

Gray and Harris: How Pew got it wrong

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2009

# America

July 21-28, 2008

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## Ministry in a Modern Church

**Blase J. Cupich • Martin R. Jewell and  
Dean R. Hoge • Tim Muldoon  
Alice Kearney Alwin**

**I**N A RECENT ISSUE of *The Art Newspaper*, I read that Belgravia Gallery in London is about to start selling once again its signed, limited-edition lithographs by Nelson Mandela to mark the artist's 90th birthday on July 18. Readers may recall that in 2001 Mandela became a fledgling artist at the age of 83, when he produced a set of handprints (his own) followed by two sets of charcoal and pastel drawings. Over three months, with the help of a tutor and professional artists to print and process the work, Mandela made his images into lithographs and signed each one. The purpose was to raise money for charity—all proceeds to go to the Nelson Mandela Trust.

A festive exhibition opening and auction took place on Robben Island, off Cape Town, at the prison where Mr. Mandela spent 18 of his 27 years in captivity. The prison is the subject of his art. At the auction, two British businessmen made purchases totaling \$200,000 each.

Later Oprah Winfrey, Bill Clinton, Prince Charles and David Beckham,

among others, also bought prints. But the sweet plan to help the needy soon soured. In 2005 Mandela filed a suit against Ismail Ayob, his longtime friend and former personal lawyer, the man who had suggested the art project initially and was entrusted with managing it. The lawsuit alleges that Ayob forged Mandela's name on countless lithographs that sold for up to £15,000 apiece, and that at least £2.6 million (over \$5 million) from such sales should be returned to the Nelson Mandela Trust. The suit has not yet been resolved.

Meanwhile, the statesman's minimalist pictures—of his cell, the guard tower, the hospital ward, the courtyard and more—with accompanying "motivations" (handwritten comments about each image) have been shown and sold throughout the world. They can all be viewed online ([www.africanartexpress.com/nm3b.htm](http://www.africanartexpress.com/nm3b.htm)) and deserve to be seen and pondered. Yet while Nelson Mandela has tried to halt the exploitation of his name and the sale of his art until the fakes can be sorted out, getting control of intellectual property is a hard battle to win.

The Belgravia Gallery, which stopped selling its lithographs by Mandela three years ago, secured the services of a forgery expert to defend the authenticity of its holdings. Not surprisingly, the

expert has assured the gallery that its holdings are genuine. Now the gallery will resume its marketing.

What I find unsettling about the scandal is the distorted image it paints of Nelson Mandela. A victorious freedom fighter; a moral giant who overturned apartheid, brought democracy to South Africa and was elected at age 75 to lead that nation; a Noble Peace Prize winner and devoted philanthropist—this noble man appears tied down by midgets, a Gulliver at the hands of the Lilliputians. Or perhaps a King Lear, reduced in old age by the treachery of those closest to him. What else can he do? A forger could, it seems, exploit Mandela's hard-won reputation and leech off his handiwork for years to come.

Focus, though, on the real portrait of the artist—that still holds me rapt. Anna Hunter of the Belgravia Gallery said Mandela told her "he would much prefer to be an artist, rather than a book writer." That gave me pause. The statement

gained credibility when I pieced it together with a New

## Of Many Things

York Times account of Mandela's own speech at the exhibition opening on Robben Island: Mandela "talked about his lifelong romance with color...about growing up as a shepherd boy in the green fields of the rural Eastern Cape province. He reminisced about the gleaming stars, the silvery moon and the shimmering rainbows." After 27 years of life behind bars—which cast a gray scrim over everything—color burst into Mandela's field of vision and lit up his world once more. Art can be play. It can transport one, bring back youth, inflame the human spirit. Mandela found the artist within himself.

"Robben Island was once a place of darkness," writes Mandela in one of his motivations, "but out of that darkness has come...a light so powerful that it could not be hidden behind prison walls... I have attempted to colour the island sketches in ways that reflect the positive light in which I view it." The artist wants to convey "that even the most fantastic dreams can be achieved if we are prepared to endure life's challenges." Here's a mark made by Mandela that no one can forge: Robben Island prison is closed. In Dec. 1999, it became South Africa's first World Heritage Site. Happy Birthday, Mr. President.

*Karen Sue Smith*

# America

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This week @  
**America Connects**

Alice Kearney Alwin shares recipes, and Chris Korzen discusses politics on our podcast. Plus, from the archives, Francis J. Butler on "Raising Money for the Pope" and a profile of young Catholics from 1999. All at americamagazine.org.

### Again?

It is more than a little disheartening to read the words “levee” and “deteriorating” in the news accounts of the floods that have ravaged Iowa and surrounding states. Yet here we are again, three years after Hurricane Katrina, reading about damaged infrastructure along the upper Mississippi Valley that was just not strong enough to withstand the rising waters. In all, over 20 levees failed, and roughly 36,000 people have been evacuated from their homes.

In the wake of the floods came stories of neighbors banding together, heaping sandbag upon sandbag to protect their threatened communities. These stories may inspire us, but they should not distract us from a pressing set of questions. Why did so many levees fail, and why were they not attended to sooner? What is the condition of the rest of the country’s flood protection systems? These questions are not of merely local concern. The U.S. corn and soybean crops are a matter of global importance during a world food crisis, and a significant portion of those crops are raised in Iowa.

What will it take to draw more attention to the deterioration of the nation’s highways, bridges and waterways? The next president should acknowledge the urgency of this issue, perhaps by creating a cabinet-level post devoted to improving the nation’s infrastructure. Bridges and roads have no natural constituency, so an advocate is needed. Maintenance is a job that government can do well, as proven by reports that levees built with public funds proved more resilient than privately financed ones. Fixing cracks and potholes may not lend itself to soaring rhetoric, but then again the work of government is for the most part a decidedly prosaic pursuit.

### Torture and Accountability

On June 23 the U.S. bishops’ Office of International Justice and Peace, in conjunction with the National Religious Campaign Against Torture, issued a 37-page study guide, *Torture Is a Moral Issue*, to help the faithful better understand Catholic teaching on torture (available online at [www.usccb.org/sdwp/stoptorture](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/stoptorture)). The study guide includes personal testimony from torture survivors, challenges its readers to become “people of the Beatitudes” and identifies several consciousness-raising actions that will help build a world in which “torture will simply become a reality of the past.”

Yet in some respects, the study guide falls short. *Torture Is a Moral Issue* fails to identify waterboarding as torture, and likewise, fails to acknowledge the C.I.A.’s

admitted use of waterboarding against three terror suspects—Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, Abu Zubaydah and Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri—following the 9/11 attacks. The study guide identifies its “primary, immediate concern” as the “possible use of torture by the U.S. government.” But today we know that U.S. government officials years ago moved beyond the realm of mere debate and possibility; that torture is permissible became an operative, if never acknowledged, official policy.

The study guide also makes no suggestion that those who have engaged in or approved of torture should be held accountable for their criminal actions. This is excluded from the study guide’s vision of justice. Human Rights Watch, for one, has called for an immediate criminal investigation, since “waterboarding is torture, and torture is a crime.”

### Committed and Tolerant

“We have just enough religion to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another.” These words of Jonathan Swift seem not to apply in the United States. The *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey*, recently released by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, reports that 79 percent of Catholics agree “that many religions can lead to eternal life.”

Does this represent a watering down of the centrality of Christ and the church? Is there a danger in this attitude? Only if it leads to total relativism or indifferentism. But that need not be the case. Might this more positive attitude to other traditions be an indication that Catholics are in tune with the Second Vatican Council? There we read that “those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience—those too may achieve eternal salvation” (“Dogmatic Constitution on the Church,” No. 16). Indeed, even atheists can be saved, for “the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery” (“Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World,” No. 22).

Rather than seeing tolerance as a lessening of the importance of Jesus Christ and the church, might we not see it as evidence of insight into the boundless love of God made manifest in Jesus Christ? Is it not an indication that Catholics in the United States appreciate the title and message of the first encyclical of Pope Benedict, *God Is Love*?

# Rule of Law

**A** CHAIN OF DECISIONS by the U.S. Supreme Court has left the Bush administration's detention program for so-called enemy combatants in shambles. In particular, the decisions put the detention program at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, in legal limbo. Only last year Congress renewed the far-reaching Military Commissions Act, which allows the executive wide discretion in terrorism cases. But this June 12, in a 5-to-4 decision, the Supreme Court ruled that suspected terrorists held in detention have the right to appeal for habeas corpus, that is, the right to challenge their detention in federal courts. The decision in *Boumediene v. Bush* undercuts the administration's claims to extraordinary emergency powers in the war on terror. This decision affirms once again that even a war on terror must be a law-governed activity, where executive action is not beyond appeal.

Confronting terrorism by police methods is frequently derided as ineffective, and military means are promoted as an appropriate tool for combating terrorists. But criminal prosecution against the 1993 World Trade Center bombers proved more successful than the military campaign against Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda. The '93 bombers are in prison; bin Laden is still at large. A criminal approach to terrorism, however, comes after the fact. What are authorities to do when they believe a large-scale terrorist act is imminent? Is there a place for preventive detention in the struggle against terrorism? The mass killing threatened by post-9/11 terrorists does require preventive measures, but not measures that deprive suspects of the basic right to challenge their arrest and detention. Such prevention, as practices in other countries like Britain show, should not place suspects beyond legal redress.

The *Boumediene* and earlier court decisions have forced the reworking of U.S. detention policy. In *Hamdi v. Rumsfeld* (2004), the Supreme Court ruled that U.S. citizens declared unlawful enemy combatants retained their right to seek habeas corpus. In *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld* (2006), the court ruled that detainees could challenge the military commissions set up to adjudicate their cases, and it overturned a provision of the 2006 Defense Appropriations Act that attempted to exclude such cases from judicial review. In June 2007 the court agreed to hear the appeals of Guantánamo detainees seeking review of their cases, and with this latest ruling it upheld their right to habeas corpus.

Detainees will no longer be lost in a counterterrorist netherworld for life, but will be informed of the charges against them and better able to rebut them in court.

Three tasks lie ahead for the government, the military and the legal profession. First, the courts, the military and the Department of Justice must find ways to adjudicate speedily the pending and potential cases of Guantánamo detainees. Second, the three branches of government must institute policies to implement habeas corpus in cases of alleged terrorism. Third, new ways to prevent terrorist acts must be explored and developed without creating obstacles to legal review or allowing unlimited executive discretion in the name of national security. Any new preventive measures must be reconciled with the protection of personal rights. Furthermore, identification of people as enemy combatants, except on the battlefield, must be abandoned; and indefinite detention without legal supervision or appeal should be proscribed as an instrument of tyranny.

**FINALLY, IN THE YEARS AHEAD** our country must still come to grips with our national acquiescence to the politics of fear, which has led to the detention and abuse of hundreds of individuals. Among the necessary steps will be restoration of freedom to innocent detainees, accompanied by public apology and some monetary restitution for the years they lost to incarceration. Furthermore, Congress needs to accept responsibility for its complicity with the executive in laws that denied suspects rightful appeal. A national truth commission should be instituted to establish political accountability for the decisions, policies and statutes that placed suspects outside the protection of the law.

Congress might create a bipartisan commission in the style of the Iraq Study Group (members of both parties have criticized the detention system), or, failing Congressional action, a broad association of foundations and human rights groups could organize such an effort. A truth commission should not engage in a witch hunt, but make a serious effort to understand the subversion of the rule of law in the post-9/11 panic and to build a barrier of public opinion and professional responsibility to prevent similar failure in the future. If the nation does not make a collective effort to come to grips with the subversion of liberty in the name of security, we will leave ourselves and generations to come vulnerable to still greater violations and silent coups d'état.

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## Signs of the Times

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### Focolare Members Elect New President



Maria Voce, a longtime close collaborator of the late Chiara Lubich, founder of the Focolare movement, has been elected the new president of the movement to foster worldwide unity. Almost 500 delegates from five continents voted nearly unanimously for Voce July 7 during the movement's general assembly at Castel Gandolfo, a lakeside town south of Rome. Voce, 70, has degrees in theology and canon law, and extensive ecumenical and interreligious experience, according to a July 7 statement from the movement. Born in Italy, Voce joined Focolare in 1959 and began living with the community in 1964. From 1978 to 1988, she lived in Turkey, where she worked closely with the Orthodox ecumenical patriarchs of Constantinople, the leaders of other churches and Muslim leaders. Assembly participants also elected the Rev. Giancarlo Faletti as the movement's co-president. He had been serving as the co-head of the Focolare movement in Rome. Father Faletti, 67, has a degree in economics and served as head of the Focolare movement in Genoa and Rome.

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### Final Vatican Approval for Neocatechumenal Way

The Vatican has given final approval to a set of statutes for the Neocatechumenal Way, confirming the movement's

unique approach to adult evangelization but insisting on close ties with local bishops and parishes. The statutes, given to leaders of the movement June 13 after several years of review, also regularized the group's distinctive liturgical practices. Kiko Arguello and Carmen Hernández, the Spanish founders, welcomed the approval and said it would launch the movement on a new wave of evangelization. At a press conference June 13, the 69-year-old Arguello told how he initiated the movement in 1964 among Gypsies, the homeless and others living on the margins of society. He described the Neocatechumenal Way's mission as a "battle" to reach young adults and said that in the early years it encountered frequent resistance from church leaders. "This battle we've fought has now been confirmed by the Holy See. This is very important, that this pope has approved this. It's amazing, it's fantastic," he said.

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### Business Leaders Meet With Bishops

Effective organizations need good leadership and good management, but because "individuals frequently are much better at one than the other," successful organizations make sure both skills are well represented on their leadership team, said the business leader Frederick Gluck. He spoke during the annual meeting of the National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management held in Philadelphia, Pa., on June 26-27. Gluck, a member of the roundtable's board of directors and a former managing partner of the international consulting firm McKinsey & Co., told the meeting's 90 participants that while leaders and managers in the church might sometimes wish they could escape their responsibilities, "there is no escaping them." One can, however, take steps to define leadership and management to create a balance between them that works for a given individual. Participating in the Philadelphia meeting were 10 U.S. bishops, along with business and financial leaders, pastors and lay pastoral ministers, philanthropists, educators and others.

They discussed ways to promote excellence in the leadership and management of Catholic dioceses and parishes.

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### Tekakwitha Conference Pilgrims Gather in Canada

Frank Large's dream came true July 5. A Cree Indian from Saddle Lake, Alberta, Large attended his first Tekakwitha Conference in Spokane in 1999. "When my wife and I were talking, I said, 'Wouldn't it be nice to have this at Lac Ste. Anne?'" he recalled. "That was my dream." This year, the 69th annual Tekakwitha Conference came on July 2-5 to Edmonton, Alberta, and nearby Lac Ste. Anne, where the waters have been held sacred by aboriginal people for generations. It was the first time the conference has met in Canada. The conference brings together aboriginal Catholics from the United States and Canada and helps affirm their faith under the protection of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha. The final day of the gathering moved to the Lac Ste. Anne pilgrimage site, 60 miles northeast of Edmonton, where every July tens of thousands of First Nations and Metis people gather for a weeklong pilgrimage in honor of St. Anne.

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### Pope Invests New Archbishops

The mission of the Catholic Church is to overcome the divisions of the world and bring God's healing power, love and peace to all people, Pope Benedict XVI told new archbishops from more than 30 countries. The permanent mission of St. Peter and his successors is that the church "never be identified with only one nation, only one culture or only one state...that it always be the church of all people," the pope said June 29 during Mass in St. Peter's Basilica for the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul, the patron saints of Rome. During the Mass, the pope gave the archbishops named within the previous year a pallium, a circular band of white wool marked with six black crosses. The pallium symbolizes an archbishop's authority and unity with the pope. The 40 archbishops, who concelebrated the

## Signs of the Times

Mass with the pope, included U.S. Archbishops Edwin F. O'Brien of Baltimore, John C. Nienstedt of St. Paul and Minneapolis and Thomas J. Rodi of Mobile, Ala.; and Canadian Archbishops Anthony Mancini of Halifax, Nova Scotia, and Martin Currie of Saint John's, Newfoundland.

### Vatican Regrets Church of England's Decision

The Vatican has expressed its disappointment with a July 7 decision by the

Church of England, the mother church of the Anglican Communion, to move ahead with plans to allow the ordination of women bishops. "We have learned with disappointment of the news of the vote by the Church of England that opens the way to the introduction of legislation that leads to the ordination of women bishops," said a July 8 statement from the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. "Such a decision means a break from the apostolic tradition maintained by all the churches of the first millennium and is, therefore, a

further obstacle for reconciliation between the Catholic Church and the Church of England," said the statement published by the Vatican press office. The 428 bishops, clergy and laypeople who make up the General Synod of the Church of England spent more than six hours July 7 debating what accommodations, if any, would be made to allow Anglicans who object to women bishops to continue to be part of the church.

### Despair Engulfs Zimbabwe

Zimbabweans were in widespread despair as the country's longtime ruler Robert Mugabe was sworn in as president for a sixth term on June 29, a Catholic Church official said. In rural areas of the southern African country, the June 27 runoff election, in which Mugabe was the only candidate, "was masterminded by thugs" loyal to the ruling party, said Alouis Chaumba, who heads the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe. "People know if they disobey, they will be beaten up," Chaumba said on June 30. "The level of brutality in the rural areas has reached unimaginable proportions." While many people in Zimbabwe's cities did not turn up at the polling stations, people in rural areas "were warned that they had to go and vote," he said. "They were not allowed into the booths on their own but were made to tell the electoral officers that they were unable to read or write and then were given folded ballots [for Mugabe] to hand in," he said.

### Pope Expresses Joy at Hostage Release



Keith Stansell, one of three U.S. defense contractors freed after being held hostage by rebels in Colombia for five years, holds his twin 5-year-old sons during a news conference at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio July 7.

Pope Benedict XVI expressed joy upon hearing that hostages held by Colombian rebels had been freed after the Colombian army staged a bloodless military operation. The Vatican spokesman, Federico Lombardi, S.J., said the July 2 liberation of 15 hostages held by the rebel Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, is also "a sign of hope" for peace in a country that has been plagued by rebel violence for

decades. The pope "is happy about this very wonderful news," he said July 2. Colombian soldiers disguised as rebels tricked local FARC commanders into letting the hostages be airlifted in an unmarked helicopter. Among those liberated were three U.S. contractors, who had been held by FARC since 2003. They had been captured when their drug surveillance plane went down in a rebel-held jungle.

### Torture Survivors Lead Vigil at White House

Torture survivors and friends gathered outside the White House on June 28 to share stories, poetry and artwork, and to remind political leaders that "torture is terrorism." The Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition International, based in Washington, D.C., held its 11th annual 24-hour vigil in commemoration of the U.N. International Day to Support Victims and Survivors of Torture. During the vigil, hundreds of visitors stopped to lis-

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ten to the survivors' stories. One observer marveled at their strength and faith: "How is it they have not been destroyed? How can the spirit of hope shine through all that was done to them?" Survivors shared the stage with their advocates, and musical groups brought their own message in support of human rights. Dianna Ortiz, an American Ursuline sister who was raped and tortured in Guatemala in 1989, founded TASSC in 1998 to bring the practice of torture to an end and to empower survivors and their families.

### Salesian Priest Murdered in Eastern Nepal

A Catholic priest was shot dead by armed men who broke into the priest's residence in Nepal. Johnson Moyalán, a Salesian priest from Kerala, India, had been living in Nepal for more than 10 years before he was killed July 1. The 60-year-old priest was the principal of a Don Bosco school in Sirsiya, in eastern Nepal. A group of four or five armed men forced their way into the mission and locked up one of the two priests residing there while they assaulted and shot Father Moyalán, said George Kalangara, another Salesian priest, in an interview with the Asian church news agency UCA News. He said that it was not clear what happened next, but that there was an explosion that caused extensive damage to the building. According to an Indian police report sent to the Salesian generalate in Rome, the armed men detonated small bombs at the residence.

### Catholic Educator: Virtue Brings Success

Business students need to hear from their professors that the pursuit of virtue—particularly moral courage and humility—will not put them at a disadvantage in the business world, but really does lead to success, said the president of Jesuit-run Gonzaga University in Spokane, Wash. "Some students think you have to be cruel to succeed," explained Robert Spitzer, S.J., "but we, as mature professors, can convince them these virtues are

very much worth seeking and help us to be great leaders, [and] will produce esprit de corps and empathy." Father Spitzer made the comments in the opening plenary session at a mid-June conference on business education at Catholic universities. More than 200 Catholic educators gathered at the University of Notre Dame to discuss how business schools within Catholic colleges and universities can do a better job of educating thoughtful and faith-filled executives for the future. The conference was co-sponsored by 18 Catholic colleges and universities across the country.

### Pope and Patriarch Open Pauline Year



Pope Benedict XVI and Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople arrive for an evening prayer service at the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls June 28. Joined by other Christian leaders, the pope opened the year of St. Paul, calling the apostle a model for contemporary Christians.

### Williams Gives Common Ground Lecture

The NBC "Nightly News" anchor and managing editor Brian Williams told a gathering at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., that the late Tim Russert's Catholic values propelled him as a political journalist in his mission to seek out the truth. Williams, a Catholic college dropout who had

attended the university and two other colleges, was a replacement speaker for Russert at the 2008 annual Philip J. Murnion Lecture, hosted by the Catholic Common Ground Initiative June 27. Russert, the NBC News Washington bureau chief and "Meet the Press" moderator, died unexpectedly June 13 at the age of 58. "Tim wore his Catholicism proudly," said Williams, 49, who eventually was awarded an honorary doctorate from Catholic University. "His Catholicism was an overwhelming influence on him to seek out the truth." Though Russert's Catholic values drove him to push guests on "Meet the Press" to reveal political truths, those same principles motivated him to hold them accountable for their actions, but in a civil manner, Williams said.

### Canonization Closer for Father Damien of Molokai

Pope Benedict XVI has authorized publication of a decree recognizing a miracle attributed to the intercession of Blessed Damien de Veuster of Molokai, clearing the way for his canonization. The decree was the first of 13 published by the Vatican July 3 after Cardinal José Saraiva Martins, prefect of the Congregation for Saints' Causes, met the pope at his summer residence in Castel Gandolfo, south of Rome. Blessed Damien was a 19th-century Belgian missionary and a member of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Born in 1840, he spent the last 16 years of his life caring for patients with Hansen's disease, or leprosy, on the Hawaiian island of Molokai. Blessed Damien died in 1889 and was beatified in 1995. With the recognition of the miracle, the date for Pope Benedict's celebration of his canonization will be set later. Another of the decrees approved by the pope July 3 involved a miracle attributed to the intercession of Louis and Marie Zélie Guerin Martin, the parents of St. Thérèse of Lisieux. Louis lived from 1823 to 1894 and his wife from 1831 to 1877.

From CNS and other sources. CNS photos.





## Parsing Race and Gender

‘Identity politics can be dangerous.’

**N**OT SURPRISINGLY, but regrettably all the same, some of Hillary Clinton’s disheartened supporters have dragged out the M word—misogyny—to explain her defeat in the historic Democratic primaries of 2008.

Feminists like Gloria Steinem and others charge that Senator Clinton was the victim of male supremacy in the ballot box and in the media. Clinton supporters put together a list of accused misogynists in the news media. Included on their roster of shame is Maureen Dowd, a Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist for *The New York Times* who certainly did not lack for withering comments about Clinton’s candidacy. Then again, Maureen Dowd does not lack for withering comments about anybody who holds public office, a fact that Clinton’s disappointed supporters have failed to recognize.

So it was surprising, indeed, to find the name of Maureen Dowd on a list of supposed anti-feminists who allegedly did in Clinton because of her gender. Perhaps just as surprising, although barely noticed, was the absence of one particular group from that list: Catholics.

Hillary Clinton’s most dependable supporters in big states like Pennsylvania, Ohio and New York were Catholic Democrats. In all three states, the senator won more than 60 percent of the Catholic vote. Those numbers were replicated in other states with substantial Catholic populations.

Let’s remember, now, that Catholics are not generally thought to be on the cutting edge of issues that feminist leaders deem important. Senator Clinton’s positions on a range of social and cultural

questions, most obviously abortion, are hardly in keeping with those of the nation’s bishops. And yet she swamped Barack Obama in those states where Catholics make a big difference at the ballot box.

How to explain this turn of events? A cultural historian might well conclude that for white male Catholics, anxieties about race remain paramount, so much so that they are willing to empower a white woman rather than an African-American male.

You would have to have several initials after your name to believe such nonsense, but be assured that such theorizing has been and will continue to be carried out on campuses and in the nation’s smartest salons.

A more satisfactory theory, one that surely flies in the face of most Catholic stereotypes, was suggested by a member of the New York State Assembly, Catherine Nolan. In an interview with Jim Dwyer of *The New York Times*, Assemblywoman Nolan sought to explain Catholic support for Senator Clinton by recalling the prominent roles that women have played in the American church.

“Maybe we’re a little more open to female leadership,” said Nolan, who attended Catholic elementary school. “We had female role models from an early age. When I was growing up, all the Catholic school principals were women, and almost none of the public school principals were.” Nolan said she thought that Catholics were “used to female authority figures for much longer than other groups.”

For many cultural commentators, the Nolan theory will seem counterintuitive. But for those who actually know something about Catholicism, it makes perfect sense. The American church has been providing women with leadership oppor-

tunities for nearly two centuries. Scholars like Bernadette McCauley, Maureen Fitzgerald and others have shown how women religious founded and administered the church’s formidable network of social services, from schools to hospitals to orphanages to summer camps. Ultimately, many of these institutions reported back to the bishop, but in reality, they were run by women.

So, in fact, the notion of a woman in charge of the country requires less of an adjustment for Catholics than it might for other groups, as Nolan points out. But that’s not all. If the analysis of the Clinton supporters is correct—that their candidate was denied the nomination because of an anti-feminist, anti-woman backlash—then it follows that American Catholics, at least those registered with the Democratic Party, must be among the most ardent feminists in the land.

Or could it simply be that large numbers of Catholics looked at the records and rhetoric of the two main candidates and concluded that Senator Clinton was a better choice than Senator Obama, regardless of race or gender? In other words, isn’t it possible that the Obama-Clinton race was not about identity politics at all, but about which candidate ran the best campaign and offered the best solutions?

If Senator Clinton had lost to a generic white male, if she had run poorly in areas and among voting blocs where women still struggle for equality, her feminist supporters might have had a case. But the senator lost to an African-American male whose core supporters tended to be college-educated white-collar professionals—the stereotypical double-latte progressives on the Democratic Party’s left.

Are we to believe that they rejected Senator Clinton because of their Stone Age views of women?

Identity politics can be a dangerous business, as Democrats appear to be learning. Clinton supporters are having a hard time rallying around Obama because they believe his victory has been tainted.

What of Senator Clinton’s many Catholic supporters? If John McCain is smart, he’ll be making some inquiries about their availability. He could start by using the phrase “tuition tax credits.”

*Terry Golway*

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**TERRY GOLWAY** is the curator of the John Kean Center for American History at Kean University in Union, N.J.

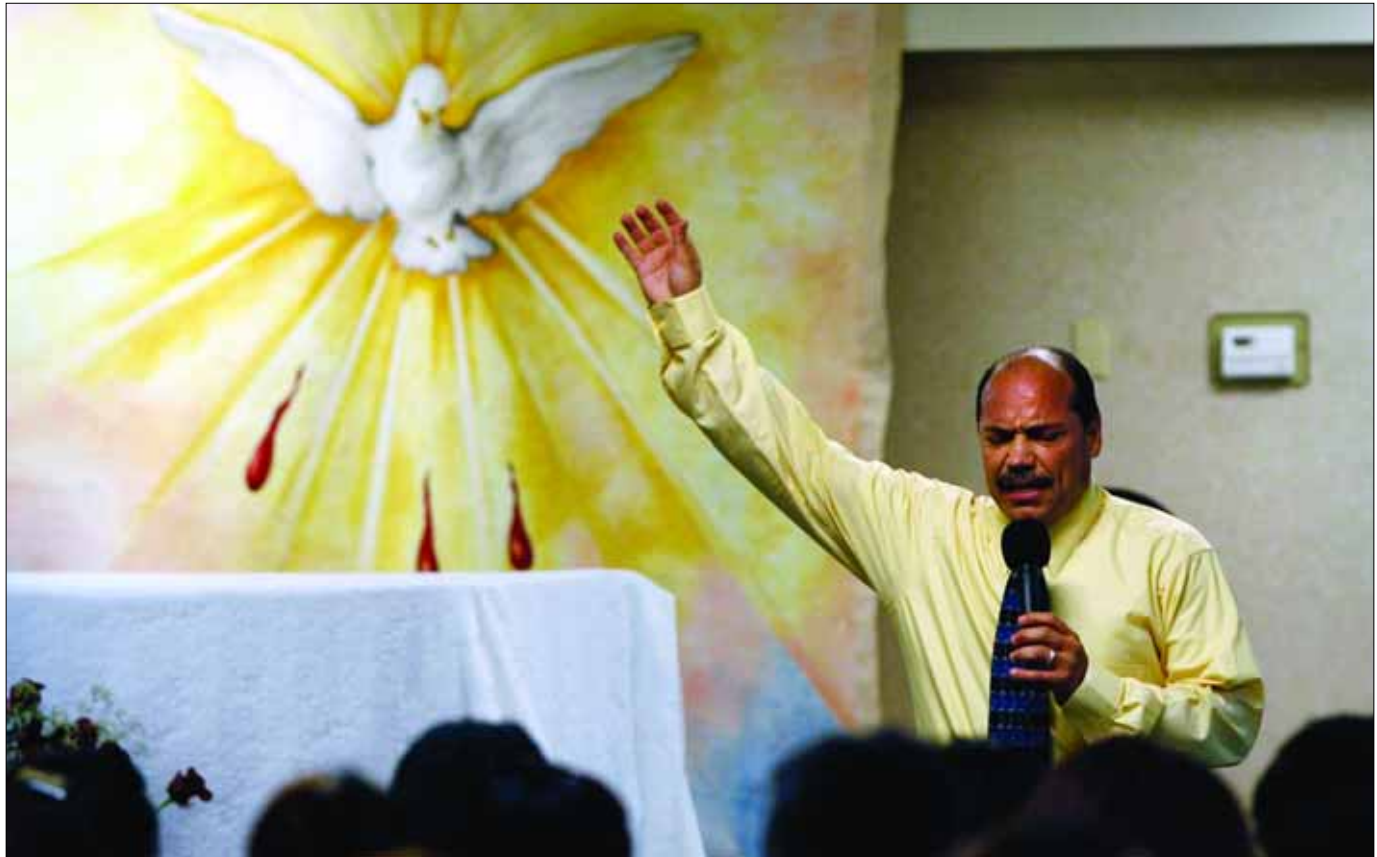


PHOTO: CNS/NANCY WIECHEC

Pablo Bayona preaches during the Hispanic program at the national Catholic charismatic renewal conference in Secaucus, N.J., in 2007. The Catholic layman from the Diocese of Brooklyn, N.Y., is a full-time preacher.

A bishop reflects on the changing voice of the laity.

# Workers in the Vineyard

– BLASE J. CUPICH –

**D**URING ONE OF HER frequent trips to the United States, Mother Teresa of Calcutta granted an interview to a well-known American talk show host. The host began with a friendly tribute, lauding her heralded reputation for caring for the poorest of the poor, even calling her “extraordinary” and “saintly.” It was a trap. His words of acclaim were designed to tee up his first question, a whack at the church: “Now Mother, aren’t you just a little bit angry that the church isn’t with you on this? After all, aren’t you doing this work with the poor almost single-handedly?” With characteristic serenity and poise

**THE MOST REV. BLASE J. CUPICH** is Bishop of Rapid City, S.D. This article is based on an address he delivered on April 21, 2008, in Orlando, Fla., at the national ministry summit sponsored by the project Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership.

she replied, “Oh, but you see, when I do it, the church does it.” Her response left the interviewer speechless, as though the petite founder of the Missionaries of Charity had just answered him in an alien tongue.

Of course, any of us familiar with the work of religious women and men in schools, hospitals, orphanages and social services understand what Mother Teresa meant. Their work was never a personal project, nor even just an undertaking of their particular religious communities. Rather, they were the church in action, putting the church’s best foot forward, joining in the work of Christ. And in all of this, they were schooling the rest of us in what it means to be a disciple of Jesus and introducing us to a language, the language of the church, with which to speak about our lives. It was that language that left the interviewer perplexed.

## Laypeople unhesitatingly frame their ministry in a theological context, using church language.

### Co-workers in the Vineyard

The memory of that incident flashed through my mind as I sifted through a massive amount of new data on the growth of lay ministry in the Catholic Church collected by a project called Emerging Models of Ministry. This multiyear project, funded by the Lilly Endowment, invited lay and ordained leaders to reflect on and describe the impact of what the bishops, in their document *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* (2005), call “the new realities of lay participation in Christ’s ministry.” There they note that all the baptized are called to work for the transformation of the world, and that most do so in the secular realm. Yet “lay persons are also equipped with gifts and graces to build up the church from within, in cooperation with the hierarchy and under its direction.”

Through a series of symposia, surveys and focus groups, lay women and men, as well as bishops, priests, religious, deacons and diocesan personnel, participated in a national conversation about parish life. The result is a fresh view of the new and ever-changing landscape of pastoral life in our church today. It includes both the fertile growth that comes from groundbreaking and creative approaches by gifted people, and the rugged terrain of daunting uncertainties and shifting challenges.

And yet—within this impressive panorama of new and diverse talents, innovative organizational models and developing forms of leadership—another feature of the landscape

grabbed my attention that should not be overlooked if we want a complete picture of this new reality in the church. It is the new self-awareness about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus that lay ministers have gained as a result of their ministry, and the almost instinctive way these lay women and men turn to the language of the church to describe their ministry and their faith lives. This is something we have never seen before.

### The Legacy of Lay Ministry

A conversation I had with an elderly grandmother illustrates my point. Mary Alice has been a commissioned lay minister for some years. I asked her to tell me in her own words what lay ministry means to her. She prefaced her remarks by noting how our belief in the resurrection of the body has been a constant source of comfort to her. The

prospect of eternal life heartens her in the face of life’s trials. Yet now as she considers how lay ministry has so enriched the church, to the point that future generations will benefit from the works she and others are doing, she has come to believe with equal conviction that “something of me,” as she put it, “will also continue to live on in the church after I die, because

this is Christ’s work and we believe nothing of his is ever lost. In many ways that is even more consoling, since I can see that lasting reality now.”

Mary Alice’s response is typical of the way lay men and women today are speaking about their involvement in church ministry and leadership. With unflinching consistency they unhesitatingly frame what their ministry means to them in a theological context, using the language of the church. I think this merits close attention for the insights it has to offer for understanding lay ecclesial ministry and its future development. Three are worth noting.

First, the fact that participants in the study quite naturally turned to theological language to describe what is happening in the church today should not be taken for granted. After all, there are alternatives, particularly for us who live in a culture dominated by the corporate and the political worlds. It would not be surprising, given this environment, for some to interpret the greater involvement of lay men and women in church leadership as but an adjustment by an organization lacking a sufficient number of ordained ministers. Lay ministry in such a view is the church’s fallback position, its way of filling in the gaps created by a shortage. Others might claim that this new reality is about laypeople finally asserting their rights. They would frame the new reality of lay ministry as a sociological development in which the democratic tendencies in the broader culture have finally been accepted by, or have

seeped into, the church. Yet that is not what we are hearing. Instead, those involved in lay ministry repeatedly demonstrate a positive predisposition to start with the language of our faith tradition. This is significant and should be encouraged, for it can only benefit the church's efforts to ensure, as the bishops urge in *Co-Workers*, that the development of lay ecclesial ministry will continue in ways that are faithful to the church's doctrinal and theological tradition, while responding to contemporary pastoral needs and situations.

Second, lay ministers like Mary Alice are not only giving a theological framework to their ministry but also to their lives. I was struck by Mary Alice's ability to express

her awareness of the integration between her call to holiness as a disciple and her ministry of participating in the work of Christ in building up the body for the salvation of the world. Her comment that "something of me" will live on in the church because she is doing Christ's work is remarkably close to the language we find in Paul, for instance in Gal 2:19: "The life I live now is not my own; Christ is living in me. I still live my human life, but it is a life in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." It suggests that while the formation of lay ministers must begin with sound theological instruction, it does not end there. Attention must be given to helping these lay leaders develop the skills for the kind of theological reflection needed for integrating life and ministry.

### Witnesses to the Faith

Finally, all of this requires us to value the contributions of lay ministers beyond the tasks they accomplish by sharing their unique talents and experiences. If part of the new reality is their ability to witness to it in the language of our faith, then we should not be surprised if in time lay ministers will complement the work of religious women and men in presenting to all the baptized what it means to be a disciple. Edward Hahnenberg of Xavier University in Cincinnati recently observed that lay ecclesial ministry is the fourth great ministerial wave in the church, following in the tradition of the monastic movement, the mendicant orders and the founding of women's religious communities in the 19th century. It may be too early to come to a firm judgment about the historical significance of lay ecclesial ministers for the life of the church. The fact that these lay men and women describe themselves as responding to a call, however, is a hopeful sign that the Spirit of Christ is at work in this new reality.

Something new is happening here. We have not seen this before. Lay men and women are seeing their service in building the ecclesial communion as a true ministry. And they are seeing their ministry as a living, ecclesial witness. They know and experience that "when I do it, the church is doing it." **A**

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# Will They Serve?

*A new survey looks at young people's attitudes toward ministry.*

BY MARTI R. JEWELL AND DEAN R. HOGE



PHOTO: CNS/GREGORY A. SHEMITZ

Sheila Collins of Piscataway, N.J., raises her arms in prayer during a rally for seminarians and young people at St. Joseph's Seminary in Yonkers, N.Y., April 19.

**W**HERE WILL THE NEXT GENERATION of Catholic leaders come from? As the average age of priests and religious continues to climb, this question must not be ignored. Finding ways to encourage young people to consider a life of ministry is a crucial task for all members of the church.

The first step toward a solution is to look at young adults' attitudes toward ministry. How many young Catholics seriously consider a life of ministry as a priest, religious or lay minister? Why do many opt for other professions? Would a relaxation of the church's rule of celibacy draw more young people to the church?

To answer such questions, the Emerging Models of

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**MARTI R. JEWELL** is the director of the project Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership. **DEAN R. HOGE**, emeritus professor of sociology at The Catholic University of America, has published a number of significant studies on Catholic life and ministry.

Pastoral Leadership project, a joint effort of six national Catholic associations funded by the Lilly Endowment, commissioned a survey of Catholic young adults. Here we offer a brief summary and analysis of those results. The full report can be found at [www.emergingmodels.org](http://www.emergingmodels.org).

## Conducting the Study

We began the study in summer 2006. Working with a committee of young adults and pastoral leaders, we set out to conduct a nationwide survey of Catholics between the ages of 20 and 39. Since we are chiefly interested in the views of young adult Catholics who are active in church life, we asked Catholic campus ministers and diocesan directors of young adult ministry to invite young adults on their mailing lists to participate in an online survey.

Two such surveys were conducted. The first focused on college students. Usable responses were received from 421 students at 19 of 20 randomly selected Catholic, public and

private schools around the country. The second survey focused on college graduates from dioceses around the country. (The names were collected from diocesan directors of young adult ministry, and for the purposes of this analysis are referred to as the “diocesan sample.”) A total of 486 usable responses were received from 12 of the 13 randomly chosen dioceses, one diocese in each episcopal region. Of those responses, approximately half came from young adults in their 20s and half in their 30s. In addition to the online surveys, 25 personal interviews were conducted; 15 of those interviewed are currently working full time as lay ecclesial ministers. An additional 30 college students participated in four focus groups.

### Interest in a Life of Ministry

The good news is how many young adults in both samples have at some time considered the possibility of ministry. More than a third indicated they had “seriously considered” lay ministry, and nearly half of the young men had “seriously considered” ministry as a priest. The diaconate is perceived as something for later in life: nearly half of those surveyed indicated they might think about it in the future.

Young adults see both lay and ordained ministry as a call from God. In both samples, 80 percent said lay ministry and 90 percent said ordained ministry is a response to God’s call. They find ministry inviting because it allows them to share their faith and use their gifts. One young man in his 20s said, “I am interested in full-time work as a lay minister serving the Catholic Church because I can think of no better way to use the gifts God has given me than to give them back to him in joyful service to his church and people.”

Respondents who expressed an interest in lay ministry were primarily interested in working with young people, either by providing religious education or teaching in a Catholic school. In our diocesan sample, 83 percent of men

and 69 percent of women expressed serious interest in a career as a youth minister. A significant number of college women (73 percent) indicated an interest in teaching.

Respondents cited a number of reasons for considering a life of vowed ministry, including “It is a response to God’s

call” and “It is an opportunity to help other people.” Very few—only 6 percent of college men and 10 percent of women—cited “prestige” as a reason for considering a vocation. Instead, most see a vocation as a way to be holy and closer to God. One young man said, “It is an answering to a call I may have, and it would be an amazing thing to help others find their faith and to help them in their time of need.”

### Deterrents

So why aren’t large numbers of young

adults coming to our seminaries, convents and lay ministry formation programs? We asked all respondents to tell us what deters them from choosing a life of ministry. They cite several reasons. First, most want to be married and raise a family. That rules out priesthood and the religious life. Fewer than 30 percent of men in both the college and the diocesan samples would change their minds if the rule about celibacy were to be changed.

Other concerns that deter people from full-time lay ministry are other occupations, utilization of gifts, and wages. In the college sample, two-thirds of the men and just over half of the women say they have a different occupation in mind, while a fifth say a job in ministry would not make the best use of their talents. Nearly one-fifth (19 percent) of the college men surveyed and 16 percent of the women are concerned about low wages. These numbers shift in the diocesan sample. Of those responding, 36 percent of the men and 40 percent of the women are focused on a different occupation, while about one-third do not believe ministry would use their gifts. A higher percentage are con-

	College		Diocesan	
	M	F	M	F
<b>Young Adult Respondents’ Interest in Ministry (percents)</b>				
I am seriously interested in full-time employment...				
as a youth or young adult minister	61	77	83	69
as a religious educator	49	63	70	69
as a social action minister	34	46	33	30
as a music minister or liturgist	31	49	30	25
An encouraging reason to consider lay ministry is that it is...				
a response to God’s call	81	79	76	82
is an opportunity to pass on the faith	63	64	68	72
provides prestige	6	10	3	6
A reason I would not be interested in lay ministry is because...				
the wages are too low	19	16	40	33
I have a different occupation in mind	65	57	36	40
<b>Ordination — if celibacy were not required</b>				
Seriously interested in the priesthood	20		27	
Not interested	37		44	
<b>Ordination — if women could be ordained</b>				
Interested in the priesthood		13		10
Not interested		65		71

cerned about wages, with 40 percent of the men and 33 percent of the women naming low pay as a deterrent.

### What Can the Church Do?

Given these apparent roadblocks, how can the church tap young adults' interest in ministry? How do we reach the next generation of ministers? First, the church needs to involve young adults in their faith. We can no longer assume young adults will be active in the life of the church. Our survey shows that when young people are actively involved in the church, the likelihood that they will consider ministry increases. When the level of involvement in parish or campus ministry increases, so does interest in ministry. For example, 52 percent of those in campus ministry leadership indicated an interest compared with only 16 percent of those not regularly involved. In the words of one young adult:

I think that the church really needs to stress more for teens and young adults. Many large parish churches, like my own, do not have much for people after confirmation. My mother and I have been working hard to try and establish something in my church, but it is difficult. I love my Newman Center. I wish we could have something like this within my own home parish.

And another:

The church should seek to encourage the formation of communities in which young people feel like their church is their home and that their faith is important to them.

Second, the church needs to find ways to connect with young adults. From other research conducted by the Emerging Models Project we have learned that an important way for parishes to reach young adults is through the use of technology. Parishes need to have active Web sites. Some pastoral leaders are recording their homilies or classes as podcasts for young adults to listen to when they have time.

Third, our study shows that while most young adults have discussed their interest in ministry with family and friends, few pursued their inquiry with career counselors, and only a quarter sought the counsel of a diocesan vocation director. Perhaps if they had done so, they could have been helped to see a connection between their gifts and talents and ministry. This indicates a need to develop more awareness among young adults of the presence and role of diocesan vocation directors. Indeed, one of the top recommendations made by participants at the National Ministry Summit

convened by the Emerging Models project was an invitation to vocation directors to expand their ministry to include recruitment for lay ecclesial ministries.

Fourth, young adults want the church to provide better support for lay ministry. Half of the college respondents and 60 percent of the diocesan sample agreed with the statement that "the Catholic Church needs to move faster in empowering lay persons in ministry." One 22-year-old woman said, referring to the U.S. bishops' document on lay ecclesial ministry published in 2005:

I think we have to market the opportunity to serve professionally in the Catholic Church and also ask for more support from the bishops and folks in the top echelon. Not many people know about *Co-Workers in the Vineyard*, and they need to know that we need their talent and willingness to serve, and their passion. And so, get the word out that the church as a whole, especially the clergy, is fully in support of lay ministers. People don't know that. And people don't know that we are considered valuable by our bishops.

### Going Forward

This study is a beginning. The next generation of pastoral leaders, lay and ordained, is already active in the church.



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And we know that future studies must focus on the fact, which is growing in importance, that many young adults come from different cultural backgrounds; and their pathways into ministry will reflect that. At the conclusion of the study, young adults were asked what they would like to tell the church's leaders about the direction of the church in the years ahead. Their answers are clear. Pay more attention to youth, college students and young adults. Teach young adults about their faith. Empower laypeople. And focus on love and forgiveness.

Our results show that young adults in their 20s and 30s have already made life decisions that have steered them away from future ministry. Apparently we reached them too late. Had church leaders appealed to them at an earlier age and more convincingly, more might have seen ministry as a serious option. This conclusion is reinforced by the insistence of our respondents that the church give more energy and resources to youth ministry. Nobody should assume that children of Catholic families will automatically be good prospects for future ministry. Rather, we need to "actively recruit them"—now—into life in the church and into ministry. **A**



From the archives, a profile of young Catholics from 1999, at [americamagazine.org/pages](http://americamagazine.org/pages).



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# Sowing the Seeds for Ministry

*Five ways to reach young Catholics*

BY TIM MULDOON

ON A TUESDAY NIGHT IN MID-SEMESTER most Boston College students are poring over books or sitting in front of computer screens writing papers. Yet roughly 150 students—in brown T-shirts emblazoned with the words “What would Jesus brew?”—have made their way to a cafe for a monthly series known as Agape Latte. This evening of serious yet informal theological reflection will generate further conversations in residence halls, dining areas and cyberspace. (The series resembles the successful Theology on Tap series launched by the Archdiocese of Chicago 25 years ago.)

In venues like this, outside of parish life and weekly Mass, some young adult Catholics are developing an understanding and practice of the faith. What appears to be bad news—that young adult Catholics regularly absent themselves from the pews—masks a sign of hope, at least for some. These Catholics are taking seriously their spiritual lives and are asking thoughtful questions about the church and its teachings, even though they lack the supportive Catholic subcultures of family and neighborhood that formed earlier generations in the faith.

Ministry to young adult Catholics is complex today, given delayed marriage (median age 28, compared with 23 a generation ago), geographic mobility (mostly because of job and career changes) and immersion in a pluralist culture. The majority of young Catholics do not attend Mass weekly, and many feel no strong connection to the church through parish life. Some have grown up with negative or hostile images of the church.

In speaking with leaders in young adult ministry, however, I have heard expressions of great enthusiasm and hope. These leaders say that young adults come to the church with almost none of the guilt that pervaded the faith of earlier generations; instead, they come seeking

community and authenticity. How can parishes nourish such young adults who can become leaven among their peers? Young adult ministers employ five elements, the five C's: community, communication, cooperation, consultation and catechesis.

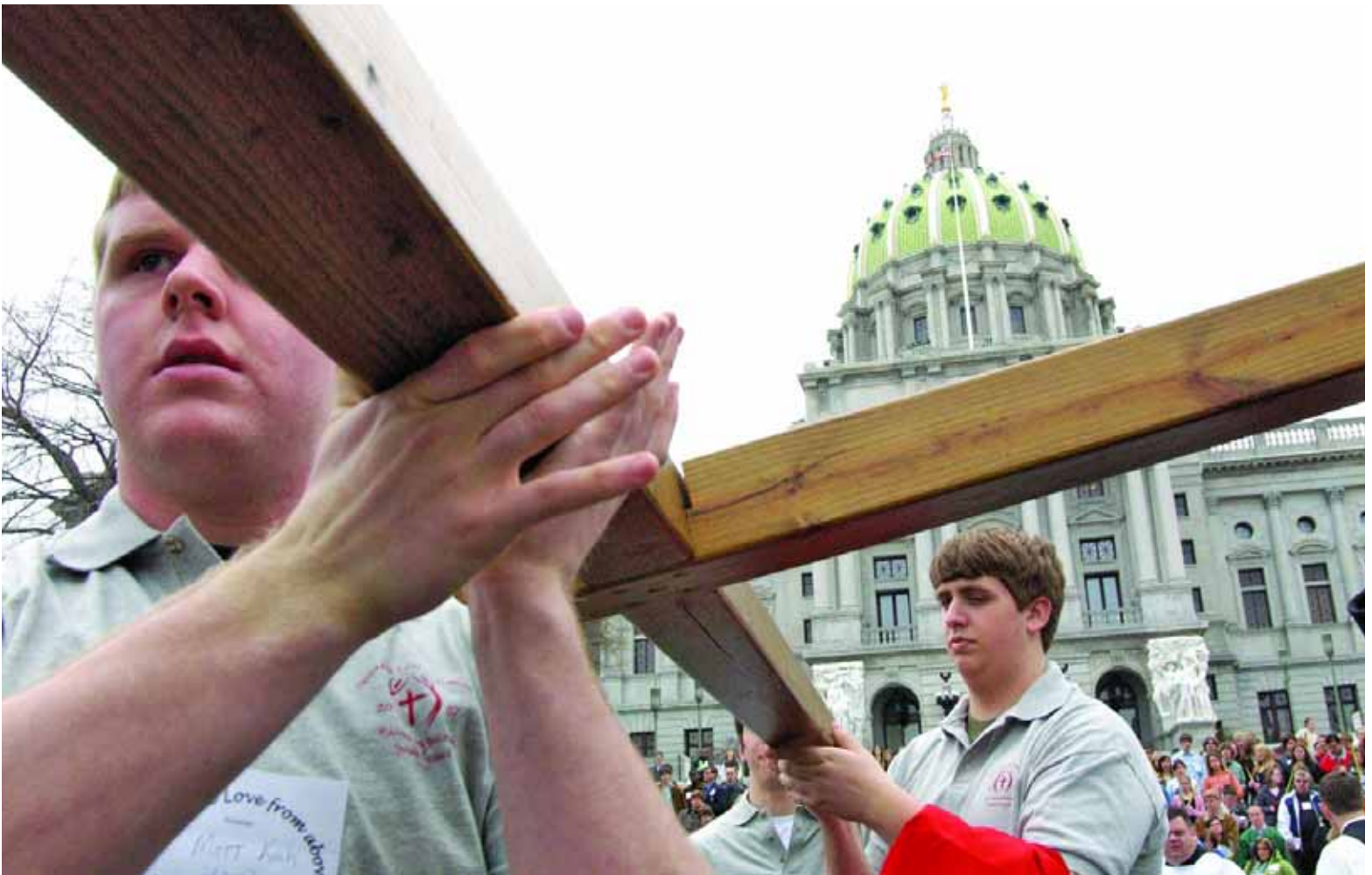
## Community

Many young adult Catholics have experienced displacement and are struggling to find authentic community. Take first-generation immigrants, for example, a majority of whom are Hispanic. Currently, many dioceses are ill equipped to address their pastoral needs for lack of bilingual ministers and adequate programming. According to the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University, 44 percent of the Catholic young adult population are Hispanic. The number includes not only recent immigrants, but second- and third-generation young adults who have assimilated to U.S. culture. Basic differences of language and culture, says Jorgé Rivera, the coordinator for Hispanic young adult ministry in the Archdiocese of Chicago, make it difficult to keep together diverse communities of Hispanic young adults, let alone form community with the larger population of young adults in the archdiocese. Nevertheless, Loyola University Chicago's Institute of Pastoral Studies has succeeded in forming new young adult leaders. And around the country thousands of young people have attended *encuentros* (national gatherings of Hispanic Catholics and their leaders, sponsored by the U.S. Catholic bishops since 1972). There they have seen firsthand that they are not alone in seeking ways to negotiate faith and culture.

Other young adults have experienced displacement, often through college or professional life. They too desire a community the workplace cannot provide. One successful element of Theology on Tap that can be replicated in other programs is the way it offers young adults an opportunity to engage in the kind of conversations that do not take place in ordinary social situations. Young adulthood is a time for raising profoundly spiritual questions: about vocation, relationships and the meaning of life. A faith community offers

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TIM MULDOON, a theologian, is the author of *Seeds of Hope: Young Adults and the Catholic Church in the United States* (Paulist Press, 2008). He serves in the Office for University Mission and Ministry at Boston College, and was the first director of the college's Church in the 21st Century Center.



Young Catholics carry a large cross outside the Capitol in Harrisburg, Pa., to mark World Youth Day April 1. More than 900 youths gathered for a blessing of palms and a procession to St. Patrick Cathedral for a Mass celebrated by Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of Harrisburg.

young people a place for growth and maturation. Denise Pressley of the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee describes how a recent young adult conference drew together participants from different backgrounds, including the military, who themselves constitute something of a hidden subgroup among young adults.

It is not easy to foster community among young adults, because displacement often means transience and upheaval; job or career changes, weddings and the birth of children change the dynamics within communities. And there are significant differences between the pastoral needs of 30-somethings and those of college students, though both groups can be considered young adults. One creative way to bridge these differences can be seen in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. The end-of-the-summer Theology on Tap gathering of mainly late 20- and early 30-somethings was held on a college campus as a way of welcoming the late teen and early 20-something students into the young adult Catholic community.

At the root of young adults' desire for community is, I think, a basic resistance to the many ways that our culture extols the individual. Since a need for friendship and love is a good and holy spiritual desire, one key to ministry is to

help young adults cultivate authentic relationships among themselves and with others in the Catholic community. This can be a challenge, because division sometimes mars relations among Catholics. The very presence of young adults ought to remind us that Christian community is rooted in the joy the disciples experienced at encountering the risen Christ. As one young adult put it, "It's not all the gray hair that scares us, it's the bitterness and apathy."

### Cooperation

Sustaining relationships among young adults can be difficult especially for small communities, where the departure of one or two key people for a new job elsewhere can badly affect a faith-sharing group. To address the problem, it may be helpful to take advantage of the resources of a large community rather than rely solely on a small local one. The Archdiocese of Detroit has developed a plan for cooperation among young adult ministry and campus ministry in eight regions, each of which includes one to five vicariates. Instead of each parish or vicariate securing its own personnel and programs, each region pools its parish resources to fund staff positions in young adult and campus ministry. The result is greater order and greater likelihood that each

region can grow enough young adult leaders to carry forward the ministry, even when individuals move on.

When it comes to programming, Krista Bajoka, director of campus and young adult ministry in Detroit, suggests hosting different kinds of events—liturgical, social and service—because some young adults do not yet have a connection to the church. She recommends creating young-adult-only events to bring them in and then finding ways to involve them in the life of the parish, larger church and society. The model works because the archdiocese has committed funding and organizational leadership, while at the same time it encourages local parishes to work together.

### Communication

An online presence is essential: for many young adults, if something is not online it doesn't exist. Internet communication addresses the issue of displacement: if young people are displaced, they need to know where to go to church. A parish's Web site—its appearance and content—indicates quickly to young people whether this parish is likely to be a place where they will be nourished.

Young people use the Internet to explore spirituality. The success of such sites as *beliefnet.com* and *BustedHalo.com* (a Catholic, Paulist-sponsored site that receives 15,000 to 20,000 hits per month) shows the Web's potential for evangelization. The Irish Jesuits operate *sacredspace.ie*, and the British Jesuits offer podcasts on *pray-as-you-go.org*. Currently, religious orders and universities host the best Catholic sites, but local parishes and dioceses can serve local young adults by providing links. And they can develop virtual communities to complement real ones through online social networking sites like *Facebook.com*.

The Catholic presence for young adults on the Internet is modest. Many diocesan and parish sites give good information, but use too many words and lack technological sophistication. With its vast repertoire of liturgical symbols, history, literature and art, the Catholic community can have a better presence online as a way of attracting young adults. Tapping the expertise of young adults who work in the communications media has a double benefit: it gives them a way of serving the local community, and it enhances parish outreach.

### Consultation

The church must cultivate young adult leaders ready to minister to their peers—as small group prayer leaders, retreat leaders, service project coordinators, liturgical ministers and so on. The resources devoted to forming these leaders in faith (like appropriate catechesis, guided reading in theology and experiences of prayer) will yield fruit in the long run for both the local parish and the church.

The challenge is to develop a long-term plan for rotating leadership, similar to what happens in campus ministries, where the entire student body changes every four years. Dioceses, parishes and colleges/universities must establish effective relationships in order to develop such leadership. Students involved in campus ministry often bring ministerial gifts to their local parish after they graduate. At Boston College a parish-intern program sends interested undergraduates to work in various parish ministries. In the United States, only 3 percent of Catholic young adults are enrolled at Catholic colleges and universities, but even a fraction of this group could, with the right mentoring, play a vital and necessary part in successful young adult ministry.

Nowhere is the need for consultation and apprenticeship clearer than in the Latino community, where leaders could then minister to their peers. If the church is to minister to young adults whose primary language is not English and whose culture differs from that of most young adult ministers today, resources will have to be put toward the development of peer leadership. No matter the specific group, ministers and educators ought to consult with young adults themselves to gain new perspectives on what it is like to choose to be Catholic and to learn what gifts young adults can bring to the local parish.

### Catechesis

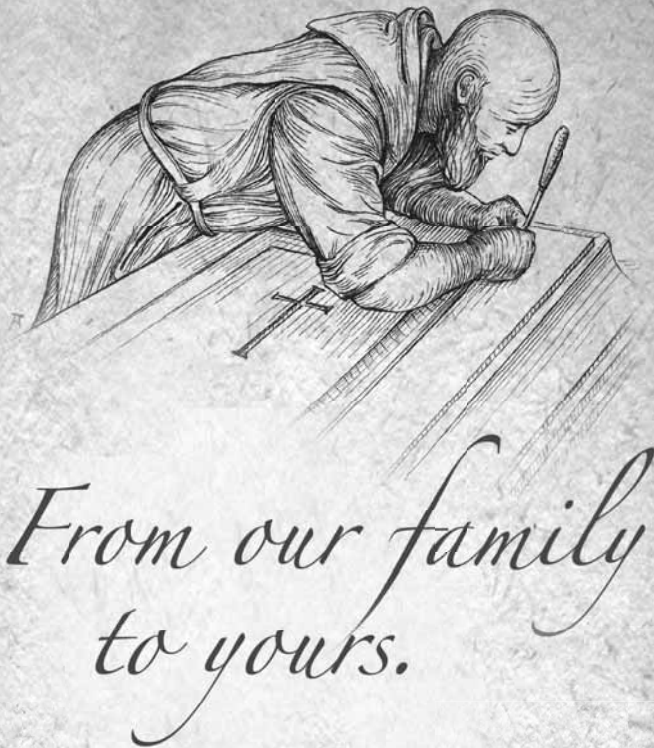
By catechesis I mean a range of activities that foster growth in the faith—from first contact with Catholic teaching to deepening understanding, properly called “mystagogy.” Young adults today have grown up during a catechetical pendulum swing. The minister's challenge is to help them find the right balance. Pre-Vatican II catechesis emphasized rote learning of the catechism, often to the exclusion of affective learning or deepening of an authentic spiritual life. Early post-Vatican II catechesis emphasized affective learning, often to the exclusion of basic knowledge of history, traditional terminology and symbols. In more than 10 years of college teaching, I have found that as a rule I cannot expect Catholic students to know many of the basic elements of Catholic tradition. Many have never read the Bible, and few can articulate the meaning of their faith at a level comparable to what is expected of a college student in other areas.

Many new programs and publications are available to help young adults cultivate a spiritual life within the church. One of the most successful is *Charis Ministries*, founded in 2000 by Michael Sparough, S.J., of the Chicago Province of the Jesuits; it introduces young adults to Ignatian spirituality. An outline for their retreats—honored as models for ministry to young adults by the U.S. bishops—is being published this summer as a series titled *Grace Notes*. Another

program, called Spirit and Truth, has chapters around the country dedicated to the practice of eucharistic adoration.

Hundreds of local, national and international Web sites are dedicated to helping young people grow in knowledge of their faith. While many are quite good, they lack basic and vital person-to-person mentoring in faith. Ministry to young adults ought to include coaching in the basics of how to be Catholic: from the use of language, to prayer, to the application of moral teaching, to reading the Bible and other religious texts. There is a vast superstructure of Catholic belief and practice to which many young adults have never been adequately introduced. As a result, many find themselves with a fragmentary or immature understanding of the faith. Mentors could show them, in a nonjudgmental way, what it means to be Catholic. And these mentors could come from the ranks of young adults themselves, if parishes and dioceses would assist them to become leaders.

YOUNG ADULTS TYPICALLY DO NOT OCCUPY the pews as frequently as pastors and many other faithful would like. Yet their absence need not sever them completely from the parish. Parishes and dioceses can help young adults negotiate the complexities of their faith lives and understand the wisdom of the church's traditions. Already, many young adults are interested in spiritual growth and seek it on their own. They respond to heartfelt invitations from Catholics who care about them. Today, church leaders are inviting young adults in, but we must do better. Our challenge is to follow the advice of St. Benedict: to listen to the young, "because the Lord often reveals to the younger what is best." In this age of new models of parish leadership and cooperation between clergy and laity, perhaps the most exciting area of growth will be among young adults who take up leadership and mentoring roles in local communities. Jesus long ago described the scene: just a few laborers are facing a harvest that is ready and plentiful. **A**



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# A Phantom Crisis

*Are Catholics leaving the church in droves? Not really.*

BY MARK M. GRAY AND JOSEPH CLAUDE HARRIS

**D**URING POPE BENEDICT XVI'S historic visit to the United States this year, many commentators remarked that the supreme shepherd of the church was tending a rapidly shrinking American flock. They based their conclusion on the *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey*, published in February 2008 by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, which reported that "Catholicism has experienced the greatest net losses" of any religion in the United States and that "roughly 10 percent of all Americans are former Catholics."

Reporters in both secular and Catholic media were quick to use terms like "bleeding" and "hemorrhaging" to describe changes in the Catholic population. Luis Lugo, director of the Pew Forum, said "the Catholic numbers are eye-popping." Commentators were swift to assign blame and identified "obvious" reasons for these changes, such as the recent sexual abuse crisis, the continuing shortage of priests and the long-term effects of the Second Vatican Council. Yet on closer inspection, Catholic Church leaders have less to worry about than it may seem. The Pew numbers do not reflect any new crisis.

The Catholic Church may be the "biggest loser" in terms of total population loss, but it is important to remember that the Catholic Church is also the single largest Christian denomination in the United States. Proportions matter. As bad as the losses have been, they would be even worse if Catholics were losing their young faithful at the same rate as every other U.S. Christian denomination. None of these

other Christian churches has had as much success as the Catholic Church in retaining as adults members who were raised in the faith. The Pew study reports that the Catholic Church has retained 68 percent of those who grew up Catholic. By comparison, 60 percent of those raised Baptist are still Baptists as adults; the number is nearly the same for Lutherans (59 percent). The retention rates are lower for



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/G. CAMPBELL

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Methodists and Pentecostals (both 47 percent), Episcopalians (45 percent) and Presbyterians (40 percent). Of all the faith groups in the United States, only those who were raised as Hindu, Jew, Orthodox or Mormon are more likely than Catholics to keep their faith as adults (84, 76, 73 and 70 percent retention rates, respectively). Actually, the Pew numbers demonstrate that the Catholic Church is

## As bad as the losses have been, they'd be even worse if Catholics were losing their young faithful at the same rate as every other U.S. Christian denomination.

among the *most* successful at retaining those raised in their faith.

It is the case that more “Protestants stay Protestant” (80 percent), but this statistic masks the large volume of switching that occurs among Protestant denominations. The relative ease with which such a move can be made does not mean that it is somehow less relevant. Each denomination has its own unique customs, rituals, traditions, teachings and style; and switching from one to another brings change for the individual and the members of the churches involved. Although the expression about Protestants staying Protestant may have sociological and historical validity, the concept lacks relevance in the real world for the persons who make these changes and the religious organizations that lose and receive these members. Researchers may choose not to recognize a respondent's change of faith group as a “real change,” but this does not mean the individuals making these changes (or the churches losing or gaining their membership) share such an interpretation.

### When the Losses Occurred

Even with better retention rates than most, the Catholic Church is still losing too many members. Yet it is also important to understand that these losses have not occurred in any recent exodus. The results reported by Pew do not include information about when a respondent left his or her faith. But other social scientists have studied this particular question. In a 2003 national random-sample telephone poll, for example, the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University asked American adults who said they were raised Catholic, but who no longer self-identify as such, the following question: “About how many years ago did you stop thinking of yourself as Catholic?” Respondents had a tendency to answer this open-ended question with round numbers, like one, five,

10, 15 or 20 years ago, rather than by specifying a year. A majority of these former Catholics said they stopped considering themselves Catholic before 1988 (54 percent). The percentage who in 2002 responded “last year” is statistically not different from that of respondents who said they left “five years ago,” “10 years ago” or more. In fact, former Catholics were more likely to name “30 years ago,” that is, 1972, than any other interval (10.8 percent of all those who have stopped considering themselves to be Catholic). These results reflect the incremental life-cycle changes that affect people's faith life, such as the coming-of-age process, which may lead one to question childhood beliefs, or marrying someone of another faith, which may affect practice. Also, social scientists have long understood that some of those who no longer identify with the faith in which they were raised, especially those who currently say they are “unaffiliated,” will return to that faith later in life.

### An Error of Size

Church leaders and Catholics in general should also be aware that the Pew results underestimate the size and composition of the Catholic population. Although Pew conducted more than 35,000 interviews, which resulted in a margin of sampling error of 0.6 percentage points, there is no safety in these numbers because sampling error is just one type of potential error. Pew researchers note in the report that an unusually low number of Latino respondents identify themselves as Catholics. In a three-page explanation of this phenomenon, the researchers explore other potential sources of error that could have caused this result, including question wording, unrepresentative sampling and problems caused by the language options for the survey. Pew conducted a follow-up survey, which confirmed that the *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey* had indeed underestimated Latino Catholic affiliation. The Pew researchers conclude thus:

This means the Landscape Survey underestimates the proportion of Latinos who are Catholic. By extension, it may also slightly underestimate the proportion of the U.S. Catholic population that is Latino and marginally underestimate the proportion of the U.S. population that is Catholic.

Instead of identifying themselves as Catholic, a sizable number of Latinos in the survey identified themselves as “unaffiliated.” Although the Pew researchers seek to reassure



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readers that because of the “missing” Latino Catholics, the report may only “marginally underestimate the proportion of the U.S. population that is Catholic,” this error has an impact on the interpretation of the Catholic data. The difference between the 58 percent identification among Latinos in the Pew survey and the more typical 68 percent affiliation found in other studies, including some conducted by Pew, is equivalent to 2.7 million U.S. adults (or 1.2 percent of the total U.S. population). To put the size of this error in Pew's comparative terms, the 2.7 million adult Latino Catholics “missed” in the Religious Landscape Survey are equivalent to or larger than all but 10 of the other specific religious faith groups identified by Pew researchers in the U.S. population. If the Pew survey had not been affected by this methodological problem, the Catholic retention rate would have been more than 70 percent, which is consistent with previous CARA estimates.

The Catholic Church should be concerned about losing members. But the results of the Pew study do not reflect a recent mass exodus from the Catholic faith. The changes it reflects have occurred incrementally over a long period, most often among young adults and teens; the changes are most often related to marriage, leaving home and migration to new environments. The average age at which former Catholics said they stopped considering themselves to be Catholic in CARA's 2003 poll was 21, and only 14 percent of former Catholics said they were older than 35 when they left the church. The average age at the time of leaving has risen slightly over the decades from the early 20s (up until the 1990s) and now into the mid-20s. This change corresponds to the longer periods Catholics and non-Catholics alike are waiting to leave home and marry. Thus, the church's concern for and focus on young adults should be nothing new. This is the population church leaders should continue to focus on now to stem future losses. **A**

# Imagining Abundance

*The transformative potential of Catholic fundraising*

KERRY A. ROBINSON

‘A CCORDING TO THE TEACHING of the Gospel, we are not owners but rather administrators of the goods we possess: these, then, are not to be considered as our exclusive possession, but means through which the Lord calls each one of us to act as a steward of his providence for our neighbor.’

These words from Pope Benedict XVI’s Lenten message on charity and philanthropy remind us that we are all stewards of God’s creation, called to give and receive God’s blessings. Heeding the pope’s words and mindful of the responsibilities of our baptism, we must seek to be conscientious leaders of our Catholic faith community, using our resources in a holy and proper way.

Today, as Catholic institutions from hospitals to parochial schools face serious challenges to their financial health, the need for a distinctly Catholic approach to philanthropy is acute. I have been blessed to work my entire career in service to the church, both as a member of the Catholic philanthropic community and as a development director and adviser to Catholic institutions and charities. Catholic philanthropy and development are two sides of the same coin; when exercised with vision, faith, generosity of spirit and commitment to excellence, they can be catalysts for transformation. In my work in both fields, I have learned certain lessons about how to approach fundraising in a way that is consonant with the pope’s call to be proper stewards of God’s blessings. I share them here in the hope that they

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will be of value to Catholic leaders seeking to bring new vitality to their institutions.

*Be worthy of generosity.* The starting point for all successful Catholic development must be a passion for excellence. To achieve this high standard, an organization must have a well-defined mission and must be committed to exemplary standards and practices on every institutional level, especially in the management of human and financial resources. It is essential for church leaders, ordained and lay alike, to recognize that they themselves must strive to lead and manage impeccably. The church’s mission is too important to be entrusted to outdated standards or lackluster vision.

Furthermore, stewardship is more than just the proper care of what has been entrusted to us; it is also the recognition of and care for the possibilities at hand. Our response to that potential, whether to ignore it or bring it to fruition, is the measure of our stewardship.

*Money follows mission.* How well is the mission understood, articulated, advanced and accomplished? Fundraising at its



best is a byproduct of an organization's creativity, vitality and vision. Too often Catholic organizations use a lack of financial resources or the fact that something "isn't in the budget" as an excuse to do nothing. Yet waiting for financial resources before carrying out an organization's mission is unnecessarily constraining. Reverse those priorities, understand mission as central to your organization's success, and witness the generosity and financial commitment that follows.

The Catholic nonprofit sector can be divided into those who are trapped in a maintenance mindset, tantamount to treading water for survival, and those who live and breathe mission. Avoid the stultifying seduction of maintenance; emphasize mission. As people of faith we are called to be courageous, prophetic, confident and faithful. We are called to live in a world of possibility, to think big and to never give up.

*Donors are subjects, not objects.* Donor prospects, whether individuals or institutions, are not objects from which to try to extract as much money as possible as quickly as possible. That false understanding contributes to the notion that development is manipulative, coercive, underhanded work, rather than an invaluable ministry. Consider the language used in talk of fundraising: "Hit him up for money." "Put the squeeze on her." "Twist his arm." "Seal the deal." This is a language of violation, not befitting the fundamental Catholic understanding of the dignity of the human person. All people search for meaning and desire to be part of something life-giving and consequential, and most want to contribute in deeply meaningful ways.

Catholic leaders seeking to raise money must also recognize and resolve any theological ambivalence they might have about wealth. Be wary of the temptation to disparage the wealth or financial decisions of prospective donors. It is often demanding and difficult to distribute wealth in a judicious and effective manner. It is grossly presumptuous to believe that "he doesn't know what to do with his money!" Catholics have risen to levels of enormous affluence and influence in the United States, especially over the last five decades. Increasingly, those who donate are sophisticated and strategic in the choices they make, as they seek to maximize the impact of their grant dollars. They look at philanthropy as an investment and expect a return on it. Far more important than receiving public recognition for their gift is their desire to enhance the ability of the recipient institution to execute and fulfill its mission. Fundraising is about rela-

tionships, and healthy relationships are built on trust and mutual respect. Trust and respect are engendered when excellence is the aspiration for all.

*Imagine abundance.* Nothing succeeds like success. There is always more to be given and received. Confidence is demanded by the mission of the organizations being represented, provided the mission is sound and the management

## Once development is understood as ministry, one can approach what might have been thought of as distasteful work as an opportunity for mutual conversion of heart and mind.

is exemplary. If there is no confidence in the importance of the mission, one fails to meet the first maxim of successful development: be worthy of generosity.

From a Catholic perspective, development is not a zero-sum game. A gift for one organization should not be seen as a loss for another. Such an approach to fundraising is inappropriate for people of faith, who properly understand that the church's mission is fulfilled by a variety of worthy institutions. Besides, it is best to encourage donors to give to those activities they care most passionately about.

*Be positive.* The most difficult obstacle to faith-filled development is cynicism and negativity. A great leader and successful development director lives in a world of possibility. My favorite definition of a cynic is one who has given up but not yet shut up. Resist negativity and cynicism in all its insidious forms. In fact, learn to recognize it in others as a sign that you are onto something of consequence, that your positive and hopeful outlook is rattling the cages of those who would rather resist any form of change. Learn to proclaim the good news of your organization and how it is making a measurable difference in the world. Believe that people want to hear good news and to be part of something life-giving, successful and, yes, holy. And remember that the person who says it cannot be done should not interrupt the person doing it!

*It's all about joy.* Be joyful. Once development is understood as a ministry, priests, religious and laypeople can approach what they might have previously thought of as distasteful work and "a necessary evil" as an opportunity for mutual

conversion of heart and mind. Grant maker and grant seeker are collaborators in a life-giving mission, rooted in faith, both seeking to use their resources to benefit others. This process brings meaning to the beneficiaries, to the donor and to those working in development. It affirms that the organization's ministry matters and is making a measurable difference in the lives of others. So be expansive of spirit and magnanimous of heart. Care for the donor and take delight in the relationship. Evince a collaborative, communal, participatory and enthusiastic disposition. Advancing the mission of the church should not be a competition. Keep the big picture in mind, for the sake of what is in the donor's best interest and in the best interest of the church's larger mission. Remember that it can be done, and it can also be fun. And celebrate all advancements toward the goal.

When I was a director of development, a donor once called me on the eve of my board meeting. I had been preparing my oral report to the board, praying for the words to communicate the significant advancements in our various programs. My hope was to inspire confidence in the board that we were well on our way to being worthy of generosity, that money would follow mission. The donor's call was an answer to prayer. He told me that he and his wife had been following the concerted expansion in activity and together they wanted to contribute \$1 million to be used "however we saw best." When I began to explain the extraordinary timing of his call and proceeded to thank him, he politely cut short my effusive gratitude and said something that will always remain with me: "You make it a joy to give." I was struck by the sentiment, mindful that it was the energy and enthusiasm of every member of our organization that had made their gift possible.

*Successful development/successful leadership.* Exemplary fundraising is a prerequisite for successful nonprofit leadership. Look at an outstanding leader in the nonprofit sector—a university president, for example, or an executive director of an international aid organization—and you will find an impressive command and track record of fundraising. This is less because these executives are good fundraisers and more because they are good leaders. That is, they inspire confidence. They elevate the visibility and importance of their institutions. They are mission-driven. They desire and demand excellence in every aspect of the institution they represent. They seek to involve and

engage a panoply of beneficiaries and constituents. They hire smart, effective people—often with abilities they themselves do not have—to be part of a team. They are confident and positive. Where they see positive potential, they act with alacrity and tenacity to bring it to fulfillment.

Donors do not take risks on leadership. They follow the vibrancy—that is, they seek leaders who are passionate and trustworthy, people of conviction and vision. If donors are confident in an institution's leadership, they will be willing to take risks on new initiatives and creative programs. If your programs are well thought out, and if transparency and accountability are a priority, donors will see that and make a commitment to your organization.

AS CATHOLICS, WE ARE ALL CALLED to attend to the larger mission of the church. At a time when Catholic institutions are still reeling from a loss of priests and religious, who have done so much to ensure the financial and spiritual stability of their organizations, it is essential that a new generation of Catholics find effective ways to spread the resources of the faithful. As the pope reminds us, we are called to administer the goods we possess, which are not "our exclusive possession." Ultimately, development is about hope and trust in God's providence, not for the sake of raising money or meeting income goals, but for the sake of the church's myriad apostolates. May we all find ways to contribute to their future success. **A**





Francis J. Butler on "Raising Money for the Pope," at [americamagazine.org/pages](http://americamagazine.org/pages).

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# Christ and the Cooks

## Ministry beyond liturgy for young adults

BY ALICE KEARNEY ALWIN

**I**N MANY CATHOLIC PARISHES, young adulthood can seem less like an age range than an age gap. Catholics between the ages of 18 and 35 are underrepresented in the liturgical and community life of most parishes, which many pastoral staffs fear is a reflection of the secularism and skepticism of this “millennial generation.” But their absence may be due to nothing more than plain apathy, which can be addressed by developing creative programming to facilitate full liturgical and social re-entry into the church community. This missing demographic can and should be reclaimed.

The first step needed to draw young people into the parish community is to bring them together as a lead-in to an interesting activity. (This is why smart pastors encourage young people to attend a specific Mass.) Liturgy is the center of parish life, but Mass alone does not effectively build community. People pray better when they know one another, and part of the purpose of young adult ministry is to make introductions. A good strategy for a coordinator of young adult ministry is to invite them into the church building for more than just Mass, introduce them to one another and then step away, allowing them to encourage each other to come back next week. And they will.

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ALICE KEARNEY ALWIN writes about food and theology on her blog, <http://keepthefeast.blogspot.com>, where recipes and other resources from her parish cooking classes can be found. She was an editorial intern at **America** in 2007-8.

Young adults are searching for relational experiences with people who share their interests, but too often this is interpreted as a single-minded interest in finding a romantic relationship with another Catholic (turning young adult ministry into a youth group with beer). It is not the



Young adults from the Washington area meet at a pub in the District of Columbia for an archdiocesan Theology on Tap event.

charism of the church to play matchmaker for young adults in (or estranged from) the church. Given the diversity of sexual orientations and relationship expectations among people today, effective ministry to young adults cannot be limited only to heterosexual single people. Effective programming needs to encourage an intra-generational social support system: older young adults mentoring younger adults. When these relationships are established, the differences between singles and married people that can threaten to fracture a young adult group will instead help bring it together.

American millennials hate groups but love crowds. They attend events (like lec-

tures) and drop in on classes (like yoga). They may not join a church, but they may stop by for a Mass. Although this casual parish relationship is frustrating to pastors, it must be tolerated when courting the young adult demographic. Their problem with organized religion is not

that it's organized, but how it's organized. Young adult “groups” and “meetings” aren't as effective as young adult ministry event offerings. It is not enough to advertise a young adult mixer and expect people actually to mix in a room full of people whose only commonality is their neighborhood and religion. Instead, it is necessary to twist the pitch: to invite people to come to church to learn

something interesting in the company of other young people.

One reason the Chicago-based young adult ministry program Theology on Tap is effective is that it meets young people where they like to hang out, in this case at local watering holes, and brings the ministry to them with speakers and peer-led discussions. By mimicking this approach, parish ministers can meet the interests of young adults with programs they will actually attend. If you get them into a church building, you have gotten them into church.

New and emerging models of pastoral ministry are based on imaginative ways to bring Christ to the faithful. Programming

PHOTO: CNS/NANCY WIECHEC

should start with two questions in mind: what do young adults want to learn, and what can the leader teach? The invitation should be limited to young adults only. Activities that are hands-on, experiential, social and fresh might include woodworking, carpentry, sailing, fishing, hiking, quilting or planting a prayer garden. An activity is especially beneficial if it has both a social and reflective component. If any catechetical connections can be developed, it can be made into ministry.

When a program concludes, the young adults might want to stay together like a small Christian community that meets regularly to sit together during Mass and share a meal afterwards or do service together. Ideally, classes and programs are just a bridge to ease the transition back into parish life. In the case of new people coming into the church, meeting other young adults in a welcoming social environment can confirm their decision to join the church. The goal is to make young adults know they are important and welcome, and to cycle young adults into other parish ministries.

### Setting the Table

As the full-time director of youth and young adult ministry at a large parish in the diocese of Trenton, I organized cooking classes for 21- to 35-year-olds as a way to jump-start the parish's long-dormant young adult ministry. Over and over, I heard young adults claim that going to church was not "feeding" them, so my strategy was to invite them to share a meal and teach them how to make it. I selected the menus, did the shopping and taught the classes. I am theologically educated but a self-taught cook. I based this ministry on my gifts and the popularity of television programming about cooking and entertaining. Although originally intended to run once per week during Lent, the program was so popular we extended it to 10 weeks. It attracted an almost equal number of married and single women and men.

Many millennials have been raised in homes where both parents worked full time, and cooking lost the daily priority it enjoyed when one person in the household, usually the wife/mother, was able to prepare a home-cooked meal and teach the children to cook. The cooking series was a creative way for the church to fill a

natural need—everyone eats—that many people wanted to learn more about. Food is always cultural and contextual, which gets people talking about who they are and where they come from. But cooking was just the catalyst for the ministry.

### Baking Bread to Break

Food is mentioned over 30 times in the Gospel of Luke, more often than Jesus heals the sick or uses parables. The church recognizes the importance Jesus placed on food; after all, celebrating the Eucharist is the central activity of parish life. The nourishing spiritual food of the Eucharist brings the people to Jesus and Jesus to the people. Examining how eucharistic people eat and share food outside of the liturgy seemed like a natural deconstruction of this central spiritual experience. The question that led the project was: How has Jesus called his disciples to cook, eat and share food?

Although donations were accepted for my program, the parish contributed a budget to cover the costs, which came to about \$10 per person per class. It is important that such activities be free or require only a nominal fee, because the church

does not sell ministry. The young adult demographic is surely worth the investment. The ideal class size is between eight and 12 people, and ideally drop-ins or last-minute e-mail reservations should be accepted. It helps to encourage people to bring friends or even a date, and to advertise on the parish Web site and publish a bulletin announcement encouraging churchgoers to pass along the notice to their young adult children or friends.

Good cooks are usually horrible instructors, because they are too practiced and intuitive to remember the basics. Likewise, faith cannot be taught. Both food and faith are seasoned with dashes and splashes, adjusting to taste. In the kitchen and in the church, imperfections, mystery and surprises abound. There are no secret ingredients.

Teaching young adults to cook has to start out with the basics; breaking into a theological conversation has to be just as elementary. The role of the leader is to encourage conversation, like a good host, and introduce people more than once if necessary and ask open-ended questions. Politically charged discussions can splinter any group and make people scared to

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return, so it helps to keep it light, at least at first. If ministry is the translation from Christian language into the vernacular, then it helps if the instructor is fluent in both. And more than anything, the instructor has to reflect the hospitality that the church strives to offer to everyone.

The classes followed the same format every week. Until everyone arrived, people would mill around the kitchen with a soft drink or a glass of wine. Once the company was assembled, there would be about 10 minutes of introduction and explanation about the class. A lesson on

lamb stew, for example, was prefaced with a few minutes of discussion on each of the following diverse topics: Jewish temple sacrifice; Jesus as the Agnus Dei, the “Lamb of God”; the ethics of organically raised and free-range meat; and the culinary effects of slow oven braising.

As soon as possible, members would be at the cutting boards learning by doing things themselves. Our group started using sharp knives to slice into raw meat on the very first lesson. Pulling a group of people out of their comfort zone requires one to earn their trust, so it was important that I

made sure the directions were very clear. Once everyone was chopping and chatting, I was able to step out of the way to witness the real ministry that was happening: a collection of strangers becoming one body. After about an hour in the kitchen, it was time to share the feast, but not without saying a prayer. Saying grace, like the work of creating the meal, should come from young adults themselves, even if they need encouragement to find their voice.

### During the Feast

The meals were chosen for their catechetical potential. One week, we baked bread from scratch and enjoyed a wine tasting. Another time, we simmered soup in the monastic style and talked about Sabbath rest in our busy world. One week was devoted to making a meal to be delivered to a local shelter for women and children. During Holy Week, we prepared traditional Jewish recipes and discussed the symbolism of the Seder meal. The last meal together was a potluck so that all could showcase their new skills. All the recipes were collected in a weekly booklet that also contained a theological essay on the week’s topic and a bibliography. Since some people were more interested in theology than others, the booklet acted as another vehicle for catechesis and further reflection.

The connections between food and Christian theology were just one way the cooking classes served as ministry; the conversations that arose at the table also introduced other meaningful topics. In the course of the cooking series, five of the twelve participants became engaged, which led to discussions about Christian marriage, the outrageous price of weddings and the benefits (and sometimes the loneliness) of being single. The conversation naturally flowed around from career to travel to getting an apartment.

Over the course of the cooking class, I found that our little community became a communion, and individual members came to support and minister to each other. They were more than just friendly faces to see at Mass. They enriched the parish experience for one another. **A**



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The author shares her recipes for an Easter feast, at [americamagazine.org/connects](http://americamagazine.org/connects).

# A Friend in God

To draw close to the holy, pay attention to ordinary experience.

BY WILLIAM A. BARRY



**I**N THE COURSE OF HELPING people to relate personally with God as a psychologist and spiritual director, I have become convinced that God wants our friendship. As St. Ignatius Loyola wrote in the *Spiritual Exercises*, the creator communicates directly with the creature and the creature with the creator. You might wonder: “What does this mean for me? I’m not making the Spiritual Exercises. In fact, I don’t pray very often.” I believe, however, that God wants a personal relationship with you along with every other member of creation. God does not discriminate in this desire, wanting friendship only with cer-

**WILLIAM A. BARRY, S.J.**, a spiritual director and writer, is co-director of the tertianship program of the Jesuits’ New England Province. His latest book, *A Friendship Like No Other*, has just been published by Loyola Press.

tain special people. God wants everyone’s friendship. And that means that God is communicating personally with you and wants you to respond in kind.

God’s act of creation is not a past event, because the divine is not subject to time. Creation is ongoing, never ending, ever present. God’s desire for friendship is therefore always at work. What this means is that you can communicate with God, but you need to pay attention to pick up the signals.

Sometimes when we hear the term “religious experience” we think of something esoteric, even odd, something only experienced by holy people. But if it is true that God is communicating with each one of us at every moment of our existence, then any human experience can have a religious dimension. Ignatian spirituality speaks of finding God in all things, because God is present and active throughout the universe. All that is need-

ed is to pay attention and to discern in the welter of dimensions of any experience what is of God from what is not of God.

What do I mean by the “welter of dimensions” of experience? All of our experiences are influenced by our mood at the moment, by our expectations, by our upbringing, by the nature of the things we encounter, even by our digestive system. Thus there are physiological, psychological, sociological and cultural dimensions to any experience. Of course, we are not always aware of each of these dimensions. We need to focus our attention in order to become aware of the effect of our mood on our experience of a sunset, for example.

If you want to engage in a friendship with God, you need to take time to become more aware of what is happening within you as you go through your day. The Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote: “The world is charged with the grandeur of God.” At every moment you are in the presence of God. So you must seek to take a contemplative stance toward the world. Pay attention to what you encounter in your ordinary life, and you will experience God’s presence.

## Attending to and Savoring Experience

In my work as a spiritual director I try to help people attend to their experience: to notice what happens when they see the ocean, listen to a Gospel story, watch a baby crawl, read the newspaper or listen to television news. Then I encourage them to talk with a friend about what they notice or to reflect on this during spiritual direction. The contemplative stance is something like what the Ignatian examination of consciousness seeks to foster: a way of noticing what has happened during the day in order to discover God’s presence and how we responded to it.

Helping people to adopt a contemplative outlook is one of the challenges of spiritual direction. It is not easy to pay attention to something outside the self, to really see, feel, smell and touch a tree, for example (Oh, it’s just another oak). Or to pay attention to a Gospel text (Oh yes, the prodigal son). Or to pay attention to what a friend is actually saying to you. We have so many preconceived notions, so many

ART BY STEPHANIE RATCLIFFE

cares and concerns that we do not really pay attention to the other, whether the other is a person, a thing, an event, a text of Scripture or God. Just think of what happens when someone tells you about his knee operation. Most likely the first thing you think of is your own knee operation or your mother's, and you talk about that. The other person has no time to discuss his or her experience.

The former poet laureate Billy Collins's humorous poem "Introduction to Poetry" gives an idea of the challenge of assuming a contemplative stance toward anything:

*I ask them to take a poem  
and hold it up to the light  
like a color slide*

*or press an ear against its hive.*

*I say drop a mouse into a poem  
and watch him probe his way out,*

*or walk inside the poem's room  
and feel the walls for a light switch.*

*I want them to waterski  
across the surface of a poem  
waving at the author's name on the  
shore.*

*But all they want to do  
is tie the poem to a chair with rope  
and torture a confession out of it.*

*They begin beating it with a hose  
to find out what it really means.*

Many of us want to beat understanding out of our experience before really paying attention to what exactly hap-

pened. We have to be patient with ourselves. Sometimes it is difficult to believe that my experience is worth paying attention to; it often seems so banal. You may feel the same way. Yet our ordinary experience is where we encounter God.

What kind of experience am I talking about? Well, after a day of work and dinner with your family, you sit down to watch the evening news on television. Pictures of an automobile accident flash on the screen, and the announcer says that four teenagers died in that crash. Your son is out with his friends. "Could it be Tim?" you wonder but then are relieved to hear that the accident occurred in another city. Suppose you paid attention to this experience. You might become aware of how much you love your son, even if you are often annoyed by his antics. "God, how I would miss him if he were to die in a senseless accident." Reflecting on this simple experience gives you something to talk over with God, namely how much you love your son and how much you are afraid for him. Perhaps in this ordinary moment you are being invited to share with God your feelings about your son and to listen to what God feels for your son and for you.

Here is an example from the detective novel *Original Sin*, by P. D. James. Kate Mishkin, a Scotland Yard detective and agnostic, is in her apartment overlooking the Thames:

Standing now between the glitter of the water and the high, delicate blue of the sky, she felt an extraordinary impulse which had visited her before and which she thought must be as close as she could ever get to a religious experience. She

was possessed by a need, almost physical in its intensity, to pray, to praise, to say thank you, without knowing to whom, to shout with a joy that was deeper than the joy she felt in her own physical well-being and achievements or even in the beauty of the physical world.

These two examples illustrate how paying attention to the ordinary events in our lives can help us to develop a friendship with God. Kate Mishkin feels a great sense of well-being coupled with a desire to say thank you. The religious dimension of her experience lies close to the surface. If Kate took her experience seriously, she might discover that she has been touched by God. In the first example, the religious dimension came later, when the father reflected on his emotions and sought to communicate with God about his love for his son.

### Finding God in the Everyday

Early on in my work as a spiritual director, I met a married woman who wept with relief and joy when she found out that she could talk about her experience of God with someone who was interested. I discovered that the most important thing I could do as a spiritual director, and possibly in most of my ministry, was to listen to the other person. By doing so, I was allowing the person to take his or her experience seriously as a sacred place where God was present. When people tell me of the times they encounter God, the room becomes a holy place. Often enough the person re-experiences God's presence by simply recounting those holy moments, and I feel that presence too.

Once you have paid enough attention to your experience and savored it, then you can begin to ask questions, to try to make sense of it. What is of God in this experience? What is not? Here the rules for discernment of the Spiritual Exercises come in handy, because they are practical. Experiences that make you more alive, more caring, more loving are probably from God; those that make you more self-centered, more worried, more anxious are probably not. God is always trying to draw us into a relationship of friendship that will make us more like God, that is, more like the human beings we are created to be. **A**



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## Film

# We Meet Again, Dr. Jones

RICHARD A. BLAKE



PHOTO: CNS/PARAMOUNT

Harrison Ford, left, Shia LaBeouf and Karen Allen in a scene from the movie "Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull."

WHEN A FILM TAKES IN over \$100 million in its first weekend, no one much cares what reviewers say about it. The corporate verdict is in. Negative reactions can be dismissed as "elitist," a word that has become pivotal in presidential campaign rhetoric. Positive comments can be lamented as surrender to the mindless entertainment and crass commercialism of Hollywood. What can one add to the predictable reactions to Steven Spielberg's latest installment of his decades-old saga: **Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull**? Actually, once the receipts are counted and its popularity is assured, one can say a great deal, or at least think a great deal about it.

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

First of all, "Crystal Skull" provides no surprises. This may or may not be a bad thing. It's like attending a garage sale. Some people delight in spending their Saturday afternoons rummaging through odd bits of worn-out furniture, whether or not they ever discover a million-dollar rocking chair they can take to "Antiques Roadshow." They feel at home among objects that countless unknown owners have enjoyed for years. In this case, familiarity trumps innovation. Pardon the sudden switch in metaphor: "Crystal Skull" provides comfort food for the imagination. Meatloaf is meatloaf, and anyone who likes it will not be convinced sirloin has anything more to offer.

In the 19 years since Indy's last adventure, "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade" (1989), Prof. Henry Jones Jr. (Harrison Ford), the tweedy archeologist at Marshall College, may have grown a bit more jowly above his bowtie and a trifle

grouchier with his less-than-enthusiastic undergrads, but give him a whip and a fedora, and off he goes. The character lives in a time warp. He hasn't been allowed to mellow. The sly grin, less of a smirk than Bruce Willis's, is still there, and as he jumps across canyons and fights several men half his age, he has that same comic-book resiliency he had on his last crusade. Can audiences accept Indiana Jones with arthritic knees and bifocals? Or does the character have to live up to his mythic reputation? These formula films always raise vexing questions. When does the repetition of familiar devices satisfy legitimate expectations? When is it a witty allusion to past films? When is it simply a failure of imagination? The answer does not come easily.

As a concession to the passage of time since the last film, the villains are no longer recycled Nazis in search of some mystical device to give them control of the



world. Even though Indy still wears his 1940s fedora and leather jacket, “Crystal Skull” is set in 1957. The Soviet Union is the enemy; the risk of nuclear war hangs over the landscape. Although the worst days of McCarthyism, the Rosenberg trial and the House Un-American Activities Committee were fading away, in those days Americans still feared Communist infiltration. We believed that Soviet agents were everywhere—and they may have been. Indy’s students still dress with pre-grunge hints of civilization, but they have begun to listen to Elvis Presley and drive hot rods. Can the Beatles and disco be far away? When the well-scrubbed students hold an anti-Red rally on campus, the Soviet spies disrupt their leafy world by running motorcycles through their parade; the Communists have disrupted their cozy little world. For those looking for symbols, the chase leads through the library reading room, where they disrupt Western civilization as well.

The script, written by David Koepp and coproducer George Lucas, is a mish-mash of incoherence, but when did genre films ever make narrative sense? The only function of the story line is to lead from

one set piece to the next. Think of those wildly implausible romantic plots that gave Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers the chance to strut their spats and sequins on the dance floor. In the 1930s, Depression audiences wanted costumes and dancing, not *The Iliad*. This screenplay energetically propels Indiana from one chase or last-minute rescue to the next, exactly as Steven Spielberg wants it. Giving audiences time to think would interrupt the momentum of the movie and thus compromise its entertainment value.

One would think that the action sequences and special effects might justify the price of a ticket, as surely they had in George Lucas’s “Star Wars” series or the earlier Indiana Jones films. But sadly in 2008, they no longer pack the same wallop. When in “Return of the Jedi” (1983) Mr. Lucas staged his magnificent chase scene in the forest with everyone riding rocket-powered sleds and missing trees by inches, most of us clutched our armrests in white-knuckled excitement. In “Crystal Skull,” a deliberately similar chase through a rain forest in war-surplus military vehicles goes on too long for its own good. The only thing I clutched was my watch. Is the different reaction the audience’s fault? Perhaps. Yet after years of video games and movies inflated with computer-generated imaging and Dolby sound effects, audiences may be excused for losing interest in one more sequence of noisy, manic action. There may be another explanation. Perhaps the Spielberg-Lucas team has become tired of innovation and is content to repeat past triumphs.

The Soviets believe the crystal skull contains a power that will give them world domination. Professor Jones can decipher the codes and lead them to it. By a series of implausible plot twists, Indy tries to leave town but is brought back into the conflict by Mutt Williams (Shia LeBeouf), a teenage biker dressed in cap and leather jacket just like Marlon Brando’s in “The Wild One” (1953). Mutt will be his sidekick for the rest of the film. The spies kidnap Indy and bring him to a nuclear testing site in the desert. After locating a key clue in a top-secret warehouse, he escapes to a village whose central building is labeled “Atomic Café,” the title of a documentary on nuclear war made in 1982. All the people in town are dummies—how fitting! “Howdy Doody,” the series for children

that lasted from 1947 to 1960, drones from the television in the living room of a cottage. When Indy hears a countdown over a public address system, he fears he may have wandered into the wrong place at the wrong time, but an atomic bomb can’t slow Indy down. It just makes him mad.

The race to the crystal skull is on. Indy and Mutt hop a cargo plane to South America, where they track down Indy’s old mentor, Professor Oxley (John Hurt), who seems completely bonkers, but can still read a map and natter away in lost Indian languages. Indy’s former fiancée, Marion Ravenwood (Karen Allen), runs into them (don’t ask) and joins the team. For a brief time, I thought this improbable reunion of old buddies would lead to some delicious comedy, but Oxley just rolls his eyes and mutters a lot, and Marion, after a few funny exchanges with her ex, simply fades into the background. She pilots an armored duck through the jungle, off a cliff and over a waterfall, but I thought Katharine Hepburn had more fun running the rapids in “The African Queen” (1951). All the while Irina Spalko (Cate Blanchett, looking emaciated in her drab gulag coveralls and Louise Brooks wig) chases them with her own band of merry but incompetent warriors. She puts the evil in evil empire, and in the process appears to be having more fun than the other actors. A few hostile Indians appear in the rain forest, looking as though they’d lost their way to a reunion of “Apocalypto” extras. Indy’s crowd eludes them, but the dastardly Russians take more definitive action. Of course. They are the villains.

The action ends in the cave of the crystal skull. The gimmicks and gadgets are fine in their own way, but we’ve heard enough multi-ton doors slamming by this time. Irina finally has her epiphany about the meaning of the crystal skull in a scene that borrows heavily not only from Spielberg’s “Raiders of the Lost Ark” (1981), but also from his “E.T.” (1982) and “Close Encounters of the Third Kind” (1977). All these clever references, allusions and borrowings from past films are surely highly entertaining for Spielberg fans. I for one found them a bit too slick and obvious. There is no difference of opinion at all on one point, however. The Spielberg-Lucas team has mastered the art of selling tickets to their fans. **A**

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# Nothing 'New' Here

## God and the New Atheism

A Critical Response to Dawkins, Harris, and Hitchens

By John Haught

Westminster John Knox. 156p \$16.95  
ISBN 9780664233044

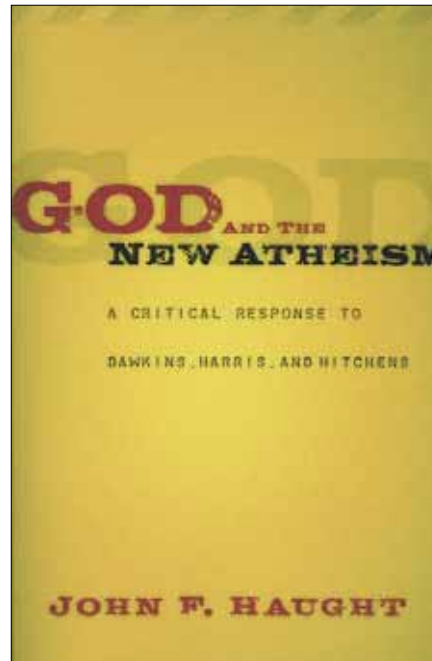
A recent spate of well-publicized books has set off a new round in the several-centuries-old atheist attack against faith. *The God Delusion*, by Richard Dawkins, dismisses God as a monster; according to Sam Harris in *The End of Faith* and *Letter to a Christian Nation*, God is evil; in *God Is Not Great* Christopher Hitchens argues that religion poisons everything. Underlying these broadsides is the conviction that science is qualified to decide whether God exists. Placing divine activity within the nexus of physical causality, they use standard scientific methods to conclude: No. God does not. Their case is buttressed by citing gross evils perpetrated by religion: the Crusades, the Inquisition and other violent ventures. Maturity in our day calls us to shed religion like an old skin and emerge into the sunlight of reason.

John Haught wrote *God and the New Atheism* as a response. Intended for the general reading public, it is short, clearly written and blessedly non-polemical. Haught has spent decades teaching and writing theology in dialogue with science. He is the U.S. Catholic community's most accomplished and prolific scholar in this area. Here he directly engages these recent attacks, attempting to show their inadequacy to both faith and reason. His main criticisms can be distilled into three areas: the new atheists' idea of God, the logic (or illogic) of their method and the intellectual and moral flabbiness that results.

*Idea of God.* Haught traces how the new atheists first shrink God into a discrete individual who acts directly within the causal chain of natural events and then wipe "him" out. This idea of God, however, has almost nothing to do with what Christian faith and theology today under-

stand by that name: an ineffable mystery of infinite being, truth, goodness and beauty. Vexed that the new atheists completely ignore mainstream theology, Haught exposes how the silliness of their gross caricatures makes their job of demolition easier. Anyone can set up a straw God.

But where do they get this idea? Obviously, from fundamentalist proponents of creationism and intelligent design. In a series of comparisons that



runs through the book, Haught details the similarities between the two contenders. Both interpret Scripture literally; both accept an either-or stance regarding religion or science; both make ignorant assumptions about the other; both employ intemperate rhetoric. Enacting the proverbial "A plague on both your houses," Haught endorses a third front, where faith and reason, working fruitfully together, approach God as something more than a cartoonish figure.

*Method.* It is fine to approach religion as a phenomenon that can be studied by scientific method. After all, religion is a part of nature in the sense that it is an evolved human behavior.

But the new atheists claim that science can give an adequate explanation of the reality of the One toward whom human devotion is directed. Haught criticizes this assumption on the basis of its own internal logic. Where is the scientific experiment

## Book Reviews

that could discover the infinite? By its own standards, science is not wired to make this discovery, positively or negatively. In truth, the philosophical stance of scientific naturalism/materialism cannot justify the new atheists' enormous "cognitional swagger." With a touch of irony, Haught notes that to carry forth their argument they have to make a leap of faith beyond what their methods warrant.

*Intellectual thinness.* Haught's main, and perhaps surprising complaint against the latest round is that it is intellectually disappointing. Given its non-scholarly and illogical bases, it raises no genuinely interesting questions. The deepening of theology that occurred in previous conversations between serious atheists and Christian thinkers has little chance of happening here. Examples of fruitful conversations that Haught adduces include those of Paul Tillich with Friedrich Nietzsche; Karl Barth with Ludwig Feuerbach; Karl Rahner and Rudolf Bultmann with Martin Heidegger; Jürgen Moltmann with Ernst Bloch; Gustavo Gutiérrez with Karl Marx; many contemporary theologians with Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan and Jürgen Habermas. Those atheists had enough understanding of theology to make conversation engaging and productive. In marked contrast, the level of theological knowledge held by the new atheists is too shallow and inaccurate even to begin such a conversation.

*Moral flabbiness.* The new atheists write in comfortable circumstances. Unlike the hard-core older challengers, they do not demand any radical transformation of human society. Pale in terms of social justice and ecological concern, they permit the same old values and meanings to govern society, only now sanctified by a conservative Darwinian orthodoxy. While they make valid points about abuses in the name of religion, they ignore human

## The Reviewers

**Elizabeth A. Johnson, C.S.J.**, is Distinguished Professor of Theology at Fordham University. Her most recent book is *Quest for the Living God* (Continuum, 2007).

**Sally Cunneen** is emerita professor of English at Rockland Community College of the State University of New York and the author of *In Search of Mary*.

rights abuses from nonreligious political powers that cost millions of people their lives in the 20th century. One is not inspired to work for a better social or ecological world by these critics.

This lucid and learned book makes clear that the new atheists are trying to topple a deity that mainstream Christian theology has no interest in defending. By contrast, what theology means by "God" is not a link in the causal chain but an infinite mystery, a personal God of unbounded love, a vulnerable, self-emptying love present as source, sustaining power and

goal of the evolutionary world. In religious traditions people find themselves addressed by this God and invited into relationship. In this context faith in God, rather than being an immature, irrational leap without evidence, is an adventurous movement of trust that opens reason to the inexhaustibly deep dimension of the world. It keeps reason from collapsing in on itself, suffocating in its own self-enclosure. It gives the human spirit room to breathe. Far from being the enemy of reason, faith is its cutting edge.

A large amount of media publicity has

surrounded the work of the new atheists; their books have been bestsellers. Readers of Haught's small treatise will find an excellent compendium of defenses, answers and counterthrusts to use in personal reflection and public conversation. The one postscript I would add is that readers would do well to attend to the extent to which the fundamentalist mentality also affects segments of Catholic life. Elements of popular piety, preaching and the teachings of the ordinary magisterium have not always imbibed the understanding of God's infinite mystery prevalent in mainstream theology. Contact with the new atheists may well offer the opportunity for the church's everyday teaching and preaching to become more mature.

*Elizabeth A. Johnson*

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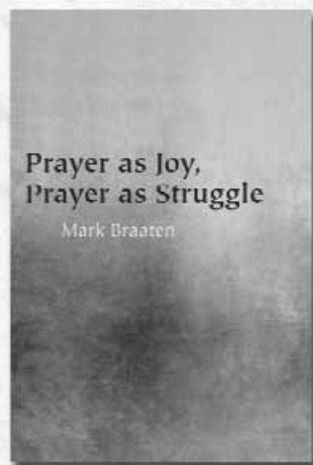
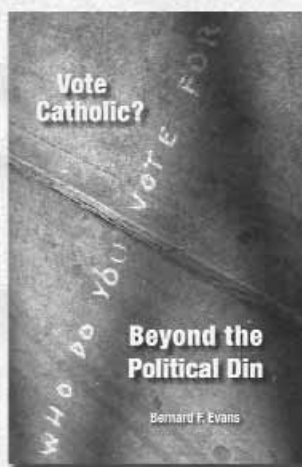
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## Going Public

### The Last Secret of Fatima

By Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone

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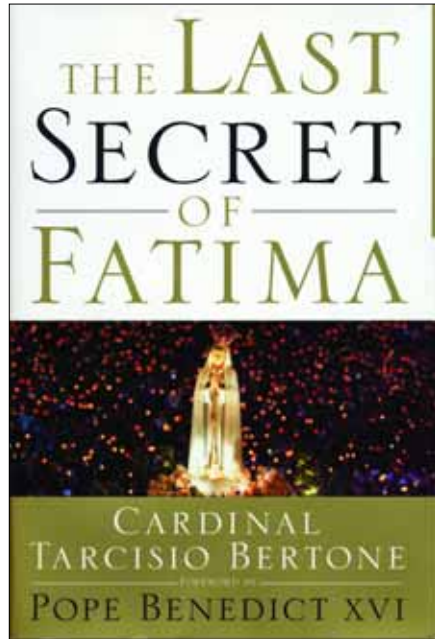
ISBN 9780385525824

Reading this slim and puzzling book is a little like receiving a message from another period of church history. Yet it contains a foreword from our current pope, Benedict XVI, a series of interviews with Tarcisio Bertone, the cardinal he appointed secretary of state, and a theological commentary on the third secret of Fatima written by Cardinal Ratzinger (then prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith) in June 2000, when Pope John Paul II made the third secret public.

Why do these distinguished church leaders find it useful now to revisit well-publicized information about the famous secrets associated with the apparition of Our Lady of Fatima to three Portuguese children in 1917? Those of us who are old enough can well remember the excitement surrounding such secrets in the late 1940s and 50s. Unlike many earlier apparitions, during which viewers were asked to have a church built on the site of Mary's appearance, a number of serial 19th-century appearances, beginning with La Salette in 1843, suggested divine punishment if people did not repent and pray. La Salette was also accompanied by secrets the children

were told not to share.

The events at Fatima followed in this pattern, but received far more attention for two reasons. First, because Lucia, the primary caretaker of the secrets from 1917, became a Carmelite nun and under



her superior's orders, wrote four memoirs between 1935 and 1941 revealing further details of the Virgin's visitations. And second, because those revelations were widely understood to apply not only then but to all of 20th-century history.

The "secrets" are recorded here: the second (from the third memoir in 1941) contains a view of hell reminiscent of the medieval horrors painted by Hieronymus Bosch. It also introduces the Virgin's concern for the conversion of Communist Russia and threatens cataclysmic war if her pleas for prayer—particularly the Rosary—and other requests are not met. Fear of Communism in the post-World War II environment brought this message to worldwide attention. It was widely known that one last secret had been withheld, and speculation as to its content grew amid near-panic. Only when Lucia seemed near death did her bishop tell her to write down the third and final secret, which was sent in 1957 in a sealed envelope to the confidential archives of the Holy Office.

As Lucia describes it, the message is reminiscent of the Book of Revelation, with visual images of angels hovering over a scene of great suffering. A "Bishop

dressed in White," surrounded by clerics and faithful, passes through a ruined city and climbs to a cross high on a mountain, where he is killed along with many others by arrows and bullets.

Pope John XXIII read the document in 1959 and decided to return it to the archives as irrelevant to our times. Later Pope Paul VI read it and also sent the envelope back. But when John Paul II read the message while recuperating from his near-assassination in 1981, he was convinced that the bishop in white was himself, and that Our Lady of Fatima had saved his life. A year later he made a pilgrimage to Fatima to thank her; he also had the bullet that struck him placed in the crown of her statue. One piece of evidence that convinced him of his personal connection with the secret was the extraordinary coincidence of a number of dates. For instance, Our Lady had appeared to the young visionaries on May 13, 1917; and John Paul was shot on May 13, 1981.

The pope visited Fatima once again, in 1990, and talked with Sister Lucia in her cell. By 2000 he decided to publish the third secret but felt he needed corroboration by her that the document was genuine and that his interpretation of it was correct. He sent Tarcisio Bertone to meet her several times, and she confirmed both points. On May 13 of that year he beatified Lucia's cousins Jacinta and Francisco, and in June had Cardinal Ratzinger and Archbishop Bertone (then prefect and secretary, respectively, of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith) divulge at a press conference what the book calls "the greatest mystery of the twentieth century."

So we are back to the mystery of this book—which is more a collection of separate documents—whose purpose is unclear and even somewhat contradictory. The problem begins with its authorship. Both front and back covers suggest that Cardinal Bertone is the author. Yet he has actually written nothing in it. Its centerpiece is a series of interviews with him. The reader can only assume that the "Giuseppe De Carli" whose name appears under the cardinal's on the frontispiece and is thanked by Pope Benedict in the foreword is in fact the questioner and writer of the long, unsigned introduction, though he is never so acknowledged or described. He also suggests in his lengthy,

rambling questions that he is more strongly devoted to the Fatima story, its blessed visionaries and the centrality of John Paul II to its world significance than either the pope or the cardinal. He claims, for instance, that John Paul's survival of his assassination attempt was responsible for the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the U.S.S.R.

Apparitions have always been of great interest to the official church—but are often also seen as thorns in its side. Private revelations, so often occurring to the poor, uneducated faithful in trying times, always exist in tension with the official church. As then-Cardinal Ratzinger says in his theological commentary on the third secret, public and private revelations are essentially different, and no revelation adds to that of the Gospels. "It is not their role to complete Christ's definitive Revelation, but to help live more fully by it in a certain period of history."

Both Benedict XVI and Cardinal Bertone seem to be suggesting that the period of history to which Fatima and its secrets belong has passed with the story of John Paul II. With due respect for Lucia and the extraordinary devotion of John Paul II, they seem to be trying to end whatever speculation still exists about further apocalyptic prophecies related to the secrets of Fatima. Without specific references, De Carli suggests there is much speculation. How much simpler would the pope's and the cardinal's task have been if the imaginative, long-lived Lucia (she died, still lucid, at 97) had been able to fend off her constant secret-searchers as Bernadette Soubirous did.

She, too, had been given a secret at Lourdes and was told by Mary to reveal it to no one. When the bishops' commission asked her if she would tell her secret to the pope, the young woman is said to have replied: "The Pope is someone." When the commission persisted, pointing out that the pope had the authority of Christ, she replied: "The Pope has authority on earth; the Blessed Virgin is in heaven," and refused to speak further on the subject.

**Sally Cunneen**



Chris Korzen on Catholics and the common good, at [americamagazine.org/podcast](http://americamagazine.org/podcast).

## Books in Brief

### Redeemed

A Spiritual Misfit Stumbles Toward God, Marginal Sanity, and the Peace That Passes All Understanding

By Heather King  
*Viking*. 238p \$24.95

A brutally honest, moving and heartfelt memoir, *Redeemed* is an account of ongoing recovery, conversion to Catholicism and a journey across terrifying borders into a new and previously unfamiliar world. Attorney-turned-writer and NPR commentator, Heather King, whose first book, *Parched*, detailed her two-decade-long alcoholic, drug-addicted, sex-driven and depressive life, turns a contemplative corner in this finely wrought, beautifully written sequel. "If there was one thing I'd always known about myself, it was that I was sick—soul-sick, weary." The Catholic Church, which "didn't sugarcoat or pretend everything was all right," provided her the needed self-affirmation and courage to embrace life and others in meaningful new ways. Through the eyes of fresh faith, she reflects on various chapters of her life—a failed marriage; a bout of breast cancer; making it through law school; her writing aspirations; family strife; her elderly father's painfully protracted death—and the road back, through

steadfast prayer, to full and fruitful engagement with the world. Readers have much to take away from this insightful, gutsy and inspiring story. **P.A.K.**

### Against Happiness

In Praise of Melancholy

By Eric G. Wilson  
*Farrar, Straus and Giroux*. 176p \$20

Peppered with anecdotes from the lives of famous artists, writers and musicians, all of whom suffered greatly but whose pain yielded some of the most poignant art, Eric G. Wilson's *Against Happiness* analyzes how American life and industry strives to vanquish sadness, disregarding its importance on the spectrum of human emotion. "Why," Wilson asks, "are most Americans so utterly willing to have an essential part of their hearts sliced away and discarded like so much waste?" His encomium to melancholia incisively challenges American culture's acquisition-oriented conception of happiness, encouraging instead a more meaningful engagement with the world, noting that diversity of emotion enriches the human experience and preserves what he calls the "vital polarity between agony and ecstasy, dejection and ebullience." Though occasionally hamstrung by overblown language ("They've probably never moved among autumn's multihued lustrousness, through the serrated forms of orange and amber and crimson, with hearts irreparably ripped"), Wilson's polemical thesis is a welcome antidote for readers seeking a richer if more complicated existence than one offered by self-help culture. **R.N.**

### Madapple

A Novel

By Christina Meldrum  
*Knopf*. 416p \$16.99

This is a spellbinding literary debut by a former attorney. The novel's protagonist (Aslaug, of Danish descent) is reared by a sickly mother in a solitary and sheltered town in the Maine woods. Plants and their unique properties take center stage throughout; philosophical questions abound; science and faith, reality and fantasy are in constant collision. After her mother's sudden death, Aslaug relocates with a newfound family on a search for her true self and the mystery surrounding her mother's life and her own. But she

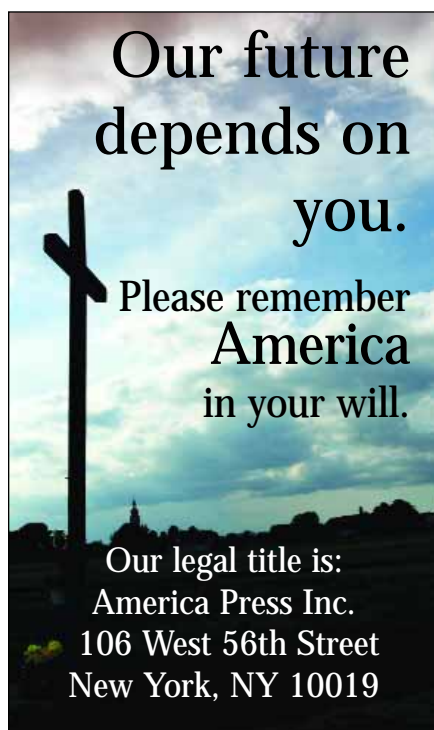
becomes embroiled in new and darker mysteries. Then a fire at the church/home where she was residing kills her aunt and female cousin (who were already meeting their Maker after an overdose of the lethal jimsonweed). Aslaug is accused of murder. Thereafter, in alternating chapters, we follow her trial and her narrative of prior circumstances and events. Now a young mother (a cousin is the father), Aslaug is ultimately acquitted of the crime and moves away with her daughter to provide her an upbringing that "bridges the gap between heaven and earth." The novel, however, slackens in pace toward its denouement, and the somewhat surprise ending is less than satisfying. Still, it will keep the reader thinking hard from first to last. **P.A.K.**

### The Book of Other People

Ed. by Zadie Smith  
*Penguin*. 304p \$15

To generate material for this short story anthology, novelist Zadie Smith assembled 22 writers, asking each to "make someone up," a character around whom their story centers. The objective was to illustrate that, in Smith's words, "there are as many ways to create 'character' (or deny the possibility of character) as there are writers." Daniel Clowes presents in graphic novel format a disillusioned film critic confronted by the specter of his past enthusiasm, while Nick Hornby introduces a single character through a series of altering dust jacket biographical blurbs and cartoon photographs. Others examine the powerful effect of name, as in Aleksandr Hemon's "The Liar," in which the protagonist's identity is filtered through this title, swaying the reader to impose judgment before finding out who this "liar" really is. Even the concept of "character" itself evolves, as Toby Litt and George Saunders write about non-human subjects in, respectively, "The Monster" and "Puppy." While the shift between such varied styles can be jarring without an underlying theme to unite them, an admission Smith makes in the introduction, it is far outweighed by the value of this literary experiment. **R.N.**

**Books in Brief** is written by Patricia A. Kossman, literary editor of *America*, and Regina Nigro, literary assistant.



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### Positions

**THE ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE** is seeking a CHANCELLOR to assist in fulfilling the Archbishop's basic canonical responsibilities. The Chancellor serves as the Executive Director of the Office of the Archbishop, is responsible for the administration of the Archbishop's office and assists the Vicar General in his duties as Moderator of the Curia.

Qualified applicants will have an advanced degree in canon law (J.C.L. or J.C.D.), a minimum of three years' experience as a canonist, and a thorough knowledge of the structure and mission of the Roman Catholic Church (particularly of the Archdiocese of Baltimore). Previous education or experience in the basic principles of management and administration is preferred. To apply, please send a résumé with salary requirements to: Len Strom, Executive Director of Human Resources, or apply online at [www.archbalt.org/careers](http://www.archbalt.org/careers). Archdiocese of Baltimore, 320 Cathedral Street, Baltimore, MD 21201. E.O.E.

**BLESSED SACRAMENT SCHOOL**, a Pre-K through 8th grade school of 250-plus students located in Burlington, N.C., is seeking a PRINCIPAL to lead the school both spiritually and academically. Blessed Sacrament, a 2003 Blue-Ribbon award-winning school, has a 70-plus-year tradition of excellence in faith-based education. The school enjoys strong support from the parish and community, as evidenced by the recently installed state-of-the-art, inquiry-based science labs for middle and elementary school, made possible by donations.

The qualified applicant must be a practicing Catholic with a master's degree (or higher) in educational administration or curriculum and instruction; must have or be eligible for a North Carolina Administrator's license; and must have previous administrative experience, preferably in a parish-based Catholic school.

The successful candidate must have strong leadership skills, fostering an environment that promotes the Catholic faith and moral development of the school community, ensuring the

attainment and maintenance of academic and religious standards, including accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). In addition, strong communication skills are essential to foster collaboration among faculty, parents and parish staff.

Salary and benefits are commensurate with experience. Interested candidates should send their résumé, a statement of educational philosophy and a listing of three references to: Principal Search Committee, P.O. Box 619, Burlington, NC 27216, or [Pastor@blessedsacramentnc.com](mailto:Pastor@blessedsacramentnc.com). Deadline for applications is Aug. 1, 2008.

**DIOCESAN DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF CATECHETICS AND INITIATION**, Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland, Me. The Director of the Office of Catechetics and Initiation is responsible for the ongoing development of the mission and ministry of catechetics and initiation within the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland. The Director strives to provide a comprehensive and integrated catechesis, vision and process for parishes/clusters of the diocese in the area of catechetics and initiation based on national norms and directives. The Director also fosters the goals and objectives of the *National Directory for Catechesis* and the *General Directory*. Candidates must hold M.A. in theology, ministry, religious education, pastoral studies or related field, practicing Roman Catholic, solid praxis in theology and Roman Catholic traditions, five years' experience in parish catechetical ministry and initiation process, solid background in adult catechesis, the catechumenate and lay ministry, knowledge of adult learning, leadership skills, excellent communication skills, budget experience, management experience, ability to travel. For a complete role description see our Web site: [www.portlanddiocese.net](http://www.portlanddiocese.net). Cover letters and résumés can be sent to: Teresa A. Schulz, Diocesan Director of H.R., Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland, 510 Ocean Avenue, P.O. Box 11559, Portland, ME 04104; e-mail: [tschulz@portlanddiocese.net](mailto:tschulz@portlanddiocese.net).

**DIOCESAN DIRECTOR OF YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY**, Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland, Me. This position initiates, develops, oversees and facilitates various programs and services that formulate and communicate the vision of youth and young adult ministry. The Director provides support to pastors and their staffs in carrying out their responsibilities to meet the pastoral needs of the young church through the diocesan pastoral plan. Candidates must hold an M.A. in theology, pastoral ministry, religious studies or related field, practicing Roman Catholic, five years of experience with youth and young adult ministry, leadership and organizational skills, excellent communication skills, experience managing professional and volunteer staff, experience with budgets. For a complete role description, see our Web site: [www.portlanddiocese.net](http://www.portlanddiocese.net). Cover letters and résumés can be sent to: Teresa A. Schulz, Diocesan Director of Human Resources, Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland, 510 Ocean Avenue, P.O. Box 11559, Portland,

ME 04104; e-mail: [tschulz@portlanddiocese.net](mailto:tschulz@portlanddiocese.net).

**DIRECTOR**, Volunteers, Society of the Precious Blood. The Missionaries of the Precious Blood, centered in Kansas City, Mo., is looking for a qualified person to become the director of its initial volunteer program, to be sponsored by the province. The Precious Blood is an international community that furthers the work of reconciliation, lay ministry and the mission of the Precious Blood through parishes, retreats, education/teaching and emphasis on the word of God. It is in 20 countries worldwide.

The Director will be responsible for recruitment, training and placement of volunteers, with the assistance of an advisory board. Qualifications for the position include energy and knowledge of volunteer programs, a college degree in theology or social work, being Catholic, some flexibility for travel, an interest in social justice and a willingness to work with young people.

Salary and benefits are commensurate with other directors. For more information or to apply, please contact: Jim Urbanic, C.P.P.S., P.O. Box 339, Liberty, MO 64069; Ph: (816) 781-4344; e-mail: [JimUrbanic@aol.com](mailto:JimUrbanic@aol.com). Applications submitted by Aug. 20, 2008.

**OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL HELP CHURCH**, Lindenhurst, N.Y., is seeking a full-time COORDINATOR OF YOUTH MINISTRY. Qualifications include college degree or equivalent in youth ministry; two to three years' experience. Ideal candidate will be dynamic in reaching out to teens and have a solid background in Catholic faith. Organization and good communication skills are important. Music/liturgical background a plus. Salary commensurate with experience. Includes medical benefits. Send résumé and cover letter to: Rev. James Stachacz by e-mail to: [jstack@gmail.com](mailto:jstack@gmail.com); or by postal mail to: Our Lady of Perpetual Help, 210 S. Wellwood Ave., Lindenhurst, NY 11757.

**PRESIDENT**, Xavier High School, New York City, N.Y. Founded in 1847, Xavier High School is an independent Jesuit Catholic college preparatory school dedicated to providing a rigorous and challenging education to young men of promise in the New York metropolitan area. Serving 935 boys in grades 9-12, Xavier endeavors to produce graduates who are persons of competence, conscience and compassion—"men for others." Among the school's signature offerings are its Junior R.O.T.C. and Christian service programs.

Located two blocks from Union Square, Xavier offers a dynamic urban environment for a diverse student body. More than \$1 million in financial aid was awarded this year. Annual Giving topped \$3.3 million last year, and the school's last capital campaign raised \$14.9 million. The school is debt-free and has a \$25 million endowment.

The President is the chief executive officer of Xavier High School and a member of the Board of Trustees; responsible for the direct supervision of the Office of Advancement and Alumni Relations,

## Letters

### A Modest Proposal

Since **America** expresses such confidence in the ability of the United Nations to resolve humanitarian crises in "The Duty to Protect" (6/9), I propose that the U.N. and its entire bureaucracy be moved out of New York to Khartoum, capital city of Sudan and the location of a decades-old and ongoing humanitarian crisis. Where better to demonstrate the duty to protect?

**America's** editorial staff will of course also be relocated to Khartoum, the better to view and report firsthand on human rights abuses, as well as to elaborate on the editors' view that the United Nations is the best organization to resolve conflicts.

I can't wait for the first report from the field.

*D. E. Mosman  
Richmond, Va.*

### Parting Is Such Sweet Sorrow

As a former Amnesty International member and group leader, I would like to comment on the affiliation crisis reported in "End of a Partnership" by Jeffrey Odell Korgen (6/23). Amnesty is a voluntary association with various secular objectives; our bishops should not expect its action programs to conform completely to natural law or moral and social doctrine. Student members of campus chapters should be aware of this, especially in these hot-button times.

Amnesty's programs and policies are shaped with much membership input. The Stop Violence Against Women campaign was launched after discussion and debate at all levels throughout the world, with contributions from women who have suffered sexual assault or abortion-related criminal proceedings. Since Catholic teaching also condemns acts of

violence against women, I think there may be more common ground here than the headlines have indicated.

Your article reports that several campus groups have formed autonomous human rights defense organizations that could emulate Amnesty's methods and achieve some measure of effectiveness in doing so. No human rights activists I know want to monopolize the stage; quite the contrary. But I have discovered many rewards from working side by side with men and women of other beliefs and political leanings as part of a broader movement.

*Paul Schlachter  
Miami, Fla.*

### Return of the Sermon?

Regarding your editorial, "Synod on the Word of God" (7/14): As I hear Catholic preaching around my diocese, I fear that

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the Business Office and the physical plant; and, by delegation to the Headmaster, responsible for the well-being and operation of the educational programs of the school.

Xavier is seeking an energetic and visionary leader with exceptional skills in administration, fundraising and strategic planning. The President must be a practicing Catholic who understands and embraces the tenets of Jesuit education to which Xavier is dedicated.

Wickenden Associates is conducting the search for July of 2009. Call (609) 683-1355, or visit [www.wickenden.com](http://www.wickenden.com) to request the complete position description and details of the application process. Application deadline: Sept. 5, 2008.

#### SPIRITUALITY AND EVANGELIZATION DIRECTOR.

This full-time position within the Evangelization and Worship department of the Diocese of Green Bay is responsible for planning and promoting evangelization and spirituality programs within the Diocese and overseeing all evangelization and spirituality initiatives. This administration will be done under the supervision of the Director of Evangelization and Worship. Qualifications required include a master's degree in theology or related area plus a minimum of five years' experience in the field in a related parish or diocesan position. Position requires knowledge of the definition, purpose and methods of evangelization within the contexts of Catholic spirituality. Must be a practicing Catholic in good standing. Valid driver's license required. If interested in this position, please send cover letter and résumé to:

Barbara Wiegand, Human Resources Coordinator, St. Luke Benefit & Insurance Services, Corp., P.O. Box 23825, Green Bay, WI 54305; e-mail: [hrcoord@gbdioc.org](mailto:hrcoord@gbdioc.org).

#### SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY TEACHING POSITIONS.

Washington Theological Union, a Roman Catholic graduate school of theology and ministry, announces two full-time faculty positions in systematic theology (one in the area of foundational theology and Christian anthropology; the other in ecclesiology, ecumenism and priesthood) beginning fall 2009. Applicants must be Roman Catholic, possess a doctorate in systematic or historical theology and be able to teach graduate students preparing for ordained and lay ministry. All applications are welcome, but preference is given to applicants from corporate religious orders. Excellence in teaching is sought; rank and duration of appointment are open. Send letter of application, curriculum vitae and three letters of recommendation to: Academic Dean, Washington Theological Union, 6896 Laurel St., N.W., Washington, DC 20012; Web site: [www.wtu.edu](http://www.wtu.edu). Application deadline: Sept. 2, 2008.

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### Training Program

**SPIRITUAL DIRECTION TRAINING PROGRAM**, at Mount Saint Joseph Conference and Retreat Center, begins Oct. 13, 2008. Consists of eight weekly sessions held quarterly over a two-year period (2008-10). The program will take place at Mount Saint Joseph Conference and Retreat Center, located on a beautiful 780-acre rural campus in Maple Mount, Ky. Participants receive intense training, practice and supervision. (270) 229-0200. E-mail: [kmccarty@maplemount.org](mailto:kmccarty@maplemount.org). Visit: [www.mscenter.org](http://www.mscenter.org).

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## Letters

we have fallen back into moralizing and dogmatics instead of biblically based preaching. I hear people quoting the Church Fathers, which is fine in a classroom; but I do not think it is appropriate for motivating and empowering Catholics to live the radical vision of God's reign as Jesus preached it. It's as if the homily has once again become a weapon for chastising people in the pews for not following church teachings. No wonder people have never heard preaching on the Scriptures!

(Rev.) Vernon Meyer  
Phoenix, Ariz.

### Fullness of Life

I was gratified by Shannon Crouse's thoughtful article, "Cheering for Change" (7/14), and her recognition that those who advocate pro-life policies also need to address the root causes that lead a woman to abort a child. It's also necessary for our church to do more to address those issues that pertain to everyone's right to the fullness of life.

I too often close my ears to pro-life advocates because the conversation often really is just about the abortion issue. This might be an example of what Crouse experiences when engaging in conversation with "older" women. And frequently the pro-life voice has seemed overly judgmental—a turnoff for anyone desiring conversation.

Mary Henry  
St. Louis, Mo.

### Awakenings

Jennifer Fulwiler's testimony in "A Sexual Revolution" (7/14) is a strikingly clear example of an awakening similar to the apostle Paul's epiphany that the ones he persecuted bore the holiness of Christ. She brings out vividly the capacity we all have to avoid facing disquieting truths about ourselves through rationalization. In this case, the discomfiting truth is that the God-given gift of sexual pleasure is

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uniquely connected to the meaning of sexual intimacy, and should only be approached with awareness of its life-giving and love-giving mission.

Rhett Segall  
Wynantskill, N.Y.

### The Laborers Are Few

As a vocation minister for the Sisters of Charity in Cincinnati, I can say that the issue raised by "Religious Life in the Age of Facebook," by Richard G. Malloy, S.J., has been in the forefront of my mind for many years. I agree that young Catholics cannot choose what they do not know, and the youngest generations of Catholics have not had the kind of contact and opportunity to build relationships with sisters, brothers and priests that many "baby boomer" and older Catholics did. There are many positive efforts underway to provide experiences and contacts that will help remedy this situation.

What is more disturbing to me is a concern hinted at in the article—namely, that the young adults of America are "empty," lacking some very basic capacity for commitment, service or even the intellectual discipline to respond to the call of a vowed life or priesthood. I can-

not believe it is the case, though in these times, perhaps more than others, religious life is a more difficult and counter-cultural choice.

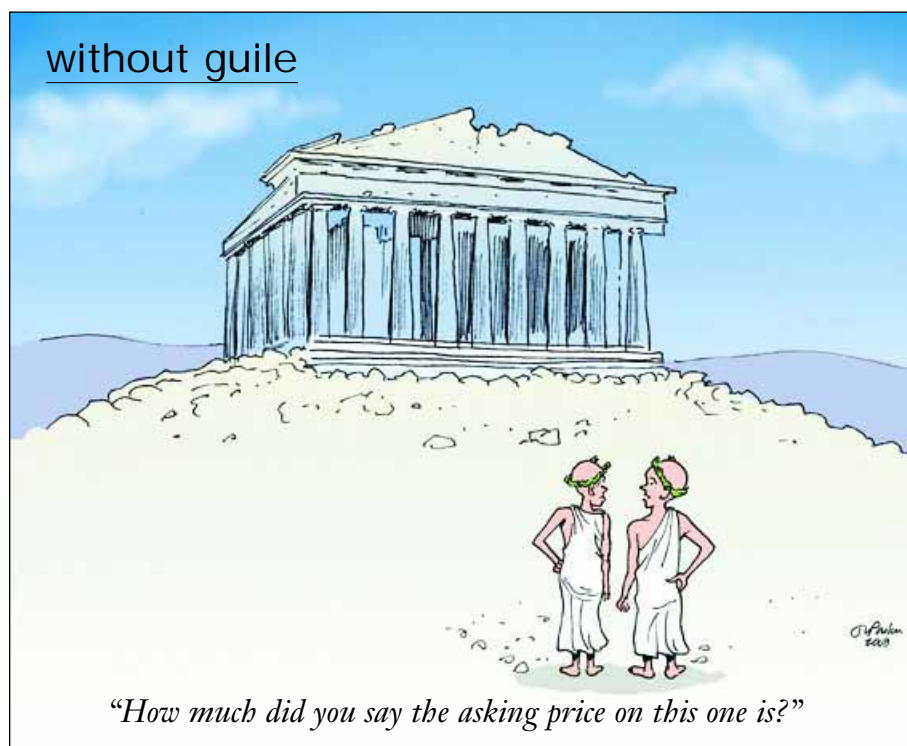
My other concern is that we who are living the life are not doing so in a compelling manner—that our lives do not proclaim any good news and that we have become apathetic about inviting young men and women to consider making the kind of commitment that we still find worth the gift of our lives every day.

(Sr.) Janet Gildea, S.C.  
Anthony, N.M.

### Full Participation

"Religious Life in the Age of Facebook," by Richard G. Malloy, S.J., (7/14) should be required reading for the Catholic hierarchy, as well as for religious superiors, teachers and parents, who often cannot grasp the numerous cultural shifts—social, ethical, psychological, educational, political, gender and religious—that continue to influence our way of thinking about and interacting with our world.

The loss of religious vocations should not necessarily be lamented, because it may result in an opportunity for the laity to achieve greater engagement with the church, which must be understood as the





## The Word

# Three More Parables About God's Kingdom

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A), July 27, 2008

Readings: 1 Kgs 3:5, 7-12; Ps 119:57, 72, 76-77, 127-130; Rom 8:28-30; Mt 13:44-52

*"The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure..." (Mt 13:44)*

**M**ATTHEW 13 is a collection of Jesus' parables about the kingdom of God, the central theme of his preaching and other activities. The third and final part of this discourse contains two short parables, about buried treasure and an especially valuable pearl, and one longer parable with an allegorical interpretation, about a fishing net. Each parable is introduced by the phrase "The kingdom of heaven is like..." and purports to tell us something about God's kingdom and our relationship to it.

Palestine has always been a dangerous place to live, with foreign armies periodically attacking from both north and south. In the face of such danger, it was not unusual for ordinary people to gather their valuable belongings and bury them in the ground. The parable of the buried treasure presupposes such a situation. Suppose

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**DANIEL J. HARRINGTON, S.J.**, is professor of New Testament at Boston College School of Theology and Ministry (formerly Weston Jesuit School of Theology) in Chestnut Hill, Mass.

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people of God living in today's world, not some out-of-touch institution whose positions and practices actively limit from full participation a good half of the world's population.

*Jim Dugan, S.J.  
Rome, Italy*

### Strange Bedfellows

Although I considered your praise of Tim Russert generally appropriate (Current Comment, 7/14), I believe honesty and journalistic integrity require some acknowledgment that

someone came across such a treasure in an abandoned field. He might do everything in his power to purchase that field in order to get the buried treasure for himself. Without going into the ethical problems involved, this short parable makes two points about God's kingdom: it is some-

### Praying With Scripture

- What characteristics of God's kingdom emerge from these three parables?
- What place does the theme of the kingdom of God have in your spirituality?
- Do you find any tension between the total commitment demanded by Jesus and Paul's emphasis on divine grace? How do you put them together?

thing of extraordinary value, and it calls for total commitment.

Palestine has long been a place for commercial activity, with merchants from all over the Near East going through what had become its international trade routes.

Russert, the ultimate Washington journalistic insider, was at the very least symptomatic of a general failure on the part of the mass media to serve the American public in recent years, as the media functioned too frequently as a conveyor of public relations spin emanating from the Bush administration. It is truly ironic that one feels compelled to shout "Thank goodness for Scott McClellan!"

*David L. Martinson  
Olathe, Kan.*



Suppose a shrewd merchant came across a particular pearl, and he alone recognized how valuable it was. He might sell all he had in order to get that pearl because of its great value. This second short parable makes the same two points: God's kingdom is something of extraordinary value, and it calls for total commitment.

The longer parable compares the kingdom of God to a net thrown into the sea. Recall that the home base of Jesus' ministry was the fishing village of Capernaum, and that his first disciples were fishermen there. When the fishermen reach shore, they sort out which fish they want to keep and which fish are to be thrown away. As the allegorical interpretation attached to the parable makes clear ("Thus it will be at the end of the age"), the full coming of God's kingdom will involve a final judgment in which the righteous will be vindicated and the wicked will be condemned.

Today's fourth excerpt from Paul's instruction on life in the Spirit in Romans 8 reminds us that the principal agent in Christian spirituality is God. Two features have given exegetes and theologians headaches for centuries. Paul first asserts that "all things work for good for those who love God." But as we know, there is no guarantee of uninterrupted happiness and success even for those who love God very much. Rather, "all things" surely includes our sufferings. The point is that

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God can and does often draw good results from negative events. Then Paul speaks about divine foreknowledge and what seems like predestination. His positive point is that God's grace is with us through the whole process of salvation. It is all grace from beginning to end.

## An Enacted Parable

**Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A),  
Aug. 3, 2008**

Readings: Is 55:1-3; Ps 145:8-9, 15-18;  
Rom 8:35, 37-38; Mt 14:13-21

*"Heed me and you shall eat well. You shall delight in rich fare" (Is 55:3)*

**P**EOPLE IN BIBLICAL times appreciated a good meal. Even when food was scarce, providing a meal for others was a sign of one's generosity and hospitality. The sacrifices that people offered in Old Testament times at the Jerusalem temple were essentially meals with God and God's people. When covenants were made, they were often sealed by a shared meal.

Today's reading from Isaiah 55 expresses hope for an ideal future, in which Israel would be back in its homeland after many years of exile in the sixth century B.C. The prophet does this by inviting the prospective returnees to a free and sumptuous banquet, interpreting that banquet as a renewal of God's covenant with his people.

Jesus was both famous and infamous for his meals. All through the Gospels he is portrayed as eating with his immediate disciples, other followers, the crowds and even "tax collectors and sinners." His opponents criticized him for being a glutton and a drunkard, and complained about the bad company he kept. Jesus' banquets were "enacted parables," that is, symbolic actions intended to make a public theological statement, much as Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel had done before him.

Today's passage from Matthew 14 presents Jesus as presiding at the miracu-

lous feeding of more than "five thousand men, not counting women and children." The same basic story appears six times in the Gospels—twice in Matthew and Mark and once in Luke and in John. It was surely considered important by early Christians. Against the background of such texts as Isaiah 55, the miraculous feeding narrative expresses the conviction that through Jesus we share in God's own abundance and in the promises made to

### Praying With Scripture

- In what sense is Jesus' miraculous feeding a parable? To what does it point?
- Why were meals so important in the Bible? Why are they important to you?
- Read today's selection from Romans 8 slowly and solemnly. How does it affect you?

God's covenant people: "The hand of the Lord feeds us; he answers all our needs." It also prompts us to think about the future fullness of God's kingdom, which in the

Gospels and many contemporary Jewish writings is portrayed as a glorious banquet.

The way in which Jesus' actions are described ("looking up to heaven, he said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to his disciples") makes a connection with Jesus' Last Supper and the church's celebration of the Eucharist. The eucharistic celebration is a sacred action in which God is present in a special way. But it is also a human action, for in it we share a meal and connect with Moses, Isaiah and the earthly Jesus. This meal points us toward and stimulates our hopes for the fullness of God's kingdom ("Thy kingdom come").

The fifth and final excerpt from Paul's instruction on life in the Spirit is an emotional celebration of the conviction that nothing can separate us from "the love of Christ." That expression refers to both the love that Christ has shown to us and the love that we have for Christ. Basic to our spirituality is the belief that in Christ God is for us and loves us, and so makes us "conquer overwhelmingly."

**Daniel J. Harrington**

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ARE BEARERS OF  
JESUS CHRIST.  
THEY CARRY OUR  
LORD EVERYWHERE...  
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