

The background of the cover is a photograph of a rural landscape. The top half shows a vibrant green field with a dirt path leading from the left towards the center. A tractor is visible in the middle ground, working in the field. The bottom half of the image shows a brown, tilled field with some green weeds in the foreground.

America

THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC WEEKLY

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Stewards of Creation

THE CATHOLIC CLIMATE COVENANT

WILLIAM S. SKYLSTAD

OF MANY THINGS

Jesuit missionaries have been anthropologists, grammarians, astronomers and preservers of culture in Asia and the Americas. This is happening now in the Pacific through the Micronesian Seminar. Mic-Sem, as it is known, aims to serve the local people and preserve their heritage. In this case, "local" has a rather wide meaning; it covers islands spread across an area larger than the United States.

My opportunity to visit the Mic-Sem came after I was invited to direct an eight-day retreat last year for 20 Jesuits gathered on the island of Pohnpei. As a novice some 50 years earlier, I had volunteered for this mission of the New York Jesuit Province in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. I did eventually become a missionary—but on the other side of the globe, in Africa, for over 20 years. The retreat gave me an opportunity to expand my horizons and see the tremendous achievements of the Jesuits in Micronesia.

Mic-Sem and its staff of 10 are based in a modest two-story building close to the Pohnpei airport. Begun in 1972, it has been directed since then by my Jesuit friend Fran Hezel, originally from Buffalo, N.Y. His full name is Francis Xavier Hezel, and in many ways he carries on the endeavors of the saint with whose name he was baptized. While Xavier was a high-jumper at the University of Paris in the 16th century, Fran, who clocked 70 in January, continues to play half-court basketball almost every day. Even before he was ordained, he was assigned to Micronesia; and his entire Jesuit ministry has been with the people of Micronesia.

The purpose of Mic-Sem is "to stimulate reflections on current issues in the light of Gospel values." The impact of the recent economic downturn upon the islands is the current hot topic. Fran explains that Mic-Sem "is a mixture of many things—and always new and growing." The library is a cornerstone of the institution. With about 20,500 book titles, it is recognized

worldwide as one of the best collections on Micronesia. While its special strengths lie in history and anthropology, it is rapidly expanding in related fields such as government, education, social and economic development, and the natural sciences.

Besides print materials, the library collection includes maps, microfilm, videos, transparencies and photographs on Micronesian history. The collection contains about 55,000 images, 14,000 tracks of local music and about 700 videos.

Mic-Sem has produced several books and many occasional bulletins (the latest is No. 75). The media studio has produced 63 videos on a wide variety of social issues. These are broadcast on local television stations and are available in VHS and DVD formats, as well as online.

Most of the library resources are also available on the Internet. A glance at the seminar's Web site, www.micsem.org, will introduce you to the history and current situation in Micronesia in a variety of ways. Photo albums have become my favorite feature, with 30 albums on the history and culture of the islands. One powerful presentation, entitled "Nuclear Nomads," describes the impact of atomic weapons tests near the islands from 1946 to 1958.

As one of the world's experts on Micronesia, Fran looks back on his years of service and his contribution to the people of Micronesia and says modestly, "It has been a good ride." He adds that the key to whatever success they have achieved is always to reflect with the people, not over or for them, "to examine how ordinary lives and traditional cultures are being changed, challenged by modernization and structural changes." Although he is not slowing down on the basketball court or in his research, he admits he is looking to the time when he can hand on the leadership of Mic-Sem to a local layperson or a Micronesian Jesuit. **PETER SCHINELLER, S.J.**

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From the archives, Hans Küng (right) and Karl Rahner, S.J., discuss infallibility. Plus J. Matthew Sleeth introduces *The Green Bible* on our podcast, and Karen Sue Smith narrates a slide show of Holy Week at the Franciscan Renewal Center in Arizona. All at americamagazine.org.



The Living Dead

Zombies, by definition, come back to haunt you. That is the danger inherent in the U.S. Treasury's plan for taking over the toxic assets, i.e., bad loans, of the so-called zombie banks, financial institutions that continue to operate despite the fact that their liabilities far outweigh their genuine assets. In the end, the plan will leave us with still more zombie banks or even, worst of all, a zombie federal treasury. The plan for the government and private investors to buy up the bad loans is premised on the same kind of flimflam that brought the banks down in the first place. The bad loans will be bought up at a ratio of nine to one, public to private money. Many of those loans will never yield any profit, but losses on them will be guaranteed by the federal government. If in the end there are any profits, private investors will reap the bulk of the profit over the taxpayers.

That bankers love the plan is no surprise, but for the taxpayer there is no justice. Paul Krugman, the Nobel prize-winning economist, writes, "This is an open invitation to play heads I win, tails taxpayers lose." The plan amounts, said another Nobel laureate, Joseph Stiglitz, to "robbery of the American people." The financier George Soros believes it simply won't work. This is the same kind of overly smart, short-term and self-interested chicanery that brought on the economic collapse. We appreciate the determination President Barack Obama has shown in trying to avert a depression, but his Wall Street economic team has given us not a way to recovery but a road to even greater disaster. The Geithner Plan demonstrates they lack the mindset and the values needed to restore the economy to health. If they do not have a better idea, they ought, as former Treasury Secretary James A. Baker has suggested, to put insolvent banks in temporary receivership.

Three Little Words

At the recent Group of 20 summit meeting, President Obama explicitly linked the words leadership and listening. A third word could be added: learning, as in learning from others. Together, these make a wise triumvirate: Leaders listen and learn. A leader who learns might help to fend off slogans like "It's too European," which are routinely paraded before the American public as a disincentive for needed reforms. Today, Germany and a few other nations have savings and financial reserves on tap that will make the economic crunch they too are experiencing much less severe. Why not learn from them?

Critics of the president's health care reforms are already

reverting to the stale scare-word "socialism," another form of anti-European bias and a refusal to learn from others. In some Western countries, every citizen has access to health care at significantly less cost than in the United States; and U.N. data show that people in these nations also enjoy comparatively longer life spans.

We could also learn from the Japanese. Although electric cars and the need for charging stations were discussed in New York as early as 1912 (The New York Times, Aug. 11, 1912), the United States failed to develop either the stations or the cars. In the 1990s, though, Toyota developed, tested and sold the Prius, a hybrid. Honda also developed a hybrid, the Insight, but GM stepped away from its battery-powered car, the EV1. Finally GM and Ford are developing electric cars, as is Nissan. How sad it would be if our leaders in politics and business were to demonstrate a hubris that kept them from listening, learning and leading the way out of global crisis.

Venus or Space Station?

A few years ago in Abuja, Nigeria, after sunset a teacher pointed to a bright light in the west and asked the children, "What is that?" They answered immediately, "That's the BBC satellite!" The teacher smiled and gently corrected them, explaining that it was the evening star, the planet Venus. But they were not far from wrong. A few weeks ago astronauts added the last array of solar panels to the International Space Station, completing the construction that began with its launching in 1998. Now, on certain days it will appear brighter than Venus will ever be, becoming the brightest object in the sky after the sun and moon.

How does one know whether that bright object is Venus or the I.S.S.? The I.S.S. is always moving, about 220 miles above earth, and its exact location can be found on the Internet. Visit www.heavens-above.com and follow the directions to find out if and when it will be over your backyard in the next 12 days. On a clear evening or morning, in addition to thousands of stars, a few planets, possibly the moon and some aircraft, you may see how science is adding bright new lights to the night sky, competing with the heavenly lights the Creator placed there billions of years ago.

We might also think of the I.S.S. orbiting planet earth every 92 minutes as a sign of peaceful coexistence, since it is the product of international cooperation among five partners: Canada, Japan, Russia, the United States and participating countries of the European Space Agency. Currently astronauts from Russia, Japan and the United States are on board.

Protection for Haitians

Thirty thousand Haitians in Florida face deportation back to the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. The United States should grant them temporary protected status—which allows people from a designated nation to reside here legally and qualify for work authorization—until the country recovers from four back-to-back hurricanes and tropical storms that ravaged it last summer. These killed 800 people and left nearly one million homeless, with crops wiped out and an estimated \$1 billion in damages. Increased costs for food and fuel led to riots a year ago. For children, the consequences have been especially dire. Many eat so-called mud cookies, made from dirt, salt and vegetable shortening. According to Unicef, Haiti has the highest rates in the Western Hemisphere of mortality of infants, children under 5 and mothers. Suspending the deportations, moreover, would allow remittances to continue to flow from Haitians in the United States. Remittances account for approximately a quarter of Haiti's gross domestic product.

After the storms, Haitian president René Préval asked President George W. Bush to grant temporary protected status. Congress approved this in 1990 for foreign nationals fleeing in the wake of civil war and natural disasters like Hurricane Mitch in 2004. Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador have all received regular 18-month increments of this status, and now Haiti should receive it too. Writing on behalf of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Cardinal Francis George said in a letter to President Bush dated Oct. 8, 2008, that “Haiti meets the standards of T.P.S. because it had experienced political turmoil, four natural disasters and severe food shortages in the previous eight months alone.” The letter also pointed out that conditions there were comparable to or worse than those in countries that received the designation. In mid-March the cardinal wrote again, calling temporary protected status “a mantle of protection...the United States can make toward alleviating the suffering of the Haitian people.”

Fears that granting T.P.S. would bring a large exodus from Haiti to U.S. shores are groundless. It would be available only to people who are already here. Nevertheless, the former Homeland Security Department secretary, Michael Chertoff, denied Mr. Préval's request, and the new secretary, Janet Napolitano, has not addressed the Haitian deportation issue apart from a Feb. 25 letter from the department's director of policy, Susan Cullen, stating that

the department planned “to continue to coordinate the removal of Haitian nationals to Haiti.”

Deportations also lead to the breakup of families. One recent example concerns a 35-year-old undocumented Haitian mother, Vialine Jean Paul. She married a U.S. citizen in the United States and had a child who, being born here, is also a U.S. citizen. The case is on appeal. Family breakup has long been a major concern of the U.S.C.C.B. and is a major motivation for immigrant advocates' efforts toward comprehensive immigration reform.

Over the past decades, people on Haiti's neighbor island, Cuba, received far more generous treatment from the United States. Through a lottery program, 20,000 Cubans receive visas annually to emigrate here through the Special Cuban Migration Program of 1994. Other Cubans who manage to reach U.S. shores by sea can remain if they touch land—the so-called wet foot, dry foot policy. Once on U.S. soil, Cubans are automatically eligible for asylum.

By contrast, the policy toward Haiti has been harsh, marked by mandatory detention and lack of access to counsel. There is a double standard, with Haitians treated as economic migrants and generally deported back home in a blatantly exclusionary manner. Cheryl Little, an attorney who is executive director of the Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center, told *America* that the inequity “represents the two extremes of our immigration policy.” She added, “I don't know of any other group that has been singled out for discriminatory treatment decade after decade.” To its credit, Canada has imposed a moratorium on the deportation of Haitians.

So far, Haiti's plight has not appeared on Mr. Obama's radar screen. Until it does, members of families like Ms. Jean Paul's will continue to face separation. Temporary protected status is the humane way to prevent deportations that would not only unravel family bonds but would also create an influx of Haitians back into a desperately poor country that even before the four disastrous storms of last year was unable to provide basic food and shelter for its people. The new administration ought to show its humanitarian side by granting Haiti temporary protected status, sparing Haitians in the United States from deportation back to a country ill-prepared to receive them.



SIGNS OF THE TIMES

THE ENVIRONMENT

Green Initiatives in San Jose Diocese

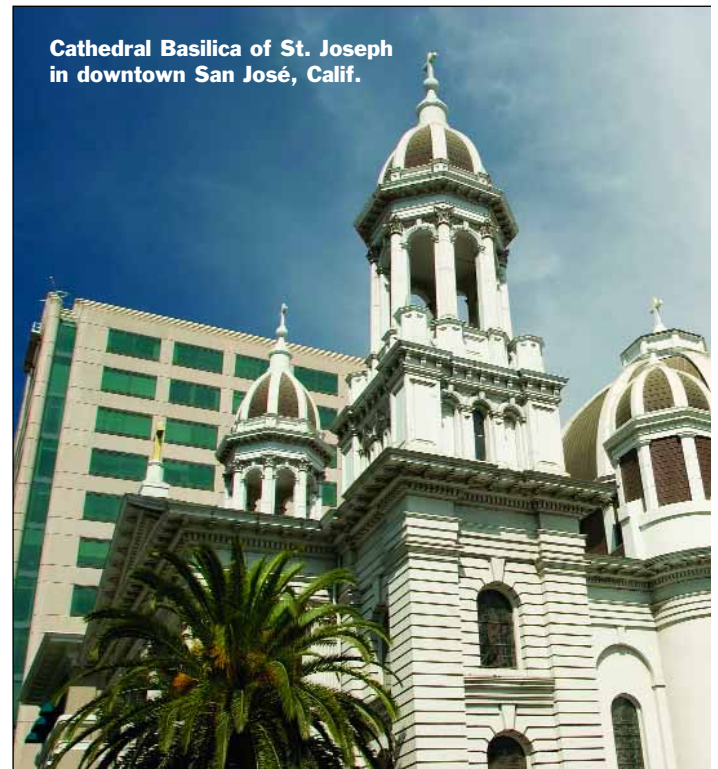
As consensus continues to grow in the United States around the need for a proactive approach to climate change, Catholic organizations like the Diocese of San Jose in California are finding a valuable resource and inspiration in Catholic social teachings for stewardship of the environment. The diocese recently announced a new program called the Catholic Green Initiative of Santa Clara County to encourage area Catholics to conserve water and energy, to become more educated about conservation efforts and environmentally friendly practices for the home and workplace and to collaborate on a unified “green vision” for the diocese.

The impetus for the initiative originally came from grass-roots efforts in local parishes to increase awareness of environmental concerns. Since last September, a diocesan green team under the direction of the Rev. Brendan McGuire, vicar general for special projects in the diocese, has been meeting regularly to formulate a plan of action and organize a town hall meeting for parish leaders and others in the Catholic community engaged in the environmental movement.

At that meeting, held at Santa

Clara University on Feb. 7 and co-sponsored by the Diocese of San Jose, Catholic Charities of Santa Clara

County, Santa Clara University and Presentation Retreat and Conference Center, participants heard from Dan



Cathedral Basilica of St. Joseph in downtown San José, Calif.

THE ECONOMY

Demand for Counseling Skyrockets During Troubled Times

As the March unemployment numbers showed another huge increase in the number of jobless Americans, one occupation is in greater demand across the country: providing counseling services to jobless people whose emotional distress is outpacing their financial distress. “We are simply beyond capacity at this point,” said Courtney Prentis, director of Catholic Charities Community Services Southside in St. Louis, Mo. “We started seeing a surge starting late

summer to late fall. We thought it would subside a little bit over the holidays,” she added. “That did not happen. We are looking at potentially running a wait list for non-urgent mental health needs.”

California. Dave Ross, a counselor with Catholic Charities in the San Francisco Bay area, said he sees a “spread of effect” in the clients who now come seeking help. It’s akin, he explained, to a “chain reaction.” “Somebody loses their job in the fam-

ily” but they don’t feel too bad, “because their spouse is working.” Then “their spouse loses their job...but that’s okay because they have savings,” he continued. “Then the savings get depleted.” Ross said households are then forced to think about “things they never thought of before. Sign-ups for Little League are \$150. Do you spend that for rent, food or your kid’s Little League?” Parents feel shame, Ross said, as they believe “I should be able to rise above this.”

One thing that is different in this economic slump, according to Ross, is the number of “new poor” seeking help. Without any experience of poverty in their lives, “they don’t know how to be poor.” Ross related the case of one



Misleh, executive director of the Catholic Coalition on Climate Change, who spoke on the theology of

stewardship and the centrality of stewardship to the Christian ethos. The Catholic Coalition on Climate Change (profiled in this issue of **America** by Bishop William S. Skylstad) is a conglomerate of 12 organizations committed to addressing the causes and consequences of climate change.

Outlining some of the damage climate change has already caused to the environment and to human communities, Misleh warned of the immediate need for action. “We need movement, not just a plan. People are becoming informed on this issue and I see a real hunger for leadership, especially from the church,” he said.

Bishop Patrick J. McGrath of San Jose expressed similar sentiments in a January statement. “Our Catholic social teaching impresses upon us that nature is not something to exploit but is God’s creation to preserve,” McGrath wrote. “We are called to celebrate the splendor of God’s handiwork, to be good stewards of creation,

and to safeguard the integrity of all that God has made.”

Specific actions already underway in the diocese include retrofitting a number of schools and churches for solar energy, as well as plans to distribute reusable grocery bags in parishes. The initiative will eventually include education programs on the connection between Catholic social teachings and the environment, as well as practical education efforts on how to reduce water and energy use in the home, how to make households more “green” and how to make greater use of community organizing to affect public policy on environmental issues.

“This initiative is about mobilizing all Catholics in the diocese under a single vision of sustaining an environmental legacy for our children, their children and all future generations,” said Father McGuire. The initiative is scheduled to launch officially on June 5, which is World Environment Day.

couple who came into a Catholic Charities office. “We start chatting a little bit—about how the day was going,” he said. “I asked, ‘How can I help you?’ [The man] starts crying. ‘We need to know how to get shelter, we need to know how to get food. We used to give to Catholic Charities, but now we’re in a position where we need to get help.’”

Nebraska. Melissa Brestel, a counselor for Catholic Charities of Omaha, Neb., said trying to treat an individual’s depression in the midst of the economic slump is “a really huge challenge for us. Before the economy got really difficult, you’d manage their stress and manage their depression. Unfortunately, we can’t help people get jobs.

We can’t force the market to do what people need it to do,” she said. “We try to help them find meaning in their lives.... We help people redefine themselves a little bit differently,” through such things as volunteer activity or church programs. Brestel said the counselors themselves are also feeling the stress of the situation. “We’ve had to make a few referrals with our employee assistance program to help therapists find some balance in their life,” she said.

Michigan. Michigan’s unemployment rate reached 11.6 percent in February, largely as a result of job losses in the collapsing American auto industry. But “It’s not like I’m seeing a



Counseling at Catholic Charities in New Orleans, La.

lot of G.M. and Chrysler execs,” said Pina Newman, a counselor for Catholic Social Services of Oakland County. “I’m seeing a lot of people in the labor and construction industry.

Carpentry, plumbing, electrical work—their trades are coming to a screeching halt.” Newman said some of her clients—she works with 20 to 25 people and she doesn’t even work full time—are resigned to their situation. “Some people walk around with ‘this is my fate and this is where I’m going to be,’ and those people are chronically that way,” she said.

Pope Joins Call for Weapons Ban

Pope Benedict XVI called on April 5 for all nations to end the production, stockpiling and use of land mines and cluster bombs. He also expressed his support for programs and measures that “guarantee the necessary assistance to victims of such devastating weapons.” He noted that 10 years have passed since the Ottawa Mine Ban Treaty first took effect. Signatories to the treaty agree to ban the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of antipersonnel mines. The Convention on Cluster Munitions, which would similarly prohibit cluster bombs and munitions, was recently adopted and is open for signatories, the pope added. “I wish to encourage countries that still haven’t done so to sign without delay.” The United States is a signatory to neither treaty.

Sri Lankan Refugees in Need of Aid

As more and more civilians cross out of the battle zone in northeastern Sri Lanka to government-controlled areas, Buddhists and Catholics have joined forces to transport truckloads of relief items to the displaced people. “We collected milk powder, toothpaste, rice and eggs from Muslims, Buddhists and Christians,” Akurana Gunarathana, a Buddhist monk, told UCA News. He

NEWS BRIEFS

Pope Benedict XVI has appointed Archbishop Vincent Nichols of Birmingham, England, as **archbishop of Westminster**. • The Rev. Andrew Wadsworth of the Diocese of Westminster, England, has been appointed executive director of the **International Commission on English in the Liturgy**, the body that prepares English translations of liturgical texts. • Richard J. Goldstone, the former chief prosecutor of two U.N. criminal tribunals, will lead an investigation into violations of human rights and international law during the **recent conflict in the Gaza Strip**. • The Council on Foreign Relations has launched a new Web page as part of its **Religion and Foreign Policy Initiative**: www.cfr.org/religioninitiative. • A Florida-based Christian aid agency announced it has secured the release of **69 nonviolent inmates** just in time for Easter. Prisoners in Jamaica, Guyana, Haiti and Honduras who committed nonviolent offenses—but were incarcerated because they lacked funds to pay the required fines—will be released in time to spend Easter with their families. • As many as **150,000 new or returning Catholics** are expected to join or return to the Catholic Church in 2009 in the United States. Many of them will do so in parishes across the country during the Easter Vigil on April 11.



Vincent Nichols

began his eight-hour journey northward around 3 a.m. March 8 with Buddhist monks and Catholic priests. An estimated 150,000 ethnic Tamils are still trapped in a small patch of Tamil-controlled area in the island country’s northeastern area. Since 1983, the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam have been fighting for independence from the Sinhalese-led government in an effort to establish a Tamil state in northern and eastern Sri Lanka. The conflict has claimed close to 80,000 lives.

Iowa Bishops Decry Gay Marriage

Iowa’s Catholic bishops have voiced serious disagreement with the Iowa Supreme Court’s unanimous decision on April 3 to declare unconstitutional

a state law defining marriage as a union of one man and one woman. “It implements a novel understanding of marriage, which will grievously harm families and children,” the bishops said in a prepared statement. The bishops vowed to continue to protect and promote marriage as a union between a man and a woman and asked Catholics and other citizens of Iowa to amend the state constitution to do so. The decision further allows gay and lesbian couples full access to the institution of civil marriage. With the high court’s ruling, Iowa became the third state in the nation to recognize marriages for gay and lesbian couples, after Massachusetts and Connecticut. Vermont became the fourth state to do so on April 7, 2009.

From CNS and other sources.

KYLE T. KRAMER



In Desert Times

I had a chance recently to wander a bit in the Sonoran desert outside of Tucson, Ariz. As a farmer accustomed to the lush green fields and thick woods of the well-watered Midwest, I was unprepared for the surprising beauty of the rocks, sand, mountains and valleys of this semi-arid land. Unlike the gentle, mostly tamed landscape of my home, however, the desert's beauty is fierce, wild and frighteningly indifferent. And while not barren, the desert's fecundity is spare, stark and lean. Survival in the desert plays out on the margins of sufficiency: it provides manna just enough.

On my hikes I found myself fascinated by the saguaro, those tall, emblematic, almost anthropomorphic cacti that proliferate across the Sonoran desert. Remembering that the most elegant and sustainable agricultural systems are patterned on the ecosystems native to their locale, like forest cover or prairie grasses, I wondered what I might learn from the saguaro about how to survive—and even thrive—in desert times.

The saguaro is uniquely suited for a harsh environment, as its two-century lifespan attests. A central taproot and wide radial roots help it both to remain stable and to catch the sparse desert rainfall. These roots also anchor the saguaro to the possibilities and limits of a particular place. It manages the best it can where it is, with almost unimaginably patient fortitude, growing just an inch and a half in its first eight years and waiting over

five decades before putting out its first branch or arm. Sometimes reaching 40 feet in height and often weighing over six tons, the saguaro depends on a strong interior core of interconnected, woody ribs. Its tough, thick skin and two-inch spines protect its soft interior from heat, sun and animals.

The saguaro has evolved to embrace the rhythms of feasting and fasting that must govern any life lived in harmony with the cycles of the natural world. In flush times, the cactus drinks up a storm, its pleated exterior expanding like an accordion to accommodate heavy rainfall. In drought, it conserves moisture by growing slowly and transpiring little.

The saguaro might seem to suggest an ideal of a strong, stingy, rugged individualist. In truth, however, its life is rooted—literally—in community, hospitality and generosity. In its early years, a saguaro can survive only under the shaded protection of a “nurse tree,” like a palo verde, ironwood or mesquite. Though it eventually supplants its host, the saguaro practices its own form of hospitality, as gilded flickers, gila woodpeckers and other birds bore into its sides and create cavities in its interior to shelter themselves from the elements. And beyond allowing its body to be perforated, even amid a life of great scarcity the saguaro finds a way to share generously: the native Tohono O’odham tribes and others have long used its fruits for food and its strong internal ribs for building materials and various other purposes.

When Jesus dwelt 40 days in the desert, he gave himself over to divine

care instead of grasping for the food, protection, possessions and power with which he was tempted. In the current period of uncertainty, it is likewise tempting to grasp for these, for much of the order, security and wealth of the modern period has turned out to be far less tenable than we had assumed. With an age of economic and ecological consequences now clearly upon us, an era of desert living has begun that will extend far beyond the 40 days of Lent. Like the saguaro, we can survive in the desert—but only by embracing its gifts, demands and limitations.

Mere survival is not the vocation of Christians.

With every report of the stock market's latest plunge or news of an acquaintance's lost job, I confess that I feel a strong temptation simply to hunker down amid earthly concern. But even in desert times, mere survival is not the vocation of Christians who follow a raised savior.

Intrigued as I was by the saguaro's various adaptations for life in the unforgiving desert, even more was I moved by how, so firmly rooted in place and so long accustomed to suffering and deprivation, it still embodied beauty and transcendence in its very form. Given its difficult circumstances, one might expect the saguaro to be short, squat and self-contained, like a barrel cactus. Instead, its long trunk and arms stretch insistently heavenward, and its spine-covered body seems electrified with excited and almost childlike anticipation: “Look to the sky! Christ is risen! Christ will come again!”

KYLE T. KRAMER is the director of lay degree programs at Saint Meinrad School of Theology in Saint Meinrad, Ind., and an organic farmer.



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/MARXON



A CATHOLIC APPROACH
TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Stewards of Creation

BY WILLIAM S. SKYLSTAD

Earth Day, April 22, will mark the unveiling of “The Catholic Climate Covenant,” an initiative of the three-year-old Catholic Coalition on Climate Change, which represents 12 organizations, one of which is the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. The covenant includes what is being called the St. Francis Pledge to Protect Creation and the Poor, inspired by the saint’s “Canticle of the Sun,” which praises creation in the form of earth, water and creatures. St. Francis of Assisi is an important model for another reason as well: he uniquely links care of creation and care of the poor.

“God’s creation is good and it is one,” Pope Benedict said last August in Australia at World Youth Day, as he introduced the theme of protecting God’s creation. Benedict declared that sustainable development and care for our environment are “of vital importance for humanity.” Then he framed the moral dimensions of environmental justice and care for creation in the form of a challenge to the “brutal consumption of creation,” where the whole is treated merely as “our property” that we consume “for ourselves alone.” Benedict cautioned that effective initiatives to prevent the destruction of creation can be developed and implemented, but “only where creation is considered as beginning with God.”

In the United States, a growing awareness of climate change and its consequences can be seen in private and public efforts to conserve energy. State governments are introducing bills and forming policies to reduce fossil fuel emissions and are crafting incentives for homeowners and busi-

BISHOP WILLIAM S. SKYLSTAD *is the bishop of Spokane, past president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and a current member of the bishops’ Committee on International Justice and Peace.*

nesses to conserve and to consider renewable energy alternatives. The president and Congress are making similar proposals at the national level, setting off a major debate over how best to respond to the complexities of climate change. In a debate dominated by environmental groups, scientists and alternative energy entrepreneurs on the one hand, and by utilities, agribusiness, coal and oil companies and others with vested interests on the other hand, the Catholic Church and Christian interfaith leaders are lifting up the moral and human dimensions of climate change. Our Christian faith calls us to bring together the biblical mandate to care for the "garden" (Gn 1:28-30) and also to care "for the least of these" (Mt 25). As our nation deliberates about future policies, American Catholics offer a distinctive position that combines care for God's creation with protection for those who are poor and vulnerable.

The church is by no means setting itself against science on this issue. Rather, the church relies on scientific research. "With increasing clarity, scientific research demonstrates

that the impact of human actions in any one place or region can have worldwide effects," Pope Benedict wrote in a letter to the ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople (Sept. 1, 2007). The pope went on to note that the consequences of disregard for the environment "always harm human co-existence" and "betray human dignity and violate the rights of

citizens who desire to live in a safe environment..."

The U.S. Catholic bishops have expressed similar views in their own statements; on climate change the bishops accept the scientific evidence and conclusions of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Climate change is largely a consequence of the way the world has undertaken industrialization, used and abused natural resources for energy (transportation, heating and cooling) and neglected the resulting pollution and other adverse effects on the fragile ecosystems of the planet. Its adverse effects are global. The nations, particularly the industrialized nations, must now find remedies.

Pope Benedict's sophisticated understanding of these issues is apparent in the same letter, where he discusses a

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responsibility that industrialized countries and those becoming more industrialized share. "While it is true that industrializing countries are not morally free to repeat the past errors of others by recklessly continuing to damage the environment," he wrote, "it is also of the case that highly industrialized countries must share 'clean technologies' and ensure that their own markets do not sustain demands for goods whose very production contributes to the proliferation of pollution."

Climate change is already affecting the planet and its people in very real ways. And the adverse effects could make life more difficult for those least able to cope with the consequences of climate change (see the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Fourth Assessment Report, available online). While not every weather-related natural disaster can be directly linked to climate change, it is clear from those who are studying climate change that weather disruptions—prolonged droughts, more intense rains, melting glaciers, and so on—will become more common.

Two years ago, the Catholic Coalition on Climate Change held a hearing at the request of the Alaskan bishops. An elder from the Inuit village of Newtok told the participants how his village now regularly floods in the fall because the sea ice is forming later and later, allowing storm-swells up the nearby river. State and federal funds are being

used to relocate the village to higher ground. But think of all the places on earth where such resources are not available. What happens to those people, their livelihoods, their families, neighbors and friends?

Many scientists warn that African nations now feel the brunt of the negative impact of climate change and that they will continue to do so. In Ethiopia, nearly one-fifth of the population (12 million people) is currently receiving food aid due to chronic drought. Breaking the cycle of drought and starvation has always been difficult in this part of the world, but new and more plentiful resources will be needed to respond to humanitarian crises like this—mitigating the impact of climate change—and also for adaptation efforts that help poor nations cope in the long term with an altered climate.

These examples highlight the need to reduce the level of our own greenhouse gas emissions through new technology and energy efficiencies and to share these new ways with the poorest countries around the world. Our nation must demonstrate leadership in helping developing nations grow their economies in more environmentally sustainable ways.

Working Behind the Scenes

Since the moral and human dimensions are often neglected or missing in the dialogue over how to respond to climate change, the Catholic community and its interfaith partners

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CFCA is an international movement of people who support and encourage children, youth and the aging in developing countries. Founded by lay Catholics acting on the Gospel call to serve the poor, CFCA works with people of all faiths.

have a duty to speak for the voiceless and to bring together issues of social justice and environmental stewardship. This is the mission of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Environmental Justice Program and the National Religious Partnership for the Environment.

On this issue the Catholic community took an early lead. Seven years ago, the U.S. Catholic bishops adopted an unprecedented statement, *Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence and the Common Good*. In it the bishops insisted that responses to climate change be guided by the following: prudence, which requires wise action now to address problems that will grow in magnitude and consequence; "bold and generous action on behalf of the common good," rather than in compliance with narrow interests; and a clear priority for the poor, who bear the greatest burdens and pay the greatest price for the consequences of climate change.

"At its core, global climate change is not simply about economic theory or political platforms, nor about partisan advantage or interest group pressures," the bishops wrote. "Rather, global climate change is about the future of God's creation and the one human family. It is about protecting both the 'human environment' and the natural environ-

ment. It is about our human stewardship of God's creation and our responsibility to those who come after us."

The U.S.C.C.B. is leading efforts with other members of the National Religious Partnership for the Environment to help shape the climate change legislation before Congress. Without that collective voice, key provisions that address the poverty dimensions of climate change would have been weakened or eliminated from the first climate change legislation to be debated (but not adopted) by the Senate. The partnership is still working to ensure that the new legislation includes provisions to protect poor people in the United States who face rising energy costs, and also provisions to assist developing countries in adapting to the negative effects of climate change. In mid-February hundreds of Catholic leaders went to Capitol Hill as part of a Catholic Social Ministry Gathering to make this specific case with their senators and representatives.

ON THE WEB

From the archives, William S. Skylstad on the spirituality of rivers.
americamagazine.org/pages

The Covenant and the Pledge

The Catholic Coalition on Climate Change, as noted above, is also launching a practical education and action initiative. Individual Catholics, families, parishes, schools, religious communities, dioceses and other Catholic organizations are invited to take the St. Francis Pledge and join The Catholic Climate Covenant. The covenant provides concrete ways of responding to Scripture and Catholic teaching, while demonstrating a concern for both the planet and its people. Through a new Web site, video and ad campaign with outreach to dozens of cooperating national organizations, Catholics are being asked to take the pledge and agree to: *pray and reflect* on the duty to care for God's creation and protect the poor and vulnerable; *learn about and educate* others on the moral dimensions of climate change; *assess our participation*—as individuals and organizations—in contributing to climate change; *act to change choices and behaviors* that contribute to climate change; and *advocate Catholic principles and priorities* in discussions and in decision making on climate change, especially as it affects the poor and vulnerable. A new Web site (<http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/ejp/climate>) will provide concrete ways for Catholics to fulfill their pledge.

With Pope Benedict's strong voice, with clear leadership by the U.S. Catholic bishops, by joining together in The Catholic Climate Covenant and the St. Francis Pledge, and by reclaiming our ancient traditions of caring for creation and for God's people, especially the poor, the Catholic community will play an increasingly important role in addressing climate change. It is one way of demonstrating true solidarity with our brothers and sisters on a finite yet abundant planet. **A**



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Christopher Bellitto, Ph.D., assistant professor of history at Kean University, and academic editor at-large with Paulist Press.

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A Farmer's Gift

An appreciation of Wendell Berry

BY KYLE T. KRAMER

The Christian Science Monitor once hailed Wendell Berry as “the prophetic American voice of our day.” Raised on a farm in northeastern Kentucky, Berry studied English at the University of Kentucky and creative writing at Stanford. In his early 30s, he returned to his native Henry County and purchased a farm, where he has remained for more than 40 years, writing, teaching and farming. With a voluminous corpus of fiction, poetry and essays, Berry is best known as a cultural critic, calling the modern world to task for its addiction to technology and economic growth, and arguing that this unchecked infatuation has often engendered violence against both nature and human communities.

Considering Berry’s not-undeserved reputation for grumpiness, I would imagine that “prophet” might be a tough mantle to wear; but like Jeremiah and other prophets of old, Berry has consistently lamented the destructive tendencies of our age with a forceful, eloquent and uncomfortably accurate critique. I am no expert on his work, nor am I on very familiar terms with him, but Wendell Berry and his writings have played a pivotal role in my own vocation as an organic farmer. From my experience, then, I offer an appreciation of him in three kinder, gentler roles: mentor, model and midwife.

Mentor

Richard Rohr, O.F.M., Robert Bly and others in the modern “men’s movement” have averred that men need mentors

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to help them journey through childhood, adolescence and the stages of mature adulthood. They are right about this need, not only for men but also for women, and even for the culture at large. Though he would likely not realize it and would certainly not claim the title, Berry has been a mentor to me for almost two decades, ever since I struck up an occasional correspondence with him after encountering his writings in a college seminar at Indiana University, taught by Scott Russell Sanders, an author, friend and fellow conservationist of Berry.

A mentor inspires; a mentor counsels and guides; a mentor challenges and affirms. In Sanders’s college seminar we read *The Unsettling of America*, one of Berry’s best-known books. Like much of his work, *Unsettling* decries the industrialization of agriculture, as epitomized in the admonitions to “plow fencerow to fencerow” and to “get big or

get out.” The book offers a powerful critique of the culture out of which large-scale, environmentally and socially destructive “agribusiness” can emerge. As a youthful idealist, I was not only convinced by Berry’s critique; more important, I was inspired by his vision of a humbler, more decentralized economy and culture that would be more intimately connected to the unique possibilities and limitations of particular locales.

The trouble is that a gentler, more sustainable future is uncharted territory, and no one knows exactly how to get there. Even if we had cultural blueprints or roadmaps, each of us has a unique path to tread, dictated by our temperament, gifts and circumstances. Over the years Berry patiently read and responded to my long letters, in which I puzzled out difficult vocational choices related to career and



PHOTO: PAM SPALDING, COURTESY OF COUNTERPOINT PRESS

lifestyle—two priorities that often tend to compete with each other in the modern age. When I was ready to give up my academic pursuits for the romantic ideal of “life on the land,” his short, pithy, handwritten reply reminded me kindly (but firmly) that farming is a tough way to make a living and that it would be wise to have a good education to fall back on. When I later lamented that trying to farm part-time alongside the responsibilities of family and a full-time job gave short shrift to all three, he was quick both to commiserate and to affirm the good in these efforts, despite their often wearying frustrations.

Model

Be careful about meeting your heroes, I have always heard—it is a setup for disappointment. Nonetheless, a few years into our correspondence I arranged to visit Berry at his farm. I was thrilled and terrified at the prospect. I knew he admired the Amish, farmed with horses and wrote only by hand and only by daylight. Would he have electricity or any modern conveniences? Would he and his wife Tanya have the perfect and pristine farm, as I had always imagined?

It was indeed a lovely and well-kept place, perched on a lush green hillside overlooking the Kentucky River valley and complete with the requisite white-frame farmhouse, barns and other outbuildings, all in good repair. A woodstove and sturdy, full bookcases were prominent interior features of their home. A television set was conspicuously absent, but I was relieved to discover electric lights, a phone and (praised be Jesus) even store-bought food in the fridge. Like the rest of us mere mortals, Berry makes his own compromises with the modern age.

I was struck most, however, by the degree to which Berry truly did model the values he espouses in his writing. His farm, though situated on difficult, steep terrain (he joked that he breeds sheep with legs longer on one side), offered a testament to decades of patient, rehabilitative care. He seemed to have intimate knowledge of every square foot, and we spent much of my visit hiking through his woodlot, identifying trees and talking about his efforts to heal a hillside scarred with gullies of erosion. Though care and concern for his land often weighed upon him, I could see how truly and deeply he loved it, that his love had made it beautiful and that this challenging landscape was his muse and measure as a writer and a farmer. I keep that land in mind when I read his work, knowing that his writing comes not

simply from abstract imagination but from a lasting relationship with a place he knows well. Wendell Berry is a man of his word.

Midwife

If it is true that any significant and durable change—in a person, in the church, in a culture or in an economy—must balance continuity with the past against the new and different demands of the future still waiting to be born, then perhaps Berry’s most important role is as a midwife: a bridge figure between what has gone before and what lies ahead.

Midwives tend to the health of the mother. Likewise, I believe Berry wants to honor all that is good and right in our past. Much of his work, particularly his fiction, with its consistent cast of characters, centers therefore on the theme of memory: the recollection of a place, the people of that place and all their interconnected stories of heartbreak and joy and wounds and redemption, and respect for the strong, ancient values of community and faithfulness that undergird their love and work. In *The Memory of Old Jack*, several members of Berry’s fictional Kentucky farming community gather their memories of Jack Beechum, a farmer and wise local patriarch, recently deceased:

In all their minds his voice lies beneath a silence. And in the hush of it they are aware of something that passed from them and now returns: his stubborn bidding with them to the end, his keeping of faith with them who would live after him, and what perhaps none of them has yet thought to call his gentleness, his long gentleness toward them and toward this place where they are at work. They know that his memory holds them in common knowledge and common loss. The like of him will not soon live again in this world, and they will not forget him.

Given the wistful thread running through Berry’s work, I have often found myself wondering whether he wishes to turn back the clock to an earlier, simpler time. I think he does, in some ways, but he is not blindly nostalgic about the past. In *The Hidden Wound*, for example, Berry grapples eloquently and personally with the Southern legacy of slavery; and when writing of the fictional community of Port William, he makes clear that it contains seeds of its own decline and demise. He understands that even as we try to

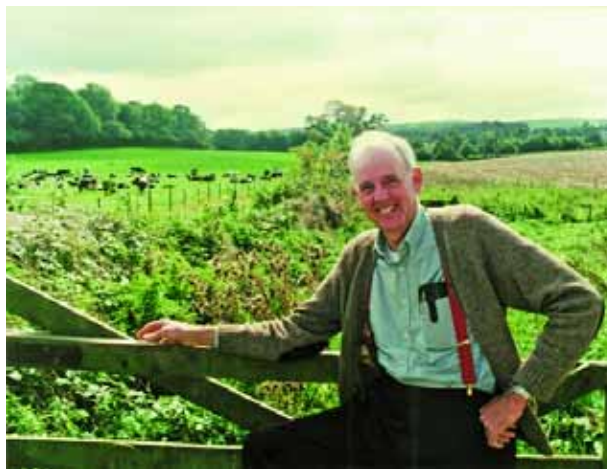


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remember and preserve the best of our history, we cannot cling to it, but must build on it as the foundation for the future. As what has gone before yields to what is emerging, however, much that is good is inevitably lost. Berry tries to grieve its passing properly.

Birth always entails uncertainty and risk. When it comes to the transformation of cultural values, surely Wendell Berry realizes that a stillbirth is possible. As a collective, we might indeed fail to embrace—or embrace soon or thoroughly enough—the virtues and practices that will heal our environment and our communal lives. Believing that we can circumvent sacrifice and suffering, and discounting our own greed and sinfulness, we might put too much naïve and optimistic faith in mere technical ingenuity and innovation.

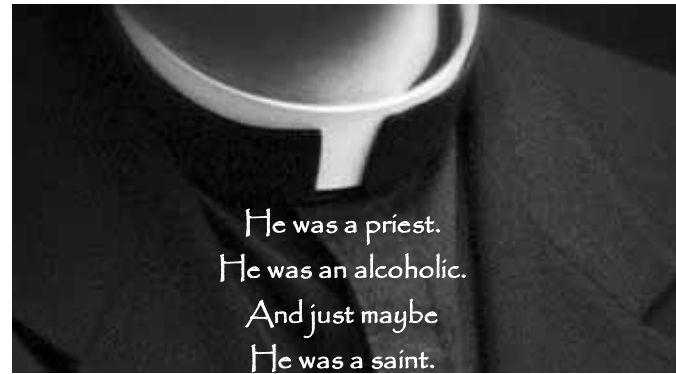
Any midwife or mother knows that to bring a child into the world requires pain and great effort. Wendell Berry has worked faithfully and ceaselessly amid our era's long, difficult labor for a more hopeful future, and I honor and admire him for sharing in its pangs as an unflinching and clear-eyed witness. But as he testifies in his decades-long series of Sabbath poems (collected in *A Timbered Choir: The Sabbath Poems 1979-1997*), there is a time for work and worry, and there is a time for rest and wonder, when the God of mercy bids us to realize that whatever is good and right in the future will come not only by our choosing and working for it but—like a newborn child—as a gift:

*Whatever is foreseen in joy
Must be lived out from day to day.
Vision held open in the dark
By our ten thousand days of work.
Harvest will fill the barn; for that
The hand must ache, the face must sweat.*

*And yet no leaf or grain is filled
By work of ours; the field is tilled
And left to grace. That we may reap,
Great work is done while we're asleep.*

*When we work well, a Sabbath mood
Rests on our day, and finds it good.*

The seemingly insignificant birth of a child in Bethlehem two millennia ago changed the course of history. I believe Berry harbors a stubborn, disciplined hope that a healthier future can likewise be born, but likely not in the form of a grand, dramatic scheme of government or industry. Rather, it will begin—it *has* begun—much like a child enters life: as a small, humble, vulnerable movement in which individuals and small groups embrace Gospel-rooted values of sufficiency, loving fidelity to places and people and healing work balanced by God-given rest. **A**



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A Catholic Moment

America engages a new world

BY CHARLES R. MORRIS

The Catholic Church's long struggle for recognition and acceptance within the U.S. polity came to a glorious climax with John F. Kennedy's election to the presidency—an event that for Catholics carried a symbolism much like Barack Obama's election did for African-Americans. And like Barack Obama's rise, Kennedy's took place outside the ethnic cocoon that had been a reliable mainstay of his political support.

Kennedy's election, it turned out, was just the leading edge of a widespread movement of Catholics into America's secular elite, accompanied by a commensurate diminution of the deference paid by the lay faithful to the church's authority. **America** maintained its traditional editorial focus on unions, civil rights, social welfare—and its vigorous anti-Communism. But the struggles of the American church to find a new footing between an “empowered” laity and a revanchist Vatican occupied an increasing share of editorial attention in the second half of the magazine's 100-year lifetime.

1959-68

John Kennedy's election to the presidency was the first great Catholic event of the decade, and there was a distinct emotional arc to **America's** coverage of his White House run—first a dispassionate examination of the obligations of a Catholic officeholder; then open bitterness as Protestant anti-Kennedy mobilization portended another prejudice-laced Al Smith campaign; next near-giddy incredulity at the Kennedy poll surge after the first televised debate; and finally unabashed joy at the final ratification of “full first-class citizenship” for American Catholics. (The president's murder just three years later was marked by “The Cease of majesty/Dies not alone...”)

The second great event was the Second Vatican Council. **America's** religious journalism grew more probing, more inward looking, more theological and, as the “never-ending” council plodded on, more critical. Francis X. Murphy, C.Ss.R.—The New Yorker's pseudonymous Xavier

Rynne—coily called for less conciliar secrecy. The liturgical movement and the “age of the layman” portended a new, highly participatory form of parish life. Articles analyzed Karl Rahner's models of church democracy and real-life examples of communitarian parishes.

After Pope Paul VI reserved the final decision on birth control to himself, **America** published a long analysis of the resulting encyclical, *Humanae Vitae* (1968), that cautiously but confidently concluded that, yes, there was adequate wiggle-room. But the encyclical came as a rude shock. The editors respectfully disagreed—a seismic moment—noting that the teaching was “not infallible.”

Questions previously reserved for the cognoscenti were chewed over in public—divorce and the “intolerable” marriage, authoritarianism. The Rev. Martin Marty chided “Catholic extremists.” In 1965, the editors pleaded that seminary dropouts not be “treated with suspicion.” Just a year later, an article asked, “What's Bothering Priests?” but there was no hint of the mass exodus just around the corner. Pastoral work was in flux as never before. Boston's crusty Cardinal Richard Cushing started a diocesan family counseling service staffed by secularly trained workers.

Every aspect of the American church's self-understanding was called into question. **America** chronicled Catholics' flight from their urban strongholds and the struggles of the hollowed-out institutions left behind. A tenure fight and a union movement wracked St. John's University. The Gellhorn report criticized the quality of Catholic colleges. Laicization and much higher spending lay ahead.

“Participation” was the catchword of the day, especially in the antipoverty program, stirring clerical memories of the great days of the union movement. **America** parsed the rights and wrongs of Milwaukee's Rev. James Groppi. Arrested for leading civil rights and welfare marches, Groppi became an instant role model for activist priests everywhere.

America, of course, persisted in its focus on anti-Communism, human rights and unionism, but the cold war educated an unwonted ambivalence on the use of force. The editors applauded President Eisenhower's warning of an expanding “military-industrial complex,” but they approved a national program of fallout shelters and worried about United States resolve, especially in Southeast Asia. They

CHARLES R. MORRIS is the author of several books, including *American Catholic*, *The Tycoons*, *The Surgeons*, *The Two Trillion Dollar Meltdown* and *The Sages* (June, 2009). This is the conclusion of an overview of **America's** history begun in our April 13 issue.



The civil rights march in Selma, Ala., in 1965

were appalled at the “cold blooded murder” of the (Catholic) Ngo Dinh Diem in 1963, apparently with administration connivance, and later were unswerving in their support of Lyndon Johnson’s grim escalation.

The editors also worried about Taft-Hartley’s burden on unions and the looming threat of automation. The breakdown of authority structures that they cheered in other settings was playing havoc with sexual and marital mores. Robert Drinan, S.J., wrote the first of many articles pushing at that most neuralgic of issues: the Supreme Court’s legal wanderings along the state-church boundary under the obsessive goading of the absolutists at the A.C.L.U.

1969-78

The 1970s were not a happy time in the United States, and **America** reflected that mood. My notes from the decade have a distinct “things fall apart, the center cannot hold” flavor.

The previous decade’s optimism on new models of the church had mostly dissipated. The Rev. Andrew Greeley wrote of the “End of American Catholicism” in the wake of *Humanae Vitae*. Another author suggested that only

Catholics on the far left and far right were in touch with their roots, while the middle was merely “drifting.” Karl Rahner, S.J., and Hans Küng wrote on disagreeing with the pope, while Avery Dulles, S.J., weighed in on the limits of papal infallibility. Disappointment followed high hopes for the 1971 World Synod of Bishops. There were meditations on the plague of alcoholism among priests and on whether the American church was heading toward an era of predominantly lay parish administration. And was it time to hold a “wake” for the Catholic press? Reports of steady improvements in liturgy and music offset some of the gloom.

On social issues, there was the shock of the *Roe v. Wade* decision in 1973, only eight years after the decision in *Griswold* had established a right to contraceptive privacy. In 1978, the editors warned of the ambitious program of Planned Parenthood, now as “respectable as the Red Cross,” to “eliminate any moral standards that would inhibit their view of what population control should be.”

America praised Senator Sam Ervin’s resistance to the erosion of defendants’ rights in the Nixon crime-control legislation and steadily escalated the editors’ opposition to the

PHOTO: CNS COURTESY OF ST. LOUIS REVIEW

death penalty. The editors hammered away at the disgrace of American prisons and featured an extended contribution by Karl Menninger, a longtime critic of the U.S. penal system. A parish priest agonized over counseling for battered women; the default position was to retrieve the marriage, which too often entailed more beatings.

On civil rights, the editors were disappointed in Richard Nixon's demagoguery on school busing and deplored Catholic school segregation in Louisiana. An extended piece chronicled the struggles of a black Catholic for acceptance within her church, a consistent **America** theme for at least 60 years.

Worries persisted on the future of Catholic higher education—finances, unrest on campuses and the difficulty of maintaining Catholic “values.” The editors continued to poke at the “sleeping contradictions” in the Supreme Court's educational rulings—the hard, bright line drawn against any aid to parochial schools, against a virtually laissez-faire attitude toward federal funding of Catholic colleges.

The politics of the decade were toxic. The editors carefully parsed the legal issues in the Watergate convulsions as well as the pros and cons of the Pentagon Papers case. **America** also noted with great pleasure that priests were running for political office. Drinan, a longtime contributor, won a Congressional seat in Massachusetts in 1970 and sat on the Judiciary Committee, playing a prominent role in the impeachment of President Nixon. During the 1976 campaign, Drinan wrote an extended piece on the religiosity of Jimmy Carter, his evangelical background and his commitment to the human rights and peace movements.

On the international front, **America** was skeptical of the Nixon-Kissinger “opening to China” and of the good intentions of the Chinese leadership. There was sympathetic coverage of Carter's multiple policy “botches” his first two years in office, albeit with fervent hopes for improvement.

1979-88

America's focus on internal issues of Catholicism intensified. One line of articles could be called “managerial”: a piece by the Rev. Charles Curran on the church's (poor) internal management; the new prominence of Hispanics in New York's Catholic population; Curran and the editors on separating heresy from dissent; the expanding roles of women in parishes; attracting teens to Mass; blunt assessments of the miserable leadership skills of bishops; the sharp falloff in Catholics availing themselves of Penance; cleaning up the Vatican's financial mess; the proper role of bishops' conferences.

Theological articles often chafed at the tightening control from Rome. Jesuit backs arched sharply at Roman attempts to exert control over Catholic colleges in the United States, and **America** deplored Rome's rigid approach to ecumenism. There was long reflection on the state of moral theology, an account of the evolution of liberation theology in

Latin America and careful tracking of the Roman inquiry into Leonardo Boff, O.F.M., who was silenced for a year in 1985. A 1986 issue featured Avery Dulles, S.J., the liberal laywoman Sidney Callahan, Theodore Hesburgh, C.S.C., and others in a Symposium on the Church, an occasion one might not have imagined even 30 years before.

America celebrated Judge John Noonan's historical analysis of abortion but also extolled as “an American Catholic classic” Mario Cuomo's Notre Dame speech on abortion. Two Jesuit seminarians reported from a day they spent as Operation Rescue volunteers outside an abortion center in Manhattan. The Rev. Andrew Greeley wrote on why Catholics stay Catholic and on the Catholic aesthetic of Bruce Springsteen. A report from a pro-life convention pointed to the tightening link between the pro-life movement and the movement against capital punishment.

Nuclear tensions were high in Europe, as the Carter and Reagan administrations responded to a Soviet medium-range missile buildup with equivalent American missiles. **America** sided strongly with European protestors, was enthusiastic about the 1983 bishops' statement on nuclear weapons and was pleased at the mutual Euromissile removal agreements in 1987.

The editors noted that the Soviets were bankrupting themselves with the arms race and feared America might do the same. David Carlin, a Rhode Island legislator, published a meditation on the complexities of civil disobedience: you must be a showman, appear as an exceptionally good person, and yet maintain humility.

Latin America, long a focus of **America** editors, was in turmoil for much of the decade. Articles tracked the course of Nicaragua's Sandinistas, the upheaval in El Salvador and Guatemala and the state of human rights in Argentina. The American anti-inflation program was imposing cruel burdens on deeply indebted Latin American “petrodollar” borrowers.

America was pleased with the U.S. bishops' pastoral letter *Economic Justice for All* (1986) but allowed the number of pages devoted to unions to fall off sharply along with the precipitate decline in private-sector union membership. The editors gloomily reported on the sophistication of anti-union consultants at Litton Industries and registered alarm that Catholic hospitals and other institutions were employing similar tactics.

The happiest news of the decade, perhaps, was a ringing endorsement of Catholic schools by the sociologist James S. Coleman, the author of the highly respected “Coleman Report” on American schools. The report especially singled out the quality of “community” at Catholic schools.

And finally, a throwback piece—on the men who attempted to assassinate Hitler; there was no anniversary, no connection to current events. It was just there, the kind of random little gem that marked **America's** early days.

1989-98

Abortion was a major **America** focus of the 1990s. An article on Catholic abortion rates—were they really as high as among non-Catholics?—drew many letters. Was there room for “prudent” accommodations: could Catholic politicians work to reduce abortions when abolition was not a practical possibility? Several articles linked abortion and human rights. Archbishop John Quinn wrote that abortion was the “axe” at the root of human rights. **America** noted that the pro-choice movement was confused on the moral question; they tried to ignore it, but it would not go away. There were more reports from Operation Rescue.

The Catholic Common Ground Initiative to bridge the gap between liberal and conservative Catholics was launched in 1996. The Rev. Andrew Greeley wrote that Catholics were not polarized; it was merely that the “loudest” Catholics were on the left and right fringes. Greeley also published a factual analysis of the issue of sexual abuse of minors by priests and extended his series of Catholic sociological studies—on marginal Catholics, the Catholic elite, conservative Catholics and defense of priestly celibacy.

Richard McCormick, S.J., was a regular contributor on theological issues: on theology as a “public art,” on the morality of warfare, on the morality of ending life, on theology and feminism, on the ethics of AIDS and on Catholic AIDS networks. A young physician wrote on the conflicts involved in the new laws about physician-assisted death. Robert Drinan, S.J., who was very much on the Catholic left on “life” issues, pushed at the distinction between “suicide” and an earlier death for a suffering person. Andrew Sullivan contributed a featured piece on the hopes of gay Catholics to be accepted by the church.

Parishes were reeling from the priest shortage. Articles explored women in parishes, lay leadership and more voices for the laity in church management, the ordination of women, the feminization of the ministry in other mainstream religions and the church’s odd reluctance to welcome converting Episcopalian priests. Msgr. Myles Bourke, a longtime professor of theology in the New York Archdiocese, found current seminarians “rigid.” Boomers preferred “dogma-lite” religion.

America backed health care reform and ran articles on the wide gaps in coverage in the United States, the struggles

of Catholic health care institutions and the depersonalizing effects of medical training. The editors worried about the increase in homelessness, the growing casualness of teenage sex, the direction of “welfare reform” and President Clinton’s tendency to adopt the policies of the right. The editors argued hard for school choice, and Drinan wondered how the A.C.L.U. absolutists would treat state aid for handicapped children in Catholic schools.

Jean Harris wrote on women’s prisons. **America** pushed hard for abolition of the death penalty and for a reduction in prison populations. The withdrawal of a Clinton cabinet nominee, Zoë Baird, because of a household help issue, the editors feared, had an anti-immigrant subtext.

There was detailed coverage of Haiti, the unwisdom of a threatened American invasion and a long interview with President Jean-Baptiste Aristide, a former priest and liberation theologian.

A young man and young woman contributed regular Catholic “singles” columns. There was a 50-year retrospective on the gross anti-Semitism of the Rev. Charles Coughlin, perhaps as a corrective to **America**’s mild references in the 1930s.

1999-2008

This was a difficult decade for **America**, but it ended well. At home, the Bush administration was methodically hacking away at the social support systems **America** had long supported. Abroad, the administration was pressing, or threatening, military action on a broad front. The Vatican’s demands for orthodoxy grew ever more insistent. At home, another flare-up of the sexual abuse scandal came close to demoralizing good priests and devoted Catholics.

The scandal may have consumed more editorial ink than any other issue. But it took several years for **America**—and most of the Catholic press—to be clear that in terms of offenders and victims, this was a rerun of the mid-1990s scandal. There were very few new cases. What was new was the revelation that bishops had covered up the abuses, repeatedly shifting known offenders from parish to parish—a “Catholic Watergate” one commentator called it.

On social welfare issues, the editors deplored the morphing of “compassionate conservatism” into a “cruel” “ownership society.” **America** railed futilely at the administration’s enthusiasm for the death penalty and for guns, its (but not



Ronald Reagan and Pope John Paul II in Miami in 1987

the president's) hostility to immigrants and rough detention methods, the gaping holes in the reformed welfare system, growing income inequality, the "eight different Americas" of health care access and the "meanest cities" list on the treatment of the homeless.

The administration's roughshod disregard of civil liberties in its war against terrorism was deeply offensive to **America**; even in the McCarthy era, the magazine had accorded civil liberties primacy over its staunch anti-Communism. The "tar-pit" of Iraq confirmed the editors' misgivings about the rush into that war, as did using the war as a boondoggle for the rich—a "red-white-and-blue" budget with huge tax breaks for the wealthiest Americans.

Pope John Paul II's charisma and energy raised the profile of the church globally, but **America** distrusted his centralizing instincts and the lack of "civility" in discussion of ecumenism. Joseph O'Hare, S.J., wrote a careful defense of American Catholic colleges: the church has a "relationship" with the schools, not "jurisdiction"; and administrations had been "laicized," not "secularized." (Legally, almost all the schools are independent institutions under the control of their boards of trustees.)

Upon John Paul's death, the editors wistfully listed the hoped-for traits of his successor—openness, decentraliza-

tion, discussion, less silencing. That same year, **America's** editor in chief and longtime contributor Thomas J. Reese, S.J., was forced to step down under Vatican pressure. Jose De Vera, S.J., spokesman of the Jesuit curia in Rome, wrote that Reese had always tried to present a spectrum of views on neuralgic issues like stem cell research. He noted that whenever issues touched on doctrine, the Vatican wanted Jesuits to defend "whatever position the church has manifested, even if it is not infallible."

America noted that the Supreme Court had a majority of Catholics for the first time in its history, which caused the editors to hope for changes on abortion and the death penalty. The death penalty presented the first test of the hypothesis; Samuel Alito, a Catholic, wrote the majority opinion in its favor.

But the hard decade ended well. **America** does not recommend presidential candidates, but it pointedly reminded readers that racism is a sin and that a conscientious Catholic could vote for a pro-choice candidate if other "life" issues, like torture and war, outweighed the abortion problem. The editors did not conceal their satisfaction with the result. The election of Barack Obama was "a chance to reverse [the United States'] dismal standing in the world. The opportunity comes not a moment too soon." **A**

ON THE WEB

From the archives, Hans Küng and Karl Rahner, S.J., discuss infallibility
americamagazine.org/pages

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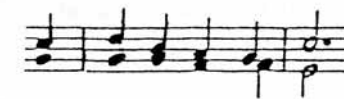
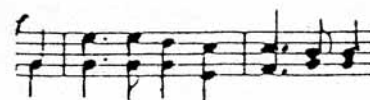


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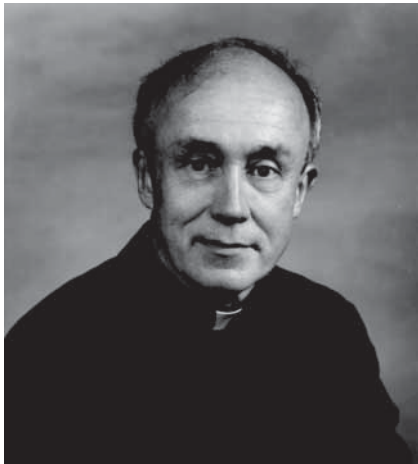
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Brian E. Daley, S.J., is the Catherine F. Huisking Professor of Theology at the University of Notre Dame. A graduate of Fordham University, he studied classics and philosophy at Merton College, Oxford, as a Rhodes Scholar. After theological studies in Frankfurt, Germany, and ordination to the Catholic priesthood, he returned to Oxford to do a D. Phil. in the Faculty of Theology.

He is the author of *The Hope of the Early Church*, *On the Dormition of Mary: Early Patristic Homilies*, and *Gregory of Nazianzus* as well as many articles.

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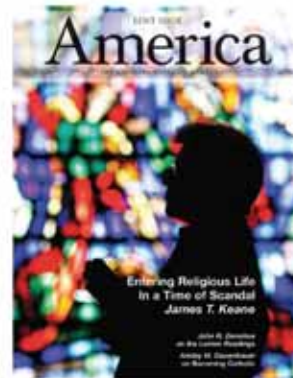
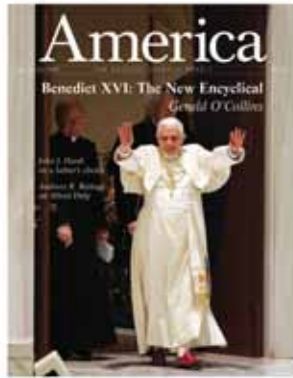
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BOOKS & CULTURE

ART | FRANCO MORMANDO

CHRIST IN THE GARDEN

An Easter reflection on Fontana's 'Noli Me Tangere'

My neighborhood, Boston's South End, is notable not only for its many intact blocks of stately Victorian townhouses but also its numerous community gardens. Within a small radius of my house are several of these large swaths of public land, punctuating the red-

brick urban landscape, each divided into small plots, entrusted by the city to the custody of individual citizens, to plant them as they see fit. In the growing season, I find it fascinating to watch people lovingly caring for their little piece of Mother Earth, expressing their own distinct personality and

aesthetic tastes through an endless variety of flowers, vegetables, shrubs and vines.

Now that we are on the verge of the bursting forth of another spring, this inescapable feature of my daily life, combined with a recent encounter with a remarkable painting of the Italian Renaissance, has had me wondering about an odd question: "If Jesus were a gardener, what kind of garden would he plant? What would his garden look like?" Before I say anything about my response to this pious query, a word about the painting that planted the question, as it were, inside my head.

It is Lavinia Fontana's "Noli Me Tangere," depicting the surprise encounter between Jesus and Mary on Easter Sunday morning described in the Gospel of John (20: 14-17). Painted in 1581, this canvas is by no means either the most famous or the most beautiful rendition of this scene. But it is worthy of note for at least two reasons. First, it comes from the hand of the first woman in European history ever to achieve the same public fame and professional status as her male counterparts in the very mainstream and at the highest levels of art patronage, both secular and ecclesiastical. Though married, the mother of 11 children and working against impossible odds in yet another male-dominated field, Lavinia Fontana was both economically and critically successful in her career. Garnering prestigious commissions from princes and prelates, she had the distinct honor in 1603 of being called to Rome by Pope Clement VIII to serve as official painter to the papal court, where she died in 1614.

Though rather modest in size (80 cm. x 65.5 cm.), the present *Noli me*



"NOLI ME TANGERE," BY LAVINIA FONTANA. PHOTO: ART RESOURCE NY/ERIC LESSING

Christ appears to Mary Magdalene

tangere is nonetheless considered one of Lavinia's most successful canvases for the technical skill evident in its composition and coloring, as well as for its unusual "take" on one of the most popular scenes in Christian art. The latter, in fact, is the second reason for which the canvas is worthy of special attention. Whereas traditionally, in perfunctory deference to the scriptural text ("Mary, thinking he was the gardener..."), most artists had shown the resurrected Savior casually holding some garden implement, Lavinia, instead, gives us a Jesus—rather homely—completely decked out in horticultural apparel: coarse, belted smock, wide-brimmed straw hat, with a large shovel capable of digging real holes. It was no act of simplistic literal-mindedness on her part; Lavinia deliberately wishes to impress on us the fact of "Jesus as gardener," as if to remind us that the specific nature of Mary's misidentification had some spiritual truth to convey.

In so doing, the artist was in fact giving visual representation to a traditional theme of orthodox scriptural exegesis and popular preaching, one tracing its origins to patristic times. Mary's misidentification was meant to remind us, so the pre-modern exegetes taught, of a spiritual reality: Jesus is the gardener of the human soul, eradicating evil, noxious vegetation and planting, as St. Gregory the Great says, "the flourishing seeds of virtue." Although today out of circulation, this teaching was disseminated in Lavinia's age in such popular, authoritative texts as Ludolph of Saxony's *Life of Christ* (a book that played a crucial role in St. Ignatius Loyola's conversion) and Jesuit Cornelius a Lapide's *Great Commentary on Scripture*. Lavinia had clearly done her homework.

But to return to today and my unanswered question about Jesus' garden provoked by Lavinia's canvas and the sight of so many gardens in my daily life: What would it look like?

Would it be a dense riot of color, texture and fragrance? Or would it be more Zen-like, a quiet, stirringly spare arrangement of a very few but eloquent plants? But, surely there must be some lilies in the mix—it is, after all, the flower most associated with Easter, and did not Jesus admonish us to "consider the lilies of the field"? The question is, of course, an impossible one to answer, and such reverie can be no more than a kind of amusing parlor game. However, even as I acknowledge the frivolity of the question and the impossibility of an answer, my mind, for some reason, continues to take delight and what St. Ignatius would call "consolation" in imagining Jesus, with his straw hat,

smock and shovel, digging and planting and weeding.

Of the many metaphors by which we traditionally imagine Jesus and the working of his influence in our world, I now find this ancient but long-forgotten one strangely compelling: Jesus the gardener at work in the often rough, hostile and forbidding terrain of the human heart, transforming empty deserts into fertile patches of a renewed Eden, producing the most unexpected, life-giving fruit, which in turn sends its seeds off in every direction the wind spontaneously takes them.

FRANCO MORMANDO is associate professor of Italian at Boston College.

BOOKINGS | STEPHEN BEDE SCHARPER

RENEW THE FACE OF THE EARTH

A couple of summers ago, I taught a course on Christianity and the environment at Memphis Theological Seminary in Tennessee. For the divinity students in my class, most of whom were already serving as ministers to congregations in the southern United States, the idea of linking Christian discipleship with creation was new at best and, for many of their congregants, clearly questionable, if not downright heretical.

After all, was not human salvation, rather than ecological stewardship, the primary aim of the Christian vocation? Wasn't it pagans and secular humanists who were at the vanguard of the environmental movement? Would it not sully Christian orthodoxy, not to mention Christian knees, to get down in the dirt to pursue secular environmental initiatives with such unwashed and certainly un-Christian eco-types?

After the screening of "Is God Green?", Bill Moyers's cogent 2006 documentary about U.S. evangelicals'

embrace of and resistance to Christian "creation care," however, the students' attitudes began to change. They winced as some celebrated evangelical personalities sanctimoniously denied the scientific evidence of climate change and smiled, perhaps a little self-reflectively, as they witnessed an Idaho Republican evangelical minister, a member of the National Rifle Association and an avid hunter, deliver his first environmental sermon, galvanizing his flock to eco-activism, culminating in a tree-planting junket with the U.S. Forest Service.

They reflected on how Christians in the South, inculturated into Jim Crowism, had opposed Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s civil rights movement out of racial prejudice, rather than Christian calling, and began to muse that once again, out of political and ideological entrenchment, rather than authentic adherence to the Gospel, many evangelical brethren were castigating Al Gore and deriding Christian

calls for ecological concern.

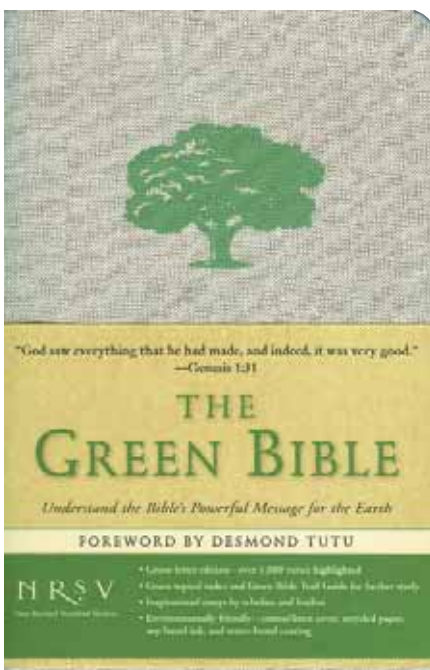
Today, in the post-Bush era, teaching such a course would, I imagine (and hope), be a somewhat different experience. With a Democratic U.S. president of African heritage in power, who not only acknowledges climate change but also seeks to address it, the political atmosphere has perhaps become more propitious for such learning. And with the recent publication of *The Green Bible* (HarperOne, 1,440p, \$29.95) a green-letter edition of the New Revised Standard Version, the Christian ecological air has become a little more breathable.

With its comfortable, cotton linen cover, recycled paper, soy-based ink and water-based coating, *The Green Bible*—with a foreword by Desmond Tutu—is a handsome, eco-friendly volume. Akin to “red-letter Bibles,” highlighting the words of Jesus in red ink, *The Green Bible* features in green over 1,000 verses dealing with nature, creation and the divine origin of and human responsibility toward both.

The volume is helpfully book-ended by St. Francis of Assisi’s “Canticle of the Creatures,” a short poem from the Christian Kentucky-poet-farmer Wendell Berry and “The Green Bible Trail Guide,” which delineates green biblical themes and the passages pertaining to them. Also included are a “green topical index,” an annotated list of Christian environmental groups, eco-action ideas and practical tips for congregations interested in getting started down the green path of sustainability. In addition, a variety of essays by both scholars and religious leaders add theological salt and environmental light to the edition. The excerpts from the work of the evangelical environmental scientist Calvin de Witt; Pope John Paul II’s statement “Peace With God the Creator, Peace With All of Creation”; Sojourners board chair Brian McLaren on the theological shift to

creation care; the Jewish environmentalist Ellen Bernstein on 10 principles of creation theology; and the Anglican bishop N. T. Wright on environmental renewal are particularly useful additions.

Coincidentally, 15 years ago, my wife Hilary and I co-wrote *The Green Bible* for Orbis Books (alas, one cannot copyright a book title), building on the popular *Radical Bible* pub-



lished years earlier by my father, Philip Scharper, and John Eagleson. Our volume was not an entire Bible, but rather an ecological, ecumenical and, we hoped, inspirational resource.

Before a book signing at a Christian bookstore in Tucson, Ariz., the owner reported that a few callers would not come to the event because *The Green Bible* was somehow related to “witchypoo”—a precise definition of which was never provided. Tellingly, the HarperOne *Green Bible* has also spawned some controversy. According to James Taylor, a senior fellow of environmental policy at the Heartland Institute, a conservative Chicago-based think tank, there is a significant amount of “skepticism”

among mainstream evangelicals toward the new Bible.

According to a survey by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life in 2006, for example, 70 percent of evangelicals believe there is credible evidence that the Earth is getting warmer, and Richard Cizik, former head of the National Association of Evangelicals, has been an intrepid and inspired advocate for the Earth, especially in light of dramatic climate change, within U.S. evangelical circles.

The environmental theologian Steven Bouma-Prediger, who served on the Advisory Board of *The Green Bible*, said that while there have been rumblings about the text, he is not aware of any concerted “pushback” against the volume. He also noted in a recent conversation that “there is a real generational shift” emerging among conservative Christians. Those 35 and younger “don’t know the older evangelical figures such as James Dobson of Focus on the Family, Pat Robertson of the 700 Club” and the late Jerry Falwell of the Moral Majority. These younger Christians “don’t see the world in the same categories as the older generation,” Bouma-Prediger notes. “They are more concerned with H.I.V./AIDS, global poverty, and creation care” than their forebears, Bouma-Prediger claims, commenting that when his 13-year-old daughter saw *The Green Bible* in the house, “she globbed right on to it.”

Ellen Bernstein, in her incisive essay “Creation Theology: A Jewish Perspective,” which is included in the volume, writes: “Generally the high point of Jewish faith is thought to be the moment when God revealed the law to Moses. But according to some of the ancient rabbis, creation was God’s first revelation, and inscribed in the creation itself is another dimension of God’s law.”

This speaks to a critical insight within the Judeo-Christian tradition

and a sizeable lacuna in this volume: the importance of creation itself as a primary source of revelation, and the absence of commentators such as the “geologist” Thomas Berry, C.P., the mathematical cosmologist Brian Swimme and Miriam Therese MacGillis, O.P., the founder of Genesis Farm, who accent the cosmic reality out of which scriptural revelation emerges. Such a perspective represents more than a slight shift in emphasis; the cosmocentric focus of these thinkers has long roots deep within the Hebrew and Christian lineage, and represents a profound antidote to anthropocentric and idolatrous readings of the Bible.

While *The Green Bible* contains helpful quotes from such figures as Clement of Rome, Irenaeus, Hildegard of Bingen, Meister Eckhart and Rashi—in the section “Teachings on Creation through the Ages”—the lack of any sustained reflection from

advocates of a cosmological approach is as telling as it is regrettable. It eschews one of the most compelling aspects of the current nexus between faith and ecology, one that unites the

ON THE WEB
The editor of “The Green Bible” discusses the project.
americamagazine.org/podcast

Jewish and Christian Scriptures with sacred texts and stories from the world’s other great faith traditions, and tends to de-contextualize the written word of the Bible from the Word that was and is God, and through whom all things “came into being.”

The Green Bible, nonetheless, can help us understand that in the West, and indeed the world over, “people of the book” are failing in one of the first and most important biblical injunctions—to take care of the Garden. This is a woefully belated step, given our current, horrifying despoliation of the planet, but a welcome step nonetheless.

STEPHEN BEDE SCHARPER is associate professor of religion and environment at the University of Toronto.

waste from animals and humans.

“Flat” refers to the fact that more of the world’s people have entered the middle class, a decidedly good development in the quest to overcome poverty. But middle-class lifestyles, Friedman says, encourage people to acquire more consumer goods, which use up more fossil fuels and thus contribute to more carbon emissions.

“Crowded” refers to the ever-increasing world population, which today stands at 6.7 billion. Demographers estimate that by mid-century it will be 9 billion, with the greatest increases in countries that are least able to sustain a larger population. It is these countries that have the potential for violence, civil unrest and extremism.

To mitigate these interconnecting problems, Friedman advocates an all-out effort to “mobilize the most effective and prolific system for transformational innovation and commercialization of new products.” Americans, in particular, are well poised to develop and dominate such a market by creating a demand for clean energy. We could also put our people to work by encouraging innovators to invent renewable energy generators and by enlisting blue-collar workers to be “green-collar workers” to make and service these products. Unfortunately, the United States is not doing this, says Friedman, but China is. And unless we get going, we will miss an opportunity to “out-green” the Chinese and sell the world our new, green technology.

What prevents the United States from getting on board the renewable energy train is our reluctance to invest the necessary funds for research and development. Friedman says that supplying these funds would be expensive up front, but the benefits of converting to a modern and efficient energy infrastructure would save us a great deal of money in the long term.

Another thing stopping us is some

BOOKS | OLGA BONFIGLIO

THE GREENING OF AMERICA

HOT, FLAT AND CROWDED

Why We Need a Green Revolution—and How It Can Renew America

By Thomas L. Friedman
Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 448p \$27.95
ISBN 9780374166854

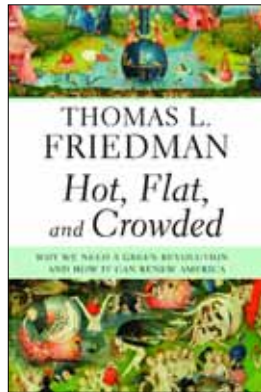
Thomas Friedman has done it again. The Pulitzer Prize-winning New York Times columnist has taken a global situation, this time climate change, and set out to educate the public about how we got there and what we can do about it. In his explanation, however, the self-described “somber optimist” inadvertently ends up salving the pub-

lic with the expectation that technology will save us and we can go on with our lives as usual.

Hot, Flat and Crowded focuses on the threats and opportunities of climate change in this new age that he calls the Energy-Climate Era (E.C.E.), which is beginning now.

Friedman is an engaging storyteller who can skillfully elucidate complex ideas with pithy phrases. In the book’s title, for example, “hot” refers to the earth’s rising temperatures because of an overdose of carbon emissions from large-scale manufacturing, the loss of forests, urban sprawl, the extraction of resources and the large store of solid

political leaders' doubts about whether climate change is caused by humans or nature—so they block funds for research and development. The \$787 billion stimulus package recently signed by President Barack Obama was a big victory for change because it did designate nearly \$20 billion for renewable energy and \$11 billion to modernize the U.S. electrical grid. But the nagging question remains: where will lawmakers find more funds in the future?



Meanwhile, Friedman deftly illustrates how our oil addiction is encouraging petropolitical dictators and strengthening “the most intolerant, antimodern, anti-Western, anti-women’s rights, and antipluralistic strain of Islam—the strain propagated by Saudi Arabia.” He reminds readers that 15 of the 19 hijackers of Sept. 11, 2001, were Saudis.

Another complication to our response to climate change is Friedman’s contention that if we want to maintain our present way of life, “we will have to leverage and exploit our intellectual resources through innovation and technology.” Here he reveals his basic worldview: “We as a global society need more and more growth, because without growth there is no human development and those in poverty will never escape it.”

While Friedman should be commended for his concern for the poor, he believes that “a rising tide lifts all boats,” as President John F. Kennedy once noted. After nearly 50 years of operating on this assumption, we have seen the gap between rich and poor widen and the utter and insidious collapse of our economy.

Friedman’s statements about growth show him to be what energy experts call a “cornucopian.” A cornucopian believes that there are few

intractable limits to growth and that the world can provide a practically limitless abundance of natural resources.

Friedman conducted extensive research to prepare this book, but there is a curious omission about our energy future: “peak oil.” According to the Energy Bulletin, “peak oil” refers to the high point in the rate of global oil production. Because oil is a finite, nonrenewable natural resource, once we use up half the world’s total reserves, oil production will begin to decline. It is important to recognize that a peak in production does not mean that we are running out of oil. It signals that we are running out of *cheap* oil. We got a taste of that future last summer when oil reached \$147 per barrel and gasoline prices topped \$4 a gallon.


No one knows when we will hit the

“peak” and begin to decline, so the urgency to do something about it depends on one’s estimate of remaining oil reserves. The Cambridge Energy Research Associates (www.cera.com), one of the world’s leading energy consulting firms, estimates we have 20 to 30 years before reaching peak. Many peak oil theorists (as seen in the documentary, “The End of Suburbia,” www.endofsuburbia.com) believe oil could peak as early as 2010.

Perhaps the most disturbing word on peak oil comes from what is commonly known as the Hirsch Report, sponsored and published in 2005 by the U.S. Energy Department. It states that “the economic, social, and political costs [of peak oil] will be unprecedented.”


Organizations like the Post Carbon Institute and the Rocky Mountain Institute are working hard to inform and organize policy makers and the public to “understand and respond to

Then



Still.

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the challenges of fossil fuel depletion and climate change.” Unfortunately, they are unable to capture much attention from the media or policy makers, so the public remains largely uninformed about peak oil.

In the end, people will believe what they want to believe; there are always plenty of data around to substantiate whatever position makes them feel comfortable—including very smart and influential people like Thomas

Friedman. But readers must ask themselves: why is America willing to gamble on the possibility that we have more time rather than less time not only to take care of climate change but to curb our dependence on oil to fuel our economy?

OLGA BONFIGLIO is a professor at Kalamazoo College in Kalamazoo, Mich., and author of *Heroes of a Different Stripe: How One Town Responded to the War in Iraq*.

Fulton Sheen). The black-and-white photos add to his tale. It is one thing to read about young Tom tomcatting around Columbia University in the 1930s; it's another to see a photo of him arm in arm with his college pals, trying to look cool. As you move through his life, you can see Merton growing paradoxically older (more lines on his face, less hair on his head) and younger (more alive, less confused). Forest is especially good on Merton's influence on the peace and nonviolence movements in the 1960s, and on his anguished romantic relationship with “Margie,” the young nurse he meets during a hospital stay near the end of his life. *Living With Wisdom* does not aim to be a scholarly biography like the magisterial *Seven Mountains of Thomas Merton*, by Michael Mott, but if you want a short, lively, accessible introduction to M. Louis Merton, O.C.S.O., for yourself or for friends, this is it. J.M.

BOOK BRIEFS

A MONK'S LIFE; EARTH'S LIFE

LIVING WITH WISDOM

A Life of Thomas Merton (Revised Edition)

By Jim Forest
Orbis Books. 262p \$22 (paperback)

As a Jesuit novice making a 30-day retreat many years ago, I was happy to stumble across a book in the retreat house library called *Thomas Merton: A Pictorial Biography*, written by Jim Forest and published by Paulist Press in 1979. A clearly written, short biography of the Trappist monk's life, accompanied by photographs, it introduced me through words and images to the world of Thomas Merton in a way that his own writings had not. Twelve years later, Forest, a friend of Merton's

(it was to him that Merton wrote his famous “Letter to a Young Activist”) and a founder of the Catholic Peace Fellowship, revised the book and published it with Orbis Books as *Living With Wisdom: A Life of Thomas Merton*. Now, to mark the 40th anniversary of his friend's accidental death, Forest has again revised the text, and Orbis has added many more photographs, with the result that this is the best short introduction to the life of Thomas Merton that you will find.

Forest has an unadorned style that propels the reader through the remarkable story of perhaps the most influential of all 20th-century Catholics. (His nearest “competition” might be Dorothy Day and Bishop

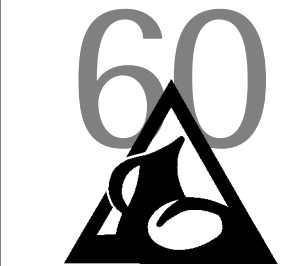
EARTH TALK

Expert Answers to Everyday Questions About the Environment

From E: The Environmental Magazine
Plume. 320p \$15 (paperback)

A recent Harris Poll indicates that Americans are becoming increasingly eco-aware and concerned about planet Earth and protecting the environment “at all cost.” Many are avid readers of a syndicated column called “Earth Talk,” which originated with E: The Environmental Magazine. The column has evoked a steady stream of mail from interested readers, which the editorial team has gathered in a volume by the same title. Each of the book's 10 chapters presents a host of questions—and answers—relating to its overarching theme. “Eat, Drink and Be Wary,” for example, offers helpful information on matters of nutrition, including the Slow Food Movement,

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organic farming and urban gardens. In "The Whole Kid and Caboodle," in response to a question whether disposable or cloth diapers are better for the environment, we learn that non-degradable disposable diapers can sit for decades, even centuries, in landfills. And elsewhere the experts enlighten the reader on the impact of wasteful packaging on the environment; strides in environmental education as part of school curriculums; transportation,

travel and cutting our carbon load; health benefits of raw foods; tax incentives for buying green (both individuals and businesses); what ethnic group suffers most from pollution in the United States; which trees to plant to combat global warming; where in the world you can find car-free cities—and much more. After each answer, the authors provide contact information, content-specific Web sites and resources for additional informa-

tion/action. *Earth Talk* is chock full of eye-opening data and essential advice on living green. Changing first one's perception and then one's lifestyle, this book shows, is a challenge that takes on greater urgency when we know the facts. There is no better, more convenient place to begin than here.

P. A. K.

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LETTERS

Jailhouse Blues

Your editorial on the prison industry ("Prison Nation," 3/9) paints a shocking picture. It would be helpful to remind ourselves that while the terminology varies, there are only three goals of imprisonment: the punitive (punishment for offenses), the rehabilitative (reintegration of the offender into civil society) and the protective (restraining the offender from doing further harm). It might be helpful if judges were required to declare the weight of each of these factors in any prison sentence.

The concept of prison term limits might also profitably be explored. While the public might need to be protected from some felons indefinitely, does locking a person in a cell for over 10 years add any likelihood to the possibility that the prisoner will be rehabilitated?

ROBERT V. LEVINE
Collegeville, Pa.

History's Mysteries

While reading Emilie Griffin's review of *Help My Unbelief*, by William J. O'Malley, S.J. ("The Quest for Certitude," 2/23), I was taken aback by the statement that "the Roman Catholic Church seems to be the original from which the others branched."

I suspect that the Orthodox churches would disagree quite vehemently with that statement. Until 1054, when the formal schism occurred between the Eastern churches and the Latin rite church, there was no Roman Catholic church.

The Roman Catholic church is better described as the largest survivor of the original churches instead of "the original."

JIM MCCREA
Piedmont, Calif.

Applause

Many thanks to Mary M. Foley for

sharing her experiences as a pastoral minister ("Exceptional Pastoring," 3/9), and many thanks to **America** for publishing her article. Having worked with and for parish coordinators in my many years of parish work, I applaud them all for their hard work and dedication to the mission of the church.

BILLY GARGARO
Norfolk, Va.

Hold That Applause

We are kidding ourselves if we think that stories such as that told by Mary M. Foley about her experiences as a pastoral minister ("Exceptional Pastoring," 3/9) are good news. How is it good news when Foley's position was terminated on a whim? How does this help women or the church?

We need to recognize that the emperor has no clothes. There are

untold numbers of women called to serve the church who are not welcome. That is the real vocation crisis. Rather than propping up the old system with absurd organizational maneuvering, we need to embrace the women who are eager to be pastors to God's people right now.

PEG CONWAY
Cincinnati, Ohio

Playing Politics

In your editorial on the need for a "truth commission" to investigate the Bush administration ("Truth and Prosecution," 3/23), you follow the path of others on the extreme and hysterical left, taking it as a given that crimes have been committed by the Bush administration and its legal advisors. You will be amazed to learn that there are many who disagree with you

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and think you are advocating the highly destructive and vindictive course of trying to criminalize the decisions of your political enemies.

DENNIS O'BRIEN
San Francisco, Calif.

Policing the Police

In her reflections on our country's legacy of torture ("Accounting for Torture," 3/30), Maryann Cusimano Love has hit the mark. We are disciples of a tortured God, and this means that we have a strong moral obligation never to torture, to investigate and prosecute human rights violations and to stand in solidarity with torture victims.

But Love assumes too easily that President Obama has returned us to full compliance with the Geneva Conventions. At Guantánamo, instead of allowing independent human rights organizations to review conditions and the treatment of prisoners, Obama curiously assigned this task to the Department of Defense, the department that is also responsible for operating the facility. Should we trust the architects and perpetrators of torture to investigate themselves?

LUKE HANSEN, S.J.
Chicago, Ill.

More Light, Less Heat

The column by John F. Kavanaugh, S.J., on the recent controversy over President Barack Obama's scheduled appearance at the commencement ceremony at the University of Notre Dame ("Outrages," 4/13 online edition) is a fine contribution to the dismal story of Catholic attacks on Obama, the first president in quite a while who seems genuinely committed to seeking the common good. Beyond the particular issue, what is most disquieting is the latent venom in so many Catholics, just waiting to be called into action by some poisonous standard-bearer.

Of course the issue of abortion is a serious one; but it is a complex issue, not one best dealt with in haste or by

over-simplification. It is a great pity that the American bishops do not choose to lead by recognizing the complexity of the issue on which they are called to teach, and then teaching in a way that produces more light and less heat.

In the resultant moral vacuum, it is no surprise that demagogues can whip up the masses on matters whose complexity they have not explored. And I wonder how many of them have reflected on the fact that this man they apparently hate is breaking his back trying to save their jobs, their pensions and perhaps their way of life.

PAUL LAKELAND
Fairfield, Conn.

Straw Man

In his recent column ("Outrages," 4/13 online edition), John F. Kavanaugh, S.J., criticizes a commenter named "James" on an Internet blog for contradictions in his denunciation of President Barack Obama's scheduled appearance at the University of Notre Dame. But picking on the weakest person on the other side of an issue is a little too easy, almost like pulling the wings off a fly. At this point, 15 American bishops have expressed reservations about the actions of the University of Notre Dame. How about addressing their concerns? Or should one be satisfied to demonstrate merely that one is smarter and more civil than some random person with an ax to grind?

ANDREW STRADA
Cleveland, Ohio

Sublime

When I read the excellent article about Karl Rahner, S.J., by Leo J. O'Donovan, S.J. ("Reading Karl Rahner," 3/30), I was struck by his statement that we "are the truth of lives that only love can guarantee. Thus, knowledge is only momentarily an end in itself; it must always be guided by love...."

Only an hour earlier, I had heard a radio interview with a clinical psychol-

ogist who works with Alzheimer's support groups. He spoke of a woman who regularly greeted her husband when she visited him in an Alzheimer's care facility with the question: "Do you remember who I am?" One day, before she asked the question, he said "I don't know who you are, but I love you."

Aren't these two expressions from different sources amazingly reinforcing and sublime?

JACK ZUERCHER, S.J.
Omaha, Neb.

Conspiracy of Silence

Kudos to Kate Blake for her superb article on the ethical treatment of animals ("Our Responsibility to All Creation," 3/23). It was both articulate and informed. The church justly and properly advocates for the rights of the poor and voiceless all over the world, standing on the side of the defenseless in both word and action. At the same time, the church (and by extension, all of us who worship a gentle God) appears oblivious to the needs and welfare of another voiceless group: animals. There seems to be a conspiracy of silence with regard to the suffering of animals, whose sad fate is a life lived under intensive farming conditions, followed by death in a slaughterhouse.

It strikes me as quite incongruous that many people who bring their animals to church every October to have them blessed might later that same day enjoy a Sunday meal of roast beef.

In this critical time, when our stewardship of God's creation should be of deep concern to all of us, Blake's article is very timely.

DEBORAH DYER
Newton, Mass.

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Peace That Overcomes Fear

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER (B), APRIL 19, 2009

Readings: Acts 4:32-35; Ps 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24; 1 Jn 5:1-6; Jn 20:19-31

“Through this belief you may have life” (Jn 20:31)

Often one person is willing to speak up when everybody else may be wondering the same thing at a gathering but is afraid to ask. In today’s Gospel Thomas is the one who voices the doubts and fears with which others are also struggling. The Fourth Evangelist frequently uses one character as a representative figure. For example, Nicodemus represents all those whose learning stands in the way of their being able to come to the light and believe in Jesus (3:1-21). The man born blind (9:1-41) symbolizes all those who gradually come to full faith in Jesus. Thomas (as also in 11:16 and 14:5) stands for everyone who is a follower of Jesus yet harbors doubts.

In the first scene in today’s Gospel, the disciples are together, locked in their fear, when Jesus stands in their midst. His double declaration, “Peace be with you,” recalls his promise of peace that casts out fear (14:27). Jesus then shows the disciples his hands and side, the unerasable evidence of the brutality inflicted on him. Oddly enough, instead of increasing their terror, this gesture causes them to rejoice. The explanation is found in the Last Supper scene, where Jesus spoke to his disciples about his impending death, likening his pain and theirs to the labor

pangs of a woman giving birth, whose agony turns to joy after the new life is brought forth. Jesus had assured them that when they would see him again, their hearts would rejoice with a joy no one could take from them (16:20-22).

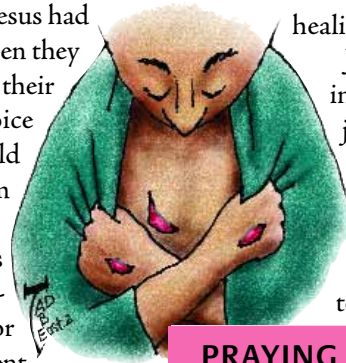
Jesus then sends the disciples to continue the mission for which the Father sent him. In John’s Gospel there is no calling or sending of the Twelve; the mission is entrusted to all disciples empowered with the Spirit. As Jesus breathes on them, the new life brought forth through his death and resurrection vivifies them. The image is reminiscent of the creation of the first human being, into whose nostrils the Creator breathes the breath of life (Gn 2:7). It also calls to mind Ezekiel’s vision of the valley of dry bones, over which he prophesies, “I will cause breath to enter you and you shall live” (Ez 37:5).

Just as God restored hope to the disheartened Babylonian exiles, so the risen Christ breathes peace and joy into the fearful disciples. Already at the moment of death, Jesus had “handed over the Spirit” (Jn 19:30). These are not two separate bestowals of the Spirit but two moments of the one “hour.” In the Fourth Gospel, the

“hour” of the passion, death, resurrection, ascension, glorification and bestowal of the Spirit is all one movement, not separated in time as in Luke-Acts.

The power that the disciples receive with this infusion of the Spirit is the ability to heal and forgive. When Jesus shows his wounds, we see that forgiveness does not erase them, nor does it dismiss them as unimportant, yet telling the truth about them is essential for forgiveness and healing.

Jesus then speaks of “holding on” to every beloved one, just as he himself had done (10:28; 17:20; 18:9). The word “sins” is not found in the Greek text of v. 23b. Rather than an instruction to withhold forgiveness for



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- How has the Spirit breathed forgiveness and healing in you?
- How is it possible to proclaim Jesus as “my Lord and my God” even when we have doubts?
- How does the peace of Christ cast out fear?

ART: TAD DUNNE

some sins, the instruction is to “hold on” to each precious one, “binding up” the wounds. The language is similar to that of Ez 34:4 and 16, which describes God’s work as “binding up the injured.”

In the second scene, Thomas stands for all those who were not present in the initial experience with the resurrected Christ. Just as Mary Magdalene did, so the disciples declare, “We have seen the Lord” (20:17, 25). But belief on the basis of another’s word is not sufficient (see 4:42); one must have firsthand experience of Christ in order

BARBARA E. REID, O.P., is a professor of New Testament studies at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, Ill.

to participate in the mission. Jesus once again stands in their midst, bringing peace. He directs Thomas to probe the meaning of his wounds so that he, too, can become an agent of forgiveness and healing. When

Thomas makes his acclamation of faith, Jesus affirms that there are two ways of blessedness: believing by having seen, and believing without having seen. The crucial thing is to believe, so as to have life.

Jesus and for putting to death the “author of life.” But the Gospel writer’s focus is not on fixing blame for the death of Jesus; rather, the focus is on God’s power in raising Jesus.

Peter excuses all those who were complicit in Jesus’ death, saying that they acted out of ignorance; this is similar to what the Lucan Jesus does as he prays from the cross, “Father, forgive them; they know not what they do” (23:34). Luke consistently portrays Jesus as a rejected prophet and explains his death as the fulfillment of Scripture. The notion of a suffering messiah, found in the first reading and in the Gospel, is one that occurs only in Luke’s writings (Lk 24:26, 46; Acts 3:18, 17:3; 26:23); it is not found in any Old Testament texts.

Immediately linked to the affirmation that the Messiah must suffer is the invitation to repentance and forgiveness. Repentance and acceptance of forgiveness is not guilt-induced; it is the only adequate response to God’s gift of new life, offered in restored relationship with the risen Christ. Witnessing to this love and power begins at home (Jerusalem), then radiates out “to all the nations.”

You Are Witnesses

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER (B), APRIL 26, 2009

Readings: Acts 3:13-15, 17-19; Ps 4:2, 4, 7-8, 9; 1 Jn 2:1-5a; Lk 24:35-48

“It is I myself” (Lk 24:39)

The Gospel for today has many resonances with the Gospel for the Second Sunday of Easter (Jn 20:19-31). In both accounts the risen Christ appears to the disciples and stands “in their midst.” In both, his first words are “Peace be with you”; then he shows them his hands, feet and side. In both accounts the disciples move from terror to joy. Both stories end with a sending of the disciples in mission.

Despite the many similarities, however, the theological emphases in the two accounts are quite different. Luke focuses on the identity of the risen Christ and his reality and tangibility. Unlike the story of Thomas in John’s Gospel, which focuses on believing, in the Gospel of Luke, the reason for the disciples’ seeing and touching Jesus’ hands and feet is to convince them that the risen one is the same Jesus who was crucified and who still bears the marks of this on his body, though he is real and alive. Jesus is not just a memory that lives on, nor is he a haunting ghost; instead he is truly alive and tangible. Unlike the preceding Emmaus scene, where Jesus’ eating with the two disciples is revelatory and eucharistic, in today’s Gospel Jesus’ eating serves as proof that he is truly alive and tangible in bodily form.

In the second half of Luke’s Gospel, the focus shifts to the mission of the disciples as witnesses to the suffering Messiah who is raised. Key to being a witness are an understanding of the Scriptures, repentance and forgiveness of sins. These same emphases are echoed in today’s first reading.

Peter’s speech is set in Solomon’s Portico in the Temple; it follows his healing of a man who was crippled and who begged daily at the Beautiful Gate. Peter harshly accuses his fellow Jews, placing on them all the blame for handing over



ART: TAD DUNNE

Trusting Followers

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER (B), MAY 3, 2009

Readings: Acts 4:8-12; Ps 118:1, 8-9, 21-23, 26, 28, 29; 1 Jn 3:1-2; Jn 10:11-18

“I know mine and mine know me” (Jn 10:14)

“I hate this Gospel,” said a friend of mine from New Zealand, as she broke open the Word for the assembly on Good Shepherd Sunday some years ago. Coming from

a country that at the time had 60 million sheep and three million people, she knew sheep. One image this Gospel conjures up is that of a flock of dumb animals who mindlessly fol-

low after whoever herds them. It was this notion of disciples as dumb sheep to which my friend objected, and rightly so. The metaphor falters when we notice that the text emphasizes the intimate knowledge the sheep have of the shepherd and vice versa (10:14). Moreover, the intimacy between Jesus and “his own” replicates the relationship he has with the Father (10:15). It is an intimacy expressed ultimately in loving self-surrender, even unto death.

There is a kind of domino effect in the fourth Gospel. First, God pours out the divine self in love through the gift of the Word made flesh (Jn 1:14; 3:16), a self-surrender that is replicated in Jesus’ gift of self for his own (10:15). This same action is what is asked of his followers, especially those in leadership (15:13). The image of shepherd is used a number of times in the Scriptures for a leader of the people. God is shepherd of

Israel (Gn 49:24; Pss 23:1; 78:52-53). Moses and David were both shepherds as boys before being called to lead Israel.

When Israel’s leaders were not tending to the needs of the people,

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- How is a deeper understanding of the Scriptures enabling you to be a witness to the risen Christ?
- How does intimacy with Christ the Good Shepherd empower you to replicate his loving self-surrender for “his own”?

they were denounced for being absent and stupid shepherds who scattered the flock (1 Kgs 22:17; Jer 10:21; 23:1-2; Ez 34:5-6). By contrast, Jesus is the “model” (*kalos*, “good,” “beautiful,” “exemplary”) shepherd, who gathers all together into one, giving his very life for his own. We replicate this

kind of shepherding not by actively seeking suffering but by putting love at the center: God’s love visible in Jesus, Jesus’ love manifest in us. It is a love freely chosen by one who is empowered and willing to go to extremes if necessary. This requires not blind following but intimate knowledge of the model shepherd and the free choice to continue his work of gathering all the disparate into one.

BARBARA E. REID

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