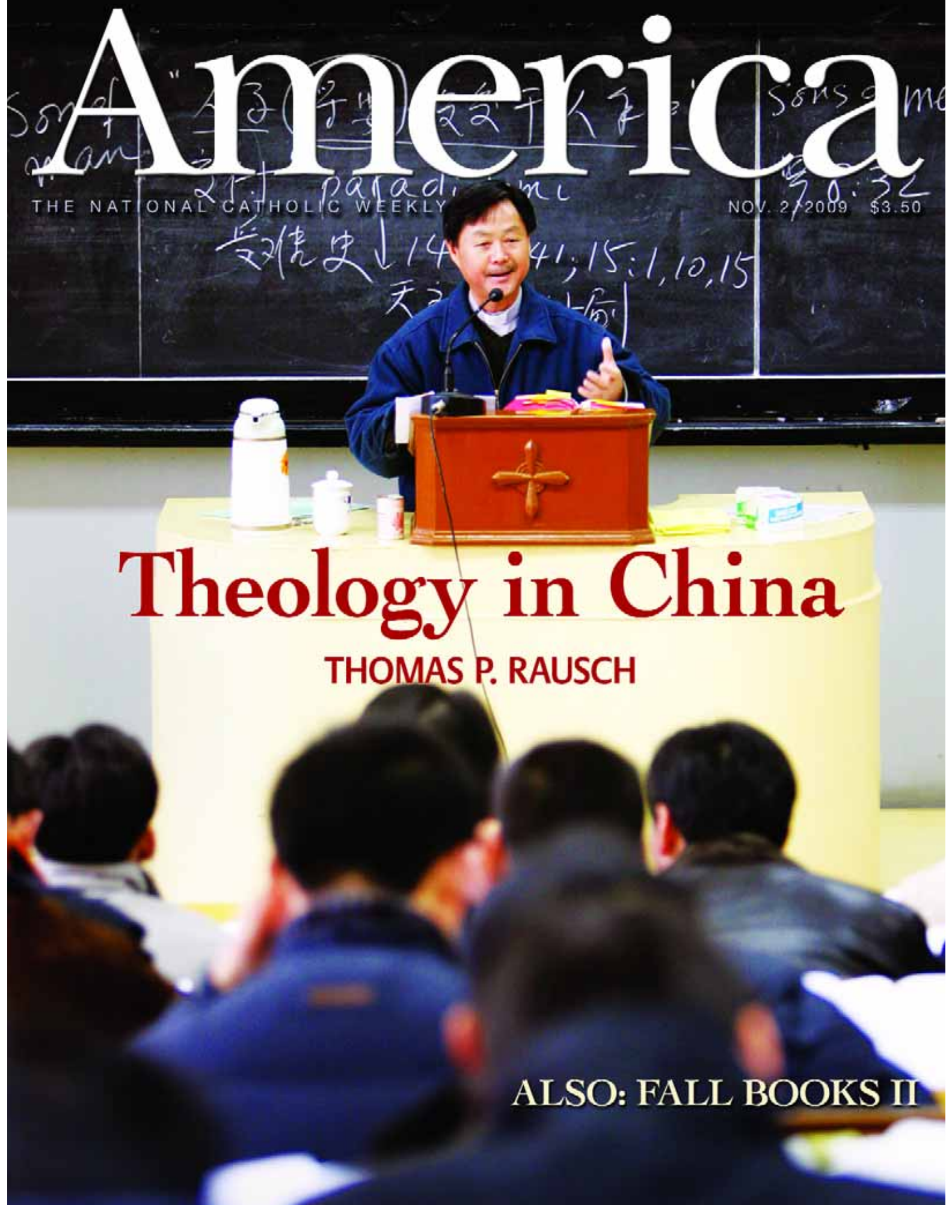


# America

THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC WEEKLY

NOV. 27, 2009 \$3.50



## Theology in China

THOMAS P. RAUSCH

ALSO: FALL BOOKS II

# OF MANY THINGS

**T**he Tilles Center for the Performing Arts, on the C. W. Post campus of Long Island University, is a state-of-the-art facility that hosts a variety of artists and ensembles throughout the year: the New York Philharmonic, ballet and modern dance companies, Broadway productions and more—music and theater from around the world, in fact. A month ago, the Broadway musical actress Bernadette Peters graced the stage and offered a dynamic tribute to the works of Rodgers & Hammerstein, Stephen Sondheim and other great lyricists and composers. Broadway devotee that I am, I could not pass up this opportunity.

Possessed of a lustrous voice that has captivated audiences for decades, Ms. Peters is clearly devoted to the theater. But not everyone knows of her charitable passions, one of which is saving and rescuing homeless animals. Ten years ago, in 1999, she and the actress Mary Tyler Moore founded Broadway Barks, an annual summer charity event held outdoors in New York City to promote the adoption of shelter animals. The adopt-a-thon has come a long way, garnering promotional support and presentations by many celebrities. It currently benefits more than two dozen animal welfare groups (I'm sure there are countless similar programs around the country and abroad as well).

Ms. Peters will appear in mid-November at a Broadway theater for a repeat concert, with all proceeds to benefit Broadway Barks and her other charity, Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS. A children's book (for ages 4 to 8) she wrote in 2008, *Broadway Barks* (illustrated by Liz Murphy), benefits her animal charity. The book comes with a CD of the story and a lullaby, "Kramer's Song," with music and lyrics by Ms. Peters herself (whose mixed-breed dog, adopted from a shelter, is named Kramer).

As many *America* readers are

aware, I am an animal lover and try to do as much as possible for the cause of homeless, abused animals (not to mention supporting the efforts of the Audubon Society, the National Wildlife Federation, the Nature Conservancy and the Equine Protection Network, among others). The causes, unfortunately, are numberless while needed resources are scarce. Some progress is being made on shutting down puppy mills, on greater oversight of the treatment and crating of farm animals and on legislation to prohibit having a wild animal as a personal pet.

What I see and experience in my volunteer work at a local adoption shelter (a no-kill center, by the way) can be equally disturbing. We have had dogs and kittens literally dumped outside our door anonymously. We have found animals bound to fences and trees with hard wire. We were recently visited by someone who blithely announced she has a 10-year-old dog and now wants a cat—but not both. Will we accept the dog? Responsible animal owners realize the place a pet should hold within a family and shudder in the face of such cold indifference.

It is especially gratifying in this volunteer work to know we make a difference. We save a needy animal, (re)socialize him, engage a professional trainer (who donates time) and take animals out of their crates for much-needed holding or cuddling time. This is crucial for building trust and human connection in the case of a heretofore isolated, neglected or mistreated animal. Manifold duties keep a large group of volunteers—who range from youngsters to oldsters—busy seven days a week.

Happily, we do find good homes for many of our animals, which should be reward enough. But this Broadway babe would also love to sing for her shelter. Give me a C, Maestro, please.

**PATRICIA A. KOSSMANN**

# America

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## ON THE WEB

**William Bole**, right, discusses today's social conservatives on our podcast, and from the archives, the editors mark the 50th anniversary of the **People's Republic of China**. Plus, Jake Martin, S.J., reviews the HBO show "True Blood." All at [americamagazine.org](http://americamagazine.org).



### A Curious Omission

A new exhibit at the Vatican Museums contains Galileo Galilei's handwritten notes and a replica of one of his telescopes but no mention of how these items fueled the 16th-century astronomer's stormy relationship with the church. Titled "Astrum 2009," the exhibit is the joint effort of the Vatican Observatory, the Italian National Institute of Astrophysics and the Vatican Museums. It showcases antique instruments of astronomy and globes from throughout Italy, and some portions also offer stories of Catholicism's contributions to the field.

Though a written introduction to the exhibit states that Galileo's findings were not immediately accepted, the exhibit omits any specifics regarding the church's condemnation in 1616 of Copernicus's heliocentric view of the universe. Despite warnings from the church, Galileo continued to defend in writing this belief that the earth revolved around the sun. In 1633 he was accused of heresy and convicted, forced to deny his view and placed under house arrest for the remainder of his life.

The Vatican has since apologized. In 1992 Pope John Paul II formally acknowledged Galileo as a "brilliant physicist" and recognized "the error of the theologians of the time." And while the church need not call excessive attention to Galileo's mistreatment, the Vatican missed an opportunity to educate visitors about the church's past as well as to offer a marker for how far it has come and a proper context in which to move forward. This silence about the Vatican's role in the life of the man now held in esteem worldwide is a distraction from an otherwise laudable effort to continue building the church's relationship with the scientific world.

### The Pacific Garbage Patch

Floating in the North Pacific Ocean is a garbage patch estimated to be twice the size of the United States. It exists in areas affected by ocean currents called the North Pacific Gyre. Most of the debris consists of small plastic particles at or just below the surface of the water from such throw-away items as plastic bags and bottles and styrofoam cups. Eighty percent of the garbage in the gyre comes from sources in Japan and California. Although scientists corroborated the existence of this extraordinary example of marine pollution two decades ago, awareness on a wider scale came through articles written by Charles Moore, a California-based ocean researcher who came upon it while returning from Hawaii to the United States after a trans-Pacific sailing race in 1997.

Plastic does not readily decompose, but it does fragment into ever smaller pieces through exposure to ultraviolet rays from the sun. Sea turtles and albatross ingest the particles. Besides the danger to underwater wildlife, the debris can carry toxic pollutants like PCB's. Consumed by jellyfish, which are then consumed by fish, the pollutants can enter the human food chain. This past August an expedition called Project Kaisei, composed of scientists and environmentalists, set out from San Francisco to examine the North Pacific Gyre and study prospects for commercial recycling of the material. But since most of the debris comes from everyday items that consumers use and throw away, the real solution lies largely in changing our throwaway society's bad habits.

### Dr. Barnes's Little Museum

Around 1910 Albert Barnes, M.D., a Philadelphia inventor of an antiseptic drug called Argyrol, quietly started collecting Impressionist and post-Impressionist paintings—among them Renoirs, Matisses and Picassos. In 1923, after amassing a sizeable number of works, Barnes decided to show his collection to Philadelphia society. Bad move. As told in Howard Greenfield's entertaining book *The Devil and Doctor Barnes*, the blue-nosed crowd laughed his paintings to scorn. So Barnes did what any self-respecting eccentric would do: He built his own museum and barred members of Philadelphia society from entering. It was to be a place for the education of the common man (and woman). But over time, as the collection became more desirable, art aficionados clambered to gain admission to the small mansion in Merion, Pa. James Michener once posed as a steelworker to see not only the Modiglianis and Gauguins, but also how Barnes had placed his masterpieces on the same wall with Amish door hinges that struck his fancy.

After a protracted legal dispute, the Barnes Foundation is moving from its original home into a much larger building in downtown Philadelphia, whose ultramodern design was recently put on public display. The move brings both benefits and drawbacks. The greatest boon will be for the millions more who will be able to see what many have called the greatest collection of Impressionist art in this country (one figure: 181 Renoirs). Also, the arcane admittance policies and severe limitations on the number of guests will end. On the other hand, Dr. Barnes's own modest vision of a private museum designed for just a few persons at a time is at an end. Overall, though, Dr. Barnes's perspicacity and grit will benefit even more of the common folk with whom he wanted to share his vision and to whom he wanted to show his great masterpieces.

# An Untreated Epidemic?

Autism spectrum disorder is a medical catch-all classification that includes a range of neurological syndromes. It covers people with pervasive development disorder, Asperger's syndrome and mild-to-severe "classic" autism. In children, symptoms of autism spectrum extend broadly from minor challenges with social interaction and sensory integration all the way to the kind of complete withdrawal and accompanying physical disabilities most often associated in the public imagination with autism. Autism's telltale signs include lack of eye contact, sporadic or prolonged lack of awareness of others and repetitive motions and vocalizations. A diagnosis of autism can be the predictor of a lifetime of difficulty for the children and families affected, but it also represents significant costs to local school districts at the front line in the age of autism.

Not too long ago estimates of the number of children with autism were as low as two to five in 10,000. Just two years ago that number was revised to a startling one in 150 by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. A new survey published in the monthly *Journal of Pediatrics* suggests the number of children "on the spectrum" in the United States is as high as one in 91 among all children and one in 58 among boys, a revision corroborated by a parallel study by the C.D.C. That means that 673,000 U.S. children—1.1 percent of children ages 3 to 17—and a comparable number of U.S. families are grappling with autism and the impact that diagnosis has on family life and, not least of all, family budgets.

A C.D.C. statement noted: "These data affirm that a concerted and substantial national response is warranted." This is the kind of rhetoric we have already heard as the autism spectrum numbers leapt higher. When will that concerted response begin? It is true that new federal money—\$100 million—has recently been directed to autism research as part of the economic stimulus package, but even that lofty figure pales in comparison to the commitments made to other, similarly large-scale public health crises. Though it now clearly affects a much higher number of children, autism has historically received only a fraction of the monies devoted to other childhood afflictions. Over the long term, this apparent epidemic will represent an as yet undetermined cost to U.S. society as it attempts to respond to the special needs of children, teens and adults with autism.

One fundamental question needs to be answered immediately: Are these numbers "real" or just a statistical anomaly generated by greater awareness of autism? After

years now of rising anxiety because of reports of autism's increasing prevalence, how is it possible that a public figure as prominent as Kathleen Sebelius, secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, still cannot say for sure if the higher numbers recorded by her own researchers merely reflect better reporting and a broadening diagnosis?

If an alarming increase in autism is indeed occurring in our homes, and not just on statistical spreadsheets, then we need to confront this problem as the major health care crisis that it is. Discovering more about what provokes this puzzling neurological syndrome and how it can be treated effectively should be a major C.D.C. priority. Much of the institutional debate surrounding autism spectrum disorder has revolved around its suspected connection to the increasing vaccine load required of U.S. children. More research needs to be done to confirm or deny this hypothesis about the origins of autism before faith in the entire vaccination enterprise collapses. Clearly genetics plays a primary role, but as the numbers pile up the possible effect of so-called environmental triggers like vaccines cannot be ignored.

While a more determined effort to address the causes of autism and develop strategies to prevent it is absolutely necessary, another serious lapse also needs attention: the lack of support for families of autism-spectrum children. Parents of children on the spectrum are growing more confused about how to help their children even as they grow more vulnerable to medical quackery of all sorts. Many have waded through oceans of bureaucratic ridicule or indifference to find treatments they say are working. Such parents find themselves falling into a void between what they believe they can do to help their children and what insurance plans will cover or school districts provide. Many proven therapies are extremely costly but must be paid for out of pocket by parents. With evidence building that early intervention is crucial in the response to autism, families frequently find themselves balancing bankruptcy against the obvious needs of their children. It is a choice they should not be forced to make.

When Jesus said, "Let the children come to me," it was a gesture of benevolence. It was also an acceptance of responsibility. Autism is not something that happens only to "other" families. These are our children. Let them come to us and be helped or healed, or at the very least be comforted.



# SIGNS OF THE TIMES

UNITED KINGDOM

## Rome Open to Anglican Return

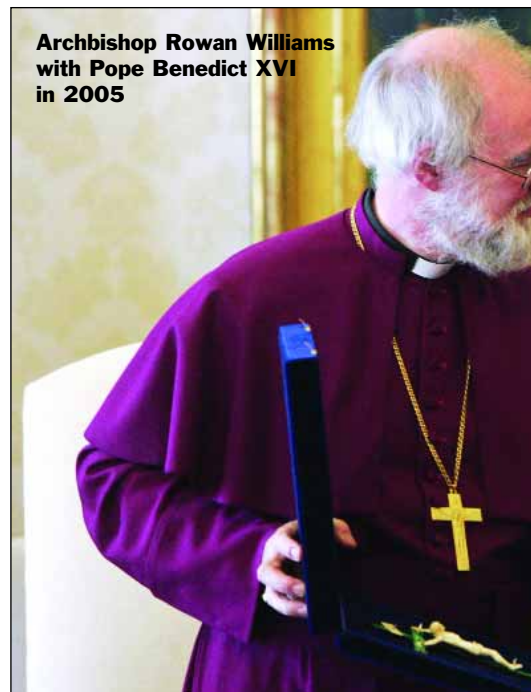
**P**ope Benedict XVI has established a special structure for Anglicans who want to be in full communion with the Roman Catholic Church while preserving aspects of their Anglican spiritual and liturgical heritage.

A new apostolic constitution would establish “personal ordinariates”—similar to dioceses—to oversee the pastoral care of those who want to bring elements of their Anglican identity into the Catholic Church with them. According to the new structure, Anglican priests who are married may be ordained Catholic priests, but married Anglican bishops will not be able to function as Catholic bishops, in keeping with the long-standing Catholic and Orthodox tradition of ordaining only unmarried clergy as bishops. In establishing the new structure, Pope Benedict XVI is responding to “many requests” from individual Anglicans and Anglican groups—including “20 to 30 bishops,” said Cardinal William J. Levada, the Vatican’s chief doctrinal official.

It is uncertain how many “high church” Anglicans may be tempted to accept the pope’s framework, but in Britain there was speculation that entire parishes—even dioceses—would “go over to Rome.” The Rev. David Houlding, the leader of the Catholic Group on the Anglican Church synod, said several hundred clergy would leave immediately and as many as 1,500

eventually, a desertion that could seriously damage the Church of England’s efforts to preserve its Anglo-Catholic wing.

The announcement on Oct. 20 was



Archbishop Rowan Williams with Pope Benedict XVI in 2005

a shock to many and apparently even something of a surprise to the leader of the Anglican Communion, Archbishop Rowan Williams of Canterbury, who admitted he had not been con-

AFRICA

## U.S. Walks Tightrope in Sudan and Uganda

**O**n Oct. 19 the Obama administration announced its new Sudan policy, and from Oct. 16 to Oct. 25 the U.S. Army conducted military exercises in the Kitgum region of northern Uganda with forces from Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi to develop joint responses to humanitarian emergencies. The two developments are surely related. What happens in Sudan will have important effects on its neighboring countries, all of which have experienced grave humanitarian crises in recent years.

The peace in Uganda is fragile, but for now the Lord’s Resistance Army has ceased terrorizing people in northern Uganda, and many of the 1.8 million people displaced by its ruthless campaigns are returning home. The conflict in southern Sudan has long been intertwined with the crisis in northern Uganda. The south Sudan crisis is distinct from but related to the grave challenge raised by genocide in Sudan’s Darfur region, though it has been even more destructive. The conflict, which has killed two million people and displaced over four million

more, came to an end in 2005 under the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

A key provision in the peace agreement is a referendum scheduled for 2011, by which the south will decide whether to remain part of Sudan or seek independence. Those in the south have long been treated as second-class Sudanese by the north. It is highly likely they will opt for separation from Khartoum in 2011. But few in south Sudan believe Khartoum will permit independence, since that would carry away most Sudanese oil reserves along with the north’s self-image as the ruler. The referendum could very well bring war back to south Sudan, making resolution of the crisis in Darfur even more difficult and threatening the fragile peace in



sulted on the creation of the framework and only heard about the plan “a couple of weeks ago,” as he spoke at a London press conference held jointly with the Roman Catholic archbishop

of Westminster, Vincent Nichols. Williams said: “I do not think this constitution will be seen as in any sense a commentary on Anglican problems offered by the Vatican.... In that sense it has no negative impact on the relations of the communion as a whole to the Roman Catholic church as a whole. It is not an act of aggression. It is not a statement of no confidence. It is business as usual.”

The British press seemed unconvinced. An analysis in the Times of London called Pope Benedict’s decision an effort to “poach thousands of traditional Anglicans who are dismayed by growing acceptance of gays and women priests and bishops” in the global Anglican church.

In recent decades thousands of conservative priests and parishioners in England, America and Australia have left the 80-million-strong Anglican Communion in protest over the ordination of women and openly homosexual clergy. The pope’s unprecedented-

ed move allows Anglicans to become fully incorporated into the Roman Catholic Church instead of forming small breakaway churches, while retaining parts of their Anglican heritage that do not clash with Catholic doctrine.

The extraordinary London press conference was accompanied by a parallel announcement from Cardinal Levada at the Vatican, who said the new provision does not weaken the commitment of the Vatican to promoting Christian unity, but is a recognition that many Anglicans share the Catholic faith and that Anglicans have a spiritual and liturgical life worth preserving. “It has always been the principal aim—the principal aim—to achieve the full, visible unity” of the Catholic Church and Anglican Communion, the cardinal said. The pope’s apostolic constitution and norms for implementing it will be published after final revisions are completed.

northern Uganda.

If war does return, the term “humanitarian crisis” could be too mild to describe the consequences. The Sudan People’s Liberation Movement that governs southern Sudan today is no longer a rebel movement operating from the bush. It is much better armed than it was in the war halted in 2005. Renewed conflict could do even more harm than the massive destruction engendered by the previous conflict.

The new U.S. policy promises to play a vigorous role in pressing Khartoum and the south to move peacefully to the 2011 referendum, abide by its outcome and peacefully conduct the elections scheduled for April 2010. It also seeks to re-engage

European and African nations in the peace process and to press China to use its oil links with Khartoum in a more constructive way. Preventing a new war in the south is rightly a high priority and also a condition for the resolution of the Darfur crisis.

The new U.S. policy threatens serious consequences if Sudanese officials impede the peace agreement in the south or interfere with the ending of the Darfur conflict. It also holds out the promise of positive benefits to Sudan if real progress toward these goals is achieved. Sudan’s President Omar al-Bashir, however, has manipulated the international community to his own ends in the past and is quite capa-

ble of doing so again. The real test of the Obama administration will be whether it will pursue its goals with the



creativity and commitment needed to reach them. The well-being of the Sudanese people, along with that of

many Ugandans and others in the region, hangs in the balance.

**DAVID HOLLENBACH, S.J.**, of Boston College, now teaching in Kenya, recently visited some of the works of the Jesuit Refugee Service in northern Uganda and southern Sudan.

## State of U.S. Marriage

Although several measures of the health of marriage in the United States have declined sharply since 1970, there are some signs of improvement this decade, according to a new "marriage index." The index, released on Oct. 2 and produced by the New York-based Institute for American Values and the National Center on African-American Marriages and Parenting at Hampton University in Virginia, assesses the strength of marriage by using five indicators: the percentage of people ages 20 to 54 who are married; the percentage of married adults who describe themselves as "very happy" in their marriages; the percentage of intact first marriages among married people ages 20 to 59; the percentage of births to married parents; and the percentage of children living with their own married parents. The combined score for the five "leading marriage indicators" dropped from 76.2 percent in 1970 to 60.3 percent in 2008, according to the index. But since 2000 there have been small gains in the percentage of intact first marriages (from 59.9 percent to 61.2 percent) and the percentage of children living with married parents (60.5 percent to 61 percent).

## Growing Green Jobs

During a nationwide conference call marking the second Fighting Poverty With Faith initiative in mid-October, faith leaders called for jobs that not only paid a living wage and offered comprehensive benefits, but also set a recover-

## NEWS BRIEFS

Santa Clara University's solar house finished third in the biennial **Solar Decathlon** competition sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy on the National Mall in Washington on Oct. 16. + U.S. Archbishop Raymond L. Burke, newly appointed to the Vatican Congregation for Bishops, celebrated a pontifical high Mass using the **Tridentine rite** in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel of St. Peter's Basilica on Oct. 18, the first time the 1962 rite has been celebrated at the basilica in almost 40 years.

+ Hoping to reverse what they call "a disturbing trend" toward viewing marriage as "a mostly private matter," the U.S. Catholic bishops will debate and vote on a **pastoral letter on marriage** at their meeting in Baltimore from Nov. 16 to 19. + The Vatican began a long-awaited dialogue on Oct. 26 with the leaders of the **Society of St. Pius X.** + "**Families are struggling. Faith is calling**" is the theme of the 2009 Collection for the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, which will be held in most Catholic parishes the weekend of Nov. 21-22. + In an observation of **World Food Day** on Oct. 16, Pope Benedict XVI said combating hunger by guaranteeing that everyone has access to a sufficient and healthy food supply would be "a tangible manifestation of the right to life."



**Prize-winning solar home**

ing economy toward the task of energy conservation and pollution reduction. These new "green jobs" should provide laid-off workers and low-income families the opportunity to shed the title of working poor, said The Rev. Larry Snyder, executive director of Catholic Charities USA. "We can, and must, work to reshape our economy so there is a balance and pay equity for all workers," Father Snyder said. The push for well-paying, green jobs comes as the country begins to emerge from what some experts are calling the Great Recession. Unemployment stood at 9.8 percent in September, its highest level in 26 years.

## Thousands Protest Spain's Abortion Law

Tens of thousands of people rallied against legislation that would allow girls

as young as 16 to have abortions without parental consent in traditionally Catholic Spain. The nation's Catholic bishops had urged people to participate in a rally on Oct. 17 along a major boulevard in Madrid. In late September, the government formally approved the Bill on Reproductive and Sexual Health and Voluntary Interruption of Pregnancy. The legislation would make abortion available on demand in Spain up to 14 weeks into a pregnancy as long as the woman receives information at least three days before the procedure about her rights and about the help she can expect to receive as a mother if she continues her pregnancy. Abortion is currently allowed in Spain during the first 22 weeks of pregnancy, but only in cases of rape, genetic defect or threats to a woman's health.

From CNS and other sources.





# The Race of a Lifetime

Every so often we encounter scenes on television or (even better) in person that are reminiscent of Ezekiel's stream flowing out from the temple and through all creation, revitalizing every place through which it flows and making stagnant waters fresh (Ez 47). They are rivers of humanity—great colorful rivers flowing right through the heart of our most famous cities, like New York, Paris, London, Berlin and—one of my favorites because I once lived there—Newcastle-upon-Tyne. This city in northeast England is the annual host to the Great North Run, the world's biggest half marathon. Whatever I happen to be doing, I always put it aside to watch the stream of participants because, like Ezekiel's stream, they also have the gift of enlivening the very stones they flow over. They are, of course, the rivers of thousands of eager, enthusiastic runners of all shapes, sizes and abilities who will complete a 13.1-mile course, often in blistering heat.

Road races remind me of the great race of life that St. Paul was so proud to have completed faithfully. The resemblance starts with the motley array of runners. A few of them are "the elite." These are the serious individuals who are there to win or at least to beat their own personal best. Some of them may manage the course in under an hour. They are in top condition and have trained all year. In terms of the spiritual journey, they would be the saints and martyrs, the few who

show the many how it can be at its finest.

The other 50,000 or so will be lucky to make it in less than two or even three hours. These are the ones we often call the "fun runners," though by anyone's standards it is no light feat to run 13 miles in two hours. These are the ordinary people, the ones Jesus might have called the *anawim*, the little people, the people like you and me.

They have all kinds of reasons for running the race. Take Carol: She is running to raise funds for the hospice caring for her sick grandmother. Then there's Mike. He had a sailing accident last year and wants to thank the Royal National Lifeboat Institution for rescuing him. Meg has just turned 3 and is proud that for the first time she can run the "baby mile" along with her older brother. Sue and Jim are running a three-legged race, reminding us that none of us will make the distance on our own in life. John is in a wheelchair, and when he hits problems, Sarah slows down to push him toward the finish line. His safe arrival matters more to her than her own. Many are running against the odds, in the face of serious illness or handicap. Many are in outrageous costumes. All are greatly encouraged by the huge crowds gathered to cheer them on and the rousing music along the way.

The first eight miles are the worst, they say—no less true of the spiritual journey, when the temptation to return to a more comfortable life can be overwhelming. But the moment comes, at least on Tyneside, when the

last hill is climbed and the ocean comes into view. They are on the home stretch.

Long after the elite have broken their records and the fun runners have arrived, the stragglers continue to cross the finish line. One of them remarks: "The marathon always gives me time to think. And the slower I am the more I can think." Not bad advice for a spiritual pilgrim either. We

applaud the winners and delight in their success. But it is the losers, the stragglers, the strugglers who bring a lump to our throats and a tear to our eyes. Why would it be any different with God?

These lengthy road races, wherever they take place around the world, are occasions of

Road races are occasions of joy and laughter, sweat and strain.

joy and laughter as well as sweat and strain. Every person who shares his or her story speaks of gratitude for some blessing received or passion for some cause that will make the world a better place. No one is there in a spirit of complaint. Every time I watch a marathon, I know I am seeing humanity at its very best: a magnificent melange of countries and cultures, determination and the sheer love of life. What a difference it would make if we who are consciously running a spiritual race were as full of fun and as eagerly present to one another as these thousands of city runners.

And at the end of the race, I hear a still, small voice from the heavens murmuring, "The last shall be first." In this great race, as in heaven, everybody wins the prize.

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MARGARET SILF lives in Staffordshire, England. Her latest books are *Companions of Christ: Ignatian Spirituality for Everyday Living* and *The Gift of Prayer*.

An opponent of gay marriage leads a chant across the street from gay-marriage supporters outside the Massachusetts State House in November 2006.

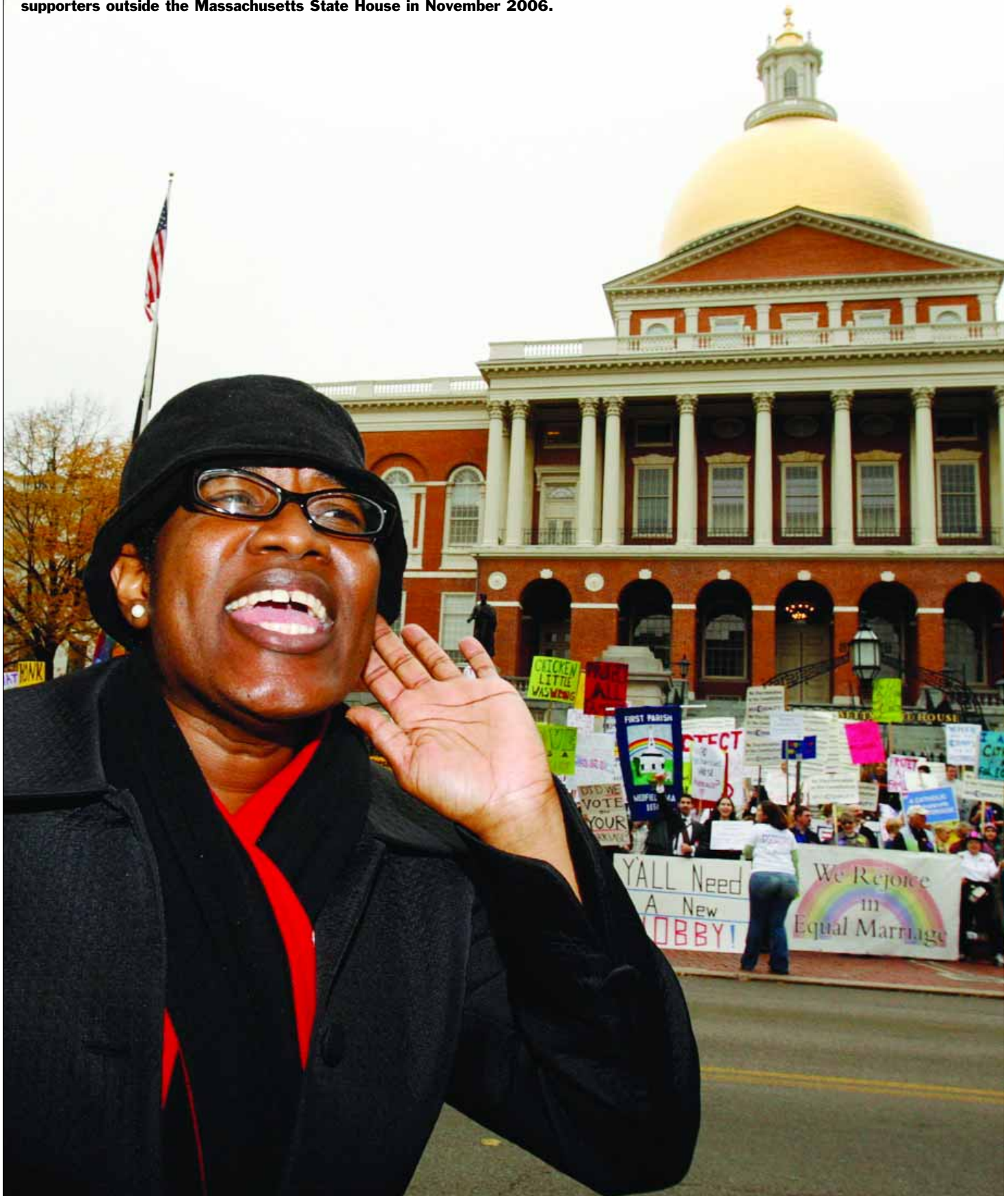


PHOTO: REUTERS /BRIAN SNYDER

WHY EVEN OBAMA CANNOT BRING AN  
END TO THE CULTURE WARS

# An Illusory Peace

BY WILLIAM BOLE

**D**uring the early months of the Obama administration in Washington, there were persistent rumors of a ceasefire in the nation's notorious culture wars. One writer hailed "the coming end" of these furious battles over abortion, gay marriage and the like, a demise that would be ushered in soon by greater attention to such bread-and-butter concerns as work and wages and by President Obama's agreeable style. The rumors were circulated mostly, and wishfully perhaps, by liberals who hoped to take the steam out of conservative social crusades. It seems that word never reached the people who fly the flag of traditional moral and family values.

While some people were counting down the days of the culture wars, many of the staunchest soldiers in the wars were pressing their uniforms. Gary Bauer, a onetime Republican presidential hopeful and a leader of social conservatives, opened fire directly on Obama. The former head of the Family Research Council, a nonprofit public policy organization, declared that the president, then barely 100 days in office, was rolling back "a generation [of]...small, incremental advances in promoting pro-life, pro-family policies." First among those Bauer cited was the Defense of Marriage Act, the 1996 federal statute that defined marriage as a legal union exclusively between one man and one woman. Bauer alleged that the Obama White House was scheming to repeal the act, known as DOMA. Not long after, the Justice Department filed a brief in support of the law.

## More Conservative Than Social

At the time of Bauer's assessment (published in *Human Events* on April 29) many observers believed the opposite—that Obama seemed to be soft-pedaling social issues like gay marriage or was reaching for common ground, notably on abortion. That still seems true enough, but the most telling part of Bauer's early call to arms is that it was issued before he and other social conservatives really got angry.

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**WILLIAM BOLE** is a journalist in the Boston area and co-author, with Bob Abernethy, of *The Life of Meaning: Reflections on Faith, Doubt, and Repairing the World (Seven Stories)*.



That began a month later when they were infuriated by the nomination of Judge Sonia Sotomayor to the Supreme Court. Although a pro-choice president could hardly be expected to seek out a pro-life nominee, there was scarcely a hint of abortion partisanship in her judicial record and more than a hint of moderation on the issue. Still, the opposition of pro-life groups was adamant. They seized on her role as a board member of a multi-issue, Puerto Rican legal advocacy organization that filed briefs in favor of abortion rights, but they pointedly ignored the most notable abortion-related case she actually ruled on as a federal appeals judge. In that case, involving the use of U.S. aid to family-planning agencies abroad, Sotomayor ruled against pro-choice groups.

Then came the health care shootout. Pro-life groups assailed proposals that would, in their contesting view, lead to government-funded abortions. Fair enough. But they also did their part to credit fantasies about “death panels” that would somehow emerge from the optional end-of-life counseling proposed as part of Obama’s health care overhaul. Next they helped scare up protestors who shut down discussions of the president’s initiative at numerous town-hall meetings. But, for those who wondered what social conservatives were really up to, more revealing was the message that pro-lifers should

derail health care reform, abortion aside.

Case in point, a mass e-mailing this past summer from a regional pro-life organization, Massachusetts Citizens for Life. Its redoubtable president, Anne Fox, commented in the action alert that even if it were possible to remove what she insisted are the “anti-life underpinnings” of the reform push, “as individuals we would have to be scared by this bill for other reasons.” Those other reasons had everything to do with the financial costs of what Fox indicted as “universal health care.” This is an arguable point, but it is not a pro-life or family-values argument. It is a Republican National Com-

mittee argument.

And that is the trouble with social conservatives or at least many activists who most visibly wear that label. They often seem more conservative than social, more devoted to the political conservative movement than determined to address the roots of contemporary U.S. cultural challenges, like family implosion and widespread abortion.

At times during the deliberations about Sotomayor, the pro-family movement seemed oddly preoccupied with the judge’s views on firearms. Within hours of the nomination, Ken Blackwell, the Family Research Council’s “senior fellow for family empowerment,” cranked out an opinion piece carried by FoxNews.com: “Obama Declares War on America’s Gun Owners With Supreme Court Pick.” Even the president of Americans United for Life, Charmaine Yoest, managed to highlight that issue (together with abortion) in testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee. The pro-life leader remonstrated that Sotomayor had “failed to recognize the Second Amendment right to bear arms.” Such worries throw light on a dance taking place between moral-values conservatives and other segments of the conservative movement, in this case the gun lobby. There is very little daylight between these ideological partners.

### Kept Off the Agenda

Just as revealing is what these advocates of traditional values are not talking about—anything that suggests a place on their agenda for economic justice. Other social trends that would appear to be of concern to social conservatives do not seem to have captured their attention of late.

Recent research finds, for instance, that divorce rates in the United States have tapered off, but that is because of a steep drop in divorce among the college-educated middle class, especially the affluent. Family breakup is in fact plaguing poor and working-class communities, creating what some researchers have dubbed a “divorce gap” along socioeconomic lines. In his new book, *The Marriage-Go-Round: The State of Marriage and the Family in America Today*, the sociologist Andrew J. Cherlin points out, “The tensions in the marriages of the non-college-

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educated reflect, in part, the declining job prospects that husbands face.”

A similar picture is developing with regard to abortion. U.S. rates have fallen off significantly, except among women with low incomes. Three-quarters of the women who responded to one survey cited “economic hardship” as their reason for getting an abortion, and studies sponsored by groups like Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good have concluded that social and economic supports correlate significantly with lower abortion rates. Unwanted pregnancies, meanwhile, have been surging among women with low incomes and waning in middle-class suburbs.

If standard-bearing social conservatives are speaking of these trends, they are doing so in a whisper. It is possible that some of this may strike a little too close to home for a movement that is disproportionately southern and evangelical.

Southern states are known to be the most divorce-prone in the country, followed by states in the West. The regional pattern looks roughly the same when it comes to teenage pregnancy and birth. Mississippi is a leader in abstinence education, but it is also the state with the highest teen birth rate, having recently relieved Texas of that distinction, according to figures released earlier this year by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In his book *Forbidden Fruit: Sex and Religion in the Lives of American Teenagers*, Mark Regnerus, a sociologist at the University of Texas at Austin (himself an evangelical Protestant), relates that evangelical teenagers on average make their “sexual debut” at 16.3 years old. Teenagers in no other major religious group besides black Protestants have sex for the first time quite so early.

For many pro-family crusaders, these are not just social issues. They are notably backyard problems, which can be the most discomfiting. But there is a better explanation for the lagging interest of social conservatives in such findings as the divorce divide, and it has less to do with geography than with ideology.

### Ignoring Economic Inequality

The demographics of these trends are complex, but one common thread is the effect of income and education on whether a family stays together, a woman chooses an abortion or a 16-year-old becomes sexually active. The problems may not always call for lunch-bucket liberal solutions like larger, refundable tax credits for working families or a more generous federal grant program for college and vocational education. But they do call for discussions, in which many social conservatives would be less than eager to engage, tending toward the question of economic inequality. Some of this disinclination goes back to the beginning of the post-World War II conservative movement, which joined together libertarians, like the economist Milton Friedman, and moral conservatives, like the political theorist Russell Kirk.

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Writing in the August-September edition of *Policy Review*, published by the conservative Hoover Institution at Stanford, Peter Berkowitz noted that the disparate elements of this new conservatism had been “united in thought by opposition to the New Deal” as well as to Soviet Communism. The Hoover senior fellow suggested with approval, that opposition to New Deal-style liberalism and egalitarianism remains the warmest bond of conservatives today.

On the part of pro-family conservatives, this would make a fair measure of sense if the New Deal had been an anti-family project. But that would be a decidedly unhistorical view of Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s policies. Concepts like the family wage were championed by so-called “maternalists,” reformers who believed social policy should bolster the traditional family by enabling the companionate roles of breadwinner and homemaker. They included personages no less than Eleanor Roosevelt and the president himself, not to mention his visionary labor secretary, Frances Perkins. As Allan Carlson points out in his underappreciated 2003 book *The “American Way”: Family and Community in the Shaping of American Identity*, they were resisted most pointedly by two forces that converged: the National Association of Manufacturers, which coveted women’s labor, and the National Women’s Party, which crafted the Equal Rights Amendment and disparaged the homemaker role for women. F.D.R.’s maternalists carried the day.

In a lecture back in June 2002 in Washington, D.C., Carlson, who is president of the Howard Center for Family, Religion, and Society in Rockford, Ill., explained that the New Deal’s family-support system (featuring lush working-class wages and a fixed work week) reigned for four decades. It unraveled as the real wages of men sank in the 1970s and ’80s, eclipsing the era of what Carlson describes as the “breadwinner/homemaker/child-rich family.”

That family-values conservatives today would still identify themselves, even in part, as against the New Deal, is something of a historical irony. It is also a tribute to the not-so-invisible hand of people like Milton Friedman in the wider conservative movement. This case, however, should not be overbuilt. After all, the American Catholic hierarchy is socially conservative on many questions, but New Deal-oriented. Carlson himself is a credentialed social conservative whose talk in Washington was delivered as the annual Witherspoon Lecture, sponsored by none other than the Family Research Council. Social conservatives may not be as unswayable as they seem.

No one expects these culture warriors on the right (and there are plenty on the left) to begin chanting for health care reform and subsidized housing. But if they could see their way to acknowledge that economic insecurity is a pro-life concern, and other similarly sensible propositions, it would be a shift in a more interesting and peaceable direction. **▲**

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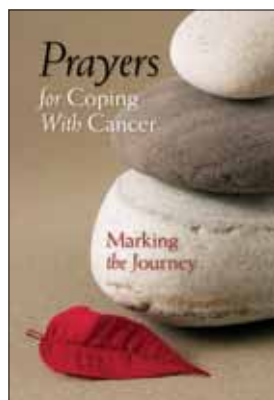
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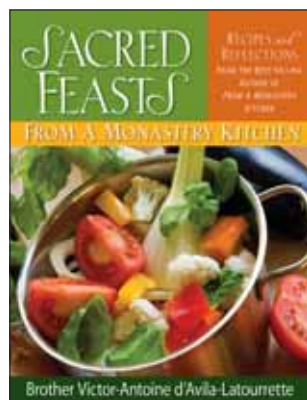
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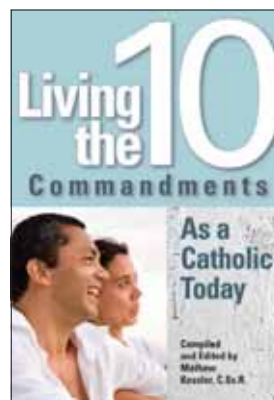
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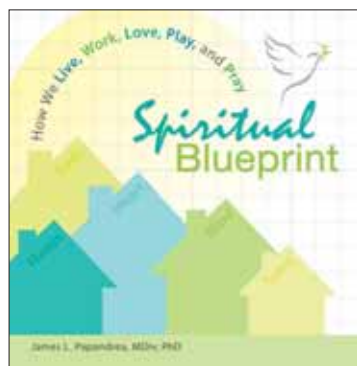
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# Mandate of Heaven

Religious studies return to China.

BY THOMAS P. RAUSCH

‘A Jesuit professor? Very dangerous for China!’ When a student made this exclamation at the beginning of my seminar, I thought some rough waters might be ahead. But I need not have worried. The young man often played the role of class clown and was just trying to be provocative. I never expected to teach a course on Christology in a secular university in China, but when I had the chance to do so at Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou during a sabbatical in the spring of 2009, I thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

Founded in 214 B.C. and long known as Canton, the city

of Guangzhou is situated on the Pearl River about 75 miles from Hong Kong. The Italian Jesuit Michele Ruggieri (1543-1607), who is often considered the founder of the Jesuits’ mission to China and may have been the first Jesuit to master Mandarin, visited Guangzhou in 1580. Today it is a city of nine million people, one of the largest in China.

About 20 graduate students, all in the department of philosophy, took the seminar. They had a wide variety of interests and academic backgrounds, including Eastern and Western philosophy, the philosophy of science, religious studies and Marxism—the study of which is mandatory in Chinese schools. Since the students were competent in basic English, I was able to use my own text, reproduced in the Chinese fashion, as well as articles by the scholars Jacques

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PHOTO: CNS/NANCY WIECHEC

Dupuis, Elizabeth Johnson, Peter Phan and Terrence Tilley, available online or on electronic reserve at my library at home. Some of the students had no practical knowledge of the story of Jesus, while several others were from independent house or “family” churches. Two were Catholics and another was among the 80 enrolled in the diocesan Christian initiation program for adults. At least one seminar member had studied abroad. Most were younger and more reserved than I had expected. They were very polite, reluctant to question the professor, hesitant about using English and more concerned with the university-sponsored exams at the end of their studies than with their assignment for the next class.

### New Interest in Religious Studies

I was surprised by the extent of the new interest in China today in the study of religion, particularly Christianity, even though I knew that many of China’s modern comprehensive universities were originally Christian schools, founded in the late 19th or early 20th century by foreign missionaries or Chinese Christian scholars. Fudan University in Shanghai, for example, which is one of the most prestigious universities in China, was founded in 1905 by Ma Xiangbo, who remained a faithful Catholic after leaving the Jesuits after his ordination. The establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949 and particularly during the difficult years of the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), the study of religion was largely dismissed as superstition or outdated ideology and replaced by courses in Marxist materialism.

Religious studies in China underwent a revival in the 1980s, however, as part of a general reform of higher education based on a new openness to the world encouraged at the time by Deng Xiaoping, the leader of the Communist Party. Professors from several departments offered courses that investigated various aspects of religion, and scholars began to travel abroad for courses or conferences. Centers or institutes for the study of religion were re-established and new ones founded. It is estimated that there are some 50 to 60 such institutes today at Chinese universities or

academies for social science.

In the 1990s religious studies were formally incorporated into the academic structure of Chinese universities. Between 1995 and 2000, the ministry of education established subdepartments of religious studies—usually within the department or school of philosophy—at Peking University, Wuhan University, Beijing’s People’s University and Nanjing University. The ministry’s aim was to separate the secular study of religion from theology. Most of these programs were aimed at serving graduate students in degree programs (both M.A. and Ph.D.), but Peking, People’s, Sichuan and Fudan began to offer religion courses for undergraduates, and some now offer undergraduate majors in religion. In 2009 at least five Chinese universities maintain religious studies departments, and they have graduated a first generation of students specializing in religious studies. Their list of courses looks very much like one in an American university.

Although other religions can be studied in Chinese universities, the government of China recognizes only five: Buddhism, Daoism, Protestantism, Catholicism and Islam. Today there is a special interest in Christianity. Even though most Chinese still see Christianity as a foreign religion, consumerism brought on by the new economic prosperity, materialism and the loss of traditional values, particularly after the Cultural Revolution, have left many Chinese hungry for something deeper. Thus many Chinese scholars are interested in Christianity for its potential to influence Chinese culture in the areas of values, morality and social justice. They are eager for a dialogue between Christianity and their culture and recognize that many of the international conflicts today have their origins in religious fundamentalism.

### Future Prospects

In March I joined representatives from four Jesuit institutions in California (the University of San Francisco, the University of Santa Clara, the Jesuit School of Theology—now part of Santa Clara—and Loyola Marymount University) for a consultation with the religious studies faculty at Fudhan. We were graciously

received, and the consultation was very informative.

The subdepartments and newly emerging departments of religious studies in China’s universities are still small and have few resources. Their faculties are overextended—a small number of professors are teaching many courses. Faculty members acknowledge lacunae in their programs. They seek access to good theological library collections and professors able to teach medieval theol-

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ogy, Islam, church history, spirituality, theological anthropology, sociology of religion, even Latin and Greek. They are beginning to establish cooperative relations with other institutions in Hong Kong, Macau and outside China. Serious about the professionalization of religious studies, the faculty members want to develop first-class departments that will be internationally recognized. They are eager for more contact with scholars in other countries, ready to welcome them to their universities as visiting and sometimes permanent faculty members (another new development in China) and are interested in academic exchanges for their graduate students. Primary concerns include recruiting and forming the next generation of religious scholars.

One of the challenges still to be overcome is the tension between the churches and the academy—that is, between an “ecclesiastical” theology and the more humanistic theology of the universities. It is not the theologians from the churches or seminaries but rather the university intellectuals who are responsible for the new prominence of Christian theology (or the “philosophy of Christianity” as it is called) as a subject of study and debate in China. These intellectuals often are referred to as “cultural Christians,” because many of them are not formally church members. In the long run an estrangement between the academy and the church will

not contribute to the integrity of Christian theology in China.

Pastoral theology, another underdeveloped area, could help to bridge the divide. There have been efforts to move beyond the strictly academic subjects to pastoral courses available to broader communities, temples and churches. Since 1985, one university has offered brief courses for government officials dealing with religious issues. In the 1990s it offered a special course for Buddhist monks and for officials of the Protestant Three-Self Movement, and in 2003 it offered a two-year training program for Protestant pastors. Courses in pastoral psychology, church management and faith and culture are other possibilities.

China is a fascinating country, full of energy and self-confidence. Its people are both intelligent and creative. But beneath the material prosperity lies a spiritual vacuum. David Aikman’s estimate that within the next 30 years 20 percent to 30 percent of China’s population could be Christian is probably an exaggeration, yet the new interest among the Chinese in Christianity and Christian theology is undeniable. Without reducing Christianity to ethics, a perennial temptation in China, this new interest in Christianity has great potential for informing Chinese culture in a positive, even transformative way. Yet in order to accomplish that, as Chinese scholars themselves acknowledge, they need help. 

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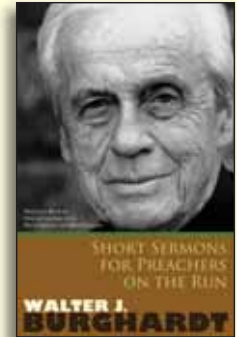
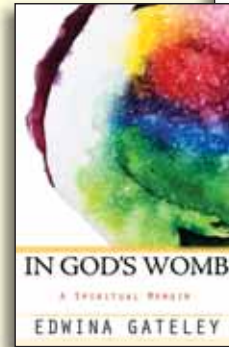
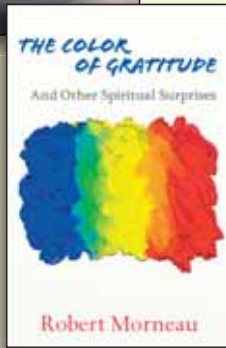
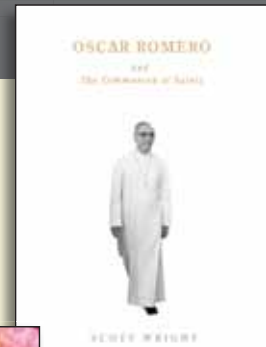
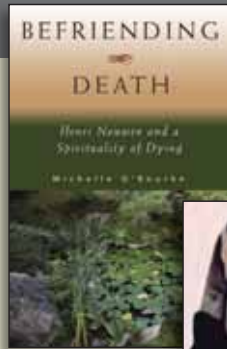
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# Soldiers Home

Our duty to returning veterans

BY TIMOTHY P. BROGLIO



**A soldier waits in a Watertown, N.Y., counselling center.**

**O**ur country is at war. Although there has been no declaration of war, thousands of young men and women—our brothers, sisters, sons, daughters and neighbors—have been sent to the Middle East and elsewhere as members of the United States military. Many have experienced the effects of war: tension, aggression, separation from loved ones, hostile conditions, wounds and the unexpected. Some have returned physically maimed; others have damaged psyches.

Many questions about U.S. policy in the Middle East can and should be raised. My role here, however, is as the shepherd of Catholics in the U.S. military responding to an ongoing pastoral situation: Returning veterans are in need, and all of us can offer solace and support. Christians bear a responsibility to those coming back from military service and to their families. Jesus tells us that our ability to see and respond to anyone in need not only determines how we will be judged but is the

way in which we meet the Lord himself (Mt 25:31-46).

Remember the parable of the rich man and Lazarus? It always strikes me that the rich man is not particularly evil. We are not told that he mistreated Lazarus or denied him the scraps from his table. Rather, he never noticed Lazarus until he perceived that the beggar could be useful in relieving the rich man's torment in the afterlife. Do we see the needs of returning military personnel?

Post-traumatic stress syndrome is not new. Since the Civil War the ill-effects of combat have been described. *Shell shocked* was the expression used after World War I, *battle fatigue* after World War II. Post-traumatic syndrome currently affects 22 percent of those who have served in Iraq or Afghanistan. It is widely believed that many more military personnel, perhaps all who have served in wars, are afflicted to some degree. Last year in a medical facility, I visited a young marine who was completely unresponsive. Not only could he not speak; despite his youthful, strong appearance he simply sat in his room and stared. His case was extreme.

Some in the military who are afflicted do not seek help.

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**MOST REV. TIMOTHY P. BROGLIO** is archbishop for the military services, U.S.A.

PHOTO: REUTERS/MARK DYE

Those still on active duty might be reluctant; they may fear discharge, which in the current economic situation could easily mean unemployment. Others no longer on active duty may worry about harm to their post-service career. Some do not even realize that they have been adversely changed.

The symptoms include distressing recollections, nightmares and flashbacks to events in the war zone. Military personnel have seen comrades violently killed and experienced explosions at close quarters—events they try to keep from their minds. Some avoid activities that used to bring them pleasure. They feel detached, unable to love anyone. Sleep may be difficult, which leads to increased irritability, outbursts of anger and an exaggerated concept of how much vigilance is necessary. If one or more of these symptoms persist longer than a month or two, then the person is likely suffering from a disorder.

The syndrome affects a victim's family. After experiencing the hardship of separation, family members find themselves reunited with a person who seems unknown. Tension results from the simplest situations. Misunderstandings are common.

### Offering Assistance

What can we do as individuals and as Catholic communities? First, recognize what is going on (in biblical terms, see

Lazarus at the door), then take up our duty to love him or her and consider how best to help. Second, we can all pray for our military personnel and their families, asking God unceasingly for peace and understanding in our world.

Third, we can “turn down the volume” in our society. One of the most striking changes I have noticed in returning to the United States after 29 years of residence abroad is the abrasiveness of our discourse. Across the political spectrum people write and speak without any attempt at civility. Being convinced that my belief is correct is no excuse to shout at my neighbor, call him names or question his sincerity. If we would treat everyone with kindness, as created in the image and likeness of God, we would render the Gospel more accessible to our world. It would also contribute to the returning veteran's tranquility and ease.

Fourth, while medical care and rehabilitation of veterans are responsibilities of the Armed Forces and the federal government, we can make a difference in our parishes by seeking out returning veterans. As a community, we can help them adjust to the rhythm of life here. Shaken by the atrocities of war, some veterans need time and assistance to re-familiarize themselves with those dearest to them. Assistance might mean babysitting, gratis; or a tax expert might volunteer services to help a vet with the family budget or I.R.S.

forms. A lawyer might help resolve a claim or a mechanic repair the family car. A psychologist or psychiatrist or teacher could help families through the transition. Any one of us could listen as a returning military man or woman tells us his or her story. That has an amazingly positive effect on persons who suffer from post-traumatic stress syndrome.

As Catholics we can welcome home wounded members of our community. Fundamentally the issue is not about donating resources, though that can help, but about giving of ourselves and of our time. We cannot lose the value of solidarity. Giving of our time, attentiveness to others and the search for an encounter with Christ in the returned veteran who is in need—these actions are possible now. Members of our military have been sent to fulfill a difficult task. They deserve our gratitude and our welcome home. ▲



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# A Rosary in Kandahar

BY JOHN F. BUTLER

**R**ecently my father sent me a rosary that belonged to my Great-Uncle Ray. This was not just any rosary; it had been given to my godfather by his mother (my great-grandmother) when he fought behind enemy lines during World War II. As a symbol of faith, this rosary, with its unique history, is a source of grace and empowerment to me in the daily challenges I face in Kandahar, Afghanistan.

Five years ago, while I was a student at Georgetown Law School, a Jesuit fueled my passion to fight for human rights and social justice. During a study-abroad program in London, the late Robert Drinan, S.J., assured each of us that we could make a personal difference in working for justice in the world. Moved by his conviction, I felt called to public service. When I was commissioned an officer in the U. S. Navy's Judge Advocate General Corps, I knew I would be serving the nation and justice. Yet I had no idea that I would spend 2009 working in the most dangerous place on earth.

Everywhere I walk I keep that rosary with me. When I recently rode in a convoy through the streets of Kandahar to an outlying firebase, I was comforted by its presence in the shoulder pocket of my uniform. While I silently recite its prayers as we hold our breath along winding roads laced with improvised explosive devices, this palpable connection to my family's past represents a deep longing and trust I have for God and his protection.

No week goes by without the threat of rocket attacks. While the blaring alarms used to make my hands tremble, I have gotten somewhat used to them even though rockets sometimes find their mark. Not long ago two soldiers were injured here at our NATO base, and a civilian contractor lost his life. I do not know when the rockets will come or how many at a time; I just have to learn to live with the constant threat that each moment could be my last.

The dangerous environment of my daily life prompts me to ask: Should I choose to live in fear? Of course not. Living in fear is not something any of us can afford. So how do I face this fear? With faith that God has a purpose for me, is present as my daily companion here, where I offer my best in service to my country and to its mission of improving conditions in Afghanistan so that justice can flourish.


For over four months I have attended what are called

ramp ceremonies for our fallen soldiers. Watching the bodies of these brave soldiers being lifted by their platoon brothers and placed on military air transport home is always difficult. It is more so when I realize how young they are and think of the families who await them back home.

I struggle to understand the meaning of their premature loss of life, but the presiding chaplain always has a few words to fill the void that is all too real to us. He says their passing is beyond our understanding and that this is the time God has called these brave soldiers to him. The humbling awareness of the fragility of life and of the mystery of these losses finds me choking back tears at night as I clutch my great-uncle's rosary beads and pray for deeper understanding.

This far-off venue provides an environment ripe for Ignatian reflection. Many nights when I am tempted to dwell on tragedy and the human loss about me, I remind myself of the good we and our NATO allies are accomplishing by our presence and work with local civilian populations. Surely the respect and friendships that have been formed through our coalition's efforts owe their inspiration to God's work to bring the human family together.

In my time here I have also supported two Provincial Reconstruction Teams, one in Farah and one in Zabul—remote areas. These planners and engineers have constructed over \$5 million in humanitarian projects. They are building schools, roads and health clinics; providing electricity, wheat and mentoring programs for teachers and farmers. This is not to put a gloss on the ugly reality of battles and the tragedy of war, but we can forget too easily the central dimension of our presence here: to protect and work with the Afghan people as they try to re-establish systems of governance, education and justice that are the backbone of lasting peace and a stable society.

We will not resolve Afghanistan's problems anytime soon despite remarkable progress already made. But I believe we are doing the right thing and have to be patient. Somehow this is a reminder to the world of how our fate, even in this far-off land, is intertwined with the justice and peace of others. As I lay awake at night in the cool desert air and hold those rosary beads close to my chest, I thank God for all the good people he has put in my path who have formed me in the faith. I pray for them all, including my brave Uncle Ray and the remarkable Father Drinan. I also pray for a deeper faith to see things here in Kandahar as God does. 

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LT. JOHN F. BUTLER is a staff judge advocate serving with NATO forces at Kandahar Air Base, Afghanistan.

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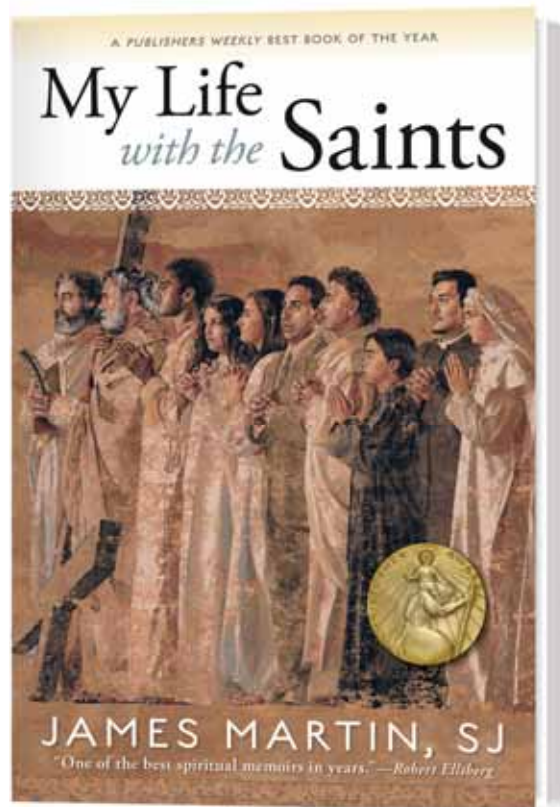
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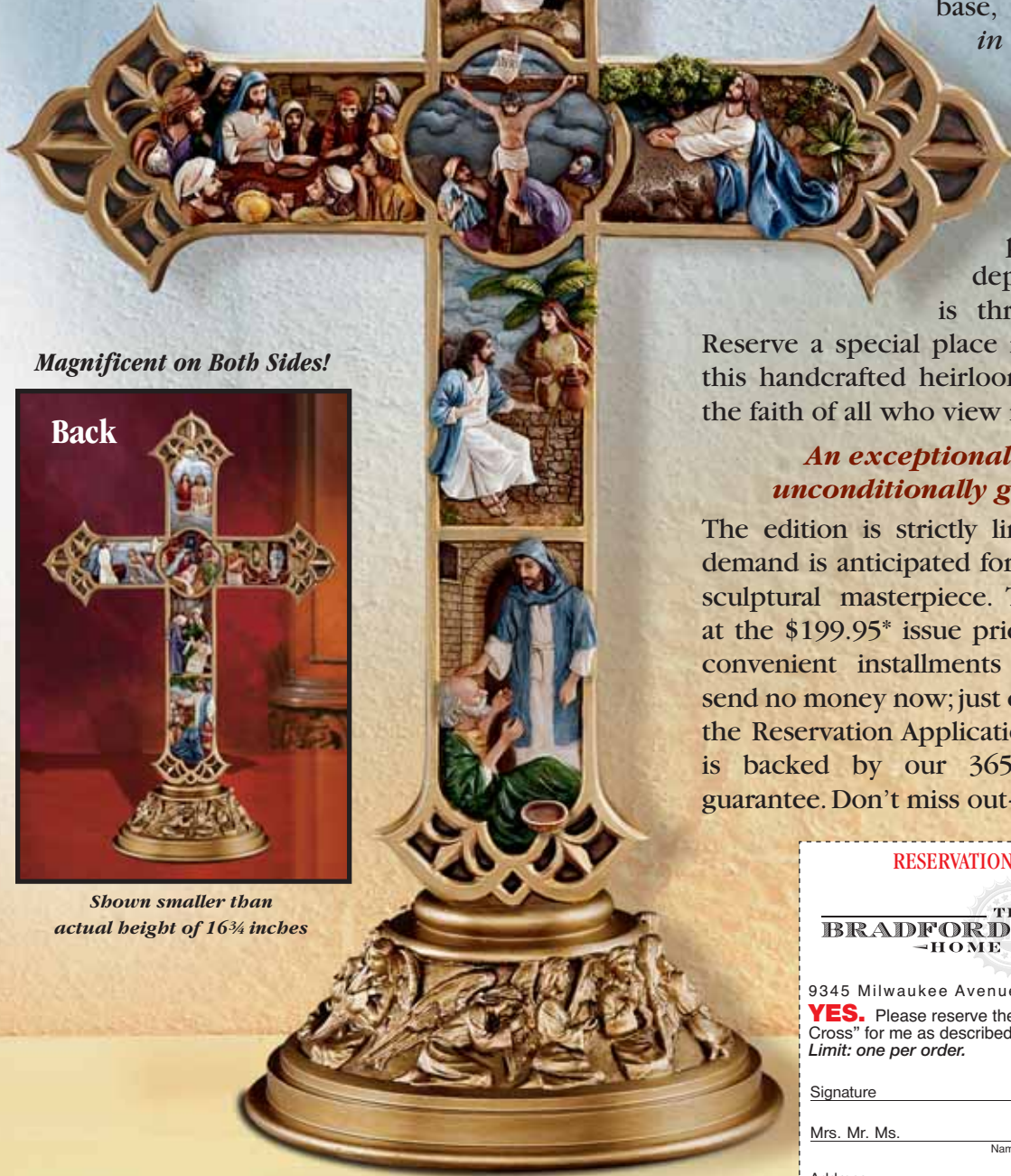
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# Pastoring Atheists

BY THOMAS J. SANTEN

A woman called me in my role as the pastor of a large suburban parish and asked if she could come to talk. I had officiated at her wedding several years before and knew a bit of her background. She was having some difficulties and thought perhaps I could make a referral. My schedule had an opening that afternoon, so I invited her to come in.

She was in her mid-30s, in a troubled marriage, had no children, was looking for work and felt depressed. She talked, I listened. At one point I asked if she took time for prayer. "Oh, no," she answered immediately, "I am an atheist." I listened as she shared her disillusionment with religious faith and her current plight. Then I began to engage her in conversation, offering some insights, only to find myself being rebuffed. Again I quieted down and resumed listening.

After making a couple of referrals, as she requested, I could see that our time together was ending. It was then that she startled me with this comment: "Do you know a place of quiet where I can go to meditate and also worship in a simple manner? I find Mass in most parishes—when I do go—too 'busy' for me. I need the quiet, but I also need the structure of the Mass." Resisting any temptation to seize that moment to comment or, worse, to moralize (as we priests are tempted to do), I named two places. She thanked me and left.

## Unique or Typical?

Stories like this are often discounted as anecdotal. Reflecting on my 38 years of pastoral experience, however, I find the story typical. It contains key elements of an atheistic motif that frequently is played out in the lives of contemporary people. Here are three of them.

**Awareness.** Atheism often is rooted in disillusionment. The disillusionment is tied, first, to what is going on in the life of the person, oftentimes a significant negative experi-



ence or set of experiences. In the case of a college student, the negative experience may be that a professor has shattered all the categories of belief that have until then shored up the student's religious faith. Disillusionment may also be tied to a notion of God that no longer fits the person's world. We have all heard the cry, "How could a loving God, who is supposed to be good, allow this to happen?" Human suffering can be made more painful by one's limited view of God. Judging by pastoral encounters I have had, atheism tends to be a response to a person's shattered world where God no longer fits, or seems not to fit.

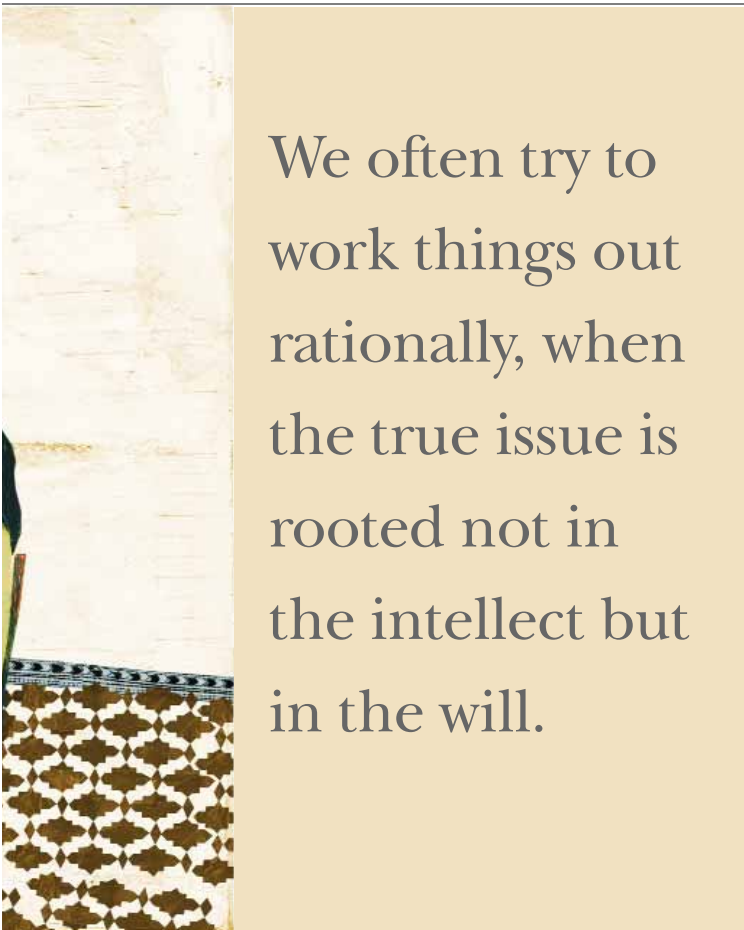
Steps to move beyond atheism include an acknowledgement that one's notion of God is not God, and that one's own "take" on life is narrow and limited. The road toward faith is not about persuasive logic or winning argumentation, but about an expanded consciousness. When the woman who had confided

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REV. THOMAS J. SANTEN, a priest of the Archdiocese of St. Louis, is pastor of St. Joseph Catholic Church in Manchester, Mo.

in me that day said she needed a time for meditation and also structured worship, I found it a hopeful sign. She needed to expand her awareness, and meditation is a great place to start.

*Will.* Atheism routinely finds a person who is stuck in his or her head. We often try to work things out rationally, when the true issue is rooted not in the intellect but in the will.



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Our culture thrives on verbal banter. Think of the talk show hosts who take a position on some topic, then seek to convince others of their position through intimidation, factoids and narrow reasoning. Such arguments are rife with syllogistic inference: once you buy the major premise, you buy the conclusion. (I often muse that Rush Limbaugh might come on the air some morning and take a position diametrically opposed to what he espoused the previous day and, using the same method and techniques, argue his new position in just as convincing a manner.) Such debate might make for great entertainment, but it generates far more heat than light.

A man once told me of his father's favorite quip: "A man persuaded against his will is of the same opinion still." Atheism in the life of an individual is ultimately not an intellectual issue. God is not a product of logic or a piece of data. Belief or nonbelief is about the human faculty of free

will, and the use of this faculty continues to be underrated. How, when, and to whom do I say yes? That question lies at the heart of any discussion of atheism or faith. I love the phrase from the Liturgy of the Hours, "Bend my heart to your will, O God."

*Hunger.* There is a deep hunger inside all of us, and the atheist is no exception. Life is about trying to satisfy that hunger. Organized religion and atheism both proclaim that they have the answer to that hunger: their version of God or no god. As a priest, I find myself succumbing to that temptation. Yet the truth is that God is an elusive presence in a world looking for certitude and control. Our hunger takes us out of ourselves again and again into a realm beyond our limited capabilities. We begin to satisfy that hunger with a profound sense of surrender.

### Engaging the Atheist

As a pastor, I have experience with atheists, but it is limited. As the theologian Michael J. Buckley, S.J., has written, there are atheists who think "God is not worth a decent argument." Such individuals rarely come into the ambit of my ministry. A significant number of atheists, however, seem to need to verbalize their position to a pastoral minister and offer convincing arguments in support of their position. They seem bent on conversion—of the believer. I have met with such individuals. Yet, in a pastoral setting, I have sensed a deeper desire on the part of the atheist to *be converted* (that is, to be persuaded by me), rather than to convert me from my faith. I have learned to resist the temptation to engage such persons in debate.

The fact is that I do not have all the answers. I have a response. The response is not an answer; it is an invitation to the person to take a stance. That stance is characterized by one word: faith. Faith in whom? Faith in what? Ah, now we are getting someplace.

Some atheists make a faith stance; that is, they exhibit a faith in science and in human capability as guarantors of truth. One rarely dissuades any person from a faith stance. Change occurs more readily when a person sees that the who or what at the center of their faith (God, science, human goodness, self) is not worthy of it.

Ministering to an atheist requires patience. Faith is a response to God's invitation, not an initiative that the believer (or doubter) takes. Most important, faith is the only way of accessing God. The God I have come to know in my life is constantly providing access. God meets us where we are, individually, and draws us into God's very self. So, it begins with God, not me.

But whose God? I have to be careful to avoid marketing my product. What my product has to offer may not be what this person seeks at this point in the journey of his or her life. Pastoring is about truth, not about denominational

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membership. Coming to the truth is unique and personal for each of us. As a Christian, I have come to see that Jesus is the truth (Jn 14:6). I further believe that we are all being led to that truth. The question is, Who is doing the leading, and how do we get there?

I have long liked these haunting lines from Dag Hammarskjöld's journal, *Markings*: "I don't know Who—or what—put the question. I don't know when it was put. I don't ever remember answering. But at some moment I did answer Yes to Someone—or Something—and from that hour I was certain that existence is meaningful and that, therefore, my life in self-surrender, had a goal."

As a pastor I am committed to walking with such seekers of Truth, knowing that they are being led into all truth by the one who is Truth. There will be a time of witnessing—yes. After all, if there is any case for God to be made, there will be a need for witnesses and their testimony in due time.

Over the years, I have had the privilege of accompanying a number of souls who came to me while in their atheistic stance. Watching God work in their lives has been a wonder. I marvel at the diverse ways God works in the lives of people entangled in unbelief. But then, aren't we all? I have come to understand that I do not have to make a case for God, that God is quite capable of doing that. My role is to be a willing witness when called upon to testify. In the meantime, I listen, wait and prepare. **A**



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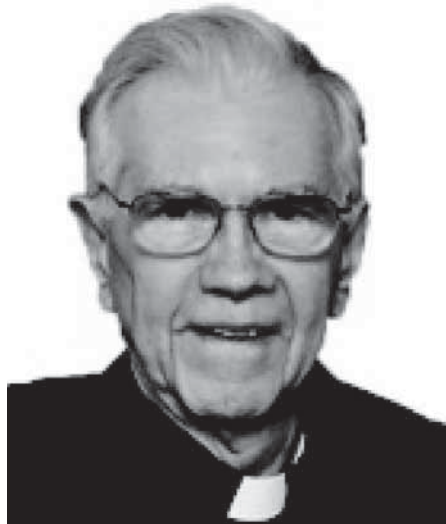
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### THE SAINT AND THE SULTAN The Crusades, Islam, and Francis of Assisi's Mission of Peace

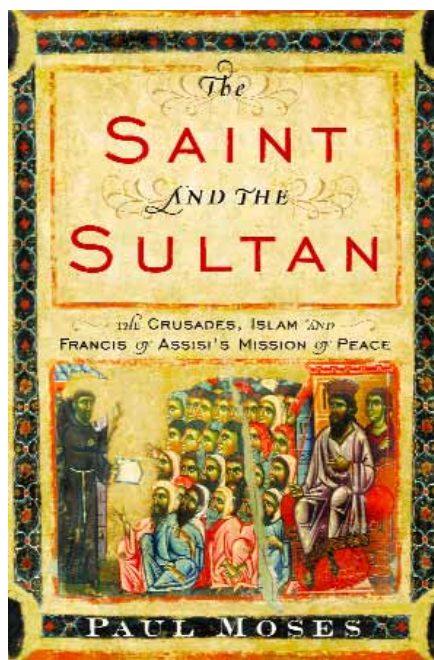
By Paul Moses

Doubleday. 320p \$26  
ISBN 9780385523707

Christopher Tyerman's *God's War* (Harvard Univ. Press, 2006), a massive history of the crusades, devotes less than two pages to the encounter between St. Francis of Assisi and the sultan Malik-al-Kamil at the battle of Damietta in 1219. By contrast, that historic encounter between the two forms the centerpiece of this new book by Paul Moses. Moses believes that the meeting of Francis with the sultan, a nephew of the legendary warrior Saladin, is crucial for understanding how Francis understood his missionary strategy. According to Moses, the intentions of Francis had a radical edge: to encourage his friars to live in peace among the Muslims as witnesses of the love of Christ and as a testimony to his own total commitment to peace. But Francis' intentions, Moses avers, were undermined by both realpolitik and the increasing domestication of the Franciscan charism.

It is clear to any close reader of the early biographies of the saint (called *legenda* because they were meant to be read aloud) that Francis was a missionary for peace. There are a good number of stories about his attempts to pacify the often warring factions of Italian towns; in fact, a writer who was not a Franciscan saw Francis preach in Bologna on how to reconcile aristocratic families whose vendettas were tearing the city apart. Moses insists

that the visit of Francis to the sultan was inspired not only by his horror of war (he had seen battle firsthand in a short war between his own city and Perugia) but because he instinctively thought that love was better than vio-



lence, even if the violence came with the warrant of papal preaching and under the banner of the cross.

Franciscan sources all agree that Francis did cross the battle lines to speak to the sultan, and it is further true that he was well received by the sultan, who regarded him as a holy man. We can still see in Assisi the ivory horn the sultan gave to Francis as a gift. It is equally true, however, that the same Franciscan sources also embellished the story with touches that were by turns fanciful, polemical or apologetic. Moses tries to disentangle these sources as best he can, but his

real achievement is in painting a wonderful portrait of Malik-al-Kamil himself and, further, offering a sympathetic account of the Muslim viewpoint during the Fifth Crusade. It is unfortunate for historical purposes that the sultan did make more than one peace proposal that included a promise to restore Jerusalem to the Christians. The bellicose Cardinal Pelagius Galvani, the papal legate, would have none of it, arguing that if the Christians could capture Damietta they would have a launching pad for taking all of Egypt.

Moses—a professor of journalism at Brooklyn College and the City University Graduate School of Journalism—does particularly well in his account of the dramatis personae of the Fifth Crusade but is less convincing in his analysis of Francis and his intentions. I say this because the long shadow of Paul Sabatier still looms large over Moses. Sabatier, the 19th-century biographer of the saint, portrayed Francis as a humble evangelical preacher whose vision was thwarted by the institutional church. To paraphrase a cynical quip about Christ and Catholicism: Francis preached the love of Christ, but we ended up with the Franciscan Order.

Moses indulges in this approach to a small extent. In his account Bonaventure becomes a villain; the popes reined in Francis' radical vision by legislative fiat; and so on. There is just enough truth in any one of those assertions to make it plausible, but they need to be balanced by other considerations.

A reading of Francis' own writings makes clear that he was profoundly influenced by the reforms called for by the Fourth Lateran Council. He was a totally committed Catholic with a

strong, orthodox doctrine of the Eucharist, respect for the clergy, total willingness to obey papal authority and no desire to have his movement in any way identified with the Poor Men of Lyons, the Patarines, or the other “evangelical” (and possibly heretical) reform movements of the day.

It was characteristic of the genius of Francis that he lived out a radical vision of the evangelical life in harmony with his commitment to the visible church. His strong faith in creation, his passionate Christology and his love of the sacramental life of the church were direct and telling rebuffs to the dualistic Cathars of his time.

Toward the end of *The Saint and the Sultan*, Moses says that the vision of Francis to live peacefully in the Muslim world was realized by such modern figures as Charles de Foucauld and Henri Massignon and exemplified in the prayer congress organized by the late John Paul II at Assisi. The conviction shared by all

these figures is that a deeply contemplative life lived without aggression and religious bombast is the surest way to religious peace. It is a sure way but a risky one, as the martyrdom of the Trappist monks at Our Lady of Atlas in Algeria demonstrated. They lived a life of pure presence; but the harsh realities of this sinful world turned against them, and almost every member of the community was murdered in 1996 by Muslim terrorists. Finally, the longstanding presence of the Franciscans in the Middle East, especially in the Holy Land, is fair evidence of Francis’ central concern about the Islamic world.

Moses’ lively account of a little-known but significant chapter in the life of the popular saint of Assisi deserves a wide readership, resonating as it does with world events of our own time.

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PAUL LAKELAND

## A FAITHFUL CRITIC

### RECEIVING THE COUNCIL Theological and Canonical Insights and Debates

By Ladislav Orsy  
Liturgical Press. 176p \$29.95  
ISBN 9780814653774

Ladislav Orsy is a sly fox. He is also a distinguished Jesuit who was in Rome throughout the Second Vatican Council and who has made it his life mission as both theologian and canonist to stay faithful to the council’s call to conversion. As he puts it in this new collection of essays written over the last 10 years, no one who has not undergone this process of conversion can appropriate the message of Vatican II. The language of conversion recalls that other distinguished Jesuit,

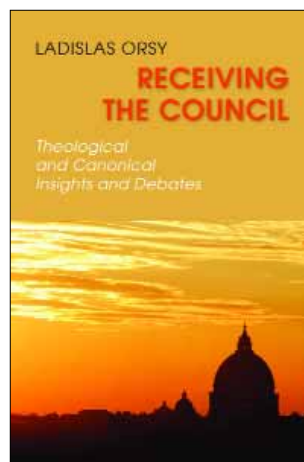
Bernard Lonergan, to whose influence Orsy pays lavish praise in the acknowledgments. The book is dedicated, no surprise, to the memory of John XXIII, the “pope who made you feel like a person.” But if these warning signs encourage anyone to dismiss Orsy’s new book as just another liberal call to follow the spirit rather than the letter of the council, it would be a big mistake to give in to the temptation.

Having been around a long time, Orsy practices the rituals and rhetoric of Roman debate exceedingly well and would have made a good diplomat.

The insights he “proposes for debate,” he says, are “precious but fragile.” They are not the truth, but they are “attempts to reach the truth”—a fitting modesty that his intellectual adversaries might do well to emulate. In an extended exchange of essays on “definitive doctrine” with Joseph Ratzinger, then a cardinal, the only sparring partner actually named in the book, both Orsy and the prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith dance around each other in compliments and qualifications enough to make those of us who would like the gloves to come off a bit impatient. But for my money, Orsy gets the better of this theological gavotte and remains more even-tempered. Like Congar before him, he wants change but practices patience.

Elegant courtesies or not, Orsy’s insights may be precious, but they are certainly not fragile. He raises many critically important questions in an irenic but forceful manner, some of them along fairly well-trodden paths, on the importance of the Trinitarian character of communion, the need to find ways for bishops to practice effective and not merely affective collegiality, and the importance of the authority of episcopal conferences.

As we might expect, however, it is when engaging canon law that Orsy is both most creative and most insistent. He scrutinizes the 1983 Code of Canon Law’s equation of the power of governance with jurisdiction, which he characterizes as an innovation with little or no justification in the tradition. Because this change in canon law is a merely disciplinary action, it can be changed, he argues, and he seems to think it should be changed. It was not the practice of the





church in the past and it precludes, among other important issues, any serious role for laypeople in church leadership.

Then in several chapters he points out forcefully the distinction between doctrine and law-giving. The former is guaranteed the assistance of the Spirit to preserve doctrinal truth in the church, including infallibility. But law-giving is about prudence, and prudence is not guaranteed by the Spirit. In one especially trenchant chapter he takes on the current rules and procedures for the examination of doctrines (the process for investigating suspect opinion among theologians), concluding that they do not serve the cause of justice and adding that the penalty of automatic excommunication (*latae sententiae*) is an anachronism that should be abolished.

Finally, in two of the last three chapters he turns to the 1998 amendments to canon law promulgated in *Ad Tuendam Fidem*, which introduced a new category of teaching, “definitive doctrine,” which is to be held as irreformable, if not infallible. This, he says, demands study and reflection because although it is a novelty, it is one promulgated by the magisterium. But it raises a very serious question: “How can a point of teaching not guaranteed by the Spirit (as infallible definitions are) be irreformable?” It is this last and critical question that he debates at length with Cardinal Ratzinger in an exchange originally published in the German Jesuit monthly *Stimmen der Zeit* and available here in English for the first time.

Orsy will undoubtedly insist on the tentative nature of his insights. And, of course, all theological insight is open to change. Unlike “definitive doctrine,” at least according to Cardinal Ratzinger, it is not irreformable. Newman is often quoted and haunts every page of the text. But in some ways the great value of *Receiving the*



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*Council* is to be found less in its particular judgments on things and more in the spirit in which they are proposed. Theological debate of the kind Orsy practices is always a matter of reading between the lines. It is decorous, even precious, and hardly a contact sport; but it may be that if the Vatican is the dancing partner you want, then to get on its card you have to be willing to learn steps that might sometimes seem distinctly old-fashioned. Orsy, of course, is very adept at these steps and reading this book is an education in how to be indirectly direct.

Though Ladislav Orsy is now getting on in years, his insight and wisdom are as strong as ever; and we hope to cherish them for many years to come. But if, in the end, this collection turns out to be his last book, it is a fitting tribute to the man and his work, in which one phrase he quotes rings out loudly throughout: “in all things, charity.”

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ANGELA O'DONNELL

## AGE BEFORE BEAUTY

### EASY Poems

By Marie Ponsot  
Knopf. 96p \$26  
ISBN 9780307272188

Poetry and old age are difficult human endeavors, yet in her new, aptly titled book of poems, Marie Ponsot makes both look *Easy*. And who would know better than she? Well into her ninth decade and still evolving as an artist, Ponsot takes her place among a distinguished company of American poets who wrote—and continue to write—into their 80s and beyond, a group that includes Marianne Moore, Stanley Kunitz, Donald Hall, Richard Wilbur and, the most famous, Robert Frost. In a youth-obsessed culture like ours, it is exhilarating to read a collection of poems that celebrates the graces of age, the gift of wisdom and the freedom won



through endurance. *Easy* reads like a long love poem to life as well as to art. It asserts and affirms the power and pleasure of poetry as a means of engaging the beauty and illuminating the mystery of the world we are blessed to live in for a time.

This is not to suggest that Ponsot's life or poems could be considered easy in any ordinary sense of the word. Unlike some contemporaries who were able to devote themselves fully to their art, Ponsot wrote poetry while working as a translator, teaching and raising her seven children. (Her marriage to the painter Claude Ponsot ended in divorce.) After publication of her first book in 1957, Ponsot did not publish another until 1982 at age 60. Four collections followed, including *The Bird Catcher*, which won the 1998 National Book Critics Circle Award and brought her work the attention it deserves. *Easy* arrives after a seven-year hiatus

(*Springing* appeared in 2002), and, as with most good things, it is worth the wait.

Ponsot is a poet's poet, the work rich with allusion, formal wit and cliché-breaking wordplay that often puzzles at first glance and then delights as the reader discovers the multiple meanings embodied and implied. Many of the poems, in fact, address the demands of writing and reading poetry, as well as the needs it fulfills, and serve as vehicles for exploring what a lifetime of dedication to words might mean.

In “On Line,” the languages of fishing and computers converge and create metaphors to describe the craft of poetry: “We row out into the dark./ We fish all night, no nets. Sometimes/ we weight or bait each other's hooks,/ testing what our lines can catch./ May the lakelife prosper.... May the lines hold good.” The poem employs punning as a kind of code and teaches its lesson obliquely: the speaker is *on line* yet using *no nets*, describing her primitive approach to fishing and also implying the inadequacy of Internet communication; we *weight* and we *wait* for fish and for poems to come; the final wish that the fishing *lines hold good* and firm is also a wish that the *lines* of her poetry *hold goodness* for her readers. As in many of her poems, the pleasure of words serves as both medium and message, and the reader becomes hooked.

It is precisely this pleasure that makes this collection accessible. *Easy* offers the satisfactions of meter and rhyme and a variety of fixed forms (including many fine sonnets). There is nothing forced or decorative about Ponsot's formal verse. The purity of her diction practically convinces the reader that rhyme is an inevitable condition of communication, as in “Cometing”: “I like to drink my language in/ straight up, no ice no twist no spin.” We are hoodwinked here into

believing what we know to be untrue: that there is no artifice in the poem's carefully crafted music and no double entendre in her supposedly "straight up" words. As with the practiced athlete or dancer, she makes achieved grace seem natural in poem after poem.

Yet *Easy* offers truth as well as beauty. Ponsot's poems present the world as it is rather than as she might wish it to be. "For Denis at Ten" describes the clear-eyed vision of the child in the poem: "Nothing reminds him of something./ He sees what is there to see." This absolute attention to the present moment is the condition to which every artist aspires and that Ponsot achieves. In "Train to Avignon," the elderly speaker and her companion observe a crowd of young travelers board their train. While the youngsters worry aloud about reaching their destination, nervously drinking "Cola pop-top with their chips," trying to annihilate time, the women enjoy the journey, savoring their simple lunches ("white-fleshed peach," "salami & bread") in unhurried expectation of their arrival:

*We, extravagant, chat easily,  
take our vagrant ease. We're off,  
stopping & starting, off-season,  
off-peak, on time, on our own.*

Old age brings the happy condition of freedom from the bondages of time, urgency and false constraint. The women travel through life *off yet on time*, having learned to live in time without being its creature, certainly past their prime yet braving risks the anxious young could barely imagine. To grow old, according to *Easy*, is to learn to live paradox, to discover power through diminishment and to cultivate ease in extremity.

Ponsot's poetry toes a fine line suspended over the abyss of being, even as the traffic roars beneath. The reader takes this tightrope walk

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with her—witnessing dark realities along with spots of joy, comprehending all as essential parts of the human whole. Poems that lament the loss of parents, the death of innocents and the sorrows of war are balanced by poems that celebrate the gift of her Catholic faith, glimpses of God in the ordinary world and the power of art and language, “whose redeeming speech

spans time and tune.”

Marie Ponsot’s generous vision beholds and honors youth and age, dearth and plenty, the call of eternity as well as the exigencies of now. *Easy* speaks the difficult art she has mastered.

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ROBERT P. IMBELLI

## IDENTITY CRISIS?

### THE DIFFERENCE GOD MAKES

#### A Catholic Vision of Faith, Communion, and Culture

By Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I.  
Crossroad Publishing Company. 384p  
\$26.95  
ISBN 9780824525828

Cardinal Francis George, with doctorates in both philosophy (Tulane) and theology (Urbaniana) is a formidable intellectual presence in the church in the United States. In addition, he brings to his reflections significant missionary and pastoral experience as vicar general of his religious congregation, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, and as bishop of Yakima, archbishop of Portland and, since 1997, archbishop of his native Chicago. He is currently the president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

This book of collected writings does not disappoint. In it Cardinal George articulates in a clear, substantive and challenging way central issues regarding a distinctive Catholic identity, discernment of the possibilities and perils of contemporary American society and culture, and a renewed call to evangelization, the joyful sharing of the good news of Jesus Christ.

Though the essays derive from dif-

ferent occasions, Cardinal George skillfully and systematically structures them in three main parts: The Church’s Mission, The Church’s Life and the Church’s Goal. “Communion” serves as the foundational reality that integrates the three into a comprehensive theological vision. Cardinal George celebrates the source of communion in the very life of the triune God and its earthly realization in the church, which, as the body of Christ, is called to be the sacrament of communion and hence of salvation for the world.

One finds in the book careful and perceptive discussions of globalization, liturgical inculturation and the church’s dialogue with Judaism and Islam. While insisting on the crucial importance of this last area, George also sounds a number of cautions. He writes, for example: “In the dialogue with Islam, Catholics have not always avoided, in an attempt to find shared beliefs and common ground, the danger of ‘catholicizing’ Muslim concepts and terminology and reading into them a Catholic sense they cannot

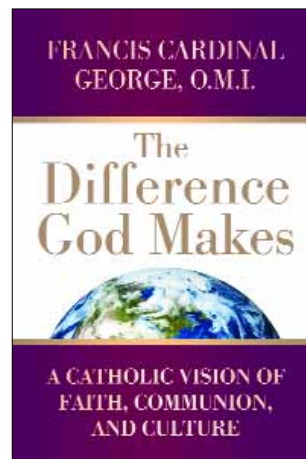
possess.” He insists further, in words that are applicable to all interreligious dialogue: “Essentially dialogue is a service to truth. The parties explain their respective faiths and communities, thereby hoping to grow in mutual understanding and in obedience to revealed truth.”

With regard, however, to a sorely needed intra-ecclesial conversation, the two most challenging, and potentially most fruitful, essays are: “Sowing the Gospel on American Soil: The Contribution of Theology” and “The Crisis of Liberal Catholicism.” In these essays Cardinal George’s concern to highlight the distinctive newness of the Gospel proclamation and to discern how contemporary American culture provides both “rocky and receptive soil” for that proclamation comes most explicitly to the fore.

George insists that the Gospel must be inculturated to be faithful to its incarnational roots. At the same time every culture must be discerned in the light of God’s revelation, which requires that believers labor for the transformation of their milieu. In this regard contemporary American culture is not different from ancient classical

culture. Culture, moreover, far from being some neutral external reality, enters into our very being, forming and also deforming us by the meanings and values it propagates in myriad ways. Before we shape culture, it has already shaped us.

In George’s view American culture is by and large the product of modernity with its secularizing thrust that confines religion to some private sphere divorced from the public life of society. One of the merits of Cardinal George’s book is his ability to trace, in straightforward terms, the intellectual pedigree of this development—from



Descartes and Hobbes through Jefferson and Emerson to the present-day triumph of therapeutic individualism.

What George terms “liberal Catholicism” was the laudatory attempt, beginning in the 19th century, to engage this emerging culture in a creative way. The designation “liberal” is to be understood primarily in its theological, not political sense. What clearly concerns him, however, is that on American soil this attempt runs the risk of progressively allowing the values of the culture to prevail over those of the Gospel. Thus *aggiornamento* declines into accommodation and assimilation with the result that the salt of the Gospel loses its distinctive savor and becomes insipid.

What theological principles crucial to Catholic identity are thereby imperiled? Among others, three stand out. First, objective divine revelation becomes narrowed to the confines of subjective religious experience and taste. Second, Christology dissolves from confession of the incarnate Son of God to admiration of the all-too-human proclaimer of the kingdom, from Jesus, the savior of humankind, to Jesus the Galilean prophet. Third, ecclesial-sacramental mediation yields to the consumer-driven celebration of individual preference and the assembly of the like-minded.

What needs to be underscored in this review’s too succinct summary is that Cardinal George’s theological vision neither supports a naïve restoration of some fantasy-tinged past nor countenances a simplistic “counter-cultural” invective. He seeks instead to provide signposts toward a renewed Catholic imagination, at once generous, discriminating and demanding. His is a deeply relational vision and commitment, grounded in the lifegiving soil of the eucharistic and ecclesial presence of the one who is truly God and truly human: God’s kingdom in person.

Six years ago I reviewed and recommended in these pages Peter Steinfels’s important book, *A People Adrift* (9/15/03). In some ways Cardinal George’s new book engages in implicit and, at times, explicit conversation with Steinfels’s book. In *A People Adrift*, Steinfels had made this crucial admission: “The narratives that have framed the contending diagnoses of

Catholicism’s health are outdated and inadequate.” Cardinal George’s *The Difference God Makes* may be read as a significant effort to offer a more acute diagnosis and indicate the direction toward a more promising narrative.

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SCOTT KORB

## AFRICAN JOURNEY

### THE EDUCATION OF A BRITISH-PROTECTED CHILD Essays

By Chinua Achebe  
Knopf. 194p \$24.95  
ISBN 9780307272553

In early April 1980, the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe met the Harlem-raised James Baldwin “for the first, and sadly last, time,” at the annual meeting of the African Literature Association, held that year in Gainesville, Fla. Both men happened to arrive to the conference a day late, pushing back their much anticipated keynote address, a dialogue titled “Defining the African Aesthetic,” from Wednesday to Friday evening.

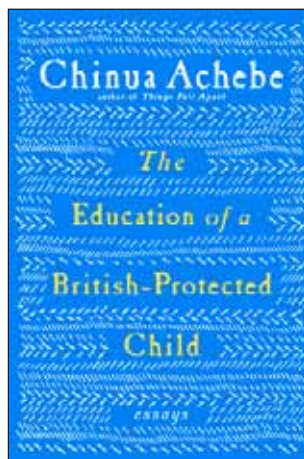
Reporting on the occasion for *The Black Scholar*, Dorothy Randall Tsuruta, now chair of Africana Studies at San Francisco State, recalled the slow, early exit from the auditorium of scores of “crestfallen enthusiasts who’d come out, presumably, only to hear Achebe and Baldwin.” The slave trade had kept Africans and African-Americans apart for some 400 years, time and distance enough to allow misunderstandings

and animosities between the two groups to become entrenched. Indeed, as Achebe the African and Baldwin the African-American saw it, they themselves had been kept apart for those 400 years. A single day together in private offered the opportunity to patch up some old wounds.

Readers today might assume a simple and easy friendship between Baldwin and Achebe, the so-called father of African literature and author of the 1959 novel *Things Fall Apart*. Still, time and again in Achebe’s new collection of essays, *The Education of a British-Protected Child*, we see that nothing about the relationship between Africa and the West, with its overlapping histories of missionaries, colonizers and

slave traders, has ever been simple or easy. Achebe says that Baldwin, as a young man, “lamented the ‘fact’ that his African ancestors did nothing but sit around waiting for white slavers to arrive!”

Baldwin’s “terrible comment,” the result of what Achebe calls “historical alienation,” was undoubtedly less obvious or harmful than the paternalism common among Christian missionar-



ies or the slave trade's utter brutality. But in a book concerned ultimately with the complexities of colonization, Baldwin gets just as much play as Joseph Conrad, author of *Heart of Darkness*, a writer "at once a prisoner" of a Western literary tradition that dehumanized Africans "and its most influential promoter." Mentioned in no less than three of the book's 16 essays, the meeting of Achebe and Baldwin becomes a kind of refrain. Their reconciliation, which represents, it seems, Baldwin's reconciliation with the complexity of Africa itself, is as profound as any other in the book.

Recalling personal history, from an episodic look back at British colonial rule—hence the title of the book, which recalls the designation he is given on his 1957 passport: "British Protected Person"—to bittersweet remembrances of family life, Achebe reveals an endless string of complications and, very often, reconciliations. Born to Christian parents in the

Nigerian village of Ogidi, the setting of *Things Fall Apart*, he fondly recalls watching, "from a reasonable distance," the traditional masquerades of the Nwafo Festival; even so, he writes, the boundary between "the people of the church and the people of the world...had very many crossings." And the sturdiest bridge between the church (a k a the West) and the world (a k a Africa) was language—"in song and speech"—which just happens to be the source and yield of Achebe's genius.

The essays, Achebe admits, ramble, especially those that were originally presented as lectures. A sharper editor might have smoothed out a few of the rough edges. But roughness, one might argue, could be what the national—and in this case international—conversation about race could use. The man does not pull punches. Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* contains "poisonous writing," and Achebe relentlessly assails Conrad. In an essay titled "Traveling White," Achebe describes

journeying through Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) in the 1960s, where, he claims at the outset, "the chief problem was racism." And on several occasions—again, in what becomes a refrain—he reports a conversation he had during that same tour, seated in the front of a segregated bus:

TICKET COLLECTOR: What are you doing here?

CHINUA ACHEBE: I am traveling to Victoria Falls.

T.C.: Why are you sitting here?

C.A.: Why not?

T.C.: Where do you come from?

C.A.: I don't see what it has to do with it. But if you must know, I come from Nigeria, and there we sit where we like in the bus.

The problems Africa faces are the problems we all face—hunger, violence, oppression, colonialism and racism—whether blatant or, worse,

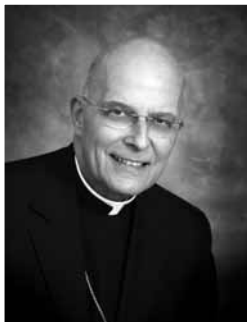
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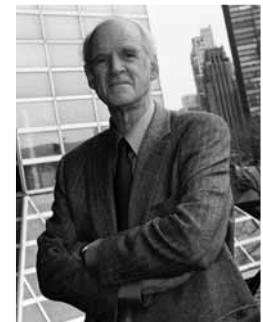
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subconscious. Struggling against these evils following the example of Martin Luther King Jr., James Baldwin and the great West African nationalist Azikiwe, three of Achebe's heroes, is the best we can do. And we must.

"Africa is people," writes Achebe in his concluding essay (this would have been a better title for the book as a whole). And his final words only echo what he has been saying from the start: "The great thing about being human is our ability to face adversity down by refusing to be defined by it, refusing to be no more than its agent

or its victim." Achebe calls this finding the middle ground, living on those bridges that connect us, that span the 400 years that kept Achebe and Baldwin apart, and that account not only for the education of the British-protected child, but more important, perhaps, the education Achebe has been offering us for the past 60 years.

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**SCOTT KORB** is co-author of *The Faith Between Us: A Jew and a Catholic Search for the Meaning of God* (Bloomsbury, 2007) and the forthcoming *Life in Year One: What the World Was Like in First-Century Palestine* (Riverhead).

TERRY GOLWAY

## SHAPING UP THE DOCKS

### ON THE IRISH WATERFRONT The Crusader, the Movie, and the Soul of the Port of New York

By James T. Fisher  
Cornell Univ. Press. 392p \$29.95  
ISBN 9780801448041

The recent deaths of the screenwriter Budd Schulberg and the actor Karl Malden inspired endless retrospectives of the classic film "On the Waterfront," which Schulberg wrote and which featured Malden as a crusading Catholic priest on the New York docks. Much of the commentary had it exactly wrong, as James T. Fisher's timely new book demonstrates.

Fisher, a professor of theology and American studies at Fordham University, has spent more than a decade studying the culture, history and soul of the docks and piers that once lined the West Side of Manhattan and the riverfront of Jersey City and Hoboken. He also has researched the making of the film and the controversies it touched off long before it appeared in theaters in 1954. As a result, Fisher probably knows more about the waterfront than any living person who has not—as I

assume he hasn't, although one never knows—stood in line at a shape-up.

Fisher has poured all that knowledge into a glorious book that ought to change how movie critics view Schulberg's cinematic creation and how cultural historians interpret working-class culture in New York and New Jersey during the middle years of the 20th century. Despite critical assertions to the contrary, Fisher insists that Schulberg and the film's director, Elia Kazan, did not manipulate the film's theme to justify their decision to name names before the House Committee on Un-American Activities in the early 1950s. (Both men were former Communists.) What's more, Fisher shows just how Irish—and, needless to say, just how Catholic—the old waterfront was, how the waterfront's code of silence was intertwined with Irish suspicion of reformers and do-gooders. Deep within their folk memory, the Irish-American dock workers were familiar

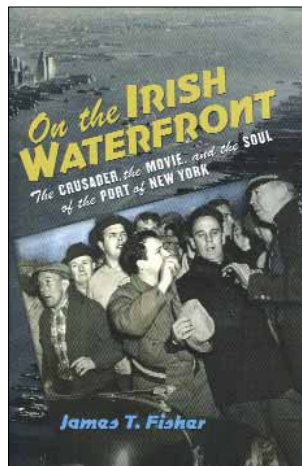
with the type—elite journalists and moral crusaders who treated them like abstractions, who were unfamiliar with life-and-death realities on the docks and in the neighborhoods that longshoremen called home. Until, that is, some of them aligned themselves with a Catholic priest and a Jewish screenwriter who had the courage to speak truth to power.

Fisher's study of that moment in the waterfront's history, when Schulberg and the legendary waterfront Jesuit John (Pete) Corridan worked to expose injustice on both sides of the Hudson River, is a tour de force, an amalgam of urban political history, ethnic studies, cultural criticism, with a little theology thrown in. Fisher's publisher would be well advised to get this book out of the academic ghetto, for the story line is riveting and the prose extremely accessible. That is hardly the norm in academic publishing.

Instead of relying on jargon and professorial double-speak, Fisher delivers a rich, colorful narrative filled with characters like "Taxi Jack" O'Donnell, a West Side pastor who derived his nickname from his favorite mode of transport, and "Cockeye" Johnnie Dunn, whose impairment did not prevent him from becoming one of the waterfront's

most effective thugs.

At the center of the book is a cast of characters who shared something that readers of this magazine surely will appreciate: an association of one sort or another with the Society of Jesus. Indeed, at times a reader might conclude that Fisher has not, in the end, written a history of the Irish waterfront; his book often reads like a history of the Jesuit waterfront. From Jesuit labor priests Philip Carey and Pete



Corridan to Jesuit-educated secular leaders like the union boss Joe Ryan and the Port Authority reformer Austin Tobin, the Society plays a supporting role in this version of the waterfront's culture, spirit and conflict.

The heart of *On the Irish Waterfront* focuses on the relationship between Father Corridan and Schulberg, an unlikely but effective partnership between two men with a passion for social justice and an abiding contempt for the corruption and inhumanity that were part of daily life on the waterfront in the years just after World War II. Father Corridan, as many *America* readers surely know, was the best known (though hardly the only) Jesuit associated with the Xavier Labor School in Manhattan, one of several such schools around the country influenced by the worker-priest movement in France. One would hope that most Catholics will not be surprised to learn of the Jesuits' active involvement on behalf of work-

ing people during the height of America's industrial era. But Fisher's account of the labor schools and the activism of the Jesuits may well be an eye-opener to non-Catholics who associate the Catholicism of that era with characters like Joe McCarthy and others on the far right.

Corridan was the inspiration for the Malden character, Father Pete Barry, in Schulberg's screenplay for "On the Waterfront." Fisher delivers a poignant, well-researched portrait of the partnership between the priest and writer. Corridan never sought to evangelize Schulberg, whom Fisher describes as a "Jewish humanist." Corridan, Fisher writes, was a "loner" who had the "rare gift for mobilizing the passions of others similarly accustomed to working alone, especially writers." He certainly mobilized Schulberg, whose creation of Father Pete Barry remains an enduring tribute to Corridan and other priests like him. Karl Malden's famous scene in

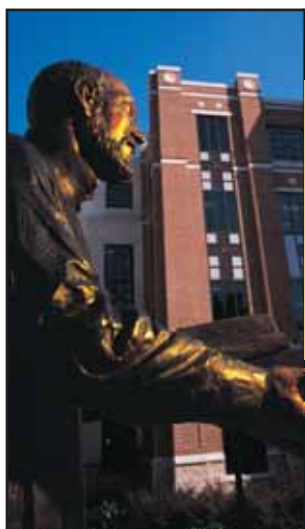
the movie, known to aficionados as the "Christ in the Shapeup Sermon," is based on a real talk Corridan gave to longshoremen in the late 1940s.

Lest you conclude this is a book about a movie, be advised that Fisher provides a good deal more than cultural criticism, important though that field is. His portrayal of politics on both sides of the Hudson River, of Irish-Catholic working-class life, of the passions that motivated not only Father Corridan but Austin Tobin and other secular reformers, is a prize-worthy piece of scholarship and writing.

Those wise enough to snap up this book will never again look at the Hudson River waterfront in quite the same way. They may also come away with an improved understanding of the history of the Jesuits in New York and New Jersey as well.

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**TERRY GOLWAY**, a former columnist for *America*, is director of the John Kean Center for American History at Kean University in Union, N.J.



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Michael Stuhlbarg (left) as Larry Gopnik and Fred Melamed as Sy Ableman in "A Serious Man"

FILM | JOHN ANDERSON

## JOB IN MINNESOTA

*The Coen brothers tackle suffering in 'A Serious Man.'*

Every joke has a hook, some a little sharper, darker and more septic than others. In Woody Allen's poison-laced 1989 comedy "Crimes and Misdemeanors," for instance, the principal character has his troublesome mistress killed and then, despite a period of epic remorse, goes on to lead a normal life. If there was a model for Martin Landau's character, Judah Rosenthal, it might have been the narrator of Robert Browning's "Porphyria's Lover," who is disquieted to find that having strangled his girlfriend and sat through the night with her body (awaiting the divine thunderclap), "still God has not said a word."

Browning is not remembered as a comedian, but Woody Allen is and so are Ethan and Joel Coen. Their new

film, **A Serious Man**, is the cosmically darkest "comedy" since Allen's "Crimes," speculating about not only what God says and how, but also about the fate of the spiritually deaf. Browning was not Jewish, but the fact that the Coens are is no small matter within a film where culture and belief have become indistinguishable and inseparable.

Predictably, the filmmakers responsible for "Raising Arizona," "Barton Fink," "Fargo" and other acts of existential mischief (the Oscar-winning "No Country for Old Men" having been a tonal aberration) open their film with a metaphorically pointed example of pure faith: an ice pick through the heart. In the opening sequence, a 19th-century, Yiddish-speaking husband returns home to tell

his wife of an encounter on the road. He has met an elder of their acquaintance and invited him to come in from the blizzard that is whipping their czarist-era shtetl to their home. The wife is aghast: She has it on good authority that the very rabbi of whom her husband speaks died three months earlier. What her husband has seen, therefore, must be a *dybbuk*, or malevolent spirit, which has taken possession of the dead man's body.

When the visitor arrives, she stabs him through the heart. His existence defies what she "knows." She feels no remorse. The rabbi, oozing blood from his recent perforation, stumbles back out into the snow.

There is a window in the couple's home. Fittingly, it offers a small view of the outside world. Whether it is a matter of theology or a half-open curtain that obscures sight, the rabbi/*dybbuk* seems not to appear exactly where he should after he leaves the cabin and heads off. Is he a *dybbuk*, then? One might write this off to cinematic care-

lessness if everything else in the new Coen movie were not so thematically purposeful. This includes the provocative suggestion as the movie leaves the 19th century for the 20th—specifically, for suburban Minneapolis circa 1967—that the religiously defined community per se does not change much, with all the loose ends between faith and practice wriggling about like a venomous anemone, trying to strangle the clown fish of spiritual complacency.

At the recent Toronto Film Festival, a colleague asked if I had seen “the new Coen brothers” (the director-possessive being festival shorthand). “If I were Jewish,” he added, “I’d think it was the most anti-Semitic film since ‘Jude Süß,’” referring to the notorious Nazi-produced drama of 1940. But this seemed an overly solemn, *goyische* reaction. While I have to qualify my impressions by saying that I am a Catholic, “A Serious Man” seems as difficult to peg as anti-Semitic as it would be to call a Tyler Perry produc-

tion anti-black or “The Quiet Man” anti-Irish. All are of their specific cultures and find humor in the characteristics of that culture. While the Coens make jokes about Jewish clichés, they are also looking for the answer to matters far more profound.

Larry Gopnik, played by the largely unknown but perfectly cast Michael Stuhlbarg, is an as-yet-untentured math professor at a mid-dling Midwestern university, a father of two, husband of one. His wife, Judith (Sarri Wagner Lennick), who wears the melted-LP hairstyle of the late-1960s Junior League and provides Larry with no comfort. While her biblical namesake cut off her enemy’s head, this Judith aims a little lower. She wants a divorce, she tells her husband, because of the special relationship she has developed with the widowed Sy Abelman (Fred Melamed), an unctuous example of self-satisfied, fleshy-lipped suburban maleness. Being cuckolded by Sy is adding insult to injury, but Larry is too stunned by the abruptness of it all to register much beyond confusion over why a good man like himself is becoming, in his mind, the 1967 Minnesota version of Job.

He is overstating his own misery, of course, but Larry’s reaction to everything is bewilderment. He fails to confront two logical possibilities: either there is no God, or Larry has not tuned in to the heavenly frequency. Larry’s brother, Arthur (Richard Kind), he of the constantly draining sebaceous cyst (see Job), has moved in and is not moving out. And Larry’s son, Danny (Aaron Wolff), who is stealing Larry’s money to buy pot, is being persecuted by a school bully while preparing for a bar mitzvah about which no one seems to have a spiritual care. Danny’s sister, Sarah (Jessica McManus), is saving up for a nose job, an idea that gets a stronger

reaction out of Larry than does the announcement that his wife is leaving. His amorphous identity as a Jew seems more important to him than his identity as a man. It is perhaps in this regard that my colleague heard echoes of “Jude Süß,” but more likely it was in the film’s suffocating portrayal of

Hebrew school, social gatherings and the self-righteousness cloaked in religious belief that confronts

Larry on every front.

Western pop culture seems to be in the midst of a love affair with the early 1960s. “Mad Men,” “Revolutionary Road” and the recently-released “An Education” all exploit an overly ripe era when nothing much was happening, but everything was about to: the Second Vatican Council, the Beatles, J.F.K., the Civil Rights Act, women’s liberation. It is a measure of the Coen brothers’ amused contempt for their own upbringing (on which “A Serious Man” allegedly is based) that none of these events, even by the mid- to late-1960s, have penetrated the virtually closed society of “A Serious Man” (clearly, the Johnson-era equivalent of the shtetl).

Larry cannot deal even with the relatively small problems he has to face. He seems not to love his wife anyway; his tenure seems on track despite the treacheries of an embittered failing student; his children are irritating but not pathologically so. He needs a wake-up call, which is what he literally gets as the film ends; and the Coens leave us hanging in the cosmic breeze, wondering whether Larry can come to grips with a God of whom he has no knowledge and find a way to stop being so guilty of innocence.

**JOHN ANDERSON** is a film critic for *Variety* and *The Washington Post* and a regular contributor to *The New York Times’s Arts & Leisure* section.

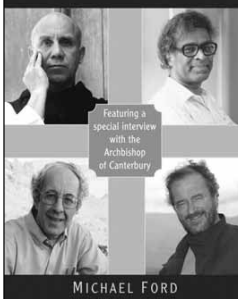
### ON THE WEB

Jake Martin, S.J.,  
reviews HBO’s “True Blood.”  
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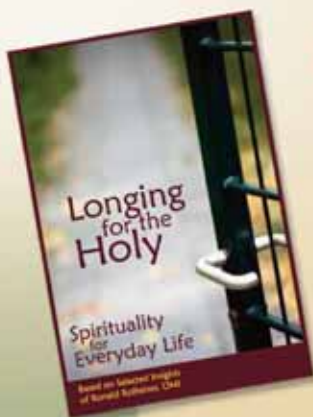
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## LETTERS

### Transforming Technology

I am shocked that the editors of *America* allow a writer to stereotype a whole generation of young people as “the Dumbest Generation” (“Generation Text,” by Mark Bauerlein, 10/12). As a supervisor of student teachers, I enter scores of schools. In these classrooms students listen, are respectful of differences and would never engage in gross putdowns like that phrase. Today the average student is far advanced in mathematics, and those students taking advanced placement could spin circles around us.

Those of us who work with students must limit their use of cellphones. In the past, parents had to

limit television-watching. Incidentally, when books became popular they were also condemned. Truth be told, some children take refuge in books instead of relating to real people.

I am substituting in a senior high confirmation class. The topic is listening to the Holy Spirit. I will be asking students to list times when the Holy Spirit may be operating as they use their cellphones. Their challenge is to transform technology into a positive force.

BERNARD VANDEN BERK  
*Green Bay, Wis.*

### Connecting Generations

“Generation Text” does not tell the whole story. I am leery of any claims that the latest technology will ruin any generation. We baby boomers were supposed to be ruined by televi-

sion (and some claim we were), but I think our generation has survived quite well. Texting is the latest but hardly the first new means of social communication among teens. Being social is what a teen is all about. What does not seem to be part of Mark Bauerlein’s experience is that this means of communication also works to connect generations.

I just upgraded my cellphone plan because my grandkids text me so much. Most of the texting is from my grandsons, who live almost 400 miles from me. It is a regular means for keeping in touch across the miles and between all too infrequent visits. I love hearing the tidbits of their daily lives that I would otherwise miss. I love the fact that they think of me so often and care enough about me to text me so frequently. And I appreciate having the means to remind them of my loving concern for them. That’s not ruining my grandchildren; it is building stronger, loving family bonds.

STEVE CRON  
*Grand Rapids, Mich.*

### More Than Little White Mice

Re M. M. Hubel’s “Looking for Love,” (10/5): Love is indeed a strong case for believing in God, but an even stronger one is freedom. God has given freedom to all of creation. This is why things often get messy and go astray—disasters of all kinds from wars, crimes, volcanoes and floods.

St. Paul explained the problem of pain brilliantly in Rom 8:18-25. Yet we continue to wring our hands and ask, “Why didn’t God prevent this?” If God were to do this, we would be nothing but little white mice running mazes in a perfectly ordered laboratory, and God would not be a good God. He would be the ultimate mad scientist, forever tinkering and tampering with his creation.

MARY CLARE DINNO  
*Los Gatos, Calif.*

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## St. Damien Lives On

Thank you for publishing Sister Patricia Talone's fine tribute to Mary Christine Reyelt, S.C., M.D. ("A Life Freely Given," 10/5). This year the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth, Convent Station, N.J., celebrate their 150th anniversary. The notable variety of ways in which they have fulfilled their mission and lived out their charism is a glorious chapter in the history of the church in the United States.

Sister/Dr. Chris was a true daughter of the church, a delightful down-to-earth woman who lived her religious life faithfully and practiced her medical skills humbly, ably and generously.

This month the church canonized St. Damien de Veuster, who died from complications connected with the disease of those he served. Sister Christine, in serving and treating AIDS patients, did the same. Her religious life and dedicated ministry in caring for the sick give her community in this anniversary year one more great reason for giving thanks to God for the blessings bestowed on its members and through them upon the rest of us, especially the sick and poor.

(MOST REV.) FRANK J. RODIMER  
*Bishop Emeritus of Paterson, N.J.*

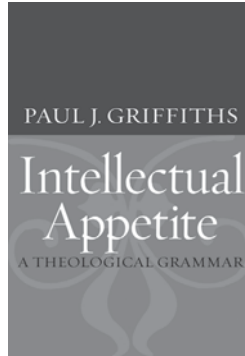
## Unconditionally Pro-Life

The editorial "The Price of Death" (10/26) does a thorough job of outlining the public policy reasons for opposing the death penalty, but it fails to mention the heart of Catholic opposition to the death penalty: capital punishment is an egregious assault on human life and the dignity of the human person. This is the foundation on which Pope John Paul II based his argument in *Evangelium Vitae*, and he reiterated this point in St. Louis in 1999 when he called on American Catholics to be "unconditionally pro-life" and oppose the death penalty.

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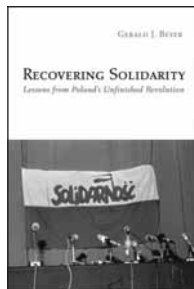
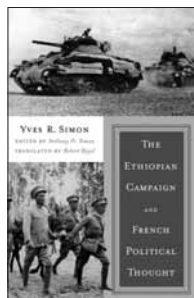
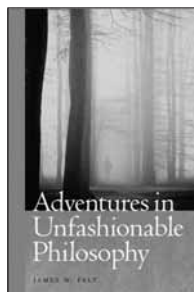
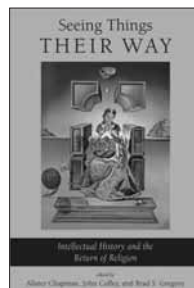
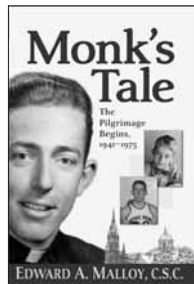
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The omission of this more fundamental argument reflects a sad division in the Catholic Church, one that has impeded my own work as anti-death penalty activist.

Many of the Catholics active against the death penalty want to talk about it as a social justice issue and seem loath to address it in pro-life terms. Catholics in the pro-life movement are receptive to talking about capital punishment as a pro-life issue but not to engage it actively, particularly if this would mean allying themselves with liberals or, worse, non-Catholics who are pro-choice.

This division is visible on the Web site of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. "Capital punishment" is listed under the heading "Life Issues," and this link takes you to a page with a handful of articles but no information (except an easily overlooked link at the bottom of the page) on how to work to abolish the death penalty. "Death penalty" is listed under "Social Justice Issues," and this link takes you to information on the abolition campaign. But there is no material here on the death penalty as a life issue, just a link ambiguously labeled "U.S.C.C.B. Pro-Life Activities," which takes you to the page mentioned above.

The Catholic Church can and should be a powerful voice in the abolition movement. But we will not become one until we can heal this internal rift and see that the death penalty is both a social justice issue and a pro-life issue, and engage all parts of the church.

DAVID V. CRUZ-URIBE  
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# All She Had to Live On

THIRTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (B), NOV. 8, 2009

Readings: 1 Kgs 17:10-16; Ps 146:7, 8-9, 9-10; Heb 9:24-28; Mk 12:38-44

*"She, from her poverty, has contributed all she had, her whole livelihood" (Mk 12:44)*

Some years ago on an immersion trip in Brazil with an ecumenical group of professors and theology students, I had an opportunity to visit a community of subsistence farmers who had taken over a segment of land. They were growing their own food and had created a vibrant community. The stories of their struggles tugged at our hearts, but nothing touched me more than the offer of hospitality from a widow who had three small children and who had prepared what seemed an extravagant feast, given how little she had to live on. As a well-fed person of privilege I didn't want to take the food from her children's mouths, yet to refuse her hospitality seemed an even bigger crime.

In the first reading today, there is a similar story of a widow who is down to her last handful of flour and a tiny bit of oil. She is just about to try to eke out something for her son and herself to eat, certain it will be their last meal. While gathering sticks at the entrance of the city, the widow encounters Elijah, who asks her first for a cup of water and then for a bit of bread. She explains her situation, and Elijah's response seems initially to be incredibly insensitive. He asks her to bring him a little cake, even before she

prepares something for herself and her son. What the biblical author does not recount is the kind of conflict such a request must have produced for the widow. Should she trust Elijah's God, whom the prophet insists will ensure that her jar of flour will not go empty nor the jug of oil run dry? Or should she follow her motherly instincts to feed her child first? The

obligations of hospitality win out; she gives all she had to live on. Miraculously, the prophet's promise of a never-ending supply of flour and oil comes true.

In the Gospel, we see a similar vignette of a widow who puts her last two coins, a paltry sum, into the Temple treasury. Jesus comments that, in contrast to those who gave from their surplus, her contribution was "all she had to live on." Literally, the Greek says she "gave her whole life." On the one hand, we see in this woman one who embodies Jesus' gift of his whole self. As this episode is positioned just before the passion narrative, it appears that Jesus' words are laudatory of the widow's total self-gift from her position of want, held out as a model for Jesus' disciples.

Another way to understand the Gospel is to see that the widow's action comes on the heels of Jesus' critique of scribes who thrive on their privileges and seek out honor. Worst

of all, they "devour the houses of widows." It is not clear to what practices this phrase refers, but the scribes may be the ancient equivalent of televangelists who bilk unsuspecting widows of their last dollars. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus is very critical of the temple institution and he warns his disciples not to ever be the kind of leader who would prey on those who are most vulnerable.

In these readings there is a particular warning to reli-



## PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- What is your response to Jesus' invitation to give your "whole life"?
- How can religious leaders and communities of faith help eradicate hunger in our day?
- When have you experienced the kind of hospitality Elijah received from the widow?

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gious leaders not to exploit those who are poorest. There is also an invitation to all the faithful to emulate the hospitality of God, whose total gift of self is replicated in Jesus' self-surrender in love. In no way does such a stance glorify poverty, for throughout the Gospel we see Jesus' intense efforts to raise up those who are poorest. Rather, these readings provoke reflection on and analysis of the causes of hunger and poverty, urging us to do all in our power to eradicate them. Such work takes everything we have.

**BARBARA E. REID**

**BARBARA E. REID, O.P.**, a member of the Dominican Sisters of Grand Rapids, Mich., is a professor of New Testament studies at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, Ill., where she is vice president and academic dean.

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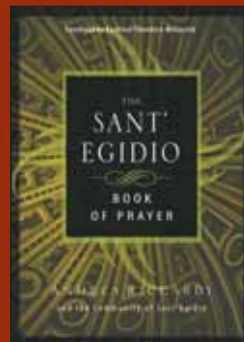
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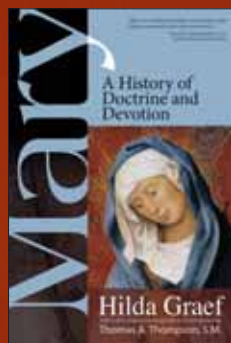
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