

America

1909
America's
CENTURY
2009

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RELIGION AND EDUCATION

Articles by

Ann Garrido

William P. George

Paul Cottle

Terrance W. Klein

Thomas Michel

William Thompson-

Uberuaga

Plus:
Reviews of books by
Martin Marty,
James M. O'Toole
& Louis M. Savary

DOROTHY DAY REPORTED in December 1932 that peace disappeared quickly when marchers arrived in Wilmington, Del. Church windows shattered and tear gas intruded on the mass meeting. When people scattered outside, the police beat them. Closer to Washington, D.C., participants in the Communist-organized Hunger March—though nonviolent—were held on a stretch of roadway as prisoners.

Dorothy wrote in her autobiography, *The Long Loneliness*, “I stood on the curb and watched them, joy and pride in the courage of this band of men and women mounting in my heart, and with it a bitterness too that since I was now a Catholic, with fundamental philosophical differences, I could not be out there with them.”

Instead, Dorothy reported for *Commonweal* and **America**, both of which sent her on assignment about the Hunger March and Farmers’ Convention.

Later that month her article in **America** “Hunger

Marchers in Washington” described the poignant dramatization of the workers’ plight.

What proved most historically significant in connection with this writing assignment, however, was not the journey to Washington or the workers’ victories, but Dorothy Day’s visit to the national shrine at The Catholic University of America at the conclusion of the Hunger March. The date was Dec. 8, 1932, the feast of the Immaculate Conception.

In the crypt church, she later wrote in *The Long Loneliness*, “I offered a special prayer, a prayer that came with tears and with anguish, that some way would open up for me to use what talents I possessed for my fellow workers, for the poor.”

Since her conversion to Catholicism three years earlier, Dorothy had been seeking a synthesis of her radical politics, commitment to justice, renewed faith and embrace of Catholicism. When Dorothy returned to New York following her prayer for guidance, she found Peter Maurin waiting for her. Together they founded the Catholic Worker movement. Dorothy would write, “The appearance of Peter Maurin, I felt with deep conviction, was the result of my prayers.”

Dorothy’s relationship with **America** did not end with that providential assign-

ment. In the subsequent month, Dorothy published two more articles in **America**: “Confession of Faith” and “Communism and the Intellectuals”; and in April 1933 a third (“The Diabolic Plot,” reprinted in part in **America** on Aug. 4, 2008). By then the first issue of *The Catholic Worker* newspaper had been prepared. To pay the \$57 printing bill for 2,500 copies, Dorothy used funds from her freelance writing, as well as small donations from friends. On May Day, Catholic Workers distributed the first edition of *The Catholic Worker* during a Communist rally in Union Square.

Over the next three years, Dorothy continued writing for **America**, having three more articles published: “Letter to an Agnostic,” “Another Letter to an Agnostic” and “Sharecroppers.” In seven **America** articles between 1932 and 1936, she engaged readers in friendly, spiritual conversation about the people, events and issues that were most important to her and part of her daily life.

Dorothy wrote about Communists—their “dia-

bolic” aims and their humanity—with refreshing honesty. She strongly resisted Communism’s ambition to destroy religion, and she directly responded to an atheist friend’s critique of religion as morbid and cannibalistic. While her letters were apologetic, they were also personal and inviting. Dorothy shared her faith: “Our beginning and our last end is God”; and she wrote about her young daughter Tamar Teresa’s capacity “to look, and listen, and ponder.”

Living in close contact with many nonbelievers, Dorothy knew that none of them were “untouched by the question of the existence of God.” She blessed their commitment to justice and shared their solidarity with workers and the unemployed, the evicted and hungry, and the nonviolent resisters who worked for social change. “It is when the Communists are good that they are dangerous,” Dorothy wrote in **America**. “I can write from actual knowledge of the goodness of the people with whom I came in contact.”

It is fitting to commemorate the relationship between Dorothy Day and **America**, especially this year, when *The Catholic Worker* marks 75 years and **America** celebrates its centennial.

Luke Hansen, S.J.

Of Many Things

America

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Marketing

Eryk Krysztofciak

Advertising

Julia Sosa

106 West 56th Street

New York, NY 10019-3803

Ph: 212-581-4640; Fax: 212-399-3596.

E-mail: america@americamagazine.org;

letters@americamagazine.org.

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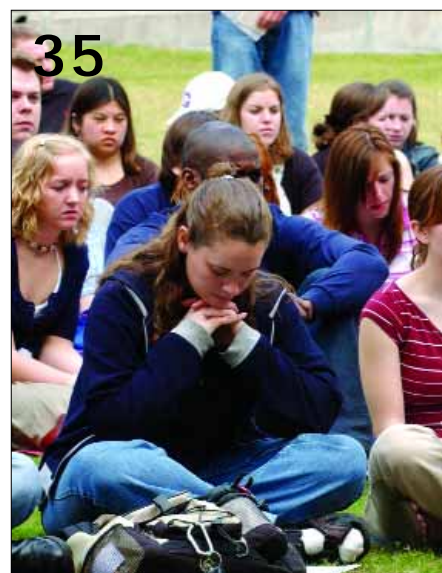
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Refugees With Disabilities

Driven from their homes, refugees and internally displaced persons stand out as perhaps the most afflicted people in the world. Within their own ranks, however, the most hidden among them are those with disabilities, especially mental disabilities. In a June 2008 report, the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children estimates that worldwide, 3.5 million people with impairments in refugee camps and urban slum settlements lead a marginalized existence, marked by "attitudinal, physical and social barriers" that hinder their societal participation even among other refugees. The commission's research took place in five developing countries: Ecuador, Jordan, Nepal, Thailand and Yemen.

Social barriers include being overlooked for needed specialized services, as in the treatment of landmine wounds and injuries incurred while fleeing conflicts. In some cases fleeing families have abandoned handicapped children. During flight, moreover, those with disabilities are vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse because of their limited ability to defend themselves. For those who manage to reach refugee camps, many with physical or mental limitations may have to stand in long lines for food distribution or other services. Blind refugees are susceptible to theft of rations by refugees who can see. In addition, health clinics are often inaccessible, with very limited services for those with psychological impairments. Among its recommendations, the commission urges equal access to mainstream services for all people with disabilities, as well as campaigns to promote tolerance and respect for them.

Risky Business

They will not go bankrupt for now, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, the mortgage insurance giants, though some commentators say that is precisely what should happen: that they deserve it for corporate mismanagement. During the Depression, when Fannie Mae was created, its purpose was to add liquidity to the U.S. housing market. Fannie would guarantee mortgage debt, freeing the banks to continue lending to consumers. The secondary goal was to promote affordable home ownership. In 1968 Fannie was rechartered as a publicly traded company, even though it was also government-sponsored. This untested hybrid structure, which Congress replicated in 1970 when it created Freddie Mac, set the stage for their current woes. The hybrid structure works like this: in flush times the private investors and management profit, but in hard times

the taxpayers are left footing the bill.

As long as the economy was strong, housing prices rose and defaults were rare, few heeded those worried about the \$5.3 trillion in risk the government indirectly had guaranteed. Few cried foul when Fannie and Freddie failed to maintain adequate capital; worse, the capital they held was largely in the form of mortgage-backed securities, backed increasingly by subprime loans, which pay the highest rates of return because of their risk.

The Treasury must now decide whether to infuse capital or nationalize them—options by which the U.S. taxpayer pays for management's errors. Although that will increase market stability, it is unfair to taxpayers. To prevent future mismanagement, Congress must put in place a string of safeguards, including effective oversight. But first the public should debate government's role in promoting affordable home ownership.

Safer Vaccinations

With the successful results in hand of recent tests on guinea pigs, bioengineers, doctors and immunologists have taken another step toward improving the delivery of vaccines in the developing world. That progress, still in the experimental stages, has just been reported in *Science* magazine and in the *Harvard Public Health Review*. While the new method, which does not use needles, might be used in the future for all sorts of vaccines, the current target is to use it to prevent tuberculosis.

Currently, the TB vaccine is the most widely used vaccine in the world. Called BCG, it is a live vaccine injected each year into 100 million children. Its effectiveness varies widely, depending on many factors, so the vaccine needs to be improved. But the needles used for injecting the vaccine pose a major problem in the developing world, because up to half of those used are not sterile. Nonsterile needles transmit such viral infections as H.I.V. and hepatitis B and C to millions of people each year. The new experimental delivery method, which is based on freeze-drying technology, would be administered as an aerosol mouth spray.

Some researchers claim this method would make the vaccine more effective, since it is much more stable in heat, which translates to better prevention for those who live in hot climates. And because it would be inhaled by mouth straight into the lungs, it would bypass the bloodstream, which takes longer. The new aerosol vaccine is also less expensive to produce, so it ought to cost less than the current vaccine, which would be a rare benefit in the world of medical technology and public health.

How Now, Mini-Cow?

The barnyard meets the backyard for owners of Great Britain's trendiest new pet: the mini-cow. According to London's *Sunday Times*, over 4,000 "Dexter" mountain cows were registered in England last year, twice the number registered in 2000. These cows, originally from Ireland, stand no taller than a large dog, produce drinkable milk, eat most varieties of grass and can produce a calf a year (and can be used for meat). Why this sudden popularity? Pundits cite rising prices for milk and beef, but just as important may be the growing interest in environmentally less destructive food sources. Many readers of troubling exposés like *The Omnivore's Dilemma* are more cognizant these days of the economic, environmental and health consequences of large-scale corn-fed beef production. Perhaps for some it makes more sense to eat the lawn mower.

The appeal of keeping a barnyard animal can also come from a nostalgic hearkening back to the past. In the living memory of many Americans, rural and even suburban households often featured a chicken coop or a rabbit hutch. Increased migration to urban areas, along with stricter and stricter health controls over livestock, made that phenomenon largely obsolete—which can be a surprise to new arrivals to America used to keeping small animals for food or sale. Will the appearance of the mini-cow mean Fido will once again have company in the backyard?

Daunting Issues at the U.N.

The 63rd Session of the U.N. General Assembly opens on Sept. 16, with debate from Sept. 23 to Oct. 1. What lies before it? The provisional agenda is 16 pages long, listing 155 agenda items. The labyrinth of topics includes peace and security (42 items), economic growth (17), development of Africa (1), human rights (7), humanitarian assistance (1), promotion of justice (13), disarmament (17), drug control, crime and terrorism (3) and, finally, organization and administration (54). A word search uncovers nothing (yet) on Zimbabwe or the handicapped, and one item each on the millennium goals, malaria and sports.

On April 18 of this year, Pope Benedict XVI addressed the U.N. General Assembly. The president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Cardinal Renato Martino, considered this the most significant speech of the pope's visit to the United States. The pope spoke strongly in favor of strengthening the capacities of the United Nations. He gave new prominence to the principle of "the responsibility to protect," which he called the "moral basis

for a government's claim to authority," and spoke of the duty of the international community to intervene if a country cannot or will not take care of its own people. As in a family, the stronger members must take care of the weaker ones. If and when the international community must intervene, this "should never be interpreted as unwarranted imposition or a limitation of sovereignty." On the contrary, "it is indifference or failure to intervene that does the real damage."

Pope Benedict pointed to two words common in Catholic theology as important for the success of the U.N., namely discernment and dialogue. Discernment—the capacity to distinguish good from evil—is an indispensable and fruitful skill. Dialogue, more specifically interreligious dialogue, is the way that leads to consensus around the truth.

Young Americans

What now seems like eons ago, the presidential race began with arguably the most diverse cast of candidates in our nation's history. As we enter the fall stretch, the field includes an African-American and a woman, a heartening display of the diversity that is now acknowledged as a fact of life by most Americans. The ascendancy of both Barack Obama and Sarah Palin was unexpected, and in many ways they are unlikely representatives of their respective demographic groups. Unlike most African-American leaders of the last 40 years, Obama did not take part in the civil rights movement of the 1960s, nor is he a descendant of American slaves. Palin is a pro-death penalty, pro-drilling-in-the-Arctic-Reserve member of the National Rifle Association and Feminists for Life. She has little in common with Hillary Clinton, much less with Gloria Steinem.

Perhaps because of their unusual biographies, both Obama and Palin have proved able to confront divisive issues and mend longstanding rifts. In a speech delivered on Father's Day, Obama called for African-American men to play a greater role in their children's lives, a neuralgic issue in the black community, and under his leadership the Democrats have started to bring some pro-life Catholics back into the tent. Sarah Palin targeted members of her own party suspected of corruption, and her rise to prominence is proof that the term anti-abortion feminist is not an oxymoron.

Much has already been made of the youth of these candidates (both are in their 40s) and their relative inexperience. Yet could it be that their youth is an asset, that it allows them to see old problems with fresh eyes?

Houma-Thibodaux Diocese Severely Hit by Storm



A man walks past a fallen tree that landed on a car after Hurricane Gustav swept through Houma, La., Sept. 1. The center of Hurricane Gustav came ashore as a Category 2 hurricane near Cocodrie, La.

Archbishop Alfred C. Hughes of New Orleans reported on Sept. 2 that of Louisiana's seven Catholic dioceses, the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux was battered the hardest by Hurricane Gustav. Hughes, who rode out the storm at the St. Louis Cathedral rectory after helping hundreds of residents evacuate the city on buses, said he spoke briefly late on Sept. 1 with Bishop Sam G. Jacobs of Houma-Thibodaux. "I suspect the Houma-Thibodaux Diocese suffered the greatest damage" among Louisiana's dioceses, Archbishop Hughes said in a telephone interview with *The Clarion*

Herald, newspaper of the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

Meanwhile, local Catholic Charities agencies are opening community resource sites throughout the affected region where families can access food, water, toiletries, cleanup supplies and other resources provided by partner agencies, according to Shelley Borysiewicz, a spokeswoman for Catholic Charities USA's disaster response team has been on the ground in the Gulf Coast area since before the storm hit, helping local agencies implement their disaster response plans, she said.

Gertrude Morris, Grail Catholic Leader, Dies

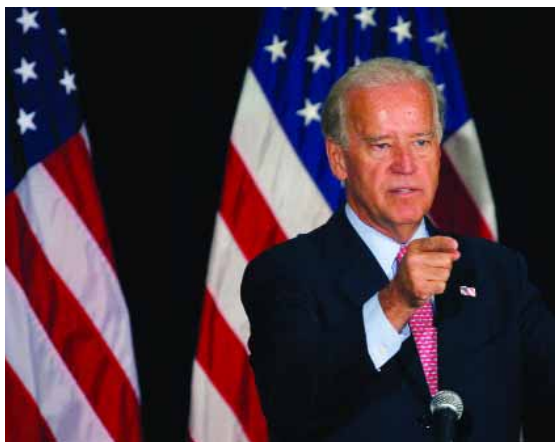
Gertrude Morris, a leader in the black Catholic community for decades died Aug. 18 in San Francisco. She was 83. Born in Brooklyn, N.Y., on Dec. 20, 1924, Morris joined the international Grail movement in 1957 and formally dedicated herself to the community of vowed lay members in 1961. As a Grail member, Morris served as the director of evangelization for the National Office of Black Catholics in Washington and was the editor of *Free in the Spirit*, a national publication for black Catholics. As a leader in the black Catholic revival movement, Morris coordinated more than 20 revivals, became the first black recipient of the U.S. Conference on Evangelization's award for evangelization and helped establish the organization "I'm Black and Catholic—and I'm Proud." A memorial Mass was celebrated at St. Paul of the Shipwreck Catholic Church in San Francisco Aug. 24. A national memorial Mass will be held at 11:30 a.m. on Sept. 28 at St. Peter Claver Catholic Church in Brooklyn, N.Y.

Missouri Execution Delayed for 30 Days

After the Catholic bishops of Missouri and other religious leaders urged clemency in the case of Dennis Skillicorn, the Missouri Supreme Court granted a 30-day stay of execution for the inmate who had been scheduled to die Aug. 27. In an appeal to

Positives and Negatives in Biden Abortion Record

Senator Joseph R. Biden's nomination for vice president will likely raise many of the same questions that trailed Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts four years ago about a Catholic nominee whose voting record on abortion conflicts with Catholic teaching. Like Kerry's record, Biden's legislative history includes opposition to a proposed constitutional amendment prohibiting abortion and to legislation that would make it harder for minors to cross state lines to obtain an abor-



tion. But Biden has also voted in favor of some limits on abortion, including voting for a ban on partial-birth abortion and against federal funding for abortions. He has said he accepts the church teaching that life begins at conception. During the campaign in 2004, a handful of Catholic bishops issued statements saying they would refuse to give Senator Kerry Communion if he presented himself to them during Mass because of his pro-choice position.

Signs of the Times

Missouri's Gov. Matt Blunt, the religious leaders said Skillicorn "has turned his life around, becoming a model of rehabilitation and service to others" and "a model prisoner who is a positive influence on other inmates and the prison environment." "Dennis Skillicorn is not the same person who was arrested 14 years ago," they added. "He is no longer a threat to public safety. His execution would be senseless." The stay was granted to allow Skillicorn's attorneys to gather information from prisoners and prison staff for a clemency petition to the governor. The attorneys are asking that his sentence be commuted to life in prison without parole.

Accusations of Religious Repression in Vietnam

The bipartisan, independent U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom has issued a report documenting persistent violations of religious freedom in Vietnam. Religious freedom "continues to be mixed, with improvements for some religious communities but not for others," the report said. "The U.S. government still needs to press Vietnam's leaders to make immediate improvements to end religious freedom abuses, ease restrictions and release prisoners," said Felice Gaer, one of the commissioners. According to AsiaNews, Communist authorities in Hanoi have recently launched a campaign of repression against lay Catholic leaders who have demanded that the government return land seized from the Vietnamese church and its parishes.

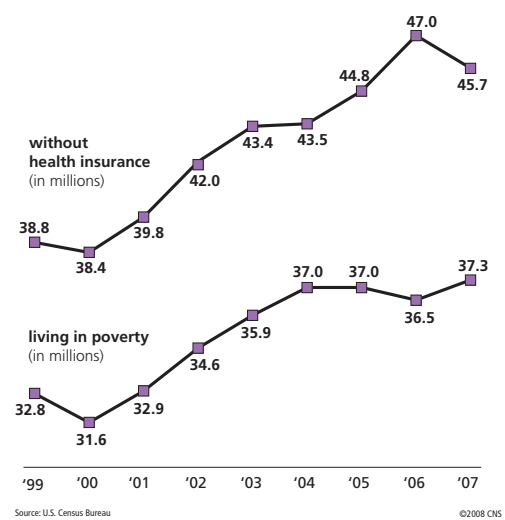
the plan, saying placement of the missile shield would endanger its own security. The United States has said the shield is not aimed at Russia but at potential rogue states, like Iran.

Georgia Confronts Humanitarian Needs

As a result of the recent Russian intervention, 128,000 people have been displaced within Georgia, according to Catholic Relief Services. "Concern is mounting about what will happen to those who can't go back, who'll need housing, vocational training and a new start in life," said Laura Sheahen, an information officer for C.R.S., upon her return from a tour of the affected areas. Sheahen also noted that while many people had returned to western Georgia, they would face hardships obtaining fuel and repairing their homes during the coming winter. Sheahen said C.R.S. is cooperating with other humanitarian organizations to supply food and medicine. The Rev. Witold Szulczynski, head of Caritas Georgia, said humanitarian aid was reaching the people of Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, and that life appeared to be "returning to near-normal" in the war-damaged city of Gori. Caritas Georgia is the local affiliate of Caritas Internationalis, an international umbrella group of Catholic aid agencies.

Census Bureau Reveals Increase in Poverty

Figures from the U.S. Census Bureau show the number of those living in poverty rose slightly in 2007, while the number of those without health insurance dropped.



Figures released Aug. 26 by the U.S. Census Bureau revealed an increase in the number of Americans living in poverty in 2007. "We have 800,000 more people living in poverty, including 500,000 more children" and 200,000 more senior citizens, said Candy Hill, senior vice president for social policy and government affairs at Catholic Charities USA. The data also showed that the poverty rate for Hispanics climbed from 20.6 percent in 2006 to 21.5 percent in 2007, and for children younger than 18 the poverty rate rose from 17.4 percent to 18 percent. Hill said that despite Catholic Charities' campaign to cut U.S. poverty in half by 2020, "we're stuck." The new figures call for a "redoubling of our efforts," she added.

Missile Plan Denounced in Rome

The Vatican newspaper, L'Osservatore Romano, has said that the U.S. plan to install a missile shield in Eastern Europe could seriously threaten U.S.-Russian relations and the future of global disarmament. The front-page story, under the headline, "Multilateralism and Disarmament at Risk," appeared Aug. 21, the day after the United States and Poland signed an agreement to place 10 interceptor missiles on Polish territory. "The signing of the missile shield agreement...has produced a dynamic that seems able to threaten multilateralism and the process of international disarmament," the newspaper said. In July, the Czech Republic agreed to station a U.S. radar system, another part of the missile shield, on its territory. Russia has strongly objected to

Mexico City Abortion Law Upheld by Court

The Supreme Court of Mexico has upheld a Mexico City law legalizing abortion. Catholic officials across Mexico expressed sadness at the decision, but also promised to focus their attention on better serving pregnant women who might be considering abortion. Cardinal Norberto Rivera Carrera of Mexico City said in a statement that the court was endorsing "an immoral law that not only decriminalizes abortion, but also hurts and infringes the fundamental rights of being human."

From CNS and other sources. CNS photos.



Back to the Future

‘Why issue a new Defense Strategy with only months to go?’

THE BUSH administration will remain in office until the inauguration of a new president on Jan. 20, 2009, but the Pentagon brought the moving vans in early, shipping out much of the Bush administration’s foreign policy slogans from the recently issued National Defense Strategy. Gone is the term “global war on terrorism.” The military was never in favor of that label, nor with focusing on the military as the primary tool to combat terrorism. Gone is the emphasis on hard power and unilateralism.

Instead, the document repeatedly says that working with partners, engaging in the competition of ideas, addressing underlying grievances and promoting economic and political development will be more effective than military force in combating irregular global threats of the 21st century. Globalization creates a web of vulnerabilities and uncertainties, from demographic trends to “resource, environmental, and climate pressures,” which do not yield easily to U.S. dominance in conventional warfare.

In the 1990s the Clinton administration, and particularly Vice President Al Gore, noted the rise of new security threats and non-state actors. Unconventional global problems (terrorism, pandemics such as H.I.V./AIDS, climate change, environmental problems and resource wars) caused conflict and destabilized governments as much as any invading army could do. Because conventional military forces were not well suited to address these problems, the United States needed to rethink the tools of U.S. foreign policy, emphasizing more creative multilateral cooperation, international law

MARYANN CUSIMANO LOVE is professor of international relations at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

and regimes, diplomacy, intelligence, law enforcement and unconventional uses of force to contain and combat global, networked threats that went beyond sovereign borders.

Those views were derided by the incoming Bush administration in 2000, which insisted that security threats came from rogue or rising states, like Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, China and a resurgent, belligerent Russia. Global threats by non-state actors and global tools of engagement were disdained in favor of unilateral approaches and investments in military programs like missile defense. Hard power was more important and useful than soft power.

When the United States was attacked on Sept. 11, 2001, by those very stateless global terrorist networks the Bush administration previously considered less important than traditional state security threats, the administration responded in a curious fashion. The United States responded to attacks by non-state actors by attacking two states, Afghanistan and Iraq. The administration was at a loss concerning how to respond to non-state actors.

In some ways this is not surprising: conventional combat is what the United States does best. The United States spends more on its military than almost the rest of the world combined and has undisputed superiority in conventional military capacity. The U.S. military attack in Afghanistan was justified as self-defense. The Taliban government profited from Al Qaeda’s largesse, offered Osama bin Laden sanctuary and refused to arrest or hand over Al Qaeda elements openly operating in their country. There was no such Al Qaeda or Sept. 11 connection to the secular regime of Saddam Hussein, as much as the Bush administration tried to manufacture one. Skeptics in the military and academics warned that

Al Qaeda could not be defeated militarily on the battlefield and that attempts to do so would merely strengthen them on the real front, the battle for hearts and minds in the war of ideas.

To those who remember this history, the new National Defense Strategy issued by the Pentagon reads like a “Back to the Future” assessment from the 1990s. It would be a fine “I-told-you-so” moment for administration critics, if these lessons had not been learned at so high a price in lives. But perhaps more telling than the document’s explicit repudiation of the neoconservative viewpoints is the fact that the document exists at all.

Why issue a new National Defense Strategy with only months to go in the Bush administration? A cynic might suggest this is Secretary Gates’s job application to remain in office, no matter who is elected in November; and it is true that the secretary has urged Department of Defense civilian appointees to continue to serve the new administration if asked, to ease the country’s first wartime transition since Vietnam.

But the rationale is principled as well, and is a critique of both political ideologies as well as military traditionalists who eschew evolving military roles and missions in asymmetric conflicts and post-conflict reconstruction. Gates has repeatedly warned that U.S. foreign policy spending is dangerously out of line with current needs, that civilian peace-building capacities are severely underfunded and underappreciated, and that the lion’s share of the military budget continues to go toward traditional military modernization and weapons programs, not the evolving missions the military is increasingly asked to perform. Many in the military feel they were burdened with disastrous Bush administration policies, and they do not want to see this occur again.

But the document is also a critique of military traditionalists in the Pentagon and Congress who neither appreciate nor fund the evolving missions the military increasingly must perform. As Secretary Gates warns, “Looking to the future, we need to find a long-term place in the base budget for these lessons learned by our troops at so painful a price.”

Maryann Cusimano Love

An increasingly popular approach to teaching young people the faith

The Faith of a Child

BY ANN GARRIDO

FEW CATECHISTS in this country could have predicted the popularity of a religious education movement called the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. “In 1985, I sent a personal Christmas card to everyone in the United States who was involved in C.G.S.,” Tina Lillig, director of the National Association of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, told me. “I think I needed 23 stamps. Last month we sent out our annual mailing to 1,400 association members, and we estimate that there are an additional 900 or so people who are actively working in C.G.S.” As national director for 13 years, Lillig has seen interest steadily grow and spread, but nothing prepared her for the present. “Now we are receiving inquiries from dioceses as far away as the Philippines, Tanzania and Pakistan,” she says. “Suddenly it is something of a wildfire.”

ANN GARRIDO is director of the master’s program in the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd at the Aquinas Institute of Theology in St. Louis, Mo. and serves on the formation committee of the National Association for the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (www.cgsusa.org).



“GOOD SHEPHERD” BY JEAN-BAPTISTE DE CHAMPAIGNE. REUNION DES MUSEES NATIONNAUX/ART RESOURCE, N.Y.

The Historical Evolution

What is surprising is that the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is nothing new. It was founded over 50 years ago in Rome, in the shadow of the Vatican, by two Italian laywomen. The first, Sofia Cavalletti, was a bookish scholar with a penchant for ancient languages who completed a doctorate in Hebrew and comparative Semitic languages at La Sapienza University in Rome. After the Second Vatican Council, she participated in the commission on Jewish-Christian relations. A single woman, Cavalletti had no children of her own and was not particularly interested in the spiritual life of children until pressed by a friend to prepare her child for first sacraments. Moved by the child's interest and insight, Cavalletti became fascinated by the religious potential of children and ways to nurture it within the church.

She found a colleague for her quest in Gianna Gobbi, a former assistant to Maria Montessori. Gobbi introduced Cavalletti to the pedagogical research of Montessori and the methods and approach she used early in the 20th century. Gobbi brought a deep knowledge of children and their developmental capacities to Cavalletti's extensive theological foundation. Together the two formed a dynamic partnership that lasted almost half a century.

In Cavalletti's home near the Piazza Navona in Rome, the women created what they called an atrium. In early church architecture, an atrium was a gathering place between the liturgical space of the church and the street. It was a space where the faithful recollected themselves before entering into worship and where catechumens received instruction in the faith as part of their initiation into the Christian community. Cavalletti and Gobbi understood their atrium to serve a similar purpose; it was not to be a children's church separate from the adult church, but rather an aid to the fuller participation of children in the liturgical and communal life of the one church that includes baptized Christians of all ages.

Fashioned after a Montessori educational environment, the atrium included hands-on materials that children could use: small models of various objects they would see inside the church, dioramas and figures to accompany the Scripture readings, prayer cards, maps of ancient Israel, timelines of the history of salvation and resources for further study of Scripture and liturgy. When introducing any materials, the women would always listen to the children's responses and observe how they used them. The women

discarded materials that did not provoke either intense reflection or individual work among the children. Those that did, they kept. Over time, by watching children's consistent attraction to certain materials, Cavalletti and Gobbi began to discern a unique tenor to the children's understanding of the Gospel,

particular themes that captured their attention and ways of expressing the themes that were particular to childhood.

In the early 1960s, Cavalletti first began to write about what she and Gobbi were seeing. Her observations became

widespread internationally after she published *The Religious Potential of the Child* in 1979. Atria were established in a number of countries, including Mexico, Colombia, Canada and the United States. A bishop in Mexico with whom Cavalletti corresponded gave the movement its name (Catechesis of the Good Shepherd) because of the distinctive image of Christ to which the youngest children were consistently attracted across numerous cultures.

Initially, atria in the United States—as elsewhere—emerged within the Montessori educational community, especially Catholic Montessori schools. Within a short period of time, however, parishes, traditional schools and communities of parents who were home-schooling their children began to seek training in this approach to religious formation. In 1984, the newly formed National Association of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd began to offer catechist formation courses. Since 1997, when the association first developed a computerized database, 820 courses have been offered. A conservative estimate of participants counts around 10,000, but the number is probably much greater. Most catechists have been trained to work with 3- to 6-year-old children, but many have gone on to complete further levels of training, allowing them to create and facilitate atria for 6- to 9-year-olds and 9- to 12-year-olds. It is very difficult to determine the number of children currently participating in atria across the country, but judging from membership and mailing list data, Lillig estimates it to be well over 20,000.

Distinguishing Characteristics

The following five characteristics distinguish Catechesis of the Good Shepherd from traditional religious education:

Theology of the Child. Grounded in Montessori's pedagogy, Catechesis of the Good Shepherd perceives the child not as a "tabula rasa" ready to be instructed about God, but rather as someone who already has a deep relationship with

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd perceives the child as someone who already has a deep relationship with God.

God and who needs language and a space to help this relationship to grow. The catechesis begins with the belief that the child has been given the Holy Spirit in baptism and that the Spirit will drive the child toward what he or she most needs. As a result, the children's questions and interests have guided the development of the atria curricula, rather than what adults think children should learn.

Role of the Adult. Catechesis of the Good Shepherd invites the adult to move out of the role of teacher and serve instead as a co-listener and co-learner with the child before the word of God. The adult functions in a role similar to that of a spiritual director, listening carefully to each child's needs and questions and matching that child with resources from the faith tradition that will best serve the child's spiritual journey at this time. The adult is like a matchmaker who wants to encourage the child to get to know God better. So the adult creates a place and time for them to meet and fall in love, but then backs away so that the two can encounter each other on their own terms.

Attention to the Environment. Catechesis of the Good Shepherd places a special priority on the space in which religious formation takes place. Maria Montessori observed that young children have "absorbent minds," meaning that they learn language, culture and even religious belief largely through the process of osmosis or "absorbing" what is around them rather than through lessons and lectures. If

children's experience of the Spirit or "Inner Teacher" drives them toward what they need to grow, the environment around the children can be understood as the "Outer Teacher"; it can help them meet those needs or it can stifle them. Unlike traditional religious education, C.G.S. emphasizes the atrium environment in which formation takes place. It is purposely structured not as a classroom, but a place in which the spiritual life can be lived.

Spiral Methodology. Whereas traditional religious education often dedicates each year to a different theme (e.g., second grade is dedicated to reconciliation and Eucharist, sixth grade to Old Testament), Catechesis of the Good Shepherd employs a spiral approach in which core themes are touched on every year, expanding what has been covered previously. These five themes—incarnation, the kingdom of God, the paschal mystery, baptism and Eucharist—first introduced to a child at age 3, provide an overarching structure to which all further study is linked. This promotes integration among various areas of Christian life.

Emphasis on Essentials. Catechesis of the Good Shepherd notes that one of the greatest gifts children bring to the church is their capacity to winnow through a vast Christian tradition and discern what is most essential and what is most important to hold on to. Cavalletti observed that children quickly become restless when they are given peripheral material, but concentrate and settle down when given what



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they are hungering for. C.G.S. seeks to remove from catechesis all that is extraneous. It seeks to use the fewest words possible, rid itself of “busy work” and introduce only themes that children, over time, have indicated meet the criteria of what is essential.

Assessing the Gifts and Challenges

While these five characteristics distinguish Catechesis of the Good Shepherd from other religious education programs currently in use, such distinctiveness has brought both blessings and challenges to the schools and parishes that use the Good Shepherd approach.

At the top of the list of blessings is the fact that most pastors, catechists and parents involved with C.G.S. find it exceedingly worthwhile and effective. In the midst of strong critiques of religious education in the decades since Vatican II, this catechesis has received acclaim for both its theological substance and its careful attention to the developmental capacities of the child. While more rigorous assessment of C.G.S. and its long-range impact are currently needed, widespread anecdotal evidence indicates that children in the program are active, engaged members of their Christian communities and articulate about their faith.

Another positive outcome is the increased engagement of adults with their faith as a result of C.G.S. formation courses. Adults who participate in the three levels of catechist training discover that their own faith is greatly enhanced in the process. Even though not all course participants will go on to serve as catechists in atria, they report in course evaluations that the courses are personally enriching and helpful for other forms of ministry in which they are engaged (such as leading the adult catechumenate, Catholic adult education or serving in social outreach). Furthermore, Catechesis of the Good Shepherd can bridge divides within the church; it appeals widely to liberals and conservatives among Catholics and other Christian traditions. Participants in the formation courses include members of Opus Dei and the Catholic charismatic community, as well as Mennonites and Lutherans; approximately a third of the atria in the United States are hosted within Episcopal communities.

At the same time, the energy involved in this approach to catechesis has created great strain in many communities. To be effective and meaningful, Catechesis of the Good Shepherd has several requirements that many parishes and

schools find almost impossible to sustain: atrium space, enough trained catechists and time. Many parishes and schools are simply short on space and find it difficult to dedicate space specifically to this purpose.

As to catechist training, each level of catechesis requires approximately 90 to 100 hours of training, plus additional time for creating atrium materials, observing in other atria and processing notes from the course. It can be difficult to find enough volunteers willing to invest that amount of time in their ministry, especially if they are active parents or work full

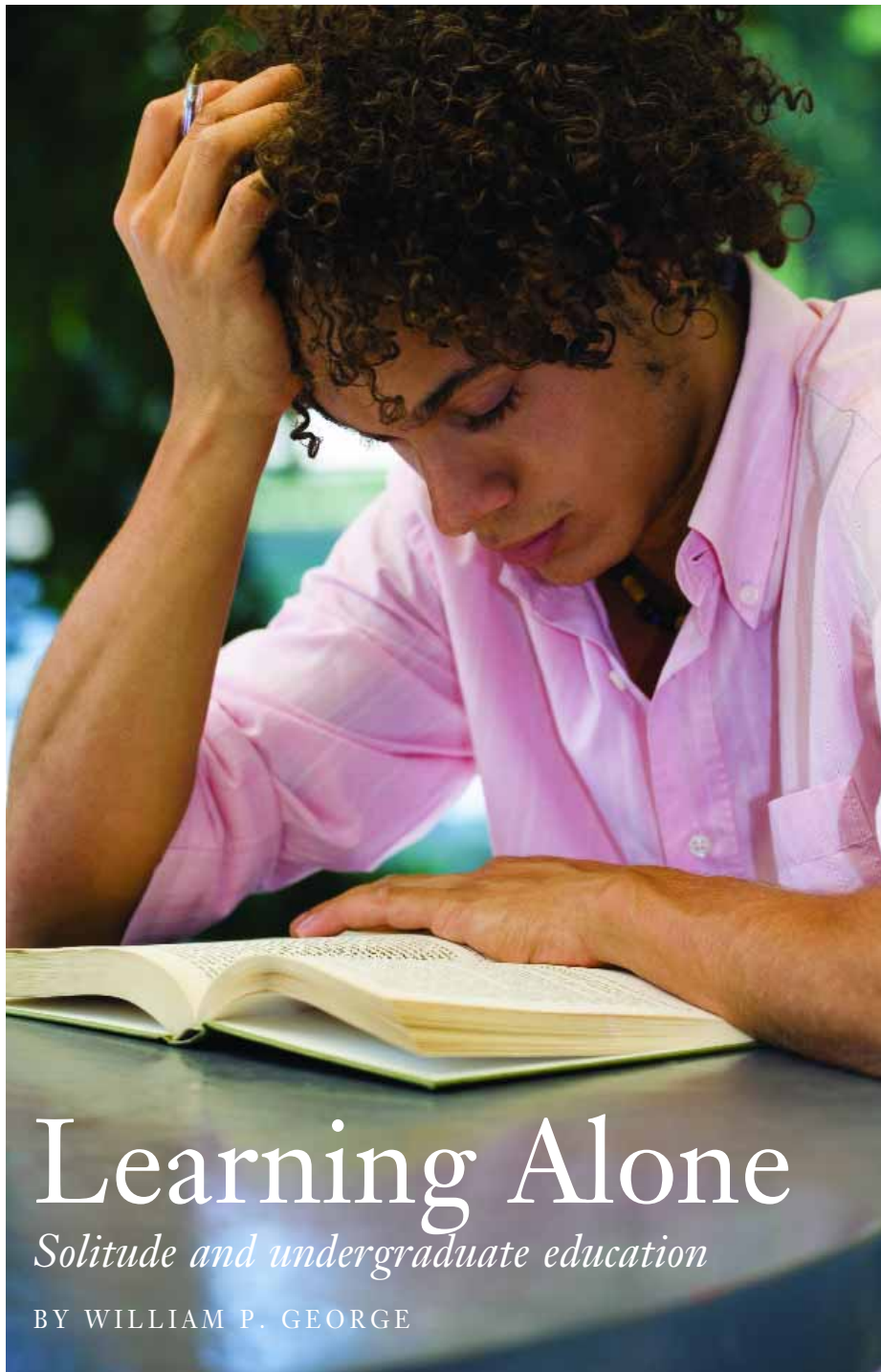
time. Time is also required for the children: a two-hour atrium period each week that allows the children to receive a new presentation and also to work with materials that have already been presented to them. Many parishes and schools are accustomed to a 45- to 60-minute block and find it very difficult to change. Such expectations can create tensions with other groups in the community that must compete for space and time. Parishes and schools attracted to the method are often unsure of how to implement it fully and how it ought to relate to other religious education programs that may be running concurrently.

Another emerging challenge is the relationship between Catechesis of the Good Shepherd and the local diocese. As C.G.S. becomes more widespread, dioceses are taking note of it and asking how the curriculum matches diocesan standards. Since C.G.S. is based on an oral tradition and uses no textbook, diocesan offices and, indeed, the bishops' Ad Hoc Committee to Oversee the Use of the Catechism have found it difficult to evaluate. It does not fit into any of the categories to which they are accustomed. As a result, communication is a challenge as a charismatic, organic movement merges with established ecclesial structures and policies.

“These are issues that we haven't had to address before, when we were a much smaller movement set primarily in the Montessori community,” admits Tina Lillig. “We are entering into a new moment in the history of this work. We began as a mustard seed and now we are experiencing the miracle and the burden of great growth. But there is something of the Spirit in all of this, and if we listen to it, it will drive us toward what we most need at this time in history.” **A**



Karen Sue Smith reviews the documentary “Portraits of a Lady” at americamagazine.org.



Learning Alone

Solitude and undergraduate education

BY WILLIAM P. GEORGE

CATHOLIC COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES are by most accounts admirably consistent in their emphasis on community and cooperation as a way of life and learning. With their emphases inside and outside the classroom on social justice, service and solidarity, and with the myriad opportunities they offer students to “get involved,” such institutions help to counter the

WILLIAM P. GEORGE teaches theology and directs the core curriculum at Dominican University, River Forest, Ill.

destructive individualism that seems ingrained in American society. Yet I wonder if it is not time for a counterintuitive moment that stresses not the group or the cohort, but the individual student instead. From my vantage point as a teacher and part-time administrator engaged in ongoing conversations about student learning, I would like to see a greater emphasis placed on solitude: the regular periods of uninterrupted time a student spends alone, struggling with calculus, savoring George Eliot’s prose or just thinking things through.

I applaud cooperative learning, emphasize class participation and rejoice when a shy student joins a campus club. I encourage peer tutoring and visits to the campus learning center, and I see the educational and social benefits of service learning and study abroad. Still, I would argue that ample stints of solitude, of time apart from peers and others, should also mark the college experience, especially today.

In my own undergraduate days, I once ran to my mathematically astute brother for help with a problem. “Well, first you have to read the problem,” he said. He was right. I hadn’t really taken the trouble to do that—at least not in the way he meant it. But he was really saying, “You can do this yourself, if you just take the time to think it through.” The deeper implication was, “This is something you *ought* to do on your own.” In our rush to demonstrate commitment to community and collaboration, do we teachers

really believe that students (and not just the brightest ones) can learn on their own? Do we let them off the hook if we allow them to believe anything less of themselves? After all, even brainstorming sessions work best when they follow individual reflection.

Exemplars of Solitude

“Liberal education is, first and foremost, training for citizenship,” writes Michael Lind in *The Wilson Quarterly*. In

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/DIEGO CERVO

its extensive work on college learning, the American Association of Colleges and Universities also touts citizenship as an educational aim. But even if the purpose of undergraduate education is largely social—a point of view consistent with Catholic social thought—solitude still has its place. Indeed, socially significant writing has flowed from the spigot of solitude even when it was imposed. Consider the many famous examples of masterpieces written by prisoners, like Hugo Grotius, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Martin Luther King Jr. More often, pondering the human condition occurs when solitude is of one's own choosing. Karl Marx spent hours in the library of the British Museum, Martin Heidegger retired often to his Black Forest hut, and Carl Jung built a waterside tower where he kept company with the collective unconscious.

Even action-oriented America has been home to striking examples of solitude. Mark Twain took refuge in his “castle” at Quarry Farm, N.Y., and writers from Emerson and Thoreau to Annie Dillard have described the pleasures and pitfalls, the highs and lows of time spent alone. Even the reclusive Emily Dickinson lived a public life; her poetry speaks with power and grace to readers she never knew.

The fame of these writers testifies that withdrawal can be for the sake of return.

These are mature examples. Yet students will not become mature in their solitude unless they practice it. What might that practice be like? Sebastian de Grazia describes how at day's end, Niccolò Machiavelli would enter his chambers, close the doors, wash his face and don “his courtly robes and slippers.” Then, writes Machiavelli to a friend, “I enter the ancient courts of the men of antiquity where affectionately received by them I pasture on that food that alone is mine and for which I was born, where I am not too timid to speak with them and ask them for the reasons for their actions; and they in their courtesy answer me and for four hours of time I feel no weariness, I forget every trouble, I do not fear poverty, death does not dismay me; I transfer all of myself into them....” Would that more students could become Machiavellian in this way.

Strength From Solitude

Physical exercise strengthens the muscles, and in the end no one can do it for you. Similarly, regular solitary exercise of the mind develops the person. In extreme circumstances, it may mean one's very life. In *Man's Search for Meaning*, Victor Frankl observes that it was not necessarily the physically fit who fared best in Nazi concentration camps. Rather, “[s]ensitive people who were used to a rich intellectual life may have suffered much pain (they were often of a

delicate constitution), but the damage to their inner selves was less. They were able to retreat from their terrible surroundings to a life of inner riches and spiritual freedom. Only in this way can one explain the paradox that some prisoners of a less hardy makeup often seemed to survive camp life better than did those of a more robust nature.” The aim of undergraduate education is not to steel students against brutality, but these years ought to have something to do with finding a breadth and depth of meaning, with “inner

Physical exercise strengthens the muscles, and in the end no one can do it for you. Similarly, regular solitary exercise of the mind develops the person. In extreme circumstances, it may mean one's very life.

riches and spiritual freedom,” fit for hard as well as more congenial times.

The philosopher and theologian Bernard Lonergan, S.J., insisted in his writings on cognition and epistemology that insights and sound judgments cannot be forced. But following his reasoning, I would argue that they can be rendered more probable not only through time well spent in labs or on group immersion trips but also through time alone, even working through seemingly boring material. Truly interesting questions often emerge only after less interesting questions have been personally met and mastered. Creative people know that this is a law of life. Before they reach the public recital or concert hall, pianists in their practice rooms learn the value of studies that educate the fingers and the heart, and museums are filled with sketches attesting to hours of preparation that led up to the masterpiece in the next room. Studies now indicate that the ability to focus, rather than the multitasking at which the young are so adept, may be the most useful skill one brings to the workplace. So, too, favoring solitude over the constant juggling of cell phones and assignments might counter the skimming and last-minute learning that sometimes passes for undergraduate education today.

A Cultural Critique

Teachers in this process (along with practicing solitude themselves) can offer students the best materials—some-

times old, sometimes new—to ponder and probe. True, you can lead students to Shakespeare, but you cannot force them to imbibe the full scope of tragedy in “King Lear.” But the imbibing is more likely to occur if students are properly led. By encouraging students to spend time alone with poems and paintings and problems, teachers help each student to drink from his or her own well. When solitude does not degenerate into an isolating “iPodism,” students may come face to face with themselves, not only with their capacity to wonder, which reaches toward the divine, but also with their self-deceits and penchant for sham. Self-confrontation in solitude can unveil narcissism and lead to changed habits of mind. Along with possible purgation, there is also the prospect of quiet delight in truth and beauty.

Several practical if difficult steps can be taken to help students learn alone: encouraging accountability for individual time on text and task; reducing student employment and other activities when such efforts ruin the rhythm of study; supporting a kind of Socratic or Kierkegaardian courage to stand alone among classroom peers. Even simply to suggest that sufficient stress on solitude is lacking in undergraduate education is itself a practical step in service of a larger purpose. Much in fast-food-for-thought America resists the retreat and return required by the life of the mind, a mind that is fit not only for the academy but for corporate, family and civic life as well. An emphasis on solitude

can be a cultural critique, and the critique and advance of cultures is what undergraduate education is partly about.

Undergraduates are not monks. But a little monkishness in learning communities is not a bad thing. It is something that educators in Catholic institutions, if they have not forgotten the desert fathers and women mystics and Thomas Merton (that socially engaged figure who sought to be a hermit), should readily understand. The philosopher Josef Pieper argued that leisure, which includes a patient, receptive attitude that tempers students’ (or more often their teachers’) obsession with “constructing” knowledge, is the basis of culture. In the West at least, anonymous monks in their disciplined leisure played a significant role in receiving and advancing the best of culture in dark times.

I realize that undergraduate culture is extraordinarily complex. Whether barbarians are at the gates of the peer-pressured, incessantly text-messaged, Facebooked and otherwise always-connected undergraduate scene is hard to judge. Perhaps they are already inside. An increased emphasis on solitude would have the benefit of helping each student to make that judgment for him- or herself. Solitude might be not only an effective means to personal breadth and depth of learning, but also an incremental remedy for aspects of undergraduate and American culture gone awry. It could also be a potent leaven for expanding those elements that are right and good. **A**



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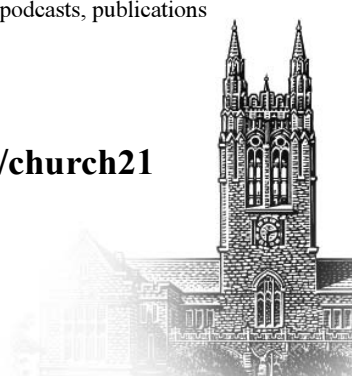
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Teaching Evolution

A Catholic scientist frames a national debate.

BY PAUL COTTLE

THERE IS NO ISSUE more visible and emotional in the field of science education today than evolution, and no state where the issue has been more hotly debated than Florida. For much of the last year, a committee of educators and scientists worked with officials from the state's Department of Education to hammer out new standards for science education. Their decision to designate evolution one of the "big ideas" in the state's science curriculum was opposed by groups like the Florida Family Policy Council and conservative lawmakers who objected to the teaching of evolution in the classroom. In the end a compromise was reached, and new standards were passed requiring the teaching of evolution, but the wording of the law was changed to call it a "scientific theory" (see sidebar for details).

I was a member of the standards committee. At the outset, we spent little time worrying about the potential controversy over the teaching of evolution. Instead, our goal was to apply the results of recent research on how children learn science to the state science education standards. Yet when we made public a draft of the new standards in October 2007, it quickly became clear that the debate over teaching evolution would dominate the process.

I am an "evolutionist," as the opponents of evolution education would say. More to the point, I am a naturalistic scientist in that I believe that my mission as a scientist is to

PAUL COTTLE is a professor of physics at Florida State University and a member of the committee appointed by the Florida Department of Education to draft new science standards for the state's primary and secondary public schools.

explain scientific observations within the framework of the laws of nature. Yet I am also a Christian, and as such I do not reject the supernatural. I believe in Christ's resurrection.

The Debate in Florida

The debate over evolution education in Florida was rancorous and presented particular ethical dilemmas for me. For one, a majority of my fellow Christians were on the opposite side of the argument from me—indeed, most Americans are. As an evolution education advocate, I am on the same side as many atheists, including militant "new atheists" like Richard Dawkins, who see evolution education as an opportunity to beat back religion in our society. As a result, I found that I was self-consciously vetting my own statements—both public and private—to make sure I was not denying my faith. I made several brief public professions of my faith during prepared statements, including during my talk before the State Board of Education on Feb.



PHOTO: REUTERS/SHANNON STAPLETON

19 and in an op-ed piece published by The Tallahassee Democrat. I was not alone: many of the other Christians on the standards committee also made their faith known during public meetings and to the media. Members of the public who followed the debate learned that there were several church officers and Sunday school teachers among the advocates of evolution education.

Unfortunately, I was in the minority among Catholics in my defense of evolution. It came as no surprise that according to a St. Petersburg Times poll published this February, a few days before the State Board of Education vote, 91 percent of evangelicals in Florida oppose evolution education. Yet that same poll reported that 79 percent of Catholics also took the anti-evolution education position. This is particularly disappointing given the church's well-established position in favor of the teaching of evolution. David M. Byers, executive director of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Science and Human Values from 1984 to 2003, noted this stunning separation between the beliefs of the American faithful and church teaching in an article in **America** ("Religion and Science in Dialogue," 2/7/05). He said that the Catholic Church "properly recognizes evolutionary theory as firmly grounded in fact," but noted that the church's "educational leadership has been very slow to correct the anti-evolution biases that Catholics pick up from prominent elements in contemporary culture."

The fact that my opponents in the evolution education debate were almost exclusively my brothers and sisters in the Christian faith imposed certain responsibilities. To quote one of several scriptural injunctions on this topic, "So then, as often as we have the chance, we should do good to everyone, and especially to those who belong to our family

in the faith" (Gal 6:10). This meant that my comments—both private and public—had to remain civil at a minimum, and respectful whenever possible. My working assumption was that my opponents were acting on the basis of their deepest convictions, even though there seemed to be a few cynical opportunists on both sides of the debate. Overall my

evangelical opponents displayed both a deep commitment to their cause and a basic decency. One of the first people to congratulate me after my talk to the State Board of Education was John Stemberger, president of the Florida Family Policy Council and a fervent opponent of evolution education. Only moments before I spoke, Stemberger had loudly warned the board that thousands of evangelical parents would withdraw their children from the public schools if the proposed standards on evolution were adopted.

In the end, the religious dimensions of the debate made it impossible to craft a resolution that satisfied everyone. Many Christians who were not committed to "young earth creationism" were attracted by the ideas of the intelligent design movement, which holds "that certain features of the universe and of living things are best explained by an intelligent cause, not an undirected process such as natural selection," according to the New World Encyclopedia, quoted on the Web site of the Discovery Institute, a well-funded think tank formed to support the movement.

The Florida Debate

The controversy over teaching evolution spread to Florida in late 2007 as a committee of 61 people—nearly all scientists and science educators—labored over new standards for science instruction in the state's K-12 public schools. The climax was reached on Feb. 19, 2008, when the State Board of Education voted by a narrow margin to accept standards nearly identical to those recommended by the committee, including clear statements that evolution must be taught to Florida's children. The 4-to-3 board vote to accept the standards was clinched by an 11th-hour semantic change that replaced the word "evolution" with "scientific theory of evolution" wherever it appeared in the draft standards submitted by the standards committee. Similar language was inserted for all other major scientific concepts to avoid appearing to single out evolution. Public reaction to the compromise was sharply divided.

The debate did not end there, as legislation was filed in both the Florida House of Representatives and the Florida Senate on Feb. 29 that would have allowed the discussion of creationist and intelligent design viewpoints and would have protected students and teachers who did not accept evolution from being penalized. In practice, this could have gutted the standards on evolution. However, amendments made to both bills and the inability of members of the House and Senate to reconcile their different versions of the bill effectively ended the threat to evolution education for the year.

Intelligent Design

Some Catholics in Florida are among those intrigued by the notion of intelligent design. In the weeks following the board of education vote, I heard homilies by two priests who, in addressing the nature and meaning of God's creation, acknowledged that parishioners held a variety of beliefs about the origin and development of life. But they

did not mention the church's acceptance of modern evolutionary biology. Meanwhile, as of this writing, no Catholic priests in Florida have signed a public letter endorsing the teaching of evolution in public schools, an initiative known as the Clergy Letter Project that has drawn 11,000 signatures nationwide.

This reluctance to take a public stand on evolution is not limited to Catholics in Florida. In June, I was stunned when Governor Bobby Jindal of Louisiana, a devout Catholic and holder of a bachelor's degree in biology from Brown University, voiced his support during an appearance on CBS's "Face the Nation" for teaching intelligent design alongside evolution in public schools. It is clear that despite Byers's urging, the Catholic Church in the United States has not fully addressed the widely held misconceptions regarding church teaching on evolution.

In Florida, as elsewhere, the evolution education debate featured strongly worded volleys between vocal minorities at both extremes, between those who see the scientific clarity of evolution and religious conservatives who claim that evolution promotes moral decay. (If that sounds a little strong, consider this quote from the Truth Project, an educational initiative of James Dobson's Focus on the Family: "Darwinian theory transforms science from the honest investigation of nature into a vehicle for propagating a godless philosophy.")

The Discovery Institute has framed the evolution education debate as a struggle over academic freedom—in particular the freedom of teachers to challenge and even disregard the naturalistic approach to science and to argue that the existence of unanswered scientific questions on the origin and development of life provides proof of the existence of God. Politically, it seems prudent for supporters of evolution education to frame a competing vision for teaching science in public schools, one that appeals to many parents and voters in the vast middle ground. These

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include individuals (and many Catholics) who are neither committed to an anti-evolution position nor convinced by arguments for evolution.

Even though this group does not have strong opinions on evolution, I think they would endorse an educational approach that focuses on two principles: tolerance for students from a variety of backgrounds, including religious backgrounds; and the accountability of teachers and administrators for their adherence to state educational standards and their performance in helping their students learn science. Such a vision of the science classroom might provide a potent moral and political antidote to the dubious assertion that academic freedom should apply to the teaching of science in the K-12 classrooms.

Educating Catholics


Catholics not convinced by this argument might consider the words of Pope Benedict XVI, who recently called the debate over evolution “an absurdity because on one hand there is much scientific proof in favor of evolution, which appears as a reality that we must see and which enriches our understanding of life and being as such.” Catholics in Florida can also look to the guidance of their bishops. In February, Bishop Thomas Wenski of Orlando published an op-ed piece in *The Orlando Sentinel*

endorsing the teaching of evolution while at the same time rejecting the notion that “evolution requires a materialistic or an atheistic understanding of the human person or of the entire universe.” “The Catholic Church does not have to reject the theory of evolution in order to affirm our belief in our Creator,” Bishop Wenski concluded. “As Catholics, we can affirm an understanding of evolution that is open to the full truth about the human person and about the world.”


Still, the task of educating Catholics on this issue remains a tricky one, not least because it could threaten the strong partnership the church has forged with evangelical groups to advance pro-life causes. (One need only recall the controversy surrounding Terri Schiavo in Florida to remember how powerful the partnership between Catholics and evangelicals can be.) Indeed, when during one of my prepared statements I read a quotation from a church source defending the teaching of evolution, my evangelical opponents expressed great surprise that the church held a position different from theirs.

Evolution education is a national issue, with heated debates taking place in legislatures and state education departments all over the country. The Catholic Church in the United States has an opportunity to lead the nation to a resolution of this matter by educating its own followers about the church’s embrace of modern science. They can also point out to their Christian brothers and sisters, as Bishop Wenski did, that the teaching of evolution need not go hand in hand with a materialistic atheism.

As a physicist and a Christian, I have learned that faith and science need not be antithetical, that a deeper understanding of the natural world can inspire awe at the workings of God’s creation. Yet I have come to this understanding by working within the intellectual framework widely accepted by the scientific community, a framework that includes the tenets of evolution. This framework should also guide the teaching of young people, in Florida and elsewhere. The Catholic Church and its partners in the faith have no reason to fear the results. **A**

 From the archives, David M. Byers on “Religion and Science in Dialogue,” at americamagazine.org/pages.


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A Space for Inquiry

Catholic universities and the search for meaning

BY TERRANCE W. KLEIN

RELIGION IS FLOURISHING in the United States in the number of adherents, but so are religious ignorance and religious intolerance. Both can be linked to the systematic exclusion from public discourse and intellectual life of a healthy examination of the religious impulse. With its deep foundation in humanism and its legacy from St. Ignatius Loyola on the discernment of spirits, Jesuit education offers a vital forum for the study of theology, which is not the catechesis of the young, but the intellectual exploration of the human need to probe the meaning of life. “Education is integral to the mission of the church to proclaim the good news,” Pope Benedict XVI insisted in his April 2008 address to U.S. Catholic educators. “It is timely, then, to reflect on what is particular to our Catholic institutions. How do they contribute to the good of society through the church’s primary mission of evangelization?”

Fatima’s Quest

A student who had never spoken in class came to my office at the end of one semester to say that she was having trouble with her final paper for my class “Faith and Critical Reason,” one of two theology courses taken by all undergraduate students at Fordham University. She sat down and went over her ideas for the assignment, which was to discuss how God is experienced by the characters of Evelyn Waugh’s classic, *Brideshead Revisited*. I listened and told her that these were good ideas that she should put to paper. She said she didn’t know where to begin. We again reviewed the assignment and her ideas for it, but she was still unsettled. I said, “Fatima, help me here. I don’t think I’ve understood your question.”

“That’s just it,” she exclaimed, as both her biography and her concern came pouring out of her. “I don’t know what I’m asking. Everything is in flux! I’ve gone to mosque every week. Everyone there always had answers. They told me they were God’s answers, and that if I didn’t accept them I would be damned. I’ve worn the hijab [the veil many Muslim women wear] since I was six. I’ve taught Arabic to small children so that they could read the Koran, and now I

don’t want to take Arabic as my modern language in college! I’ve come to think of God and God’s place in my life in a whole new way. This course has convinced me that God is real and that God is in my life, but now I don’t know what to make of my religion.”

For the first time as an adult, in an intellectually challenging but spiritually supportive milieu, Fatima had asked about her life and the role religion plays in it. She wanted another person to hear the question and affirm her right to ask it. Pope Benedict has insisted, “Only in faith can truth become incarnate and reason truly human, capable of directing the will along the path of freedom.” For Fatima, faith and reason had encountered each other in freedom, with unsettling, but, one hopes, fruitful results.

Who would have heard the same question on a secular campus? An essential difference between Catholic colleges and their secular counterparts is that the source prompting questions about God is also the one that stays to seek an answer. For all the considerable good they do, Newman centers stand at the periphery of intellectual life on secular campuses. Classrooms pose difficult questions, leaving students with only a hope that campus ministries, regularly excluded from the conversation, can support them as they seek answers. Even when they do, the system’s essential structure of separation subtly suggests that the answers sought are marginal, particularly personal and therefore more therapeutic than true.

I told her: “Fatima, I know that this is a very confusing time, but it’s also a wonderful time. What’s happening to you is what should happen to every college student. You’re asking your own questions, which are unsettling but good. They might lead you to claim your Muslim faith in a new way. They might lead you somewhere else. You remember, I’ve said from the beginning that my task in the classroom is not to convert anyone.”

“I know,” she interrupted. “You accept even unbelief. You’ve said there are parts of you that don’t believe. I’m very grateful for that. I just wish I knew where I was going.” I told her that knowing the final answer is not nearly so important as finally asking the right questions.

There are those who would argue that I should not have left Fatima with her questions—indeed, that we had arrived

THE REV. TERRANCE W. KLEIN is associate professor of theology at Fordham University in New York City.

at the very moment when the Catholic faith should have been presented “unadulterated and vigorously,” as several conservative students had argued earlier that semester in one of Fordham’s student newspapers, *The Observer*. But if I had gone the unadulterated-and-vigorous route from the beginning, Fatima never would have been in my office. She would have perceived me to be like the religious leaders whom she had previously encountered, having all the answers and no tolerance for questions. She might have continued to suffer the separation of religious impulse from intellectual scrutiny.

Some might be even more disappointed to learn that my reticence was not tactical; this conversation was not setting the stage for “the sell.” I have nothing to sell. I am not reluctant to share my Christian faith, but I will not join the rush to label it “authentically Catholic,” as though the experience of God were simply one more commodity and Catholic higher education only a question of truth in packaging. Catholic identity is not dependent upon statistics. Neither can it be equated simply with orthodoxy of course content. It demands and inspires much more: namely, that each and every aspect of one’s learning community reverberates with the ecclesial life of faith.

The truth is, I don’t know the answer Fatima is seeking. How could I? How can anyone claim to comprehend what God is doing in the depths of another’s soul? Yet Fatima shared her question with me because both of us were in a place, within a community of faith, where it could be asked.

Jesuit Education and the Spiritual Exercises

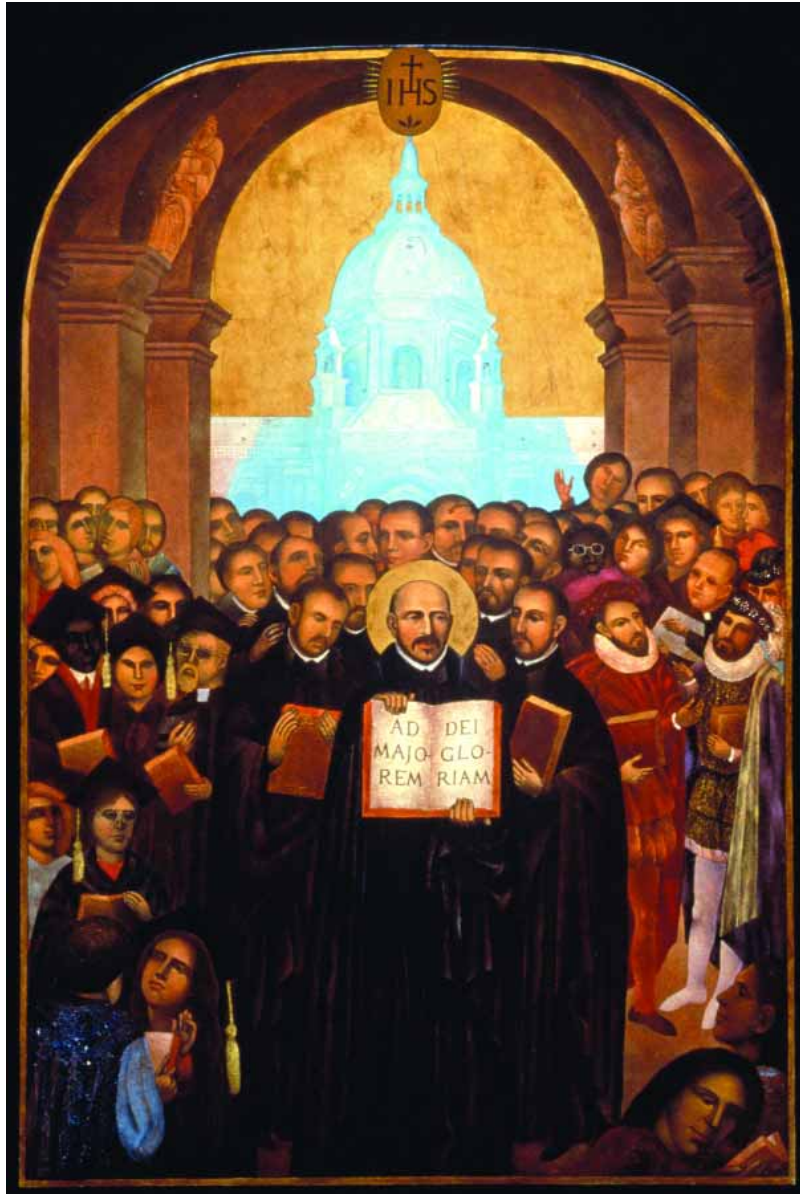
Jesuit education shares an essential premise with the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. It is founded upon trust, faith that God is active, and leads us, if we allow that to happen, through prayerful self-scrutiny. Ignatius explicitly

warns the would-be director of the Exercises not to hamper God’s work and not to confuse the director’s insights with those of the Spirit. The director “should permit the Creator to deal directly with the creature, and the creature directly with his Creator and Lord” (No. 15). Considering the profound influence that a teacher can sometimes have upon a student, the pedagogical role is not far removed from that of the spiritual director. Each must trust that God is the primary agent of growth; each must eschew manipulation and coercion of any kind. I do not know where God is leading Fatima. I have to wait and watch, just as she does.

Many students come to Jesuit schools for the same reason

St. Ignatius made the personally arduous decision in 1528 to attend the University of Paris as an adult learner, because that is where the best minds would challenge his own experiences, including his experience of God. Ignatius had learned that disquietude itself could be revelatory, that growth comes from questioning. He went to Paris expecting difficult questions, yet trusting that the Spirit would lead the way to ever deeper answers.

Coercion and control have little warrant when trust is present. Trust does not suppress questions, because trust does not fear them. The faith that animates Jesuit educa-



“THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY OF ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA, PANEL 3 OF 5: EDUCATED AND BLESSED BY COMPANIONS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PARIS.” BY DORA NIKOLOVA BITTAU. COPYRIGHT 1997 SEATTLE UNIVERSITY

tion, trust both in God and in the essential goodness of human learning, especially as it finds expression in the humanities, has a timely role to play in contemporary America.

The premise of Stephen Prothero's acclaimed book *Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know—and Doesn't* is that the United States has become a nation of religious illiterates. In the desire, and historic decision, to keep church and state separate, the United States has essentially banished religion from the public sphere. Religion is therefore also exiled from civic debate and communal scrutiny, but to what effect?

Consider another insight of the Spiritual Exercises, that evil "seeks to remain hidden and does not want to be dis-

The irony of contemporary America is that both those who reject religion and those who fervently preach it know little about it.

covered" (No. 326), that the work of the Spirit is accomplished when what is dark is brought into the light. Isn't that insight as true corporately as it is individually? If so, what has happened to religion in America away from a truly public forum, apart from the intellectual rigor of higher education? What happens when, as Pope Benedict notes, "the value of the church's contribution to the public forum is questioned"?

The Wall of Separation

Some argue that religion is flourishing in the United States because of the wall of separation, but strength in numbers cannot be the sole criterion of religious vibrancy. Adherents can be numerous while faith itself remains anemic. Separation between church and state should not mean the banishment of religion from public discourse. That separation may protect the state—though the growing number of politically active Christian fundamentalists gives reason to challenge that premise—but it leaves the church itself intellectually impoverished, insulated from rigorous inquiry.

The irony of contemporary America is that both those who reject religion and those who fervently preach it often know little about it. By contrast, Prothero notes, Western Europeans believe less but know more; they can accurately describe the rudiments of the Christian faith and other world religions.

Treating religion as an essentially private affair exposes it to the twin dangers of darkness: ignorance and intolerance. This is why higher education should not repudiate the

deeply human vision that created the liberal arts curriculum, which included theology. It emerged in the West as the first Jesuits were being sent on mission, and it still has an essential task: to liberate the human person from ignorance, from prejudice and from the intrinsic limitations of a merely personal perspective.

The study of theology in Catholic institutions of higher education has never been more essential or more intimately linked to the liberating arts. Today it must help both students and faculty steer between the shoals of uninformed and prejudicial rejection of religion and the equally ignorant and intolerant option of fundamentalism, whether that is based on religious scriptures or on teaching authority. "Far from undermining the tolerance of legitimate diversity, such a con-

tribution illuminates the very truth which makes consensus attainable, and helps to keep public debate rational, honest and accountable" says Pope Benedict.

Jesuit universities seek the best people for their faculties. Today that may mean recruiting some who have been trained to see religion itself as essentially irrational and thus profoundly antihuman. That prejudice needs to be met with learning, patience and trust. Many religious young people are tempted to reject anything that questions belief, retreating into the intellectual ghetto of fundamentalism. They need to be challenged by faculty who do not believe, but they also need the same learning, patience and trust given by those who do. The graced strength of Jesuit education, and that which separates it from its secular and its more conservative church counterparts, is that everyone is given the right to speak.

I preside weekly at the Eucharist on Fordham's Lincoln Center campus in midtown Manhattan. The main portion of the chapel is separated by curtains from a private area where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved. I rarely enter the chapel without finding a student alone in its privacy. One day, as those of us who had gathered for the midday Mass were reciting the penitential rite, a veiled Muslim student emerged from behind the curtains. Had she come to offer her own midday prayers? After all, a quiet spot in midtown Manhattan is a gift from God, however you conceive of God!

I took comfort in knowing that, although our religions separated us, we were united in our desire to seek God. More than that, simply by being at Fordham, a Jesuit university at the crossroads of the world, we shared with St. Ignatius the conviction that education and its questions could help one to listen, to be attentive and to trust. **A**

Christians Who Can Breathe and Laugh

The life and work of Jean-Jacques Olier

BY WILLIAM THOMPSON-UBERUAGA

THE 400TH ANNIVERSARY of the birth of Jean-Jacques Olier on Sept. 20 is likely to pass unnoticed in the United States, given the relatively low visibility of his foundation, the Sulpicians. Diocesan priests released by their bishops for the work of seminary education, the Sulpicians are named for Olier's parish of St. Sulpice in Paris (recently made famous, or infamous, by Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*). In Quebec and elsewhere in Canada, they still enjoy something of the kind of prominence they once had in the United States in the early days, with a cardinal, bishops and a major seminary. In the United States their seminaries are now down to two, Baltimore and San Francisco, and they have not had a U.S. bishop appointed from among their ranks in almost two centuries. The reasons for this lack of prestige or fall from ecclesiastical favor merit another essay. But perhaps for now, the

Sulpicians' perch on the edge of ecclesiastical power affords a vantage point for a

Bérulle, the founder of the French Oratory, had written of the decrease of authority, learning and holiness among the priests of the time and the need to recover them once again. Bérulle's reformist project had reached Olier through his spiritual advisor, Father Charles de Condren, whose own reform efforts on behalf of the church corresponded to Bérulle's concerns.

Authority, Learning and Holiness

Without learning and holiness, such authority as the priesthood still possessed teetered dangerously close to becoming a shell covering up power plays and careerism. Well-positioned clergy wanted ever more lucrative benefices (parishes and dioceses). Olier's aristocratic mother wanted this for her own son, who must have greatly disappointed her by his two refusals of a bishopric and by his determination not only to accept the benefice of St.



critical perspective on the church and the priesthood. Olier's birthday offers us all a chance to share in something of the same.

Olier's life (1608-57) fell within a time when the priesthood was truly struggling to breathe, let alone laugh. Olier's indirect spiritual mentor, Cardinal Pierre de

Sulpice, but actually to serve as its pastor (not always true in other parishes at the time). Olier seemed committed to a reformed and Spirit-energized parish of St. Sulpice, which could serve as a hub from which would radiate further renewal in Paris and beyond. Priests, he knew,

WILLIAM THOMPSON-UBERUAGA is emeritus professor of theology at Duquesne University and author of *Jesus and the Gospel Movement: Not Afraid to Be Partners* (University of Missouri Press, 2006).

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were a central part of this hub-approach to renewal. Their leadership was vital, but it had to be a true leadership, not simply a career in search of money or status. Hence he founded a seminary within the parish itself, perhaps the first such in France (although the Vincentians might give this honor to St. Vincent de Paul, who played an important formative role for Olier). In Olier's view, seminarians needed to learn that they were there to serve the people.

Centuries before the Second Vatican Council, Olier wrote enthusiastically about the priesthood of the faithful and was mindful of the need for a more active and responsible laity. The Jansenists nearly chased him out of his parish for his attempts to foster frequent Communion, which, until then, was a practice reserved to the ordained priest. But the "presbyteral" priests, so to speak, would normally assume leadership, and Olier had few illusions about the costs involved in this. One of his favorite images for the priest was that of "host-victim," a liturgical reference to Jesus' life of sacrifice but also an anticipation of a priesthood of service rather than elitism.

Learning was another crucial element

in Bérulle's and Olier's reformist triad. Olier's key tactics were a solid education for the clergy, both at the seminary and the Sorbonne, and for the adult laity. Efforts to meet the growing demands by the better-positioned laity for adult education were met through an impressive list of popular publications. We know, for example, that one of his works, *The Christian Day*, went through six editions in the 17th century. These were the kinds of educational reform boasted about by the French Protestants as well, and there is no shame in recognizing that Olier probably learned a thing or two from them. Learning from them no doubt also meant much for the quality of preaching, for example, or for efforts to foster a more critical laity.

The 17th century initiated our so-called turn to modernity. Descartes and Bérulle knew each other. One might ask just how "modern" Olier himself was in his learning. Like Bérulle, but without his metaphysical leanings, Olier seems to have returned to a more Pauline and Johannine theology via the church fathers, especially the Greek fathers. He was modern in the sense that he eagerly participated in the

biblical and patristic renewal of his time. He even, in a quite modern way, referred to the Bible as a ciborium in which Christ dwells. But he also anticipated today's "antimoderns" or "postmoderns," in the sense that he did not move in the direction of the more Cartesian, rationalist theology of the scholastic manuals, but in the direction of a more mystical, spiritual and pastoral style of theology.

Holiness—today one might say "spirituality"—was Monsieur Olier's chief love and focus, and fittingly so, for he likely considered it the chief partner in the triad of authority, learning and holiness. The new critical edition of his *Treatise on Holy Orders* reveals a quite mystical understanding of the priesthood, distinct from either a more legalistic, canonical view based on power or from a more moralistic one, which might be more characteristic of the Jansenist view of the priesthood. In his view, the priest is one who is called by grace to participate in the mysteries of Jesus, and to be deeply rooted in his interior and exterior dispositions, undergoing purification, illumination and mystical union. From this presbyteral hub, chiefly through education, spiritual direction and liturgy, this mystical spirituality was to radiate out to the priesthood of the faithful at large.

Signs of the Spirit

Olier's triad of authority, learning and holiness anticipated the later Baron Friedrich von Hügel's notion of institutional, intellectual and mystical elements of the church. Like Bérulle and Olier, Von Hügel argued that these three needed to remain in a fruitful and mutually critical interchange for the church to remain healthy. Otherwise the church, her people and her priests could not breathe properly, let alone laugh. These images of breathing and laughing come from a passage in Father Olier's *Mémoire*, in which he describes his liberation from a spiritual and physical cramp he had experienced for some time. By extension, one could say that the church of his time was likewise experiencing some serious cramping, and that ecclesial breathing and laughing could be regarded as signs of liberation. To employ another of Olier's favorite expressions, they were manifestations of "se laisser à l'Esprit," opening ourselves up to the Spirit. Joy is one of the Spirit's most



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desired gifts (Gal 5:22), and the Spirit has been described as the “breath” through which Father and Son speak.

One challenge we might take from the occasion of Father Olier’s birthday celebration is to ask ourselves how well all of us—the priesthood of the faithful at large and the presbyteral priesthood in particular—are remaining faithful to the triad of institutional authority, theological and humane learning in general and spirituality in mutual and critical dialogue. Each of these suffers without the other.

Probably few of us do not have some issues with institutional authority, including what we might perceive as its inertia or its blindness, among many forms of ecclesiastical cramps. Institutions seem peculiarly prone to these maladies, for they are meant to be rather stable and solid, providing an infrastructure from which various projects might emerge. Truly stable structures, ones that really work and enjoy the confidence of the people they are meant to serve, take time and careful nurturing. What takes centuries to build up can all too easily be crushed by imprudent leaders. Naturally, therefore, there is a kind of built-in institutional resistance to

much tampering. But therein lies a lurking danger.

As a result, we must look to learning as a way of keeping institutions healthy. In the first century, Paul the theologian took Peter the institutional shepherd to task, and ever since in the church there has been a somewhat rocky relationship between theologians and scholars and the hierarchy. Naturally there is a kind of fruitful tension here, as there should be for the church to remain healthy. But learning can carry us only so far, and one does not have to venture far into theology before learning that theologians have their blinders too.

Olier’s instinct was to look to spirituality (which for him developed primarily through the sacramental and liturgical life) as the deeper soil from which would emerge a healthy theology and a sound institutional church. But here too, much turns on what is meant by spirituality. We have all likely met the person, whether hierarch, priest or layperson, who thought of spirituality as a matter of quasi-piety: “If we’re pious, we’ll just roll over in humble self-disregarding obedience.” Spirituality can degenerate into a

sentimentalism or intellectual infantilism when not nourished by solid scholarship, or into elitisms of all sorts when not nourished by participation in the church’s larger life. For Olier, the chief form of holiness was an openness to the Spirit that keeps us self-critical and growing. A formula he recommended for prayer was “Jesus before our eyes [minds], in our hearts [the wellspring of the Spirit], and in our hands [a metaphor for our commitments, institutional and otherwise].” The three elements are intriguingly present in their pleasingly simple prayer formula.

Breathing and especially laughing were important indicators for Olier of the Spirit’s presence. By laughing, Olier meant a truly liberating kind of laughter that comes from the deep-down sense that reform, personal and ecclesial, is not all on our shoulders. We may stumble and fall along the way, but we can laugh, for we sense we are being supported by the greater power of the Spirit. That kind of laughter has nothing to do with arrogant intellectual or institutional closure.


Happy birthday, Father Olier, and congratulations, priests of St. Sulpice. **A**

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An Unusual Partnership

Islamic scholars at Jesuit universities

BY THOMAS MICHEL



WHY ARE JESUIT universities in the United States hiring Muslims to teach Islamic studies? And why would a Muslim professor leave a well-paying post at a state university to teach at a Jesuit institution? These are just two of the questions raised earlier this year at a meeting of Muslim professors of Islam at Jesuit universities, which was held in Washington, D.C. The meeting was organized by the national coordinator for interreligious dialogue of the U.S. Jesuit Conference, and Jesuit and Muslim schol-

THOMAS MICHEL, S.J., is an international visiting fellow at Woodstock Theological Center, Washington, D.C.

ars from nine Jesuit institutions took part.

Marcia K. Hermansen, a professor of theology and director of the Islamic world program at Loyola University Chicago, emphasized an important distinction between “the academic aspect of teaching Islam and the personal dimension of being myself Muslim.” She argued that Jesuit institutions can offer an opportunity for Muslims in the United States to deepen their own understanding of the faith experience: “I see ‘faith examined’ as an important Jesuit value. Most religious schools and institutions in the U.S. Muslim community focus on piety and identity but do not critically reflect on the experience of faith and the meaning of tradition. The academic study of Islam serves a purpose

that cannot be addressed by simply providing a place for prayers.”

Irfan Omar, of Marquette University’s theology department, pointed out that the value of teaching Islam in a Jesuit university is not limited to the Muslim students. “The continuing challenge facing Jesuit institutions and all educational institutions, for that matter,” the Indian-born scholar reminded the meeting, “is how to provide students with the widest possible exposure to important relationships. Success in business depends on creating networks and intercultural exchanges. But such efforts should go beyond commercial perspectives. Muslims can play a significant part in this process as Islam and the Muslim world are constantly on display in the American media.”

Amir Hussain of Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, who moved there from the California State University system, said that his original motivation was a personal desire to learn theology. As he explained in an article in *Cross Currents* (summer 2006): “I soon realized that as a Muslim teaching Islam, I needed to learn more about theology. In 2005, the opportunity arose for me to move to Loyola Marymount. Prior to this move, my only formal connection to the Catholic tradition was that I was born in a Catholic missionary hospital in Lahore.”

Beyond his personal desire for deeper theological understanding, Hussain found another attraction to teaching in a Jesuit institution: its emphasis on excellence in teaching combined with a concern for justice. Hussain said he wanted to help students “learn to learn,” rather than simply “learn to earn.” Since he had come from a working-class background in Toronto, Hussain said he was impressed by the emphasis on social justice in Jesuit history. He cited such examples as the Jesuit Reductions (efforts to protect and catechize the native people) in 18th-century Paraguay, as well as Jesuit participation over the past 40 years in the development of liberation theology and the martyrdom of six Jesuits and two of their lay companions in El Salvador in 1989.

A Diverse Group of Muslims

Muslim scholars who teach Islam at Jesuit universities are themselves a mixed lot. Some of them, like James Morris of Boston College and Marcia K.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/DMITRY GOYGEL-SOKOL AND TAMER YAZICI

Hermansen of Loyola University Chicago, are American-born Muslims. Others, like Umeyye Isra Yazicioglu of Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia, Ibrahim Kalin of Georgetown's Prince Alwaleed Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding and Zeki Saritoprak of Cleveland's John Carroll University are of Turkish origin. Irfan Omar was born in India, while Amir Hussain was born in Lahore, Pakistan, and raised in Toronto.

What led these men and women to teach Islamic theology as a profession? Zeki Saritoprak attributes his teaching vocation to one of his high school teachers: "He said that my knowledge of religion was good and suggested that I make divinity school my first choice in the university placement exam." Later Saritoprak went to Egypt and improved his Arabic for four years while completing his doctoral thesis; his degree is in Islamic theology.

Irfan Omar was interested in new religious movements. "I wanted to study new religious movements but realized that I did not know much about the main religions from which they arose," he said. "So I applied at Hartford Seminary, which led to all kinds of discoveries in Islam and Christian-Muslim religions. Then I lost interest in the new religious movements altogether."

Isra Yazicioglu's interest in religious studies grew out of conflict: "I was a student in a medical college in Istanbul," she said. "In my third year at Marmara Medical School, a ban on head covering was imposed on my campus and on other campuses in the country. It was painful to experience this kind of discrimination when I had paid equal taxes and earned entry to a medical school like everyone else. This ban made me think more about the role of religion and the relation between religion and science." She was disturbed that some of the professors in favor of the ban considered all religion as superstition. "It made me want to study religion to seek a more sophisticated view of faith. I left the university and got a scholarship to study at Hartford Seminary where I did my master's thesis comparing Paul Tillich and Said Nursi on reconciliation of faith and reason in the modern age. Then I did my doctoral studies at the University of Virginia on the philosophical and theological implications of miracle narratives in the Koran."



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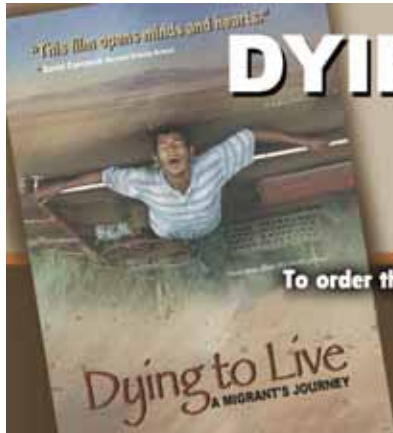


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Participants at the meeting discussed the prospects for greater cooperation among Jesuit universities in promoting Muslim-Christian understanding. Marcia Hermansen sees a range of possibilities. The universities could offer joint study-abroad programs in Muslim countries and join together to recruit specialists in Islamic topics; they could cooperate in shaping retreat programs for Muslim and Christian students; and they could promote service opportunities in the Muslim world in areas related to international development. She also suggests that Jesuit institutions encourage Muslim-Christian dialogue on distinctive areas of strength in Jesuit programs, such as “ethics, service, formation and vocation.”

Hermansen also notes that gender studies are a fertile field for Muslim-Christian cooperation. Loyola University Chicago, for example, already has a master’s program in women’s studies and gender studies. Programs like these, she suggests, could work together with institutes in Muslim-majority countries and with Muslims in the European and North American diaspora to identify and develop leadership skills among Muslim women.


Hiring Muslim professors to teach Islam presents Jesuit universities with a new set of challenges, as well as some valuable insights into the basic educational experience. As Umeyye Isra Yazicioglu explains: “My experience has been wonderful so far. My colleagues and administrators are very supportive and friendly. I do not believe that religion is superstition, nor is it in conflict with reason and science. I am glad to have the opportunity to help my students approach religion with sophistication and be critical of the approaches that pit religion and reason against each other. I keep telling them that by using the case of Islam I want them to improve their skills in understanding the fundamental religious experience, and their own traditions in particular.” Yazicioglu tries to help students appreciate the diversity of interpretations of religious texts and the relevance of transcendence to daily life. “I also encourage them to recognize the problems that can be created by superficial interpretations of the scriptures and rituals,” she says. “I am glad that my objectives in teaching match the university’s Jesuit aims of training strong, sophisticated and committed individuals.” **A**


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Steps Toward Justice

What is the purpose of charitable works?

BY VINCENT J. GENOVESI

AS SUPERIOR GENERAL of the Jesuits, Pedro Arrupe said he hoped graduates of Jesuit schools would become “men [and women] for others.” But most students and graduates of Jesuit schools have never heard the full context in which he used this phrase.

Here is what Father Arrupe said in his speech to the International Congress of Jesuit Alumni of Europe in Valencia, Spain, on July 31, 1973:

Today our prime educational objective must be to form men [and women] for others; men [and women] who will live not for themselves but for God and his Christ—for the God-man who lived and died for all the world; men [and women] who cannot even conceive of love of God which does not include love for the least of their neighbors; men [and women] completely convinced that the love of God which does not issue in justice for men [and women] is a farce.

Arrupe’s hopes were that graduates would have grander ambitions than simply their own material advancement, that they would use their knowledge to recognize and meet the needs of others and that their labor on behalf of others would be born of a relationship with God and his Christ. By putting on the mind and heart of Christ, graduates, like all Christians, are to live as embodiments of Christ, the pre-eminent “man for others.” If Christians want to live and love in a Christ-like way, they must be committed to helping others realize their potential. That is what love

VINCENT J. GENOVESI, S.J., is professor of theology (Christian ethics) and campus minister at Saint Joseph’s University, Philadelphia, Pa.



Young people attend a 2007 outdoor Mass on the campus of Loyola University in New Orleans. The school hosted a weekend teach-in called “Rebuilding Communities: Facing Racism and Poverty.”

does: it helps others to thrive as true human beings.

The Bare Minimum

Unless Christians first walk the path of justice, however, any talk of love is idle chatter. If love helps people to thrive, justice allows them first to survive. Justice is the bare minimum of love. It guarantees that people have what they deserve—like nourishing food, suitable clothing, decent housing, access to standard medical care and employment that offers fair wages and safe working conditions—simply because they are human beings. These things help to put flesh on the prized rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Christians must be careful about how they think and talk. There is much said about doing “works of charity,” but Pope Benedict XVI’s words in his first encyclical,

God Is Love (No. 26), warrant consideration:

Works of charity...are in effect a way for the rich to shirk their obligation to work for justice and [are] a means of soothing their consciences while preserving their own status and robbing the poor of their rights. Instead of contributing through individual works of charity to maintaining the status quo, we need to build a just social order in which all receive their share of the world’s goods and no longer have to depend on charity.

These ideas echo earlier church teachings, such as: “Charity will never be true charity unless it takes justice into

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account.... Let no one attempt with small gifts of charity to exempt himself from the great duties imposed by justice" (Pius XI, 1937, *Divini Redemptoris*, No. 49). And a document from the Second Vatican Council teaches: "The demands of justice must be satisfied first of all; that which is already due in justice is not to be offered as a gift of charity" ("Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity," No. 8).

These teachings challenge Christians to recognize that there is no way to meet the responsibilities of love so long as they fail to satisfy the demands of justice. Christians are masters of self-deception if they see themselves as practicing love while making no attempt to correct the injustices that oppress their neighbors. Without justice, love is just a word.

Charity, or a Step Toward Justice?

In light of such teachings, the activities we call works of charity—like food and clothing drives, maintaining soup kitchens and shelters, involvement in Habitat for Humanity—might better be regarded as steps toward justice. These are ways we try to provide people with the bare minimum they deserve as human beings, but they are only emergency responses to their immediate needs. Since these are largely short-term interventions, they remain short-sighted, treating only the symptoms, not the causes of the pain and deprivation many suffer. While good and necessary, such activities are not enough. They may leave people trapped in oppressive social structures. Ultimately, the structures themselves must be challenged and improved.

Admittedly, challenging a country's prevailing social, political and economic structures is an unappreciated endeavor. As Dom Helder Câmara, the late Brazilian archbishop, noted: "When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a Communist."

Still, if we are honest with ourselves, it is hard to deny that we allow the structures of society to do to others what we ourselves would never think of doing to another person face to face. We live amid social sin, which is not just the doing of evil, but also a failure to do the good required. Love's long journey lasts a lifetime, but the works of justice mark its first steps. **A**

Book Reviews

Away From the Pulpit, Into the Pews

The Faithful

A History of Catholics in America

By James M. O'Toole
Belknap Press. 362p \$27.95
ISBN 9780674028180

I have just reviewed the evaluations for my American Catholic history course and, once again, many students cited our “field trip” across Notre Dame’s campus to the Basilica of the Sacred Heart as the highlight of the semester. They had listened with rapt attention as Peter Rocca, C.S.C., the rector of the basilica, narrated the stories embedded in the stained-glass windows, explained the provenance of the treasures that adorn the sacristy and side altars, and described the various architectural changes that have transformed the church since its construction more than a century ago.

But our basilica tour is more than a merry outing for my students. The building and its contents illuminate, far more brilliantly than my lectures do, a host of topics and themes central to the history of the American church: the French missionary influence on U.S. Catholicism, Marian devotion, church architecture, the cult of the saints and much more. While I would like to take credit for this pedagogical stroke of genius, it all belongs to James O'Toole. In 2004 O'Toole published a reflection on teaching American Catholic studies in which he shared a number of his innovative teaching techniques, among them a guided tour of the church of St. Ignatius of Loyola on the campus of Boston College. Not long after reading that essay, I was dialing Father Rocca, arranging a similar adventure for my own students. I have since shamelessly adopted other O'Toole methods, including another perennial student favorite, a visit to the campus archives, where we view scapulars, Mass kits and objects of Catholic material culture that even the most devout students of this generation have rarely seen.

The Faithful, O'Toole's history of the American Catholic laity, contains the same elements that inspired me to follow his lead in the classroom. He relies on a wide range of source material, writes in vivid detail and, above all, pays a great deal of attention to religious practice and ritual. It is this last that distinguishes *The Faithful* from previously published histories of American Catholicism. Elsewhere, O'Toole has written that “concentrating on questions of organizational structure and dynamics, both internal and external, might be suitable for understanding the history of General Motors, but it hardly seemed appropriate for the very different thing that was the nation’s largest religious denomination.” He is certainly not the first to write Catholic history from the perspective of the people in the pews. But it is true that his narrative eschews, to a much greater extent than other surveys, expositions of ideological or political conflict among the church hierarchy. Instead, he frames his book in a manner designed to capture the myriad ways in which ordinary American Catholics have lived, prayed and practiced their faith.

O'Toole introduces each of his historical periods by describing a typical lay Catholic. Roger Hanly, for example, left Ireland for the American colonies in 1770, and eventually settled with his wife and six children in Bristol, Me. Finding themselves in a “Priestless Church,” the Hanlys relied on prayer books, private worship and gatherings with other Catholic neighbors to sustain their faith during the long stretches between the visits of itinerant priests. Catholics in this period, a small fraction of the American population, enjoyed considerable leeway in expectations about devotional behavior and about their adherence to church law and, while the scrupulous fretted about “habits of negligence,” wise leaders understood that the acute shortage of clergy and the exigencies of life on the frontier

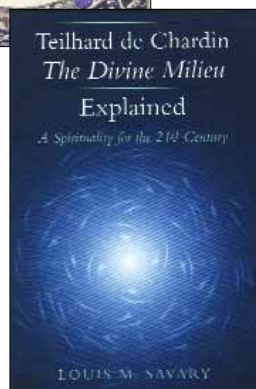
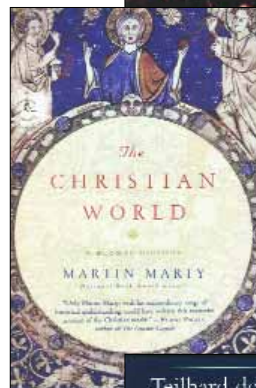
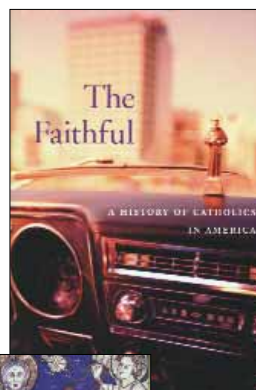
demanded flexibility.

James C. McDonald of Beaufort, S.C., was a medical doctor who lived in “The Church of the Democratic Republic.” The bishop of South Carolina (John England—although O'Toole, presumably in the spirit of focusing on the laity, does not name him) had drafted a constitution for his diocese modeled on the American political system. A delegate to the first diocesan convention in Charleston in 1823, McDonald was elected president of the House of the Laity, a body that oversaw nonspiritual matters of church governance in the diocese (spiritual affairs were left to the House of Clergy). McDonald and

other Catholics had no problem understanding themselves as both loyal citizens of the republic and as faithful members of the church. In subsequent decades, however, these identities would increasingly come into conflict, as the laity and the clergy competed for authority and as non-Catholic

Americans grew more suspicious of Catholics’ allegiance to the pope.

The question of American Catholic identity was even more complex for Catholics of “The Immigrant Church.” Anna Hurban, a Slovakian-born woman



The Reviewers

Kathleen Cummings is associate director of the Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism at the University of Notre Dame, Ind.

Luke Timothy Johnson is R. W. Woodruff Professor of New Testament and Christian Origins, Candler School of Theology, Emory University, in Atlanta, Ga.

Richard J. Hauser, S.J., is director of the master's program in Christian spirituality at Creighton University, Omaha, Neb.

from Cleveland, founded the First Catholic Slovak Ladies Union in 1892. Within a decade, the union had 84 local affiliates, opened an orphanage, ran schools to preserve Slovakian language and culture and published its own newspaper. By the time Hurban died in 1928, the club had 65,000 members. Hurban's life spanned a period of astonishing growth in the church's infrastructure. In 1880 Detroit had 15 Catholic parishes; by 1925 it had 89. The number of Catholic schools expanded at a similar rate, as did social service organizations, many of which were staffed by women religious, a population that increased dramatically in this period. Priests were also abundant, and the worship and daily life of Catholics centered on the parish, where religious bonds often reinforced ethnic ones.

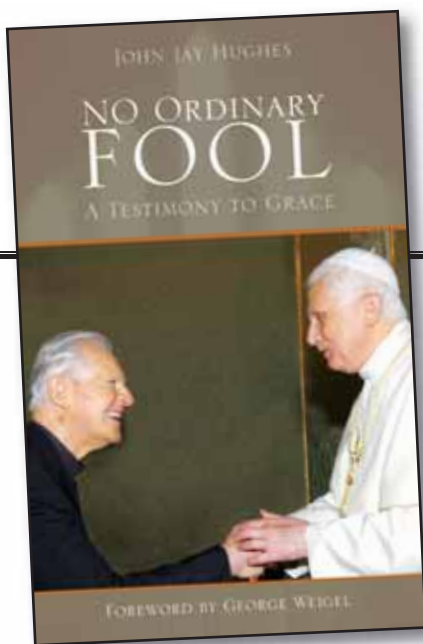
Unlike Hanly, McDonald and Hurban, O'Toole's typical Catholics in the 20th century are recognizable to most contemporary Catholics. Dorothy Day represents "The Church of Catholic Action," and Pat and Patty Crowley collectively embody "The Church of Vatican II." In his treatment of these periods, too, O'Toole strives to convey how ordinary Catholics lived, both by synthesizing an

impressive amount of published scholarship, and by peppering the text with his own original research. Here again, O'Toole's study is distinguished by his attentiveness to devotional life. He describes—in far more compelling detail than I have seen elsewhere—exactly what changes the Second Vatican Council brought to the liturgy and to sacramental practice (on the latter, O'Toole is the acknowledged expert on the history of confession, and his discussion of its decline in the wake of Vatican II is characteristically thoughtful and informative).

My major reservation about the book concerns O'Toole's decision to limit his discussion of the 18th century to Anglo-America. Recent histories of the Ursulines in New Orleans, Spanish missions in the Southwest and other studies of early American Catholicism beyond the northeastern part of the continent have yielded ample, rich material on the laity that O'Toole could have used to expand the geographical parameters of his study in the decades before and after the American Revolution. This would have had the added advantage of bringing his study full circle. For his final historical period, "The Church in the Twenty-First Century,"

O'Toole settles on "Maria," who will be born in Los Angeles circa 2012, as the typical lay Catholic, whose church will be characterized by unprecedented ethnic diversity.

That reservation aside, there is no question that with the publication of this book I find myself in even greater debt to O'Toole, as the material in *The Faithful* will surely find its way into my classroom. But it is the Catholic faithful more broadly who stand to gain the most insight from reading this book. O'Toole describes history as "our own individual memory; without it, we would be lost, uncertain of who we are." History, he argues, is particularly relevant in times of crisis; and for an American Catholic Church still reeling from the sexual-abuse scandal, facing institutional contraction for the first time in its history, and seeking to accommodate demographic shifts and unprecedented diversity of practice, the past is prologue to a future yet unknown. "A new age of the Church in America has begun," O'Toole observes, "and what form the Church will take, what combination of old and new, will be up to its people to decide." He offers the past as "the standard against which to measure the many possible



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She

After my late aunt got her third new hip,
The third in an eventual parade of seven,
I call to razz her about having more hips
Now than she had been originally issued,
& she laughed but then characteristically
Sailed off in a disquisition about prayer
And how it did and didn't work hipwise,
And how the doctors had used the bones
Of a deceased woman in her hip surgery,
And how she conversed with the Mother
About this among various other subjects,
And the Mother, noted my cheerful aunt,
Was a woman of endless gentle patience,
For I pepper the poor soul with moaning
And complaints all the blessed day long,
Said my cheerful aunt, and She does not
Tell me to stuff it, or hasn't yet, anyway.
All day long I rattle and prattle and chat
And She listens and then finally I'll stop
Talking at which point I finally hear Her.
I think maybe that's the way She speaks
To everyone but everyone doesn't listen
All that well, that's the greatest problem
With men and women, the first example
In this particular crucial regard being me,
You know what I mean? Ah, yes, you do.

Brian Doyle

BRIAN DOYLE is the editor of *Portland Magazine* at the University of Portland in Oregon. He is also the author of eight books of essays, nonfiction and "proems," including *Epiphanies and Elegies* (Sheed & Ward, 2007).

futures," and for that reason, as well as many others, his rendition of that past deserves a wide readership.

Kathleen Cummings

Two Billion Strong

The Christian World

A Global History

By Martin Marty

Modern Library/Random House. 288p \$25

ISBN 9780679643494

Martin Marty's new book appears in a series called "Modern Library Chronicles," which includes similarly concise volumes on such complex subjects as the Renaissance, Shakespeare and the Catholic Church, by authors as redoubtable as Paul Johnson, Frank Kermode and Hans Küng. Treating a topic as large as global Christianity within a single slender volume requires an extraordinary grasp of the subject, an efficient style and a gift for organization. Marty here demonstrates once more that he remains in firm possession of all three.

The global vision is especially instructive for those who are unfamiliar with either Christianity's most distant past or most hopeful present. Marty sets out to displace the Euro-American focus that is instinctive to many of his readers. He naturally starts with "Jewish beginnings," using Jesus and Paul to establish both Christianity's first convictions and its first cultural engagements. But then, rather than make the usual turn to Rome and Europe that is found first in the Acts of the Apostles, he invites the reader to consider the areas in which Christianity exercised its first great influence, in the "First Asian Episode" and in the "First African Episode." Although the material dealt with in these chapters is fairly standard, Marty invites readers to consider how Christianity not only quickly reached such distant lands as Persia, Georgia and Armenia (in Asia) as well as Algeria and Ethiopia (in Africa), but flourished for centuries, producing some of Christianity's greatest leaders and thinkers before finally succumbing (in part or entirely) to Islam.

Readers with some knowledge of his-

tory will recognize much of the material covered—very effectively—in the first and second “European Episodes,” which cover in turn medieval Christianity and the varieties of reformation. In these chapters, Marty displays his distinctive ability to make accurate generalizations that are supported by many sharp details. One is startled in a treatment so broad to learn about Abelard and Heloise’s romance as well as Bernard of Clairvaux’s less than attractive side, to hear of Hildegard of Bingen’s teaching ministry as well as her visions. Similarly, it is good to hear as much about Anabaptist and Anglo-Catholic versions of reform as of Lutheran and Calvinist. Along the way, Marty not only provides thumbnail sketches of what he calls “capital letter” topics such as Renaissance, Reformation, Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution, together with their impact on Christianity, but he also shows how a combination of these cultural forces and a deeply divided Christianity provided a springboard for the mission endeavors of European Christianity.

As in his other chapters, Marty’s treatment in the “Latin American Episode” traces a historical development in that part of the world—in this case, all the way from the first Catholic conquerors/colonists/missionaries from Portugal and Spain down to the most recent developments of Liberation Theology and the success of evangelical and Pentecostal Christianity in the late 20th century. His depiction never flinches from the ugliness and cruelty that characterized Christian behavior toward indigenous peoples; at the same time he finds whatever small redeeming touches of humanity he can among those seeking to save the “savages” even as they destroyed them. And as we would expect from an eminent historian of American religion, Marty’s discussion in the “North American Episode” is both incisive and remarkably inclusive (giving proportionate attention to Canada as well as the United States, to Catholicism as well as Protestantism).

The impact of Marty’s organizational scheme is greatest when he turns to the “Second African Episode” and the “Second Asian Episode.” With North Africa sealed off by Islam, Christian missionaries struggled to establish missions in the rest of the great continent, their efforts

compromised, as in other areas, by being intermixed with commerce and politics as well as by a refusal to understand or appreciate local cultures. But despite such uncertain beginnings, churches finally achieved a genuinely African growth and character. In Asia also, the early successes of Francis Xavier and companions were followed by the persecution of tiny Christian communities and a closure to further missionary work. Yet today places like South Korea and the Philippines are among the most thriving examples of Christian faith—even if the Christians of South Korea face the atheistic regime to the North, and Philippine Christians face the challenge of an equally successful Islam.

By considering in the final sections the partial success and promising if perilous future in the continents where Christianity first thrived, Marty effectively communicates the truly global character of this faith, for which the success or failure of the European and American “episodes” do not in themselves determine either its essence or its destiny. Among the many pleasures of Marty’s survey is the way in which he keeps in view Christianity’s relationship with Judaism and, of particular significance today, with Islam. When he poses the question of what the future global map of religion might have been after 1492 if Muslims rather than the Catholic Queen Isabella had sponsored trips to the new world, he shocks the reader into a recognition of

how Islam in the past and in the present has challenged Christianity for global religious primacy.

The value of this small book goes well beyond its scope of vision and depth of detail. Marty enables his readers to ponder the knotty questions that lie beneath the smooth surface. Given its many cultural realizations and adaptations, what are the essential features of this religion and what accidental? Given the many ways in which its representatives have failed to live according to its ideals, how do we locate the appeal of this religion that enables it, even today, to command the adherence of some two billion of the world’s people? Readers from the least to the most learned can profit from this master scholar’s history of the Christian world.

Luke Timothy Johnson


Seeing With New Eyes

Teilhard de Chardin: The Divine Milieu Explained A Spirituality for the 21st Century

By Louis M. Savary
Paulist Press. 266p \$19.95 (paperback)
ISBN 9780809144846


Like many of my contemporaries, I eagerly read *The Divine Milieu* in the early

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1960s, as soon as it was translated into English. I recall being inspired by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's bold and sweeping vision. It was the first time I had ever been exposed to such a radical and optimistic Christian worldview. I have to confess that I did not fully comprehend this worldview. Teilhard's vision did not mesh with current theological categories. I put his insights aside and focused on literature fostered by the theological and spiritual renewal occasioned by the Second Vatican Council.

But I am grateful to Louis M. Savary for reintroducing me to the text of *The Divine Milieu*. Savary, a clear and articulate spiritual theologian with many books to his credit, does a masterful job explaining Teilhard's very dense and often opaque text. He assumes the reader has a copy of the 1960 English translation of the Harper Torchbook publication and arranges his text according to the divisions in that original edition.

Savary's exposition proceeds in two ways. First he gives an extensive explanation of a particular section of the text, an explanation always significantly longer than the original text. He subsequently directs the reader to read the original. Then to help the reader enter the narrative, Savary presents exercises for personally appropriating the text. For instance, in the section "Passivities of Diminishment" he directs:

Here the task is to list your internal and external passivities of diminishment. Usually, we are more familiar with those innate things about us that hinder our ability to operate and act as our best. So most people start with those: physical, emotional, intellectual, social, and spiritual are areas to begin getting you started. Next, begin to track your external passivities of diminishment. Once you have brought them into awareness and listed them, Teilhard will explain the challenge you face in dealing with them in terms of the divine milieu.

These exercises are scattered liberally through every section.

In short, Savary's pedagogy not only illuminates the text by giving explanations

but also helps the reader appropriate Teilhard's insights by giving exercises to apply to personal life. To his credit, Savary presents Teilhard's thought not merely as a fascinating theological synthesis to be understood but as a practical spirituality to be lived. Devotees of Teilhard's theological vision will appreciate this dimension of Savary's book.

The question arises: Why revive interest in *The Divine Milieu*, a text written by Teilhard in 1929? The author's foreword explains. *The Divine Milieu* is central to Teilhard's self-understanding as a person passionately committed both to his avocation as a Jesuit priest and to his vocation as a scientist. For Savary it is Teilhard's interpretation of the culminating meditation of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola, the Contemplation for Obtaining Divine Love. "His purpose in writing *The Divine Milieu* was to share with us how he, as a Jesuit and as a dedicated scientist, learned to use the new eyes that Ignatius gave him in order to see spiritual reality today—in the world contemporary men and women live in, thoroughly informed and transformed by science and technology."

The text is central to Teilhard's spirituality as a Christian. For Teilhard Christ today cannot be limited to the risen Jesus of Nazareth but must include the Cosmic Christ, the Christ present in every cell of the ever evolving created universe. "For Teilhard, the Cosmic Body is meant to become fully conscious of itself in every cell of its being in such a way that every cell is also conscious of the whole Body's magnificent destiny. When this Christ Body realizes itself as the divine reality it has always been meant to be, that moment will be what Teilhard calls the Omega Point."

The book's subtitle is significant. Teilhard's insights, though suspect by Vatican authorities when they first appeared, are increasingly affirmed in many scientific and theological circles today. Teilhard boldly suggests a "third nature" for Christ, beyond the human and divine nature of Jesus of Nazareth. This is the "cosmic nature of Christ." Savary summarizes:

That cosmic nature is clearly different from his human nature as Jesus of Nazareth, and very different from his divine nature as the

Second Person of the Trinity. That cosmic nature is characterized by its ability to subsume and integrate into its "nature" all the various "natures" of creation, from the "natures" of the most inert and lowly rocks to the "natures" of the creatures with higher and higher levels of complexity and consciousness. Thus, for Teilhard, as for St. Paul, there

are three natures in Christ. Christ is fully human, fully divine, and fully cosmic.

This book is an exhilarating read, and will be welcomed not only by advocates of Teilhard's worldview but by all who are interested in contemporary spirituality. One is tempted to suggest that in 1929 Teilhard was right "too soon."

Richard J. Hauser



Donna Freitas talks about her new young adult novel, "The Possibilities of Sainthood," at americamagazine.org/podcast.

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Letters

National Treasures

I was delighted to read Bryan Lindenberg's account of the restoration of Our Lady of Purification church in Doña Ana, N.M., in "A Church Reborn" (8/25). I grew up in nearby Las Cruces, N.M. Our historic churches are truly a national treasure, and many have already been lost forever.

*David Paz, O.F.M.
Guaymas, Mexico*

Hard Questions

Many thanks to Camille D'Arienzo, R.S.M., for "Mercy Toward Our Fathers" (8/25), regarding priests guilty of the sexual abuse of minors. D'Arienzo asked two key questions: Is it reasonable to treat a one-time offender the same as a sexual predator? And ought we to judge any human being by the worst thing he has done, as if it were the only thing he has done? My response to both questions is no.

The U.S. bishops, in their 2002 national meeting in Dallas, rightly addressing the devastating harm done to victims of sexual abuse by clergy, adopted policies to assist victims and protect children and youth in the future. A motion from the floor at that meeting to provide the possibility of different punishments for offending priests, in line with differing circumstances of their offense, was defeated.

The Dallas meeting focused on victims of clergy sexual abuse; my hope is that in a future national meeting we bishops will address the two questions cited above, guided by the fundamental principles of justice.

*Most Rev. John J. Leibrecht
Bishop Emeritus
Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau*

Truth and Reconciliation

Kudos to Camille D'Arienzo, R.S.M. ("Mercy Toward Our Fathers," 8/25), for raising a taboo topic in such a nuanced and genuinely hopeful way in "Mercy Toward Our Fathers." The sexual abuse crisis is "the still open wound on the soul of the church," a wound in need of healing. Perhaps we as a church will now be willing to look at some creative ways toward such healing. Has anyone thought

of using the model of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission as a way toward such healing for us? Has anyone asked the abusers if they would be willing to speak of how they came to act on their impulses and to ask for forgiveness? Let the healing begin.

*William A. Barry, S.J.
Weston, Mass.*

Remembering the Outcast

Re "Mercy Toward Our Fathers," by Camille D'Arienzo, R.S.M. (8/25): In the current context, it is perhaps too much to hope for forgiveness and reconciliation between sexual abuse victims and the priests who abused them. And certainly those who were abused deserve our primary care. But there has been an incredible abandonment of such priests by some dioceses and religious communities, as if to say: "You've caused all this harm. We don't want anything to do with you."

I would not ask those abused to forgive their abusers. But I would ask the Christian community in general to be about the task of forgiveness and reconciliation. Such priests are still members of

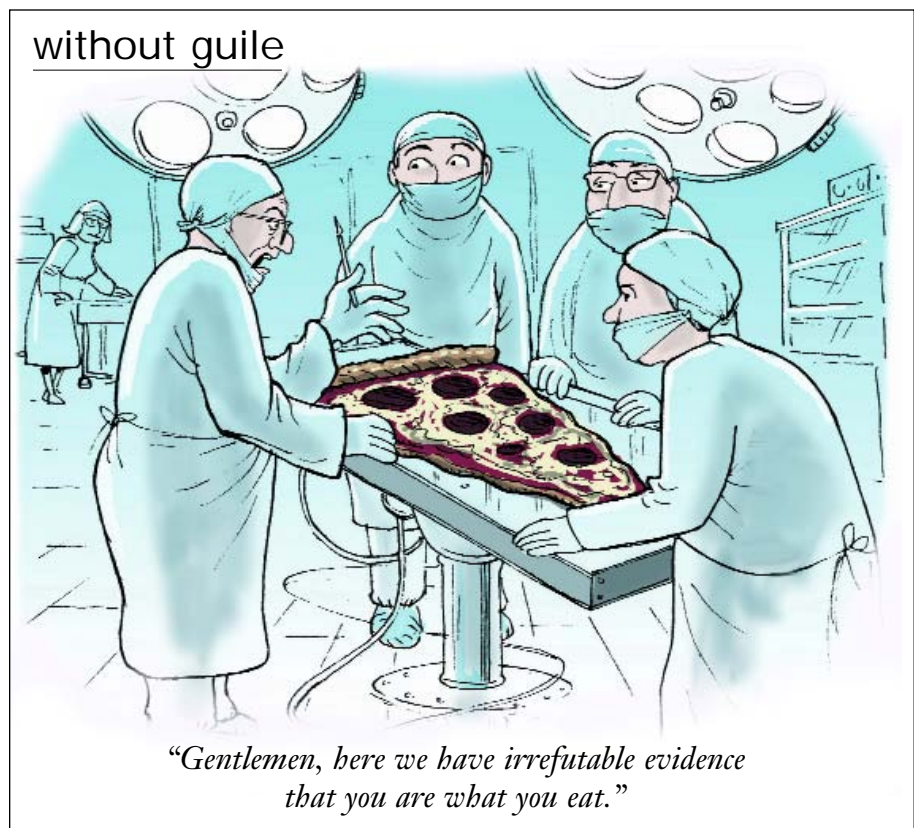
the church, with a right to the sacraments, as well as citizens with limited rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

*Ken Smits, O.F.M.Cap.
Madison, Wis.*

Pro-Life, Pro-Obama

Thank you for "Dear Senator Obama," by John F. Kavanaugh, S.J. (8/25). I am a passionate supporter of Senator Barack Obama's candidacy. I have a son who is autistic, and Obama's plan to help autistic children and their families is outstanding. I do, however, have a problem with his stance on abortion. I chose to keep my child even though I knew right from the start, from ultrasounds and blood tests during my pregnancy, that my son would probably have problems. When I was in my last trimester, our state voted on the "partial-birth abortion" issue. I felt as if the state was voting on whether or not I was carrying a human person.

My son is now 8 years old, and a happy child. God has blessed me. As a supporter of Senator Obama, I will send him a copy of Father Kavanaugh's open letter. At the same time, we have



Letters

to pray for him to change his heart.

*Jennifer Wingate
Bucksport, Me.*

A Distasteful Choice

In "Dear Senator Obama" (8/25), John F. Kavanaugh, S.J., displays once again his unique ability to cut to the heart of the matter and tweak the consciences of the powerful. It is ironic that we are presented with these kinds of morally distasteful choices between those who would get rid of the inconvenient who are yet to be born and those who would dispose of the inconvenient living. Perhaps if more of us had the wisdom to confront both sides with the wisdom of Christ, we would tweak more consciences. Now let's see an open letter to John McCain and his ilk.

*John D. Fitzmorris Jr.
New Orleans, La.*

Living Stones

Re Austen Ivereigh's "Bethlehem's Wall" (9/1): Having just returned from three days in Bethlehem, I can attest to the truth of the article regarding the existence of "the Wall," the oppression of Palestinians in the West Bank and the plight of Christians in particular. Crossing the Bethlehem checkpoint twice on foot, I saw the humiliating treatment of Palestinians by Israeli security personnel. At the same time, I saw buses of tourists being whisked through the Bethlehem checkpoint and then spending a couple of hours at the Church of the Nativity and Manger Square before passing through the checkpoint again, without having any idea of the suffering of the Palestinian Christians around them.

Many times during my visit, Palestinian Christians said they feel abandoned by the Christians of the West. They are incredulous and angry that we

are so concerned about religious sites in the Holy Land but are blind and deaf (or at least indifferent) to the oppression and plight of the "living stones" of the Holy Land.

*Ninette D'Souza
Toronto, Ont.*

American Terrorism

You have spoken bravely and truly in your Current Comment on "A-Bombs and Repentance" (8/25). Many Americans have excused themselves from the war crime of indiscriminate mass bombing of civilians—even of the use of atomic weapons. Five months before Hiroshima and Nagasaki, American bombers had rained incendiary bombs on many of the larger cities of Japan. One such raid killed an estimated 80,000 civilians in a vast residential area of Tokyo.

The Truman government's excuse for the use of atomic weapons was to call it the choice of a lesser evil, to force Japan to surrender instead of invading with much greater loss of lives. There were other (untried) ways to bring Japan to surrender, but deciding to kill civilians to force the rulers of Japan to cave in was essentially what is done by terrorists who say "if you don't do what we demand, we will kill these innocent hostages whom you love."

The bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were tactically unnecessary and ethically abominable.

*Robert Deiters, S.J.
Tokyo, Japan*

Incendiary Rhetoric

I have never been so incensed with an editorial comment as when I read "A-Bombs and Repentance" (Current Comment, 8/25). Yes, on Aug. 6 and 9

we mourned the dropping of atomic bombs on Japan. However, what many mourned is the fact that the relentless, merciless, negligent and persistent efforts by the leaders of Japan to start and wage war had put their entire populace in peril. They were solely responsible for the devastation brought upon their country.

You talk of the "utilitarian" estimates of U.S. losses from an invasion as if they are imaginary. Put them aside if you like, but what about the millions of Japanese civilians who would have been forced into war and killed during such an invasion? It is a fact that the atomic bombs not only saved American lives, they saved many more Japanese lives.

To suggest that the United States should apologize for using maximum force to prevent a maniacal regime from causing the deaths of millions more innocent people borders on the pathological. How would our government have explained to the families of those killed in an invasion that we had a bomb that could have ended the war earlier? Talk about a need for apologizing!

*John Fitzpatrick
Massapequa, N.Y.*

Robert F. Drinan, S.J., Biography

For a biography of Robert F. Drinan, S.J., Raymond A. Schroth, S.J., would appreciate reminiscences from those who knew him. This could include letters, stories of friendship, professional projects, research, teaching and persons to contact.

Among Schroth's previous books are *The American Journey of Eric Sevareid* (Steerforth Press) and, most recently, *The American Jesuits: A History* (New York Univ. Press).

*Raymond A. Schroth, S.J.
Boston College Jesuit Community
St. Mary's Hall
140 Commonwealth Ave.
Chestnut Hill, MA 02467
E-mail: raymondshroth@aol.com.
Ph: (617) 552 8042*



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The Word

Both Just and Merciful

Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A), Sept. 21, 2008

Readings: Is 55:6-9; Ps 145:2-3, 8-9, 17-18; Phil 1:20-24, 27; Mt 20:1-16

“Are you envious because I am generous?” (Mt 20:15)

THE TWO GREAT attributes of God in the Bible are justice and mercy. Today’s responsorial psalm reminds us that “the Lord is just in all his ways.” But we also hear that “the Lord is gracious and merciful,” and the reading from Isaiah 55 urges us to “turn to the Lord for mercy; to our God, who is generous in forgiving.” Is there any coherence or consistency between these statements about God? Today’s parable from Matthew 20 about the generous employer and the various persons hired to work in his vineyard concerns the relationship between God’s justice and God’s mercy. The point is that while God is both just and merciful, God’s mercy can and often does override or trump God’s justice.

Jesus lived most of his life in Galilee, the northern part of Israel, where agriculture was (and still is) a major occupation. Many workers were hired by the day, in keeping with the employer’s needs. During harvest time landowners needed a great deal of help, while at other times a prospective worker could stand around all day and not be hired. The scene presupposed in this parable would have been very familiar to Jesus’ audience.

That a landowner should hire people to work for the day in his vineyard is not surprising. That he should hire them at such different times of the day—dawn, 9 a.m., noon, 3:00 p.m., and 5:00 p.m.—is mildly surprising. But obviously he wants to finish the work that day, so he keeps on hiring workers. What is startling is that he pays all the workers the same salary. Those hired late in the day, we can be sure, were pleasantly surprised, and so they marvel at the landowner’s generosity. But those hired at dawn become angry and grumble about what they regard as the

landowner’s injustice. The landowner defends his practice by reminding the grumblers that he has given them what they agreed to—“the usual daily wage” or “what is just” (that is, a *denarius*). He ends the controversy with a question intended to silence the grumblers: “Are you envious because I am generous?” (Mt 20:15).

One of the persistent complaints against Jesus by his opponents was that he reached out to marginal persons, proclaiming to them the mercy of God and promising them entrance into God’s kingdom. The tax collectors and sinners were like those hired at 5:00 p.m., whereas the religiously observant (the scribes and Pharisees) were like those hired at dawn. The opponents reasoned that according to their vision of God’s justice, they should receive a greater reward than the latecomers. Should the former get any reward at all? Should they get the same reward as those who toiled all day? Was Jesus so emphasizing God’s mercy that he was neglecting God’s justice?

The point of the parable of the generous employer is that eternal life in God’s kingdom is a sufficiently abundant reward for everyone. In that respect God is just. And God wants everyone to enjoy that reward. It is never too late; there is always hope, even for latecomers. In that respect God is also merciful.

The parable reminds us that what is at issue here is admission to God’s kingdom, which is God’s gift to give. What those hired early really object to is not the landowner’s injustice but rather his generosity. They need to learn that God’s kingdom is the favor of God freely given, that the fullness of God’s kingdom is enough for everyone, and that each of us will find perfect satisfaction with whatever God may give us.

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord.” These words from the book of Isaiah (55:8) remind us that we should not always judge God according to our own



ART. BY TAD DUINNE

limited human perspective of justice. Nor should we always expect God to act according to human standards and rules. The God revealed in Jesus’ life and teaching is both merciful and just. He gives to us all what is due to us. But he is generous and compassionate to those who need it most. The God who is just in all his ways and holy in all his works is also gracious and merciful.

Paul’s words from prison (“to me life is Christ, and death is gain,” Phil 1:21) express perfectly the attitude of one who already lives in God’s kingdom, and whose faith and hope make him fearless in the face of death. Perhaps more than any other biblical writer, Paul understood correctly the mercy of God and its relation to the justice of God.

Daniel J. Harrington

Praying With Scripture

- Do you want always to be judged according to strict justice? Or do you want to leave room for mercy?

- Do you ever feel like the workers who were hired at dawn and had worked all day? What do you do with your resentments?

- Have you ever been the recipient of someone’s unexpected generosity? How did you respond?