



# America

THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC WEEKLY

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## Fall Books 2

The Faith of Robert P. George

KEVIN SPINALE

Relating to Saints

JAMES MARTIN

# OF MANY THINGS

As you will notice, this is the second “Fall Books” issue this year. Unfortunately, there seem never to be enough pages in the book review section to allow coverage of the myriad titles published each year—in a wide range of categories—that merit the attention of *America*’s readers. In this issue you will hear about five.

The first is the latest work by the prolific and critically acclaimed David Lodge. *A Man of Parts* is a novelized biography of the writer, political thinker and womanizer H. G. Wells. Next on the list is *Streams of Contentment*, Robert Wick’s stories and lessons in good living, based on the author’s experiences each summer visiting his uncle’s farm in the Catskills. Our third presentation is *Guantánamo: An American History*, by the Harvard historian Jonathan M. Hansen, chronicling the history of the bay area and the current human rights debate over the use of the U.S. naval base there as a prison. *Mary I: England’s Catholic Queen* is the subject of the British historian John Edwards’s critical new work on Bloody Mary’s battle for the soul of England.

Last, but for my money perhaps the best, is *The Grace of Everyday Saints*, by the journalist Julian Guthrie, who recounts the dramatic true story of a group of activists from a San Francisco church that is threatened with closure. It seems that these parishioners have lost the battle for now, but in the course of their fight they have deepened their faith. The story is inspiring and riveting from first page to last.

As we enjoy another fine November harvest of books, let us remember the month is also notable for several events and observances. Catholics, of course, mark the feast of All Saints and All Souls Day. Many of these holy men and women are authors too. They have left a legacy of now-classic writings in theology, spirituality and history that feed the intellects and spirits of Christians

worldwide.

Besides being the month of the holy souls, November, I recently learned, is also National Novel Writing Month. This is an Internet-based creative writing project. The challenge: write a 50,000-word novel in one month’s time. Entrants may submit a work in the fictive genre of their choice. The project was begun in the summer of 1999, drawing fewer than two dozen writers. In 2010 over 200,000 people participated. According to the Web site NaNoWriMo.org, the word count of submissions is verified by special software. Make the count, and you are a “winner.” The aspiring, fame-seeking novelist, however, should be advised of a downer: there is no guarantee that a human being (other than the writer) will read a word of your manuscript.

While our readers are unlikely to find in this magazine reviews of books by any of the winners referred to above, we strive to inform our subscribers about recent and upcoming books in a variety of subject categories. And so, for instance, as a sneak preview, here is a sampling of what you will see covered in *America*’s pages in future issues. (And this is not even the tip of the iceberg.) *The Sense of an Ending*, by Julian Barnes, is this year’s winner of the prestigious Man Booker Prize for fiction. Also coming is *The Anticipatory Corpse: Medicine, Power, and the Care of the Dying*, by the health care ethicist Jeffrey P. Bishop. Look too for *Dante in Love*, by A. N. Wilson, a passionate portrait of the poet’s life and times. The award-winning novelist Don DeLillo is publishing this month his first collection of short stories, entitled *The Angel Esmeralda*. In addition, you will read about *Prophetic Encounters: Religion and the American Radical Tradition*, by Dan McKanan. And month’s end will greet Eamon Duffy’s *Ten Popes Who Shook the World*.

What a rich harvest, indeed.

**PATRICIA A. KOSSMANN**

# America

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Lisa Pope

106 West 56th Street  
New York, NY 10019-3803

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

E-mail: [america@americamagazine.org](mailto:america@americamagazine.org);  
[letters@americamagazine.org](mailto:letters@americamagazine.org)

Web site: [www.americamagazine.org](http://www.americamagazine.org)

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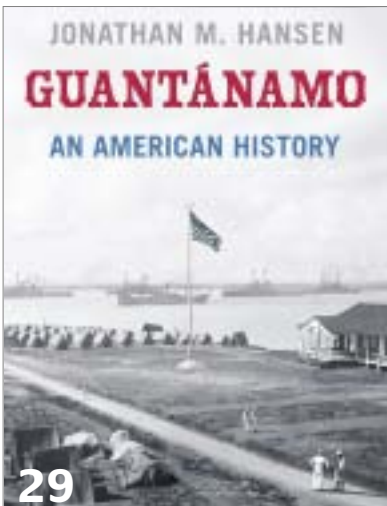
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Video interviews with **Occupy Wall Street** protesters. Plus, a podcast report on the Jesuit initiative, **Contemplative Leaders in Action**, and an archive of articles on the **saints**. All at [americamagazine.org](http://americamagazine.org).



### A Major Investment

The growing number of Americans going to college—more than 20.4 million were enrolled as of 2009—has brought about a worrisome financial situation. This year the total amount of outstanding student loans in the United States is expected to exceed \$1 trillion. And the College Board reported that the average amount borrowed by full-time undergraduates increased by 63 percent between 2000 and 2010. Defaults have also increased. While this sounds like a matter of personal finance, it is a trend that can affect the entire nation. According to USA Today, young Americans with crushing school loans often delay starting families or making major purchases, which negatively affects the economy.

The high cost of a college degree has led some to question the value of a college education. Peter Thiel, founder of PayPal, recently argued that the United States is experiencing an education bubble, which forces many students to make job decisions based above all on salary.

Today's high school students must be taught the serious implications of taking out loans. But the interest rates on student loans must once again be regulated and monitored, and the grace period for federal loans should be extended to one year from six months. Many state schools provide a quality education for a fraction of the price of private institutions, and students should consider the pros and cons of each. A college degree can provide enormous benefits, but young Americans should not be forced into a lifetime of debt to earn one.

### Bring Back Bogart

In the film "Deadline—U.S.A." (1952), an old immigrant woman brings to the managing editor of *The Day*, played by Humphrey Bogart, evidence about the murder of her daughter that will convict a gangster boss of the killing. Why bring this evidence to *The Day* rather than to the police, he asks her. She replies, "I no know police. I know *The Day*."

The newspaper has served as the American classroom. It raises literacy, records history, binds the community and makes democracy possible. Today those responsibilities are said to have moved to new media—television, Facebook and Twitter. But can they carry the load?

Few public schools teach news literacy. A third of young adults receive no news on a typical day. Pre-college students spend over seven hours a day on entertainment media, while the reading of newspapers, books and magazines has declined.

One response to this is the News Literacy Project, a national endeavor involving 20 news organizations, 185 journalists, and teachers, in which middle and high schools and the media combine resources. Through workshops they teach students to read, create, write and speak critically in all media, both old and new.

They distinguish between verified information, spin and misinformation. Above all, they stress the relationship between media and democracy. As Bogart's character says, "The free press is like a free life—always in danger."

In the film's last scene, Bogart pulls the switch that starts the presses rolling. The gangster boss phones Bogart to intimidate him and hears the presses' roar. "What's dat?" he yells over the din. Bogart replies, "That's the press, baby. And there's nothing you can do about it."

Perhaps in the N.L.P. Bogart is back.

### All Together Now?

Held in Assisi, Italy, in 1986, the World Day of Prayer brought together leaders of the world's religions in a spirit of goodwill to work toward a common goal. In a moment of enormous symbolic importance, Pope John Paul II stood alongside Jews, Muslims, Hindus and many other people of faith to pray together for peace.

Last month, world religious leaders reconvened in Assisi to mark the 25th anniversary of that event. Unfortunately, the Vatican planners did not provide an opportunity for the delegates to come together in prayer. "The real prayer will be here at St. Peter's on the vigil [Oct. 26], when the Holy Father is with the Catholic faithful," said Cardinal Peter Turkson, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace.

It is no secret that some Vatican officials, including then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, voiced serious concerns about the interreligious prayer at Assisi. And theologically, such gatherings raise a host of questions. Still, the World Day of Prayer was a breakthrough event precisely because religious leaders prayed in one another's presence. For them, the goal of peace superseded theological disagreements.

Prior to Assisi, "interreligious relations for most Catholics remained distant, almost exotic," wrote John Borelli, an expert on interreligious dialogue. That all changed in a single, dramatic event. At a time of increasing religious strife, particularly in the Arab world, interreligious conversation is as important as ever. The moment of interreligious prayer at Assisi was a bold act that bore great fruit. The Vatican's decision is an unfortunate step backward at a time when the church can play a crucial role in forging the path to peace.

# Fair or Flat?

One tax rate for all, levied on gross income, with no deductions or exemptions—how simple, almost elegant, the flat tax sounds in its purest form. A flat income tax like that, or even that plan with a few modifications, could make the filing of one’s federal income taxes a snap—with no assistance required, not even a software program. If the flat tax rate were low enough, many people would willingly give up their tax exemptions and deductions. At least they think they would.

But the flat tax is a bad deal for several reasons. And would-be supporters ought to ask serious questions of anyone who proposes it, especially in an election year, when it is being offered to voters like a bag of candy.

The key question is: What is meant by gross income? Does the term mean wages only, or wages plus Social Security and pension and all other income—like cash or stock bonuses, interest, investment dividends and capital gains, inheritances and other valuable gifts? Could one still stash wealth, for example, in nontaxable municipal bonds? Some billionaires currently pay very low taxes because their wealth does not depend on wages but rather on other sources of income that is taxed at lower rates. If all sources of income are not included in a federal flat tax plan, then the major sources of income “earned” by the wealthiest Americans may not be subject to the tax.

That brings up the primary drawback of a federal flat tax: it cannot pass a fairness test. Consider a hypothetical case of two earners, one with a \$50,000 annual income and the other with a \$5 million income and a flat tax rate of 20 percent for both. The first earner would pay \$10,000 in taxes; the second, \$1 million. Yet the lower earner still carries the greater burden, because it is much harder to live on \$40,000 a year after taxes than to live on \$4 million. The price of a sack of groceries, a gallon of gas, a doctor’s visit or a new car does not vary much, regardless of the purchaser’s income. That is why consumption taxes and flat income taxes are both deemed regressive. A flat tax rate, many economists say, places a disproportionate burden on middle and low earners.

Catholic social teaching adds much to this discussion. The reflection “Towards Reforming the International Financial and Monetary Systems in the Context of Global Public Authority,” published by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace on Oct. 24, applies basic ethical principles to the global economy and the goal of the common good. It also notes that although the average per capita income has

risen over the last 100 years, “the distribution of wealth did not become fairer but in many cases worsened.”



In their pastoral letter “Economic Justice for All” (1986), the U.S. Catholic bishops promoted commutative and distributive justice. The former pertains to fundamental fairness in agreements and exchanges, like that between employers and workers; the latter pertains to the allocation of income, wealth and power, judged in light of its effects on the poor (Nos. 59, 60). The bishops, concerned to remedy the “inequitable concentration of privilege,” supported the view that tax assessments should be based on the “ability to pay” (No. 72). Taxation, they wrote, ought to “raise adequate revenues to pay for the public needs of society”; follow “the principle of progressivity, so that those with relatively greater financial resources pay a higher rate of taxation”; and exempt those with incomes below the official poverty line. The bishops also noted that “most sales taxes and payroll taxes place a disproportionate burden on those with lower incomes” (No. 202).

But the Tax Policy Center found that Herman Cain’s 9-9-9 tax scheme would raise \$300 billion less than the current tax system. Low revenue would force the government to cut services or to borrow, adding to the deficit, or to levy additional taxes like a V.A.T. or national sales tax. Governor Rick Perry’s flat tax aims to cut government services, which would exacerbate the “inequitable concentration of privilege.”

Since 1913, when the federal income tax was instituted, U.S. tax policy has followed the principles of progressive taxation, based on fairness and the taxpayer’s ability to pay. Without doubt, current tax policy has become overly complex and riddled with loopholes. The tax code needs to be simplified and reformed next year, when the Bush-administration tax cuts are set to expire (again). In fact, the tax rates are not nearly progressive enough, especially for high earners. The millionaire pays the same rate as the billionaire, even though the gap between them is enormous—a situation that cries out for adding more tax rates at the top end of the spectrum. But while tax reform and simplification are critical needs, these ought not be confused with untested notions like the flat tax and its various modifications. Better to simplify the current system and make it more progressive and more fair. At best, the flat tax is simplistic; at worst, it could prove devastating.

# SIGNS OF THE TIMES

## GLOBAL FINANCE

### Vatican Document Calls For 'Supranational' Reform

A Vatican document that calls for the gradual creation of a world political authority with broad powers to regulate financial markets and rein in the “inequalities and distortions of capitalist development” was welcomed by many Catholic progressives as timely and relevant and dismissed by Catholic conservatives as misinformed and without magisterial authority.

Released on Oct. 24, “Toward Reforming the International Financial and Monetary Systems in the Context of Global Public Authority,” argues that the current global financial crisis has revealed “selfishness, collective greed and the hoarding of goods on a great scale” and suggests the creation of a supranational authority that might place the common good at the center of international economic activity. Regulatory controls, “imperfect though they may be,” that may exist at the national and regional level, it argues, have not been replicated at the international level, sometimes to devastating effect on the world’s most vulnerable people.

The document, from the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, places the primary blame for the current global economic crisis on “an economic liberalism that spurns rules and controls,” relying solely on the laws of the market and “individual utility” that “does not always favor the common good.” It calls for

more effective management of financial shadow markets of the real economy that are largely uncontrolled today.

Introducing the text, Federico Lombardi, S.J., the Vatican spokesper-



Protesters carry a “golden calf” in front of the twin towers of the Deutsche Bank, in Frankfurt, Germany, on Oct. 22.

son, emphasized that it is “not an expression of papal magisterium” but is an “authoritative note of a Vatican agency.” The Justice and Peace office’s document made a point of quoting from the

## MIDDLE EAST

### Preventing an ‘Arab Winter’

With world headlines tracking a breathtaking rate of change as the Arab Spring turned into an autumn of violence in Egypt, Syria, Yemen and Libya, the new Maronite Patriarch Bechara Peter Rai cautiously welcomed the political movement’s potential for transforming the region. But, he warned, “We must remain vigilant.”

“The church abhors the use of violence to meet any goal,” he said. “We want to see a Middle East renewed in its respect of human rights and dignity, especially for minorities.”

Patriarch Rai, 71, was elected on March 25 as the leader of the Lebanon-

based Maronite Church, the largest of the six Eastern Catholic patriarchal churches. At the close of a tour of the United States, before a visit with U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon in New York on Oct. 20, the patriarch expressed worry about the possible implications of the changes roiling the Arab world on the region’s Christians. Just days earlier a demonstration by Egyptian Copts in Cairo demanding protection ended in violence that left almost 30 people dead. As the patriarch spoke in the headquarters of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association, rebel forces in Libya were closing in on one-time strongman Muammar

el-Qaddafi; violence flared in Yemen; and a government crackdown on the opposition persisted in Syria.

The patriarch said Americans should understand that the region’s Christians “wish the Arab Spring to be really an Arab Spring. We wish the countries to adopt a separation between religion and state, the system that Lebanon has adopted, which respects all religions and all the values of each religion.”

Discussing the plight of Egypt’s Copts and the devastation visited on Iraq’s Christian community in recent years, the patriarch said that unless Arab nations support religious freedom and respect human rights, the Arab Spring movement will devolve into an “Arab winter.”

“We wish to see freedom being



teachings of several popes, however, including those of Pope Benedict XVI, who in his encyclical “Charity in Truth” (“Caritas in Veritate,” 2009) said there was “an urgent need of a true world

practiced in [Arab] countries. We wish to see all the values of human rights and democracy implemented in those countries,” he said. “It is not easy to talk about democracy in the Western sense in countries that have a theocratic system. Christianity divides politics and religion, and we wish Islam and other religions to do the same,” Patriarch Rai said. Failure to do so will result in civil wars, like the one in Iraq, he warned, and will lead to the rise of regimes “that are even more fundamentalist. This is something that will be to the detriment of everybody.”

Patriarch Rai said conflicts between Israel and the Arab countries and between Israel and the Palestinians have had a negative impact on the region’s Christians.

“The Arab-Israeli conflict is at the

political authority” that could give poorer nations a bigger voice in financial decision-making. It also cited Blessed John Paul II’s warning in 1991 of the risk of an “idolatry of the market” in the wake of the failure of European communism. Today this warning “needs to be heeded without delay,” the document said.

The document also proposes taxation on financial transactions. The revenue raised could create a “world reserve fund” to support the economies of countries hit by crisis. It calls for recapitalization of banks with public funds that make lending conditional on “virtuous” behavior aimed at developing the real economy.

Cardinal Peter Turkson, council president, said the office hoped the statement might prove useful in prodding new thinking at the G20 meeting, which convened in Cannes on Nov. 3. During a press conference in Rome, however, the broadside against some of

level of religion and culture. The conflict between the Palestinians and the Israelis is a conflict [about] a people whose sovereignty, whose land, was taken away, who were displaced and for 64 years have been promised by United Nations resolutions a right of return, but this has not happened,” he said.

“The atmosphere that was created by those conflicts has impacted the Christian presence in the Middle East, causing some to leave for economic and security reasons,” he said. “There will be no peace in that part of the world until Judaism, Islam and Christianity separate church and state,” he said.

Patriarch Rai said that in Lebanon, 18 distinct religious groups live together, a sign of hope for people of the region.

the contemporary dysfunctions of global capitalism was quickly connected to the growing Occupy Wall Street movement. Cardinal Turkson acknowledged some similarities in “basic sentiment” between the aims of protesters and that of Catholic social teaching and the new document on global finance reform.

“If people can hold their government to account, why can we not hold other institutions in society to accountability if they are not achieving or not helping us live peacefully or well,” Cardinal Turkson said. “The Vatican is not behind any of these movements, but the basic inspirations can be the same,” he said.

He added, “The people on Wall Street need to sit down and go through a process of discernment and see whether their role managing the finances of the world is actually serving the interests of humanity and the common good.”



**Maronite Patriarch Bechara Peter Rai, center, with Msgr. John E. Kozar, left, C.N.E.W.A. president, and Archbishop Paul N. Sayah, vicar general of the patriarchate.**

## Cholera Persists In Haiti

A cholera epidemic that erupted in earthquake-shattered Haiti entered its second year on Oct. 19 as aid agencies promoted a new weapon to battle the deadly water-borne disease. Through Oct. 9 of this year, 469,967 cases of the disease have been reported, leading to 6,595 deaths, now the world's largest cholera outbreak. Led by the Boston-based Partners in Health, aid agencies plan a vaccination program that could reduce the incidence of cholera and prevent the rapidly transmitted illness from overrunning vulnerable communities. Partners in Health is targeting Haitians in isolated rural villages and those still living in tent camps without access to clean water in quake-devastated Port-au-Prince. It estimates that only about 54 percent of all Haitians have access to clean water. The agency hopes to inoculate more than 100,000 people beginning in January. "What we're proposing is not a trial," said Paul Farmer, who co-founded Partners in Health. "The vaccine has been proven safe. It's yet another effective measure against this epidemic." The problem, he said, is raising \$300,000 to fund the campaign, because the world has moved on to other concerns.

## A Call for 'New Agriculture'

"No one should go hungry, wherever they live in the world," said the National Catholic Rural Life Conference in the first of a six-part essay series, a "Catholic call for a new agriculture." The N.C.R.L.C., based in Des Moines, Iowa, warned, "By the end of this year, weather disruptions and rising food prices may drive" the number of hungry people in the world

## NEWS BRIEFS

Prime Minister **David Cameron** of Britain last month called the Act of Settlement, which bars from the throne members of the royal family who are married to Catholics, a "historical anomaly" that could not "continue to be justified." + Helping people understand how racism undermines society's ability to overcome violence and economic injustice is a top priority for **Patricia Chappell, S.N.D.deN.**, the new executive director of Pax Christi USA. + On Oct. 24 Pope Benedict XVI named Cardinal **Donald W. Wuerl** of Washington, D.C., the relator-general, or recording secretary, of the 2012 Synod of Bishops on "new evangelization." + Catholic Charities USA, joining the "Fighting Poverty With Faith" mobilization on Oct. 27, offered a **food stamp challenge**: buy a week's groceries on the average stamp allotment of \$31.50 per person. + Jewish groups asked the Vatican on Oct. 19 to suspend reconciliation talks with the **Society of St. Pius X** after Bishop Richard Williamson, a member, wrote that the killing of Jesus "was truly deicide" and that "only the Jews were the prime agents of the deicide" because they "clamored for his crucifixion."



David Cameron

"back to 1 billion, where it last peaked in 2008 due to a spike in food prices. That's one in every seven people." The group said that one linchpin of "a new agricultural ethic" would be the concept of "food sovereignty," where "stakeholders strive to participate in policy decisions concerning their food," and food security, "a basic calculation of how much food needs to be produced by farmers in order to meet the caloric needs of a population."

## Students Respond To Thai Flooding

As flooding persisted in Bangkok, Thailand, Catholic university students and staff used the Jesuit residence, Xavier Hall, as a base for relief efforts for flood victims on the outskirts of the capital. About 30 students from the Catholic Undergraduate Center of Thailand joined hundreds of other vol-

unteers at two relief centers in the Don Muang and Chatuchak sections of the city. The students helped fill sandbags and prepared emergency relief packages for residents displaced by flooding. "During this semester break, our students had planned to go to Mae Hong Son [Province]; but because of the flood situation, the C.U.C.T. committee decided to cancel the trip and offer volunteer service for flood relief work," said Maharsono Probo, S.J., chaplain at the Catholic center. "We students have to contribute our support when society is facing a crisis," said the C.U.C.T. president, Setthawutt Chanpensuk. More than 350 people have died in Thailand as a result of flooding that began in the north in early August. The flooding has affected an estimated 2.8 million households.

From CNS and other sources.



# SMALL TOWN SEEKS PARISH PRIEST.



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# No More Nukes

**T**wenty five years ago, President Ronald Reagan and Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev met in Reykjavik, Iceland, and nearly agreed to eliminate their entire nuclear weapons arsenals. The summit foundered when the United States would not agree to research and development only of the Strategic Defense Initiative, without testing the system in space. Secretary of State George Schultz and others urged Reagan to accept the Soviet Union's historic concessions, but the advisor Richard Perle argued against any limitations on the initiative and prevailed. Although everyone left Reykjavik empty-handed, Gorbachev predicted, "This is the end of the cold war."

If only it had been. The cold war is alive and well in the defense budgets being discussed in Congress, particularly in the so-called supercommittee budget. Twenty years after the demise of the Soviet Union, and in a period of struggle with a poor economy, the United States is still spending exorbitant sums on cold-war nuclear weapons artifacts. As the price for the Republican votes needed to ratify the New Start treaty, Senator John Kyle, Republican of Arizona, demanded and received \$85 billion to modernize the U.S. nuclear arsenal.

The administration is planning to spend \$125 billion to build a new generation of delivery systems for strategic nuclear weapons over the triad of land, air and sea. This will include a new long-range bomber (possibly a drone capable of delivering a nuclear

payload) and a new nuclear-capable cruise missile, 12 new ballistic missile submarines, a new intercontinental ballistic missile and updated Trident II submarine-launched ballistic missiles, plus \$88 billion to build two major new nuclear facilities. While these are presented as 10-year budget numbers, the real costs will be much higher. No new weapons systems or defense facilities ever come in under budget.

These proposals go in exactly the wrong direction. Instead of increasing our spending on nuclear arsenals, we should be decreasing our spending, reducing our arsenals and re-evaluating the triad. The number of poor Americans is at an all-time high. Now is the time for the U.S. government to invest in people, not weapons.

Some are objecting to these expenditures. Senator Tom Coburn, Republican of Oklahoma, and, separately, the Cato Institute, a conservative public policy research organization, are both calling for modest cuts. Some are calling for much deeper cuts, including Republicans like George P. Schultz and Henry A. Kissinger, who argue that a world free of nuclear weapons is the only way to reduce the nuclear danger, particularly the risk of nuclear accident or terrorist use.

We have made some progress since Reykjavik. In 1986 the combined arsenals of the United States and the Soviet Union contained about 66,000 nuclear weapons; today there are 20,000, most of them held by the United States and Russia. China has

fewer than 300 nuclear weapons. North Korea has six to 12.

Time is not on our side. Globalization creates many new avenues for proliferation. Given global climate change, the need for clean energy has led to a race in the Middle East to acquire nuclear energy. Many countries have announced their interest in or contracts to build nuclear power plants: Tunisia, Libya, Jordan, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain and others.

Extending nuclear power to these places is a recipe for creating more countries like Pakistan—unstable states with poor control over their nuclear infrastructure. In such countries there is also potential for diversion of nuclear material and

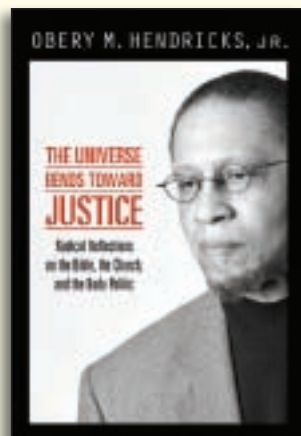
expertise for military use or to terrorist actors or private proliferation networks. This happened in Pakistan when A. Q. Khan, the father of the Pakistani nuclear program, sold nuclear designs, information and dual-use technology to North Korea, Libya, Iran and others. Today he is a free man in Pakistan. The Arab Spring and the nuclear disaster at Fukushima, Japan, have only highlighted the risks.

It is time to change our minds and our budget and put spending for the poor ahead of spending for nuclear weapons. As Mikhail Gorbachev noted recently, "Our efforts 25 years ago can be vindicated only when the nuclear bomb ends up beside the slave trader's manacles and the Great War's mustard gas in the museum of bygone savagery."

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



# Food for Heart, Mind & Soul



## The Universe Bends Toward Justice

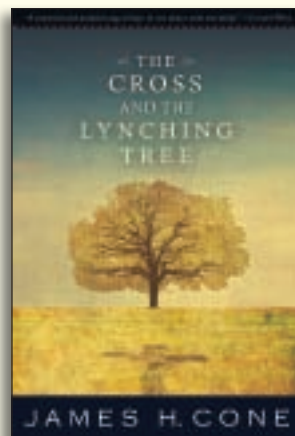
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## The Cross and the Lynching Tree

JAMES H. CONE

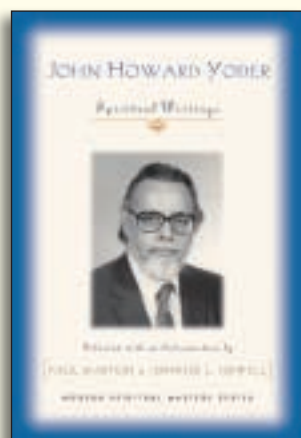
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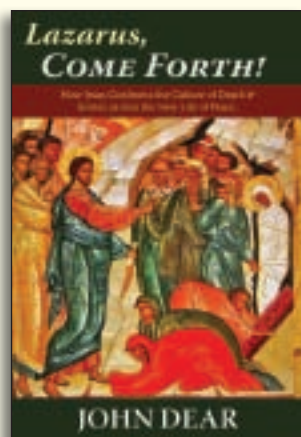
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Robert P. George, a law professor at Princeton University, speaks to reporters at a press conference in the Washington office of Crisis magazine in 2003. Listening from left are Russell Shaw, Carol McKinley and Frank Hanna.

# ‘Sustained by Faith’

An interview with Robert P. George

BY KEVIN SPINALE

*As the holder of the McCormick Chair in Jurisprudence at Princeton University and the founding director of the James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions, **ROBERT P. GEORGE** is well known for his intellectual rigor and dedication to politics. One of the nation's leading conservative thinkers, Mr. George has unofficially advised a number of U.S. Catholic bishops on matters of politics and morals; he has also led organizations that oppose same-sex marriage as well as the sexual trafficking of women and children. President Bill Clinton appointed him to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and President George W. Bush appointed him to the President's Council on Bioethics. In July, *America* spoke with Mr. George in Princeton, N.J., about more personal matters: his prayer life, his advice for young adult Catholics and the relationship between his Catholic faith and his academic scholarship.*

ONS PHOTO BY MARTIN LUEDEFS

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KEVIN SPINALE, S.J., teaches at Boston College High School, in Boston, Mass.

## **H**ow do you pray?

On my knees, the old fashioned way. Not always, but I do find that being on one's knees in a posture of prayer facilitates trying to remove oneself from one's normal routines and puts oneself in the presence of God for that conversation.

I like to pray with people, especially with friends—some of whom are Catholic, some of whom are not. I like the old fashioned forms of prayer such as the rosary or the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Glory Be because of their simplicity. We learned them as children, most of us, and they continue with us in our adult life. We should never regard ourselves as too sophisticated for these prayers.

## *How do you address spiritual desolation?*

I find that reading and praying the Psalms is helpful. Especially in the darker moments—those moments of peril or, as you say, desolation—the psalms remind us that God is in charge and that we are ultimately reliant on him.

I think of Jesus' prayer on the cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" [Mk 15:34]. Jesus is stating the first few words of a psalm [Psalm 22] that will end not with an expression of despair but with a profound expression of hope and trust in God. We are not in control. My great and dear and much missed friend, Father Richard John Neuhaus, used to say: "We have to remember that we are not in charge of making things turn out all right. That's God's job. We are in charge of being faithful. We are just supposed to be faithful. The rest is God's part."

## *Who did you look to as you matured spiritually and intellectually?*

My parents were very important spiritual influences in my life, in quite different ways. My father has very deep but childlike faith. When you hear him praying, you would think that he is talking with a friend. He comes from the Eastern tradition, Syrian Orthodox, and there is a very strong mystical component in the Eastern tradition, very deeply Trinitarian, and a strong devotion to Mary as well. My mother is from an Italian background and is Roman Catholic. She taught us the formal prayers. The rhythm of our lives was the rhythm of the church's year: Sunday Mass, Stations of the Cross in Lent, the special occasions of adoration of the Eucharist.

I got interested pretty early on in the intellectual side of religion and in the intellectual side of Catholicism. When I attended Swarthmore College, the Catholic chaplain, the Rev. Thomas Halloran, a priest of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, was very interested in transcendental Thomism, particularly in Bernard Lonergan's work. He helped to feed that interest that I had already developed in the intellectual side of Catholicism, especially the philosophical side.

In graduate school, I was supervised by John Finnis at Oxford, who is a contemporary Catholic moral and political philosopher. Finnis, like so many of my Catholic friends, especially my intellectual Catholic friends, is a convert. Many of the Catholic philosophical writers whom I admire are also converts: the late Elizabeth Anscombe, Michael Dummett, Peter Geach, Alasdair MacIntyre, Nicholas Rescher. They influenced not just the spiritual dimensions of my faith but also the intellectual dimensions.

My faith has also been enriched by the influence of religious people and writers from other traditions, including Rabbi David Novak, Gilbert Meilaender, who is a Lutheran, and Leon Kass, who is Jewish.

## *How does your faith influence or sustain your academic scholarship and teaching?*

The Second Vatican Council teaches that all of us, not only those called to priesthood and religious life, have vocations. The council stresses the importance of discerning our vocations and integrating all the different aspects of our lives in light of our discernment of what God is calling us to do. I view my teaching, my scholarship and my activism in the world of public affairs as part of my vocation. Faith plays an important integrating role in my life.

My life is sustained by faith. I need God's help to discern what I should be doing and how to do it well. I need God in my life to apologize to when I fail. I need God as comforter and also God as challenger. I think that God challenges us to do more and to do better. It is in the light of God that we can see just how little we have accomplished, no matter how generously the world has showered its honors on us.

## *How does a person know that a particular vocation is what God intends for him or her?*

I think the only way anyone can know one's vocation is by discerning it in prayer. One has to be in relationship with God. That means, for a Christian, being in relationship with Christ and looking for that guiding hand and feeling the force of that hand when you are going off the path. God is always trying to bring you back on to the straight and narrow way, and because his hand is gentle, it is all too easy to pretend that we do not feel it.

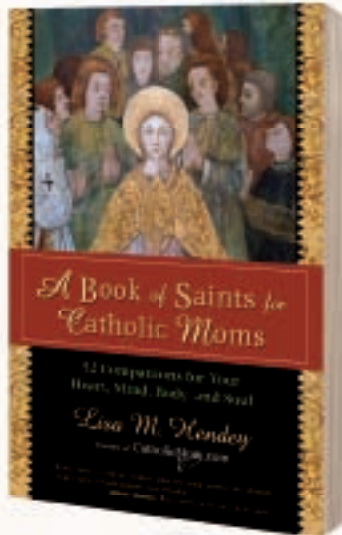
Of course the real danger with any human life is rationalization. If you rely just on feeling, then most of the time you are going to think: Well, if I want to do something, that must mean that God wants me to do it or is giving me permission to do it. We confuse God's will with our desires, when in fact God may be willing that we resist those desires.

## *What aspect of Christianity or Christian belief most resists a rational account?*

I think the Christian faith, particularly the Catholic faith, is

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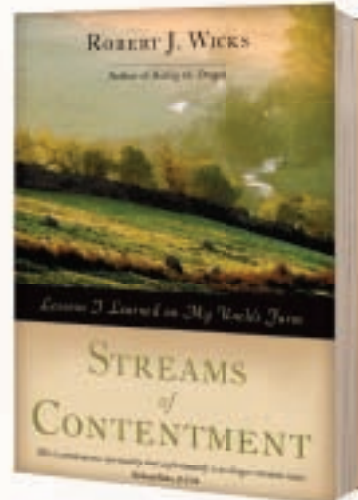
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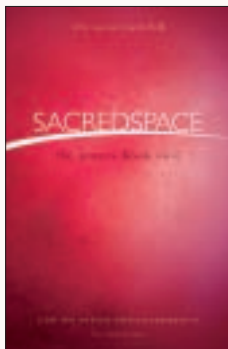
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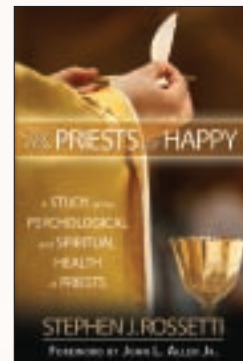
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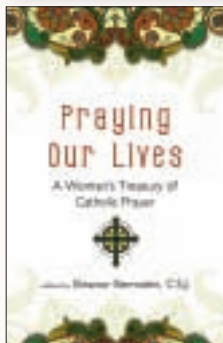
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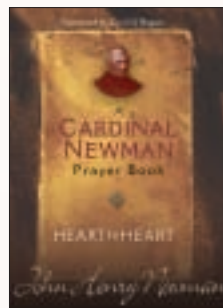
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a very reasonable faith. Catholics think that faith and reason are both important and mutually supportive of each other. In his encyclical “Fides et Ratio,” Pope John Paul II begins with this wonderful image: he says that faith and reason are like the two wings on which the human spirit ascends to contemplation of the truth, and it does take both wings.

I think that the strongest, most mysterious and, in some ways, the most impressive aspect of Christian faith is that it challenges natural human emotions. Perhaps the most radical of all of Christ’s teachings is love of enemies. I would not say that love of enemies is contrary to reason. But I would say it is contrary to the natural emotions that we have, and so it challenges us in a fundamental aspect of our being, because we are not just pure minds. We do have emotions and we do have feelings, and loving our enemies is not only difficult, it just goes against the way we are made. To me, the fact that Christianity could make so bold and radical a demand is more evidence for the supernatural truth of Christianity.

I see the Christian faith as a faith that integrally involves a hope that is not a matter of blind faith. Of course, since the whole story of salvation, the whole story of redemption, is so marvelous and transcendent, it is plainly outside the realm of our ordinary experience, and thus it is a challenge to reason, because reason ordinarily deals with what is normal—what happens most of the time. Here you have something extraordinary in every way; so yes, there is a certain kind of challenge to reason, but not one that should lead us to think that we should praise the irrational or that our faith as Christians is an irrational faith.

*How does the reality of suffering affect your prayer, your living out of faith?*

It is a cliché but, nonetheless, I think it is true—that from the Christian point of view, suffering can only be accounted for as a great mystery. Christianity has a story about suffering. It is a very powerful and beautiful story, but it is a difficult one: suffering offers us the opportunity to participate in

a small way in the redemptive work of Christ. Martin Luther King Jr. emphasized that unearned suffering is participation in the act of redemption. Now, why would redemption require suffering? Or how is sacrifice necessary for redemption? These are deep issues to which, ultimately, I think there is no completely satisfying answer. With a mystery like this one can only enter more deeply into it rather than solve it. It is not meant to be solved.

Suffering is a challenge to us in two ways. First, no life is free of it. It is the nature of suffering that you cannot protect yourself against it or ward it off by being rich or important or by having status, celebrity or prestige.

Second, suffering calls forth from us a natural human empathy; but beyond that, in our Christian vocation it demands of us a response. It requires us to be there for the other person to try to ameliorate suffering. It is most significant and most challenging when it is suffering that cannot be made to go away, but which can be lightened by sharing. Where one’s Christian vocation requires one to meet the needs of others who are suffering, by sharing their suffering, by taking part of it on oneself—that is the imitation of Christ.

*What advice do you have for young adult Catholics maturing spiritually and intellectually?*

My first bit of advice would be to attend to your spiritual life. Develop a strong interior life, especially when we are making educational choices and anticipating career choices. We have to discipline ourselves to maintain regular prayer, engage a spiritual director and examine the options for different kinds of spirituality—Ignatian spirituality or the spirituality associated with some of the new movements in the church like Opus Dei and so forth. Find something that one is comfortable with, and make it a point to work on strengthening one’s spiritual muscles all the time. A lot of young people today will really be determined about jogging or going to the gym and staying physically healthy; we need to have the same attitude toward our spiritual lives.

Perhaps the most important thing for young people to be thinking about is, what is God’s plan for their lives; what is God calling them to do? Discerning that vocation is in a certain sense one’s primary job; and if you do not have a strong interior life, you lack the foundation for that discernment. Strengthen your spiritual life so that you can properly discern God’s will for you in all the dimensions of your life. Gain God’s assistance in living a life that makes sense—integrated and devoted to things that matter. **A**

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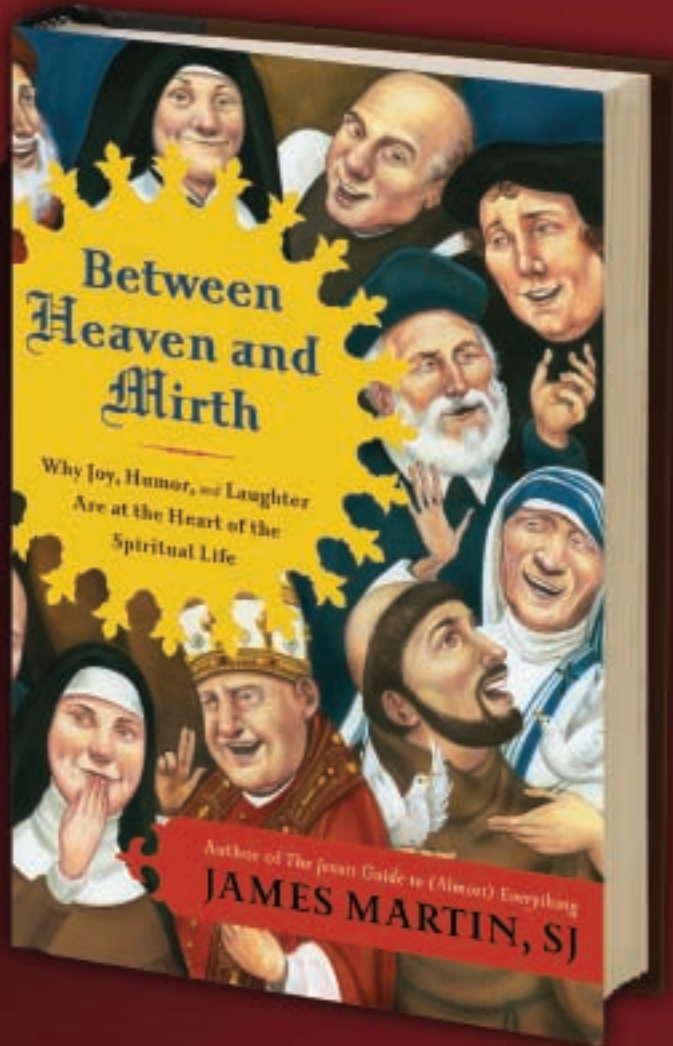
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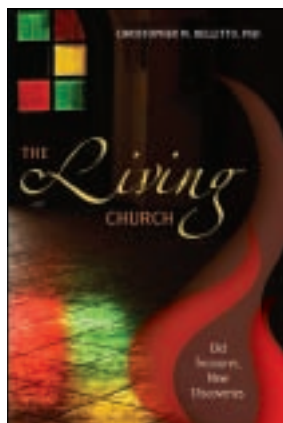
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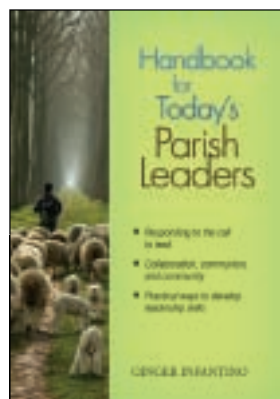
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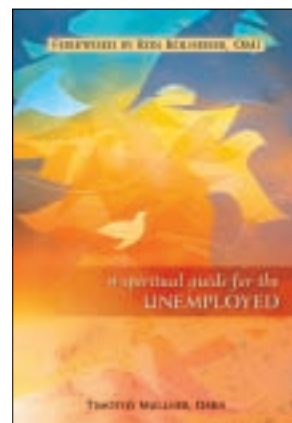
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# Patrons and Companions

When it comes to the saints, there are two extremes to avoid.

BY JAMES MARTIN

Over the past few years, I have spent a good deal of time speaking to groups both large and small about the saints. After listening to the comments and questions of people in parishes, colleges and universities, retreat houses and conferences, as well as reading scores of letters, I have noticed two extremes in contemporary Catholic devotion to the saints, both of them perilous.

The two main ways of understanding the saints in the Catholic tradition are to see them as patrons and as companions. These two models are elucidated in most scholarly studies of the saints, among them *Friends of God and Prophets* by Elizabeth Johnson, C.S.J. They also find voice in the Preface of the Mass for Holy Men and Women, used on the feast days of the saints: “They inspire us by their heroic lives and help us by their constant prayers.”

The main challenge in fostering devotion to the saints lies in steering between the extremes surrounding those two models. On the one hand, there is in some quarters an exaggerated emphasis on the *patron*: the canonized saint in heaven who intercedes for us. In this understanding, the focus is on the one who prays for us in company with the risen Christ, the Blessed Mother and the communion of saints, after having led an earthly life beyond any critique; the patron never entertained an unorthodox thought, never suffered doubt for even a moment, never experienced conflict with the institutional church. Seen thus, saints are supposed to be acceptable in every way to people of every devotional type. Catholics who overemphasize this model are sometimes shocked to hear about the flaws of the saints, the areas where they did not follow the status quo and those times when they found themselves in conflict with church leaders.

On the other side are those who overemphasize the *companion* model: the earthy, sinful, struggling man or woman who shows us, through sometimes flawed actions, how holiness always makes its home in humanity. In this conception, the saint is someone who, once dead, serves no other role than that of model—as if their lives ended once they died. People in this camp often recoil from the parts of saints’ lives that include apparitions, visions or anything that remotely smacks of the supernatural. They are often aghast at talk of



**Parishioners of St. Mary of the Woods, outside Terre Haute, Ind., visited the remains of Blessed Mother Theodore Guérin in October 2006, in anticipation of her canonization.**

intercession, pilgrimages, novenas for the saint’s help and, of course, miracles.

A healthier (and more accurate) model is to see the saint as both patron *and* companion: the manifestly human being whose earthly life shows that being a saint means being who you are, but who now enjoys life in heaven and intercedes for us.

By way of illustration, let me share two stories from the two dangerous extremes.

## Human Lives

A few years ago I wrote a brief article for the op-ed page of *The New York Times* that described the incredible life of Mother Theodore Guérin, the newest American saint.

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JAMES MARTIN, S.J., is culture editor of *America*. This essay is adapted from an address given at the Catholic Theology Society of America meeting in San José, Calif., in June.

PHOTO: CNS PHOTO/KAREN CALLAWAY

Mother Guérin was born in 1798 in France, entered religious life and eventually journeyed to Indiana. There this remarkably determined woman founded the Sisters of Providence of St. Mary-of-the-Woods and started a college and several schools in the region. One might think that such zeal would have won her favor from the local bishop.

It did not. The idea of a strong, independent woman deciding where and when to open schools apparently offended the bishop of Vincennes, Ind., a man whose name sounds like that of a villain in a Victorian-era potboiler: Celestine de la Hailandière. In 1844, when Mother Guérin was away from her convent raising money, the bishop, in a bid to eject her from the very order she founded, ordered her congregation to elect a new superior. Obediently, the sisters convened a meeting. There they re-elected Mother Guérin—unanimously. Infuriated, Bishop de la Hailandière informed the future saint that she was forbidden to set foot in her own convent, since he, the bishop, considered himself its sole proprietor.

Three years later, Bishop de la Hailandière demanded Mother Guérin's resignation. When the exceedingly patient foundress refused, the bishop told her congregation that she was no longer its superior, that she was ordered to leave Indiana and that she was forbidden from communicating with her sisters. Her sisters replied that they were not willing to obey a dictator. At one point, the bishop locked Mother Guérin in his house until her sisters pleaded for her release. The situation worsened until, a few weeks later, Bishop de la Hailandière was replaced by the Vatican.

My op-ed noted that for a time the future saint, through no fault of her own, found herself in conflict with the church hierarchy. Within just a few days, I received a letter from a bishop with whom I am friendly. My article, he said, was damaging to the faithful. Was I saying that the only way to be a saint was to oppose the hierarchy? By no means, I replied. Rather, Mother Guérin's struggles with her bishop were part of her spiritual journey, her very human life on earth.

Coincidentally, I had just returned from a pilgrimage to Lourdes, where I had spent time cheerfully chatting with this friendly bishop. I am surprised that this would come from someone who visits Lourdes, he said in his letter. In response, I pointed out that St. Bernadette Soubirous, the visionary of Lourdes, had herself been booted out of the town's rectory by the local pastor, after she first reported her visions of Mary. Here was another instance of a future saint being, for a time, rejected by the church. (The story of Mary MacKillop, the new Australian saint who was for a time excommunicated, is another of many such examples.) Understanding the saints as bland figures whose lives were free of any conflict indicates an exaggeration of the patron

model, where any "controversial" aspects of a saint's life are seen as irrelevant, now that they are in heaven.

Some Catholics who gravitate toward this extreme are discouraged to hear that the saints sometimes sinned even after their conversions; that they did not follow the "expected" things that saints are supposed to do; or that they were, in a word, human. Once, during a parish talk, I quoted St. Thérèse of Lisieux on the rosary, as an example of how different were the saints. They were not cookie-cutter models of one another, nor were their spiritualities. "The recitation of the Rosary," said the Little Flower, "is as difficult for me as wearing an instrument of penance." The crowd—believe it or not—gasped audibly.

"Why did you say that?" said a Catholic sister afterward.



Mother Guérin

## The saints led manifestly human lives on earth. They now pray for us in heaven.

"Because it's true," I said. "Well, you shouldn't say such things," she said.

One extreme to be avoided, then, is an excessive emphasis on a homogenized, noncontroversial blandness. For the one who prays for us in heaven also lived a human life.

### Saints Alive

The other extreme is an overemphasis on the companion model, which stresses the saints' humanity. More explicitly, it is an approach that shies away from what happens after the saint's earthly death. A few years ago after another trip to Lourdes, I told a Catholic theologian about my visit there and about the pilgrims with whom I went.

"That's dangerous," he said.

"What is?" I asked.

"The notion that the saints pray for us, that miracles happen—like magic."

But that is what we mean by "patron," I responded, quoting the prayers of the Mass: "They help us with their constant prayers." After all, I said, the law of prayer is the law of belief (*Lex orandi, lex credendi*). Besides, the records of miraculous cures are available in Lourdes for all to see, authenticated by physicians, many of them nonbelievers. And that is just for St. Bernadette. Read the canonization papers for any modern saint and you will be gobsmacked by the cures: immediate, irreversible, inexplicable. From the look on my friend's face, however, you might have thought I was telling him that I believed in the Great Pumpkin.

But if God can create the universe and raise his Son from

A DETAIL FROM THE STAINED GLASS IN THE ST. THEODORE GUÉRIN CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL CHAPEL IN NOBLESVILLE, IND. PHOTO: CANSBOB NICHOLS, CATHOLIC MOMENT

the dead, then miracles—miracles today, that is—seem easy in comparison. Regarding the question of why some prayers are answered and others are not: I have no idea. Why, if millions visit Lourdes annually, have only 67 miracles been authenticated? I have no clue. But that is no cop-out; it is on the same theological plane as the problem of evil: Why do some people suffer? I don't know, but I do not need to understand God fully to believe in God fully or to love God fully. But those miracles, whether or not we understand *why* they happen, do happen.

When the doubtful or suspicious ask about intercession I often ask them this: If we ask for the prayers of friends on earth, why not from friends in heaven—unless we do not believe that they are with God, or that God somehow destroys their unique selves after their death, which I cannot believe. If our fellow sinful believers on earth pray for us, why wouldn't the saints? Regarding intercession, it is also important to look at the *sensus fidelium*. Millions of Catholics pray to the saints for their help; they can recount personal stories of being helped in ways that go beyond credulousness, gullibility or stupidity. So I pray to the saints regularly. But I do not get overly upset when my prayers are not answered.

The dangerous thing is not so much “believing in miracles” or even “believing in intercession.” The dangerous thing is limiting God. In essence, it is saying, “God cannot possibly work like this.”

### Both/And

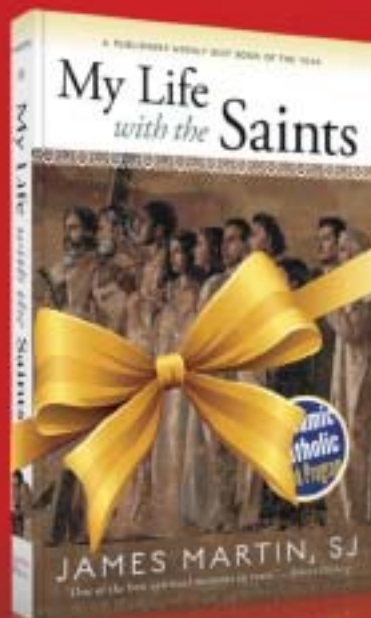
When it comes to devotion to the saints one must hold in tension their dual roles as patron and companion. An overemphasis on one destroys the saint's humanity, renders their earthly lives almost meaningless and negates their roles as models, examples and companions as Christian disciples. An overemphasis on the other makes their new lives in heaven meaningless, renders the tradition of intercession irrelevant and negates their current place in the communion of saints.

There is an obvious parallel to Christology. In classical Christian theology, Jesus Christ is understood as “fully human and fully divine.” An overemphasis on the divinity of Christ (for example, saying that Jesus could not suffer because he was God) is as unhelpful as is overemphasis on Jesus' humanity (for example, denying his ability to perform miracles). Both need to be kept squarely before us as Christians, to be held in tension for us to begin to understand Jesus Christ. The same tension needs to be held when looking at the saints, balancing hagiography “from above” and “from below.”

So in my own work and life I am trying to restore a little balance. And I'm happy to do so with the help of the saints, my patrons and companions. **A**

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# Creating South Sudan

The challenges of nation-building

BY DAVID HOLLENBACH

In an event marked by joyful celebration and hope, the Republic of South Sudan was born on July 9, 2011, becoming the world's newest country. The joy was over the South Sudanese people's freedom, at long last, after decades of exploitation by the northern government in Khartoum and a war that took the lives of millions and displaced millions more. The people of South Sudan hope their new democratic government will lead them to a peaceful future based on justice for all.

Participants in the celebration were aware, however, that the fulfillment of their hope is by no means guaranteed. Conflict between Khartoum and northern groups that were allies of the south during the civil strife could reignite war between the new country and its former rulers. South Sudan also faces daunting internal challenges. It is one of the world's poorest countries. And it has just begun the task of creating the political and economic institutions that sustain national life. Creating the hoped-for future will require much of both the government and the people. The U.S. government and the U.S. church, which provided important assistance to South Sudan in its pre-independence struggles, will have to continue their support. The tasks ahead will be arduous for the South Sudanese and for all concerned with their future.



## Responsibilities of Nationhood

With new nationhood come new responsibilities. In the midst of the long north-south war, one of Sudan's leading intellectuals, Francis Mading Deng, co-authored a book entitled *Sovereignty as Responsibility*. Mr. Deng wrote about the plight of the millions of southern Sudanese killed and displaced by what was then their own government in Khartoum. He argued that sovereignty requires a government to protect the rights of its people and to secure justice for them. If a government fails in this responsibility, it loses the immunity from international intervention that sovereignty ordinarily provides.

During its long struggle with the regime in Khartoum,

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DAVID HOLLENBACH, S.J., holds the University Chair in Human Rights and International Justice at Boston College, where he teaches Christian social ethics in the theology department.

southern Sudan appealed to this understanding of governmental responsibility to call for international help. The government of South Sudan, now a sovereign nation-state, has a responsibility to secure justice and protect citizens' rights; because it is a democratic republic, its people share this responsibility. Failure could lead to a repetition of the injustices that led South Sudan to choose independence. Keeping the joy and hope of the July 9 independence celebration alive will demand effective action by citizens and their political leaders.

The Catholic community in South Sudan shares the responsibility to help shape the life of the new country. Catholics make up a sizable part of the population. And because the civil war weakened social life, the church is one of the few functioning bodies in civil society today. Catholic Relief Services and an association of women's and men's reli-

gious orders named Solidarity With South Sudan invited me to conduct a weeklong workshop last August for church leaders. I was asked to address how the Catholic understanding of social justice and peace could contribute to the development of the new country. My strategy was to move from the foundational principle of Catholic social thought



A very young nation, especially one as poor as South Sudan, must resist corruption from the outset.

to several practical recommendations. This approach, sketched here, could be applied to other new democracies as well as to South Sudan.

### First Principle and Six Practical Steps

*The protection of every person's human dignity, which requires active participation in the life of society, is the core responsibility of all social interactions. And the protection of the most basic requirements of human dignity is the particular responsibility of the new government of South Sudan.*

This foundational principle follows from the fact that all people are created in God's image. Dignity requires that all citizens contribute to the life they share in common and that all benefit from it. As Pope John XXIII put it in his encyclical "Mater et Magistra" (1961), "Human beings are the foundation, the cause and the end of every social institution" (No.

219). The new institutions of civic and governmental life being created in South Sudan ought to protect citizens' rights and enable citizens actively to shape their life together.

1. *The people of South Sudan should be helped to become active citizens through civic education that enables them to work together for the common good.* South Sudan, like many other developing countries, faces the danger that the immaturity of its political institutions and culture will make a stable democracy difficult to sustain. A single referendum and occasional elections are not enough. The church can help South Sudanese citizens learn their new role as citizens. That the church can provide effective civic education is clear from the role it played in preparing people for the referendum on independent statehood.

2. *Citizens should hold government officials accountable for using the power bestowed on them to serve the common good. To accomplish this, the capacity of citizens to hold officials accountable should be strengthened.* A democratic society that is just and peaceful over the long term requires that politicians and public institutions be accountable to those they serve. The church can help citizens to understand that they have a right to this accountability. The church can also provide educational and pastoral support to public officials, helping them develop the civic and professional virtue they will need to resist the temptation to use their power for their own benefit. Political and economic power should serve the common good, not enrich those who possess it. A very young nation, especially one as poor as South Sudan, must resist corruption from the outset if the country is to have a healthy political future. The Catholic tradition has resources that can help, especially its emphasis on the role of political and legal action in building the common good.

St. Thomas Aquinas, following Aristotle, once commented that the use of governmental power for the private good of the ruler is "tyranny" (*Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 42, art. 2). Since South Sudan was created through an extended struggle against tyranny, it needs to develop a public culture that resists corruption. The church can help by providing a strong example of accountable leadership in its own governance. The stakes are high, as the effects of the misuse of power in other developing countries have made clear.

3. *Every person is to be treated with reverence and respect, independent of ethnicity, race or religion; tribalism is a serious threat to attaining the justice and peace that independence promises, and it must be resisted.* Creating new political and legal institutions and a permanent constitution is a formidable task. These institutions need to respect the rich ethnic, cultural and religious diversity of the new country. If minority groups feel excluded from this process, both peace and justice could be threatened. Even more difficult will be the creation of a shared national identity that leads all to see themselves as South Sudanese

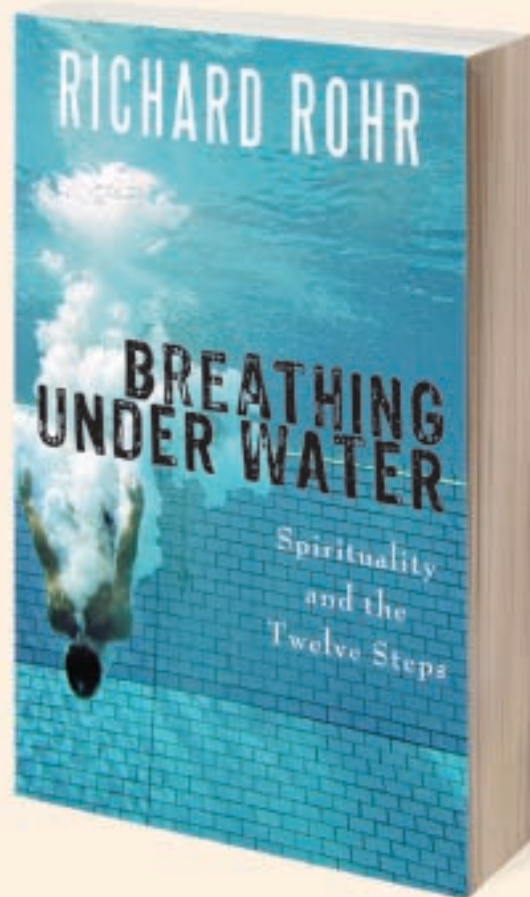
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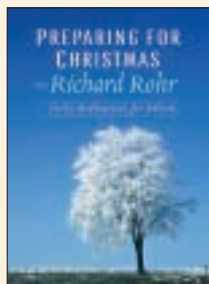
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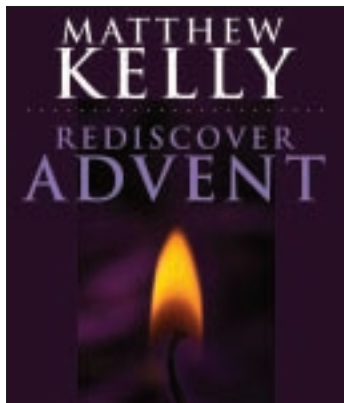


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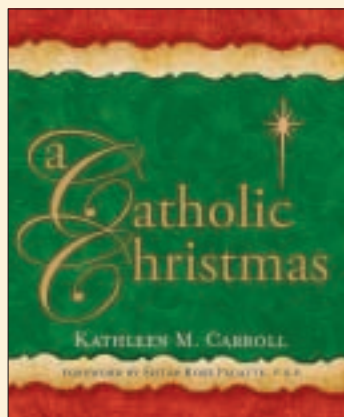
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first and members of their tribes second. The distinctive cultural identities of ethnic communities must enjoy equal respect and treatment. South Sudan was born because of devastating divisions between north and south based on ethnicity and race (Arabs versus Africans) or religion (Muslims versus Christians and followers of traditional African religion).

4. *The church should help the country overcome tribalism through preaching and other educational efforts.* The church can also serve as an example in the way it structures its own communities and carries out its ministries. To prepare for independence, the church conducted a nationwide pastoral project called One Nation from Every Tribe, Tongue, and People (the title is adapted from Rev 5:9). Attaining national unity is a long-term project, as shown by recent clashes in Jonglei State that took hundreds of lives. Sustained work in building a national culture that respects dignity across tribal differences will be one of the church's most important contributions.

5. *National unity depends on the just distribution of land.* South Sudan is blessed with an abundance of agriculturally productive land. In contrast to the regions to its north and east, it also has the water needed for agriculture and the grazing of animals. How these resources are used will have a major impact on the country's capacity to address its extreme poverty. Catholic tradition, from the patristic era to today, has long insisted that land is a good created by God for the benefit of all, not just for the rich or for a privileged elite. It is regrettable that land-grabbing by powerful people and the sale of land rights to foreign nations like China may set back efforts to alleviate poverty. The new government is currently developing a land bill that will significantly shape

the economic future of the country. Here the church can be an advocate on behalf of the many South Sudanese who could become more economically self-sufficient if they had land. The global church can call for international accountability regarding the sale of land rights to foreign countries or corporations.

6. *National unity also depends on the just distribution of profits from the extraction of oil and other natural resources.* South Sudan has rich oil reserves. In the past nearly all the economic benefits from these reserves went north. The extraordinary difference between the wealthy northern capital, Khartoum, and the new southern capital of Juba bears witness to the injustice in the way oil was handled before independence. The new country will be challenged to develop a just policy on oil extraction and on the use of oil profits. Few if any African countries with oil or other valuable mineral resources have been able to accomplish this goal. Instead, natural resources are often used to further enrich the elites, which deepens inequalities and stimulates resentments among those who do not benefit, which in turn leads to conflict. In poor African countries, one often hears talk of a "resource curse." South Sudan needs an oil-use policy that will prevent the blessing of their land from turning into a curse.

The country will need assistance from other governments and from international nongovernmental organizations that have worked elsewhere to assure that the poor benefit from natural resources. It will also need help in pressing U.S. and European oil companies and importing nations like China to refrain from blocking South Sudan's way forward. The Catholic tradition sees oil and other natural resources as blessings from God, but always with the expectation that they be used to benefit all.

The people of South Sudan have enormous hope for the justice and peace their independence promises. The local church worked effectively for the surprisingly peaceful transition to independence. Today the challenges for the people and the church in South Sudan are perhaps even greater than in the past. Both U.S. policy-makers and the U.S. church need to remain strongly engaged in South Sudan's early efforts at nation-building and in preventing conflicts in the north from impeding these efforts.

I hope the practical suggestions made here will help the South Sudanese, as well as U.S. citizens and the U.S. church, continue the work that is indispensable for enduring justice and peace. **A**

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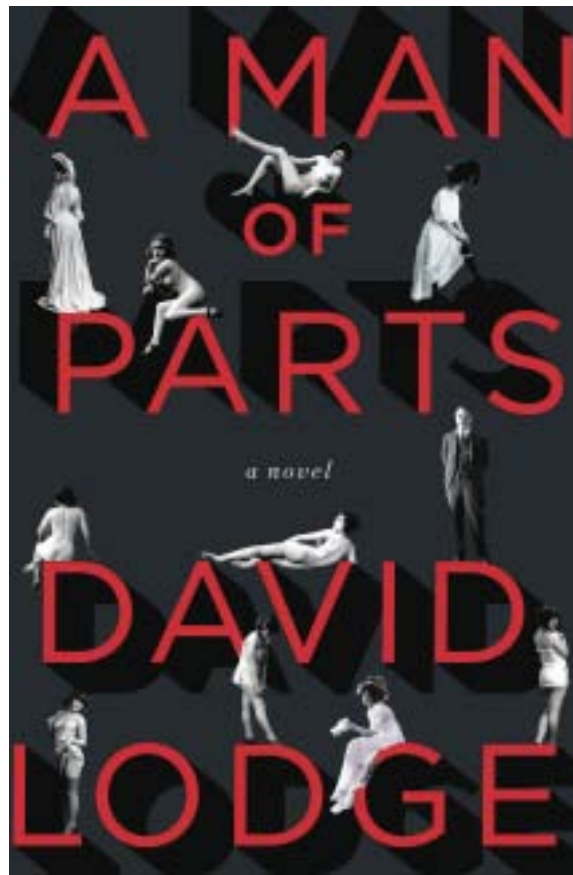
By David Lodge  
Viking. 565p \$26.95

A century ago H. G. Wells (1866-1946) was probably the best-known and best-paid writer in the English-speaking world. But just a decade later, the star of this most topical and forward-looking of authors—the man who dreamed of tanks, atomic bombs and massive aerial warfare before they were invented—began to fade, to the point that he is now remembered as a modestly gifted, if spectacularly prolific (ca. 100 books), pioneer of science fiction and popular history. Oh, and he also left behind a reputation as an indefatigable womanizer (while proclaiming himself a feminist).

Photos of Wells reveal a rather homely, mustached fellow, only 5 feet 5 inches tall, who might be mistaken for a thoughtful businessman. One can still hear his voice on YouTube in an interview from October 1940 with his American admirer and near-namesake Orson Welles: a polite, squeaky old man's voice with undertones not of Oxbridge leisure but of up-by-the-bootstraps lower-class misery, met and mastered. Is this the Edwardian Lothario, the forever-controversial public intellectual who had sat at the feet of Thomas Huxley, the socialist, reformer and (by the end of his days) tragic pessimist? Does he still

hold any interest for us?

In David Lodge's novelized biography he certainly does, even if there is no denying that Wells's stature has shrunk and that psychoanalytically he can seem at times more pathetic than passionate. As for Lodge, a former ac-



demic (U. of Birmingham), a fine novelist (twice a finalist for the Man Booker prize), satirist, critic, essayist, playwright and a quirkily self-described "agnostic Catholic," he combines scenes from Wells's by now more or less completely documented life story with generous quotations from his books, journalism, letters and the like, and lots of imaginative recon-

struction, especially of dialogue. Though absorbed in Wells's hyperactive public and private existence, he keeps his emotional distance from the man and often serves as a prosecutorial questioner in Wells's interior dialogues, where H. G. doggedly but honestly tries to explain and justify his problematic behavior—for example, toward his good friend Henry James, whom he savagely mocked and broke with.

In the perspective Lodge provides, it is clear that Wells's adult life was a protracted (and partly successful) campaign to compensate for the deprivations of his wretched childhood and youth: love, attention, respect and every sort of pleasure. He had a great deal of raw intelligence and all-but-inexhaustible energy. Neither stylistically gifted (he thought writing should above all be useful) nor conventionally attractive (he swore he would have been taller, had it not been for early malnourishment), Wells poured himself out in hectic efforts to win over readers everywhere (pirated copies of his work were a big hit as far away as Soviet Russia) and the beautiful, sometimes quite brilliant, women he kept encountering. His brisk middle-brow prose and unusual plots won him a growing audience, and his erotic magnetism turned heads.

Unhappily married in 1891 to his cousin Isabel, he eloped in 1894 with his student at the Normal School of Science, Amy Catherine ("Jane") Robbins, who bore him two sons and then settled into the role of secretary, nurse and Griselda-like platonic confidant until her death in 1926. During

that time Wells pursued his serial (or simultaneous) adulteries with various, typically younger, loves like fellow writers Amber Reeves, Elizabeth von Arnim, Rebecca West, Dorothy Richardson and Odette Keun. He had an illegitimate daughter by Reeves and a son by West. Then there were the affairs with Margaret Sanger and a Russian woman named Moura Budberg, who may have been a Communist spy, and many brief, unregistered flings (or *passades*, as he

liked to call them) with unnamed partners.

One would like to report that just as Wells's rough-and-ready fiction showed a serious desire to grapple with the crucial issues of the day, such as war and women's liberation, so his amatory exploits reflected a burning, quixotic quest for the perfect soul mate; but that does not appear to

have been the case. In one of his harsher judgments, Lodge declares that "sex for him was ideally a form of recreation like tennis or badminton, something you did when you had completed a satisfactory bit of work." On a sadder, more consequential note, Wells himself,

in the Postscript (not published till 1984) to his *Experiment in Autobiography* (1934), summed up "the story of my relations with women" as "mainly a story of greed, foolishness, and great expectation." It was a karmic irony that the great love of Wells's last years, Moura Budberg, steadfastly refused his pleas to marry or even move in with him.

Wells was an ornery, self-taught, self-made man. And when one lives as headlong as he did, when everything that one thinks and does finds its way into print, there are bound to be painful contradictions. A thoroughgoing egalitarian, Wells nonetheless proposed, in *A Modern Utopia* (1904), dividing society up into a veritable caste system of the "poetic," the "kinetic," the dull and the base, with philosopher-king "Samurais" (like, say, H.G.W.) in charge. A fervent peace-lover, he spouted jingoistic propaganda throughout the first half of World War I. A champion of hard science, he also supported eugenics. A spirited champion of women's rights, he demanded from his mistresses a monogamous fidelity that he never practiced himself.

Still, on the whole his heart was in the right place—which was why the ravages of World War II left him so depressed (he had been an early proponent of the League of Nations). He could confess and regret his failings. But there was a vacuum inside him that nothing could altogether fill. As he once wrote to Rebecca West, "I'm almost unendurably lonely and miserable. I've done no end of work and

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Michael F. Suarez, S.J., discusses the Rare Book School. [americamagazine.org/podcast](http://americamagazine.org/podcast)

## The Day

You said you wanted to die on a bright day  
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you said noon would have no distracting shadows  
to maneuver around, for you believed the lore

that the soul is haunted by them; you said the day  
should be long because you never could walk fast  
and you wanted not to be late; but here you are,  
stretched out in dark winter, betrayed, long past

the summer's light; but is there ever, finally, a day  
perfect for what you now know? Does our world  
prepare us correctly, with its colors and its din,  
for the moment we all shun when we are hurled

into silence? You do not speak. No matter the day,  
then, no matter the silver clouds from the west:  
you've packed away your trinkets and lie with empty  
hands, ready for what someone else knows is best.

WILLIAM J. REWAK

WILLIAM J. REWAK, S.J., is chancellor of Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, Calif.

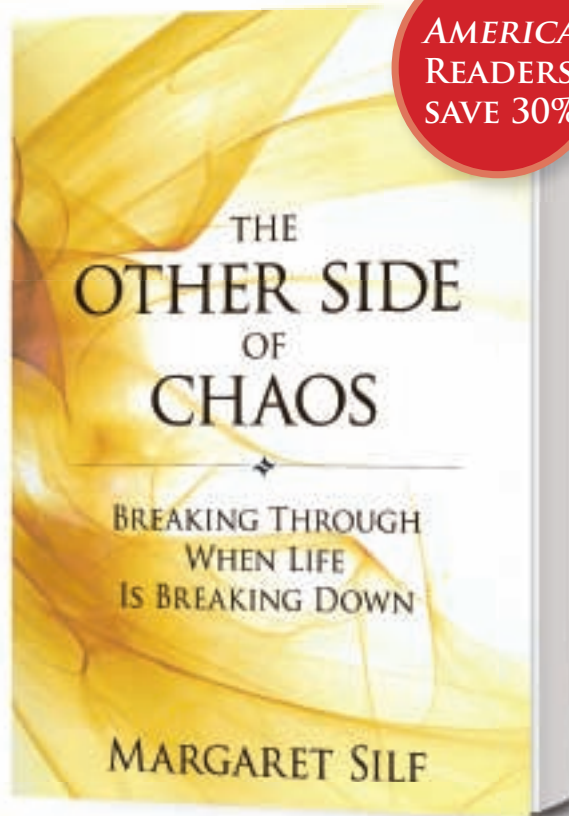
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good work.... Righteous self applause is not happiness. Russia excited me and kept me going. Now I'm down. I'm alone. I'm tired.... I want love that I can touch and feel. And I don't deserve love." Lodge can fairly claim that despite everything, Wells "had a liberating and enlightening effect on a great many people." But he knew that from his fan mail: it drove him to write and editorialize nonstop and even busy

himself with the time-consuming chores of politics (e.g., as a leading figure of the Fabian Society), which he otherwise hated. Yet it was not enough. So, compulsive overachiever that he was, he went on doing more and more—which, as often happens, wound up equaling less.

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PETER HEINEGG is a professor of English at Union College, Schenectady, N.Y.

WILLIAM VAN ORNUM

## PRACTICING FAITHFULNESS

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### STREAMS OF CONTENTMENT

#### Lessons I Learned On My Uncle's Farm

By Robert J. Wicks  
Sorin Books. 224p \$22.95

Special talents in writing, combined with a good heart and a life well lived, are needed to write a book on spirituality for a general audience. Robert J. Wicks has brought to the task of writing *Streams of Contentment* his many fond memories of summers in the Catskills, four decades of professional work as a psychologist (including important contributions in pastoral psychology at Loyola University Maryland) and many joys of being husband, father and friend. Henri J. M. Nouwen asks us on an early page, "Is there a still point where life is anchored, and from which I can reach out, with hope and courage and confidence?"

Wicks's new book can help guide us all toward a similar encounter in the center of our psychological and spiritual being. Readers will be drawn to the author's gentle but natural authority, created by his own life experiences—as a Marine Corps officer, helper and healer of other professionals who work in situations of trauma,

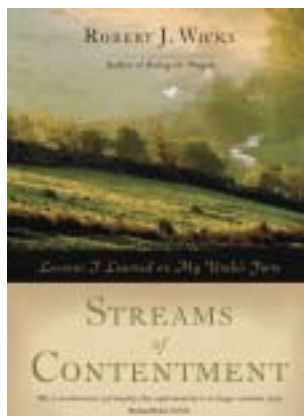
and writer or editor of a bookshelf of highly regarded books on psychology and religion.

This *vade mecum* of good living consists of two parts: 15 chapters involving lessons and stories ("Practice a Little Faithfulness," "Know What a Renewing Community Really Is," "Mind Your Own Negative Predictions and Evaluations") along with enough five-minute practical exercises ("Deeply Appreciate Impermanence," "Beware the 'Fastest' Route," "Enjoy Transparency") to fill an entire month. There is a seamless transition of cognitive-behavioral psychology, insights from an entire United Nations of spiritual writers, including Anthony De Mello, James Herriot, Jon Kabat-Zinn, Kathleen Norris, Anthony Storr, Carlos Ruiz Zafon and many others who represent all points of the globe. We get to meet many interesting folks from Wicks's own life. You may enjoy a chuckle or two when he describes interactions with psychologists in his professional life, experience wistfulness and longing for days gone by when reading his

Catskill reveries or be deeply moved when he writes about his daughter's struggles or the wisdom of a precocious granddaughter.

One of my favorite chapters asks us to be clear about what is truly essential in life. In his clinical work training professional health workers to be effective helpers in crisis or trauma situations, Wicks teaches the importance of recognizing the continuum of responses ranging from intense and immediate reaction to knowing when to remain detached. We often find ourselves in the same quandary when facing local, global or international situations of human need or systemic injustice. If we follow the fire truck to every disaster, we will soon wear ourselves out and be incapable of giving of ourselves to others in our own home or neighborhood. This chapter alone would make for great discussion in a parish meeting hall, bishops' conference or even that precious small space whenever two or three are gathered in his name. "Your goal as a helper," writes Wicks, "is encouragement and clarity, not forcing. Your goal is to be personally and professionally faithful to the process of helping people sit with the truth; success is nice, but it is not the goal."

Anyone in need of regular emotional tune-ups might benefit from Wicks's counsel on gestures of kindness, the importance of letting go, connecting with a healthy community, avoiding the tyranny of false hopes, emotional reasoning, blaming, projection and the importance of tolerance. *Streams of Contentment* will fit comfortably on (and make a unique contribution to) any bookshelf containing Alcoholics Anonymous's "Big Book" and related 12-step literature. One chapter offers a 25-item examination of conscience pertinent to anyone





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***plus a YMT Pacific Northwest Vacation***

**15 Days**

**Departs May 21; June 18; July 16 or Aug 27, 2012**

from **\$1898\***

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**\*Prices per person, double occupancy. Airfare is extra.**



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contemplating the fourth or fifth steps, or those Catholics who may wish to consider receiving the sacrament of reconciliation more than just during the week before Easter.

There was one question in my mind as I read the book, one that could be applied to an entire genre of books published by Catholic publishers or articles and blogs in the Catholic media: “Where are the gifts and treasures that Christianity and the Catholic faith bring to our lives?” Many authors bend over backward to be fair to humanistic and other traditions—and this may be an effective strategic counterweight to excessive evangelizing, proselytizing or undue emphasis on four or five current

issues that rankle and divide. Although *Stream of Contentment* is a highly personal memoir, I kept wondering as I read where Wicks’s obvious Catholic faith (he has been decorated by the Vatican) inspired his life. Toward the very end of the book, he counsels us to “decide on a theme or philosophy in your life” and makes a parenthetical observation, “Mine is: Be clear and be not afraid, for you are loved by God.”

Wicks’s book offers a compelling credo, but I was left wanting more.

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**WILLIAM VAN ORNUM** is a professor of psychology at Marist College in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., and director of research and development at the American Mental Foundation.

## CHARLES R. GALLAGHER ISLAND PARADOX

### GUANTÁNAMO An American History

By Jonathan M. Hansen  
Hill & Wang. 448p \$35

In this well-written and lively account of a place most Americans find thoroughly mysterious, Jonathan M. Hansen, a historian at Harvard University, offers a carefully crafted history of one of America’s most paradoxical possessions, viewed in connection to United States national interest.

As the United States’ “war on terror” morphs into some other configuration, it is the U.S. naval base at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, that continues to generate legal controversy and debate about America’s human rights record.

Guantánamo Bay held attractive geological and geographic qualities for both its original inhabitants and all those who would come later. Strategically, the bay occupies a position in the Caribbean Basin and in the Western Hemisphere that made it a

desirable port from the Age of Exploration through the age of American imperialism.

British Admiral Edward Vernon explained the strategic value of Guantánamo Bay to Lawrence Washington, half-brother of George, who participated in Vernon’s landing there in 1741. For Vernon, Cuba was the “gravitational center” for all trade from the American colonies to Mexico. The geometrical center for all future expansion was Guantánamo Bay. John Adams, Thomas Jefferson and George Washington all seemed to agree with this original assessment.

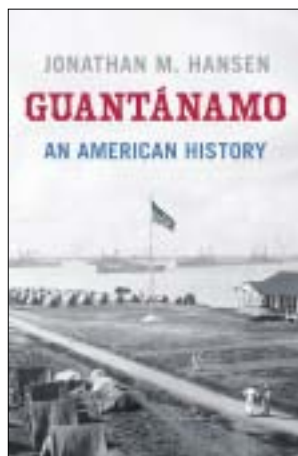
During the 19th century, a combination of the “closing of the American frontier” and the rise of U.S. sea power gave greater weight to Guantánamo’s strategic position. The expansionist

theories of Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan energized the search for U.S. naval coaling stations throughout the Caribbean. Expansionism, imperialism and American exceptionalism would merge over the coming decades to forge the special position of Guantánamo Bay in the U.S. political landscape.

The first Marines rushed ashore during the Spanish-American war. Establishing a base, the Americans fought side-by-side with indigenous Cubans, whose aspirations were stoked by shared principles of democracy and autonomy. With the United States firmly in control of Cuba by the end of 1898, American principles were slow to find areas for growth on Cuban soil. The Platt Amendment of 1901 was adopted by the U.S. Congress, but in a puzzling political twist, it was also incorporated into Cuba’s new constitution. As Cuba took pains to create an independent government, the Platt Amendment indicated that the United States would intervene both to preserve Cuban independence and to “maintain a government adequate for the protection of life, property, and liberty.” For Hansen, Platt offered the perfect ploy for the now 110-year U.S. holding-pattern to begin. Hidden in Platt was the cession of Guantánamo Bay to the United States.

Cuban independence in 1903 generated the Cuban-American

Treaty, which included the stipulation that the United States would lease Guantánamo Bay as a coaling naval station. “Complete jurisdiction and control” of Guantánamo Bay would be given to the United States, while “the ultimate sovereignty of the Republic of Cuba” remained intact. The Franklin Roosevelt administration annulled the



# AN OPEN LETTER FROM THE PEOPLE OF GOD TO THE BISHOPS OF THE UNITED STATES

*Dear Bishops:*

Over the past forty years, the Roman Catholic Church in the United States and worldwide has experienced a steadily worsening priest shortage. At first, the process was so gradual that it was hardly noticed. But now, the rapidity of the decline is having a devastating impact on parish and sacramental life.

According to a 2008 Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate study, half of the 19,302 active diocesan priests plan to retire by 2019. We are ordaining about 380 new diocesan priests each year. In just eight years, we will have only 13,500 active diocesan priests to serve our 18,000 parishes, presuming ordinations remain constant, as they have for over a decade.

Many dioceses engage in the morally questionable practice of importing priests from the developing world despite even more severe priest shortages in those countries. Still others are accepting married priests from other religious traditions, while simultaneously dismissing Catholic priests who marry and failing to recognize the vocations of Catholic married men. Some bishops are changing priests' retirement age from 70 to 75. Many are embracing several of these strategies simultaneously yet none will arrest the steep declines looming ahead.

We, the people of God, are regularly asked to "Pray for vocations," and we have been praying diligently. Since Church law tells us that we have the duty to express our views about the Church's welfare, we share with you the outcome of our prayer.

The slow deliberate pace of the Catholic Church, once deemed a virtue, is a luxury we can no longer afford. Delay caused by inaction threatens our Catholic life and mission. Silence, blind obedience, and unquestioning trust on the part of faithful Catholics can no longer be viable options if the Church with the Eucharist as the center of its life is to survive. Now is the time to act as well as to pray.

We call on you, our bishops and brothers in Christ, to embrace your roles as shepherds, and nourish the people you were ordained to serve. The people of God, including priests and bishops, have already begun a courageous dialogue about restoring our early traditions recognizing married and celibate priests and women deacons.

We ask you, as leaders of US dioceses, to open such a dialogue as well, officially or unofficially within your dioceses, the US Bishops' Conference, and especially in your 2012 ad limina visits to the Vatican.

May God bless our Church with people of vision, wisdom and courage.

**Go to [www.futurechurch.org](http://www.futurechurch.org) to:**

- Sign the letter yourself and view signatures by diocese of thousands of faithful Catholics.
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- Send electronic and paper postcards to Rome asking to restore our earliest traditions of both married and celibate priests as well as women deacons.

**Donations to defray advocacy and publishing costs are greatly needed.**

**This initiative is coordinated by FutureChurch, a national Catholic renewal organization that has been working for over 20 years to raise awareness about the consequences of the priest shortage. The Open Letter is supported by 12 Catholic renewal organizations, including two informal organizations of priests.**

Platt Amendment in 1934, creating a so-called “Permanent Treaty,” which established a definitive leasing arrangement between the United States and Cuba. The hybrid status formulated in Platt remained. A clause indicating that the treaty could be broken only by mutual agreement virtually guaranteed American possession in perpetuity. Since 1959, the Castro government has considered the naval station to be Cuban ground unlawfully occupied by a foreign military.

Hansen’s chronicle of life in Guantánamo is important because as an “American history,” it examines the views of so many Americans who lived in a place where for so long they remained oblivious to the national, cultural, political and ideological wishes of the host country. The author pays close attention to issues of race, mores, cultural conflict and U.S. naval culture. In many cases, he explains, it was the geography of Guantánamo that heightened problems already present.

While important as a fueling outpost, Guantánamo’s strategic role during the 1940s and through the cold war began to diminish. Geopolitics was shifting from South America to Southeast Asia—and then back-flipping toward Europe as the 1980s and 1990s wore on. Historically, the author points out, alcoholism flourished at Guantánamo, prostitution was rife (Navy men routinely referred to the base as Gitmo), while race relations were always problematic. Since the 1930s, placement at the base was considered a career-ender for any ambitious admiral.

Much of this changed as the United States embarked upon its global war on terror. Paradoxically, high government officials in the Bush administration initially spurned Guantánamo Bay as a possible place of detention for Al Qaeda and Taliban enemy combatants. But over time, Guantánamo Bay’s hybrid status made it perhaps the shrewdest choice for an administration

geared to set new and troubling directions for its foreign and human rights policies. As Hansen shows, the cages of Camp X-Ray had their precedents in previous briggs, detention centers and prisons that dotted the history of this mysterious 45-square-mile compound.

During the Cuban missile crisis, Admiral Robert Dennison once described Guantánamo’s strategic topography as “undefended and indefensible...a coastal pocket with Cuban

hills looking down.” The U.S. naval station’s newest legacy as an infamous place of “enhanced interrogation techniques” underscores Hansen’s “American history” of Guantánamo as a forced history, one largely unwanted by its host, and one that many Americans find increasingly indefensible.

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CHARLES R. GALLAGHER, S.J., is assistant professor of history at Boston College, Chestnut Hill, Mass.

JOSEPH P. CREAMER

## THE BATTLE FOR ENGLAND’S SOUL

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### MARY I England’s Catholic Queen

By John Edwards  
Yale Univ. Press. 336p \$35

The short reign (1553-58) of England’s Queen Mary I witnessed the execution of an astonishing 284 people for their Protestant beliefs, earning her the nickname Bloody Mary. This moniker has attached to her reputation ever since. Mary has unjustly suffered from an insular approach to English history, as her five-year reign appeared as a bump on the road toward staunch English Protestantism. Mary’s father, Henry VIII, had broken with Rome in 1534 because the pope refused to annul his marriage to her mother, Catherine of Aragon.

During the equally brief reign of Mary’s younger half-brother, Edward VI (1547-53), the English church drifted toward Protestantism. Mary was accused of attempting to restore medieval religion to England; and, as England’s first female sovereign, she was faulted for her lack of political

prowess and her single-mindedness. John Edwards’s new biography of Mary I takes an ecumenical approach, building upon and advancing the recent revisionist efforts of Catholic and women scholars to re-evaluate Mary’s rule in both the religious and the secular spheres.

As both a distinguished British historian of early modern Spain and an Anglo-Catholic by faith, Edwards has the background to recast Mary’s life in a European context. He argues that Catherine of Aragon ensured that Mary received the full formal education in Latin and Greek that a male heir to the throne would have received, primarily under the tutelage of the Spanish humanist Juan Luis Vives. Mary was immersed in the Bible,



the church fathers, classical authors and the works of Vives’s humanist acquaintances, Erasmus and Thomas More. Mary’s humanist education influenced her religious practice, which eschewed traditional pilgrimages and relics—criticized by the humanists—and emphasized the

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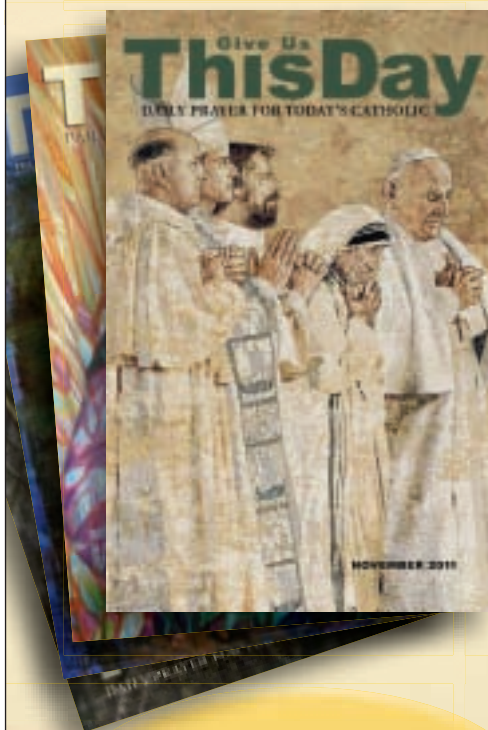
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Mass, eucharistic devotions and meditations on the life and passion of Christ, like Thomas à Kempis's *Imitation of Christ*. Her Christocentric piety was nourished by the same texts that were the foundation of both Ignatian and Catholic Reformation spirituality.

Edwards asserts that the queen's restoration of the Catholic religion, like her personal piety, was not reactionary but was based upon the ideas of leading reformers. He recounts how Mary attempted to reform English Catholic religion by requiring bishops to reside in their diocese, encouraging preaching, founding seminaries, publishing catechetical works and even planning an English translation of the Bible. Cardinal Reginald Pole, archbishop of Canterbury, devised and undertook these reforms of the English church. Pole had long been active in Catholic reform in Rome, and his legislation establishing a seminary in every diocese became the basis for

the Council of Trent's important decree on seminaries. Mary had also, before Pole arrived, replaced the Protestant bishops of Edward's reign with both Catholic-leaning bishops who had accepted Henry's break with Rome and bishops loyal to Rome.

Mary's progressive reforms prove (although Edwards does not let the reader know this) that English historians were wrong to argue that the so-called Marian Reaction was founded solely on coercion and could never have evolved into a workable form of English Catholicism. While Edwards emphasizes Pole's and Mary's reform plans, he disagrees with Eamon Duffy's recent claim that Mary's heresy trials were effective methods of reestablishing English Catholicism, arguing instead that they were counterproductive to Mary's reform aims. Nevertheless, Edwards connects Mary's reforms to nascent trends in the European church, holding forth the possibility that England could have

been reconverted to a reformed Catholicism through persuasion rather than violence—something that the Counter-Reformation church accomplished in parts of Germany and elsewhere.

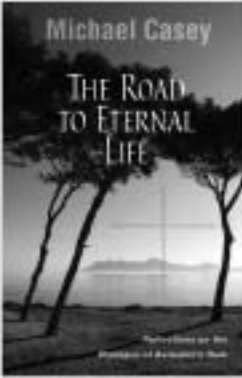
Edwards also undermines English insularity by considering European models of female royal authority. He compares Mary to her grandmother Isabella of Castile, not, as most everyone else does, by contrasting her with her half-sister and successor as queen of England, Elizabeth I. The strong-willed and deeply pious Isabella of Castile successfully ruled a united Spain with her husband, Ferdinand of Aragon, while still governing Castile in her own right. She thus set a precedent for Mary, who ruled England even after her marriage to Philip of Spain in 1554.

Mary lived much of her life among Spanish officials and courtiers, and also shared the determination and strong convictions that served her grandmother well as a female ruler in a man's world. The author also places the major events of Mary's reign—her marriage to Philip of Spain and England's war with France—in their full, if somewhat dizzying, European context. England became a pawn in the power politics of Europe, disastrously losing Calais, its last territory in France, while the pope, fighting his own war against Philip and his Hapsburg allies, tried to diminish Cardinal Pole's power by calling him to Rome to face charges of heresy. These misfortunes of Mary's reign, Edwards argues, were largely out of Mary's control as England was marginalized by the struggle between the pope and the sprawling Hapsburg Empire.

The author is right to study Mary's life, religion and reign in a European context, but unfortunately Mary herself is somewhat lost in the details. Dynastic marriage plans, the to and fro of diplomatic negotiations, continental politics and romanticized

# A

## NCIENT WISDOM FOR THE HERE AND NOW



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### THE ROAD TO ETERNAL LIFE

*Reflections on the Prologue of Benedict's Rule*  
Michael Casey, OCSO

In *The Road to Eternal Life*, Michael Casey reflects on the Prologue of the Rule of St. Benedict one verse at a time. These reflections build a bridge between the sixth-century text and twenty-first-century Christians.

*"Recently I asked Brother Patrick Hart of Gethsemani who was the best writer of our times. He said, 'You mean, after Merton?' I said, 'Yes. Who would be the best of my generation?' He replied without hesitation, 'Michael Casey, OCSO. He writes with clarity and depth.' Reading this new book on the Prologue of the Rule of Benedict confirms Brother Patrick's affirmation."*

Meg Funk, OSB  
Our Lady of Grace Monastery  
Beech Grove, Indiana

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Spanish views of England and the English—interesting and important in their own right—are not sufficiently integrated into the narrative of Mary’s life to reveal all that they might about her views.

While Edwards deserves credit for bringing neglected Spanish sources to the account of Mary’s life, he fails to explain what difference these sources make for our understanding of Mary’s character. The challenge of replacing the colorful, if historically false, image

of a fanatical and politically inept Bloody Mary with a balanced yet equally compelling image of Mary is daunting. Edwards frees Mary from the limiting perspective of English history, but fails to imaginatively craft a worthy portrait of Mary that will command the place she deserves on the wide European canvas.

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**JOSEPH P. CREAMER** is the assistant dean for seniors at Fordham College, Lincoln Center, in New York.

BILL WILLIAMS

## A FIGHT FOR ST. BRIGID

### THE GRACE OF EVERYDAY SAINTS

**How a Band of Believers Lost Their Church and Found Their Faith**

By Julian Guthrie  
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. 288p \$25

Catholic bishops have struggled with the impact of declining church attendance, shrinking numbers of priests and the financial costs of settling priest sexual abuse cases. One solution is to close some churches.

*The Grace of Everyday Saints* is the riveting story of one such church, St. Brigid, in San Francisco. When Archbishop John Quinn shuttered the church in 1994, shocked parishioners banded together to fight the decision—marking the start of a long-running saga that continues to this day.

The author, Julian Guthrie, is a San Francisco Chronicle journalist who first wrote about the parishioners’ struggle in a series of newspaper articles, which she has now expanded into this compelling book. Guthrie’s narrative brims with drama, tension, surprise and loss. Her descriptions of the faith and lives of the people involved bring the story to life.

Robert Bryan, a nationally known

lawyer who represents death row convicts, felt drawn to the parishioners’ cause and became the fiery leader of the Committee to Save St. Brigid. He converted to Catholicism, but eventually became disillusioned with church politics and what he viewed as the arbitrary decision to close the century-old church.

Other activists included Lily Wong, a devoted parishioner from Burma, one of 11 siblings who converted from Buddhism to Catholicism; Joe Dignan, a confused man struggling with his sexual identity before he disclosed to the committee that he was gay; and the Rev. Cyril O’Sullivan, a committed St. Brigid priest who defied the archbishop by actively working with parishioners to save their church. The archbishop soon moved him to another parish to silence him.

To all appearances, Guthrie’s account makes clear, St. Brigid appeared to be a thriving church. There were five Sunday Masses and three daily Masses, celebrated in five

languages.

Parishioners met with the archbishop, but he was adamant that the church would not reopen, citing declining Mass attendance and the anticipated high cost of strengthening the church to protect it from earthquakes.

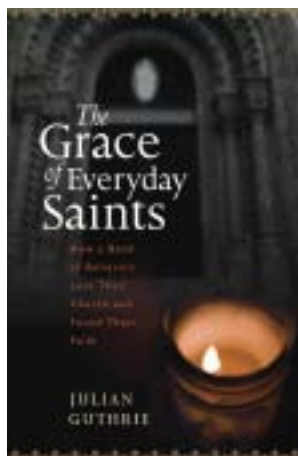
The committee leader Bryan characterized the struggle as one “about good versus evil, about the little guy taking on the powerful.” He even flew to Rome to file an appeal, but no one in the Vatican would meet with him. He accused the archbishop of exercising “morally corrupt leadership.” Tiring of the rancor, the archbishop resigned.

Bryan’s hardball, aggressive leadership eventually split the committee. After a decade at the helm, Bryan gave up his position. Joe Dignan, a younger, less inflammatory leader, succeeded him.

The new archbishop, William Levada, initially seemed more open to compromise, but when the committee offered to raise \$1.5 million to upgrade the church, it got no response. Parishioners, however, did succeed in having the church declared a historic landmark so it could not be torn down.

One dramatic sub-theme of the story involves the impact of the nationwide sexual abuse scandal involving priests. The San Francisco Archdiocese alone spent \$67 million to settle such cases. As Guthrie notes, parishioners believed the archdiocese wanted to sell St. Brigid to raise money to help pay for the settlements, but the archdiocese maintained none of the sale proceeds were used for that purpose.

The St. Brigid story has so many twists and turns that it is hard to sum-



marize them in a short review. At one point the archdiocese agreed to sell St. Brigid to a condominium developer but then backed out of that deal and instead sold the church to the Academy of Art University, which planned to use the building for school and community events.

In 2005 Joe Dignan told the committee, "What I've come to learn is that my faith has nothing to do with gold chalices or big cathedrals. It is deep inside." A year later committee members received the shocking news that Dignan had died suddenly of a heart attack at age 49. The Academy of Art allowed mourners to use the shuttered church for a memorial service.

Despite the loss of their leader and the long odds, the Save St. Brigid committee has vowed to carry on. It continues to meet bi-weekly. One diocesan official has compared the protesters to the Energizer Bunny. They simply never give up. "They believe in some-

thing bigger than themselves," Guthrie writes, "and they are never going to let go—despite the powerful opposition and despite the appearance of getting nowhere."

Nonfiction books written by reporters often lack depth and a compelling narrative thread, but Guthrie's account hooks the reader from the start with color, dialogue, telling detail and intrigue, much like good fiction.

Nationwide, the unfortunate economic reality is that some dioceses are close to bankruptcy because of rising costs, declining Mass attendance and multi-million-dollar settlements of sexual abuse cases. Are there options other than closing churches to save money? The author does not say, but perhaps that is a subject for another book.

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**BILL WILLIAMS** is a freelance writer in West Hartford, Conn., and a former editorial writer for *The Hartford Courant*. He is a member of the *National Book Critics Circle*.

**ART** | JON M. SWEENEY

## INTO THE DESERT

### *Il Poverello in portraiture*

Have you ever seen St. Francis of Assisi smile? Neither have I. And that's unfortunate, because according to his biographers, *il Poverello* (the little poor one) was one of the most joyous of men. He was the merry leader of a band of brethren who called themselves "God's jugglers," as they worked and played and sweated and laughed with people in the fields and towns, before ever preaching to them. This sunny disposition also showed itself in the ways Francis located God in some startlingly new places, at least according to the 13th-century worldview. He saw God not just in men and women trying to be faithful but in lepers and outcasts, ravenous wolves, fish

and birds, the sun and the moon, even in bodily pain and death. Francis is a man who rolled in the snow, stripped himself naked to demonstrate to his father how joyfully he had renounced owning things and preached in his underwear to show humility. Still, we never see him smile. What a shame that is.

Blame it on the iconographers—the artists and painters who have rendered the image of St. Francis since his death in 1226. There are thousands of paintings of St. Francis. The world's most popular saint is also, after Jesus, the most

painted figure in history. So it seems that at least occasionally we should see him smile. Instead we see him caught in the serious actions of his life story as told by biographers.

### The Top Three

In the history of art there is a "top three" of the most important paintings of the Poverello. First would have to be the fresco on the wall of the chapel of St. Gregory in the Sacro Speco (sacred grotto) in Subiaco, a city in the province of Rome. The Subiaco grotto was made famous centuries earlier by St. Benedict of Nursia, who retreated there and founded the Benedictine order within its walls. The fresco portraying Francis hangs to the right of the entrance to the cave and is inscribed as painted during the second year of the pontificate of Pope Gregory IX (late 1228 or early 1229). This makes it the earliest surviving painting we have of the saint. Many scholars assume that the man depicted in that fresco is as close a likeness as we will ever have of the real Francis. He is wearing the rough habit of his order, with a knotted cord about his waist; his hands are pre-stigmata; and he is barefoot.

Second in importance may be Cimabue's famous portrait, which hangs in the right transept of the Lower Basilica of San Francesco in Assisi. There Francis appears shorter and swarthier than in the portrait at Sacro Speco. He is showing his stigmatized hands to the painter with downcast, humble eyes. Some biographers prefer this image as the most faithful of the early ones precisely because it seems to show a less idealized man. This feels like the Francis we know from the stories in *The Mirror of Perfection* and *The Little Flowers*.

The third painting is the most frequently reproduced image of St.

#### ON THE WEB

Kamaria B. Porter reviews the film "Margin Call." [americamagazine.org/culture](http://americamagazine.org/culture)





COURTESY OF THE FRICK COLLECTION, NEW YORK. PHOTO: MICHAEL BODYCOMB

**“St. Francis in the Desert” (c. 1475–78), by Giovanni Bellini**

Francis: Giotto’s fresco, also from San Francesco in Assisi, depicting “The Preaching to the Birds.” This is the 15th scene in the narrative cycle located around the nave of the Upper Basilica. You have probably seen it in books and films or on postcards, coffee mugs, holy medals and in your hotel and tour brochure if you have visited any town in Umbria. Each image from the fresco cycles at San Francesco—and in similar cycles at other Franciscan basilicas throughout Italy—depicts scenes from the biogra-

phies of Francis. Like any good storytelling of a saint’s life, they show Francis on his way of conversion toward heaven.

But other images, which hang in museums around the world, also deserve our attention. Francisco de Zurbarán’s “Saint Francis in Meditation” hangs in The National Gallery in London, for example. The 17th-century painter, a Spanish Catholic, shows a kneeling friar in closet-like solitude, cowed, his mouth open to speak to God, holding a skull

in contemplation of death. This is a dark, stark, arresting image, far removed from the juggling, joyous side of Francis. Zurbarán’s countryman, El Greco, painted similar scenes.

### **Bellini’s Francis**

“Saint Francis in the Desert,” by Giovanni Bellini, was recently restored and is on exhibition at the Frick Collection in New York City. Bellini’s painting dates from the most exciting days of the European Renaissance, around 1475, when the artist was at the

height of his powers in Venice. He took as his subject the patron saint of Italy, but added a variety of details, mysteries and symbolic touches that have kept experts guessing for centuries.

The work was painted in oils on three wooden panels joined together. Bellini placed St. Francis in the foreground surrounded by mountains and desert, a common combination in central Italy. Depictions of Italian saints venturing into the mountains have long been used to replicate the experience of Jesus going into the desert. The two locales are united in the Italian worldview. In this picture, St. Francis is alone, in deep contemplation of God, gazing gently heavenward, his arms at his sides, palms slightly raised. In the background is a walled city, a pasture with a donkey, farmland and perhaps orchards—a place rugged and alone but also cultivated and civilized.

One's eye can wander in the background for a long while. Who knows

how a master painter decides what to place in those parts of a picture? It is a created scene, to be sure, not any particular Italian landscape. Are the details simply what the artist fancied, or do they hold some deeper symbolism that he read into the saint's story he aimed to tell?

And what is that story, exactly?

The central action of "St. Francis in the Desert" takes place, albeit mysteriously, with St. Francis in the foreground. The natural world surrounds him there, too: a red bird, various indigenous plants, an elegant heron and a rabbit that appears below the saint's outstretched right arm. I can't help but think that Francis may have purchased such a rabbit from a meat vendor in town only to carry it with him to the countryside, where he could set it free.

There, standing dramatically before you, is St. Francis. Unlike Cimabue's fresco of the swarthy little man, this Francis is the charismatic founder of the world's largest family of religious

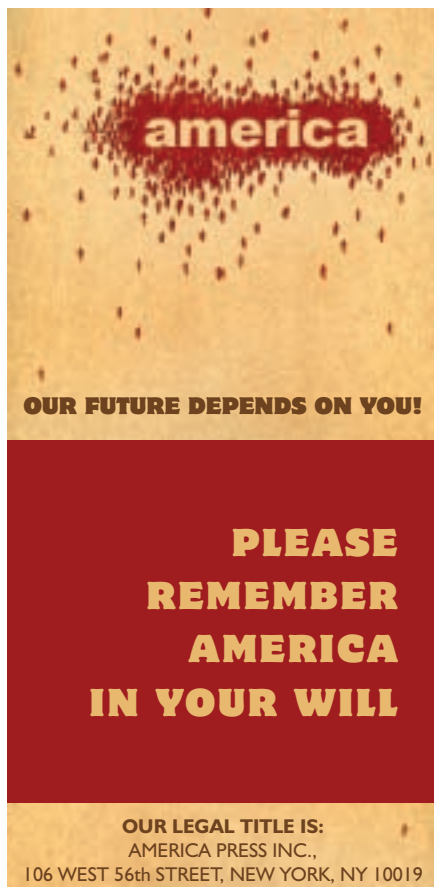
orders. Contrary to what we know as fact since his body was discovered several meters below the high altar at San Francesco in 1818, this Francis appears almost tall and lanky. He strikes a grand figure. We know that Francis had theatrical flair, but it is hard to imagine that he would display such a quality as he stood alone before God. This is the sincere movement of a man consumed by God in a single moment.

But what is that moment? Bellini tells us with tiny, almost indecipherable spots of red paint. You can still see them on Francis's hands, and conservators who have recently examined the painting under a microscope tell us that there was once a spot of red on the saint's foot, as well. As for the traditional piercing of the side, it is nowhere to be found. One would not imagine that this man is experiencing any discomfort at all from the five wounds associated with Christ's crucifixion—and that seems odd to me. Nevertheless, Bellini presents us with the moment in time when the wounds of Christ were being reproduced in the body of St. Francis: the world's first stigmata.

The greatest mystery in Bellini's painting is the presence of God. This Renaissance artist created a somewhat modern rendition of the stigmata scene, in contrast to Giotto's traditional representation of Christ in the form of a seraph imparting the sacred wounds to the holy man. Instead, Bellini has St. Francis looking out of the frame to find the divine. God is depicted nonrepresentationally. Only a soft light enters in and permeates the entire scene. This divine light seems to illumine Francis and make him, quietly, like Christ.

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**JON M. SWEENEY** is the editor of *The Road to Assisi: The Essential Biography of St. Francis*, as well as a new edition of *The Little Flowers of Saint Francis* (both published by Paraclete Press).



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Reporting directly to the Provost, the Executive Director of the Wolfington Center serves as an academic and campus leader for the College's social justice mission and the Justice Matters core curriculum. Therefore, the successful candidate will be knowledgeable in Catholic social teaching, while at the same time respectful of, and open to, collaboration with other religious traditions and like-minded institutions who seek social change.

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The Executive Director will oversee and strengthen existing domestic and international partnerships and relationships as well as encourage new domestic and international affiliations that foster solidarity and the common good. Because partnership is a core concept of the College's social justice effort, s/he must have a profound understanding of the nature of partnerships and relationships as constitutive of a shared vision, and challenge members of the College to an ever-more-authentic commitment to poor and marginalized people.

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*Minimum Qualifications* require a master's degree in a related field. Earned doctorate preferred. Several years of experience working with community organizations, excellent writing, teaching and public presentation skills, including a strong record of publication and/or presentations in the areas of Catholic social teaching, social justice education and/or community-based education

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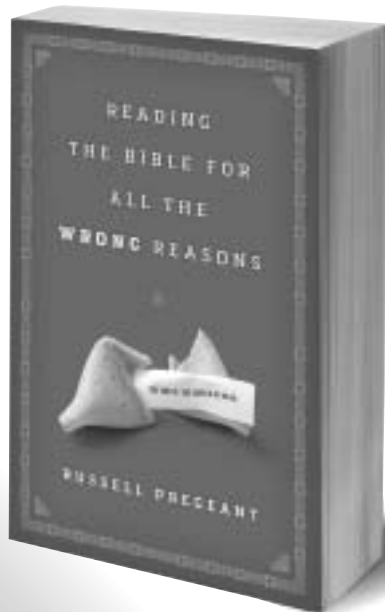
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## LETTERS

### Undaunted

Just a little note on the “Save the Altar Girls” editorial (10/10). I winter in Florida, where my parish swells to seven weekend Masses during the snowbird season, with three aging priests to handle them. One Sunday none of the altar servers showed up, and the priest asked if someone from the congregation would volunteer to serve Mass. There was no movement from the ranks of the elderly men. Obviously they didn’t feel they would remember how to do it. After all, their training had been in Latin. The lack of response grew embarrassing. Finally someone got up and walked to the altar. She was a grey-haired lady who had never had the opportunity to serve Mass in her youth. Untrained, inexperienced and undaunted, she served very well.

CAROL DeCHANT  
Evanston, Ill.

### Do Three Things

It is good to see your coverage in “‘Occupy Wall Street’ Goes Wild” (Signs of the Times, 10/24), but I hear in it a distressing echo of the popular news media repeating that the protesters are “unfocused” and “don’t have a message.” They are energetic young people acting out the whole family’s dysfunction, and it is up to us to decipher the illness they point to.

The credible message that the media and others do not want to hear is that some remedies are in order. Here are a few priorities.

1) A new Homestead Act must help homeowners keep their homes by lowering the principal of their mort-

gages to reflect reality, not the speculation-driven, hyper-inflated price that housing was selling for.

2) The Glass-Steagall Act of 1933 must be reinstated. The reason bankers and financiers could develop those fraudulent mortgage packages that have not only bilked homeowners but devastated the economies of the world is that both parties in Congress worked to gut the Glass-Steagall Act, which kept the bankers from using deposits of clients for speculative investments.

3) The public should be encouraged to remove their deposits from the “too big to fail” banks and put them in community credit unions. Keeping your money local keeps the accountability local. These moves are doable and concrete if there is political will and a sense of justice.

CHRIS NUNEZ  
Santa Cruz, Calif.

### Start With Plato

I agree with “Catechesis or Theology” (Current Comment, 10/10) that more curricular space should be allotted to

theology. A two-course requirement is insufficient; at least three should be required. Especially at a Jesuit college, one should have special emphasis on the New Testament. There should also be three required courses in philosophy. One should take Catholic thinkers from Augustine to Thomas Aquinas, though after tackling Plato and Aristotle. Graduates of Catholic colleges acquainted with Catholic social thought on war and peace, the value of human life and economic justice could make a significant contribution to American life.

RICHARD H. ESCOBALES  
Buffalo, N.Y.

### Listen to Married People

Re the review by Thomas P. Rausch, S.J., of *The Crisis of Authority in Catholic Modernity* (10/24): I was one of those priests who ended up telling people to follow their conscience. I had read “*Humanae Vitae*” several times and found it unconvincing—with its natural law argument that seemed to be based more on the demands of sexual plumbing than on the reality of

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two people facing life. It made frequent appeals to authority, the weakest of all modern arguments, and Pope Paul VI had refused to listen to the commission he had appointed, which disagreed with him, even though he had stacked it with conservative bishops. I was also aware that Pope Paul, the hierarchy and I shared one thing: We did not understand the realities of married life because we were not married people.

I still think that married people who know that part of their vocation is the cross and who are open to the Spirit are better judges of reality than any pope. I do not quite understand how this is "relativism." I would call it reality. What destroyed the authority of the church? Priests who told married people to follow their consciences, or a pope who tried to force his opinions down the throats of people who

had their own sacrament to live, with the wisdom and help of the Spirit that comes with it?

WILLIAM TAYLOR  
Nampa, Idaho

### No Kidding

Thomas P. Rausch, S.J., says in his review of *The Crisis of Authority in Catholic Modernity* (10/24), "This book should be widely read by bishops...." You've got to be kidding. Can you name one out of the hundreds of U.S. Catholic bishops who would read this book? The church has been my life, but right now I can't find any smart people who are taking it seriously.

JAMES E. O'LEARY  
Corpus Christi, Tex.

### So Much for Sanks!

T. Howland Sanks, S.J., has written an interesting article ("The Changing Face of Theology," 10/24). But it may

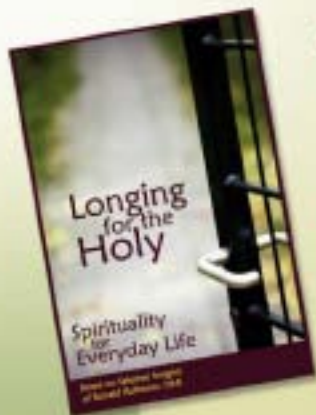
come as a shock to Father Sanks that the U.S. Catholic laity has little interest in "Conversion and Retrieval of Fihavana Culture in Madagascar" or any other such obscure thesis topics that come out of his school.

It is in the fundamentals of our faith—Thomism, church fathers, historical theology, soteriology, ecclesiology, eschatology, moral theology etc.—that the American laity is thirsting for knowledge.

As Reinhard Hutter writes in "The Ruins of Discontinuity," in *First Things*, "We do not seek pluralism, we seek continuity!" Edward Oakes, S.J., author of "The Supernatural Controversy: A Survey and a Response," in *Nova et Vetera*, represents the theologian I hope to emulate some day. Father Sanks and the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley do not.

EDWARD RAY  
Orange, Calif.

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# Unmasking Greed

THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (A), NOV. 13, 2011

Readings: Prv 31:10-31; Ps 128:1-5; 1 Thes 5:1-6; Mt 25:14-30

“Well done, good and faithful servant” (Mt 25:21)

What can be done when one lives where the economic system is marked by deep inequity? One kind of response has been visible in recent weeks in the United States, as the protest movement Occupy Wall Street has voiced a broad-based frustration over how our financial system works. Today’s parable offers another image of how an individual can take measures to undermine a system that allows the rich to become richer while the poor become poorer.

The story involves a very rich man who entrusts his possessions to his servants before going away on a journey. One receives five talents, another two and the last one. A talent, *talenton* in Greek, is a monetary unit or a weight measurement. It is a very large sum of money. Unlike the master in Luke’s version of this parable, who instructs his slaves to invest the money, the master in Matthew presumes his servants know how to increase his holdings in his absence. While he is away, two of the servants invest and double the money. For this they earn the master’s praise and are given increased responsibilities. The third buries the money, which does not increase the yield but was a good way to safeguard money and possessions in antiquity (see the

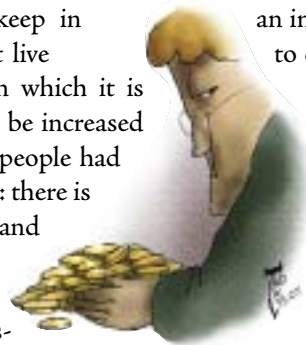
parable of the buried treasure in Mt 13:44). For this he receives harsh words and severe punishment.

An important key to understanding the parable is to keep in mind that Jesus did not live in a capitalist system in which it is thought that wealth can be increased by investment. Instead, people had a notion of limited good: there is only so much wealth, and any increase to one person takes away from another. A typical peasant would aim to have only enough to take care of his family. One who amassed large amounts for himself would be seen as greedy and wicked. In the parable, then, the third servant is the honorable one—only he has refused to cooperate in the system by which his master continues to accrue huge amounts of money while others go wanting.

The parable can be a warning about the ease with which people can be co-opted by an unjust system, while also giving encouragement to disciples to take courageous measures to expose unfettered greed for the sin that it is. The last verse is sobering, depicting what can happen to those who blow the whistle on the rich and powerful. The parable also encourages disciples to find ways to stand together as they confront unjust systems and not to be found in a vulnerable solitary position, as was the third servant.

Reading the parable from this perspective, one sees that the man going

on a journey is not a figure for God, and the parable is not an exhortation for people to use their God-given talents to the full. While the latter is an important thing for Christians to do, it was not likely to be the way Jesus’ first hearers understood the parable, since *talenton* does not have this metaphorical connotation in Greek. Moreover, there is an eschatological dimension to the parable that such an



## PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

ment.

**BARBARA E. REID**

- Ask Jesus to free you from any image of God that instills fear of punishment.
- How is the Spirit emboldening you to counter systems in which the rich become richer and the poor become poorer?
- How does your community of faith stand together to undermine systems that fuel

interpretation misses.

In the literary context of Matthew’s Gospel, this is the third of three parables that stress the need for disciples to be faithful in the time between Jesus’ departure and his coming again. In contrast to slaves, who live in servile fear of a greedy master who metes out cruel punishment to those who will not go along with his program for self-aggrandizement, Jesus’ disciples live with trust in God, whose equitable love emboldens them to work for justice here and now while awaiting ultimate fulfill-

**BARBARA E. REID, O.P.**, a member of the Dominican Sisters of Grand Rapids, Mich., is a professor of New Testament studies at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, Ill., where she is vice president and academic dean. Her latest book, *Abiding Word: Sunday Reflections for Year B* (Liturgical Press), is a compilation and expansion of articles that first appeared in *America*.

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