reduction in extremist violence. The second was in Kosovo. The initial agreement between Slobodan Milosevic and Ibrahim Rugova was a successul attempt to create the conditions of peace before the outbreak of the civil war, but there was no international support to implement it.

The "method" also proved decisive for putting an end to more than 30 years of civil war in Guatemala, creating contact groups and an agenda that revived the official negotiations in the mid-1990's. It may turn out to be useful again today in the matter of Casamance, a Senegalese territory fighting for independence, and other "forgotten" wars. And it may lessen damage from existing crises, as happened in Liberia, avoiding a final battle in Monrovia. Or it may offer an increasingly necessary political, more democratic way out in the terrible Syrian Civil War, haunted by Al Qaeda's shadow.

Even when the international community risks standing on a slippery slope that, in the end, looks toward external military intervention as the apparent solution to complex problems, the Sant'Egidio method may prove useful. Unfortunately we know that at least in the most sensational cases, from Afghanistan to Iraq, and recently in the development of the Arab Spring, there is no shortage of problems. There is no doubt the method can help with intermediate solutions, like finding ways to offer relief to civilian communities caught in the grips of violence. But it might also prove useful in far-reaching international crises. A

MOZAMBIQUE
Former Portuguese colony.

Independence
June 25, 1975

Population
23,515,934 (July 2012 est.)

Religions
Catholic 28.4%
Protestant 27.7%
Muslim 17.9%
Other 7.2%
None 18.7%
(1997 census)

Median age
Total: 16.8 years
Male: 16.2 years
Female: 17.5 years (2012 est.)

HIV/AIDS
Adult prevalence rate
11.5% (2009 est.)
World rank: 8

Source: The World Factbook, cia.gov

Defending Hyde

An abortion policy most Americans can embrace

BY RICHARD M. DOERFLINGER

We are told that abortion is one of the most divisive issues in American politics, but one thing has remained remarkably consistent: Most Americans oppose taxpayer funding for abortion. Therefore I was startled recently to see an article by Jessica Arons of the Center for American Progress (The Daily Beast, 9/30) deploring the 36th "unhappy birthday" of the federal abortion funding ban known as the Hyde Amendment—and tagging it as "the amendment that started the war on women."

"War on women" is the slogan now used to label objections to the Obama administration's mandate for contraception and sterilization coverage in almost all private health plans, including plans provided by many Catholic employers. The slogan has always shed more heat than light. The mandate in question is as much an imposition on women who do not want to be forced to pay for these items as it is on their employers. And objections arose precisely because the mandate itself is an unprecedented innovation in federal law, threatening to derail a long-standing balance between "pro-life" and "pro-choice" voices in our society.

Since the Supreme Court cases in Eisenstadt v. Baird (1972) and Roe v. Wade (1973), the government has not had legal authority to prevent women who want contraception, sterilization or even abortion from choosing them. But those who disagree have not been forced to facilitate or purchase these drugs and procedures, or to pay taxes for them in the case of abortion. The breakdown of that balance—symbolized in the current Democratic platform's pledge to uphold women's right to abortion "regardless of ability to pay"—is increasingly visible.

The Hyde Amendment, in particular, is an odd choice for emphasizing the extremism of the pro-life side. It first took effect on Oct. 1, 1976, sponsored by Republican Henry Hyde of Illinois, but passed by a House and Senate that were overwhelmingly Democratic. As a rider to the annual appropriations bill governing domestic federal health programs, it has been renewed with little change for 36 years, supported by congressional majorities and presidents of both parties as well as by public opinion. It would be difficult to name an abortion-relat-

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/JULIE/DEGUIA

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ed policy that has garnered more bipartisan support over a longer period of time.

Challenges to the Amendment

The amendment was not always so secure. When first enacted 36 years ago, it faced three objections or challenges: It was said to endanger women's lives, conflict with the right to abortion defined in Roe v. Wade and even impose an unconstitutional "establishment of religion."

First, in the years following enactment, government officials and private researchers who opposed the amendment scoured the nation, seeking evidence that it had driven many low-income women to unsafe "back alley" abortions that endangered their lives. They could not find that evidence. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found "no evidence of a statistically significant increase in the number of complications from illegal abortions," but rather a decrease in reported complications from legal abortions.

Second, opponents filed suit against the amendment to claim that it violated the newfound constitutional "right" to abortion—and specifically that it nullified that right for low-income women who cannot otherwise afford to pay for an abortion. But in the landmark case of Harris v. McRae in 1980, the Supreme Court explained that the abortion right, like most constitutional rights, is a right to be free from government interference. In other words, it did not translate into a right to demand active government assistance to obtain abortions.

Third, these suits argued that the amendment rested on nothing but theological ideas about "when life begins" and the moral wrongness of abortion—ideas that could not be written into law without violating constitutional guarantees against an "establishment of religion." But here, too, the Supreme Court showed a great deal of common sense. The court said it could not find all laws against larceny unconstitutional just because the Bible has a commandment against stealing. Whatever views may be held by different religions, the Hyde Amendment served a legitimate secular interest—that of "encouraging childbirth over abortion" in all but the most extreme circumstances. After all, said the court, "[a]bortion is inherently different from other medical procedures, because no other procedure involves the purposeful termination of a potential life."

In later cases the court has moved away from the biologically uninformed term "potential life." In Planned Parenthood v. Casey in 1992, for example, the justices said the government may regulate (though not prohibit) abortion in ways that "express profound respect for the *life* of the unborn" (emphasis added). Such regulations have been passed in many states and have had a real impact on abortion rates.

Reducing Abortions

As for Hyde itself: If it has not endangered women, violated Roe or established Catholicism as the official religion of the United States, what has it done? Chiefly, it has done something that people on all sides of the abortion debate say they want—it has reduced abortions.

Before Hyde went into effect, the federal Medicaid program was paying for almost 300,000 abortions a year for low-income women. Legal authorities had concluded that once abortion was permitted as a medical procedure under Roe, the Medicaid statute's general requirement for funding all "medically necessary" procedures covered any abortion that a woman and her physician agreed on—unless Congress passed a law stating otherwise. Under Hyde, the number of federally funded abortions plummeted to a fraction of one percent of this figure, and has stayed there.

This does not mean that the amendment has prevented 300,000 abortions a year nationwide. Seventeen states provide their own public funding for abortion for Medicaid-eligible women, usually because state judges have declared an abortion "right" in state constitutions that goes beyond Roe v. Wade to demand public funding. And many women covered by the amendment have used private resources to have abortions. But by conservative estimates, a ban on public funding of abortion in programs like Medicaid reduces abortions among women in the program by about 20 to 35 percent.

Some estimates go further. In 2002, a study in the journal of the Guttmacher Institute (formerly the research arm of Planned Parenthood) found that the abortion rate among Medicaid-eligible women is twice that of other women in states that do not provide public funding for abortion. If the state does fund abortions, these women's abortion rate doubles again, rising to four times the rate of other women.

Mother and Child

A question has circulated among Catholics for some time about reducing abortions: Do we achieve this by combating poverty or by passing abortion funding bans and other pro-life laws? The answer to the question is: Yes. We need to do both, especially because we reverence the dignity of both the mother and her child. But if you want to reduce abortion rates, even while abortion remains legal under Roe, laws like the Hyde Amendment provide an important part of the answer.

Even more remarkably, some studies have concluded that unintended pregnancy rates are lower in states that ban public funding of abortion: When abortion is more expensive, or harder to access in other ways, men and women take more care not to begin a pregnancy in the first place.

By contrast, programs to expand access to contraception have often failed to reduce unintended pregnancies or abortions. An apparent exception, a new study in St. Louis called Contraceptive Choice, claims to have reduced both pregnancy and abortion rates among low-income women. But it required persuading 75 percent of the subjects to accept a hormonal implant or an intrauterine device that can be removed only by a physician; participants were then regularly followed throughout the study to make sure they stayed with the program.

For 36 years the Hyde Amendment has reduced abortions, encouraged men and women to be more responsible about risking pregnancy and respected the consciences of the majority of taxpayers who morally object to abortion. More broadly, it has implemented a federal policy of seeking to respect unborn life and prefer live birth to abortion, even while abortion remains legal. It is the most positive federal policy to be maintained on abortion since Roe was handed down almost 40 years ago. If abortion advocates want to attack it as part of an alleged "war on women," that may only highlight the extreme nature of their own agenda. A

Darren Pettie, Amy Ryan, David Schwimmer and Sarah Sokolovic in Lisa D'Amour's "Detroit."

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE PUBLICITY OFFICE/JEREMY DANIEL

THEATER | MICHAEL V. TUETH

DREAMS DEFERRED

'Detroit' examines relationships in troubled times.

Every now and then, a good film or play can gain an added resonance when it coincides with current events. Lisa D'Amour's portrayal of two destructive marriages, **Detroit,** is enjoying a sold-out off-Broadway run at a time when its eponymous city is in the public eye. The Tigers made it to the World Series; one of its native sons ran for president; and a documentary about its challenges is playing in movie theaters (see pg. 26). At the same time, Edward Albee's classic portrait of toxic married couples, "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" has returned to Broadway in another revival.

Unfortunately, the play is not really about the city of Detroit; it could just as easily be called "Tulsa," "Kansas City" or "Jacksonville," and the setting could be the suburbs of any of these cities. Nor does it achieve the catharsis that Albee's absurdist domestic drama continues to deliver even 50 years after it first shocked Broadway audiences and filmgoers. "Detroit" does, however, dwell on the effects of the joblessness that both presidential candidates promise to address if elected. And the closing scene of the play—involving actual fire on stage—deals with the demons in many a family these days. As such, "Detroit" is an important and relevant addition to American theater today.

The play opens with the same situation as "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?": a married couple invites another couple over to their house. But instead of the genteel-shabby residence of a college professor that serves as the setting for Albee's play, "Detroit" begins in the backyard of a home in what is now called the "first ring" of suburbia, a subdivision built in the 1960s that is in serious decline. The host couple, Mary (Amy Ryan) and Ben (David Schwimmer) have invited their new next-door neighbors, Kenny (Darren Pettie) and Sharon (Sarah Sokolovic), over for a barbecue (introducing the fire motif). Their awkward conversation is suddenly exploded by Sharon's lengthy and manic observations about the disappearance of the concept of neighbor in society today. Meanwhile, Mary and Ben's typically suburban glass sliding door tends to get jammed and the umbrella of their patio dining table keeps unfolding, finally inflicting a wound on Kenny's head (domestic dysfunction looms). We soon find out that Ben has been laid off from his job as a loan officer at a bank. The housing loan-default crisis has apparently affected the lenders as well as the borrowers. Mary works

as a paralegal, while the other couple claim to have low-level jobs, which we soon come to suspect are fictional. It is then revealed that Mary has a drinking problem and Kenny and Sharon are drug addicts in recovery (maybe).

As the couples' relationship continues, Ben and Mary begin to take on Kenny and Sharon's philosophy of life. As Sharon says to Mary, "You've got to live this moment; that's all you can do." This traditional *carpe-diem* attitude acquires new meaning in the current atmosphere of disillusionment with the American dream and the bleak economic prospects of so many families today. This view proceeds to darken both couples' lives, turning into a dangerous hedonism and culminating in a Bacchanalian return to the backyard where the play's action began. This time the party is fueled by excessive alcohol consumption, includes some inappropriate sexual activity and concludes with some major property destruction.

Each character is given at least one powerful monologue. Sharon gets several, including those early observations about neighbors, her extremely detailed accounts of her nightmares and her angry tantrum in reaction to another neighbor's complaint about her dog. Sharon concludes her rant by shouting, "I don't even have a dog!" Mary offers a lengthy description of her unhappiness in a marriage to her unemployed husband who spends every day working on creating his own Web site. A drunken Ben finally erupts in a confession that there is no Web site and never will be, while Kenny reveals a hostile macho decadence in his description of a "boys' night out" that he invites Ben to enjoy with him.

ON THE WEB
Robert Sullivan talks about his book, *My American Revolution.*
americamagazine.org/podcast

The performances by the superb film actress Amy Ryan and the former television star David Schwimmer flesh out the play's depiction of marital frustration, and the newcomer Sarah Sokolovic displays an impressive range as a comic hysteric, sexy swinger and desperate druggie. The admirably detailed set gradually turns the realistic scenery of a typical suburban dreamhouse into a horrifying disaster scene.

The most original image in the play is provided by Kenny when he and Sharon host the barbecue at their house. While the burgers are really cooking onstage, Kenny describes his own version of the traditional meal. He confides that he makes the hamburgers with a ball of cheddar cheese inside. He warns the guests to be careful when they bite into them. "You might burn your mouth." The suburban lifestyle can have unintended and painful consequences.

"Detroit" would benefit from more of this originality in its language and symbolism. Perhaps it isn't fair to com-

pare this solid drama with the theatrical couples whose company it would like to join. The play's emotional violence never approaches the monstrous fun and games of "Who's Afraid of Virgina Woolf," the poetry of "A Long Day's Journey into Night," the wicked humor of "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" or the primal sadness of "Death of a Salesman."

"Detroit" succeeds, however, in its personalization of the discouraging situation of many American families at this time. One can only hope that it will someday be seen as a document about life in the early 21st century that, like the dramas of Clifford Odets in the Great Depression, serves mainly as a depiction of a painful American memory.

MICHAEL V. TUETH, S.J., *is associate professor of communication and media studies at Fordham University in New York.*

FILM | DAVID NANTAIS

AN AMERICAN CITY

Falling in love with Detroit

My wife and I own a house in Detroit, a city of 139 square miles with 700,000 residents but only one first-run movie theater. I missed the two-week window during which the theater was showing **Detropia**, so I had to drive 50 miles, round-trip, to a far western suburb to see this documentary about the immense challenges confronting my city and the people who, either by choice or necessity, are facing them head on. "That was a real 'feel good' film," one of the three other viewers in the theater said with sarcasm as the film concluded. "It could be," I thought, "If you've fallen in love with the city." "Detropia" illustrates that it is still possible to fall in love with Detroit, but, as with any true relationship, the process includes risk and pain.

The Raven Lounge and its owner, Tommy Stephens, are featured prominently in the film. The Raven is a classic Detroit blues bar and restaurant that thrived when the nearby General Motors Detroit/Hamtramck Assembly Plant—a three million square foot facility—was running shifts around the clock. The creation of this plant in the early 1980s was very controversial, as it displaced hundreds of residents from their neighborhood, known at the time as Poletown. Polish Americans had monopolized the neighborhood in years past, but by the late 1970s the area was racially diverse and stable. Construction of the G.M. plant devastated the neighborhood, still evidenced today by the burned-out houses, boarded-up businesses and overgrown vacant lots. Most of the jobs at the plant were lost in subsequent years as the auto industry declined, and the economic advantages promised to the city were never realized. In the film, Stephens holds out hope that his business can be resurrected by G.M.'s recent decision to build its electric car, the Volt, at the plant. He also buys up cheap homes in the neighborhood, hoping to contribute to its revitalization.

By chance, I stumbled upon the Raven Lounge with a friend a few weeks before seeing "Detropia." We were dining at a venerable establishment located just blocks from the Raven—another one of the few places left over from the old Poletown days, trying to stay viable as the neighborhood around it literally crumbles and burns. Oddly, this restaurant did not have a single person of color inside, even though the neighborhood in which it is located is predominantly, if not exclusively, African-American. After dinner, when my friend and I investigated the Raven Lounge, just the opposite was true. Both establishments, fighting it out in a devastated neighborhood, have nothing to

Steve and Dorota Coy, in the documentary 'Detropia'

PHOTO: TONY HARDMON

do with each other. Segregation like this is unfortunately all too common in Detroit.

One cannot understand Detroit or its problems without examining race. The directors of "Detropia," Rachel Grady and Heidi Ewing ("Jesus Camp"), clearly understand this; and they approach the topic without being heavy-handed, preferring to present the human stories and facts without editorializing. Racism has been a difficult and thorny issue in Detroit for a long time, going back before the 1967 riots, which many people mistakenly point to as exhibit A, for evidence of racial tensions in the city. But there was rioting between blacks and whites in 1943 in Detroit, and the high-profile Ossian Sweet trial in 1925 also illustrated the ugly reality of racial hatred. Contemporary racism is sometimes more subtle, but no less virulent or destructive.

"Detropia" points out that there is hope, however, as hundreds of suburban young adults are reversing the white-flight of their parents and grandparents and are moving into the city. These hipsters are hungry for urban life and for opportunities to be creative, to test their entrepreneurial skills and not have to worry about failing, given the low cost of living in the city. But this phenomenon carries with it some complex sociological quandaries. The majority of these young adults are white, and at times their urban pioneer attitudes irritate the people, primarily African-Americans, who have been here for decades.

Urban agriculture, for example, is nothing new in Detroit—it has been going on in some form for well over 100 years, and several African American neighborhoods have quietly led the way. Now it is in vogue, and the faces that appear in newspapers and on discussion panels are mostly white. Frustration about this is understandable, but at the same time the city has improved in many ways because of the hard work of these young adults. There are more houses being cared for, more small businesses starting up, more money being spent and more sustained excitement being created about the city than at any other point in my lifetime.

The film's greatest gift to the residents of Detroit and, perhaps, to everyone in the United States, is that it shows how intertwined our lives are. Yes, the white guy working at American Axle and living in a neighboring suburb is connected to the black man who owns the blues bar in a depressed Detroit neighborhood, who in turn is connected to the young hipster artists who have fallen in love with Detroit because of the vast potential it offers. There are thriving, stable neighborhoods in Detroit, but there are abandoned, devastated ones as well. And the people in each are our neighbors, black and white. And no matter how bad we think we have it, we can't forget them.

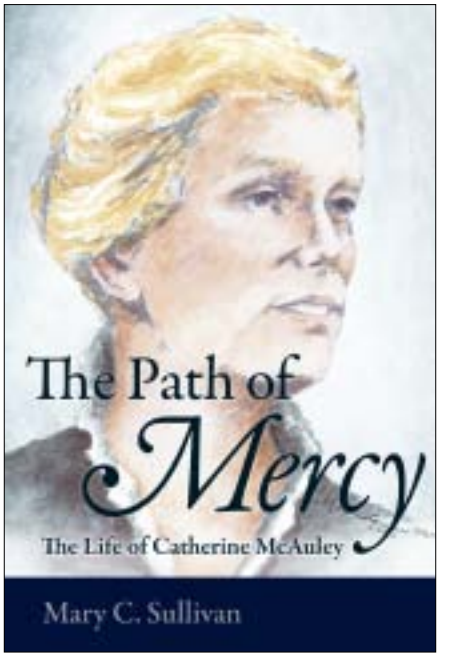
DAVID NANTAIS *is director of university ministry at the University of Detroit Mercy.*

BOOKS | LAURA M. CHMIELEWSKI

A WOMAN IN FULL

THE PATH OF MERCY
The Life of Catherine McAuley

By Mary C. Sullivan
Catholic University of America Press.
419p $49.95



I came to Mary C. Sullivan's biography of Catherine McAuley with several entrenched assumptions about the level of interest a 19th-century Irish founder of a women's religious order could possibly inspire. These assumptions were handily challenged by the narrative sweep that Sullivan maps out for the subject, who founded the Sisters of Mercy in 1831. Sullivan's highly focused, though somewhat uneven exploration of Catherine's life and times reveals that Catherine McAuley was socially shrewd yet intensely spiritual, fragile yet capable, forceful yet full of warmth and humor. This book thus invigorates the many dimensions of Catherine's character, spirituality and work of serving the poor and outcast.

Sullivan conveys these ideas with a richly detailed prose record of Catherine's activities, made possible by a wide variety of primary sources and written reflections by those who knew her. And those who knew her were many. From the moment the mature, unmarried Catherine came forward with her plans to turn a building she was constructing on Dublin's Baggot Street into a sanctuary for the poor,

the idea attracted other laywomen who wanted to help implement the plan. How she attained the means to make this happen is one of the most intriguing, and perhaps elusive, passages in the book. Orphaned by age 18, Catherine spent much of her adult life as a dependent in the homes of others. At first her hosts were relatives, but when they found themselves in strained circumstances, Catherine went to live with family friends, Catherine and William Callaghan, who were wealthy, loving, indulgent, supportive—and not Catholic. In their household, Catherine kept her growing commitment to Catholicism quiet out of respect for her hosts, a Quaker and an Anglican.

It was an inheritance from William Callaghan that underwrote her activities as a social activist in the name of God. In her 40s at the time of William's death, Catherine was for the first time mistress of her own life and the possessor of a handsome fortune in cash and property—a situation that raised some eyebrows, especially in light of the fact that Catherine had continued to live with William Callaghan after his wife died. It would not be the last time that the propriety of Catherine's activities was called into question. Another, far more notable occurrence was the actual founding of the Sisters of Mercy as a religious order, a pragmatic response to the gender-based realities of laywomen publicly ministering to Ireland's needy.

As a social historian of religion, I read this book in the constant hope that the author would fully contextualize her subject's remarkably eventful life. After all, Catherine was not only an important figure in her own right, but crossed paths with other 19th-century notables, including the Irish political activist Daniel O'Connell, the eminent architect and Catholic convert Augustus Pugin, the celebrated Temperance Priest, Theobald Mathew, and Princess (later Queen) Victoria.

She was also a woman who built—literally—large, task-specific buildings, interacted regularly with and at times vocally disagreed with men who answered to the Roman hierarchy, established her order in overwhelmingly Protestant England as well as Catholic Ireland and saw adored associates, friends and family members die in droves from terrible diseases and starvation.

What was it like to be a 19th-century woman in these circumstances? Unfortunately, this book does not tell the reader, at least not consistently. Similarly, the level of detail focused on Catherine's immediate activities often obscures this larger story. I finished this book knowing many specifics about Catherine McAuley, but not very much about the Ireland in which she lived and worked.

Yet this book succeeds in other ways, chiefly in its ability to inspire a personal connection with Catherine

AMBITION

For Bunny

His, at the age of six, was to be Zorro.
Black hat and mask, a sword held in reserve—
He'd pull them from their closet pile, then swerve
Big figure eights around the houses, borrow
Whatever came to hand (they needed nerve

Those daylight raids), and take some puerile stabs
At self-disclosure—monogram, make Z's.
The mystery of stray baseball bats in threes
Puzzled clean lawns. Likewise, both up for grabs
Wet laundry and mere mud left scattered keys

To who he was inside. He doesn't try
These days; time's shorter now, and he's got less
And less to hide. His love's his best success:
She thinks there's more to him than meets the eye.

CHARLES HUGHES

CHARLES HUGHES, *a recent retiree from a Chicago law firm, tutors in the writing clinic of St. Leonard's House. His poems have appeared in literary journals and in the 2010 anthology of the Georgia Poetry Society.*

and a sense of awe at what she was able to achieve in her lifetime. Sullivan's skills in reconstructing a life shine when she assesses the forces, inspirations and challenges that shaped Catherine's spiritual life. Described in particularly beautiful prose is one of the animating influences of Catherine's spirituality: her belief in "human acceptance of one's 'portion of the Holy Cross.'" Sullivan demonstrates that Catherine lived this belief almost daily and bore it with unflagging conviction and grace.

Mary C. Sullivan does not state explicitly that Catherine's story holds lessons for our times. But reading this book against the backdrop of recent pronouncements from the Vatican about the work and priorities of some American nuns cannot help but inspire parallels. Despite the support and friendship of numerous clerics, Catherine too had her frustrations and dissonances with the church hierarchy. Even in the months before her own lingering death, she strenuously objected to changes made to the Sisters of Mercy's official, approved rule—and the fact that the final document had been prepared and presented to the Sisters in Italian, not English. As presented in this book, Catherine McAuley's conviction that she knew best for the people she organized and those she served was worthy of patient, good-humored defense.

LAURA M. CHMIELEWSKI *is an assistant professor of history at Purchase College, State University of New York. She is the author of* The Spice of Popery: Converging Christianities on an Early American Frontier *(University of Notre Dame Press, 2012).*

JON M. SWEENEY

THE ARTFUL CRITIC

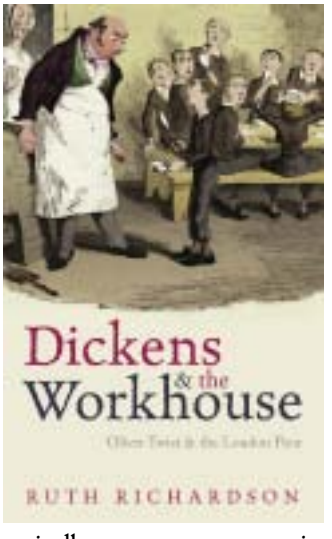
DICKENS AND THE WORKHOUSE

Oliver Twist and the London Poor

Ruth Richardson
Oxford University Press. 240p $29.95

My enthusiasm for Charles Dickens began in the eighth grade, when a longsuffering English teacher forced us to read *A Tale of Two Cities*. I remember it as tough going. Much of the vocabulary, historical allusions and humor required adult explanations. But I also remember thoroughly enjoying it. Three-plus decades later, I read and reread him and regret that my own kids never experienced required Dickens in school. Sadly, for them, Oliver Twist is a Disney character (from the 1997 television movie).

Working people used to crowd the docks around Boston Harbor the day copies of a new Dickens novel were due to arrive. What made this author the most popular of his day on both sides of the Atlantic? His characters were memorable, his stories well-plotted, but perhaps most important, he spoke to social concerns in ways that no one else, even and especially in the church, did. Dickens was no Trollope; one is hard-pressed to find a clergyperson in one of his novels who is not a windbag or faulty in some other way. He was nevertheless the conscience of his century.



In *Nicholas Nickelby*, *David Copperfield* and *Hard Times*, Dickens portrayed the inadequacies of primary education, and he did it very well. Who can forget the bumbling, ineffective teacher with the apt name, Mr. M'Choakumchild? In *Bleak House*, Dickens took on the corruption of government and the penal system. It seems that he was prescient, as we still live with these problems, and in some respects, they have gone unchanged in the varieties of their corruption and inhumanity since Dickens's era.

Ruth Richardson's fascinating new book takes *Oliver Twist* as its subject and tells the story of her recent discovery that Dickens grew up only a few doors from the major London workhouse that inspired both the novel and, likely, the novelist's passion for social justice. Showing a deep understanding of the history of cities, the history of city planning, architecture, sociology and even sight-lines, this book is a detailed account of the boy Dickens's neighborhood and its possible influences upon him.

Everyone knows the basic outline of *Oliver Twist*. Oliver is a poor, illegitimate orphan raised in a workhouse (Richardson's definition of *workhouses* is: "publicly run institutions funded by local taxation, which provided minimal accommodation and sustenance for the desperate poor"), then apprenticed to an undertaker, who escapes to central London where he falls in with a band of ruffians led by an unreliable character, the Artful Dodger. The gang teaches Oliver to live by his wits on the streets, including how to pick the pockets of unsuspecting Londoners.

Oliver Twist was shocking in its day for the realism with which it portrayed orphans, criminals and the underworld. With the novel Dickens almost single-handedly raised international awareness for the cause of taking bet-

ter care of society's underprivileged children.

Richardson begins by examining how Dickens only reluctantly revealed certain personal details about his life to his best friend and first biographer, John Forster. Forster's biography was published in 1870, almost immediately after Dickens's death. He quoted from autobiographical writings that were subsequently lost or destroyed, telling us that Dickens spent time working as a boy in a factory manufacturing shoe polish and that his father spent time in debtor's prison. These details illuminated the novels, including *David Copperfield*, as the reading public understood that their author was writing from firsthand experience. But Richardson asks: If Dickens only reluctantly revealed these details to his best friend, could it be that he also decidedly did not reveal that he'd grown up in close proximity to a notorious workhouse in London? It is this hypothesis that Richardson works out convincingly.

At dozens of points in *Dickens and the Workhouse*, Richardson tells the reader in minute detail about early 19th-century London only to wonder why Dickens seems to have been silent about it in his novels, letters and autobiographical fragments. She makes these points to explain that Dickens was familiar with many aspects of London poverty from direct experience. For example, she writes, "London is a curious city. One can go a couple of blocks from an area that is down-at-heel and be in the most exclusive streets. Local inhabitants know where the divisions fall. It may be that Norfolk Street fell on the wrong side of the divide.... Dickens's silence about Norfolk Street may show a Londoner's tender sensitivity to such territorial markers." This comes 15 pages after she discusses the "social geography" of Norfolk Street and its general dodginess, and 61 pages after she first tells us how young Charles's first childhood home in London was on the same Norfolk Street.

Most readers of *Oliver Twist* would never know details like these or the fact that the novel was Dickens's way of protesting a law passed by the Whig government in 1834. The Poor Law Amendment Act radically altered the way Londoners cared for their poor. This new law did away with much of what we today refer to as the "safety net" set in place by the principles of Christian charity and made the poor more akin to criminals requiring safe housing in these notorious workhouses. They were dreadful places. Families were usually split up upon entering them, and forced labor was the rule. Don't let Disney fool you; *Oliver Twist* is appropriately brutal at times. In the early going of *Twist*, Dickens mentions that Oliver might have hanged himself, if the authorities had allowed him to have a handkerchief. Later on, the descriptions of the deaths of the poor, from hunger, for instance, are harrowing. Dickens was angry, and for good reasons.

JON M. SWEENEY *is an author and critic whose most recent book is* The Pope Who Quit: A True Medieval Tale of Mystery, Death, and Salvation.

ANGELA ALAIMO O'DONNELL

REDEMPTION SONGS

PITY THE BEAUTIFUL

By Dana Gioia
Graywolf Press. 80p $15.99

Dana Gioia's new book of poems, *Pity the Beautiful*, offers a series of powerful meditations on loss and the redemptive power of beauty to sustain the soul through the most harrowing of hells. This is Gioia's fourth book of poems and his first collection in 12 years. The long hiatus was occasioned by Gioia's six-and-a-half-year service as chair of the National Education Association under President George W. Bush. His long and successful foray into the realm of public service has served Gioia well as a poet. His signature public project—to take art out of the realm of academics and aesthetes and restore it to ordinary people—brought him into close contact with the preoccupations and the idiom of his readership, enabling Gioia to create poems that speak powerfully of our universal loves and losses and address our deepest desires. *Pity the Beautiful* does all of this, offering 35 poems that are compelling, haunting and, in fact, beautiful.

The narrative arc traced in the course of the volume is one of pilgrimage. Gioia is a modern-day Dante, moving poem by poem through the stations of Hell and Purgatory, bringing us to the gates of a Paradise that is promised but not yet gained. The poems take us, inevitably, to dark places: the special treatments ward of a hospital filled with dying children, the box of letters written by the poet's beloved dead (revenants who haunt this collection) and, in a wry twist, to the shopping mall, with its glittering altars to the false god of commerce we (un)wittingly worship.

Gioia's vision, however, is ultimately a hopeful one. An unspoken belief in the theological gift of grace pervades the poems—a suspicion, if not an outright conviction—that there is a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will. The poems, then, become impassioned acts of beauty, sacramental gestures toward a hidden God who might be guessed but not known, and we the readers accompany him on his salvific journey.

Gioia channels a series of powerful voices in the poems, as well as speaking in his own. Earliest among these *dramatis personae* is "The Angel with the Broken Wing," a presence who serves as the tutelary spirit—or the Virgil—of the volume. (In fact, the cover of the book features an angel, suggesting his pre-eminence.) Designed by a master carver in an era of belief, the angel has outlived his purpose. Shut away on account of his spiritual ferocity, desecrated by soldiers in a by-gone revolution, he appears a broken, impotent relic, "a crippled saint against a painted sky."

The angel's uselessness in a secular culture and his obvious imperfection in a world that worships superficial beauty have relegated him to the farthest margins, yet he conveys a capacious and syncretic vision, one that embraces the past and present, the human and divine, eternity and now, and speaks with an elegant authority that moves us. We look in the wrong places for both truth and beauty, the angel warns us. The real sources of these are hidden from view.

In "Prayer at Winter Solstice," one of several outright prayers in the collection, the poet maps the human spiritual journey as a *via negativa*. Echoing the Beatitudes, he delivers a series of unexpected blessings: "Blessed is the road that keeps us homeless./ Blessed is the mountain that blocks our way./... / Blessed are the night and the darkness that blinds us./ Blessed is the cold that teaches us to feel./ ..../ Blessed is the pain that humbles us./ Blessed is the distance that bars our joy." The poem gives thanks for our absences and privations, obstacles and afflictions, our longings and our griefs, finding in trials that typically lead us to desolation a circuitous route to consolation. In its biblical diction and insistent repetition, the poem acts as powerful incantation, a counter-spell to the sorrow and losses that befall the poet (and us), the beauty of the language itself redeeming the agonies it blesses.

Those agonies are considerable, ranging from the superficial wound (the lost moment, the lost argument, the lost illusion) to the scarring (a lost lover, one's lost youth) to the most transformative of all, the lost child. In "Majority," the final poem of the book, the poet addresses his first son, who died long ago in infancy. Tracing the trajectory of a father's quiet grief over two decades, he imagines the son he has lost come alive in the bodies of other young boys as they learn to swim, play the piano or simply grow into their own stature. After years of this consoling fantasy, the poet finally recognizes the necessity of letting go: "How splendid your most/ mundane action seemed in these joyful proxies./ I often held back tears./ Now you are twenty-one. Finally it makes sense/ that you have moved away/ into your own afterlife."

The quality of understatement in Gioia's work, wherein he addresses the most exquisite of griefs in the plain language of ordinary speech, underscores our helplessness in the face of time and necessity and yet somehow asserts our extraordinary strength. That a father can speak—or write—such words and live makes us marvel and reminds us of the central symbolic act of Judeo-Christian tradition. Redemption somehow comes of a father's and a mother's sacrifice (we imagine Abraham at the altar, Mary at the cross), terrible and irrational as

this may seem. This father's renunciation of his own agony concludes with the assertion of an afterlife, not as a possibility, but as a fact of faith, owned and claimed, a final reality that "makes sense."

I had occasion to hear Gioia recite this poem during a reading he gave in New York recently. As he prefaced his recitation with the circumstances of the poem, I saw a woman seated in front of me place her arm around the shoulders of the woman beside her, marking her companion as a mother who had lost a child. I could not take my eyes from this bereft mother as she listened to the poem, her head nodding in assent, tears streaming soundlessly down her cheeks and, strangely, a gentle smile on her lips. Here was public witness to the power of poetry to speak the unspeakable, articulate for us what we cannot and redeem our most piteous losses through beauty. The community poetry makes of our brokenness somehow makes us whole. At the end of the reading we all stood up, applauded and streamed out into the rainy night, stricken and triumphant

ANGELA ALAIMO O'DONNELL *is a poet, professor of English and associate director of the Curran Center for American Catholic Studies at Fordham University in New York City.*

CAROL K. COBURN

A MEDIA MASTER

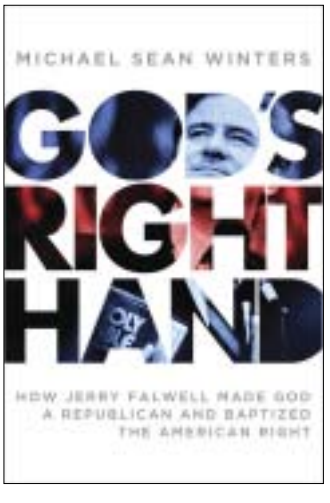
GOD'S RIGHT HAND

How Jerry Falwell Made God a Republican and Baptized the American Right

By Michael Sean Winters
HarperOne. 448p $28.99

The name of the Rev. Jerry Falwell tends to excite and/or rile the emotions of American Christians in a way that few other 20th-century clergymen can claim. Michael Sean Winters provides an even-handed and insightful biographical exploration of the legendary pastor, who began with meager resources but built a fundamentalist juggernaut that influenced and shaped American political life in the late 20th century and set the stage for the divisive political battles of the early 21st century.

Describing Falwell's somewhat dysfunctional family and childhood in Lynchburg, Va., Winters traces his transformation from the son of an angry, drunk father who professed atheism, into a charismatic minister who used biblical literacy and a parochial theology as a weapon against the evils of social change and pluralism that exploded in the 1960s. As Americans wrestled with their social and cultural demons of race, sex and class inequalities, Falwell watched with horror and disdain as mainstream Christianity reinforced calls for social justice, while the more homogeneous aspects of Christianity—personal piety, patriotism and traditional social mores—seemed in decline. In his view, it was time for fundamentalism, historically isolated from the public realm, to enter the political fray to successfully influence the process to bring God back into the civic discussion.



Conciding perfectly with the conservative resurgence in the Republican Party, the marriage of traditional conservative Republicans and social/religious conservatives, Falwell built a local, regional and national movement, the Moral Majority, that eventually had influence in the White House, beginning with the Reagan administration. It embedded itself into Republican politics, serving as a model for like-minded conservatives and clergy who hoped to save the nation from perceived ruin and liberal policies.

Falwell became a master of the sound bite, whose media savvy made him the "face of televangelism" and a popular guest for a variety of radio and television talk shows and news programs. Winters provides a nuanced account of how Falwell built his evangelical empire, which eventually welcomed political alliances with conservative Catholics and conservative Jews. Besides his media and political influence, Falwell created a generation of well-educated adversaries to challenge the "liberal elites" by founding Liberty University, an institution that produced some of the first conservative legal experts. These began to challenge the courts and eventually influenced the judicial system directly when they won judicial appointments to state and federal courts.

Using and promoting his brand of biblical and moral certainty, Falwell never lets facts or logic impede his analysis or evaluation of the social or political arena. The author refers to Falwell as "morally rigorous but not intellectually curious." Falwell seems to have been immune, for example, to the knowledge that the American nation and its Constitution were created and written by deists who were highly influenced by the ideas of the Enlightenment and saw reason as the epitome of the new republic. For Falwell, patriotism and evangelicalism

draw from the same well, and one cannot exist without the other.

Upon final assessment, Winters believes Falwell's legacy is "mixed." Falwell "created a platform for engagement," and provided a generation of conservative Christians with talking points and national logistics to engage and make changes in the American political system. But Winters also credits him with transforming the Republican Party but being too successful, "succeeding so thoroughly... they are seen as too white, too southern, too conservative, and too Christian." Although Jerry Falwell died in 2007, one has to ask, in light of current national dialogues and debates that seem to be throwbacks to issues that appeared resolved generations ago, if Falwell's legacy isn't more long-lasting and powerful than Winters believes.

CAROL K. COBURN *is professor of American religious history at Avila University, Kansas City, Mo.*

"The Church needs you, counts on you and continues to turn to you with confidence, particularly to reach the geographical and spiritual places where others do not reach or find it difficult to reach."

Pope Benedict XVI, address to the Society of Jesus, General Congregation 35, February 21, 2008

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LETTERS

Too Right?

The editorial "Obama's Scandal" (10/22) begs for response. I am personally aware of the pressures on the editorial board—financial, civil and ecclesiastical—in this confounding election season. Nonetheless, why Guantánamo a week before the election? Why no mention of Mr. Obama's executive order "Ensuring Lawful Interrogations"? Why no mention of the administration's attempts to move the prisoners to American soil—stridently repudiated by public opinion? Why no mention of attempts to bring the cases before U.S. courts—bullishly rejected by several courts?

You note that Mr. Latif was cleared "multiple times" between 2004 and 2008. Why "Obama's Scandal" and not "Mr. Bush's Scandal"? You point out that Americans are complicit by indifference, and "we have failed to acknowledge and repent of our sins." Why not "Americans' Scandal"?

A summary question, urgent but not cynical: Why didn't the editors just go ahead and endorse Mr. Romney? The new editorial board's early work is starkly disappointing.

JOSEPH A. TETLOW, S.J.
St Louis, Mo.

Too Left?

If my Jesuit community did not subscribe to **America**, I wouldn't. Yet partly because I am a Jesuit, and partly because I find one or two good articles in every issue, I still read it. "Deliver Us," by Anna Nussbaum Keating (10/22), on the sacred moment of giving birth, should be in the hands of every prospective Catholic mother.

But there is so much that is bad, or at least off-putting. So much attention is paid to women's complaints (see "Why Not Women?" by Bishop Emil A. Wcela, 10/1). It is the mischief of "liberal" Catholic magazines like **America** to sow these seeds of discord and put ideas into the minds of their readers.

The editors have surrounded themselves with yes-men and yes-women; it is all too apparent in letters to the editor. But don't you realize that flattery is the sure sign of a false prophet? So if I refuse to flatter you in this letter, I wonder if it will be accepted for publication.

PETER MILWARD, S.J.
Tokyo, Japan

Becoming Who I Am

Re "Whiskey's Wisdom" (10/8): When Margaret Sill writes, "God is constantly distilling the essence of who I truly am," I think of the story of Rabbi Zusya, who said on his deathbed that God was not going to ask him why he was not more like Moses, but why he was not more like Zusya. I'd like to get to that kind of essence someday. At the very least, I'd like to simplify. The metaphors of water, barley and yeast help. The image of whiskey just sitting in a cask also helps; I don't have to do anything, just let life and the Spirit happen. And it really helps to think of all the waste (up to 25 percent) as an "angels' share." Wonderful images. Thank you. I'm going to use your article in an older-adult Sunday school class.

JOHN KOTRE
Ann Arbor, Mich.

Spirit Amid Weakness

Re "A Change of Season," by Robert J. Nogosek, C.S.C. (Web only, 10/1): Vatican II was a much needed look at

who we are as a church, what we believe and what that means in our current times. When one actually looks at the documents, their beauty and value are hard to dispute. The account by Father Nogosek actually highlights the work of the Spirit in the council despite human weakness. Fifty years later we are only beginning to see the full implementation of the council. Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI, each in his own way, have made it their mission to implement the council.

Those of us who are most involved in the life of the church need to make more of an effort to understand what the council documents actually contain and cooperate with our leadership, both lay and ordained, to continue to make the vision of the council a reality.

GERALD McGRANE
Dyersville, Iowa

Return to Earth

Re the "Moral Theology Today" issue (9/24): Many American theologians and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith appear to be ships passing in the night. The theologians are claiming for themselves the unlimited right to "explore" doctrines by the simple magic of declaring them questionable. This vision of theology is relativism on steroids.

The C.D.F. is saying to the theologians that once they step outside the realities described by fundamental, settled doctrine, the exploration itself is destructive. This is because theology done publicly in the name of the church cannot be separated from catechesis. The world perceives it as catechesis, regardless of the theologian's intent.

Doctrine matters. It is the wellspring from which come the ideas we live by. But if the wellspring is closed off in favor of passing showers, the earth becomes barren and the spirit starves. The theologians are becoming Icarus. They need to recognize that the earth is a fixed point and return to it.

JAMES CRAFTON
Kettering, Ohio

Call to Perfection

Having read **America**'s religious education issue (9/10), I realized that the perspective of a younger person (I am 17) might be advantageous in bringing about necessary changes in religious education. As a Catholic student in a public school system, I am surrounded by atheists, agnostics and nonpracticing Catholics. I have an intimate knowledge of why people my age choose not to be Catholic.

The church needs to give young people good reasons to be Catholic: first, by encouraging young Catholics to find an answer to "What is the purpose of human life?"; second, by highlighting the faith of its devoted followers, which will perplex the staunchest atheist; and third, by discussing morality in religion classes to help people understand that morality is universal and objective. One of the main purposes of Catholicism is to make it easier to be a moral individual, so any person who wants to be moral should also want to be Catholic. If we do these three things, we will create the next generation of Catholics who will bring the Catholic Church closer to the perfection to which God calls us.

JOSEPH GRANEY
Louisville, Ky.

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WITHOUT GUILE

"...and we also thank the F.D.A. for this genetically engineered food."

CARTOON BY HARLEY SCHWADRON

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Living the Kingdom

CHRIST THE KING (B), NOV. 25, 2012

Readings: Dn 7:13–14; Ps 93:1–5; Rv 1:5–8; Jn 18:33–37

I saw one like a son of man coming on the clouds of heaven (Dn 7:13)

The church comes to the close of the liturgical year by celebrating the solemnity of Christ the King. As Blessed John Paul II once reflected, this solemnity is "a synthesis of the entire salvific mystery." The Scriptures we use are both triumphal and paradoxical. In our first reading, from the Book of Daniel, Daniel envisions the "son of man coming on the clouds of heaven, receiving everlasting dominion, glory and kingship." This image is also reflected in the second reading from Revelation: "Behold, he is coming amid the clouds."

But our Gospel reading, which brings us through a portion of Jesus' trial with Pilate, presents us with a paradox: the king is simultaneously the crucified one. This is a regular theme in John's Gospel, where the cross is paradoxically Jesus' place of glory (17:1). The cross is the place where he reveals his divine status (8:28) and draws all to himself (12:32).

Pilate asks Jesus, "Are you the king of the Jews?" He responds, "My kingdom does not belong to this world." Jesus' response is an instance of a kind of dualism in John, where sharp divisions are often raised, such as spirit versus flesh, light versus darkness. Given this kind of framework, Satan is the "ruler of this world" (12:31, 16:11) and Jesus of another. These contrasts plunge us into making a decision on where we stand: With the flesh or the spirit? With darkness or light? With the ruler of this world or the king of God's world? While the language is sharp, it has to be understood rightly. This is not a decision between our bodies and our souls or between the created world and heaven. Indeed, "The earth is the Lord's and all it holds" (Ps 24:1), and "God so loved the world that he gave his only son" (Jn 3:16). Rather, it is a decision about what rules our lives: sin and evil or virtue and Christ. This feels like another paradox: to reject the world (worldliness) is to love creation, to renounce the flesh (disordered desires) is to honor the body, to reject the ruler of this world is to live here and now as a free child of God.

There is plenty to reflect on here. When Pope Pius XI instituted this feast, he wanted to address a world suffering under the illusions of such false lords as consumerism, free-market exploitation, nationalism, secularism and mass injustice. In contrast to "strife and discord and hurrying along the road to ruin and death," he wrote in his encyclical "Quas Primas" (1925, No. 4), he envisioned "a dominion by a King of Peace who came to reconcile all things, who came not to be ministered unto but to minister" (No. 20) with us "as instruments of justice unto God" (No. 33).

Paradoxically, to follow the savior whose "kingdom does not belong to this world" is to engage the world deeply and lovingly. Pope John Paul II referred to the "interior dynamism" of the kingdom as "leaven and a sign of salvation to build a more just, more fraternal world, one with more solidarity, inspired by the evangelic values of hope and of the future happiness to which we are all called" (Address, Nov. 26, 1989). Here the pope reflects the teachings of the Second Vatican Council that on this earth, the kingdom is already present and that expectations of "a new earth must not weaken but rather stimulate our concern for cultivating this one.... When the Lord comes it will be brought into full flower" ("Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," No. 39).

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- Consider ways you live the kingdom.
- Ask the Lord to reveal what's holiest about you.
- Consecrate each person you meet today to God.

ART: TAD DUNNE

There is an additional image in today's readings. The Book of Revelation teaches us that Christ has made us all into a kingdom of priests for God. The First Letter of Peter says the same as we all "offer spiritual sacrifices" (2:5). Within Christ's kingdom, we consecrate and sanctify the world, offering it to God through the high priesthood of Christ. The world is our altar; and our acts of love, justice and compassion are gifts we place on that altar, made sacred by our intention and by God's presence within them. The universe is holy, and so are we.

PETER FELDMEIER

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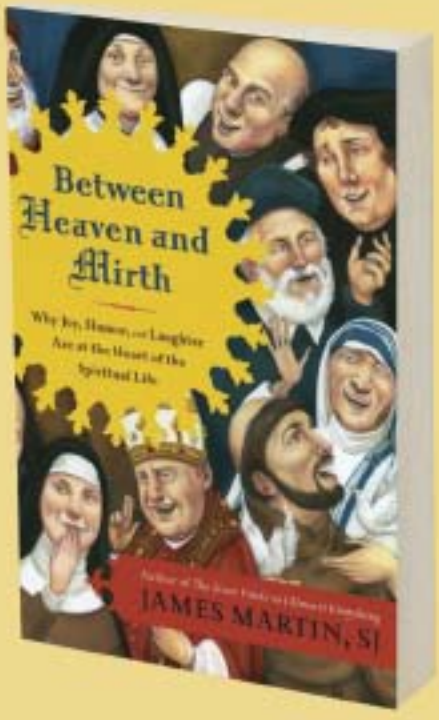

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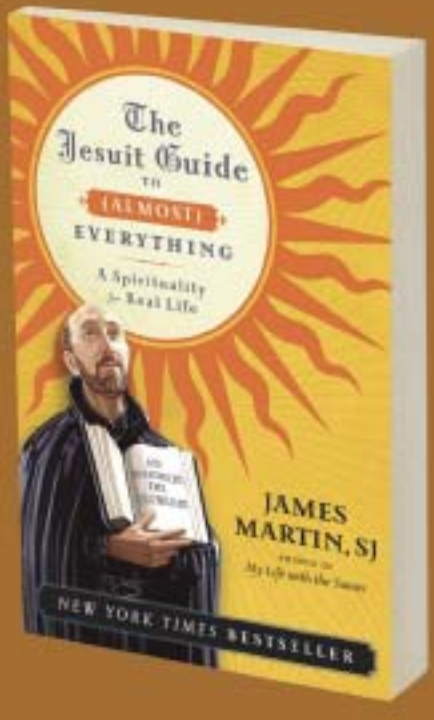

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