

America

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Lost in Translation
PAUL PHILIBERT

Does the Church Need
Exit Interviews?
WILLIAM J. BYRON

OF MANY THINGS

In late September, after more than 24 hours of stomach pains, 11 hours in the emergency room and one hour in surgery, I lay in a recovery-room bed feeling cold and groggy. Yet even in my post-operation, painkiller-induced delirium—or perhaps because of it—I felt compelled to ask the nurses a question. Calling out in what, at the time, I imagined to be a calm and polite tone, I asked to see my appendix, which had been removed from my body only a short while earlier. It made sense to me, but the nurse had little sympathy for my sudden wave of nostalgia. “What’re ya going to do,” she said, in what I’m sure was her own best attempt at a polite tone, “keep it and put it on your mantle?”

Now that I am feeling more coherent, I’d like to be able to say that my morbid curiosity has disappeared. It has not. The odd, vestigial extension of an organ that was my appendix was a part of me for over 28 years, and I can’t help but wish that, before it was gone, I’d at least caught a glimpse of it. But these days, what seems even more curious to me, is the truly routine nature of the procedure.

Despite my presurgery apprehension, I quickly realized that in the long term little in my daily life would change post-op. It is for this reason, I assume, that no one mourns the “loss” of an appendix. The word is used in cases of mastectomies or amputations; we use it to mourn the most useful parts of ourselves when they are taken by disease or disaster. We grieve the loss of limbs, of sight, of breath—things that, if we go without them, change our lives dramatically and instantaneously. And it applies, of course, to things outside of our physical selves, as well—like jobs.

This fact hit home in the weeks following my surgery when my father informed me that after 24 years with a company, he had been laid off. My initial reaction to this news was surprisingly similar to the stream of consciousness that filled my brain after being diagnosed with appendicitis: This is common; this

happens to people every day; it’s just that it has never affected me; this is scary.

Sadly, my father’s story is all too common. When I consider the 15 million Americans currently unemployed, my heart goes out to them. But when I consider the fact that my father is now one of them, my heart breaks. He, like many, has worked so hard for so long. Now he puts into his job search the same work ethic and dedication he has shown as an electrical engineer, as a supervisor, as a father. But these are uncertain times.

Still, in the midst of my worry, my thoughts again return to my surgery. How strange it is that removing my appendix—literally part of myself—could both save my life and leave it, in the long run, wholly unchanged, while my father’s job—something so abstract and detached—when taken from him, has the potential to upend everything.

Having a job offers a sense of security, purpose, routine, and the disruption of those things is unsettling. There’s no doubt that my father’s job was intricately intertwined with his life; but while it was truly a part of him, it has never defined him. There is dignity inherent in simply being a child of God, no matter one’s occupation. But in the vulnerability that comes with job loss, this fact can seem difficult to believe, if not irrelevant. Nevertheless, my father remains optimistic and focused. He’s moving forward, arguing that there’s little use in remaining overly attached to those things that cannot be regained.

In the days after my surgery my doctor offered advice for my at-home recovery: Ask for help. Refrain from carrying heavy objects. Relax. Slowly, he said, life returns to normalcy. The path to recovery following my family’s loss isn’t quite so clear cut, though my doctor’s advice may still come in handy. We will strive for normalcy. We will try to relax a bit, learn to ask for help. And we will support each other, so that no one is left carrying more than one person can bear.

KERRY WEBER

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George M. Anderson, S.J., profiles **Tom Cornell**, right, of the Catholic Worker movement, and Karen Sue Smith reviews “**Inside Job.**” Plus, a forum for Catholics who have considered **leaving the church.** All at americamagazine.org.



Sharing the Beach

The good news from Israel is that some Israeli women are determined to share the basic pleasures of life with their deprived Palestinian neighbors. According to Ynetnews, one basic pleasure is a day at the beach—salt water, children rolling on the grass. Women stride into the surf, though fully clothed, and feel the sand beneath their feet.

Two women writers drove Palestinian women from the Territories to the Tel Aviv beach. Five women from another group brought Palestinian children to the shore twice a week during the summer for what may have been their only sight of the ocean in their lives. They guided toddlers through the security checkpoints (an 18-month-old baby was suspected of carrying a bomb). The lifeguard was reluctant to accept them, but in time his heart opened to the children. A 15-year-old boy who had dropped out of school to support his family was singled out as a security risk until press coverage got the ban on him revoked.

The bad news is that the two women writers were threatened, as they anticipated, with prosecution for violating the Entry Into Israel Law, and the Web site of Ynetnews was bombarded with hate mail from both the United States and Israel: If Palestinians want beaches, let them go to Gaza; kids in Colorado don't see the beach either, but nobody raises money for them; women and children can still be terrorists.

One wonders, Why can't Israelis and Palestinians share a beach? One commentator put it this way: "You treat these children like criminals for breathing the same air as you."

Promise of Ambiguity

The exchange these last weeks over Pope Benedict XVI's comment about condom use as a first step in AIDS prevention has turned out to be a provocative case study both in ecclesiology and method in official teaching. That his response to the queries of his press spokesman, Federico Lombardi, S.J., for clarification were alternately frank—referring to the varieties of contemporary sexuality: male, female, transsexual—and coy—responding to Lombardi with a silent smile—makes his remarks all the more intriguing.

With respect to ecclesiology, why did the pope choose the format of an interview rather than an official papal statement to break with the conventional hierarchical wisdom on condom use? Was he doing an end-run around his own Curia and the College of Cardinals? Was he demonstrating some of the down-to-earth pastoral common sense he has shown in dialogues with diocesan clergy, or do his

remarks reflect his conversations with bishops for whom the AIDS epidemic is a pressing pastoral problem?

For moral theologians, perhaps the ambiguous sensitivity of Pope Benedict's comments may discreetly signal a move away from the ecclesiastical positivism of the last pontificate, with its risk of drifting toward politicization of moral teaching. It may be that moral theologians and bishops who a decade ago took the same position as the pope, only to be rejected, can begin to hope that their collective wisdom might again function as an integral part of the ordinary magisterium, as it did for centuries. Perhaps, in line with the reduced expectations Benedict has sometimes attempted to encourage about the exercise of the papal office, he may be gently nudging bishops not to feel compelled to present themselves as oracles on new moral challenges.

A Duty of Self-Care

This New Year's, as many people resolve to lose weight and take better care of themselves, a new study suggests American women would do well to maintain these resolutions not just for a year but for a lifetime. A state-by-state report card assessing women's health in the United States was recently released by the National Women's Law Center and the Oregon Health and Science University. The overall health of U.S. women was graded unsatisfactory; in some areas it is actually getting worse. Most surprising, say researchers, is that the number of women of all ages who indulge in binge drinking has gone up—to more than 10 percent in 2010 from 6.7 percent in 2007. In addition, the number of women who receive cervical cancer screenings has gone down even as the number of women who test positive for chlamydia has risen.

Perhaps less surprising is the fact that an increasing number of women struggle with obesity, diabetes and hypertension. Massachusetts and Vermont received the highest score given to any states for the health status of their residents, the low grade of "satisfactory minus." Twelve states received a "failing" grade; Louisiana and Mississippi ranked lowest. The grades reflect failure to meet the government's Healthy People 2010 initiative.

In a time when the unhealthiest foods are often the cheapest and many women are the sole providers for their families, few have the time or funds to find healthy meals or join a gym. Ensuring that fresh, healthy, local foods are affordable and available to all would be a good first step toward improvement. Recent reforms in health care will expand Medicaid eligibility and put an end to some gender-based inequalities. Christian stewardship encompasses care for all of God's creation, including oneself.

Deadline in Sudan

In just a few days, as many as three million people will participate in a referendum that will almost certainly endorse secession and independence for southern Sudan. Sudan's Catholic bishops have urged practical and prayerful support for a peaceful vote and transition to independence if that is the choice of the Sudanese. They have also called on the international community to shoulder its responsibilities in Sudan and the governments in Khartoum in the north and Juba in the south to show restraint and "neighborliness," whatever the outcome on Jan. 9.

These hopeful exhortations are unfortunately matched by preparations for war in the new year in a land that has known little else since independence. Thousands of soldiers from the north are already massing along the border. One minor revelation out of the WikiLeaks cable dump has been evidence that the administration of George W. Bush clearly knew of large arms transfers, including Soviet-era tanks, to the Sudan People's Liberation Movement in the south, the region's de facto government since the Comprehensive Peace Accord in 2005. For its part, Khartoum has made frequent arms purchases from China, Russia and other states of the former Soviet Union in apparent violation of a 2005 arms embargo.

There are plenty of reasons to be pessimistic about the likelihood of a peaceful transition in Sudan. A referendum in Abyei, a disputed border province and the center of Sudan's oil production, has been indefinitely postponed; and now the province, where both sides have deep ethnic connections, threatens to become the Kashmir of the Sudan. Final borders, citizenship and the division of oil revenues remain undetermined, and Khartoum has been persistently noncompliant in the face of growing international pressure to prepare for the vote. There is no reason to trust that Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir, with two international war crimes indictments hanging over his head, is honestly committed to a successful vote and peaceful transition. Behind him lurk other figures in the northern military even more hostile to southern independence. Thousands of southern Sudanese living in the north are heading south to escape an anticipated orgy of retaliatory violence, should secession succeed at the ballot box.

Sudan is derived from *al-Sudd*, the Arabic term for the vast swamplands in the south. Certainly, Al-Sudd has proved to be a swamp for diplomatic initiatives over the last five years. Could it be that the international community, like

many of Sudan's residents, has become resigned to the return of conflict to a nation that has already endured two million deaths in decades of fighting? "Sudan fatigue," one international analyst said, may be understandable given the country's deep complex of ethnic, religious, political and economic tensions.

Even in this 11th hour, however, there is still cause for hope. In recent months the Obama administration and U.N. diplomats have re-energized negotiations aimed at a successful referendum by offering to drop Sudan from the list of terrorist states if it accepts the outcome of the vote. The sudden rush of activity in the few short months left before the vote was certainly welcome, but it is fair to wonder why so little progress was made in the five years that have already passed since the signing of the peace accord. Perhaps the diplomatic fire brigade would not be required now to put out this regional fire if southern Sudan had been given this level of attention a year or, better, two years ago. At least now, said one Sudan analyst, "there are a lot of buckets, and they're all heading in the same direction."

The consequences of renewed violence and economic disruption will be grave for Sudan, but it is not the only nation with much at risk on Jan. 9. In September 2005, partly in response to the crisis in Sudan, U.N. member states accepted the principle of the responsibility to protect—an internationally shared responsibility to protect civilian populations from war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide when "national authorities manifestly fail to protect their populations." The United States and the Obama administration have gone even further. The 2010 U.S. National Security Strategy commits the United States to "mobilize diplomatic, humanitarian, financial and—in certain instances—military means to prevent and respond to genocide and mass atrocities."

It appears, on paper at least, that the United States will not sit back and allow another Rwanda to unfold. But, stretched thin on two war fronts, the United States may not have the will or capacity to respond. If the worst unfolds after Jan. 9, no doubt many nations, from the members of the Security Council to the African Union, will be able to offer reasonable explanations for why they could not have done more. They ought, however, to find the means to exercise their acknowledged obligation to protect the innocent.



SIGNS OF THE TIMES

SPECIAL TO AMERICA

Why Bad News Out of Africa Is Still Worth Hearing

It has become hugely popular of late to trumpet the economic successes of Africa. Magazines and stockholder reports compete for catchy clichés. An article in the latest issue of *Foreign Policy* gushes about the “African Miracle,” while the business consultants McKinsey & Company hears the bold roar of the “African Lions.” Certainly there is forward movement to celebrate, at least relative to the continent’s dismal post-independence performance, but the reality is that the bottom 30 countries in the 2010 U.N. Human Development Index are still nearly all African (though they also include two great nation-building experiments by the United States: Afghanistan and Haiti). As for Africa’s much-vaunted entrepreneurship, of the 20 countries ranked lowest by the World Bank in terms of “ease of doing business,” 15 are in sub-Saharan Africa. On this same scale, the two highest-rated African nations are South Africa (34th) and Botswana (52nd).

What is troubling about this penchant for exaggerating Africa’s recent achievements is that it can blind us to serious ongoing problems and stifle our political and diplomatic engagement. True, it may be a refreshing alternative to decades of what used to be called “Afro-pessimism,” but one-dimensional good news is no substitute for a complete and nuanced picture of the continent.

Take, for example, Africa’s predilection for conflict. In November and December, sites in south Sudan were bombed, apparently by government forces from the north, just weeks

before a referendum to be held on Jan. 9 about its independence from the rest of the country. Hostilities continue in Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia and Uganda; and



there are other countries that would require but a spark to reignite violence. The Center for International Development and Conflict Management concludes, “Undoubtedly, Africa remains the most serious concern.”

MEXICO

No Progress for Disabled People

Mentally and physically disabled children and adults in Mexico continue to live in abusive and squalid conditions in many orphanages and mental health facilities throughout the country. A report on Nov. 30 by Disability Rights International, working with the Mexican Commission for the Defense and Promotion of Human Rights, indicates that not much has changed in Mexico 10 years after a Mexican commission for the rights of cognitive-

ly and physically challenged people conducted a similar survey.

Throughout 2009 investigators visited 20 institutions and found that children and adults existed in squalid environments redolent of feces, urine and dirty sheets. They were also subjected to physical abuse. According to the report, a man and a woman who were found tied to wheelchairs in the previous survey 10 years ago were found again tied to their wheelchairs in the recent inspection.

In another facility, two women who had grown up in the institution were found working there without pay. Staff members could not explain why the women were there at all. Similarly at a girls’ institution, staff members could not provide the names or ages of patients or even the reason why some of them were there. Investigators discovered that lobotomies were not uncommon for the treatment of aggressive behavior. One institution acknowledged that it had performed four over the past few years, even though this procedure has been largely discarded in developed countries.

Children in Mexican institutions

The injured are brought to a U.N. compound in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, after street confrontations with domestic security forces.



PHOTO: U.N. MEDIA/BASILE ZOMBA

Democratization, too, has taken several big steps backward, in large part because of the greed and indifference of Africa's elites. In the Ivory Coast 20 people have died so far in clashes between security forces loyal to

Laurent Gbagbo, who has refused to accept his defeat in the presidential run-off elections on Nov. 28, and supporters of the apparent winner, Alassane Ouattarade. The electoral fiasco is but the latest tragedy to befall a country that 30 years ago was peaceful and prosperous, with a per capita gross domestic product vastly higher than those of Indonesia or China. Its neighbor, Guinea, played a similar game of incendiary ethnic politics this year, although so far it has avoided the worst excesses of Ivory Coast. Sudan and Ethiopia, two of Africa's largest and most populous countries, held sham elections in 2010, further cementing their autocratic political cultures. And the continent's other giants—the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya and Nigeria—remain profoundly corrupt. Of course, democracy entails far more than credible elections. Integrity in government is essential, too, which in most of Africa can be assured only through the vigilance of civil society and the media. Sadly, here too the trend is toward a tightening of political space. Human

Rights Watch has noted that Ethiopia, to cite but one example, has “eviscerated civil society organizations and the independent media.” In South Africa, which has the freest press in the region, the government has proposed tough new legislation that many believe will lead to a muzzling of the media.

Doubtless, there are encouraging changes to be found in Africa—economically, politically and socially—but for too many people there life remains “nasty, brutish and short.” To deny this is not just wishful thinking; it is sinful. President Obama was praised for his courage and realism when, speaking in Ghana last year, he told his audience that “we must start from the simple premise that Africa's future is up to Africans.” The truth, of course, is anything but simple. Africa's future is up to all of us, and we can best shoulder that responsibility by understanding the place in all its complexity.

CHRIS HENNEMEYER has worked in and on Africa for over three decades. He is now based in Silver Spring, Md., and travels frequently to the continent.

have been especially at risk. In the new report, government officials admitted there was no registry and no method for tracking children, leaving them potential victims of human trafficking and forced labor. A grandmother in Mexico City was unable to locate her granddaughter after she was placed in foster care at age 6 in 2005. The grandmother had been granted custody three years ago, but the child's whereabouts remain unknown, and investigators believe she has probably been trafficked. Eric Rosenthal, director of Disability Rights International, said, “Only in Mexico have I encountered a system so lacking in protec-

tions that children literally disappear.”

Ironically, together with many other countries, Mexico ratified the 2006 U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. And yet the Mexican Commission that wrote the original report in 2000 has said that current violations in Mexico are still “as serious as any this organization has documented before.” Disability Rights International's new report makes clear the failure of the state to enforce existing regulations, and it recommends that the government place more emphasis on community-based services for children and more independent oversight of institutions for the disabled.



PHOTO: GENE RICHARDS

Inside a Mexican institution for the mentally disabled

Making Migration Work for Women

A conference sponsored by Caritas Internationalis on “The Female Face of Migration” brought together in Senegal 100 migration experts from more than 50 countries from Nov. 30 to Dec. 2. “Women and girls are a vital part of the solution towards alleviating and eradicating poverty,” said Lesley-Anne Knight, secretary general of Caritas. She argued that migration done properly could “contribute to greater gender equality and to the empowerment of women.” Archbishop Cyprian Kizito Lwanga, president of Caritas Africa, said, “It would become a source of hope and development if human mobility were acknowledged and countries of origin could benefit from it.” The Caritas members urged a greater church presence on borders to improve monitoring of migration and encouraged the church to use its vast reach to speak about the difficulties of migration and promote policies that prioritize protection of families in countries of origin, transit and destination.

Patriarch Urges Protection in Iraq

Patriarch Ignatius Joseph III Younan, a Syrian Catholic, called on the Iraqi government to ensure the safety of all Iraqi citizens, especially Christians, “who are defenseless, honest and peaceful people.” In his homily at a memorial Mass in Baghdad on Dec. 10 that venerated the “46 new martyrs” of the Syrian Catholic Church killed in a terrorist siege on Oct. 31, the patriarch said the presence of government officials at the liturgy “helped to inspire some trust and feelings of some protection” for the faithful. The patriarch said: “It is the responsibility of the

NEWS BRIEFS

The Vatican and the Palestine Liberation Organization have resumed diplomatic talks toward an agreement “regulating and promoting the presence and activities of the Catholic Church in the **Palestinian Territories.**” • On Dec. 13 two Jesuit priests, William J. Bichsel, 82, and Stephen M. Kelly, 61, and three Sacred Heart Sisters, Anne Montgomery, 83, Susan Crane, 65, and Lynne Greenwald, 61, were convicted on charges related to a protest action against **nuclear weapons** at a naval base in Washington State. • According to a decree from the **Legionaries of Christ** on Dec. 6, members of the order and its lay association may privately keep photos of the order’s disgraced priest-founder, Marcial Maciel Degollado, but they cannot publicly display photographs of him “alone or with the Holy Father.” • Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory of Atlanta succeeded Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan of New York as **moderator of Jewish affairs** for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, effective Dec. 12. • Senior South Korean priests asked Cardinal **Nicholas Cheong Jin-suk** on Dec. 13 to resign as archbishop of Seoul after he publically disagreed with a statement from his fellow Korean bishops that deplored a dam project as “thoughtless development.”



**Nicholas Cheong
Jin-suk**

PHOTO: CNS/OCTAVIO DURAN

Iraqi government to carry out proper and thorough investigations to uncover the terrorist groups who did plan and finance the carnage...and to bring them publicly to justice.... We need deeds and not just...promises.”

Defender of Guaraní Receives Award

Erwin Kräutler, a Catholic bishop, received the Right Livelihood Award on Dec. 6 for his work defending the rights of indigenous people in Brazil. He was honored “for a lifetime of work for the human and environmental rights of indigenous peoples and for his tireless efforts to save the Amazon forest from destruction.” Bishop Kräutler is president of the Indigenist Missionary Council of the Catholic Church in Brazil. In accepting the

award, Bishop Kräutler highlighted the Guaraní Indians’ “pain, despair and insecurity” and said they are “confined to small areas, their young people see no prospect for their future and the suicide rate among them is alarmingly high.... The current government is ignoring this cruel genocide in progress before their eyes.” As bishop of Xingu, Kräutler has defended the rights of the Indians of the Xingu region of the Brazilian Amazon now threatened by the Belo Monte mega-dam. The bishop described Belo Monte as “a project that never took into consideration the legitimate rights and preoccupations of the population of the Xingu.” He said that indigenous people know they will not survive “if Amazonia continues to be disrespected and razed.”

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We are all called to be contemplative, and in fact the promotion of a more contemplative consciousness becomes an important social ministry for our times. We are in need of a profoundly Catholic, genuinely integral spirituality, which takes from our treasure both what is old

and what is new (Mt 13:52). There are many ways of becoming contemplative and these spiritual talks are intended to be of assistance to anyone desiring to explore what it means to live in the Spirit, give one's life to Christ, or live out of one's innermost and truest self.

About Your Speaker

Donald Goergen, O.P., Ph.D., is a Dominican priest, teacher, lecturer, and author. He has published ten books in the areas of Christology and Christian Spirituality. His most recent book was *Fire of Love, Encountering the Holy Spirit*. He has taught, lectured and given retreats in Asia, Africa, and throughout North America. He was previously Provincial for the Dominican Friars of the Central Province as well as President of the Dominican Leadership Conference. He teaches at the Aquinas Institute of Theology in St. Louis, MO, where he is also prior of the formation community. His doctorate is in systematic theology, his dissertation on Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, and his current interests include contemplative traditions, East and West, the evolution of consciousness, and the thought of Thomas Aquinas as a spiritual master. Among other honors awarded him, he is the recipient of the 2010 Yves Congar Award from Barry University in Miami.

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Bad Deal

Washington treated us to a stunning piece of political theater in December. The confluence of a lame-duck session of Congress, expiring Bush-era tax cuts and the Obama administration's fear of partisan gridlock produced some unusually hasty deal-cutting. Negotiations yielded a proposed tax package deemed a satisfying, prudent compromise by some. Others labeled the horse-trading between the president and the newly empowered Congressional Republicans an abomination. Allow me to explain the source of my own disappointment with the deal (still tentative as I write).

Liberals rightly accuse the president of capitulating to high-handed pressures by the Republicans for the preservation of huge tax cuts for the very wealthy. It is easy to agree that giving a \$700 billion bonus to the privileged undermines the urgent task of deficit reduction. But consider two further items: the specific details of Obama's concessions and a broader observation about our national discourse on wealth and taxes.

First, the president accomplished two major objectives in this complex deal. The first was securing a 13-month extension of jobless benefits for millions of the long-term unemployed, a measure that had stalled for lack of Republican support. The other was extending tax relief for middle-income American families. Any standoff allowing the Bush tax cuts to expire on Jan. 1 would have hit the middle class very hard in these difficult economic times, with unemploy-

ment still hovering near 10 percent.

From the perspective of Catholic social thought, with its special concerns for the poor and for fair sharing of social burdens and benefits, it is impossible to defend the way these two objectives became bargaining chips in a negotiation that ultimately redistributes wealth even further upward in the economic pyramid. To anyone with a taste for equity, insisting on budget-busting tax breaks for the affluent as a condition for relieving the distress of others is an indefensible course of action. It reveals warped priorities and political cynicism.

This is not a partisan point. Regardless of how particular parties or office-holders happen to line up, public policy measures that keep bread on the table of food-insecure households remain quite simply the right thing to do. How many reminders do we need that a record 42.9 million Americans are receiving food stamps, with millions more eligible? Holding financially strapped families hostage to self-serving, politically motivated demands is blatantly immoral, pure and simple.

My second point is not so much a matter of dollars and percentages as of philosophy, perhaps even ideology. Think of the unstated assumptions that surface all too often when Americans discuss income, wealth and taxes. We fall so easily into a mind-set that views the political and economic systems as mere mechanisms that operate without reference to values and morality. Markets and public policies churn out and distribute benefits in ways that respond to power, talent and perhaps

luck, but need not serve any ultimate ends. There is no particular moral meaning to the taxes we pay or the wages our corporations offer. Ethical principles like progressive taxation and the living wage are nuisances at best, serious liabilities in international competition at worst. In a world governed by nothing more enlightened than the bottom line, there is scant room for social concern. The individuals imagined within this mythic and dystopian picture of reality are sovereign monads, unencumbered by social relations—not real people.

To evaluate such social and national institutions as the federal tax code according to this alluring but false ideology is to turn one's back on the best of the

Western philosophical tradition. Erasing the obligation to undertake sacrifices for the common good means parting company with Catholic social teaching and every other commendable approach to social responsibility. Good public policies require a moral compass, and the United States needs to dust off the compass it once employed.

The episode in our nation's capital reveals how poorly the operations of our public life reflect and appreciate the central purpose of our economy, namely to meet the basic material needs of all members of society. Needs should take precedence over wants, necessities over luxuries. Insisting on a fairer sharing of social burdens and benefits may not always be popular, but it remains the right thing to do.

The United States needs to dust off the moral compass it once employed.

THOMAS MASSARO, S.J., teaches social ethics at the Boston College School of Theology and Ministry, Chestnut Hill, Mass.



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Charismatics extend their arms in prayer in a near-capacity crowd at the Meadowlands Exposition Center in Secaucus, N.J.



WHAT IS LOST IN THE
NEW ROMAN MISSAL

For You and Who Else?

BY PAUL PHILIBERT

Over the past 37 years, English-speaking Catholics became accustomed to hearing a particular translation of the Latin text for the eucharistic prayer: “Take this, all of you, and drink from it: this is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant. It will be shed for you and for all men so that sins may be forgiven.”

Since 1985, the word *men* has been omitted, but never the word *all*. Now, however, as many bishops are mandating liturgy workshops to prepare their clergy to use the new third typical edition of the Roman Missal, formerly referred to as the Sacramentary, priests are being commanded to replace the word *all*. Among the many infelicities that the new English text, slated to become normative in Advent 2011, holds in store for Catholics is the replacement of the translation of the Latin “*pro vobis et pro multis*” that we have known since 1973 as “for you and for all [men]” with the newly proposed “for you and for many.”

Why is this happening?

I recently returned from an international meeting (the general chapter of the Order of Preachers) in Rome, where the Eucharist was celebrated in the many languages of the participants. I was particularly interested to note how the phrase “*pro multis*” was rendered. What I discovered, in brief, is that in German, the Eucharistic prayer says “for you and for all” (“*für euch und für alle*”); in Spanish the text is “for you and for all men” (“*por vosotros y por todos los hombres*”); in Italian the text is “for you and for all” (“*per voi e per tutti*”); and in French the text is “for you and for the multitude” (“*pour vous et pour la multitude*”), which evokes the great multitude of the apocalypse in Rv 7:9 and 19:6. In none of these translations of the Latin “*pro multis*” is there the implication, unmistakable in the proposed English translation “for many,” of a less-than-universal divine will for salvation in the mystery of Christ’s death and resurrection. These translations, of course, were all made before the instruction *Liturgiam Authenticam* was issued in 2001 by the

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Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship.

Still, as recently as September 2010, the German bishops' conference rejected the Roman request for a new translation. The conference explained that the present sacramentary was widely accepted by both priests and faithful—a fact of great merit—and that this reception must not be jeopardized by replacing “good German texts” with “unfamiliar new interpretations.”

Because the Latin language does not have articles, the phrase “*pro multis*” can be translated either as “for the many” or “for many.” In English, without the article, *many* is restrictive rather than universal, suggesting *some*—perhaps a handful, perhaps thousands, but certainly not a majority nor the totality of human beings.

In talking about the new Missal, many U.S. bishops have expressed the opinion that a literally exact translation of the Latin text will restore the depth of meaning of the Mass text. Really? In this case, a slavishly literal translation of the Latin looks very much like the kind of mistake that a Latin teacher would correct in the work of a high school student learning the ancient language. “Don't be afraid to add the

definite article if the words don't make sense otherwise,” the teacher might well say.

Making Sense?

The words do not make sense. They run contrary to the church's constant tradition of the universal salvific will of Christ. This has been expressed with perfect clarity in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (No. 605), which reads:

[Jesus] affirms that he came to “give his life as a ransom for many”; this last term is not restrictive, but contrasts the whole of humanity with the unique person of the redeemer who hands himself over to save us. The Church, following the apostles, teaches that

Christ died for all men [sic] without exception: “There is not, never has been, and never will be a single human being for whom Christ did not suffer.”

There is no ambiguity in this explanation (and several similar texts might be cited from the *Catechism*). On the contrary, the need for such an explanation raises the alarm that the new Missal's translation of “*pro multis*” as “for many” is simply too narrow theologically and would require a similar explanation.

Without one, the ecclesiological overtones of “for many” mirror a growing tendency among “restorationists” to reinvent the church as a faithful remnant of those untouched by the ravages of secularization and cultural change—those, in other words, who are perfectly comfortable in a pre-Vatican II world, preoccupied with its own sanctity and well-being. This runs counter, however, to the ecclesiology of the “Dogmatic Constitution on the Church” of Vatican II as expressed in its first statement of principle: “Christ is the light of the nations...and desires to bring to all humanity the light of Christ.... since the Church...is a sacrament—a sign and instrument of communion with God and of the unity of the entire human race...” (No. 1).

In the May 1970 issue of *Notitiae*, the official periodical of the Vatican's Congregation for Worship, the eminent Jesuit biblical scholar Max Zerwick gave an exegetical explanation for translating a Hebrew text that underlies Jesus' words as “for all”:

Pro multis seems to have been used by Jesus himself. This is so because calling to mind the Suffering Servant who sacrifices himself, as in Isaiah, it is suggested that Jesus himself would fulfill what was foretold about the Servant of the Lord. The principal text

It looks as if the covert message is one of exclusion rather than the inclusion of all humanity.

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in question is Isaiah 53:11b-12: "Through his suffering, my servant shall justify many, and their guilt he shall bear."...

Therefore the formula *pro multis* [for many] instead of *pro omnibus* [for all] in our texts (Mk 10:45; Mt 20:28; Mk 14:24; Mt 26:28) seems to be due to the intended allusion to the Suffering Servant whose work Jesus carried out by his death....

The Semitic mind of the Bible could see that universality connoted in the phrase "for many." In fact that connotation was certainly there because of the theological context. Yet, however eloquent it was for ancient peoples, today that allusion to the Suffering Servant of Isaiah is clear only to experts.

Stilted English

The new English translation of the liturgical texts, which some claim to be more accurate and more faithful, is in fact expressed in English that is stilted, verbose and (as in the present case) theologically inadequate. What is lost especially is the matter of evangelization. The celebration of Sunday Mass is the most effective vehicle of evangelization for the

ON THE WEB

Examples of the new liturgical translations.
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greatest number of people. In many people's lives, it is the one chance the church has to reach them and to awaken their faith. Do church leaders want to signal that the grace of Christ is available only to the regular, traditional churchgoer? Is their intention to leave out the rest? More and more it looks as if the covert message beneath the written text is one of effective exclusion rather than antecedent inclusion of all humanity in God's will for salvation.

In general, the new Missal's language is of no help here. At a conference held in Raleigh, N.C., last October, the St. Mary of the Lake workshop presenters offered as an example of a supposedly significant improvement in the translation of the

Mass the following Collect (for Dec. 17):

Filled with the divine gift, Almighty God, we beg you to grant our desire that, enkindled by your Spirit, we may blaze like bright torches before the face of your Christ when he comes.

The Latin teacher mentioned above might well say to the translator, "Come on now, you can do better than that. Who talks like that?" Well, it appears we all will have to in a matter of months. Unless... ▲

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On Their Way Out

What exit interviews could teach us about lapsed Catholics

BY WILLIAM J. BYRON

Ever since Larry Bossidy, a former C.E.O. of Allied Signal and the Honeywell Corporation, raised the question of conducting interviews with lapsed Catholics, I have been giving it a lot of thought. Mr. Bossidy is a devout Catholic and the co-author (with Ram Charan) of a best-selling book, *Execution*, which Bossidy likes to explain is about effective management in business, not about capital punishment. He addressed a meeting of the National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management a couple of years ago and pointed out that if businesses were losing customers at the rate the Catholic Church in the United States is losing members, someone would surely be conducting exit interviews. His observation was prompted by data on declining church attendance released by the Pew Research Center.

Immigration, largely Hispanic, is still shoring up the aggregate numbers for the Catholic Church in the United States, but there has been a dramatic decline in Sunday Mass attendance and church life among U.S.-born Catholics, not to mention the drift of Hispanic Catholics toward Pentecostal sects.

The church in America must face the fact that it has failed to communicate the Good News cheerfully and effectively to a population adrift on a sea of materialism and under constant attack from the forces of secularism, not to mention the diabolical powers that are at work in our world.

An exit interview, if used creatively, could help church leaders discover ways of welcoming back those who have left, even as it helps leaders find ways to strengthen the current worshipping community. This interview could also help identify what else might need to be taught to those called to positions of parish leadership. The church would have nothing to lose by initiating exit interviews.

As a long-time writer of a biweekly column called “Looking Around” for Catholic News Service, I devoted a

recent column to the exit interview idea and was inundated with responses from readers. Many indicated that they had been waiting to be asked why they left. The high response rate is all the more unusual because the column appears only in diocesan newspapers around the country. Evidently, respondents who claim to be no longer “in the boat” are still keeping in touch. Many of my respondents identified themselves as older persons.

I asked: Does anyone know why the ranks are thinning at Catholic weekend worship? There are several obstacles to finding out. First, pastors and bishops tend not to think like business executives, so the practice of conducting exit interviews is not likely to occur to them. Second, no one is sure how to reach those Catholics who are no longer in the pews. Third, we do not know precisely what to ask. This is not to say, however, that the problem cannot be investigated.

What Should We Ask?

Back in 1971, John N. Kotre conducted a study of 100 young Catholic adults. Fifty of these, by their own definition, were still in the church; 50 were not. All were graduates of Catholic colleges; all were enrolled at the time of the interviews in graduate school at either the University of Chicago or Northwestern University. Kotre published the results of the study in a book that has been reissued under the title *The View From the Border: Why Catholics Leave the Church and Why They Stay* (Aldine Transaction, 2009). It contains a 400-item questionnaire that could be helpful to anyone interested in designing a briefer survey instrument that could be useful now.

Assuming that it is possible to connect with those who are not showing up on Sundays, here are seven starter questions one could pose:

- Why have you stopped attending Sunday Mass regularly?
- Are there any changes your parish might make that would prompt you to return?
- Are there any doctrinal issues that trouble you?
- Does your pastor or anyone on the parish staff know you by name?

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- Are you in a mixed-religion marriage?
- Do your children go to church?
- Did you ever really consider yourself to be a member of a parish community?

The point is to find a way to elicit honest answers to open-ended questions aimed at identifying specific Catholic doctrines or practices that may have been factors in the break. I presume that there may be misunderstandings of doctrine that require attention. Whether the respondent is male or female is relevant, as is an assessment of how the respondent regards the status of women in the church. The quality of preaching and the worship environment are also important factors that encourage or discourage attendance and participation. So what do those who no longer show up think about those elements of Catholic worship? If a person has stopped going to Mass, he or she is separated from reception of the Eucharist. Hence, it would be important for the church to find a way to re-educate (or, perhaps, educate for the first time) those who have left about the centrality of the Eucharist in Catholic life.

A good exit interviewer can find ways to detect secular political influences, as well as social class considerations, that might influence the decision to leave a Catholic worshipping community. Lay expertise in designing and implementing an exit-interview schedule is surely needed, along with a commitment on the part of parish and diocesan authorities to use it.

In the absence of good data, church leaders might be accused of sleepwalking into the future or walking with eyes and ears closed to those they want to serve.

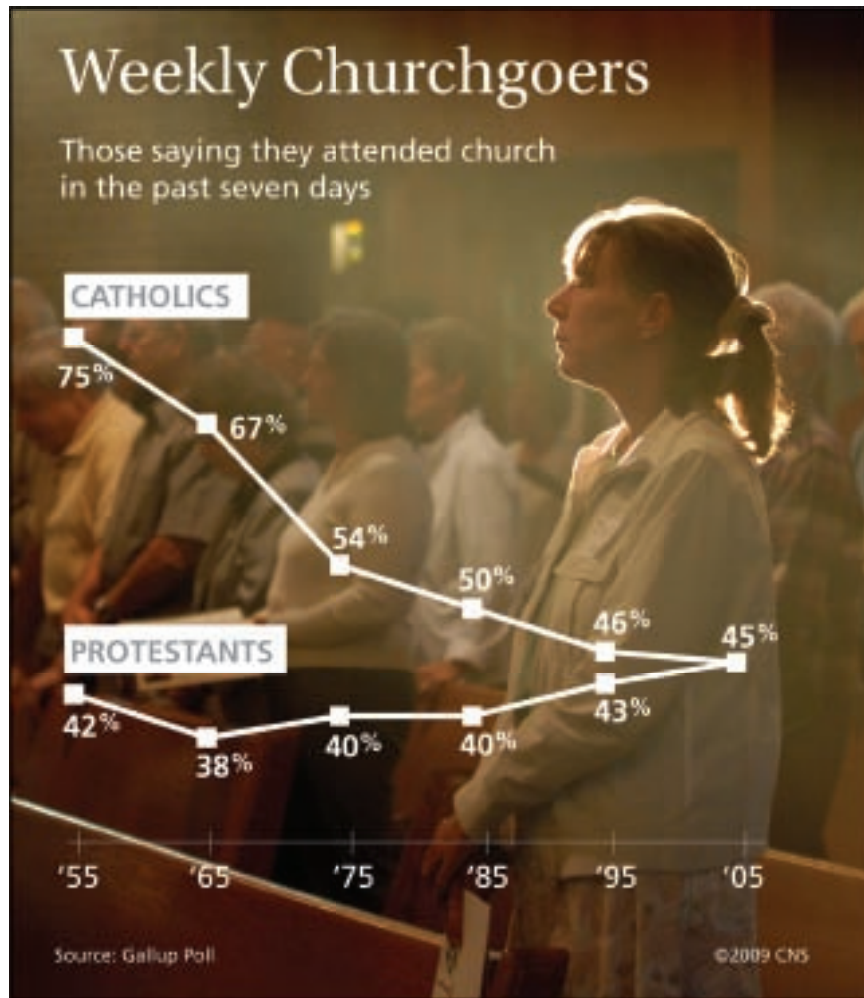
What Readers Told Me

One reader of my column agreed that information gained from exit interviews might help in the training of parish leaders. He wrote: “We need top-line leadership—leaders who can think like business executives since they are running multimillion-dollar organizations. Tell them to read *The Art of the Start* by Guy Kawasaki (former marketing head of Apple Inc.) and the book that guided me through very tough times in telecommunications, namely, *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader*, by John C. Maxwell.”

A woman who described herself as a “human resources

manager and very well informed about the benefits of doing exit interviews,” said: “I just recently turned 50, and I can tell you that I am pretty much the teenager in my parish. Most of my friends have abandoned their faith. You hit the nail on the head! I wish the Vatican would listen.”

Another woman who identified herself as “a cradle Catholic, educated exclusively in Catholic schools, married to a practicing Catholic, raised five children in the faith, taught C.C.D., was involved in the marriage preparation program in our parish—in short, one of the active practitioners of the faith,” said she had opted out because of “the recent church teaching on end-of-life issues; the moving,



instead of removing, of priests and bishops involved in the molestation of children; the headstrong opposition to the use of condoms in Africa to prevent the spread of AIDS; and the absence of any priest I can talk to.” She added: “I’ve stopped going to Mass because I can’t in good conscience say the Creed, as I don’t think this is a ‘holy’ church, and I don’t feel I can receive the Eucharist under these circumstances.”

“Exit interviews for departing Catholics or those just not attending Mass is a nice thought,” said a 69-year-old retired

GRAPHIC: CNS/EMILY THOMPSON

businessman, "but it is obvious to me that there are two reasons for the drop in Mass attendance and withdrawal of financial support: (1) the pedophile issue and (2) the exclusion of women and married men from the priesthood."

"I miss the Catholic church I grew up with," said a woman who once wanted to speak to a priest but was unable to explain precisely why to the person who answered the rectory telephone. "When you figure out what is wrong, give us a call," she remembers the receptionist telling her many years ago. "Needless to say, I did not call back." She recounted other bad experiences with her local parish and noted with a tone of regret: "Our priests used to walk the neighborhoods and stop and talk with the children, the teenagers and families. Back then, the clergy had time to talk with you about God."

"Why did I leave?" wrote a retired business executive with experience on his parish council. "It's simple. Dealing with the top-down organizational structure was like trying to change the direction of a bulldozer heading right at me. It was frightening, suffocating and frustrating. It went against my natural tendency to get involved in real change. I gave up on it like thousands of people have given up their right to vote."

Another retiree, who recently re-read (approvingly) the

documents of the Second Vatican Council, recalled his past experience at work of an organizational shift that did not meet its desired objective because "the leadership focused on the new thing but lost focus on the good old thing."

"I am on the knife edge between staying and leaving the church," he said. He offered these reasons: "(1) I no longer trust the management; (2) I have no way of influencing the selection or change of a priest or bishop; (3) the clergy sex abuse scandal continues to grow; and (4) the continuing lawsuits continue to drain my spirit."

Is It Too Late?

"Personally, I think exit interviews are too late," remarked a former military man. "The church can find plenty of ideas from those still in the pews." As for himself, he wrote: "I only go to Mass to punch my 'stay-out-of-hell-for-another-week' card. I don't celebrate the Mass; I endure it."

Deploring the absence of any feedback mechanism to hear from the voiceless laity, another senior citizen suggested that the church should have a uniform job description for the parish priest. "How can you run any organization," he asks, "when each leader brings with him his own set of rules?" In the absence of a published job description, he argues, the parishioners will have their own separate perceptions of the role of the priest. "No priest can live up to each perception; nor should every priest be free to create his own job description."

"Aren't you sorry you asked?" said one of the above respondents at the end of her e-mail message to me. Not at all. I just wish I could improve the organizational acoustics in the church so that leaders could hear what the people of God want to say. Leaders must try to discern the presence of the Spirit in what laypeople are saying and find the pastoral courage it will take to implement necessary change.

In 2010 the decennial U.S. census was conducted, and the term "census enumerator" became familiar in news stories. I wonder if dioceses could or would enlist and train volunteers to follow a uniform set of questions and conduct telephone interviews with persons who self-identify as no longer "in" the church. With expert lay assistance, the diocese would have to design the questionnaire and engage the parishes to find telephone numbers or e-mail addresses of those willing to participate. Then the diocese, again with lay help, would have to figure out how best to respond to the data it collects.

If there is no official interest at the parish or diocesan level for taking a page from the business world and employing exit interviews, one has to wonder about the quality of both diocesan and parochial leadership. **A**

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THE LAST ROUNDUP

Four movies Hollywood wants you to see

For those who did not get the metaphor they wanted for Christmas, we offer Rooster Cogburn's eyepatch. The gunslinging hero of **True Grit**—the character who in 1970 won John Wayne a depressingly predictable Oscar—did not wear one in the Charles Portis novel. But Wayne did. In remaking a film that is most notable now as a symbol of Old Hollywood's last roundup and the mortified sensibilities of a film indus-

try being cattle-prodded into the future, the Coen brothers have preserved the one device that gave their predecessor any wit at all. The eyepatch is a symbol of half-blindness to a changing world, of willful self-deceit, of the malady that now affects the characters herding into theaters as a new year begins and the idea of the "movie" itself has begun to look as fresh and relevant as Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show.

We watch movies to see ourselves disguised as others, made better by others, as cautionary whipping boys or aspirational models. We shy away from truth, except when it is obvious; and then we simply run the other way. What's true about the movies is that, like the characters we love and cannot quite be, we admire one thing and are drawn to another, which is another form of the broccoli-versus-bonbons conundrum that informs most of waking life. Hollywood, which reflects the human id almost as well as Tea Party politics does, has just passed through its annual constitutional (as in digestive) crisis: It gives us movies we *should*

Jeff Bridges and Hailee Steinfeld in "True Grit"



like, in a minor belch of unbridled quality, in an effort to win awards, gain prestige, redeem itself and distract audiences from the fact that what it produces for the rest of the year comprises the real, money-making *table d'hôte*.

In this, we and Hollywood are the perfectly dysfunctional family, unable to face what makes us dysfunctional. To see the alarming truth, look at the movies being released this month. Or re-released: Most of the films of 2010, positioned for award consideration at the end of last year, have by now won or lost the critics' prizes that signal to Oscar voters whether it is O.K. for us to like this film or that. The movies are now going into "general release." Their ultimate fates will be decided by Oscar, that fickle nudist, because the prize can salvage even the most perilously superior film that skates along the thin ice of veracity. Several of them come dangerously close to theater-clearing candor.

"True Grit"? Not among these, despite Rooster's retro eyewear and a touching acknowledgement that we are better creatures when we are not alone. The Coen brothers, who will never be mistaken for Magi even if the elder Mrs. Coen were to announce an imminent nativity of her own, never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity (to steal from the Israeli diplomat Abba Eban). Their knowledge is beyond question; their cinematic fluency is occasionally breathtaking. And their inability to take themselves seriously is pathological.

Yet, among the wisecracks, wisdom. "True Grit" is about an alarmingly intelligent, self-possessed and profoundly annoying 14-year-old named Mattie Ross (played in the original by Kim Darby and here, indelibly, by Hailee Steinfeld). Her father has been gunned down and robbed; Mattie—possessed of a frontier-hardened, Old Testament outrage—means to have the perpetrator

found, prosecuted and hanged.

Reuben "Rooster" Cogburn, a veteran of the Confederacy and a lawman who believes that shooting should generally precede the asking of questions, becomes Mattie's hired gun and *bête noire*. As a figure in need of redemption, Jeff Bridges could not appear more distanced from it. Hidden under that eyepatch, hat, beard and a crust of what one has to assume signifies miles of malignant history, Rooster is the gimp personification of a genuine Old West—a place and time of lawlessness, drunkenness, bad dentistry and skullduggery. What Bridges brings to the role, and Wayne never could, is a sense of corruption. Mattie, by contrast, and despite her articulate wrath, is angelic, pure of both motive and process. The heart of "True Grit," is not the tracking down of the nefarious Tom Chaney (Josh Brolin) but the salvation of Rooster from spiritual death.

It is also about family. The principals—Rooster, Mattie and LaBoeuf (Matt Damon), the Texas Ranger they pick up along the way—are loners, by dint of their jobs or their natures. (It's hard to imagine Mattie, say, at a sleepover.) LaBoeuf is really the outlier of the group, by virtue of having a pedestrian sense of his place in the universe. Not so the other two, whom the Coens recognize as a potentially eccentrically happy couple, unhappily born at the wrong times. The taciturn Rooster becomes downright voluble during the trio's long trek on horseback; this recognition that even a strong, silent type sometimes needs someone to talk to is a distinct improvement over the original film.

A craving for family brings us, sideways, to Mike Leigh and **Another Year**. As disparate as they are as filmmakers and as irreconcilable their styles and subject matter, Leigh and the Coens are onto much the same thing this year, though Leigh to much sadder conclusions.

The English director, who spends



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six months to a year developing a story and script with his actors, often before a frame is shot, has always made films about the search for love. It was true of the infamous Johnny in “Naked,” of the effervescent Poppy in “Happy Go Lucky” and of Gilbert & Sullivan in “Topsy-Turvy.” And it’s true of Mary, the character played with such desperation by Lesley Manville in “Another Year.”

Mary’s problem is perception. Or lack of it. Through her job as an administrator at a London welfare office, she has made friends with a social worker named Geri (Leigh veteran Ruth Sheen) and Geri’s husband, Tom (Jim Broadbent). Tom and Geri (the joke is acknowledged and mercifully dismissed) are among the most happy of marrieds; they’re funny and quick; they have one son, who seems to have been enough. Over the course of the film they tend their “allotment,” their piece of a common garden that helps to set up the four-season structure of the movie and to signify them as nurturers.

They like Mary. They overlook the fact that she is an emotional mess, an organizational calamity who drinks too much and abuses their hospitality. But that is because they don’t see her too often, because they’re charitable people and because Mary’s importance in their lives is infinitesimal compared with what they mean to Mary. That is the tragedy at the center of the film.

It is cruel, perhaps, but you can blame Mary’s quandary on ego, an interpretation that is much easier to make about Barney Panofsky, the “hero” of *Barney’s Version*, the mordant comedy based on the Mordechai Richler novel and brought to the screen by director Richard J. Lewis. Barney’s life is essentially a farce in three acts, each demarcated by marriage: to Clara (Rachelle Lefevre), a

red-headed libertine Barney meets in Rome, who proceeds to violate his every notion of fidelity and conformity; the so-called “second Mrs. P” (Minnie Driver), the classic stereotype of a “Jewish princess” and talk-a-holic, whose relationship with Barney begins at contempt and ends at despair; and Miriam (Rosamund Pike), the perfect woman, something even Barney has the sense to realize, falling in love with her at his own wedding (to the second Mrs. P).

But Barney is a family of one: He never makes an emotional connection to anyone outside his own tight little orbit, not even, arguably, Miriam, whom he pursues the way Napoleon pursued Moscow, albeit with more success. Ostensibly a comedy (with a wonderfully acerbic Paul Giamatti in the title role), “Barney” bears the woes of emotional myopia at its core. Barney is a sympathetic character in his wit, occasional generosity and intelligence—an intelligence that means, always, that he should have known better.

You cannot say quite the same thing about Dean and Cindy, the imploding working-class lovers of Derek Cianfrance’s eloquent and excruciating *Blue Valentine*, which stars the gifted Ryan Gosling and Michelle Williams as a couple who find each other with a kind of romantic clarity, but end up blinkered to themselves and each other. The film has achieved a certain pre-release

notoriety for originally getting an NC-17 rating, despite featuring nothing more explicit than what’s contained in “Black Swan” (at this writing, poised as an Oscar favorite). But content is everything. One can imagine the martinetts of the Motion Picture Association of America ratings board



Ryan Gosling and Michelle Williams in “Blue Valentine”

watching the awkward, even angry attempts at intimacy contained in “Blue Valentine” and recoiling from the unvarnished honesty of it all. Their duty, they asked themselves? Protecting as many people as possible from the truth.

But let’s face it. The M.P.A.A. may be America’s overstarched governess, but we welcome her discipline. Many of us take our “good” movies like medicine anyway. Now that the New Year has dawned and winter set in, we’ll be craving the comforting embrace of robots, serial killers and Harry Potter, who any day now should be getting his first mailing from A.A.R.P.

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

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Karen Sue Smith reviews the documentary “Inside Job.” americamagazine.org/culture

GRAND OLD MAN OF LETTERS

The life and writing of William Somerset Maugham



The journalist Janet Malcolm defines a biography as a medium through which the secrets of the dead are taken from them and dumped out in full view of the world. In an effort to stem a flood of misinformation, some writers resort to publishing autobiographies. Toward the end of his long life, following the example of Charles Dickens and a host of others, William Somerset Maugham made a bonfire of his private papers and

earnestly beseeched his friends to destroy his letters—a request which, of course, had the contrary effect. (Many were sold to American universities at high prices.) He further directed his literary executor not to assist in any way eventual biographers, his motivation being, as Ted Morgan says in the preface to his scrupulously researched *Maugham: A Biography* (1980), an attempt to preserve “the benign image

of himself he had been working on for years and wanted to perpetuate beyond the grave.”

Much has been written about the author of *The Painted Veil* (1925)—sometimes with an apparent lack of responsibility. But even where integrity has been maintained, the resulting portraits have generally been inaccurate or incomplete because access to required material had been blocked. To prevent further distortion of Maugham’s reputation, the artist’s literary executor finally decided to ignore the explicit instructions he had been given and to cooperate with Ted Morgan in what was advertised as “the definitive biography of W. Somerset Maugham.”

A Probing Portrait

But now we have another “definitive account” of one of the most widely read writers of the 20th century: *The Secret Lives of Somerset Maugham*, by Selina Hastings (Random House), author of the award-winning *Evelyn Waugh: A Biography*. The adjective in the title smacks of hyperbole. For one thing, Maugham’s nephew, Robin, who had agreed for a substantial sum of money never to publish anything about his father’s brother, went ahead and did just that after his uncle’s death. Hastings, who has, to be sure, also taken advantage of the estate’s decision to allow scholarly access to Maugham’s surviving correspondence as well as to a recently found transcript of an interview with Maugham’s daughter, writes engagingly and with great perception of the interaction between the life of her subject and his work.

It is striking that French, not English, was the native tongue of the author of *The Moon and Sixpence* (1919), a novel inspired by the life of Paul Gauguin. Maugham’s father, an English solicitor who handled the legal affairs of his countrymen in France, arranged for his son to be born at the British embassy in Paris, in 1874—thus circumventing the French law

PHOTO: BETTMANN/CORBIS

that mandated that all children born on French soil be subject to conscription for military service. Orphaned at age 10, the boy was sent to England to live with his uncle, a clergyman. The loss of his beloved mother traumatized him, and he developed a stammer that he had to cope with for the rest of his life. His new classmates taunted him because of his speech impediment, his short stature and his foreign accent. A target of derision, he became shy and withdrawn. His misery is reflected in the autobiographical novel *Of Human Bondage* (1915), generally considered to be his outstanding achievement.

During his final year of medical school, he published his first novel, *Liza of Lambeth* (1897), in which he drew upon his experiences attending women in childbirth in a London slum. The book was a commercial success and prompted him—even though he had qualified as a doctor—to abandon medicine to become a full-time writer. It was in the theater, however, that he first gained fame, at one time having four plays running simultaneously in London. A cartoon in *Punch* showed Shakespeare nervously biting his fingernails as he looked at the billboards. Willie—as he was known to his friends—developed the lifelong habit of writing for precisely three hours every morning. Writing for Maugham was more than a source of income; it was a kind of exorcism. He wrote about what weighed heavily on his mind and heart; once put on paper, the devil was banished. In his autobiographical essay *The Summing Up* (1938), he says that the artist produces what he produces for the liberation of his soul.

Secret Agent/Voyager

In the First World War, he served in France as an ambulance driver for the Red Cross but was soon transferred to the Intelligence Service—being a writer was good cover for a secret agent. His assignments took him to Switzerland, Russia and the South

Seas. His experience of the grim, brutal world of espionage appears in the collection of short stories titled *Ashenden* (1928), a volume that influenced the James Bond series by Ian Fleming; for the first time in literature a spy is portrayed as gentlemanly, sophisticated, coolly aloof.

Even when Maugham was not on a mission, he traveled widely to the Near East, the Far East and North Africa—for pleasure, but also in search of material for his writing. Out of his voyages came highly readable travel books—*On a Chinese Screen* (1923) and *The Gentleman in the Parlour* (1930) plus a number of collections of short stories, told in a taut, lucid, economical style, often with cynical overtones. Perhaps the most memorable are those dealing with the isolated lives of British colonists in the Far East, of which “Rain,” in *The Trembling of a Leaf* (1921) is undoubtedly the best known. Inspired by fellow passengers on a voyage to Pago Pago, it chronicles the moral disintegration of a missionary as he attempts to convert a Pacific island prostitute. As with many of his stories, it was adapted for stage and screen. The inclusion in his fiction of thinly disguised events and characters who closely resemble friends and foes became his trademark—a practice that occasionally resulted in law suits. His books often provoked controversy. *Cakes and Ale* (1930), for example, is seen as a veiled satirical attack on Thomas Hardy. “Fact and fiction are so intermingled in my work,” Maugham remarked, “that...I can hardly distinguish one from the other.”

Prone to moods of deep depression and capable of cruelty as well as great kindness, Maugham presented himself to the world as a handsome, elegantly dressed man-about-town, a wealthy and witty satirist of British society—in short, a conventional English gentleman. Nonetheless, as Hastings notes, he was irresistibly drawn to the sexual underworld. Living at a time when

homosexuality was considered indefensible as well as illegal—he was 21 when Oscar Wilde went on trial—Maugham felt obliged to be discreet about his own sexual practices. Although he had affairs with both men and women, he much preferred a body like his own, preferably younger, much younger.

He did marry, however—which made him wretchedly unhappy and ultimately ended in divorce—and fathered a daughter, Liza. But the love of his life was a young alcoholic charmer, an American gambler named Gerald Haxton, who acted as his personal secretary, traveling companion, lover and pimp for 30 years. After Haxton’s death, he was replaced by a young cockney who had been supported by a series of older men. Alan Searles became Maugham’s devoted companion for the rest of his life.

Maugham’s writing continued to bring in an enormous amount of money, which afforded him a life of luxury. At his magnificent villa on the

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Riviera—to which invitations were highly prized—he lavishly entertained such friends and celebrities as Winston Churchill, H. G. Wells, Noel Coward, the Agha Khan and the Duke and Duchess of Windsor. There were also teenage boys, picked up at the wharf, whom he shared with some of his guests.

With the collapse of France, Maugham became a very wealthy refugee and spent most of the Second World War in the United States. He passed much of the time at the house of his publisher, Nelson Doubleday, in North Carolina, some of the time in Hollywood, where he became a popular figure while working on the screen adaptation of his last successful novel, *The Razor's Edge* (1944), the tale of a young man's spiritual quest for the infinite. Echoing the author's own personal concerns, the protagonist declares, "I want to make up my mind whether God is or God is not. I want to find out why evil exists. I want to know whether I have an immortal soul or whether when I die it's the end." In *A Writer's Notebook*, (1949), Maugham comes to the conclusion that there is no God and that death is indeed the end.

A First-rate Second-rater

Although he was the recipient of many honors, it rankled Maugham that he never attracted much critical acclaim. He attributed this to his lack of a gift for metaphor, to the fact that he had "no lyrical quality," and little imagination. His talent lay, he said, in his extraordinary power of observation. As a writer of fiction, he was a realist; his imagination needed actual events and real people to work on. In *The Summing Up*, he remarks that he stood "in the very first row of the second-raters." It should be noted that Maugham wrote at a time when modernist literature, like that of Faulkner, James Joyce, Thomas Mann and Virginia Woolf, was gaining popularity and respect. Alongside these writ-

ers, some might consider Maugham's prose plain. Hastings comments that her subject's relationship with Haxton had undoubtedly damaged his reputation. Still, this biographer adds that at the time of her writing, there have been 98 adaptations of his work for film and television.

At the end of hostilities, Maugham returned to his villa on the French Riviera, where he continued to write and entertain the rich and famous until he succumbed to dementia. Under the nefarious influence of his companion, Alan Searles, who feared he was soon to be left virtually penniless, he attempted to adopt Searle as his son and disinherit his daughter. As he lay dying in Nice, at the age of

91, he asked the philosopher Sir Alfred Ayer for reassurance that there is no life after death.

Hastings expresses admiration for Maugham's prodigious output, stating unequivocally that his place in posterity is assured. Her very readable biography, replete with 32 black and white photos, does not so much add new information to portraits we already have of Maugham as add engrossing—sometimes sordid—details. A film documentary about "the grand old man of letters" is scheduled for release in 2011.

ANN BEGLEY, an essayist and reviewer, has taught at universities on both east and west coasts. Her studies of Simone Weil and Marguerite Yourcenar appear in *Europe Writers: The Twentieth Century*.

BOOKS | DANIEL J. HARRINGTON

HE WAS ONE OF US

JESUS OUR BROTHER The Humanity of the Lord

By Wilfrid J. Harrington, O.P.
Paulist Press. 128p \$14.95 (paperback)

Wilfrid Harrington, a Dominican priest who is a professor of Scripture at the Dominican House of Studies in Dublin and visiting lecturer at the Church of Ireland Theological College in Dublin, is widely regarded as the "dean" of Catholic biblical studies in Ireland. Through his many books and articles and his vast experience as a teacher and lecturer, he has brought the best of technical scholarship to a wide audience. His very large body of work provides an excellent example to be imitated in both style and context. It is always learned, personally engaged, clearly and concisely written, positive and constructive and theologically sensitive and relevant.

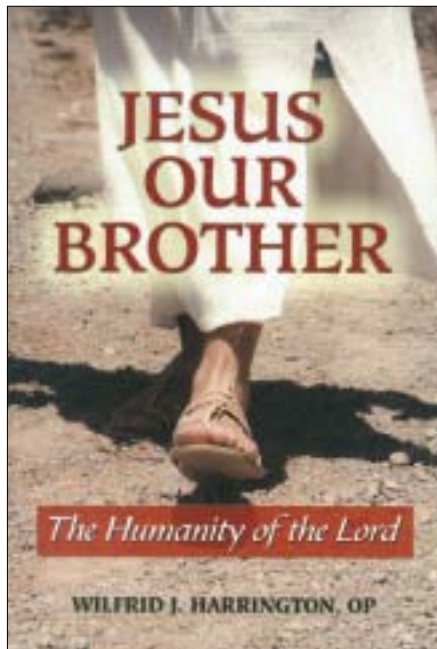
His latest volume seeks to illustrate the authentic humanity of Jesus by highlighting Jesus' characteristically human traits. He regards this as

important (indeed as "the astounding truth at the heart of Christianity") because it is in the human Jesus that we meet God. This is not another speculative book about the quest of the historical Jesus. Rather, it is an attempt to synthesize what the four Gospels say about Jesus in the light of modern critical scholarship. It gives particular attention to Mark's Gospel because it is the earliest Gospel, and because Mark's Jesus is the most human.

After considering Jesus' early life in Nazareth, Harrington discusses his association with John the Baptist and Jesus' own career as prophet, teacher and healer, as well as his death on the cross. Then he treats those persons for whom Jesus showed special concern: the poor, women, children, sinners and social outcasts. Next, in what is by far the longest chapter and the heart of the book, he deals with the human traits or characteristics of Jesus in the following areas: faith, testing, love, prayer, religion, compassion, forgiveness, nature, humor, exasperation, anger and fear.

Then he reflects on the various reactions that the human Jesus evoked: acceptance, opposition and rejection. And he concludes with observations on Jesus at his most vulnerably human in the Gethsemane episode, in what sense Jesus was and was not a failure, and the cross as God's own definition of what it is to be human.

I am often asked for recommendations of books that get at the "real" Jesus, are learned and scholarly but not overly technical, and are generally orthodox in their theology while being challenging personally and theologically. This is that kind of book. Besides his prodigious knowledge of the Bible, Harrington brings out clearly the value of taking seriously the humanity of Jesus. He describes Jesus as having come as a human being into our human history to tell us of the goodness of God—the *Deus humanissimus*, the God bent on the salvation of humankind. And he sees Jesus on the



cross as showing us that we are truly human when we accept our humanity, when we face the fact that we are not masters of our fate. In the Cross God defined the human being as a creature

that he as creator might be wholly with us, as parent with child.

Now in his mid-80s, Harrington by his writing and teaching remains not only one of Ireland's national treasures but also a teacher for all who seek to enter into the world of the New Testament. Though our paths have seldom crossed, we share a surname and common roots in the Beara Peninsula of Ireland. Also, each of us has contributed a volume to a series edited by the other. But even more important to me has been the example of learning, industry and fidelity shown by Wilfrid Harrington in making available to God's people the best in contemporary biblical scholarship and so helping our Catholic Church become more explicitly and profoundly biblical.

DANIEL J. HARRINGTON, S.J., is professor of New Testament at Boston College School of Theology and Ministry and editor of *New Testament Abstracts*.

POETRY CONTEST

Poems are being accepted for the 2011 Foley Poetry Award.

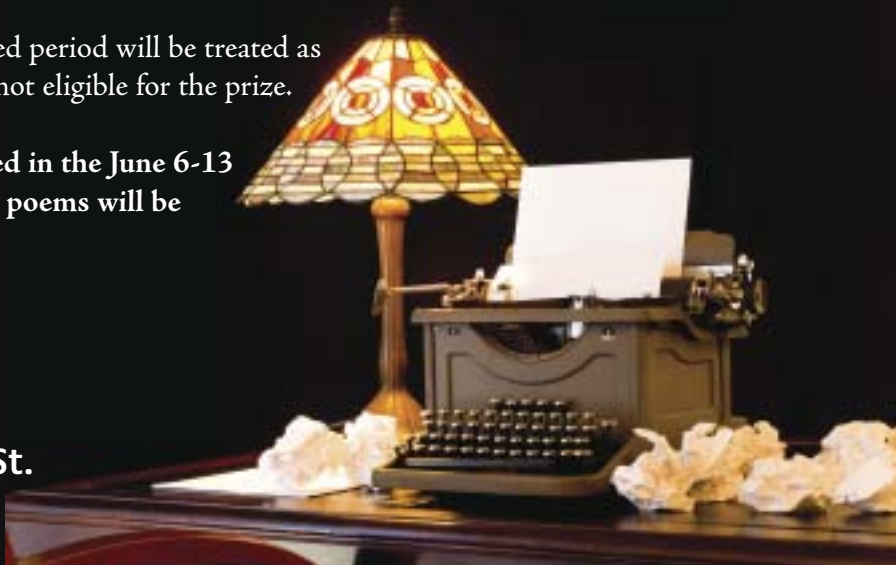
Each entrant is asked to submit only one typed, unpublished poem of 30 lines or fewer that is not under consideration elsewhere. Include contact information on the same page as the poem. Poems will not be returned. Please do not submit poems by e-mail or fax. Submissions must be postmarked between Jan. 1 and March 31, 2011.

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

The winning poem will be published in the June 6-13 issue of *America*. Three runner-up poems will be published in subsequent issues.

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Please respond with a résumé, letter of interest, including salary history, to the Pontifical College Josephinum, 7625 N. High Street, Columbus, Ohio 43235, Attn: Academic Dean. All replies kept in strict confidence. The Pontifical College Josephinum is an E.E.O. employer. Applications will be considered until Feb. 15, 2011.

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America



LETTERS

Back to the Bronx

Your current comment “The Bronx Eleven” (11/1) omitted one important consideration “in the confused context of how we deal with homosexuality.” This Jesuit-educated reader (Holy Cross and Fordham) believes that consideration is the most unfortunate attitude of the Roman Catholic Church, which discriminates against people who are born gay or lesbian or who are transgendered.

CHRIS HOPPIN, LT. COL. U.S.A.F., RET.
Peaks Island, Me.

Lepers Can Be Happy

Your poem “A Leper on Molokai, 1880,” by Joseph A. Soldati (11/15), delivers a sickening dose of retrograde pity and revulsion about Hansen’s disease. “More corrupt than Lazarus,” Mr. Soldati’s narrator says about himself. “The cemetery of Kalawa’o vomits our pitted bones.”

I don’t think the real Kalaupapa choir member would have wallowed so wretchedly in his plight. I imagine that if he did, others would slap his head and tell him to shut up and sing.

Kalaupapa, for all its suffering, was also a place of joy, decency and hope. That’s because people lived there, not pitiable objects. Father (now Saint) Damien understood this a century ago, when few other outsiders did—that is why we love him. More recently, the journalist Ernie Pyle described Kalaupapa “as a rather happy community.” The patients had their clubs, played games, had dances, went to the movies three times a week and even had cocktail parties.

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People with Hanson’s disease have fought for centuries to assert their humanity in the face of discrimination, abuse and persecution. To horror-stricken sympathizers like Mr. Soldati, I’ve got to say: “You’re not helping.”

LAWRENCE DOWNES
Northport, N.Y.

Not Good, But Not Punished

In the articles regarding the case of Sister Margaret Mary McBride, including “From Intuition to Moral Principle,” by Kevin O’Rourke, O.P. (11/15), no mention is made of a commonsense principle that could ease the consciences of all concerned. Reiterated by both Paul VI and John Paul II, the principle of toleration has been the church’s practice through the ages: a lesser evil may be tolerated to preserve a higher good. Capable of abuse, of course, it is invoked in issues ranging from self-defense to war.

Toleration does not mean an evil act is “baptized” or declared good because of the circumstances, nor is it considered either permitted or allowed. The evil, both ontic and moral, is recognized and regretted as evil. In the McBride case the equal value of the lives of mother and child

could give way to the preserving of one life rather than the loss of both.

(REV.) JOHN KOELSCH
Jerome, Idaho

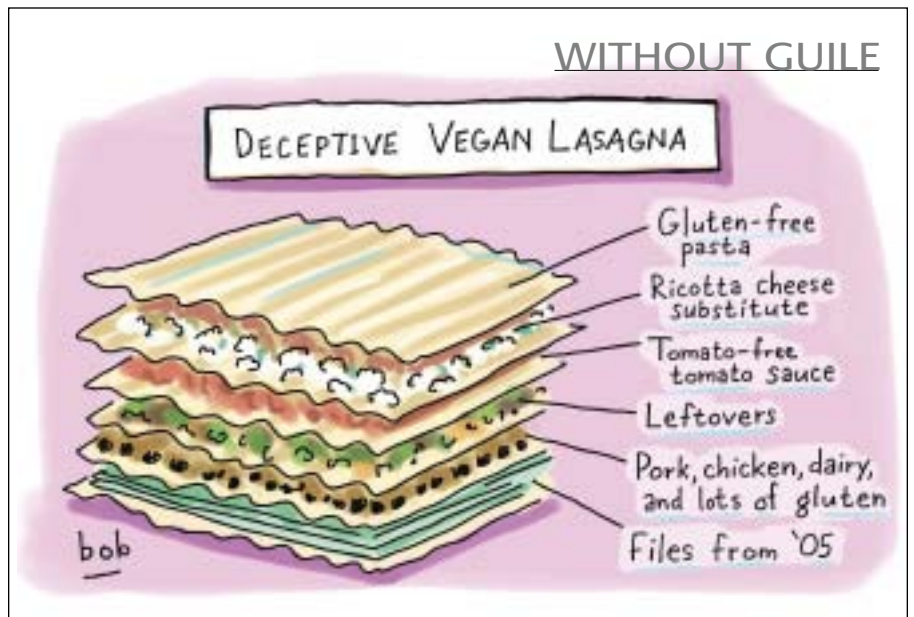
‘Tain’t Funny

I read with regret the Books and Culture entry “Comic Timing” (10/25). In the economic downturn we are suffering through, a sitcom about outsourcing is at best a grave mistake and at worst lacks any shred of sensitivity or empathy. Countless thousands of Americans are out of work because of corporate outsourcing, yet Jake Martin finds this show greatly entertaining and hopes it lasts for years to come. I can hear many voices saying, it’s only a television show and we need to be able to laugh at ourselves. Would those same voices also support an extremely well-written show with superb actors and great chemistry about an abortion clinic?

SCOTT SPARKS
Roswell, Ga.

Why We’ve Lost Our Voice

Having read John J. DiIulio’s column “Blending In” (11/29), I can think of several reasons why American Catholics may have lost their unified, faith-filled voice. First, scandal in our house makes us less likely to partici-



pate, and comment by priests and bishops is shouted down by those bringing up the scandal. Second, though Catholics are members of both parties, they are not among the extremists who rule the public debate. Third, with the exception of **America**, the Catholic press is in contraction, especially on social issues. Diocesan papers that once reported national events from a Catholic perspective have been replaced by magazines that are more devotional and inner-directed. Mainstream Catholics do not get much traction in these polarized times.

JIM AXTELL
Bolingbrook, Ill.

Take the Easy Way

Reading Nicholas Lash's "Teaching or Commanding?" (12/13), I can see it is important to distinguish between the two; but I think a great many modern American Catholics choose not to believe that the church does both and prefer to treat the commands as relics of an outdated theology and an ignorant, perhaps corrupt, hierarchy. However, most teachers in the church generally do not, I suspect, take the trouble to explain how it all fits together. They choose instead to just teach the catechism. That could lead to a church in which the only members are cate-

chism Catholics, content to obey without troubling much to think things through.

DAVID SMITH
Cincinnati, Ohio

Obey or Else

The insight displayed by Nicholas Lash in "Teaching or Commanding" (12/13) is amazing, a wonderful statement of the way things should be. Of course, that will never come to be as long as the church is not regarded as a discipleship of equals, in which we all instruct, listen and guide one another. Unfortunately the model of the church that prevails in the hierarchy is military, where the generals—in particular the supreme commanding general—order and all others must obey.


JOHN D. FITZMORRIS
New Orleans, La.

The Last Drop

Your editorial "Markets and Politics" (12/13) is one of the best I've seen on the powers at work in the global economy. I also agree that corporations must be more socially responsible and people and governments more moderate. Strong regulation is needed to rein in the financial community, similar to the drastic changes made after the Great Depression: separating commercial and investment banking, raising equity limits for banks, capping salaries and bonuses, bans on political donations, raising taxes on profits. Challenging all this is the influence of the rich financial class.

Another challenge is the increasing age of the population, as people with their pensions in mind look to the financial industry to make great returns on their investments. Unfortunately this works against the interests of the young. The phrase "squeeze to the last drop" in your editorial applies not only to the financial classes but to their customers.

CHRIS CUNNINGHAM
Seoul, South Korea



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Seek Wisdom
in 2011

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Kathleen Deignan, GND

Getting Off the Carousel,
February 25-27
Rev. Barbara Headley

Lady Wisdom in the World's Religions,
March. 11-13
Rabbi Rami Shapiro

Approaches to the Cross of Christ,
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Grasped by God's Hand

BAPTISM OF THE LORD (A), JAN. 9, 2011

Readings: Is 42:1-7; Ps 29:1-10; Acts 10:34-38; Mt 3:13-17

"I have grasped you by the hand; I formed you, and set you as a covenant to the people" (Is 42:6)

A frequently used technique in action films is a scene in which a person is in danger, slipping off a cliff or a building or some other perilous perch. Another person grasps them by the hand and desperately tries to pull him or her to safety. This is one of the images Isaiah gives us: God grasps the chosen servant by the hand and hangs on for dear life.

Set in the context of the return of the exiles from Babylon, the divine promise is to pull Israel back out of confinement and darkness into light and justice through the agency of a chosen servant. Scholars have long debated the identity of this servant, who features in three more oracles in the Book of Isaiah: 49:1-7, 50:4-10 and 52:13-53:12. Some think the servant is to be understood as Israel collectively, others the prophet himself or another person who lived during the time of the prophet. Christians see Jesus as the fulfillment of this prophecy.

The purpose for which God calls the servant is for the "victory of justice." The servant is to bring forth justice to the nations and justice on the earth. A mission centered on "justice" often conjures up images of fiery denunciations of evil and demands for repentance. Instead, Isaiah speaks of the gentle manner of the chosen one:

BARBARA E. REID, O.P., 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.

"not crying out, not shouting, not making his voice heard in the street, a bruised reed he shall not break, and a smoldering wick he shall not quench" (vv. 3-4). Where there is a spark of righteousness that is in danger of being extinguished, whether by weariness or oppression or sinfulness, the servant will tenderly fan it back into full flame.

Matthew describes Jesus' baptism in similar terms. Like the Servant in Isaiah, Jesus experiences the Spirit of God gently settling upon him. The image of a dove evokes peacefulness and possibilities for a new beginning. Just as in Genesis 8, where a dove brings Noah the signs of hope for new life, so Jesus' mission opens a new hope-filled chapter in the history of God's saving action. Jesus experiences a profound opening to God's love and pleasure in him, which enables him to lead others to know God's delight and love in them. This rapturous moment of joy is like having the heavens ripped open (Mt 3:16; Is 63:19) as the divine love pierces through any barriers to the human heart. The powerful arm of the Holy One reaches out to grasp all of humanity by the hand, both to save from danger and to walk hand in hand like lovers forever.



Just as the mission of the servant is centered on justice, so Jesus is intent on fulfilling all righteousness (the word *dikaiosyne* in Greek can be translated as "justice" or "righteousness" and signifies right relation in every aspect). Matthew shows what God's righteousness looks like in the persons of Joseph (1:19), John the Baptist (21:32) and Jesus. Jesus teaches his disciples to thirst for righteousness (5:6) and to let

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- How have you experienced God grasping you by the hand? Talk with God about that.
- When have you helped another to know how beloved they are?
- How are you and your faith community working to establish justice on the earth?

their justice surpass that of other religious leaders (5:20), emulating that of God, whose grace is extended to both the just and the unjust (5:45). At times when Jesus encounters those who refuse the divine hand extended to them, his gentle ways turn confrontational and urgent (e.g., Mt 23). But for those who are earnestly seeking the Holy One, as was Jesus when he came to John in the Jordan, God's firm and steady hand is readily grasped with saving power and an eternal pledge of love.

ART: TAD DUNNE

The Lamb of God

SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (A), JAN. 16, 2011

Readings: Is 49:3-6; Ps 40:2-10; 1 Cor 1:1-3; Jn 1:29-34

“Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn 1:29)

As we return to Ordinary Time, the readings bring us back into reflection on the beginnings of our journey of discipleship. The liturgical cycle is not a circle that keeps us going around and around, repeatedly going over the same ground. Rather, each year, we approach the texts with freshness because our world is not the same as in the previous year and we ourselves have changed. Much as a couple, when celebrating their anniversary, retell the story of how they first met and fell in love, so the Gospel invites us to reflect on the beginnings of how we came to know Jesus.

John the Baptist, who plays the role of best man (3:29-30), sets the stage for the first disciples to recognize and follow Jesus. His proclamation of Jesus as Lamb of God has caused much debate among scholars. For some, this title evokes the servant in Isaiah, spoken of in today’s first reading. In subsequent chapters, there is emphasis on the suffering of the servant, who is oppressed and afflicted, “yet he did not open his mouth, like a lamb led to the slaughter” (Is 53:7). Others think of the lambs sacrificed in the temple as sin offerings (Lv 4:32-35). Still others think of the Passover lamb, whose blood was smeared on the doorposts of the Israelites the night before begin-

ning their Exodus from Egypt (Ex 12:1-13).

One difficulty with the first interpretation is that it fits better the Synoptic Gospels than the Gospel of John. In the synoptic tradition, Jesus does not answer back throughout his trial and stands before his accusers in silence. In the fourth Gospel, however, Jesus is depicted as fully aware and even in control of the events in the passion narrative. He does not remain silent but answers back in a confrontational manner when he is struck (18:23). In the Book of Revelation, the victorious Lamb completes the picture begun in the Gospel of John.

Neither is the symbol of a sacrificial lamb the best fit for the Gospel of John. Jesus stops the sacrificial process in the temple, driving out the sheep and the cattle (2:13-22). Moreover, in this Gospel he speaks of himself not as an unwitting victim but as the gate for the sheep and as the shepherd who willingly lays down his life for his sheep (10:7-18).

Most likely it is the symbolism of the Passover lamb that the Evangelist intends. Just as in the Exodus, the lamb’s blood protects the people as they begin their arduous journey toward new life. At the death of Jesus, the Evangelist brings this symbolism to the fore again, by interpreting the

decision not to break Jesus’ legs, as they did to the other two crucified with him, as a fulfillment of the Scriptures that refer to the Passover lamb: “None of his bones shall be broken” (Jn 19:36; Ex 12:46). As the new Passover lamb, Jesus protects his disciples (17:11-15) and opens the way for the new liberation of his people.

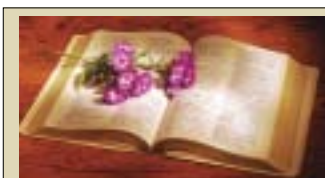
It is not as an expiatory sacrificial lamb that Jesus takes away the sin of the world, but as one who embodies a way of life that frees people from all sinfulness that holds them bound. He

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- Who first pointed you toward Jesus? Give thanks for that gift.
- To whom do you testify about Jesus?
- How do you experience the power of the Spirit to forgive?

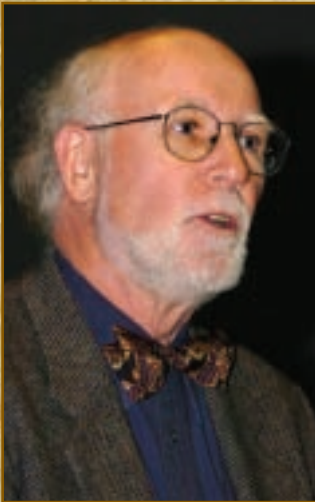
shares with his disciples the power to live this manner of life when he appears to them after the Resurrection, breathing the Spirit upon them and commissioning them: “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them” (20:23). Just as John predicts in today’s Gospel, Jesus bathes his followers with the Holy Spirit, enabling us to live as he did, forgiving everyone we can. Living in this way extends John’s testimony to the Lamb of God in our day, and continues Christ’s action of taking away the sin of the whole world.

BARBARA E. REID



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