

America

The background of the cover is a photograph of a man in a dark pinstriped suit and a bright red tie walking through a crowd of people. The man is looking slightly to his left. In the background, other people are visible, some wearing blue shirts, and there are trees and a clear blue sky. A sign with the word 'KAKUMATI' is partially visible in the upper left.

March 10, 2008

THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC WEEKLY

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Crisis in Kenya

A. E. Orobator

Curbing Medical Costs
Daniel Callahan

I TELL THE LITTLE FIFTH GRADE GIRLS to look me in the eye," said Yliana Hernandez, a member of the Presentation Sisters who is principal of the new Nora Cronin Presentation Academy in Newburgh, N.Y. The reason? To increase self-confidence and leadership qualities among mostly Mexican girls growing up in a primarily macho culture.

I visited the school one morning after a train ride from New York City along a sun-drenched Hudson River. Views of its broad expanse were within sight all along the way through Newburgh, too, as Sister Hernandez drove me to the current location of the school in rented space in a local Presbyterian church. But we also visited the academy's future permanent home, a handsome three-story Victorian brick building now under renovation. The school is named after another Presentation sister, Nora Cronin, an educator familiar with the new NativityMiguel middle schools, which focus on providing quality education for youngsters from low-income backgrounds.

A group of Presentation sisters met in 1999 to dream about a possible future undertaking. "The idea of a school for poor girls soon came up," Sister Hernandez said. As the plan took shape, there was a sense of urgency: "Whatever you decide to do, do it now," supporters emphasized. Based on a feasibility study's positive findings, the Cassin Educational Foundation provided a grant of \$150,000 spread out over a three-year period. With Sister Hernandez's many years' experience of working with Hispanic families in Newburgh, she became the school's first principal—and, she said laughing, "secretary and maintenance person too!" Starting with an initial fifth grade class in 2006, the school added another class in 2007 and will continue until all four grades are in place, five through eight.

Tuition is \$30 a month, but inability to pay is never a barrier to admission. The actual cost is far higher—\$12,000 per student yearly—and therefore funding is the single greatest challenge. She emphasized, though, that the school is already "rich" in its abundance of retired teachers who offer their skilled services cost-free. "As soon as local papers started running stories about us, people began calling to offer help," she observed. Three of the volunteers are retired spe-

cialists in reading, an area of great need because many students with limited English vocabulary begin at reading levels two years below their grade level. Reading, she believes, has to be the foundation of all other forms of instruction—an opinion shared by other educators.

Sister Hernandez's thoughts go well beyond the middle school level. Even after the students' eventual graduation from the eighth grade, she plans to create a graduate support program for girls moving on to high school. Graduates may need not only homework help, but also general encouragement in the midst of what can be a difficult transition from small classes of 15—the average size at the academy—to much larger ones in very different settings. But her thoughts go further. "Where do you want to go to college?" she is already asking surprised students. Such goals are high indeed for a city like Newburgh, where fewer than 40 percent of minority students even graduate from high school and fewer than 3

percent from college.

The students' parents work mostly

at low-paying jobs in factories, restaurants and small businesses. All donate time at the school. Some come in to clean the school at the end of the day ("we can't afford a cleaning crew"). Other parents volunteer to pick up and serve the food provided by the federally funded breakfast, lunch and snack program. Mostly from backgrounds of limited education, the parents are strongly supportive of the school's high educational goals for their daughters. Commenting on her hope to help the students realize their leadership potential, Sister Hernandez gave the example of one especially shy fifth-grade girl who was awarded the role of the lion in a school production of "The Wizard of Oz." "For that role," she said, "she had to learn how to roar, which was hard, but she accepted the challenge and roared! Now she is a much more self-confident person."

When students eventually move on from the eighth grade and enter high school and then, one hopes, college, "I want them to remember how they got there," Sister Hernandez said. "They will need to realize that they have a responsibility to help others—just as they themselves were helped here at the academy." In other words, there will be a tacit obligation to "give back."

George M. Anderson, S.J.

Of Many Things

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Cover art Opposition leader Raila Odinga arrives at a memorial service for 28 people killed during postelection violence in Nairobi, Kenya, Jan. 23, 2008. Reuters/Radu Sigheti

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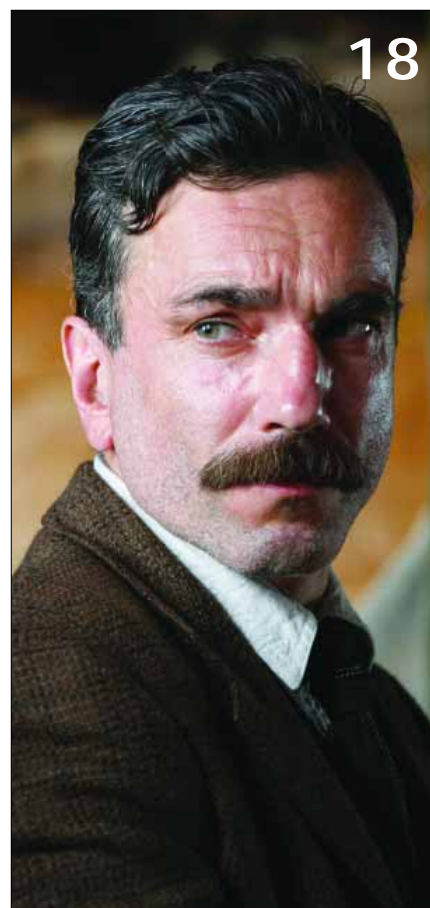
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America Connects

An audio interview with the Catholic poet Angela O'Donnell; and from the archives, Daniel Callahan on caring for the elderly. Plus, Michael Sean Winters blogs on the presidential primaries, at americamagazine.org.

Santo Non Subito

Some Catholics may have been puzzled over reports of a new document from the Vatican's Congregation for Saints' Causes calling for "strict adherence" to the canonization process. The instruction asked for better documentation to avoid "fraud or deception" and noted that some procedures had become "problematic." At a press conference, Cardinal José Saraiva Martins, prefect of the congregation, stated that there had been "confusion" at the local level. But, overall, no new rules were initiated; the old ones were merely tightened. The process should, the cardinal noted, begin not with the enthusiasm of small interest groups, but from a candidate's "stable, continuous and widespread" reputation for holiness. And investigators should not neglect negative accounts of the person's life.

The Vatican's cautionary instruction may have been promulgated not simply for those who work directly on these cases, but for the benefit of the faithful as well. Over the last 20 years, concern has arisen in many church quarters over whether Pope John Paul II was overzealous in his desire to canonize men and women from around the globe. During his pontificate, some 1,340 people were beatified and 500 canonized—more than all his predecessors combined since the current procedures were instituted in 1588. Rumors of laxity in the canonization process only raise doubts among Catholics over whether certain candidates truly deserve the title "saint." Stricter procedures can only enhance devotion to the saints, ensuring Catholics that those whose intercession they invoke really are worthy of "public veneration."

Fragile Peace in the Balkans

The riots in Belgrade in February revealed the great depth of Serbian discontent with Kosovo's declaration of independence as well as the fragility of the peace in the Balkans. Some have argued that the West acted too quickly in recognizing Kosovo's independence and, by taking sides in the dispute, has contributed to further destabilization of the situation. Yet the West had already taken sides, especially in 1999, when a NATO coalition drove Serbia's troops from Kosovo, ending the genocide there.

The United States, as a party to the conflict then, has a moral responsibility now to ensure a peaceful settlement. The United States must vigorously support the European Union's new legal and policing efforts aimed at stabilizing Kosovo and providing a smooth transition from U.N. governance. A robust Western presence in Kosovo will signal that neither reprisals against the Serbian minority in Kosovo

nor a Serbian military intervention will be countenanced.

Washington must also talk to Moscow. Russia is the one government with the credibility to help Serbia's prime minister talk the nationalists off the ledge. The Bush administration has badly bungled the U.S. relationship with Russia, but some accommodation may still be reached. In exchange for Russia's assistance, the United States could address one of Russia's principal concerns by making it clearer to the world that recognition of Kosovo should not be taken as approval for a stampede toward independence in other breakaway regions, particularly those within the Russian sphere of influence. The United States should also send a strong signal that an independent Kosovo is not the first step toward the greater Albania so feared by Serbia.

Most observers do not expect an all-out war. Most Serbians do not believe Kosovo is worth going to war over, according to recent public opinion polls. But the situation is volatile and the West must do everything in its power to ensure that the spark of violence struck in Belgrade does not ignite another Balkan conflagration.

The Unwilling Coalition

It appears that President Pervez Musharraf is not long for the world of Pakistani politics. His party suffered a crushing defeat in the country's parliamentary elections in February. The leaders of Pakistan's two main opposition parties announced shortly afterward that they would work together to form a coalition government and that the new anti-Musharraf coalition in the lower house was only 17 votes shy of the number needed to impeach him. Even if impeachment fails, the judiciary, which will likely be restored by the new Parliament, will probably rule that Musharraf's re-election last fall was illegal and invalid, further undermining his tenuous hold on power.

Washington is panicking because the government that may replace Musharraf's will be a coalition of the unwilling, opposed to further Pakistani participation in the U.S.-led war on terror. As inconvenient as this may be for the United States, its recent meddling in Pakistan's parliamentary politics by trying to convince the opposition leaders to let Musharraf stay was clumsy and ill-advised. Though both Mr. Zadari and Mr. Sharif, the victors in February's elections, have spotty records on democracy and good government, they now have a legitimate mandate to govern. If the United States means what it says about democracy, and if a peaceful, democratic and legal movement within Pakistan wants Musharraf to go, it would be hypocritical for the United States to stand in the way.

Cuba Sí, Castro No!

TIME HAS ACCOMPLISHED what a U.S.-supported invasion, a crushing economic embargo, the collapse of the Soviet Union and any number of external and internal catastrophes could not: the removal of Fidel Castro from direct control over the people of Cuba. Suffering from failing health, Castro has finally ceded power after five decades. The apparent political demise of El Jefe offers a unique opportunity for the people of Cuba and for their closest neighbor to the north to pull out of a half-century spiral of enmity and antagonism.

Fidel is not the only Castro in Cuba, nor the only hard-liner; his brother Raúl has been the de facto ruler of the country for two years now. February elections elevated Raúl to the office of the presidency and other hard-liners to positions of greater power, muting expectations of rapid change. But Raúl has spoken publicly about the need for structural changes in Cuba, and is believed to favor more widespread economic reforms. His advanced age also suggests his rule will not be a long one, and a new generation of younger Cuban leaders may soon take on more responsibility.

Cuba is blessed with prodigious natural resources and a well-educated population, but is bedeviled by the same forces (including a brain drain of skilled professionals to other Western nations) that have brought low so many of its Caribbean neighbors. Should Cuba's internal security apparatus break down in the aftermath of any transfer of power from the Castros, Cuba and the United States could face an enormous wave of attempted immigration to the United States, straining American resources while further damaging Cuba's prospects for economic prosperity. Much as South Korea has done in preparation for the eventual fall of Pyongyang, so too must American politicians and diplomats work for a "soft landing" for Cuba in the coming years, helping its people make the transition from a socialist state to a market economy with a minimum of economic and political disruption.

A useful first step will be a measured easing of the American economic embargo, which has played just as much a role in the economic privation of Cuba as the most misbegotten of Castro's policies. It is also a relic of a bygone age, begun as a bulwark against socialist revolution but now little more than an expression of an irrational

grudge. Worse, it has given Castro a *raison d'être*. Recent years have seen Canadian and European investment in the Cuban economy growing, while the vast resources of the Cuban-American community are not directed toward its own roots. Should the sitting president lift the embargo, there is no question that many Cuban-Americans would be outraged and express their dissatisfaction demonstrably. President Bush is in a unique position to make such a potentially unpopular choice, since his status as a lame duck gives him some freedom from traditional political pressures.

While it is important to recognize the legitimate grievances of Cuban exiles in Florida and elsewhere, the United States will need to make clear to any future Cuban government that the United States will not support efforts toward repatriation of land or economic assets and is willing to bury its historical grudges, much as we have done in recent years with the government of Vietnam.

THE UNITED STATES CAN ALSO RECOGNIZE the legitimate accomplishments of the Castro regime, including its achievements in education, health care and racial harmony. The Cuban people may seek capitalism's prosperity, but not at the expense of socialism's gains. Any careful transition to new economic structures should not repeat the mistakes the United States made in Russia and Eastern Europe after the cold war, endorsing an economic free-for-all but failing to support local social institutions. Changes in Cuba provide a chance for the United States to restore the international reputation so damaged by the war in Iraq. With Cuba, America can show that its seeming arrogance is matched by appropriate munificence.

John F. Kennedy, whose support for the failed Bay of Pigs invasion convinced Castro that the United States could not be trusted, nevertheless once spoke to the newly free nations of the world in words of particular pertinence now, promising that "one form of colonial control shall not have passed away merely to be replaced by a far more iron tyranny." Fidel Castro has long accused the United States of seeking to return Cuba to a colonial outpost of its imperialist ambitions. The actions we take toward Cuba in the next few years can be our chance to assuage similar reservations among the Cuban people.

Pope Meets With Jesuit Delegates



Pope Benedict XVI greets Jesuit Father Adolfo Nicolás, newly elected superior general of the Society of Jesus, at the Vatican Feb. 21.

Pope Benedict XVI asked the Jesuits to continue to be pioneers in dialogue, theological research and work for justice, but insisted that they also must make clear their faith and their acceptance of the teachings of the Catholic Church. “The church needs you, counts on you and continues to turn to you with trust,” the pope said on Feb. 21 to more than 200 Jesuits, chosen to represent the almost 20,000 members of the Society of Jesus, at the order’s 35th General Congregation in Rome. Adolfo Nicolás, the Spanish

Jesuit who was elected superior general of the order Jan. 19, responded: “In communion with the church and guided by the magisterium, we are seeking to dedicate ourselves deeply to service, discernment and research.” The members of the general congregation are aware of their responsibility to the church as a whole, he said, but they also are aware of the need for humility, “recognizing that the mystery of God and of the human person is much greater than our ability to understand.”

Pope’s Concern for Families of the Dying

Society and labor laws should give concrete support to family members so they can attend to terminally ill loved ones, Pope Benedict XVI said. While guarantees must be made for all people to receive necessary medical care, special provisions also must be put into place for the patient’s family members, he said. The pope made his comments during an audience Feb. 25 with more than 300 participants in a Vatican-sponsored congress on the pastoral needs of and

ethical obligations toward the terminally ill. Titled “Close by the Incurable Sick Person and the Dying: Scientific and Ethical Aspects,” the two-day congress brought together caregivers, medical specialists and scholars in the fields of theology, law and bioethics. The international congress was organized by the Pontifical Academy for Life and was held to coincide with the Lourdes jubilee year.

From CNS and other sources. CNS photos.

Religious Literacy Helps Dialogue

Catholics and Muslims must learn more about each other’s religions if they want to get along better, said Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald, the Vatican ambassador to Egypt and former president of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. “Rather than just knowing persons, we must know their religion more deeply in order to understand the people,” he told Vatican Radio. The archbishop was interviewed Feb. 24, the evening before the annual Catholic-Muslim dialogue meeting of Vatican representatives with representatives of Cairo’s al-Azhar University. “We know that among Muslims and Christians there are common points, although certainly not a common faith in Christ,” Archbishop Fitzgerald said. “We must respect the differences while trying to find spheres in which it would be possible to collaborate and help one another.” The dialogue with the university, a point of reference for many Muslims around the world, was marking its 10th annual session.

Vatican Seeks Signs of Reconciliation From Cuba

The Vatican’s secretary of state said he had asked Cuban leaders for “gestures of reconciliation” and confirmed he would be the first foreign official to be received by the island nation’s new president, Raúl Castro. Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, who arrived Feb. 20 for an official and pastoral visit, met Feb. 25 with Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque. After that meeting he said he hoped his encounter with Castro would be one of “clarity, sincerity and sharing of ideas.” Raúl Castro was chosen Feb. 24 to lead the country after his brother, Fidel Castro, resigned. Cardinal Bertone also called the U.S. embargo against Cuba “ethically unacceptable” and said the Vatican is trying “to push the United States to eliminate it.” “It is a violation of the independence of the people,” the cardinal said. “The Vatican confirms this position.” The cardinal also said he personally had asked “the United States government to facili-

tate the reunification of families” with members in Cuba and in the United States. “It is a humanitarian instrument. We will do everything possible in this direction,” he said.

Philippine Bishops Address Political Crisis

Fifty-five Catholic bishops in the Philippines agreed to issue a statement on the crisis in President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo’s government amid allegations of corruption in a national communications cable deal. Bishop Deogracias Iniguez of Kalookan, chairman of the public affairs committee of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines, told reporters the conference president, Archbishop Angel Lagdameo of Jaro, invited interested bishops to a

special meeting Feb. 26 in Manila. The focus of their discussion was recent events in the country in connection with the alleged overpricing of the broadband contract to pay off commissions, reported the Asian church news agency UCA News. Arroyo’s husband has been implicated in the deal. Bishop Iniguez, who had celebrated Mass Feb. 25 to mark the anniversary of the 1986 “people power” uprising that deposed President Ferdinand Marcos, said the bishops’ meeting was “extraordinary” because bishops meet in plenary session only twice a year.

China and Vatican Talks Continue

News organizations in Europe have reported further talks between the

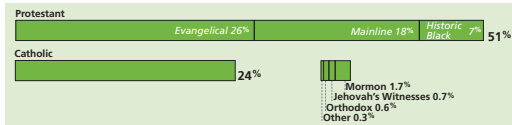
Vatican and China. Archbishop Pietro Sambi, the Vatican nuncio to the United States met with Ye Xiaowen, China’s minister of state administration of religious affairs, on Feb. 19 in Washington, D.C. Ye did not give any details of the meeting, because both parties have agreed that neither will reveal the content of the discussions. Normalization of relations depends on two Chinese demands: recognition that China and Taiwan are one country and that the administration of the Catholic Church in China is an internal state matter. Ye indicated that channels for discussion of both matters do exist. Ye also discounted rumors that the pope would visit China in the immediate future. He added, “Based on the common knowledge that I have, I believe that it is not possible for the pope to visit China before the normalization of relations.”

New Study of American Religious Affiliation

Religion in America

A new survey on religion found that more than a quarter of U.S. adults have left the faith in which they were raised in favor of another religion or no religion. It indicated that 10 percent of those raised Catholic have left the church.

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION

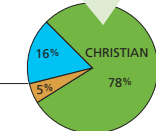


UNAFFILIATED

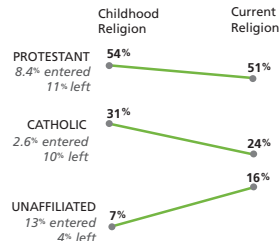
Nothing in particular 12.0%
Atheist 1.6%
Agnostic 2.4%

OTHER RELIGIONS

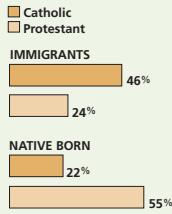
Jewish 1.7%
Buddhist 0.7%
Muslim 0.6%
Hindu 0.4%
Other 3.0%



CHILDHOOD/CURRENT AFFILIATION



IMMIGRANT FACTOR



Due to rounding, figures may not add to 100 percent. Survey based on interviews with more than 35,000 randomly-selected Americans age 18 and older conducted May 8-Aug. 13, 2007. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 0.6 percentage point. Source: Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life U.S. Religious Landscape Survey ©2008 CNS

According to a new study on the religious affiliation of U.S. adults, 28 percent of Americans have either changed

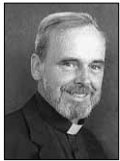
religious affiliations or claim no formal religion at all. The study also shows the Catholic Church has been hardest hit by these shifts, but that the influx of Catholic immigrants has offset the loss. Hence the percentage of the adult population that identifies itself as Catholic has held fairly steady at around 25 percent, it says. The 148-page study, *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey*, was conducted by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life and based on interviews with 35,000 adults last year. Its findings, released Feb. 25, show that roughly 10 percent of all Americans are former Catholics. Almost half of these former Catholics joined Protestant denominations, while about half do not have a religious affiliation and a small percentage chose other faiths.

According to a new study on the religious affiliation of U.S. adults, 28 percent of Americans have either changed

Progress in Interfaith Effort to End Poverty

Eliminating much of the world’s worst poverty within a decade would become a principle of U.S. foreign policy for the first time under a Catholic-led legislative push now gathering force with a growing interfaith alliance. Nearly 40 representatives from Christian, Jewish and Muslim faiths as well as the Shinto and Wiccan religions, met at the University of San Francisco Feb. 20 in an effort to broaden the ranks of members of faith communities involved in the campaign. Leaders said they are trying to build the campaign to full strength by May to push the U.S. Senate to pass the Global Poverty Act this summer. The U.S. House passed the bill Sept. 25. The bill calls for the U.S. president to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to promote the elimination of global poverty as a foreign policy goal.

The meeting was organized by the Lane Center for Catholic Studies and Social Thought at the Jesuit-run University of San Francisco. It was hosted by Archbishop George H. Niederauer of San Francisco; Stephen Privett, S.J., the university’s president; and Episcopal Bishop Marc Andrus of California.



Amnesty?

“Let us be vigilant and charitable.”

LET’S CALL HER MARÍA. She was illegally brought into the United States at the age of 2. Now 27, she is a vital member of her parish and has three young children. María was recently deported to Ciudad Juárez, where, in the last 15 years, 600 young women have been kidnapped, raped, murdered and buried in the desert. Luckily, she was able to find a way into the United States, again illegally, to be with her children. If she is discovered again, she will spend five years in a U.S. federal prison.

My Jesuit friend and neighbor, Dick Vogt, has told me of people like María and many others of the 12 to 14 million “undocumented aliens.” She is not necessarily typical of the masses who have illegally entered this country. Some, no doubt, are drunks and dealers; many are incarcerated for other crimes than their immigrant status. But most have come at great risk to their lives, because their lives were already at risk from poverty and displacement. They want to make a living, form a family and help their families back home.

The Catholic bishops of Mexico pointed out in January that the recent surge of immigration is a direct effect of the North American Free Trade Agreement. Open trade, while benefiting the most powerful and technologically advanced, has threatened poor farmers and their small rural communities. They cannot compete with heavily subsidized U.S. and Canadian producers. It is this phenomenon that drives so many to leave their homeland for a livelihood in the United States, despite, as the bishops put it, “its anti-humane immigration program.”

The U.S. bishops, witnessing everything from evictions in California to

employment raids in Massachusetts, have stirred the consciences of their dioceses and taken stands in conscience of their own. The bishop of Oklahoma City and 10 of his pastors have publicly professed defiance of a punitive state law that makes felons of all who “aid, assist or transport any undocumented person.” The bishops of Missouri have expressed their alarm over politicians “who vie to see who can be tougher on illegal immigrants.” Cognizant of the economic pressures on many families in rural Mexico, they call for a more compassionate, fair and realistic reform of our immigration system, including education and humanitarian assistance to all children, “without regard to legal status.”

There has been some resistance to the bishops’ proposals and some resentment. It is reminiscent of the outrage directed by anti-immigrant groups toward last year’s immigration reform bill, a very harsh measure that they nonetheless condemned for proposing what they called amnesty.

Some of the resentment is understandable. There are householders, especially on the border, who have had their land and yards trashed. Residents of some towns feel flooded with immigrants they cannot engage or manage. A few businesspersons who have refused to hire undocumented or cheaper labor have lost sales and customers.

But this does not explain the seething hostility that can be read in some nativist opinion columns and popular books or heard on radio talk shows: “They are criminals, felons; and that’s that.”

“They have broken the law.” This is an interesting standard of ethics, justice or charity for a nation that sees itself as Judeo-Christian and humane. It is puzzling that we do not think of the Good Samaritan or of the “least of our brothers and sisters” in Matthew 25, or of the passage from Leviticus that the Missouri bishops quote: “The stranger who sojourns with you shall be to you as the

native among you, and you shall love him as yourself.”

As for making the law our bottom line, do Christians know how many times Jesus was in trouble with the law? Do they know that the natural law tradition, articulated in the work of Thomas Aquinas, holds an unjust law to be no law at all? Do they forget that our nation was founded upon an appeal to a higher law than positive law, an appeal shared by the labor movement, by Martin Luther King Jr., and by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony?

A nation has every right to secure its borders. Unrestrained immigration will hurt our country, the immigrants and their homeland. So let us indeed protect our borders (even though that will not solve the problem of those who enter legally and overstay their visa). Let us also honestly face the multiple causes of illegal immigration. As an excellent position paper from the Center for Concern notes, illegal immigration involves many factors: trade negotiation, the governments involved, the immigrants who break the law by entering our country, employers who take advantage of them, corporate leaders who profit from them and consumers who benefit from lower food and service costs.

We must devise ways to offer legal status to anyone who contributes to our common good, whether as a future citizen or a temporary guest worker. If that means using the dirty word “amnesty,” so be it.

As to those who sojourn in our midst, let us be vigilant if they are threats and charitable if they are friends. It would be a good, if unusual, move if our legislators had the imagination to call for citizen panels before which an illegal immigrant could request amnesty, leniency and a path to citizenship based on his or her contribution to the community, solid employment record, faithful payment of taxes, family need and crime-free record.

Instead of fearing some abstract horde of millions, we might see the faces of people like María and hear their stories. If we turn them away, we will have to face the fact that we are not so much a nation of Judeo-Christian values as a punitive and self-interested people hiding under the protection of lesser, human-made laws.

John F. Kavanaugh

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

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/RONEN BOIDEK



The 'unpopular' problem

Curbing Medical Costs

– BY DANIEL CALLAHAN –

IT IS NO SECRET that the United States has a scandalously large number of uninsured people, now up to 47 million and growing. That number is vivid and evocative, but it has overshadowed a far more serious issue: the steady escalation of health care costs, currently increasing at an annual rate of 7 percent. As a consequence, it is projected that the Medicare program will be bankrupt in nine years and overall health care costs will rise from the present \$2.1 trillion to \$4 trillion in 10 years.

Those rising costs are an important reason why the number of uninsured people

DANIEL CALLAHAN, director of the international program at the Hastings Center in Garrison, N.Y., is the author of *Setting Limits: Medical Goals in an Aging Society* (1987) and co-author of *Medicine and the Market: Equality vs. Choice* (2006).

keeps going up. Businesses find it harder and harder to pay for employee health benefits, and only 61 percent of employers even provide them (from a high of close to 70 percent a decade ago). The employers who do provide ben-

Universal care is the only tried and effective way to control costs. The European health care systems do so effectively by means of a strong government hand.

efits are cutting them and forcing employees to pay more in the form of co-payments and deductibles. The 15 percent of Americans who are uninsured are surely faced with both health and financial threats. The cost problem, however, now threatens everyone else as well, including those assisted by Medicare and Medicaid.

Yet even if most people are aware of the dangers of cost escalation—and many know it from personal experience—it has not gripped the public imagination, the presidential candidates or the media with the force of the problem of the uninsured (even though recent public opinion polls indicate it is catching up). Candidates and others have proposed a number of detailed plans for universal care, but nothing comparable for cost control. There is a reason for that.

The problem of the uninsured is the popular problem and the problem of cost control the unpopular one. The former is popular because it is easy to empathize with millions of people who cannot get decent care. Cost control, by contrast, is unpopular, or, perhaps more precisely put, it is dodged and evaded as if it were a nasty political virus to be avoided. Consider what serious cost control will require: moving from a 7 percent annual cost growth down to 3 percent—a rate of inflation for health care costs that is no greater than the annual rise from general inflation. This amounts to a cost reduction of \$1.5 trillion over the next 10 years, settling in at \$2.5 trillion in a decade. That would represent an enormous and unprecedented drop in annual costs for a health care system that has never, since World War II, seen anything more than a short and temporary decline from time to time. But this will mean that just about everyone will be forced to give up something, obliged to accept a different, more austere kind of health care.

There are at bottom only three ways to deal with the high cost of health care. One of them is to increase revenues for the system. With government programs such as

Medicare, this means raising taxes sharply; with private insurance it means raising premiums. Another approach is to cut benefits drastically, giving people less care. Still another way is to force individuals to pay more out of pocket for their care. Not one of these strategies, if openly embraced, could possibly become popular. They would just be different ways of inflicting pain.

Controlling Medical Technology

The feature of cost escalation that ought to catch our eye most is the role of medical technology. Health care economists estimate that 40 percent to 50 percent of annual cost increases can be traced to new tech-

nologies or the intensified use of old ones. That means that control of technology is the most important factor in bringing costs down. Technology also happens to be the most beloved feature of American medicine. Patients expect it; doctors are given extensive training to use it; the medical industries make billions of dollars selling it; and the media love to write about it. The economic and social incentives to develop and make it widely available are powerful, and the disincentives so far are weak and almost useless.

Even among economists and others who concede that technology plays a central role in the cost problem, there is considerable ambivalence about how to deal with it. Technological innovation is as fundamental a feature of American medicine as it is of our industrial sector. After all, innovation has given us vaccines, antibiotics, advanced heart disease care, splendid surgical advances and increasingly effective cancer treatments. And many diseases and crippling medical conditions call for still more innovation. No wonder a distinguished economist from the Brookings Institution, Henry Aaron, who has prominently called attention to all the problems of technology, has written nonetheless that any effort to curb the introduction of new technologies “beyond what is required for safety and efficacy would be sheer madness.”

If there is ambivalence in many quarters about managing technology costs, there is outright resistance to such attempts among many American physicians and medical industry associations. Those groups were heavily responsible in the 1980s and 1990s for killing two federal agencies designed to assess medical technology from a scientific and economic perspective. Medical groups opposed them on the grounds that studies of that kind could interfere with the doctor-patient relationship (only they can decide about treatment evidence), and that since life is priceless, any economic assessment would be immoral. Congress, which has

never shown much enthusiasm for the control of technology costs, did the actual killing. Ever since the advent of Medicare in 1965, Congress has not allowed it to take costs into account in determining which technologies and treatments it will cover. The medical device industry has been blamed for that resistance. Meanwhile, the pharmaceutical industry has blocked price controls on drugs for many decades.

While it will be hard enough to get universal health care in this country, it will be even harder to control costs. The opposition to such control is politically more intransigent; and in the case of technology, the opposition is deeply rooted in American culture, whose obsession with health is not matched in any other society. Comparative public opinion surveys in Europe and the United States indicate a much greater belief in technology in this country. An astonishing 40 percent of Americans believe that medical technology can always save their lives; not nearly as many Europeans share that fantasy. The old line that Americans believe death is just one more disease to be cured is no longer a joke.

Cost-Cutting Ideas

Can anything be done about costs? A number of ideas have been floated about how to meet the challenge, most of them not rooted in any experience or evidence. The longtime favorite has been to eliminate waste and inefficiency, which is like trying to keep dust out of a house located on the edge of a desert. Medical information technology is a more recent candidate, along with increased efforts to advance disease prevention efforts, consumer-directed health care and disease management programs.

Those are all attractive ideas, but they share a common and crippling handicap. In our messy and fragmented mixture of public and private health care, there is no effective leverage, government or otherwise, to put in place good but often painful ideas. Government might manage to act on some of them, but only after a long and difficult fight. The private sector has never shown much capacity to do so; and given its market philosophy, it would surely resist government efforts to impose cost control mechanisms upon it.

Universal care is the only tried and effective way to control costs. The European health care systems do so effectively by means of a strong government hand. They use, among other things, price controls, negotiated physician fees, hospital budgets with limits on expenditures and stringent policies on the adoption and diffusion of new technologies. The net result is that they keep annual cost

increases within the range of 3 percent to 4 percent, have better health outcomes than we do and achieve both at significantly less cost. With the exception of the United Kingdom and Italy—despite what many American conservatives say—there is little rationing and there are no waiting lists for care.

But that is Europe, and this is America. The methods we are inclined to use here to control costs are generally mild and do not promise anything near the reduction in costs needed. The methods the Europeans use, dependent upon government, work well but are culturally and politically unacceptable here. That is the fundamental dilemma in trying to think through the problem.

Consequences of Cost Control

We need a change in culture, not just in the management of health care. Since many of the effective means of controlling costs will be painful for us because of our fascination with technology, the resistance to change will be formidable. Effective control will force patients to give up treatments they may need, doctors to sacrifice to a considerable extent their ancient tradition of treating patients the way they see fit and industry to reduce its drive for profit. Hardly anyone will want to do such things. Liberals will hate it, because though they favor universal health care, they are also children of the Enlightenment, champions of endless scientific progress and technological innovation. Economic conservatives will despise it as government interference with market freedom and consumer choice. Social

The pharmaceutical industry has successfully blocked price controls for many decades.

conservatives will see the necessary rationing as a form of social euthanasia, killing off the burdensome in the name of cold-hearted economics.

Many commentators argue that if health care is not reformed, our system will collapse. I doubt that will happen. Instead, there is likely to be gradual deterioration, tolerable enough for the affluent but bringing to everyone else a gradual loss of quality, with more people uninsured, more expensive insurance, more bankruptcies and economic pain from medical debts and more economic anxiety about getting sick.

The frustrating part of all this is that in principle, cost control is a problem that can be solved. There is indeed waste and inefficiency, enormous and absurd variation in

costs of care from one geographical region to the next, a great deal of useless or only marginally useful treatment, great possibilities in disease prevention programs, far too few primary care physicians and geriatricians and far too many specialists. The fact that the European countries can control costs and limit technologies without harming health is a patent rebuke to our way of doing things.

Looking for Solutions


Can we get there from here? To do so, both a huge economic gap and an equally huge cultural gap must be closed. We have become accustomed to living (and dying) with an expensive and disorganized system that serves many ends other than health. It is a system designed for reckless affluence. It builds upon a model of health and medical progress that is open-ended and infinite in its aspirations. Suffering, aging and death are enemies to be conquered, at whatever the cost to other social needs.

With the help of intensive marketing by industry and daily media hype, we have become fearful hypochondriacs, sensitive to every ache and pain and always anxious about that undiagnosed cancer or heart disease just waiting to get us. Our standard for good health constantly rises. Whatever the state of our health, it is never good enough. However high our life expectancy, we remain forever

hopeful for medical miracles and endlessly dissatisfied with our health.

The nation needs a good dialogue on health care reform, but one that moves beyond organizational and management schemes. They are important but no more so than some deeper matters. Should death be seen as the greatest evil, which medicine should seek to combat, or would a good quality of life within a finite life span be a better goal?

Do the elderly need better access to intensive care units and more high-tech medicine to extend their lives, or better long-term and home care and improved economic and social support? Does it make any sense that the healthier we get in this country the more we spend on health care, not less? Should we be spending three times more of our gross domestic product on health care than on education (when 40 years ago it was about the same)?

Those are rhetorical questions. But they are the place to begin any serious discussion about the control of costs and technology. That discussion merits at least as much attention as does the plight of the uninsured; it will be harder to maintain and focus, but it is even more necessary. 



From the archives, Daniel Callahan on caring for the elderly, at americamagazine.org.



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A Tale of Two Elephants

Overcoming the postelection crisis in Kenya

BY AGBONKHIANMEGHE E. OROBATOR

LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS quote a popular saying to characterize the current post-election crisis in Kenya: “When two elephants fight, the grass suffers.” For us in Kenya this is not just a quaint figure of speech. It aptly describes the catastrophe that has rocked the country since the December 2007 presidential elections. The elections set the stage for mortal combat between two colossal personalities who bestride Kenyan politics, motivated by an unmitigated quest for power: the incumbent, Mwai Kibaki, and his archrival, Raila Odinga.

The prize at stake was the presidency. As in many other African countries, this ultimate prize comes with unimaginable powers to (mis)appropriate national economic resources, reward political cronies and frustrate rivals into submission. Sadly, neither of the two elephants has had the courage to make the ultimate sacrifice for his own political ambitions. Instead innocent Kenyans have paid the price. With vitriolic rhetoric the assorted cast of Kenyan politicians goaded masses of supporters into battle, while they, ensconced in their villas, looked on, only occasionally venturing out in heavily protected convoys of S.U.V.’s.

For weeks the Western media beamed images of horrific postelection violence to a stunned global audience. The images provoked shock and disbelief, but also a feeling of *déjà vu*. After all, as the lead actor in “Blood Diamond” cynically remarked in the film, “This is Africa!”

Inside Kenya ordinary citizens still wonder how this could have happened. The country is surrounded by neighbors convulsed by wars and internecine conflicts that have swelled the refugee population of Kenya and given it a reputation as an oasis of peace in a troubled region. Dec. 27,

2007, changed all that and opened the eyes of Kenyans to deep-rooted seeds of raging discontent, tribal hatred and mutual distrust. The oasis has turned out to be a mirage.

It is a commonly accepted position among Kenyans that the ongoing violence is no longer about the election. Whether one considers the elections a trigger factor, an excuse or a subterfuge, the violence we have seen over the past weeks bears signs of a carefully premeditated and organized operation. Some of it may have been sporadic and some opportunistic. Underneath it all lies a murderous quest to avenge old wrongs, settle atavistic scores and eliminate ethnic rivals and enemies.

Violent Disregard for Human Rights

Unquestionably, in all parts of the country, the result has been the same: death and destruction, impunity and disregard for fundamental human rights. I know a mother of 12 children who eked out a living selling a few assorted candies and cigarettes in a makeshift kiosk less than a block from our school grounds. Over the years she survived several evictions and harassment by city council officials. As I write, she sleeps in the open in an agricultural showground with her entire family. She has lost her home and her livelihood; she now depends on the goodwill of humanitarian volunteers.

When violence erupted in a nearby slum, the choir director of our local parish ran for her life, not knowing who was pursuing her or why. Unfortunately she ran into a mob of riotous youths, who did not spare her. They hacked her to death.

Our cook’s eldest son saw his ramshackle room razed to the ground by a gang of youths. He was lucky to escape alive.

Every day we hear horror stories of how the postelection crisis continues to destroy innocent lives. Many of the victims voted with pride on Dec. 27. Whichever elephant they voted for, they did so with conviction and high hopes for a change in their living conditions. One of my students

Kenyans will continue to reel with pain and seethe with anger, traumatized by the truth that they voted for and lost out to selfish politicians.

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Children stand together as heavy rain falls at a temporary shelter for 19,000 displaced people during postelection violence in Eldoret, Kenya, Feb. 7, 2008.

stood in line for seven hours to cast his ballot; many traveled hundreds of miles to their home areas to exercise their civic right. It was a heartening sight to behold millions of Kenyans braving the elements to make sure every eligible voter participated.

The results, however, betrayed all expectations. The disputed vote count sparked unprecedented mayhem, chaos and violence. Any talk of an election rerun, which some political leaders have proposed, is now met with a scornful, “God forbid! Never again!” This morbid fear of elections is understandable. As one victim put it, “We voted and we lost!”

Several weeks after the elections, the death toll continues to rise. Over 1,000 Kenyans have died, though government figures claim the number is smaller. Countless others lie injured in hospitals across the country, nursing wounds inflicted by machetes, poisoned arrows, clubs and gasoline bombs. Almost overnight, Kenya has generated 300,000 internally displaced persons and refugees. Forced off land they once called home, these people, mostly women and children, sleep in open spaces: stadiums, police stations, showgrounds and church compounds.

Neither the two elephants nor their cheerleaders know

the indignities of forced displacement. It would seem that Kenya has finally joined the league of African countries whose tortuous quest for socioeconomic development remains bedeviled by senseless violence and political shortsightedness.

Consequences Across Africa

During a recent panel discussion analyzing the postelection crisis, one speaker suggested that Kenya’s was only the latest in a wave of conflicts sweeping across Africa. This wave has tossed and overturned Zimbabwe, Congo, southern Sudan, Darfur, Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea and northern Uganda. No one quite knows when, where or how this raging tide of violent conflict will subside. In Kenya and elsewhere, the consequences have proved devastating for a continent perpetually struggling to climb out of a debilitating downward spiral of poverty, hunger, disease and underdevelopment. When people see images of violence in one African country, they see all of Africa. Not many are informed enough to distinguish between the continent as a whole and the individual countries.

The present crisis has far-reaching consequences for Africa. Here again the saying about two fighting elephants

holds true: the fighting in Kenya hurts all of Africa. The events of recent weeks have demonstrated how much Africa stands to lose from this crisis. The economies of neighboring countries, like Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, southern Sudan and Congo, face serious challenges as a result of the postelection crisis. Besides, the tourist industry, which is Kenya's economic mainstay, is tottering on the brink, because many Western countries have advised their citizens to steer clear of Kenya. Local hotels are operating below capacity. Another important foreign exchange earner, the exportation of cut tropical flowers, faces an uncertain future, because most of the industry operates in the combustible Rift Valley region. Thousands of jobs have been lost, compounding an already precarious situation of unemployment.

A Tall Order

What is the way forward? That is the question on the lips of many Kenyans. "If you don't know where you are going, you should at least know where you are coming from," says an African proverb. The efforts at mediation have identified the need to redress historical injustices as part of the total peace package. This is a tall order for a country where self-seeking political operators have consistently swept the contentious issues of land tenure, ethnic bigotry, constitutional reforms, human rights abuse, corruption and economic misappropriation under the carpet for many decades since independence. As some have argued, this is perhaps an opportune moment to revisit these burning questions. But for this process to commence, a bold, credible and people-centered political leadership remains an absolute prerequisite. The political arena, however, is overpopulated by charlatans and megalomaniacs who have lost the confidence of ordinary Kenyans.

The disillusionment of Kenyans with the political class has revived the debate over the role of religion in society. First, churches have served as places of refuge for thousands of victims. And yet during the early days of conflict, the most horrific act of barbarity was committed inside a church, where scores of innocent Kenyans were burned to death as they huddled together for safety and comfort. Second, churches have served as gathering places for Kenyans seeking divine intervention. Millions continue to throng to places of worship to pray for peace so they can return to the land. Third, a turn to religion for solace and relief has highlighted the critical role of religious leaders. Many have issued passionate appeals for peace and volunteered their services as mediators and facilitators.


The complexity of the present crisis, though, reveals the precarious role of religion and religious leaders in Africa's politics. So emotionally powerful and polarizing are the issues that a perception of one's neutrality, even as a religious leader, is not guaranteed. A few high-profile religious lead-

ers have been discredited on account of their perceived political biases—a charge leveled against them by their own ethnically divided congregations. The ability of religious leaders to establish themselves as viable alternative agents and facilitators of peace in a time of crisis remains limited. This crisis proves that the church in Africa still lacks an effective mechanism of sociopolitical engagement. Even more unsettling is the fact that the vocabulary of Christian social ethics has become suspect. The following is an example.

As part of the myriad responses to the postelection crisis in Kenya, Hekima College launched a Lenten Peace Campaign. It was a simple initiative: to print and distribute postcards of St. Francis of Assisi's prayer for peace, just as Cardinal Francis Spellman of New York did during World War II. We planned to set up a booth at our school gate, as we have done for the school's Lenten campaign in past years, distributing peace postcards to passersby and urging them to take the words of the prayer to heart. Sadly, we were urged to revise our plans and adopt a more cautious and discreet approach. Under the present circumstances, the logic of political polarization in Kenya means that protagonists use words like "peace" and "justice" to represent their mutually exclusive claims to political power: if you advocate "peace," then you are for the incumbent and the status quo; if you call for "justice," then you stand on the side of the opposition leader and support his cause. Either way, one is bound to draw the ire of one of the two elephants and their herds of arsonists, looters and murderers.

Mediation and Dialogue

Kenyans and the rest of Africa pin much hope on the ongoing mediation process led by the former secretary general of the United Nations, Kofi Annan. This skilled diplomat and negotiator achieved a remarkable feat by bringing the two elephants together: Kibaki and Odinga shook hands in public and were seen on national television sharing a cup of tea. But even that gesture did not seem to quell the violence; they had already ignited a fight in which ordinary Kenyans turned against one another out of frustration and desperation. As things stand, sincere mediation and frank dialogue represent Kenya's best chance for long-lasting solutions to perennial socioeconomic and political injustices.

Eventually, out of political expediency, the two elephants will reach a compromise and agree on a power-sharing deal. Each one will have gotten what he wanted at the expense of hundreds of slain victims and thousands of internally displaced persons and refugees. Long after Kibaki and Odinga have made their peace with each other and achieved their political ambitions, Kenyans will continue to reel with pain and seethe with anger, traumatized by the fact that they voted for and lost out to selfish politicians. We face a long road to peace and reconciliation with truth and justice. 

After Sunset

P. T. Anderson's 'There Will Be Blood'

BY RICHARD A. BLAKE

THERE WILL BE BLOOD opens in 1897, 15 years earlier than its literary source, Upton Sinclair's *Oil!* The shift is significant. In 1890 the Census Bureau declared that the American frontier had been closed and the expansion of the United States from the Atlantic coast to the Pacific had been completed. In 1898 the country would open a second frontier era by declaring a war against Spain and inaugurating a century of external expansion.

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Since then more than a century has passed. The writer and director Paul Thomas Anderson, uses the centennial as the occasion to revisit the founding myths of America. His analysis is unsparing, and his prognosis for the future has led him to select a most chilling title for his work. Does the future tense indicate the century following 1897 or does it presage some horrible vision for the century ahead?

Two strands in the American character brought a successful conclusion to the building of a nation in the wilderness: the American entrepreneurial spirit that made the United States the richest, most powerful nation in history, and a spiritual heritage that makes it to this day the most

religious in the industrialized world. Both strands hold the power to loose demons. Anderson sees these traits of the American character as locked in a symbiotic but mutually destructive relationship. The dark side of the Protestant work ethic spurred the energetic and the saved to seize upon the opportunities gushing from a new country. It created a generation of robber barons, whose greed created both misery for the working classes and ecological catastrophe. At the same time these men also created unprecedented wealth for their nation. The churches too echoed the economic drive of their secular counterparts. In many instances, godliness became a splendid business opportunity that led religious charlatans and heavenly empire builders to victimize the ignorant and impoverished no less than had the captains of industry. Their energy, dedication and inventiveness stir admiration; their ruthlessness stirs loathing.

As an analysis of the American experience, the film invites a comparison with the massive body of Western films created

by John Ford. Both filmmakers use their work to tell a story of the nation, but Anderson begins where Ford ended. As a son of immigrants to Maine, John Ford embraced a romantic vision of the frontier and invented the West as we popularly understand it. In film after film, John Wayne embodied the American spirit: energetic, physically imposing, self-reliant, resourceful, courageous and invariably moral. As time passed, Ford's vision grew darker. In "The Searchers" (1956), Wayne's driven character keeps a faltering grip on his own sanity, and in the end is excluded from civilization. In "The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance" (1962), Wayne is a respected anachronism, and in "Cheyenne Autumn" (1964), a revisionist, remorseful view of the Indian wars, he does not

PHOTO: CNS/PARAMOUNT VANTAGE/MIRAMAX



Daniel Day-Lewis in a scene from his Academy Award-winning performance in "There Will Be Blood."

appear at all. Near the end of his career, Ford recognized the Western myth as flawed at best, but at worst as fraudulent.

Anderson begins with this revisionist view of America and offers few glimmers of light in his unrelievedly dark meditation. The film begins deep underground, with Daniel Plainview (Daniel Day-Lewis) striking sparks in the dark as his pickaxe smashes into rock. The work is brutal, and the stone grudgingly yields only tiny amounts of gravel that can be filtered for silver. After a mine accident that shatters his leg, Plainview pulls himself to safety, rung by agonizing rung, and makes his way to the assay office. He will become rich, but he will remain physically and spiritually maimed. Who can fail to admire his resolve and courage? Toil like this deserves its suitable reward. He is an American, risking everything to carve a nation out of the continent with his own hands, even if he destroys himself doing it.

In a few short years, Plainview has used his earnings from silver to acquire properties that promise to deliver oil. The soil in the California desert is as unyielding as stone, but Plainview is fired with determination to suck wealth out of the rock. At first he stands knee deep in the muck and raises the oil from the well by hand, bucket by bucket, and spills it into hideous pools that suppurate on the surface of the land. The stench and slime of crude never leave him. Even years later, after he has made his fortune, his face, fingernails and clothes seem perpetually grease-stained. He calls himself "an oil man," and so he is. It oozes from his skin.

As Plainview's wealth grows, his humanity diminishes. He adopts the orphaned son of a worker, who is killed working one of his rigs. Neither altruism nor guilt motivates him. The boy functions as a useful stage prop to illustrate Plainview's family values in meetings with those whose land he wants to lease. How could he possibly swindle desperate farm families out of their oil fields if he has such devotion to his "son"? Back at the camp, he puts whisky in the boy's milk to keep him quiet. After an explosion that causes permanent hearing loss, the boy becomes a burden and is sent away. Some time later, a stranger introduces himself as Plainview's brother, but the truth of their kinship is unknown. Their relationship ends badly.



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Plainview has no family, no roots, no home. He has no life other than his wealth.

Eli Sunday (Paul Dano), a creepy boy evangelist, uses his spiritual fervor to challenge Plainview's corrosive materialism. (The name Sunday suggests not only the Sabbath, but Billy Sunday, the popular evangelist of the same time period.) He quotes a few apocalyptic verses from the Bible, preaches with enthusiasm and casts devils out of the gullible. He also wants his share of the oil money to build a new, elaborate church building to replace the tiny cabin he uses for his revival meetings.

He and Plainview circle each other like boxers testing each other without throwing a punch. To gain his cooperation in bilking the people of the area, Plainview makes promises he never intends to keep. Sunday keeps his flock in line, for a price. When Sunday insists on blessing a new wellhead, Plainview humiliates him by blessing it himself. Both men publicly scorn each other for their values, but in their cynicism they are mirror images of each other. They walk a path toward mutual destruction.

The American frontier myth consists

of an irresistible march across the continent that ends at the edge of the Pacific. Plainview consolidates the independent oil companies of California and constructs his pipeline to bring their product to market without the help of the big oil companies, railroads or the banks from the East. As his empire inches westward, he arrives at the ocean and bathes in its cleansing waters. But nothing is cleansed. He needs the violence of the frontier, the stench and danger of the gusher. By 1927 he has built his mansion near the ocean. The glitter of a bowling alley in the basement of his mansion provides the setting for a climactic meeting with Sunday, who demands money to begin a radio ministry. Plainview is alone and drunk when Sunday comes with his proposition, but he will have no part of Sunday or of radio.

The final scene can be faulted for its melodramatic confrontation. I'm more forgiving. The film deals with the disintegration and exposure of two hypocritical, self-centered men. It focuses on character rather than action or narrative plausibility. At the end, both men simply explode, and their carefully constructed facades crumble at their feet. Sunday's God and Plainview's mammon, each lethal in its own way, can no longer sustain in them any pretense of humanity.

Daniel Day-Lewis drags us deep into the mine shaft of Daniel Plainview. His hat and mustache make his face rounder, coarser and more sinister than it is. I for one found his vocal mannerisms a bit distracting. He seems to be doing a self-conscious imitation of the deep-mouthed, drawling tones of John Huston. Perhaps he and Paul Thomas Anderson were trying to suggest that Plainview is merely an earlier incarnation of Noah Cross, the corrupt California land speculator Huston played in "Chinatown" (Polanski, 1974). If so, the allusion is a bit strained.

In the classic westerns, the tragic hero would ride off into the sunset, farther to the west. At the end of "There Will Be Blood," Daniel Plainview has nowhere to go. It leaves a haunting question about the future: Will there be still more blood in the building of the American nation? **A**

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A Tenable Theology?

Confronting Power and Sex in the Catholic Church

Reclaiming the Spirit of Jesus

By Bishop Geoffrey Robinson
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It is easy for American Catholics to forget that the scandal of sexual abuse by clerics was by no means limited to our shores. The Australian church, for example, has undergone a similar crisis, and in 1994 Australian Bishop Geoffrey Robinson was appointed by the Australian bishops to lead a task force created to establish guidelines for dealing with clerical sexual abuse cases. His experience in that capacity led him to conclude that the clerical sexual abuse crisis was not an isolated aberration in church life but a symptom of a more pervasive church malady. Although official documentation states that Pope John Paul II received his episcopal resignation in 2004 for reasons of poor health, Robinson admits that he resigned because he could not continue to minister as bishop in a church about which he had such deep reservations. His recent book is a forthright assessment of the state of the church today. It offers a comprehensive program for church reform argued with great passion and love for the church but compromised, too often, by a lack of theological nuance.

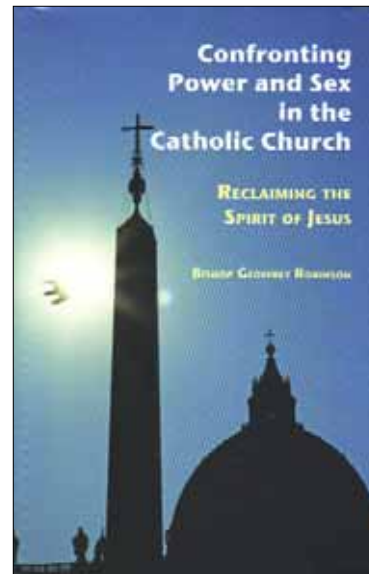
Robinson calls for a sweeping evaluation of church attitudes toward power and sex. Refreshingly, his analysis does not begin with calls for institutional reform, but with a deeper reflection on Christian faith and the ways in which unhealthy conceptions of God, revelation, divine providence and Jesus Christ inevitably have negative ecclesial consequences. These chapters are catechetical in the best sense of the term: engaging explorations into fundamental beliefs of the Catholic faith. He warns against the dangers of imagining God as a human (frequently a male!) writ large and reflects on the famous saying of Irenaeus that the glory of God is the human person fully alive. For

Robinson, Scripture and the world are “the two books of God” and he subsequently develops the notion of tradition as both the fruit and process of the church’s discernment of the meaning to be drawn from these two sources. Robinson warns against a “churchianity” that turns in upon itself....” The church, he insists, must recognize its mission of service to the world and the coming of God’s reign.

His analysis of the exercise of power in the church contains many perceptive, practical insights. Robinson highlights the juxtaposition in 1 Samuel of two accounts of the establishment of the Israelite monarchy, one in favor and the other critical. This juxtaposition should stand as a reminder of an enduring ambiguity in the Judeo-Christian tradition regarding institutional structures of authority. They may be necessary, but they are fraught with the danger of abuse. He illuminates some bizarre incongruities in the pastoral exercise of church leadership that result when institutional loyalty trumps the sincere search for truth:

I find it strange that, if I were to tell a cardinal in the Vatican that I was struggling with doubts about the existence of God, I would receive sympathy and support. But if I were to tell the same cardinal that I had doubts about papal teaching on contraception and the ordination of women, I would receive a stern lecture on loyalty to the pope.

Many of Robinson’s proposals for institutional reform are sensible, if hardly new: a greater willingness to distinguish between what is essential and non-essential in church doctrine, a more modest and juridically circumscribed exercise of papal authority, a rejection of the practice of elevating curial officials to the episcopate and/or cardinalate, a call for episcopal



membership at synods to be determined primarily by episcopal conferences, a proposal that the laity be allowed to participate in ecumenical councils and that the laity be granted a greater role in the choice of bishops.

Robinson’s analysis of the Catholic Church’s attitude toward sexual morality is also filled with the practical insight of an experienced and sensitive pastor. He laments the way the role of conscience has been obscured in much official church teaching. The church’s teaching office ought to see itself not in competition with the exercise of conscience but as

dedicated to the proper formation of conscience through moral guidance, careful study and respectful dialogue. Robinson suggests that the magisterium would enhance its authority if it were to honor rather than dismiss the complexity of many contemporary moral issues. “If the church acquired a reputation for putting the arguments against its own views as powerfully, clearly and honestly as they can be put, its credibility would soar dramatically.” The author offers a careful reading of the complex biblical traditions regarding sexual morality, identifying problematic purity and property ethics that coexisted uneasily with a personalist sexual ethic embodied in Jesus’ free and

The Reviewers

Richard Gaillardetz is Murray/Bacik Professor of Catholic Studies at the University of Toledo and the author of *The Church in the Making* (Paulist, 2006) and *Ecclesiology for a Global Church* (Orbis, 2008).

Bill Williams, a member of the National Book Critics Circle, is a former editorial writer for *The Hartford Courant*.

Mark E. Rondeau is the local news and religion editor for the *Bennington Banner* in Bennington, Vt.

liberating treatment of others. On this basis he invites church leadership to consider a more balanced and open discernment regarding the adequacy of church teachings on the intrinsic evil of homosexual acts and artificial contraception. He even wonders, provocatively, whether some forms of premarital sex might be morally legitimate.

Given my substantial sympathy for some of Robinson's insights and proposals, I have to confess a deep frustration with the shoddy argumentation that is marshaled in defense of many of his proposals, arguments that lead him to unnecessary positions. For example, he calls for a clearer distinction between essential and non-essential church teachings and challenges the modern ecclesiastical tendency toward "creeping infallibility." Here again, many theologians in the church would share his concern. But this quite legitimate concern leads him to question the necessity of the church's teaching on infallibility itself. His discussion of the First Vatican Council consistently refers to "infallible statements," when Vatican I never used this expression. Infallibility applied not to propositional statements

themselves but to an act of judgment (teaching or believing). Moreover, he presumes that the church's teaching on infallibility leads to the view that dogmatic statements are "unchanging" and incapable of development, a position the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has explicitly rejected.

The target of Robinson's reflections is a very real and troubling ahistorical dogmatism that is alive and well in some sectors of the Catholic Church. It seems to me, however, that this is best confronted not by abandoning Catholic teaching on infallibility but by cultivating a more sophisticated understanding of it. In the same vein, Robinson believes that there are elements of the Nicene Creed that are not essential to the faith. He mentions the phrase, "he ascended into heaven." He then argues against a literal interpretation of the phrase, one that assumes that Jesus physically levitated through the clouds and into the stratosphere. His criticism of such a simplistic reading is justifiable, but this hardly means that the Creed's teaching on the ascension is non-essential; rather, it simply warrants a more theologically sophisticated grasp of the doctrine itself.

Finally, while I sympathize with many of his calls for the structural reform of church governance, his appeal to a secular "parliament" as model for church governance overlooks the ways in which the church is not simply a liberal democracy (which of course does not mean that it ought not incorporate democratic elements). A far more fruitful warrant for structural reform would result from the re-appropriation of such neglected ecclesiological concepts as conciliarity, collegiality and synodality. One can only wish that Robinson's work had been subject to more rigorous editing and consultation with experts in ecclesiology and moral theology. The result, I am confident, would have been a more compelling and tightly argued work.

Theological difficulties notwithstanding, the importance of *Confronting Power and Sex in the Catholic Church* lies in the fact that a bishop, an ecclesiastical "insider," has had the courage to challenge the institution of which he was a part and invite serious conversation regarding a broad range of church issues that have too often been declared off-limits by church leadership. If Robinson's book opens the door to more open and responsible theological conversation by members of church leadership regarding the unique demands facing our church today, it will have fulfilled its purpose.

Richard Gaillardetz

Poetry Contest

Poems are being accepted for the 2008 Foley Poetry Award

Each entrant is asked to submit only one typed, unpublished poem of 30 lines or fewer that is not under consideration elsewhere. Include contact information on the same page as the poem. Poems will not be returned. Please do not submit poems by e-mail or fax. Submissions must be postmarked between Jan. 1 and March 31.

Poems received outside the designated period will be treated as regular poetry submissions, and are not eligible for the prize.

**The winning poem will be published in the June 9-16 issue of America.
Three runner-up poems will be published in subsequent issues.**

Cash prize: \$1,000.

Send poems to: Foley Poetry Contest
America, 106 West 56th Street, New York, NY 10019

'Citizens of Sickness'

Strong at the Broken Places

Voices of Illness, a Chorus of Hope

By Richard M. Cohen
Harper. 352p \$24.95
ISBN 9780060763114

The journalist and former television news producer Richard M. Cohen knows firsthand the toll of chronic illness. He described his battle with multiple sclerosis and colon cancer in *Blindsided: Living a Life Above Illness*, a chronicle of courage and survival.

In his new book, *Strong at the Broken*

Places, Cohen chronicles the dreams, struggles and coping methods of five others with serious, life-threatening afflictions.

We meet Denise Glass, suffering with ALS, popularly known as Lou Gehrig's disease; Buzz Bay, struggling with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, a virulent form of cancer; Ben Cumbo, a 20-year-old college student living with muscular dystrophy; Sarah Levin, a social worker battered by Crohn's disease, a painful digestive track ailment; and Larry Fricks, dealing with bipolar disease, also known as manic depression. Cohen telephoned, corresponded by e-mail and met with each of them, seeking to understand how chronic illness impacts individuals and families.

Denise Glass was in her 40s when she received her diagnosis of ALS. "It was like the doctor punched a fist into my gut," she recalled. Family members offered to help, but Glass pushed them away, not wanting to be dependent on anyone. "Dependence is worse than dying," she told Cohen.

Buzz Bay is sustained by a deep Christian faith that he will be cured of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma "in this life or in Heaven." He drew solace in becoming a hospice volunteer. Sometimes the pain from his tumor is overwhelming, but he is reluctant to complain. "I am at peace," he says, although he worries about his unpaid medical bills, which exceed \$500,000.

Ben Cumbo was diagnosed with muscular dystrophy at age 3 and began using a wheelchair as a teenager. Heading off to college was scary. One night a housemate helped him onto the toilet and left. Cumbo had to crawl back to his room and spend the night on the floor because no one was available to help him into bed. Cumbo has faith in God and is sustained by hope and the realization that many other people are worse off.

Sarah Levin developed severe symptoms at age 3, but was misdiagnosed as having ulcerative colitis. Years later, during surgery, doctors realized she actually

had Crohn's disease, which causes continual bleeding and exhaustion. She thought that no man would marry a "defective person," but she eventually found love and is happily married, although she worries now how her husband will deal with her impending colostomy surgery.

Larry Fricks has confronted mental illness, alcoholism and drug addiction. A Baptist, Fricks says he often feels God's presence and remembers a "spontaneous, spiritual awakening, a conversion experience. It was like a sustained flash of light. God had communicated with me and touched my life." He volunteers in a nursing home and works with troubled children. Despite his suffering, Fricks has no regrets about his mental illness because without it he would not have found the "meaning and purpose I now have."

Each of these individuals comes across as friendly and resilient under exceedingly difficult circumstances.

The five finally had a chance to meet face to face when Cohen arranged for them to talk at Harvard Medical School, where they gave students a glimpse into what it is like to live with chronic illness. One clear message emerges: physicians too often are clueless about patients' emotional needs.

Another complaint was the stigma attached to serious illness, and the public's tendency to focus on patients' limitations rather than their accomplishments. It frustrates Denise Glass when people hear her ALS-induced slurred speech and assume she is retarded or drunk. Larry Fricks resents being placed in a "diagnostic box," knowing that if he gets excited or upset, some people will dismiss his feelings as a sign of mental illness.

Cohen notes that 90 million Americans suffer from chronic illnesses, but this book is not primarily about numbers. Cohen lays out the physical, emotional and financial toll of long-term sickness, although too much of the text consists of short quotes spliced together from

tape-recorded conversations and e-mails.

The author's obsessive anger and disparagement of spiritual faith undercut the more hopeful messages of his five subjects. At the Harvard gathering, the five playfully gave Cohen a gift certificate for an "Anger Management 101" course. But anger is no joke for Cohen. "Screw the positive attitude, anyway. Give me anger and frustration anytime. Those are honest emotions," he writes.

He is equally dogmatic in his disdain for spiritual faith, calling it "alien," "a mystery to me" and something for "old folks heading around the bend." To his credit, Cohen cites "the danger of having a closed mind" and concedes that spiritual faith might help some people, even if it has no meaning for him, "a smug, godless New Yorker."

Although the individual profiles resonate, Cohen never steps back to ask what they mean. We are left with scattered bits of information and heartbreak, without a persuasive conclusion. Nevertheless, these stories offer insight into issues too often left in the shadows.

To supplement the book, Cohen created a Web site, strongatthebrokenplaces.com, where he invites others to join the conversation by telling their own chronic illness stories.

Bill Williams

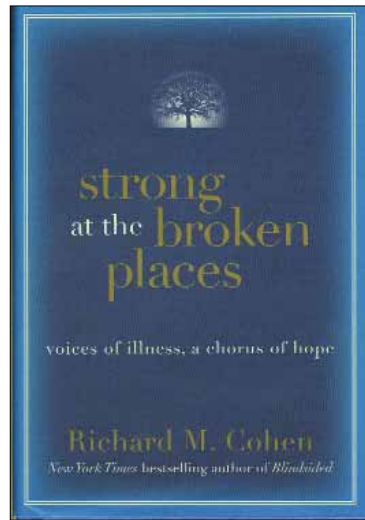
A Techie's World of Faith

God's Mechanics How Scientists and Engineers Make Sense of Religion

By Br. Guy Consolmagno, S.J.
Jossey-Bass. 256p \$24.95
ISBN 9780787994662

As both an astronomer and a Jesuit, Guy Consolmagno is well situated and qualified to comment on places where faith and science interact. He does not explain the title of his latest book, *God's Mechanics*, anywhere in the text, but clearly implies that scientists and engineers study, figure out and manipulate God's creation. He refers to these scientists and engineers as "techie."

Consolmagno has impeccable techie



credentials himself. He has worked for the Vatican Observatory since 1993. His research explores connections between meteorites, asteroids and the evolution of small solar system bodies. He also curates the Vatican's meteorite collection.

In his experience, techies are pragmatic, logical and see the world in terms of processes to be understood and jobs to be done. They want to know how things work. They are also rules-oriented and can be susceptible to rigid literalism.

Having set himself a very ambitious task—to reach some conclusions about how a huge group of sophisticated people make sense of religion—Consolmagno takes three different approaches. In the first section, he looks at the problem-solving approaches of techies and applies them to questions surrounding God's existence; in the second section he recounts and summarizes his interviews with scientists and engineers about religion; in the third part he explains how he himself makes sense of religion.

The author starts by exploring how techies would evaluate three questions basic to human life: "Why is there something instead of nothing?" "What do I want, and why do I want it?" and "How do I make sense of my life?" In this section, Consolmagno relies heavily on traditional theology and arguments for the existence of God. Though his stated intention is not to write apologetics, much in this section—and in the final section—comes across as such. (He even admits later in the book to having drawn heavily on C. S. Lewis.)

Still, Consolmagno writes with humor and insight. Citing several examples, he warns against drawing religious or philosophical conclusions from the best science of one's day. In essence, science can help explain the "how" questions but not the ultimate "why" questions.

Hindu astronomy does not prove Hindu cosmology. Kepler's laws do not prove Kepler's theology. Scientific observations can appear to be consistent with a certain world view, and some world views can even lead to correct scientific descriptions and laws, but the laws don't prove the beliefs. Science can't make that judgment either way.

Not satisfied with theory and conjecture, the author spent six weeks in 2005 interviewing scientists and engineers in northern California. He warns the reader up front that he is neither a professional interviewer nor ethnographer. The results were not exactly what he had expected. Not only did the techies turn out to be much more complex than he thought; they also fooled him by not always thinking the way he does: "The truth is that techies—like most humans—fail badly at being successfully pigeonholed. We're just too varied."

Consolmagno does find a trend, in that those who practice a religion seem to be more interested in community and lifestyle issues than in faith and truth. Yet he has a hunch that those he interviewed do indeed care about the "God stuff" but may well lack the philosophical and linguistic tools to describe their religious experiences.

"There would be something wrong if I didn't have a more elaborated understanding of religion, of the 'hows' and the 'whys,' than most of my fellow techies are able to achieve," he writes. This leads him to examine, in the final part of the book, his own experience of religion as a scientist and Jesuit brother.

Though Consolmagno does not say so, his subjects' inability to be articulate on this subject seems to support the view that most Americans, even those with advanced academic degrees, have a grade-school understanding of religion.

In the book's final section, Consolmagno covers a regular universe of territory, from reflections on what truth usually looks like, to "essential Christianity," to examinations of the truth claims of the Apostles' Creed. It is a whirlwind tour, but along the way he hits the mark more often than he misses.

The author's take on the doctrine of original sin, for instance, is intriguing. He accepts it as a fact: people often behave in evil ways. But the history of

the human race is longer and much more complicated than the Genesis account suggests.

So, as a 21st-century techie, how does Consolmagno deal with such challenges to the traditional doctrine of original sin? He

happily throws up his hands and says he doesn't know—but in fact, he is rather delighted. "Because when this kind of paradox comes up in my own scientific life, which happens all the time, I have learned to recognize such a challenge as a great opportunity to learn something important and new."

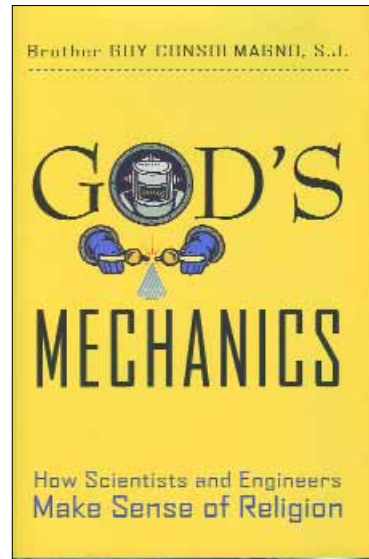
The best part of *God's Mechanics* is Consolmagno's description of a spiritual transformation he

underwent as an up-and-coming 27-year-old postdoctoral research fellow at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1980. He was attending a Back Bay church one Sunday, surrounded by old, poor and homeless people. He realized he did not know them, did not want to know them and did not want to be seen with them. Then he questioned his motives for coming to church: to be with God. And he realized God would be found in precisely such company. Before long he left his research position to serve with the Peace Corps in Kenya.

Despite such moments, however, this book is less than a great read—Consolmagno takes on too much and goes in too many directions: part Christian apologetics, part anecdotal sociological study and part spiritual autobiography. Though well-written and at times fascinating, it is not focused enough for his stated purpose.

I enjoyed *God's Mechanics*, although the promise of the book's subtitle is really answered only in regard to the author himself.

Mark E. Rondeau



An audio interview with Catholic poet Angela O'Donnell, at americamagazine.org.

America Associates



Dear Friends of *America*,

Next month **America** will begin its 100th year of publication. Throughout the coming year we plan publish a variety of material in print and on-line to witness to the history of the magazine's first century and to explore the issues that face us in the century ahead.

What my predecessor Thurston N. Davis wrote on the occasion of our 50th anniversary remains true as we enter our second century. "The small circulation journal of opinion has a more vital role to play than ever before. The relatively simple days of 1909 are gone. There are so many new problems, so many emerging issues, all them intertwined.... There is a plethora of opinions about each phase of every single problem." The editors and I pledge that **America** will continue to

be a forum for the exchange of opinion in these complex and challenging times.

We are grateful to all who have made **America** a vital part of Catholic intellectual life in the United States these last 100 years: the editors and lay staff, and most of all to friends and benefactors like you. We offer our thanks for the gifts that assist us in carrying on and expanding this ministry and for the bequests that hand on the gift of **America** to generations to come.

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 Ms. Patricia T. Finan • 1994New York
 Mr. James Fisko • 2002Indiana
 Ms. Nancy Fiumara • 2002Massachusetts
 Dr. Edith M. Flanigen • 2006New York
 Ms. Nancy Fontenot • 2006Louisiana
 John Fox, Jr., M.D. • 1987Texas
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 Rev. Moritz Fuchs • 1998.....New York
 In Memory of Mary Ellen Gamble • 1997California
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 Rev. Msgr. James D. Habiger • 1988.....Minnesota
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 Rev. George J. Haspedis • 2000.....Washington
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 Msgr. Owen J. Hendry • 2005New Jersey
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 Rev. Thomas E. Kramer • 1981North Dakota
 Susan & John Krasniewski • 2005North Carolina
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 Msgr. Stephen P. McHenry • 1985Pennsylvania
 Deacon and Mrs. Ronald L. McIntyre • 1990Mich.
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 Gail W. and Francis J. Mertz • 1991New Jersey
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 Mr. Robert Folger Miller • 1995California
 Dr. O. Fred Miller, III • 1982.....Pennsylvania
 Msgr. James A. Moloney • 1997Michigan
 Ms. Mary Rosalie Moore • 1979.....California
 Mr. John T. Moroney • 1982New York
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 Jeanne Anne Mucci • 2001New Jersey
 Mrs. Margaret F. Mullin • 1972.....Massachusetts
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 Mr. Richard T. Murphy • 2000.....Massachusetts
 Rev. Charles A. Murray • 2001Mexico
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 Mr. J. Kenneth O'Connor • 1988New York
 Rev. Vincent O'Reilly • 1990.....California
 Prof. James L. O'Sullivan • 1995Connecticut
 Mr. Hubert J. O'Toole • 2003New Jersey
 Mr. Robert P. Ochocki • 1993California
 Fr. Richard T. Ouellette • 2004.....California
 Rev. Msgr. John N. Paddock • 2005.....New York
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 Rev. Steven J. Peterson • 1990New York
 Rev. Mr. Burdette N. Peterson • 1991Ohio
 Mrs. Veronica Phoney • 1983.....Florida
 Rev. James H. Plough • 1998.....Colorado
 Mr. J. Kenneth Poggenburg • 1994.....California
 Dr. Irene L. Porro • 2002Massachusetts
 Mr. James E. Power • 1982New Jersey
 Dennis L. and Leslie W. Purcell • 1996.....New York
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 Mrs. Elinor Myers Rees • 2000.....Georgia
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 Ms. Alma Roginell • 2003Connecticut
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 Mary Anne Sonnenschein • 2004Maryland
 Ms. Edith V. Sontag • 2003New Jersey
 Mr. and Mrs. John W. Spollen • 1982New York
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 Mrs. Gail L. Sturdevant • 1995.....Missouri

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 Rev. Daniel L. Warden • 2003Texas
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 Rev. Robert M. Wendelken • 1988Ohio

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 Mr. Homer S. White, Jr. • 2003.....Kentucky
 Rev. Paul J. Whitney • 1997New York
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 Dr. Joseph R. Zajac • 2001New York
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 Rev. Carl J. Arico • 1995.....New Jersey
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 Ms. Marilyn M. Brown • 2003California
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 Mr. R. P. Brumbach • 1983California
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 Theresa Krolikowski Buck • 1993.....West Virginia
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 Ms. Bobbye J. Burke • 1987Pennsylvania
 Mr. Edward J. Burke, III • 2002Texas
 Mr. James D. Burke • 2003Pennsylvania
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 Dr. and Mrs. John A. Callahan • 2002.....Minnesota
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 Ms. Ellen M. Campbell • 2004California
 Jorge L. Camunas, M.D. • 1994.....New York
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 Mrs. Lois H. Carnes • 2002California
 Ms. Eileen R. Carpino • 1993.....Ohio
 Rev. Michael A. Carrano • 2005.....New York
 Miss Ruth Carroll • 1988Pennsylvania
 Mr. Robert J. Carroll • 1969.....Ohio
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 Mrs. Jacob T. Carwile • 1994Kansas
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 Dr. Michael P. Casey • 2001Pennsylvania
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 Mr. Peter R. Chacon • 2007California
 Mr. Charles P. Chalko • 2004.....Massachusetts
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 Mrs. Mary D. Cheap • 2003Kentucky
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 Mr. Paul Clarkson • 1995New Jersey
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 F. Farrell Collins, Jr., M.D. • 1979.....North Carolina
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 Deacon Robert L. Connelly • 1994.....Maryland
 Mr. William S. Connolly • 1993Florida
 Rev. Gerald T. Connor • 2006.....New York
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 Mrs. Anita H. Cook • 2003Ohio
 William P. Cooney, M.D. • 1998Minnesota
 Mr. William Cooper • 2005Alaska
 Anonymous • 1999.....New York
 Philip T. Cortese, M.D. • 1987.....New York
 Rev. Raymond J. Cossette • 1993Minnesota
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 Mr. and Mrs. John P. Courtney • 1987Delaware
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 Mr. and Mrs. Frank M. Covey, Jr. • 1987Illinois
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 Rev. Francis J. Culkin • 1988New York
 Anne and Richard Cummings • 2003New Jersey
 Most Rev. John S. Cummins • 1991California
 Timothy Curran, M.D. • 1989.....Connecticut
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 Mr. Joseph R. Curtis • 1985Washington
 Mr. Richard F. Czaja • 2005New York
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 Mr. Joseph A. D'Anna • 2002New Mexico
 V. D'Silva • 2004New York
 Mr. Edward J. Dailey • 2002Massachusetts
 Rev. Francis E. Daley • 2005.....Massachusetts
 Rev. James J. Daly • 1991New York
 Mr. Joseph P. Daly • 2006.....Florida
 Ms. Rosemary Darmstadt • 1998New York
 Mr. Gordon F. Davies • 2005California
 Ms. Judith M. Davis • 1996.....Indiana
 Mrs. Frances S. Davis • 2002South Dakota
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 Mr. John P. Day • 1997.....New Hampshire
 Mr. Terence R. Day • 2005California
 Mrs. Margaret De Hart • 1998California
 Baudouin de Marcken • 1987.....Minnesota
 Most Rev. Ambrose De Paoli • 2003Florida
 Mr. Ambrose De Paoli • 2006Florida
 Rev. Msgr. Ferdinand Decneudt • 2003.....Michigan
 Rev. Louis E. Deimeke • 2002Nevada
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 Mr. Andre L. Delbecq • 1999California
 Joan Dematteis • 2007.....California
 Mr. Edward J. Dempsey • 2004Connecticut
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 John J. Dennehy, M.D. • 1983.....Pennsylvania
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 Mr. Thomas A. Dincher • 1989Illinois
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 Ms. Susan Donahue • 2006Georgia
 Mr. Steven J. Donaldson • 1997Washington
 Mr. and Mrs. John G. Donohue • 2004.....Florida
 Kathleen & Terry Dooley • 1994.....California
 Ms. Martha M. Dougherty • 2005.....New Jersey
 Mrs. William Downey • 1985Illinois
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 Michael and Susan Dunn • 1999Maryland
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 Rev. Arthur J. Dupont • 1993Connecticut
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 Mr. John E. Egan • 1983.....Pennsylvania
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 Ms. M. Patricia Fallon • 1983Massachusetts
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 Mr. John H. Furfey • 2006.....Nebraska
 Mr. Zachary Furqueron • 2002New York
 In Memory of Joseph W. Gaida • 1989Tennessee
 Rev. Richard J. Gallagher • 1992Washington
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 Ms. Nan D. Gallagher • 2005.....Florida
 Rev. Msgr. David M. Gallivan • 1985New York
 Dr. and Mrs. Charles O. Galvin • 1991Texas
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 Rudolf and Carolyn Ann Goetz • 1995Michigan
 Ms. Dorothy A. Goigel • 2003Wisconsin
 Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence P. Goldschmidt • 1987Va.
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 Mr. Michael R. Goonan • 2003New York
 Mr. and Mrs. Horace C. Gordon, Jr. • 1989 ..Florida
 Mrs. Frances S. Grace • 1999.....New York
 Mr. Arthur E. Graham • 1983Kentucky
 Lt. Col. Thomas E. Graham (Ret.) • 2007.....Kansas
 Dr. Gerald W. Grawey • 1973.....Illinois
 Ms. Maria Graziano • 2001New York
 Rev. Alcuin E. Greenburg • 1994.....Texas
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 Rev. Richard J. Groshek • 1988.....Michigan
 Ms. Margaret E. Grossenbacher • 2003New York
 Dr. Kathleen A. Gruenhagen • 2007Georgia
 Mr. Jerome B. Grundmayer • 1983Minnesota
 Mr. and Mrs. Charles A. Guerin • 1985.....New Jersey
 Dr. & Mrs. Vincent F. Guerra • 1993 ..Massachusetts
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 Mr. J. Ferrel Guillory • 1998North Carolina
 Ms. Barbara Gullo • 2006California

Rev. James G. Gutting • 1989 Pennsylvania
 Ms. Gertrude Gwardjak • 2006 New York
 Rev. James A. Hablewitz • 2007 Wisconsin
 Mr. Edward W. Hagan • 1996 Washington
 Mrs. Lucie C. Hagens • 1991 California
 Mr. Thomas P. Haley • 1997 Washington
 Mr. and Mrs. Francis X. Hall • 2001 Massachusetts
 Dr. & Mrs. Thomas F. Halpin • 1990 Mass.
 Mrs. M. D. Ham • 2002 Virginia
 Eugene J. Hanavan, M.D. • 1987 New York
 James P. and Elizabeth C. Hanigan • 1987 Pa.
 Mr. Ronald T. Hansen • 1992 California
 Mr. John M. Harding • 1996 Washington
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 Mr. Harold T. Hartinger • 2001 Washington
 Mr. T. F. Hartnagel • 1987 Canada
 Mr. Jean Hattenberger • 2006 Canada
 Rev. Robert Hawkins • 2002 Rhode Island
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 Mrs. Robert J. Healey • 1972 Indiana
 Mr. Dennis M. Healy • 2006 Texas
 Rev. Joseph P. Heaney • 2004 Rhode Island
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 Ms. Mary A. Jolley • 2002 Alabama
 Ms. Louisa Else Jones • 1992 Washington
 Mr. Robert F. Jones • 2000 New Jersey
 Mr. Leo J. Jordan, Esq. • 1987 New Jersey
 Dr. Carium Joseph • 1993 South Carolina
 Msgr. Milam J. Joseph • 1996 Texas
 Mr. John E. Joyce, Jr. • 1983 New Jersey
 In Memory of Patrick C. Joyce, Jr. • 1987 Maryland
 Rev. Bernard W. Kahlhamer • 1981 Minnesota
 Msgr. Peter V. Kain • 1988 New York
 Mr. Edmund F. Kal • 2005 California
 Rev. Ronald N. Kalas • 1988 Illinois
 Mrs. Ada H. Kalbinski • 1990 Virginia
 Dr. Mike J. Kaminski • 2007 Washington
 Rev. J. Eugene Kane • 1996 Illinois
 Mr. Arthur W. Kane • 2007 Florida
 Rev. William D. Karg • 1998 Ohio
 Rev. Robert J. Kash • 1999 Illinois
 Rev. Edward J. Kealey • 2002 New York
 Mr. and Mrs. Thomas R. Kearns • 1990 Ohio
 Mr. Harold M. Kearns • 2006 Connecticut
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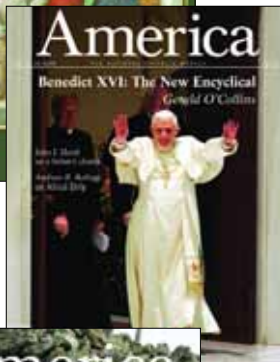
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Letters

Called to Compassion

Regarding "At the End of Life," by Thomas A. Shannon (2/18): Although not a theologian, doctor or hospice caregiver, I have been a primary decision maker for my mother, father and mother-in-law for end-of-life medical issues. In all three cases we came to a unanimous family decision to provide comfort and loving support but not to extend their lives through artificial means. This is what we feel they would have chosen. To have inserted a feeding tube at the end of their lives would have been a violation of their dignity. We are called first to compassion.

*Elaine Tannesen
Woodinville, Wash.*

Informed Reason

As a retired hospital chaplain, I welcome the sound reasoning and informed compassion of John J. Hardt's "Church Teaching and My Father's Choice" (1/21). It expresses what I have always considered to be the Catholic teaching on care of the sick, and which I have used myself as the basis of assistance to patients and families when they were faced with difficult end-of-life decisions. I will certainly recommend Professor Hardt's article and pass it along to as many interested parties as I can.

*(Rev.) Basil De Pinto
Piedmont, Calif.*

Preaching Without Words

Thank you for Maurice Timothy Reidy's "An Ordinary Mystic" (2/11) on the painter Alfonse Borysewicz. It is important for artists to preach with their talents and not simply repeat, copy and imitate over and over. Nor should we restrain religious art within the confines of what is "pretty" or "beautiful." Just as there are parts of the Gospels that are beautiful and peaceful, there are also parts that are difficult and confusing. Mystery is hard to contain and express. I admire Borysewicz's work and

his desire to "preach" the mystery through his art.

*(Rev.) Arthur D. Mallinson
Lancaster, Tex.*

Hope and Absence

In "Saved by Hope" (1/21), Gerald O'Collins, S.J., is quite right to point out the surprising respect shown by Benedict XVI in his recent encyclical *Spe Salvi* for the Marxist thinkers Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, of the Frankfurt School.

Yet I find a name curiously missing from the encyclical and unremarked on by O'Collins—namely, Ernst Bloch, who was an academic star of the left at Tübingen during the pope's purportedly disgruntled stint there as a professor. Even apart from his legendary teaching, Bloch was famous as the author of *The Principle of Hope* (1959), one of the greatest texts of Marxist humanism. Nevertheless, the name of this man who inspired so many to hope does not appear in the encyclical devoted precisely to that topic.

Perhaps the present slighting of Bloch can be rectified eventually. One of the interesting things about *Spe Salvi* is how this encyclical, with its honorable invocation of the two younger Marxist cultural philosophers, might turn out to be part of what one senses is the larger project of Benedict's own critique of the excesses of globalizing, free-market capitalism.

*Joseph Masheck
New York, N.Y.*

Help Wanted

Regarding "Our Moral Duty in Iraq," by Gerard F. Powers (2/18), I have one thought about the moral issue of leaving the scene of our devastating invasion and occupation. Why not look for assistance in the place where the drama had its prelude? Since there is general agreement that some peacekeeping presence will be required for the foreseeable future, what

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Letters

about an independent force from the United Nations? The United States could share some of its military resources with those of other nations who might now be ready to assist the Iraqi people.

*Frank Woolever
Syracuse, N.Y.*

Pandora's Box

Gerard F. Powers asks what policies and strategies best serve the interests of the Iraqi people. His response assumes that this question has an answer. I submit that it does not.

I commend Mr. Powers for his desire to put the difficult problems we face into an ethical frame, but he has allowed his commitment to ethics to outweigh his understanding of the issues he discusses. The United States did not create the mess in Iraq, but our misguided politicians opened the Pandora's box of colonial map-making. Short of repealing the 20th century, I believe that there is no solution save a very long-term arrangement under U.N. supervision, and a

divided territory with limited local rule in each area. Our responsibility is to produce a rapid transition and provide financial subsidies to restore services in education, medicine and law, as well as infrastructure. The laws to be enforced should respect human rights. The notion that we can repair the damage we caused is, in my view, unrealistic and fraught with dire consequences.

*James M. Powell
Syracuse, N.Y.*

Breaking News

The fundamental point made in "Our Moral Duty in Iraq," by Gerard F. Powers (2/18), reminds me of the saying attributed to Colin Powell as we began the Iraq adventure, referring to the so-called Pottery Barn rule: "You break it; you own it." Getting out or not getting out—maybe we need to begin by admitting that in fact, after all, the mess is ours.

*John O'Sullivan
Chapel Hill, N.C.*

Best-Laid Plans

I appreciated Gerard F. Powers's "Our Moral Duty in Iraq" (2/18), but I think we need more focus on regional cooperation from other nations in the Middle East. A new isolationism will be bad for both our country and the Iraqi people, who deserve more from us. At the same time, a stubborn refusal to admit failure on our part will not give our regional partners confidence in us. It is troubling how little the plans of presidential candidates concerning the future of Iraq have factored into our electoral debates. Is this not our most pressing issue to resolve?

*Katharine McLaughlin
Philadelphia, Pa.*

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Readings: Is 50:4-7; Ps 22:8-9, 17-20, 23-24; Phil 2:6-11; Mt 26:14-27:66

"The Lord God is my help; therefore I am not disgraced" (Is 50:7)

DURING HOLY WEEK we focus on the sufferings of Jesus—not only the physical sufferings that led to his death on the cross but also the misunderstanding and treachery displayed toward him by many who had been close to him. Even so, we must not isolate Jesus' sufferings from the sufferings of his people and those of people today. As the people of God, we constitute a community of sufferers. The source of our endurance in the midst of suffering is our faith and hope that God is indeed our help. As fellow sufferers and people of faith, we can and should show compassion to all who suffer.

In Holy Week most of the Old Testament readings are taken from that part of the book of Isaiah (Chapters 40 to 55) that reflects Israel's experience in exile in the sixth century B.C. The selections focus on a figure called the Servant of the Lord. The Servant is a gentle figure with a huge task: to establish justice on the earth, to restore the people of God and to be a light to the nations. While his precise identity remains a mystery, his mission is clearly tied in with the mission of the people of God. At several points he is identified simply as Israel, while at other points he exercises a mission in, toward and for Israel.

In today's passage from Isaiah 50, the Servant speaks. He first claims to have been a recipient of a revelation from God: "He opens my ear." The Servant describes in gruesome detail his terrible sufferings: "I gave my back to those who beat me." Finally he proclaims that "the Lord God is my help."

The Servant represents the sufferings of the exiled community of ancient Israel

residing in Babylon around 538 B.C. That community had suffered much and was trying to make sense of its suffering. The Suffering Servant speaks for the people of God as a community of sufferers, when he finds a word of hope: "The Lord God is my help." Evil and oppression could not overcome the power of hope.

Compassion is a beautiful word. It refers to the ability to share the sufferings of others, to make them our own, to alleviate them where possible and to show sympathy where necessary. In the biblical tradition, compassion is not just an emotion. Rather, compassion is rooted in the recognition that God's people constitute a community of sufferers and that even in the midst of intense suffering God is present as our help.

This dynamic of community, hope for divine help and compassion underlies the other readings for Palm Sunday. The excerpts from Psalm 22—the biblical lament psalm par excellence—give a sense of the intense suffering the speaker endured, the hope the sufferer has in the Lord ("Come quickly to help me") and his continuing concern for the other suffering persons ("The poor will eat their fill") even in the midst of the festive thanksgiving sacrifice marking the end of his own suffering.

In Matthew's Gospel (following Mark), Jesus' last words ("My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?") were the first words of Psalm 22. In reciting that psalm, Jesus identifies himself with the suffering people in every age. Becoming human meant for Jesus sharing in our human suffering. One ancient writer described crucifixion as the cruelest punishment. It was entirely appropriate, and significant, that in the midst of his terrible physical sufferings Jesus should recite Psalm 22.



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But it is important to look at the entire psalm and not stop at the first line or even the brief excerpts used as today's responsorial psalm. With Psalm 22 Jesus joins the ancient psalmist in addressing God directly and expressing his solidarity with all sufferers. As he brings to the Father his pain and suffering, he also affirms his trust in God, based on how the Father has dealt with his people and himself in the past.

Yet suffering does not have the last word with the psalmist or with Jesus. The second half of Psalm 22 describes how God rescued and vindicated the speaker. In response he wants to thank God and invites the whole world to join in. It is hard for Christians not to find in this part of the psalm a prophecy of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. The early Christian hymn quoted in Philippians 2 gets exactly right the biblical dynamic of Jesus' suffering ("even death on a cross") and his vindication ("God greatly exalted him"). Suffering and death did not have the last word.

Daniel J. Harrington

Praying With Scripture

- Recall some experience of personal suffering. What or who helped you through it?
- Read the whole of Psalm 22 and imagine Jesus as the speaker. How does this exercise illuminate Matthew's passion-resurrection narrative?
- Has suffering made you more sensitive and compassionate toward others? How do you show this?