

# America

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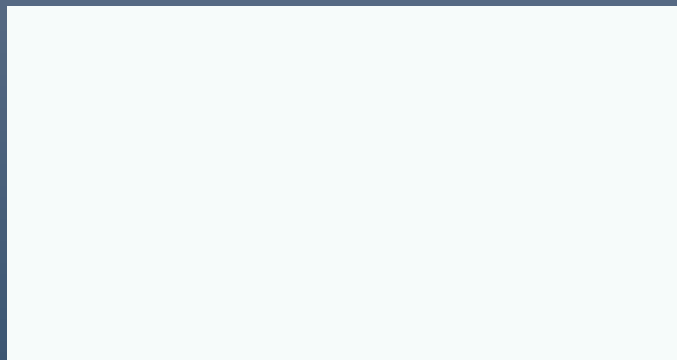
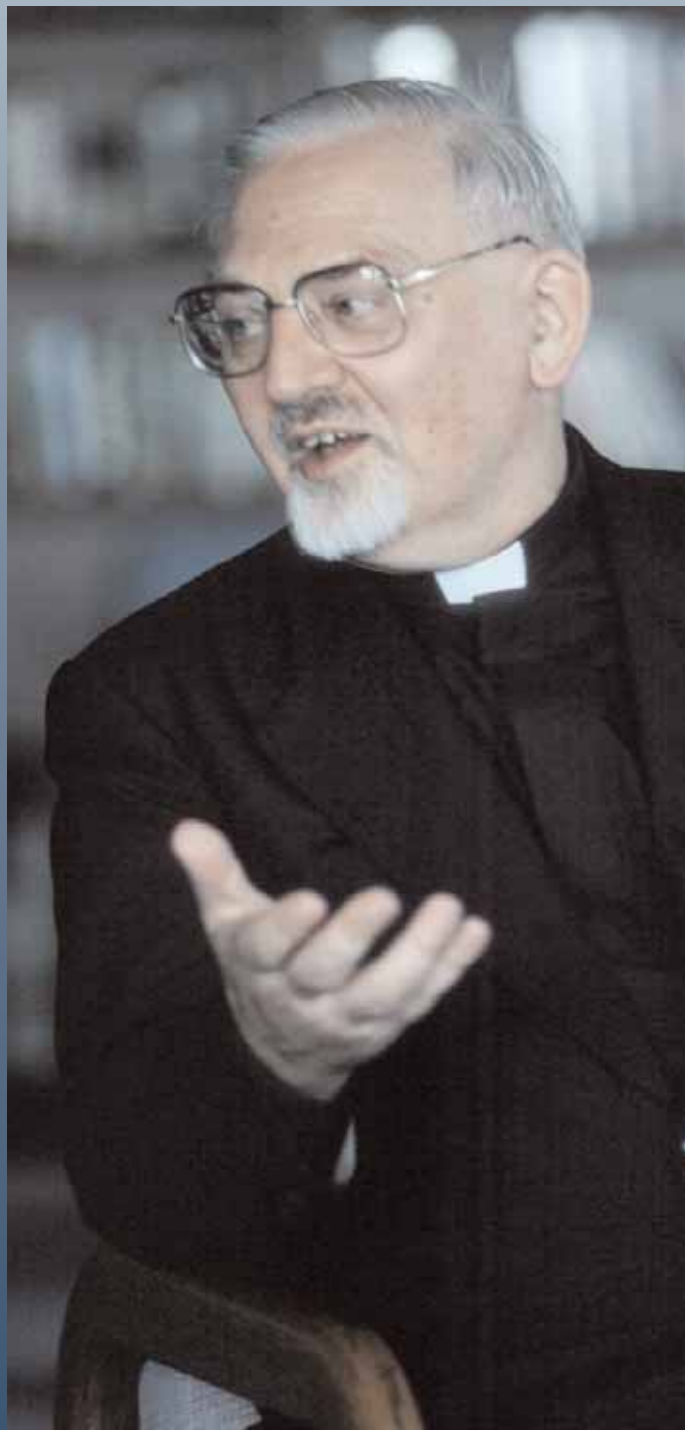
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## ‘Let Us Look Together to Christ

An interview with  
Peter-Hans Kolvenbach  
*Jim McDermott*

*Joseph A. O’Hare*  
opens an Advent series

*Richard A. Blake*  
reviews ‘Michael Clayton’



**W**HAT HAPPENS when your family lives from paycheck to paycheck and a sudden emergency arises? As many working poor people have found, you and your children may fall into homelessness. But Lori Lambert, executive director of the Bridge Fund of Massachusetts, has as her goal to prevent homelessness before it happens. She stopped by America House one day to describe how she began her work six years ago “from my dining room table without a penny in the bank.” With free space provided by the president of her new board, she applied to various foundations to supplement contributions from individual donors. “One hundred percent of what comes in goes out to serve clients,” she said.

Although she has added her own dimension to the program through its strong personalist approach, the Bridge Fund has its prototype in a larger, similar undertaking in New York City. Lori Lambert’s fund provides interest-free loans to families at risk of sliding into homelessness.

“There are few organizations that provide housing help for this

group of working poor,” she said. “With market rents running up to \$17,000 a year for a two-bedroom apartment, many parents can’t get by.” Some spend as much as three-fourths of their income on rent alone. One mishap, like a temporary lay-off, can mean falling behind in the rent and all-too-possible eviction. Families come to her through referrals by social workers in church or civic agencies—an important procedure because referrals “legitimize them in terms of having already worked with someone who has assessed the families’ needs.” With the help of interest-free loans, they can regain their footing without having to enter the shelter system.

Once clients have been referred to her, Lori sits down with them and creates a supportive relationship. “This is a key to the program’s success,” she said, “because typically, people come in to see me stressed out at the thought of losing their housing and the impact that would have on their children. So our program aims at eliminating that burden.” She went on to say that thanks to the relationship of trust, “they realize that I’m not the welfare department and that I won’t make them jump through a lot of hoops.” The next step is to work out a budget together and

to establish a plan for repaying the loans, which average between \$1,000 and \$1,500. Some can pay back \$5 a month, others \$50. But the repayment rate is high, she explained, because the clients know that they are ultimately helping someone else: the money that is repaid goes “right out the door to another family in a similar situation.”

If the same family runs into rent difficulties six months or a year later, Lori said, “they can call and we will assist again—it’s not a one-time arrangement so long as they made an effort to give back to the program.” This is how she sees clients as partnering with her and, as she put it, joining the Bridge Fund family. In her view, the program works because of the one-on-one approach, and because she maintains contact on a monthly basis.

“The clients have my cellphone number, and they know they can call me seven days a week.” As to the make-up of the clients, Lori said that about a third are intact families, with the larger portion single mothers—many of whom work two jobs with

nothing left at the end of the month. Most, she added, have

never been “hooked into the system”—that is, on welfare or in shelters.

Besides funding from foundations and individuals, some donors offer what Lori terms restricted donations, meant to help clients with specific needs. With the current sky-high cost of heating, the coming of winter may force them to choose between a warm apartment and paying the rent. “Luckily,” she observed, “I have had donors who realize this kind of Catch-22 situation, and they have made restricted donations specifically to assist with utility costs—not as loans, but as outright grants.” The same is true for people who are elderly or disabled. Some grants have even been used for moving expenses, when that becomes unavoidable.

Since the program began, Lori said, “over 1,250 people have been kept stable and housed.” The Bridge Fund has thus created a safety net for a group of people for whom one had never before existed. “They are my heroes,” she said of her clients, “and their commitment to their families and their courage keeps me in awe of them.” What has been accomplished in the way of concrete help and the restoration of dignity—all began at a young woman’s dining room table.

*George M. Anderson, S.J.*

## Of Many Things

# America

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*Cover art* Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, superior general of the Society of Jesus. Photo ©Brad Reynolds, S.J.

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### Proving Innocence by DNA

DNA evidence from hair, saliva, semen or other cell sources, has led to over 200 exonerations of wrongly convicted prisoners nationwide since 1989, according to an Innocence Project report. The 200th exoneration last April led to a national campaign to support the formation of state innocence commissions to identify the causes of wrongful convictions and develop reforms.

Of the 77 percent of cases of misidentification by eyewitnesses, almost half occurred because of cross-racial misidentification. The report notes: “Studies have shown that people are less able to recognize faces of a different race than their own.” Several dozen states have made reforms aimed at improving lineup and eyewitness procedures. Racism itself, the report observes, continues to be a significant cause of wrongful convictions. While almost 30 percent of people in prison for rape are black, 64 percent of those wrongfully convicted of this crime—and then exonerated through DNA—are black. Two-thirds of black men exonerated with the help of DNA evidence were wrongfully convicted of raping white people.

Other factors affecting wrongful convictions involved the loss or destruction of evidence, so that DNA testing was impossible. In 22 states, statutes now require the preservation in some way of evidence in criminal cases. The now numerous exoneration cases, the project says, show that wrongful convictions are not isolated events: they arise for the most part from systemic defects that can be identified and addressed.

### Sin and Scandal

The crisis of sexual abuse by members of the clergy goes on. Despite the Dallas Charter (passed by the U.S. bishops in 2002), awareness programs, monitoring and assessment, convictions and payments to victims and bankruptcies, notorious cases keep coming to light. One of the latest is that of Donald J. McGuire, a Chicago Jesuit, who was convicted in Wisconsin in 2006 of five counts of sexually assaulting a minor, but who is alleged to have engaged in similar violations for decades. It is especially alarming that McGuire’s misconduct continued even after the “zero tolerance” policy established in the Dallas Charter.

Personal and institutional failure seems to have been widespread. The repeated inability to identify and confront cases of abuse must be addressed. With all we have learned and all we have tried to do, still further lessons need to be learned and better practices put in place.

The story is complex, but there is no question that

McGuire’s superiors and brother religious, and possibly some of his lay supporters, need to do a searching self-examination as to how they could have ignored what was going on for so long. Or, if they did not ignore it, how and why their responses proved ineffective. That McGuire was dismissed from the Society of Jesus only after the case was picked up by the media illustrates how canonical processes intended to prevent hasty judgments may fail both the victims and religious superiors when they try to act responsibly. That the Wisconsin court did not revoke McGuire’s recent parole—after his superiors warned that they could not control him—until his case received nationwide publicity makes clear that failure is shared by authorities outside the church. When all is said and done, this and other cases demand from those who failed to hold the perpetrator accountable a contrite confession: *Mea culpa*.

### Church Basement Ladies

A pastor and four women volunteer cooks (one a college student) who serve at every church funeral, wedding reception, holiday and social prove to be quite hilarious in “Church Basement Ladies,” a musical comedy by Jessica Zuehlke and Jim Stowell (music and lyrics by Drew Jansen) that opened in 2005 at The Plymouth Playhouse in Minneapolis. But this year’s run may mark a turning point for the show. Based on the best-selling book *Growing Up Lutheran: What Does It Mean?*, the musical has played to sold-out audiences and grossed nearly \$600,000 in its first three months. This year, though, the producer booked it for a 50-city regional tour to test whether the play, with its 1960s church setting and Midwestern, Norwegian humor, would appeal to a wider audience.

Whether the play reaches Broadway or not, the content has much to recommend it, especially to churchgoers. As these stalwarts poke fun at themselves and others at East Cornucopia Lutheran Church, they touch on such serious subjects as the difficulty of accepting change in the church, the depth of longtime friendship, the need to mentor the young, intermarriage between Lutherans and Catholics, the role of food in forming a community and the importance of humble dedication to whatever one does at the parish. When Willy, the ever-present church janitor and bell-ringer (who is never seen, only alluded to), dies, the pastor’s effort to write his eulogy provides the most moving song and moment in the play. So far, the play’s popularity shows that church people—at least in the Midwest—enjoy laughing at themselves. That is not just good news; such laughter is redeeming.



# Dreams on Hold

**D**reams for enacting comprehensive immigration reform were alive until this past summer, when Congress refused to pass legislation that would have offered a tentative but real path to citizenship for the estimated 12 million undocumented people who live and work in the United States. Early in 2007, the president himself tried to move toward reform that would bring these people out of the shadows and into the public eye. But again and again, restrictionists sounded the cry of “amnesty for lawbreakers.” They generated millions of angry e-mail messages and letters to their representatives in Congress, who, heeding the anti-immigrant rhetoric, failed to act positively on one of the major issues of our time. In the meantime, raids on workplaces and homes continue to separate citizen-children from their parents.

Among the casualties of proposed immigration reform was the bipartisan Dream Act, which failed to garner the needed 60 Senate votes late last month. The name of the act is an acronym for the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors. It would have allowed hundreds of thousands of immigrant children who entered the United States before age 16 and grew up here as the offspring of undocumented parents to apply for temporary legal status. Then, if they attended college for two years or served two years in the military, they could apply for permanent status as a path to citizenship.

The Dream Act is one of the least controversial immigration proposals, concerning as it does children brought here from other countries but who essentially grew up as Americans. One recent case concerns two brothers, Juan and Alejandro Gómez, brought to Florida as infants from Colombia. Their parents came legally, but overstayed their visas and sought asylum because of the murder of relatives in Colombia. Their appeal was denied, and both parents were deported. Now grown, the two sons are in college in Miami. Juan in particular has shown exceptional academic ability. Senator Christopher Dodd, Democrat of Connecticut, and Representative Lincoln Díaz-Balart, Republican of Florida, introduced private bills on the brothers’ behalf. Their deportation has been suspended until 2009.

Expressing disappointment at the Dream Act’s failure to win the needed 60 votes in the Senate, Kevin Appleby, director of the Migration and Refugee Policy office of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, told **America** that

“instead of investing in young persons who will return threefold what we put into their education,” Congress instead chose to bow to what he called “the politics of immigration.” Referring to localities that have enacted anti-immigrant legislation—like the city of Hazleton in Pennsylvania, which voted to penalize landlords who rented to undocumented immigrants and employers who hired them—he said that while such statutes “may play well politically,” they may not be in the communities’ best interest when immigrants depart and leave behind an economic lag as businesses suffer and industries like construction cannot find enough workers. Over the past two years, more than 30 towns have enacted statutes penalizing undocumented immigrants. A number of these ordinances are now being challenged in courts, and some have been overturned, he added, a circumstance that makes it clear that the solution lies at the federal level. “Apparently, we’re going to have to go through all these phases before Congress is pushed to act,” he concluded.

Late in July, a federal judge struck down Hazleton’s immigration ordinances, noting in his ruling that “persons who enter this country without legal authorization are not stripped immediately of all their rights because of this single illegal act.” In New Jersey, the town of Riverside also passed a punitive ordinance aimed at immigrants; but, clearly influenced by events in Hazleton, the town council rescinded the ordinance in September. Other localities have also begun to re-examine statutes that have damaged economies and run up heavy legal bills trying to defend themselves against challenges by advocacy groups.

**TO THEIR CREDIT, THE U.S. BISHOPS** have been working for years in support of comprehensive immigration legislation. In May, while hopes for immigration reform still ran high, Cardinal Roger Mahony of Los Angeles said in an address in Philadelphia that “the remedy to our broken system is to provide legal status and an opportunity for permanent residency for those in the country currently, as well as legal avenues for future migrant workers.” Sadly, mending the broken system may have to wait until after the presidential election. Meanwhile, 12 million men, women and children will continue to live a shadowy existence in fear of deportation. As the negative politics of immigration takes an ever greater toll, the dream of an equitable solution appears to be on indefinite hold.

### Bishops Issue Forceful Statement on Iraq

Some U.S. policymakers “seem to fail to recognize sufficiently the reality and failures in Iraq and the imperative for new directions,” warned the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in a new statement on transition in Iraq. The statement issued Nov. 13 by the conference president, Bishop William S. Skylstad of Spokane, Wash., reiterates the bishops’ insistence that the transition of U.S. forces out of Iraq should take into account moral issues, such as minimizing the loss of human life, addressing the humanitarian crisis in Iraq, the situation of refugees and the protection of human rights, especially religious freedom. The bishops agreed a day earlier to have Bishop Skylstad issue a statement on their behalf. The statement bemoans the “political and partisan stalemate in Washington,” which it describes as a parallel to the “dangerous political stalemate” that blocks reconciliation in Iraq. It also includes a question-and-answer supplement that describes in greater detail the U.S.C.C.B. positions on action in Iraq, on withdrawal of troops, on fighting terrorism and on the treatment of religious minorities in Iraq, refugees and U.S. military personnel and their families.

### Mary Ann Glendon New Ambassador to Vatican



Mary Ann Glendon

President George W. Bush will nominate Mary Ann Glendon, a law professor at Harvard University and president of the Pontifical Academy of Social

Sciences, as the new U.S. ambassador to the Vatican. The White House made the announcement late Nov. 5. The nomination becomes official when Mr. Bush sends it to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which will hold a hearing before sending the nomination to the full Senate for confirmation. As of Nov. 7 no hearing had been scheduled. Glendon, a Catholic, said in a Nov. 6 statement that she hoped that her “background in international legal studies, together with my familiarity with Catholic social thought, will aid me in continuing the fruitful dialogue that presently exists between the United States and the Holy See” on a variety of issues. Those issues include

human rights, religious freedom, human trafficking, development and “the fight against hunger, disease and poverty,” she said.

### Annual Audits Urged for All Parishes

A report by the U.S. bishops’ Ad Hoc Committee on Diocesan Audits recommends annual reporting by every parish as well as the exercise of a degree of caution in the traditional presumption that church employees view their work as ministry and do not need oversight. Such a “trusting environment” can be exploited by a dishonest worker, it said. “While the vast majority of our pastors, parish finance councils and staff does excellent work in managing very limited resources to the maximum advantage, we have all seen reports of occasional financial mismanagement in parishes,” said Bishop Daniel F. Walsh of Santa Rosa, Calif., chairman of the committee.

### Pope Will Visit U.S. in April 2008

Pope Benedict XVI will visit Washington and New York from April 15 to 20, 2008. Archbishop Pietro Sambi, apostolic nuncio to the United States, confirmed the dates of the papal trip and announced the pope’s itinerary in remarks Nov. 12 at the beginning of the annual fall meeting of the U.S. bishops in Baltimore. According to the archbishop, the pope will arrive in Washington April 15 and will receive an official welcome at the White House April 16. That afternoon he will address the U.S. bishops. The following day he will celebrate Mass at the new Washington Nationals baseball stadium in Washington. Later that day he will meet with heads of Catholic universities and colleges and diocesan educational leaders at The Catholic University of America in Washington, and then he is to attend an interreligious meeting at the Pope John Paul II Cultural Center. On April 18, the pope will be in New York to address the United Nations in the morning and attend an ecumenical meeting in the afternoon. The following day he will

### Bishops Elect Francis E. George as President



Francis E. George

The U.S. bishops Nov. 13 elected Cardinal Francis E. George of Chicago as their president and Bishop Gerald F. Kicanas of Tucson, Ariz., as their vice president. Using an electronic voting system for the first time, the bishops voted on the second day of their fall general meeting in Baltimore, Md. Cardinal George won on the first ballot with 188 votes, or 85 percent. He is completing his three-year term as vice president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. He is the first cardinal to be elected president or vice president of the conference since 1971. Cardinal George succeeds Bishop William S. Skylstad of Spokane, Wash., whose three-year term came to an end at the close of the meetings last week.

concelebrate Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral in the morning and meet with youths and seminarians in the afternoon. The pope also will visit ground zero on the morning of April 20. That afternoon, he will celebrate Mass at Yankee Stadium as the final event of his U.S. trip.

### Vatican Official Urges Holy Land Compromise

Not working to bring an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through negotiation and compromise will perpetuate continued injustice, said the Vatican's permanent observer to the United Nations. Archbishop Celestino Migliore said the Vatican "remains convinced that the two-state solution has the best chance to settle the crisis." However, he said, it is up to Israelis, Palestinians and neighboring states to "set aside the pretense of peace-making and start full negotiations on the two-state solution." The archbishop made his remarks Nov. 8 to a committee of the U.N. General Assembly. He said the Vatican also believes "a lasting solution must include the status of the holy city of Jerusalem." He said, "The numerous incidents of violence and challenges to free movement posed by the [Israeli] security wall" along the West Bank have prompted the Vatican to renew calls for internationally guaranteed provisions that ensure the freedom of religion and conscience for those who live in Jerusalem and "permanent, free and unhindered access to the holy places by the faithful of all religions and nationalities."

### E.U. Criticizes Turkey for Not Protecting Minorities

As the European Union prepares for a summit in December, its governing commission has criticized Turkey for failing to protect Turkish Christian minorities. "Attacks against clergy and places of worship of non-Muslim communities have been reported. Missionaries have been portrayed in the media or by the authorities as a threat to the integrity of the country," said a commission report pub-

From CNS and other sources. CNS photos.

lished in early November. "To date, use of language that might incite hatred against non-Muslim minorities has been left unpunished," it said, adding that non-Muslim religious communities continue to face a lack of legal norms "and restricted property rights." Most of Turkey's more than 70 million citizens are Sunni Muslims. Christians, who make up less than 1 percent of the Turkish population, have often complained of discrimination in Turkey.

### Jewish Scholar Writes on Palestinian Refugees

The Vatican newspaper had one of Italy's most prominent Jewish scholars, Anna Foa, write an article about historical memory, focusing on a new book about the origins of the Palestinian refugee problem. Giovanni Maria Vian, the new

editor of *L'Osservatore Romano*, said that since the Vatican newspaper is almost 150 years old, he could not say for sure if the paper had ever published a Jewish author. "But it probably is the first time that a Jewish voice has been asked to make a cultural contribution," he told reporters. Foa told the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera* that she was pleased to have been asked to contribute to the Vatican newspaper and that seeing her name in the Nov. 9 issue "was moving." Vian told reporters he asked Foa to write as part of an effort "to open the newspaper to a lively and broad cultural discussion with an international scope. For that reason, authoritative voices from various areas will be included." Foa's article focused on the recent publication in Italian of *Bad Memories: The Debate in Israel Over the Expulsion of the Palestinians in 1948-1949*, by Anita Shapira.

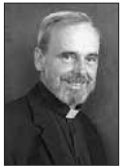
### Holy Land Religious Leaders Unite for Peace



Leaders of the three major religions of the Holy Land traveled to Washington, D.C., to announce initiatives to institutionalize their commitment to decreasing violence. Latin Patriarch Michel Sabbah of Jerusalem said the religious leaders will help expedite "rapid communication" among Jewish, Muslim and Christian leaders to address hot issues before they become sources of conflict. Holy sites can help spark conflict, but the religious leaders will work together so that the sites "remain only places for

prayer," Patriarch Sabbah said at a Nov. 7 press conference. He said the religious leaders also have agreed to "reflect on the status of Jerusalem," a city regarded by Muslims, Jews and Christians as holy. Interfaith leaders announced the initiatives of the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land, an organization of Jewish, Muslim and Christian religious leaders. Council members' visits to the United States were funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development.





## In Defense of Human Life

‘The abortion debate is about who and what we are.’

—Francis J. Beckwith

**B**Y THE TIME this column appears, the U.S. Catholic bishops will probably have issued their document *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility*. I hope the first two words of the title are retained, for they represent the particular challenges American Catholics face when they address the public square on matters of abortion and embryonic stem cell research.

To “form” is to inform. And information is vital to sound judgment, especially one’s moral judgment, one’s conscience. The problem is this: there is a great deal of ignorance and misinformation about human embryological development.

Take, for example, a recent article by Garry Wills, “Abortion Isn’t a Religious Issue,” that appeared in the Los Angeles Times and was featured on National Public Radio. Wills, a gifted scholar and writer who has had considerable training in philosophy and theology, manages to confuse the reader thrice in three short paragraphs.

“It is certainly true that the fetus is human life. But so is the semen before it fertilizes.” Does he really mean to compare a 23-chromosome reproductive cell that, by itself, is a biological dead end, with a 46-chromosome zygote (or fertilized ovum) that is the beginning of a unique human existence? I guess he does. Semen has the potential to become something other than it now is if it is united with an ovum. That something else is a new being, a human being with potential, not a

potential human.

After aligning himself with a group of thinkers who claim that there are human beings who are not persons, Wills states that “a functioning brain is not present in the fetus until the end of the sixth month at the earliest.” Does this mean that if a birth happens three days before six months, the premature baby has no functioning brain? Does it mean that all muscle activity and movement prior to six months does not require any integrated brain function?

Such a muddle of misinformation indicates how huge a task the American bishops face if they wish to help “form” moral judgment. Surely they want Catholics to engage the debate with more than an argument from authority. More surely still, the bishops must know that in order to influence political discourse, evidence and reasoned argument, not religious conviction, is the only way to be effective.

An outstanding example of such argument can be found in a new book published by Cambridge University Press. It is *Defending Life: A Moral and Legal Case Against Abortion Choice*, by Francis J. Beckwith, a professor of philosophy and jurisprudence at Baylor University.

In the first third of his book, Beckwith does three things. 1) He examines moral reasoning and offers a defense of objective moral standards against the claims of relativism. 2) He provides a legal analysis and critique of *Roe v. Wade* and subsequent abortion case decisions. 3) He argues that a pro-life position, even though it may correspond to religious conviction, is not based upon faith. Rather, it is based upon scientific evidence and the answer to the question,

“Who counts as a member of the human community?”

*Defending Life’s* middle section begins with a review of the scientific data, especially genetic, cellular and embryological data, supporting the conclusion that a human being’s life begins at conception. He meticulously (and successfully, I believe) engages the evidence and data that challenge his own position.

The sixth chapter, serving as the linchpin for Beckwith’s case, presents the “substance” view of person: an individual being of a certain kind. Activities, growth and fulfillment do not constitute human personhood, but reveal it. Human actions and performance are possible only because there is a kind of living being or organism, a substance, which can do them. Lacking an operational ability to think, whether at the beginning of life or at the end, indicates immaturity, trauma, disease or senility; it does not indicate loss of personhood. It is here that Beckwith establishes his premise that an unborn human entity, “from the moment of conception, is a full-fledged member of the human community.” In addressing the objections of writers like David Boonin, Judith Jarvis Thomson and Ronald Dworkin, Beckwith offers convincing support that the substance view has superior explanatory power, while it avoids counterintuitive results of a non-substance view.

Beckwith concludes with applications to present controversies over embryonic stem cell research and therapeutic cloning—creating a nascent human being only to use and destroy it. Throughout the book he charitably and thoroughly engages those who oppose him. *Defending Life* is a model of how a pro-life position is effectively mounted. One might hope that defenders of abortion would as thoughtfully engage his arguments.

I at least hope that our own bishops will take up this work and, upon reading it, offer it to every parish library in the country. They might also request that lay leaders, especially physicians, lawyers, teachers and business persons, enlist such a book in their efforts not only to form their own consciences, but also to inform and elevate the somewhat cheapened and knee-jerk moral discourse over the issue of abortion.

*John F. Kavanaugh, S.J.*

JOHN F. KAVANAUGH, S.J., is a professor of philosophy at St. Louis University in St. Louis, Mo.





PHOTO ©BRAD REYNOLDS, S.J.

Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, superior general of the Society of Jesus

# ‘Let Us Look Together to Christ’

– BY JIM McDERMOTT –

*On Sept. 13, 1983, Peter-Hans Kolvenbach was elected 29th superior general of the Society of Jesus on the first ballot. Originally from the Netherlands, he had spent most of his life teaching linguistics in Lebanon and overseeing the Near East Province of the Society of Jesus. As superior general, he would become well known for his diplomacy, discretion and wit, and for his encyclopedic knowledge of the people and apostolates of the Jesuits around the world. In January 2008, at their general congregation, Jesuits will elect a replacement as Father Kolvenbach retires after 25 years in office. He spoke with JIM McDERMOTT, S.J., associate editor of **America**, about his life, his time in office and his hopes for the church.*

**W**HAT WAS IT LIKE *growing up in the Netherlands during World War II?* It seems that war experience belongs to the formation of a general. Before his conversion, Ignatius of Loyola defended heroically the fortress of Pamplona in Spain against the French army in 1521. Father Arrupe, my predecessor, had the cruel experience of the first atomic attack on Hiroshima in Japan. To my formation belonged not only World War II, especially the violent defense of the nearby German border from September 1944 until April 1945, but also the long years in war-torn Beirut when Lebanon's independence was at stake. War teaches you to live in complete insecurity and precariousness, aware that coping with conflicts and tensions is more common than is a nice, peaceful existence. And after a night of deadly violence, the birds sing again, announcing that in spite of destructive human hate, death will never have the last word in the Creator's will. To experience this paschal creed is good preparation for becoming a general.

***What led you to enter the Society of Jesus?***

As secondary school students after the war, we gathered books to make the lives of the many political prisoners more humane. In the midst of all the junk generously offered to us, I discovered a small booklet, which caught

my attention because it contained not only words but sets of horizontal lines. I opened it and read Ignatius' foundational principle. In all the turmoil and disappointment the war had produced, the vision of Ignatius came like a light. When I told my novice master how I had read this short text, he informed me that I had not understood it. Still, it brought me to enter the Society.

***How did you come to work in Lebanon?***

I was just sent. As a novice I had expressed the desire to go to Russia (no answer from Rome), then to Communist East Germany after a car accident in which that province lost all its novices (positive answer from Rome). But at the last moment I was sent to the Near East, where the ongoing war in Algeria could easily have led to the expulsion of all the French Jesuits. When in October 1958 we arrived by boat in the harbor of Beirut, Lebanon, fighting was going on. The 18 different religious groups were trying to dominate one another, making political and military alliances with the help of neighbouring countries. Still, Lebanon wanted to maintain a message that diverse people can live, work and practice their beliefs with one another. The welcome of the Lebanese was unforgettable. Even as the division in the country grew worse, never was the hope abandoned that Lebanon might become a sign of communal harmony for the whole Near East.

**THANK YOU, FR. KOLVENBACH!**

The Creighton University community is grateful for your presence with us for our 125th Anniversary Celebration and for the visionary address you gave us for our ongoing reflection on Partnership together:

*"Cooperating with Each Other in Mission."*

May our Lord bless you for your leadership and courage.

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— The Very Rev. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach - October 7, 2004*

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*Creighton President the Rev. John P. Schlegel, S.J., and Jesuit Superior the Very Rev. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., bless the St. Ignatius sculpture on campus.*

***When you became a Jesuit, did you have any sense that you might be elected general?***

I had no such sense; at every level I was an outsider. The Near East Province covered a complicated area from Egypt to Turkey, including Jordan, the Holy Land, Syria and Lebanon. That apostolic context required full attention to the destiny of the Eastern churches, to the increasing political and religious influence of Islam and to the problems of a large number of Palestinian refugees. Many there found it difficult to forget and to forgive a violent past, impossible to plan a future, given the political uncertainty, and difficult to solve daily problems. For all those reasons what happened in the world and in the universal church—issues like secularization and liberation, inculturation and promotion of justice—remained completely outside our perspectives. My appointment as rector of the Oriental Institute in Rome did not change the situation substantially. For a new start the congregation was looking for a newcomer, a reasonable, understandable choice, but risky. An outsider was “in.”

***In 1981, after Pedro Arrupe, the general at the time, suffered a stroke, the pope intervened in the governance of the Society and installed a delegate to run the Society. What was the situation when you were elected two years later?***

Thanks to the efforts of the delegate of John Paul II, Father Paolo Dezza, and his assistant, Father Joseph Pittau, com-

munication between the Holy See and the Jesuits already was restored. The Holy Father himself was impressed by the obedient way the Society had accepted the quite severe intervention in its government. For a long time he had been reluctant to allow a general congregation to come together, especially to elect a successor to Father Arrupe, being afraid that given the sharp division among the Jesuits, a general congregation would be explosive and conflictive. Recognizing the union of our hearts and minds in obedient fidelity to the directives of the vicar of Christ on earth, the pope allowed the general congregation to go ahead. As a sign of its union it elected the successor to Father Arrupe on the first ballot.

***As general, what changes have you seen in the Society?***

Quoting the Holy Father, I would say that the Society of Jesus has become more spiritual, more ecclesial and more apostolic. It is more spiritual through the awareness that the mystical experience of St. Ignatius laid down in the *Spiritual Exercises* has to be lived out. In that living out we can help people today to encounter the One who stands at the beginning and at the end of every human life, giving us our personal vocation and mission. It is more ecclesial in that a “cordial indifference” with regard to the pastor of the church has been transformed into an apostolic harmony under and with Peter. It is more apostolic in that, according

## Honoring a Man for Others

*Celebrating the life and ministry of*

**PETER HANS  
KOLVENBACH, S.J.**

Superior General of the  
Society of Jesus



**LOYOLA PRESS.**  
A JESUIT MINISTRY

to Paul VI and repeated by John Paul II, wherever in the church there has been confrontation between the deepest desires of the human person and the perennial message of the Gospel, be it at the crossroads of ideologies, in the frontline of social conflict or in the most difficult and extreme fields, there have been and there are Jesuits.

***Six years after you were elected general, six Jesuits, their housekeeper and her daughter were killed in El Salvador; what recollections do you have of them?***

I had an opportunity to meet the Jesuits of El Salvador when huge disparities between the lives of rich and poor had provoked a war between the army and liberation fighters. The Jesuit university stood with the poor and with the murdered Archbishop Romero, working for the justice of the kingdom.

When I visited El Salvador again after the killing of the Jesuit professors, it was clear that the assassinated Jesuits, like so many Christians before and after them, in spite of political and ideological implications had brought the countercultural gift of Christ to a world bewildered by injustice and violence, hatred and persecution. To preach Christ poor and humble with fidelity and courage, not only in the churches but in the universities, is to expect fierce resistance, even death. One of the Jesuits I met before he was murdered smiled when I told him he was considered a follower of Karl Marx. He quoted the Jesuit *Constitutions*, expressing his desire to resemble and imitate the Lord in some manner, who is the only way that leads to life.

***A number of Jesuit theologians have had struggles with bishops and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith over the last 25 years. How would you characterize such conflicts? What is the role of a Jesuit theologian?***

The indispensable work of theologians has always advanced at the service of the church through misunderstandings and suspicions, tensions and conflicts. As the holy and learned Thomas Aquinas used to lament, with our very best human expressions and insights we succeed in saying what the divine mystery is not, but we will never be able to say fully what it is in all its profundity. Before Thomas the church fathers had spoken about the church as the mystery of the moon: it enlightens our night, but all its light comes from elsewhere (the moon being itself, as Professor Joseph Ratzinger observed later, just rocks and sand).

With so many challenges coming up, we should thank the theologians for illuminating the road Christ's church has to walk. Also, because they don't possess the light themselves, they should with us and for us listen to the universal pastor, who is called to accomplish the great service of telling us in our search for Christ's light, "He is here, he is not there" (as John Paul I said in his installation homily). A theologian cannot neglect this pastoral responsibility in carrying out his scientific task.

Quoting the Holy Father, I would say that the Society of Jesus has become more spiritual, more ecclesial and more apostolic.

***How can the Ignatian charism positively influence the struggle with religious and social polarization?***

As long as we remain in the polarization of conservatives and progressives, of left

and right, we will paralyze or block apostolic freedom and response. The Spirit is pushing us forward on the way to him who makes all things new, who will build up with us a new earth and a new heaven, the city of God. This newness of the Lord is not found in the hermeneutics of discontinuity, a breaking with the past, but, as Pope Benedict XVI pointed out, in the hermeneutics of continuity; newness is born out of him who is coming to renew the world by the fullness of his truth and by the accomplishment of the always new commandment of love. Instead of looking suspiciously at one another, let us look together to Christ.

***Could you speak about the current missions of the Society?***

Because the Jesuits are present worldwide, we have a "natural mission" to take care of people on the move: refugees, asylum seekers, undocumented people and migrants. This mission involves our presence in camps and in advocacy for more humane state regulations. The Jesuit Refugee Service has to operate often in a protean world, in which the people on the move are not only poor, but foreign and displaced.

This service would not be possible without a large partnership with non-Jesuits, especially laypeople. It was the American experience that inspired us to develop this Jesuit-lay partnership. We are not serving the church well if we remain exclusively Jesuits "for others." The Spirit speaking to us in the Vatican Council enabled us to rediscover the church as a communion within which we are called to be men "for others with others." In all our works, educational as well as scientific, missionary and pastoral, social and in the mass media, we have learned to share our spiritual and apostolic inheritance: to listen and to learn from others. This feature of our Jesuit vocation has been strongly devel-



oped. I hope and pray that, inspired by the experience of St. Ignatius in the *Spiritual Exercises*, we can continue this mission, which leads Jesuits, other religious and laypeople to a personal encounter with the Lord, the origin of our vocation and of our mission in the world.

***How would you describe the situation of the Society today?***

With Father Arrupe I would say that we as Jesuits are not as brilliant and excellent as people believe us to be, and we are not the liberals, protesters and free-thinkers some like to say we are. The Ignatian experience continues to push us in our way of life in the Lord and in all our activities to the *magis*—the ever greater glory of God, the ever fuller service of our neighbor. In the face of increasing apostolic responsibilities, in some parts of the world we are an aging society with less manpower, and in other parts a young society, numerous but still in training.

It is a real struggle to assure the people of God of a service of apostolic quality and to face the many new challenges. There should be more “holy boldness” to go where the need is greater. As long as this desire for the glory of God is awake in us, as it is, we are in line with what the universal pastor expects from us.

***Are there particular Scriptures you rely on in your work?***

During my training in linguistics, a professor asked me to report on all the grammatical and syntactical irregularities in Greek of the last book of the Bible. I discovered in the Revelation of John not only linguistic errors, but many enlightening images of the One on the throne, of him who is standing at our door knocking, of the Spirit saying, “Come.” Even today its images point to the reality of

churches—forgetting their first love, believing that they are alive when they are dead, listening to false prophets and still called by the Lord to wake up, to be cold or hot but not lukewarm. John’s message is not a doomsday story but a tale of two cities: the world of hate and destruction and the holy new Jerusalem coming down from God, where God lives among the people.

***What has being the general taught you about the Society, the church and God?***

It has taught me that the parable of the Lord in Mt 13:24 is more than ever the reality of the church and of the Society within it. In both the Lord has sowed good seed. The crop has matured; it is visible worldwide for all who want to see the hand of the Lord at work. If we open our eyes, we see in the church and in the Society so much growing.

However, says the parable, throughout the wheat the enemy of human nature sowed weeds. And the wheat and weeds are so intermingled that the Lord of the harvest, in his concern not to kill the good coming up, lets them grow together. That evil sticks to the good things developing should be recognized, but it should not discourage us, because what he has started for us is good (Jn 1:1-3). And being always with us and for us, he will show the world, in a paschal way, that life is stronger than death, love is stronger than all possible evil.

***What do you plan to do after you retire?***

If everything goes well, I will join the rank-and-file Jesuits in the Near East, in the hope that I can be a help, not a burden in that war-torn region our Lord saw and loved.

***Do you have any advice for the next general?***

I am not free to give advice. St. Ignatius traced clearly the profile of the superior general, adding quality to quality: he should be one of those who are most outstanding in every virtue, and known as such for the longest time. Having said this, Ignatius probably realized that his profile was too idealistic, so he added that if the wanted qualities were absent, the candidate should at least not lack great probity and love for the Society.

God’s help and favor will supply much, and the general can count on the good will and advice of his companions. My advice is to count on the Lord in prayerful discernment under and with Peter, sustained by the union of hearts and minds of all your friends in the Lord. **A**

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# Alpha and Omega

*The first in a series for Advent and Christmas*

BY JOSEPH A. O'HARE

**T**O THE NONBELIEVING observer the different liturgical seasons can appear at first to be an exercise in make-believe. When Christians begin the season of Advent, do they pretend that the Nativity has not already happened, so that they can celebrate the birth of Jesus at Christmas with fresh innocence? Make-believe of any kind, is, of course, totally opposed to the experience of faith, the nonbeliever to the contrary. Authentic Christian faith is never an escape from life, and make-believe, occasional or chronic, is a dangerous form of escape.

The seasons of the liturgical year are not times for pretending but exercises in remembrance that focus on different events in salvation history, inspired by the belief that God continues to act in our world according to patterns revealed in biblical history. God's word was not only spoken in the past but continues to be spoken today. As the Old Testament texts repeat: today you must hear the word of the Lord.

To hear the word of the Lord we must pay attention. And that is one way of describing what the season of Advent is all about: paying attention. The great figures of the Advent liturgy (Isaiah the prophet, John the Baptist and Mary the mother of Jesus) are all models of paying attention, concentrating on what is important as the several biblical Isaiahs did, being single-minded in its pursuit as John was and waiting in hope as Mary did. All three of these Advent figures suggest ways to clear the clutter from our lives and focus more freely on what really deserves our attention.

JOSEPH A. O'HARE, S.J., is an associate editor of *America*.

There is some irony, then, in the fact that the season of Advent in the liturgical calendar coincides with the end of the year in the secular calendar. The end of the year brings with it a flurry of activities: the busiest shopping season, a frenzied social



calendar for families and friends. It is not the best time for the kind of silent night that helps us pay attention to what is really important.

As we recall the waiting of Israel during this Advent season, we do not simply bring past history to mind, but in that act of remembrance we recognize our own longings and hopes. What we want determines, to a great extent, who we are. Our desires, of course, are many; some are trivial, others only dimly perceived. And we live in a consumer society where a busy, creative advertising industry is devoted to the creation of desires. Many of our desires are deceptive—not just the momentary tugs on the heart but our grander projects as well. Sometimes the good we want is counterfeit. Other times

the deception is in thinking that we really want it. Are our aspirations a kind of make-believe, or do they really spring from the deepest center of our selves?

Advent can be a sorting out of the wants and needs that crisscross our spirit.

It can be a time for clearing space, not so much a paring down of our desires, as traditional asceticism seems to suggest, but rather a recognition of what our desires really mean, the source from which they spring, what and who it is we really seek under false names and by ingenious detours. Advent can be a time for winding ways to be straightened and rough roads made smooth. It is the time to remember that only by seeking the Lord with all our heart will our hearts ever become whole.

The liturgy as it often does, sets our personal experience on a wider stage: the triumphant day of the Lord and the fulfillment of his kingdom. Advent is a call to faith in the meaning of human history and the meaning of each individual life. No one knows the exact day or the hour, but Christ will come again to gather his faithful from all the corners of the earth.

The course of history can seem haphazard, even as we do not recognize the hunger behind our desires; but there is a direction at work, and in this season we dare to give it a name: Emmanuel, the God who is with us and who is still to come. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. The human heart has been touched by the fire of Christ, as Isaiah's lips were touched by the burning coal. It is here our restless desires catch spark. Christ, too, is the promise of who we are to be, that final blaze of glory when all make-believe is over and all hidden meaning revealed. He was and is and always will be. **A**

# A Man for Our Season

## 'Michael Clayton,' one man's ethical wasteland

BY RICHARD A. BLAKE

**W**E NEED NOT GO BACK as far as Thomas More, even the saint as updated in Robert Bolt's film, to find moral heroes in cinema. Through the movies of an earlier age we saw Jimmy Stewart, Henry Fonda and even Gary Cooper portray plain-speaking men who faced down the "big shots" with simple homespun certainties. They were country boys, but they knew right from wrong, and no fancy talk from city slickers could change their minds. These men rose from the plains and cornfields to seize the moral high ground and defend it as their personal Masada. They were Thomas Mores in overalls.

What a difference a few decades have made. Over the past seven years, the folksy language of Frank Capra's America has been co-opted to mask unspeakable atrocities. In a complicated world of competing ideologies, plain speaking and unshakable certainties have led to a corruption of values rather than ethical clarity. Ends no longer merely justify means; now dubious ends dictate repugnant means. Torture has entered the vocabulary as a less reprehensible concept than welfare. Robbed of both innocence and decency, we

no longer wonder who has seized the moral high ground, but whether a moral high ground exists anywhere.

**Michael Clayton** offers an illuminating tour of one man's contemporary ethical wasteland. The eponymous hero, played with baggy-eyed brilliance by George Clooney, has prospered as a lawyer and leading citizen of this barren landscape. He is a man for our season, and in his weariness he embodies exhaustion, not malice. His marriage has ended, but he remains devoted to his dying father and eight-year-old son. One of his brothers has followed the family tradition of joining the police force; the other has surrendered his life to drugs. Clayton drives a leased Mercedes and wears impeccable Brooks Brothers suits, but his losses at high-stakes

poker in Chinatown and an investment in a failed restaurant have kept him from putting away much money. Unlike his colleagues, he has no Harvard, Columbia or Wharton degree; he's one of us, the son of a cop. Clayton graduated first from St. John's University in Queens, then from Fordham Law School, but Catholic teaching has left little mark on him. He made the best of his opportunities in the district attorney's office, then in the corporate world. His morality is not ambiguous as much as simply non-existent.

At the firm of Kenner Bach, Michael Clayton functions as an invaluable member of the team, but he will always be an outsider—never a partner—and he knows it. He is valued as a "fixer," or as he puts it a "janitor" who cleans up other people's



George Clooney stars in a scene from the movie "Michael Clayton."

CNS PHOTO/WARNER BROS.

RICHARD A. BLAKE, S.J., is professor of fine arts and co-director of the film studies program at Boston College in Chestnut Hill, Mass.



messes. With the ease of “fixing” a parking ticket, he has the contacts to get the firm’s clients out of embarrassing situations. His powerbase is his Rolodex and telephone; he never appears in court. Other lawyers regard him as a piece of expensive office furniture, yet they rely on Clayton to deal with congressional investigators or curious reporters from *The Wall Street Journal*.

The script, by first-time director Tony Gilroy, demands patience and attention before the pieces of the non-linear narrative fall into place. A bizarre, off-screen monologue recounts a dream about being

caught in the middle of a busy avenue with traffic hurtling toward the speaker, who cannot escape because he is covered with a mysterious slime. Later the voice is connected to Arthur Edens (Tom Wilkinson), a partner who has suffered a psychotic collapse while representing a corporate client at a discovery hearing in Milwaukee. Clayton will take care of it; he routinely handles such matters. He flies to Milwaukee to get Edens out of jail and back on his medications and assures the client that the episode has not damaged its case.

Karen Crowder (Tilda Swinton) stands in front of a mirror rehearsing a speech, which seems at first to be preparation for a job interview. She stands in front of her dressing table, as the camera pointedly reveals a body that is far from starlet perfect. Her impeccable wardrobe covers her personal insecurities and moral blemishes, as well as the belt of surplus flesh that stubbornly resists her regular gym workouts. Before long, she is identified not as a job applicant, but as chief corporate counsel for U/North, a company that produces fertilizer. She will be working with Kenner Bach, which has been handling a case for U/North for eight years and profiting quite nicely from the relationship. The company has been relying on a slick public relations campaign and legal tap dancing, choreographed by Kenner’s shrewdest litigator, Arthur Edens, to work its way out of a multibillion-dollar class-action lawsuit for distributing a carcinogenic weed killer.

Tony Gilroy’s script avoids the easy clichés of eco-terrorism waged by greedy stockholders against a defenseless population. Michael Clayton is no Erin Brockovich in wingtips. If David does face Goliath, Clayton will side with Goliath, since he is paid to help his firm defend its clients regardless of their guilt or innocence. Besides, Clayton needs the money badly. His debts are held by shady characters who warn of ominous consequences if he cannot produce \$75,000 within the week. He does nothing outside the law, but the margins of lawfulness seem especially porous at times.

As Clayton, George Clooney gropes toward morality, but doesn’t really want to find it; he is resourceful, but confused. Mastering his role, Clooney makes us sympathize with Clayton for his hard choices, rather than despise him for his venality.

His two co-leads are equally dazzling. Arthur Edens has gone mad after eight years of defending what he has come to believe is indefensible. Tom Wilkinson lets his character rave in his sickness, but never for a moment does he allow us to forget Edens’s intelligence. He’s too skillful for his own good. His success in defending U/North becomes unbearable to him. His colleague, or accomplice, Karen Crowder has risen through the all-male ranks of corporate lawyers because she excels at what she does. Despite her



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success, however, she is a bundle of insecurities, even though she knows she will be the smartest, most powerful person in the room. She continually tugs at her power suit to make sure it masks those inconvenient bulges, since she feels this is what her male colleagues will see in her. She can be ruthless, but Swinton's acting makes us sympathize with her. After all, Crowder has a point to prove: as a female she cannot display any weakness, even when she is being pressured into doing something horrible. When her lip quivers for an instant and she looks down, we know she is being torn apart by her decisions, not so much for their depravity as for her own uncertainty about their consequences.

While the lawyer Michael Clayton stands at the center of this psychological drama, he is actually a symptom, perhaps even a victim, of the world he inhabits. Clayton lacks a moral compass because here there is no true magnetic north, except of course U/North, the corporate giant that directs all the characters. But it is, in the end, a fertilizer company. Arthur Edens goes mad with his realization of the absurdity of it all. Or perhaps Edens is the sane one, with the rest of the universe gone mad around him. We wonder if Clayton will follow the path Crowder took and prosper in the morass. Or will he reject the lunacy of the situation and find his own way to drop out, as Arthur Edens has done? In the film's final sequence, we still have no clear indication of Clayton's future.

**ALTHOUGH THE FILM BASES** its claim to excellence on an extremely literate script, two wordless scenes reveal Clayton's inner struggle in a particularly poignant way. In one scene, he sits at a table in his failed restaurant looking at a soggy paper cup of coffee in front of him, as an auctioneer sells off the kitchen utensils—how fleeting is success. In another, he parks his Mercedes on the side of a country road and walks quietly to a hilltop where three horses gaze at a sunrise. He has a moment of insight, an epiphany perhaps, of the values he might have heard about at St. John's and Fordham. Perhaps the three horses even hold some Trinitarian meaning for him. These two moments offer hope that Clayton will find his way through the wilderness, eventually. It's a journey all of us can treasure as we make it with him. **A**

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# Fascinating Company

## The American Jesuits

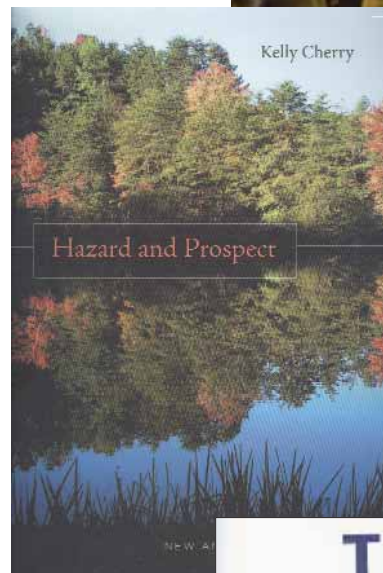
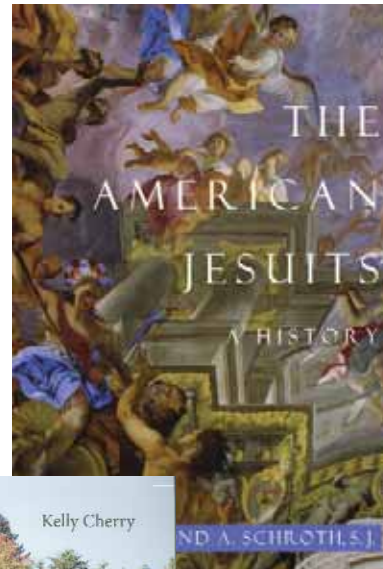
### A History

By Raymond A. Schroth, S.J.  
 New York Univ. Press. 368p \$29.95  
 ISBN 9780814740255

In 1851, the author of *Americans Warned of Jesuitism* sought to expose the “Jesuits, who fill the Roman Catholic churches, invade your colleges and educate your children, who are scattered everywhere in the richest cities of the United States.” They were in Oregon and California (“wherever money was made,” apparently) and they were incorrigibly sly and subtle: their megalomaniacal plans were always cloaked beneath modest dress and studied smiles. The American branch of the 19th-century Society of Jesus would suffer many such calumnies, reiterations of familiar tropes in the anti-Jesuit arsenal. The same prejudices would inspire the locals of Ellsworth, Me., to strip, tar and feather the Jesuit John Bapst in October 1854, lead Charles Chiniquy to accuse the Jesuits of assassinating Lincoln and allow Samuel Morse to dream up papal armies poised to invade America. And yet, as the Society had learned from long, hard experience, its enemies had always tended to be most vocal when notable Jesuit achievements were being secured.

The 19th century was no exception. The Society certainly endured its share of tensions and squabbles during these years. Determining precisely what it meant to be an American Jesuit, negotiating the American political landscape with its separation of church and state, hammering out a workable relationship with Rome: these were all difficult labors that provoked serious divisions within the Society’s ranks. But there was progress, too. The work of priests like Pierre-Jean de Smet recalled the earlier exploits in California and Arizona of Eusebio Kino and the French Jesuits who embarked on missions in 17th-century New France. Above all, the Society’s educational institutions began to crop up across the nation, some of them later evolving into famous Jesuit universi-

ties. In the wake of the Jesuit order’s worldwide restoration in 1814, John Carroll observed that “many years will be necessary to reproduce such men as formerly adorned the Society by their virtues and talents.” It was a wise remark, but American Jesuits, in consort with col-



leagues who arrived from across the world, achieved a great deal. The two groups did not always get along, but they certainly inspired their enemies to launch bilious attacks against them—a sure sign of success.

It was only the beginning (in some ways, the continuation) of a fascinating history. In his enthusiastic if uneven new book, Raymond Schroth, S.J., has attempted a systematic survey of the Society’s presence in America from colo-

nial times to the present day. It would be fair to conclude that *The American Jesuits* improves as it moves forward in time. The earlier parts of the book are less reliable, though they certainly offer interesting accounts of everything from Marquette’s explorations of the Mississippi, to the early stirrings of Jesuit activity in Maryland, to superficial accounts of the Society’s organization and its debates about missionary methods.

Fuller accounts of the 19th century follow, and we are offered rewarding discussions of Jesuits’ engagement with the abolitionist debate, their role in the Civil War, tales of such Jesuit characters as Arnold Damen and measured reportage of many of the controversies that engulfed the order. The story of Harvard president Charles Eliot’s polemical assaults on the Jesuits’ educational philosophy and methods is particularly informative.

Schroth, a professor of humanities at St. Peter’s College in Jersey City, N.J., is to be applauded for being evenhanded throughout these pages. He

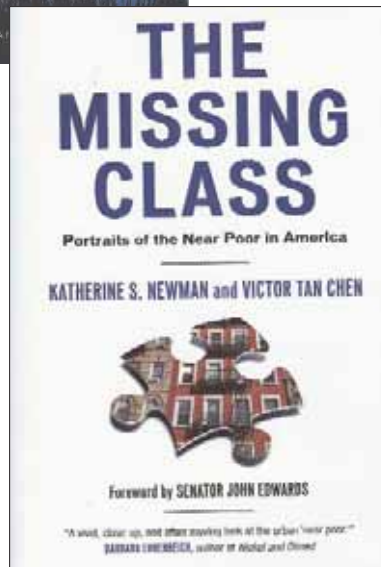
## The Reviewers

**Jonathan Wright**, who writes extensively on early modern religious history, is the author, most recently, of *God’s Soldiers: Adventure, Politics, Intrigue, and Power: A History of the Jesuits* (Doubleday, 2004). He divides his time between Hartlepool and London, England.

**Angela O’Donnell** teaches English, creative writing and American Catholic studies at Fordham University in New York City. Her poems have

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is, unsurprisingly, sympathetic to the Jesuit enterprise, but he does not shy away from dispensing criticism when it is warranted. This admirable trend continues in his account of the 20th-century Society. If we encounter the dynamic figures—John Courtney Murray, John LaFarge, the glacier-exploring Bernard Hubbard—we also meet those who might be construed as villains—the anti-Semitic Jesuit poet Leonard Feeney and the Communist-baiting Edmund A. Walsh. Indeed, readers of this book may be especially interested in Schroth's account of the dire McCarthy years, not least the criticism levelled at the errant senator by **America's** editor Robert Hartnett.

There are also enjoyable digressions into the Society's burgeoning social ministries, poignant accounts of the work of Jesuit chaplains during World War II and some fascinating comments about the portrayal of Catholic priests on the mid-century silver screen. The book concludes with a survey of the Vatican II era, the vibrant but troubled Arrupe years and the dilemmas that face the modern-day Society. Schroth does not deny the obvious crises that today's Jesuits confront. Generational differences, squabbles about homosexual priests, recent revelations of sexual abuse by priests, the continuing decline in Jesuit numbers (and the fact that, as of 2006, the average age of the American Jesuits was 64.7 years) all hint at a precarious future for the Society. Perhaps, though, as Schroth's book reveals, there might be an ounce or two of consolation in the fact that the American Jesuits have survived equally troubled times before.

Schroth does have his share of wayward moments. As one example, he repeatedly deploys a narrative strategy in which, at different historical periods, imaginary Jesuits (and, later, a fictional film crew!) take a tour of the Society's American enterprises and indulge in decidedly odd conversations and observations about the state of Jesuit affairs. This is presumably intended to be charming or quirky or inventive. But in truth, after a sentence or two, and in the context of a work of history, it becomes extremely distracting, even irritating. Such carping aside, this book provides a competent survey of American Jesuit history.

*Jonathan Wright*



# Surprised by Joy

## Hazard and Prospect

New and Selected Poems

By Kelly Cherry

Louisiana State Univ. Press. 174p \$19.95

ISBN 9780807132630

For the reader whose misfortune it is not to have yet discovered Kelly Cherry's poems, this is your lucky day. Cherry's new book, *Hazard and Prospect: New and Selected Poems*, offers a generous sampling of the poet's work, culled from six previous volumes, and features a dozen previously uncollected poems that explore new literary terrain. Formally engaged and linguistically rich, these are poems that sing, that stop you in your tracks, that make you want to read them to other people and share what has come as a pure gift.

And yet, for all their surface pleasure, Cherry's poems lead us to dark places. To read the collection chronologically is to accompany the poet on a painful journey. As the narrative unfolds, we witness the slow erasure of memory and identity as the speaker's parents age and die, the dissolution of a marriage, the death of an estranged husband and a descent into madness. Indeed, the latter experience marks the nadir of the speaker's interior drama, a dark night of the mind and soul wherein she cries for help and declares her despair: "There is blood everywhere/ and I am lost in it. Doctor, I breathe blood, not air."

What makes these poems of desolation bearable is a superb formal control through which the poet shapes the chaotic experiences of life into art. For all its agony, "Lady Macbeth on the Psych Ward" (quoted above) is a tour de force of formal wit. Its nine lines, arranged symmetrically in three tercets, employ rhymes that often do not look like rhymes (*nowhere, nightmare, hair*). The disjunction between orthography and sound, as well as the obsessive repetition we associate both with madness in general and with Lady Macbeth's particular manifestation of it, are embodied in this unsettling, relentless rhyming. Madness is often characterized by hyper-rationality as well as irrationality, and the former is eerily evident in the speaker's tightly controlled expression of her uncontrollable thoughts. Here the use

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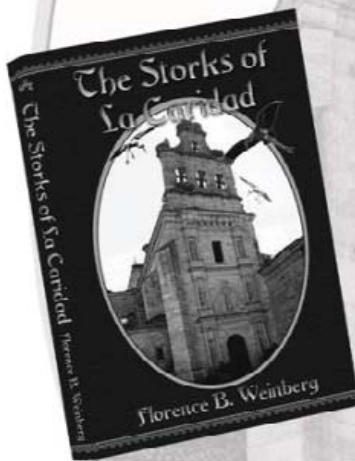
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"Aside from the suspenseful plot set in a fascinating time and place, what makes this book a rewarding read are the engrossing characters, chief among them, Father Ygnacio. Weinberg's brooding protagonist battles manfully to overcome bitterness at the unjust suffering inflicted on his Order and himself. ...Temptations aplenty test his pious resolve, including the Bishop's sly offer of escape from Spain and further prosecution..."

~ Nancy Evans, *Southwest Book Reviews.*

Florence Byham Weinberg

## The Storks of La Caridad



Father Ygnacio, a missionary in Sonora Mexico, is caught in the expulsion of all Jesuits in 1767. After enduring eight years of prison and abuse, he is incarcerated in La Caridad Monastery (Spain) where the abbot recruits him to help solve two murders, thus placing him in mortal danger.

"...Brilliantly written and thoroughly researched, this book explores the complexities and contradictions of the Church during this time period. ...The political struggles in the monastery ring with realism, as do the actions of the characters."

~ Joyce Handzo, *In the Library Reviews*

*The Storks of La Caridad*, historical mystery (ISBN 1-933353-21-X) is available through your favorite local bookstore, online booksellers and publisher, Twilight Times Books.

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of form and musical language elicit in the reader both terror and pleasure simultaneously.

Though Cherry is not a rigid formalist, all of these poems, including those in open form, demonstrate her thorough grounding in English literary tradition. *Hazard and Prospect* offers the reader skillful variations on the villanelle, the ballad, the sestina and, most prominently, the sonnet. In each of these poems, form participates in conveying meaning, so much so that the formal structure seems to have come about organically at the poem's inception rather than having been imposed later upon an already existing arrangement of words or lines.

In addition to the pleasures of craft, the other element that redeems the desolation of the early poems is the consolation offered in the later ones. In the course of her journey, the speaker gathers strength and recovers a sense of her own worthiness, as well as the ability to love. In a celebratory poem dedicated to an unnamed young woman on her graduation from college, the speaker turns her attention away from herself and towards another human being for whom she has great affection and pronounces this benediction: "I tell you, there is an economy in this,/ the way love returns."

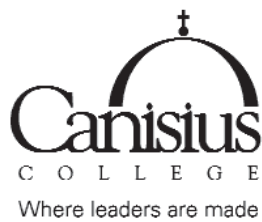
The healing power of love leads the speaker to contemplate ultimate "Questions and Answers" in the section of the volume bearing that title. These poems, among the finest in the book, are meditations on the Annunciation, the "Virgin and Child," on "Galilee" and "Golgotha," wherein she places herself in the presence of the divine in an attempt to understand the relationship between suffering and love. Tried by personal tragedy and by the experience of living in a culture that privileges the seeming certainties of science over the revelations of faith, she emerges from this baptism by fire physically, psychologically and spiritually whole, a resurrection made manifest most clearly in the quality of joy evident in the remaining poems of the volume.

Among these final offerings is "Byrd's Survey of the Boundary: An Abridgment," a found poem consisting of excerpts from William Byrd II's *History of the Dividing Line Between Virginia and North Carolina*. Alternating between his reports (written in gracious 18th-century English prose)

on the “Hazards” and “Prospect” discovered in this brave new world, Byrd’s charming meditation likely influenced Cherry’s book title and sounds the keynote of the collection: there can be no prospect without hazard, no joy without sorrow, no resurrection without crucifixion. Kelly Cherry’s poems bring us, finally, to this wisdom.

As she nears the end of her journey, having laid claim to her home, her faith and a husband she loves, the speaker discovers that what finally endures is “Joy”: “You could be doing anything,/ arranging dahlias in a vase...driving a truck...having a baby.../ you could be anywhere, at home/...walking through woods or sitting on/ a screened-in porch, writing a poem— / and there you are, surprised by it.” The final line of the poem, an echo of Wordsworth’s poignant sonnet on his recovery from the death of his young daughter, “Surprised by Joy,” places poet and reader in the company of those who have come before us, have suffered greatly and have left behind eloquent testimony to the astonishing resilience of the spirit and the power of poetry to speak of it.

*Angela O’Donnell*



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## Either Too Poor or Too ‘Rich’

### The Missing Class

Portraits of the Near Poor in  
 America

By Katherine S. Newman and Victor Tan  
 Chen

Beacon Press. 288p \$24.95  
 ISBN 9780807041390

Recently, economists pointed to a small drop in the number of absolutely poor in 2006 census data. Many dispute the finding’s significance. The U.S. government’s calculation of poverty (\$20,000 or under a year for a family of four) is considered by many policy analysts as a grossly inadequate measure. The proportion of Americans living in poverty has remained relatively constant in the past decades, ranging from 11 percent to 15 percent (the highest rates of any advanced industrial country). Those who do escape from



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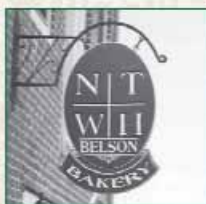
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the ranks of the 37 million who live below the poverty line tend to approach the precarious position of the 57 million near poor (those making between \$20,000 and \$40,000 for a family of four). Many of these are just one pink slip, one divorce or one major health crisis from falling back below the poverty line.

Katherine Newman, professor of sociology and public affairs at Princeton University, has charted the fate of the near poor for over a decade now in important books such as *No Shame in My Game: The Working Poor in the Inner City*; *Downward Mobility in the Age of Affluence* and *Chutes and Ladders: Navigating the Low-Wage Labor Market*.

By any reckoning, the working poor are quite vulnerable economically. They face substandard day care and a crisis in affordable housing. Many are uninsured or underinsured. They cannot afford tutors or private schools for their children, and in many cases they stagger under dangerously high consumer debt. Many work double-shift jobs to make ends meet. Growing inequality puts a severe squeeze on this second lowest quintile. The top 20 percent of Americans hold 83 percent of the total net wealth of the country; the bottom 80 percent hold only 17 percent. This gap is growing at almost unprecedented rates. The bottom 40 percent of households saw their net worth fall between 1983 and 2001. The share of bachelor's degree recipients from households earning between \$30,000 and \$50,000 a year fell from 15 percent of all graduates in 1980 to 11 percent in 2004. Intergenerational mobility in the United States is lower than that found in France, Germany and Canada.

Newman, also a gifted anthropologist, makes the statistically proven vulnerability of the near poor come alive through in-depth interviews with families (mainly African-American and Hispanic) from five neighborhoods in the New York City area. We see how a welfare mother who made the transition to work and escaped the poverty line (by dint of long hours and several jobs) may also jeopardize the mobility chances of her children. Statistics show a mother's transition to work has negative effects on school achievement of older children (mothers have less time to read to them, interact or supervise homework). Another vignette included is that of



an underinsured family experiencing catastrophic illness, which led to their fall from the precarious second lowest quintile back into poverty.

We have been treading water in the way we address poverty. A study by the Federal Reserve Bank in Boston tracked family incomes over a 10-year period. It found that among families in the bottom fifth of the income distribution, slightly more than half remained there after 10 years; a quarter had moved up, but only to the second quintile. Among families who started out in this second quintile, about a quarter dropped to the bottom quintile over the same 10-year period.

Many of the working poor also bear financial burdens for extended family members. Twenty-nine percent care for indigent elderly parents. It can be a nightmare for low-paid factory workers to get time off to take their child to a doctor's appointment or to treat a sick child at home. The working poor, under strain, have higher divorce and separation rates than the national average.

Newman and her co-author Victor Chen, a journalist, turn in a final chapter to issues of policy reform. Their suggested remedies echo those of most of the people who study poverty in America: from addressing the minimum wage (with an automatic indexing of it to reflect inflation), to health care reform, to educational reform, to policies that support home ownership for the near poor, to reform and regulation of lending practices (one of the families in this study lost its home because of exorbitant sub-prime mortgage rates). Of high priority would be child-care and education reforms. As the authors argue "[W]e must replace this patchwork child-care 'system'—a term it barely merits—with a comprehensive, public-supported network of day care (for children aged six months to 3 years) and kindergarten (starting at four)." The benefits of such early childhood interventions would outweigh the costs by \$32 billion by 2030, if we factor in the expected returns on lifetime earnings and decreased criminal behavior by the young.

I read *The Missing Class* simultaneously with the 2006 policy paper by Catholic Charities USA, *Poverty in America: A Threat to the Common Good*. Most of its statistics mirror those of *The Missing Class*. The policy positions are also quite similar.

One advantage of Catholic Charities' policy paper over this book by Newman and Chen is its ability to mount a clear moral argument for addressing poverty in America (something that, ultimately, diminishes us all). The goal of reducing poverty and near poverty in America will require major structural changes.

Whether the nation has the will to address poverty as a systemic and serious issue remains to be seen. Listening to the voices of the often desperate families in *The Missing Class*, one has a sober sense that our nation—unlike the Good Samaritan—is passing by those who have been left by the road. **John A. Coleman**

## Poem

# One Afternoon

I sat upon a window-seat.

"Sit here." I squatted at his feet.

"I could not see you for the light."

Sun shone that day with solstice might.

At the feet of the master, I  
was held, eye by glistening eye.

Seventy-five spoke; twenty-five  
listened; poetry came alive:

"The thinking heart; the feeling mind."

"Delight and wisdom." All in kind.

Flown, fifty-five years—flown, not lost,  
that afternoon with Robert Frost.

*John Fandel*

**JOHN FANDEL** was poetry editor at *Commonweal* from 1963 to 1979 and is emeritus professor at Manhattan College, after a teaching career of 39 years at Notre Dame, Fordham and elsewhere. He was Frost Poetry Scholar at the Bread Loaf Writers Conference in Vermont.

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# Letters

## Episcopal Advice

The report "Bishops on Citizenship," by Matt Malone, S.J., (11/5) reminded me of what John F. Kennedy once said: "In my experience, all nuns are Democrats and all bishops are Republicans." That axiom may be tested next year, since the Republicans seem likelier than the Democrats to nominate a Catholic for president. If Rudolph W. Giuliani becomes the Republican standard-bearer, it will be interesting to see whether conservative bishops attack him for his views on abortion and gay rights, not to mention his two divorces and disinclination to show up for Sunday Mass. My guess is that he will get a perfunctory slap on the wrist, followed by a deafening silence from the episcopacy. Conservative Catholics who attacked Kerry in 2004 seemed more inspired by the values of their pocket-books than their prayer books.

(Rev.) Isaac McDaniel  
Fairdale, Ky.

## Political Gambles

"Bishops on Citizenship" (11/5) brought back bad memories from the last election, when many Catholics were made to feel they would be guilty of sin if they did not vote for someone who claimed to be pro-life. Already we are seeing something of that again. Some politicians must be snickering to think that it is so easy to win the Catholic vote; all they have to do is say they are pro-life.

I have concluded that pro-life and pro-choice are not meaningful expressions. Many who claim to be pro-life are only anti-abortion, and others who are pro-choice are not advocates for abortion. We have had a pro-life president for the past seven years, and certainly we have not developed a culture of life. On the contrary, we have had an unnecessary war with the killing of thousands of innocent people, torture, continued use of the death penalty and a lack of health care for

children and the poor. And I challenge anyone to show me that abortions have become fewer or that women now live in a culture where they could choose not to have abortions.

Let no one say that abortion trumps all the other issues. We are not playing cards here. Human life, all life, needs to be attended to.

Lucy Fuchs  
Brandon, Fla.

## Fearless and Unapologetic

Regarding "Bishops on Citizenship," by Matt Malone, S.J., (11/5): Because so many Catholics tend to vote on the single issue of abortion, I am uplifted by the recommendation that abortion not be used as a justification to ignore issues of peace and justice. This is a much-needed teaching. At the same time, I cannot help but question how it is that abortion represents "intrinsic evil," while the killing of human beings during wars or through poverty leading to starvation of children and adults represents only the "church's teaching on other matters." How is the taking of innocent human life by the act of abortion different from the taking of innocent human life by means of war or

poverty? At a time of criminal wars consciously and purposefully inflicted on hundreds of thousands of innocent people by our politicians, at a time of escalating corporate greed inflicting levels of poverty that threaten the survival of millions of our brothers and sisters, why is it that the voice of the church's bishops is so timid in calling for political responsibility toward peace and justice?

When the recently beatified Franz Jägerstätter was a young man in Austria during World War II, he refused military service in the German army. Because of his faith, he refused to kill. For that he was jailed and executed. His fearless and unapologetic faith should be an example for all of us: for the bishops when they debate the final document, and for us regular citizens when we make our voting decisions. We must vote for the candidates who will work toward peace and justice, and not for those who will look to continue existing wars or start another war. Perhaps a third, or even a fourth candidate should become a serious option if neither of the primary candidates will satisfy this requirement.

Maria Krzeska, M.D.  
Cincinnati, Ohio

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## without guile



"The good luggage!"

CARTOON BY PAT BYRNES

# Letters

## Anglican Icon

In "Holy Men and Women" (11/29), Drew Christiansen, S.J., opens up our understanding of how diverse the cloud of witnesses truly can be. I was particularly pleased that he focused attention on the Anglican calendar and its saints from many different walks of life. I was puzzled, therefore, by the omission of Evelyn Underhill, an Anglican married laywoman and outstanding 20th-century student and writer about Western mysticism. While her natural bent was toward the cultivation of the interior life, her experience of Christ moved her toward peace advocacy in the years prior to the Second World War. She prayed, wrote, led retreats and served the poor while living a busy life in London. An icon for the laity, I would say.

*Dolores R. Leckey  
Washington, D.C.*

## Extra Credit

I found "High Taxes, Empty Desks," by Terry Golway, (11/12) surprising. As a

Catholic school board member and parent of three Catholic school children who has spent the last 10 years trying to "boost enrollment in all kinds of creative ways," I find it unimaginable that anyone who recognizes the value of a Catholic education would not encourage some type of tax credit. We who use Catholic schools are saving taxpayers a huge amount of money. Even if we got credit only for what we spend per child, that would go a long way to further the efforts of those of us in struggling schools. With the decrease of vocations and increase in apathy when it comes to practicing our Catholic religion, all hands should be on deck to ensure the success of these institutions. I am afraid Mr. Golway sounds like so many of the parents I have met lately. They are interested in the education of their child at the middle and high school level, and maybe just for college preparation reasons. It makes me wonder if there is a true commitment to Catholic education in terms of the development of the child

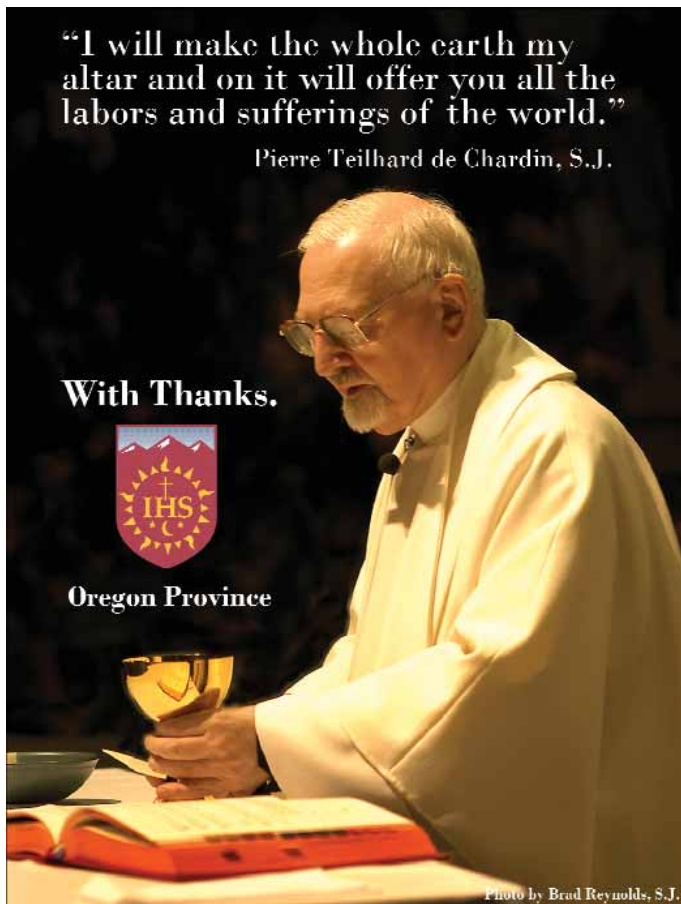
from the very start of his or her formation.

*Meg Rogers  
Garden City, N.Y.*

## Life Witness

Thank you for the deeply moving reflection by Virginia Lucey ("Comfort the Sorrowful," 10/29) on coming to terms with the phenomenon of loved ones affected by clerical sexual abuse. I couldn't help but be struck by the closing paragraphs, which brought it all back to the life witness of Jesus. Ms. Lucey writes that "Jesus never avoided discomfiting situations. He was in the midst of them, listening with compassion and comforting the sorrowful." Why is that so hard for us to understand? What idols are we so fearful of exposing to the light that we'd prefer to forsake the life witness of Jesus rather than to confront them honestly? And who benefits from such disingenuousness?

*(Rev.) J. Michael Byron  
St. Paul, Minn.*



Dear Fr. Kolvenbach,

We thank God for your inspiring leadership of the Society of Jesus. As you continue on your journey, you remain in our hearts, thoughts, and prayers.

*Gezondheid*/God bless you

Yours in Christ,

The Jesuits and Lay Partners of  
the California Province

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# Advent Hopes and Challenges

First Sunday of Advent (A), Dec. 2, 2007

Readings: Is 2:1-5; Ps 122:1-9; Rom 13:11-14; Mt 24:37-44

*"They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks"*  
(Is 2:4)

**T**HE FIRST SUNDAY of Advent marks the beginning of a period of preparation for the celebration of Christmas. In contrast to the commercialized celebrations of "the holidays," it is meant to be a quiet and reflective time. Today's readings suggest that Advent is a time to hope for lasting peace among nations, to reorient our own lives and to await the fullness of God's kingdom. The readings also challenge us to make those hopes into realities.

Hope is the predominant word during the Advent season. By definition, hope refers to a desire and expectation that goals that seem difficult to achieve may somehow be realized. Thomas Aquinas said it best when he described hope as what is agreeable, future, arduous and possible of attainment. Our Scripture readings push us beyond our narrow self-interests and challenge us to hope for understanding and peace among the nations of the world, and to look forward to the full coming of God's kingdom. The ground and goal of these hopes is God. While this kind of hope involves total reliance on God, it also challenges us to expend serious effort in the present time. Wishing is not enough.

Advent is a time to hope and work for lasting peace among nations. Against the shadow of impending military defeat from the Assyrian armies that had already overrun the northern kingdom of Israel, the 8th-century B.C. Judean prophet Isaiah held out a vision of hope. The prophet's hope was that all nations might come to know the God of Israel and that the word of God might go forth from Zion to all the nations and so bring peace to all the world. His hope was based not on wise kings or

powerful weapons but rather on God's fidelity to his people Israel and God's universal dominion and significance. His hope was that the nations might transform their weapons of war into instruments of peace. Through Jesus of Nazareth that vision has been fulfilled in part, since the Gospel of peace has been preached to the ends of the earth. However, the prophet's hope for mutual understanding and lasting peace remains elusive and challenges us to increase our effort as we work toward peace on the personal, national and international levels.

Advent is a time for reorienting our personal lives. While not so much a penitential season as Lent is, there is a sense that Advent involves turning our lives more consciously and directly to God and the kingdom of God. As Paul says in his Letter to the Romans, "Let us then throw off the works of darkness." It is an occasion for us to examine ourselves and try to see where the works of darkness may have entered. But moral conversion is not the whole story. Rather, the positive challenge is to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ." That means allowing our lives to be shaped even more by and better conformed to the person of Christ. It means living out of a kind of Christ-mysticism, whereby we can say with Paul, "I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20).

Advent is a time to await the fullness of God's kingdom. In today's readings what both Paul and Matthew have in mind is not so much the celebration of Christmas as preparation for what we call the second coming of Christ. Paul reminds us that "our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed." And Matthew provides a series of short parables counseling constant vigilance and good actions in the present as we await the full coming of God's kingdom. Just as the flood came suddenly upon Noah's gener-



ation, so the second coming of Jesus as the glorious Son of Man will be sudden. His second coming will involve a discriminating judgment, even between persons apparently doing the same things, whether they be two men working in a field or two women grinding meal. The final parable asks us to consider: What if you knew that a robber was going to break into your house but did not know the exact time? Would you not be vigilant all night long? Since the Son of Man will come like "a thief in the night," we must always be vigilant, always on guard and always watching. These parables challenge us to good deeds and constant vigilance in the present, thus providing one of the New Testament's most prominent contexts for Christian ethics.

Next Saturday (Dec. 8) is the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary. For a full treatment of its readings, see **America**, 11/21/05.

*Daniel J. Harrington*

## Praying With Scripture

- Are there any practical ways in which you can contribute to mutual understanding and peace on earth at this particular time?
- Have the works of darkness crept into any areas of your life? What do you intend to do about it?
- Is there a difference between vigilance and anxiety? What is it?