# America

Aug. 27–Sept. 3, 2007 THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC WEEKLY $2.75

## The Oneness of the Church

*Richard Gaillardetz*

## Liturgy 40 Years After the Council

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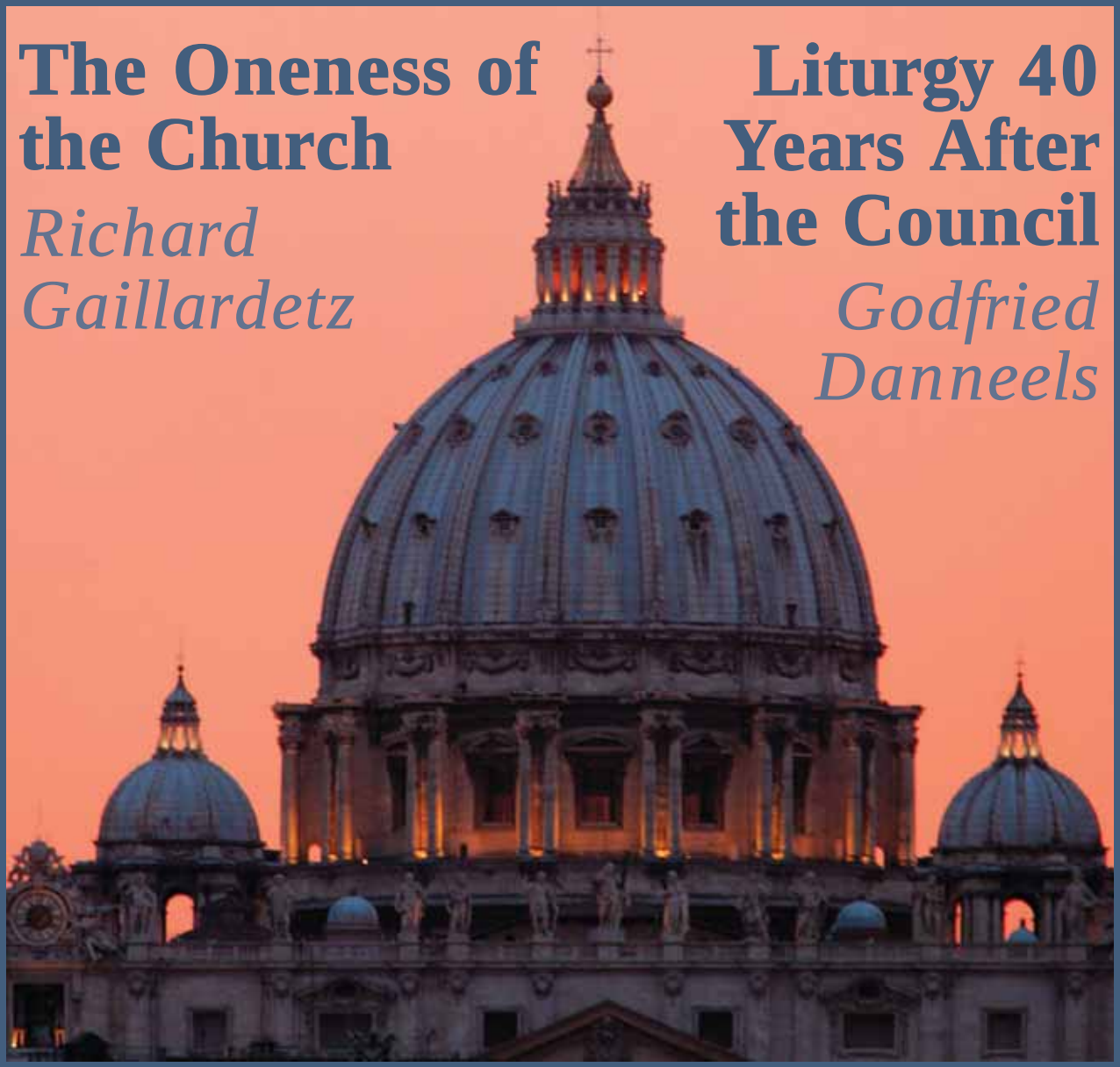

*Richard A. Blake*
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as a religious thinker

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# Of Many Things

ONE SUMMER in Maryland I volunteered to teach in a local Head Start program, but what I needed instead was a paying job. So when my roommate dashed home with the news that the Democratic National Committee was hiring over at the Watergate building, we rushed back to the District to apply and interview. That night we landed jobs in the press office. It was 1968, a few months before Election Day. And the Hubert Humphrey versus Richard Nixon presidential race was entering its final critical leg.

This is the story of how a college sophomore, too young to vote or drink, managed to become inebriated from her first big whiff of party politics. Or maybe the story is this: the party-politics bug bit our sophomore, inoculating her for decades against the twin democratic demons of political apathy and cynicism. I'm still working on the interpretation (and I'm still under the influence).

So, Ms. Smith goes to Washington. Plopped serendipitously into the press office, the center of the national campaign, I was immediately aware of my political ignorance. Many on the staff had come directly from the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, which had been marred by the violent treatment of a group of antiwar protestors. I had not been present and did not understand what such violence, along with the national fractiousness over the war, might portend for November. I knew only that, like my parents, I was a Democrat who supported the war on poverty, civil rights for blacks and equal rights for women. Unlike my parents, I was against the war, though my brother served in the Navy.

Now here I was in Washington, not exactly a Humphrey devotee, but eager to learn on the job more about the issues and the candidate. As I prepared news releases and press packets; typed, duplicated, and mailed out the vice president's speeches; and read through sacks of mail sent to the candidates care of the D.N.C. (some letters were intensely personal and heartfelt), I picked up what I could.

In all innocence, I expected the presidential candidate to inspire me. After all, he represented a democratic ideal I admired: the elected public servant. By definition, this man or woman works long and hard, for less pay than business would offer, to craft and enforce laws that further the common good of all Americans. Humphrey fit the bill. What I didn't expect was to be inspired by coworkers.

Yet I saw about me men and women of varying ages, types and career levels who embodied another democratic ideal: the politically active citizen as party worker. These people toiled behind the scenes and within the system. Their hard work, enthusiasm and dedication moved me; all of us worked nearly around the clock as the weeks sped by. And while senior staff members were surely sustained by the hope of the power, status and financial reward victory would bring, they and many staff people at lower levels seemed motivated primarily by nobler civic goals. How ironic that in an era of protest, I began to respect as well the party system and those who worked within it.

The experience did not prompt me to run for office myself or to become a career staffer, but it did ignite my lifelong interest in politics. I minored in government, joined the League of Women Voters, helped friends with their state and local campaigns, worked on many a voter registration drive, edited two magazines that cover politics and never failed to vote. I relish the current campaign, too, even though much has changed since then to tarnish the political system I cherish, such as the overwhelming power of PACs.

Though the Democrats lost the 1968 election, I continue to find surprising the degree to which that single positive experience has influenced my adult actions and views. It didn't have to be that way. Had I been more objective, perhaps, I might have concluded that party politics is ineffective, that it fails to produce the best candidates. The winner that November, Richard Nixon, eventually resigned the presidency amid impeachment proceedings, and his running mate, Spiro T. Agnew, resigned after being charged with tax evasion.

Why not be cynical? Why cling to the belief that the people's voice can best be heard through political parties? Because that is a goal worthy of effort and, I would add from experience, a view that can inspire the young.

***Karen Sue Smith***


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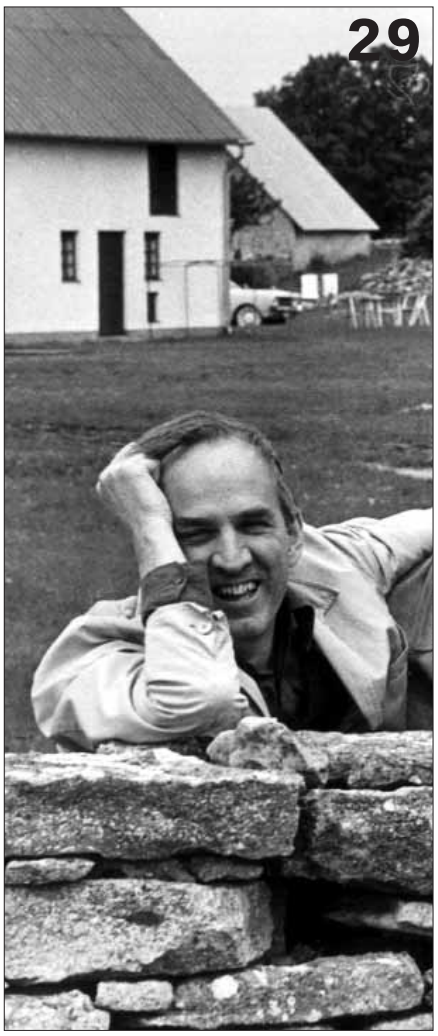
*Cover art* The domes of St. Peter's Basilica, Rome, at sunset. (CNS photo by Nancy Wiechec)


## Articles





# The Limits of Color-Coding

During the last two U.S. presidential elections, the media devised a catchy system for depicting the partisan divide among the 50 states. Where a majority of the votes cast were Republican, the state was called red; where Democrat, blue. Maps of the nation required just a glance to show where each party prevailed. The red and blue categories proved helpful in discussions of the electoral college, which decided the 2000 election for George W. Bush, although Al Gore won the popular vote. The red and blue labels worked because in most instances the winner of the popular election takes all (not a proportionate number) of each state's electoral votes.

But the color-coding has limited usefulness. Complexity gets lost. In some states, voters choose a president from one party and national legislators from another; are these states red or blue? Two colors cannot account for other factors—like gender, marital state, education and income, race and ethnicity, and urban, suburban or rural residence—that must be considered when seriously discussing voting patterns. And the two colors apply only to those who vote, leaving out the more than 40 percent of eligible voters who did not vote. Finally, the red and blue labels cannot adequately describe ideology, despite repeated assertions that blue states are liberal, red states conservative.

Note the possibility that in post-primary 2008, Rudolph Giuliani could be running for president against Hillary Clinton. One bright blue state would have produced both the candidate representing the red states and the candidate representing the blue states. Even the color blind could see the need for nuance in the red/blue scheme then.

Of course, some might prefer a return to the gray days of yore when people couldn't tell any difference between the major parties. Who would claim that now?

# Investing in the Future

The collapse during rush hour of a 40-year-old bridge linking Minneapolis and St. Paul, the explosion of a steam pipe next to New York City's Grand Central Terminal and the flooding of that city's subway system a week later raised national concern over the condition of the nation's infrastructure. How safe are the nation's aging bridges and highways? How reliable are underground systems of transportation and engineering?

Since bridges and tunnels do not have a noisy constituency promoting their interests in political campaigns, elected officials may feel no pressure to respond to the long-range needs of an aging infrastructure. At a time when much public attention is focused on terrorist threats from abroad, national and local leaders need to recognize the dangers from within.

The Highway Trust Fund receives from each penny increase in the federal tax imposed on gasoline about a billion dollars a year, which it provides to local governments for the repair and replacement of local infrastructure. President Bush has resisted Congressional pressure to increase the tax on gasoline so that more funds can be available for investment in the future of the nation's highways and bridges. The cost of gasoline in the United States is held hostage, of course, to the unilateral decisions of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries on the cost of a barrel of oil. The president would be better advised to resist the monopoly of OPEC by challenging its violations of the Sherman Antitrust Act, as Congress has proposed. Increasing taxes on gasoline would provide the necessary funds for a greater investment in the nation's future.

# The Truth Will Out

It has now been established legally by a court of inquest in Kenya that the death of John Kaiser, then 67, on the night of Aug. 24, 2000, on a road outside Nairobi was a murder. The Minnesota native was a member of the Mill Hill Missionaries who had worked in Kenya for 36 years. He was an outspoken defender of human rights, even personally sheltering those caught up in violent tribal conflicts. His death was seen as a national tragedy.

Father Kaiser's brother missionaries and his family appealed to the late Senator Paul Wellstone for help in determining the circumstances of his death. The U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation conducted an investigation and proposed a theory of suicide, a finding that seemed inconsistent to those who knew Father Kaiser and were familiar with the circumstances of his death.

The Kenyan bishops were outraged and pressed for a full inquest, which went on for four years. During that period, officials of the F.B.I. postponed or canceled their scheduled appearances before the court at which they would have been asked to explain how an arthritic 67-year-old could have shot himself in the back of the head with a three-foot-long gun. At the time of the hearing, the attorney for the bishops identified by name the F.B.I agents, who were unavailable because of unforeseen assignments. In finding that Father Kaiser was murdered, the Kenyan judge named four suspects whom the police should investigate. Seven years too late, the Kenyan judicial system has scored a victory for the truth and for its own integrity.

# Restoring Worker Choice

THE NATIONAL LABOR RELATIONS ACT, rightfully called the Magna Carta of workers' rights in the United States, was enacted in 1935 to support "the practice and procedure of collective bargaining" for workers in the United States. Known as the Wagner Act, this landmark legislation protects "the exercise of workers of full freedom of association, self-organization and designation of representatives of their own choosing" in order to negotiate "the terms and conditions of their employment or other mutual aid or protection."

On this Labor Day, union membership continues to decline. There are many reasons for this shrinkage: the restructuring of the economy away from manufacturing toward services, the advance of workers in past generations into the middle class and union-busting tactics by corporations and institutions. But as workers' share of national income has declined over the last two decades, as the middle class has shrunk and inequality has grown, why have unions not rebounded? One reason is the impediments put in the way of union organizing by the regulations and judgments of the National Labor Relations Board. Chief among these is the requirement of secret ballot elections, now so encumbered with legal obstacles that union-busting businesses have the upper hand over workers seeking to organize.

To level the playing field, the House passed the Employee Free Choice Act last March, which would permit unions to organize if the majority of workers gave their authorization by what is usually called a check-card method, the procedure followed in most of the industrialized world. But in June a motion to close debate and move to a vote in the Senate, where 60 votes are needed to end a filibuster, failed 51 to 48.

The E.F.C.A. would restore the organizing procedure that was established in the Wagner Act. The bill would also provide workers with some countervailing power in the form of mandatory injunctions against unfair labor practices committed during organizing campaigns. Opponents maintain that restoring the older procedures would eliminate government supervision, violate worker privacy and expose workers to union coercion.

The N.L.R.B., an independent federal agency established in 1935, was created to "enforce" the N.L.R.A. primarily through recognizing a union as legitimate if it had been selected by workers who signed authorization cards and by ruling on grievances that workers brought against employers. The mission of the N.L.R.B. was altered significantly, however, with the passage of the anti-union Taft-Hartley or Labor-Management Relations Act of 1947. Taft-Hartley permits employers to recognize a union voluntarily after the presentation of signed cards, but it also allows employers to demand a secret ballot election that forces workers to vote for or against their earlier choice. Accordingly, today the vast majority of employers refuse to recognize the authorization cards in favor of a much more time-consuming election that is supervised by the N.L.R.B.

The trial-like N.L.R.B. hearings that precede a secret ballot election afford the employer numerous opportunities to discredit the workers' choice as expressed through their signed cards. Employers hire sophisticated and expensive "union avoidance" firms that essentially put the workers on trial by challenging the size and composition of the bargaining unit, an individual's status as an "employee" under the N.L.R.A. and by engaging in other legal maneuvers designed to discredit the union. It can take years before an election is ordered and even longer before bargaining begins, since some employers reject the election and must be compelled to bargain by federal courts.

**THE EMPLOYEE FREE CHOICE ACT** would restore rights that workers have lost through the years. The Act would require the N.L.R.B. to certify a union as the exclusive representative of the employees when "a majority of the employees in a unit appropriate for bargaining has signed valid authorizations." Since E.F.C.A. essentially recognizes the signing of authorization cards as an election, there is no need for yet another election that is demanded by employers. The act would also streamline contract negotiations by requiring that parties who cannot agree to a first bargaining agreement within 120 days must submit the disputed issues to arbitration.

The Employee Free Choice Act is the most important piece of labor legislation in the past 72 years. Both the spirit and the letter of this act strongly resonate with Catholic social teaching, from *Rerum Novarum* to *Laborem Exercens*. It deserves to be made the law of the land.

## Baltimore Basilica Marks 100,000 Visitors

**Rosalie Dohm (left) of Woodbridge, Va., was the symbolic 100,000th visitor to the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Baltimore. She and Tom Vrtis (right), organizer of a tour from St. Elizabeth Ann Seton parish in Lake Ridge, Va., were greeted by Cardinal William H. Keeler (center) of Baltimore.**

As Rosalie Dohm of Woodbridge, Va., climbed the stairs to the nation's first Catholic cathedral Aug. 2, she thought it was unusual that Cardinal William H. Keeler was personally greeting each of the visitors from her parish tour group. The 66-year-old parishioner of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Lake Ridge, Va., then found herself in the spotlight when Cardinal Keeler handed her a package and balloons and congratulated her for being the 100,000th visitor to the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary since it reopened last November. "I'm dumbfounded," said Dohm, who came on the tour with her parish's Silver Foxes senior citizen group. "I was excited about seeing this place, but wow. What a shock to be told you are the 100,000th visitor since it opened back up to the public."

Cardinal Keeler said he was overwhelmed by the number of people who have flocked to the cathedral since it was restored to the vision of its architect, Benjamin Henry Latrobe, the father of American architecture, who also designed the U.S. Capitol.

## Kenyan Court Decides Missionary's Death Was Murder

A Kenyan bishop applauded an inquest court ruling that a U.S. priest who died in Kenya in 2000 did not commit suicide, as the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation had claimed, but was murdered. Bishop Peter Kairo of Nakuru, head of the Kenyan bishops' conference's justice and peace commission, described the ruling as superb. "The fact that the inquest court has managed to rule out the F.B.I. suicide theory on the murder of the late Catholic priest is good enough." After a nearly four-year-long inquest into the death of John Kaiser, who belonged to the Mill Hill Missionaries, the presiding magistrate, Maureen Odero, said in the ruling that "there exists sufficient evidence to show third-party involvement in the death of the deceased" and recommended that the Kenyan police immediately start fresh investigations to determine who killed Father Kaiser.

## Lithuanian Bishops Object to Some Medical Training

Lithuania's bishops said they are "gravely concerned" over a Ministry of Health draft document that would oblige would-be obstetricians and gynecologists to learn how to carry out sterilization and in vitro fertilization procedures and how to perform abortions during the first 22 weeks of pregnancy. Noting that these doctors are to welcome a "new life into the world," the Lithuanian bishops said they fear that making such practices obligatory "will make the practice of an obstetrician-gynecologist inaccessible to many young [people] who would otherwise choose to serve the human life in its most sensitive prenatal period. Such a compulsion debases the practice of an obstetrician-gynecologist on the whole," said the bishops in an Aug. 1 letter to the Ministry of Health. The bishops expressed concern that such a medical norm would contradict the principle of a doctor's freedom of conscience, which currently is protected by law.

## Pope to Visit Marian Site in Austria

During his visit to Austria, Pope Benedict XVI plans to stop at a Holocaust memorial in Vienna and to celebrate the 850th anniversary of Austria's most important Marian shrine, at Mariazell, according to the official schedule of the pope's Sept. 7-9 visit. It will be the seventh foreign trip of his pontificate.

After his arrival in Vienna, the pope will pray at a 17th-century monument marking a victory of the Catholic Habsburgs during the Thirty Years' War and stop at a Holocaust memorial at Judenplatz. He will meet the country's president and diplomats in the Hofburg Palace. On Sept. 8, Pope Benedict will celebrate Mass outside the basilica of the Shrine of Our Lady of Mariazell, 80 miles southwest of Vienna, and lunch with Austria's bishops. He will also hold an evening prayer service with priests, deacons and members of religious orders.

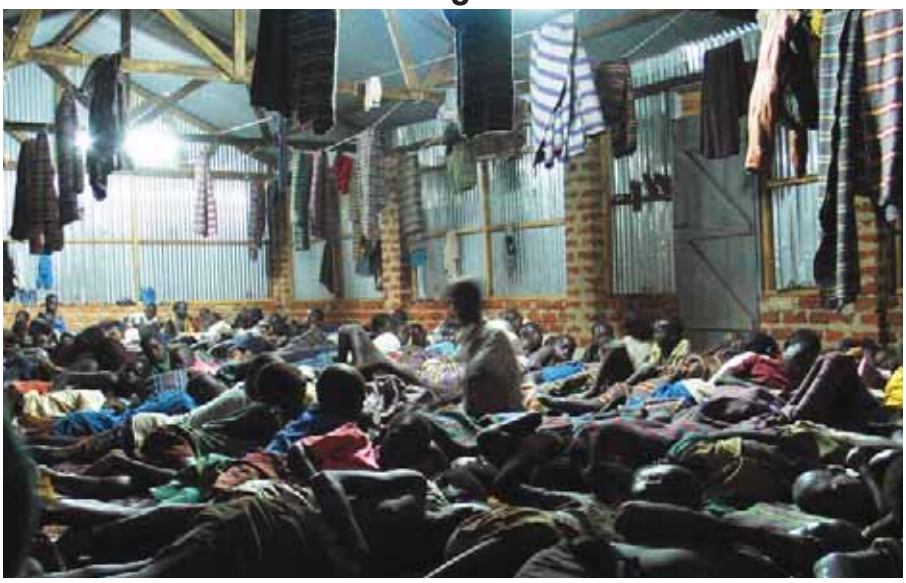
The pope will lead a procession in Vienna Sept. 9 and celebrate Mass in the city's St. Stephen's Cathedral, after which

he will recite the Angelus prayer in the square outside the cathedral. He will then visit the 12th-century Cistercian Abbey of the Holy Cross outside Vienna and meet with volunteers before returning to Rome.

## New Translation of Letter to Chinese Catholics

The Diocese of Hong Kong has revised the Vatican's Chinese translation of Pope Benedict XVI's letter to Catholics in China. Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kiun of Hong Kong told the Asian church news agency UCA News that the original Chinese text contains many mistakes and that the revision was to "help those [Chinese] who do not know foreign languages understand the letter's original intentions." The cardinal, who presided over sessions at three parishes in mid-July to explain the papal letter's content and context, spent a week revising the Chinese translation with experts. The revised text, which contains 20,086 characters including footnotes, was published in the July 15 issue of Kung Kao Po, the diocesan Chinese-language weekly. In addition, 30,000 booklets of the revised text in traditional Chinese characters and another 30,000 in simplified characters were printed for free distribution. The Vatican issued the papal letter June 30 in the original Italian and in English, French and traditional and simplified Chinese translations.

## Martino Laments Forgotten Wars of Africa



**Children crowd a shelter in Gulu, Uganda, in December 2003. They leave their rural homes every night and stay in the shelter to escape abduction by rebel military troops.**

Warring thugs must stop forcing children to fight for them, and the international community must make more serious efforts to fund programs to help former child soldiers rejoin civil society, said the president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace.

The blood shed in the so-called forgotten wars of Africa "is just as sacred in the eyes of God as that which flows between the Tigris and the Euphrates" rivers in Iraq, said Cardinal Renato Martino of Italy during an Aug. 6 visit to Gulu in northern Uganda, the scene of more than 20 years of clashes between government troops and rebels of the Lord's Resistance Army.

Cardinal Martino also condemned the rebels' practice of kidnapping children and forcing them to join the rebels in battle. He said an estimated 30,000 children had been kidnapped. The cardinal called on the international community to make a greater commitment to supporting negotiated settlements of all ongoing wars and to work to prevent other outbreaks of violence by controlling the sales of weapons, promoting social justice and ensuring that foreign investments do not exacerbate economic inequalities.

## French Cardinal Lustiger Dies in Paris at 80

**Jean-Marie Lustiger**

Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger, the Jewish-born former archbishop of Paris who defended the right of believers to have a say in public debates, died on Aug. 5 in Paris at the age of 80 after a long illness. He had been the voice of French Catholics for nearly a quarter-century. He spoke out against anti-Semitism and promoted Catholic dialogue with Jews and with the nation's growing Muslim community. The funeral was held Aug. 10 at Notre Dame Cathedral in the French capital.

Pope Benedict XVI called the cardinal a "perceptive intellectual" and "passionate pastor" who "put his gifts at the service of the faith" in order to bring the Gospel to all aspects of life and society. In a telegram sent to Archbishop André Vingt-Trois of Paris, the pope said Cardinal Lustiger was a "great figure of the church in France." The late cardinal was "a man of faith and dialogue," the pope said, praising his generous commitment to "fostering ever more fraternal relations between Christians and Jews."

## Bertone to Work on Cause for McGivney Sainthood

Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, the second-highest ranking official at the Vatican, told members of the Knights of Columbus that he is taking a personal interest in the beatification process for the order's founder, the Rev. Michael McGivney. "I hope this recognition [of sanctity] will arrive soon, and I will personally work on this, so that this day will come soon," Cardinal Bertone said during his homily, delivered in Italian, at the Aug. 7 opening Mass of the Knights of Columbus's 125th annual national convention at the Gaylord Opryland Hotel in Nashville, Tenn. Cardinal Bertone's comments on the sainthood cause of

Father McGivney were met with applause from the knights attending the Mass.

"I was thrilled," Bishop William E. Lori of Bridgeport, Conn., the supreme chaplain of the Knights of Columbus, said of Cardinal Bertone's comments. "I think he appreciates what it would mean for parish priests in the United States and around the world to have one of their own canonized a saint," Bishop Lori said in an interview on the Eternal Word Television Network. Father McGivney founded the Knights of Columbus at St. Mary's Church in New Haven, Conn., in 1882.

## Religious Retirement Needs Still Great

Despite steady support by American Catholics for the national Retirement Fund for Religious over the past 20 years, the unfunded liability for the care of elderly U.S. men and women religious continues to grow, according to a new report. Annual national collections since 1988 have raised more than $529 million for the needs of retired religious, and more than $507 million have been distributed to more than 500 religious congregations, the June statistical report of the National Religious Retirement Office showed.

But a December 2006 survey of 527 women's institutes and 154 men's institutes showed that only 11 percent of women's congregations and 12 percent of men's congregations reported being "adequately funded" for the retirement needs of their members, based on designated assets and the reported cost of care. By contrast, 26 percent of the women's institutes and 19 percent of the men's said their funding for retirement needs came to between 0 percent and 20 percent of the amount needed. At their June 2006 meeting in Los Angeles, the U.S. bishops approved extending the yearly collection until 2017. It had been due to expire in 2007.

## Cardinal: Iraqi Christians Were Safer Under Saddam

Although Iraq has a democratic government, Iraqi Christians were safer and had more protection under former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, said the future head of the Vatican's interreligious dialogue council. During the buildup to the U.S.-led invasion in 2003, French Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, who will become head of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue Sept. 1, had criticized the U.S. government's plan of preventative war and said a unilateral war against Iraq would be a "crime against peace." In a recent interview with the Italian magazine 30 Giorni, the cardinal said his early criticisms had been prophetic. "The facts speak for themselves. Alienating the international community [with the U.S. push for war] was a mistake," he said in the magazine's Aug. 10 issue.

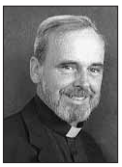
A copy of the interview was released in advance to journalists. He said an "unjust approach" was used to unseat Saddam from power, resulting in the mounting chaos in Iraq today. "Power is in the hands of the strongest—the Shiites—and the country is sinking into a sectarian civil war [between Sunni and Shiite Muslims] in which not even Christians are spared," he said.

**Russian Orthodox Patriarch Alexy II of Moscow, right, greets Cardinal Roger Etchegaray of France at the patriarch's residence in Moscow on Aug. 7. During the visit, the cardinal presented the Russian Orthodox leader with a letter and gift from Pope Benedict XVI.**

## Vatican Says No Change in Relations With Jews

Pope Benedict XVI's brief encounter with a Polish priest accused of anti-Semitism does not indicate any change in the Vatican's position concerning Catholic-Jewish relations, the Vatican said in a written statement. Tadeusz Rydzyk, the Redemptorist priest who heads Poland's largest Catholic broadcast agency and has been accused of making anti-Semitic remarks, met with the pope Aug. 5 at the papal summer residence at at Castel Gandolfo, after the pope's noontime Sunday Angelus prayer, a Vatican source told Catholic News Service Aug. 8. The Vatican statement, released Aug. 9, said the fact that the pope met briefly with Father Rydzyk "does not indicate any change in the Holy See's well-known position regarding relations between Catholics and Jews." The statement was issued after Jewish groups expressed concern over the meeting after photographs of the pope with Father Rydzyk and two other priests appeared in the Polish media Aug. 7. The Vatican statement, written in Italian, described the Aug. 5 encounter as a *baciamano*, or brief handshake, not a private audience.

From CNS and other sources. CNS photos.



# Capitobesity

## 'A few million doesn't go as far as it used to'

OBESITY SEEMS the newest thing to worry about. The real problem, however, is not our bodies. It's our brains. Why is it that children find any kind of food wrapped in McDonald's packaging "six-times tastier" than when it is plain-wrapped? A Stanford research study found that children between three and five judged even milk and carrots tasted better when they were posing as McDonald products.

It's all in the mind. And increasingly, the minds of men and women, not only in the United States but throughout the world, are being colonized by the capitalist imperatives to produce more, package more, sell more, consume more and own more.

We can now buy embryos, sperm, ova, breasts and chemically enhanced biceps. Wombs are rented. Internationally, human organs are bought and sold. And for those readers who might not know what the word "trafficking" refers to: it means the selling of persons, usually young ones. It is not traffic; it's business.

Buying and selling has not only colonized our bodies. It infects our imaginations. We seem to have a fixation on how can we find bigger things to buy and fatter bank accounts to buy them. The duPont Registry for "the ultra affluent" has offerings like a platinum cell phone for $30,000, a $1.2 million Patek Phillippe watch, a luxury sports car for $2 million, a private golf resort for $62 million and $300-million yachts.

The bigness syndrome, driven by nothing other than money, is found in everything from Whoppers and Big Macs to a Super Bowl Sunday that runs a week and a multibillion dollar campaign for the presidency mindlessly bloated to two years. One cable channel now has a political "super" Tuesday every Tuesday.

No matter how big one is or how much one has, one always feels small. Consider the comments from some Silicon Valley millionaires quoted in the the New York Times: "A few million doesn't go as far as it used to.... You're nobody here at $10 million.... I'd be rich in Kansas City…but here I'm a dime a dozen." (He has $5 million to $10 million in assets.) As Robert Frank reveals in *Richistan: A Journey Through the American Wealth Boom and the Lives of the New Rich*, whether people are worth one cool million or 10, they usually estimate that to feel secure and rich they need "twice their net worth."

Our quest for bigness and profit internationally endangers the nation's health as well as the health of the rest of the world. Aside from the question whether we would even be at war in Iraq if there were no oil there (a fact not unrelated to our glut of consuming and spending), the cost of the war in money terms alone has ballooned into projections near a trillion dollars. At the Treasury Department on Aug. 8, the president told his economic advisors that he would veto any tax hike, complaining that an increase of $205 billion in discretionary spending over the next five years would cost "about $112 million per day; $4.7 million per hour; $78,000 per minute." There was a tone of alarm in his voice. I wonder if he realized that those scary figures are only one-half of the daily costs to us for his war.

Alarming as well is the fact that China has become such a powerful capitalist force that it now has a dangerous money leverage over the United States. We are increasingly dependent upon the Chinese, not only for our clothes, electronics and food, but for our economy itself. So unrestrained and unregulated in its newfound capitalism, China is marketing low-cost, inferior goods from toothpaste and toys to automobile tires. It is threatening its own cultural heritage, waterways and skies. (The smog is so dangerous that athletes may not be able to compete in some outdoor events at the Olympics next year.) Most ominously, China is developing an appetite for oil that is as enormous as ours.

If you consider the depletion of labor retirement funds, the crisis in health care, the strains on the family, the teeter-totter of the stock market or the foreclosures on homes, you will find capitalism gobbling up the resources of the poor and middle class. Among the super-rich, at least those who have no moral or legal constraints on their desire for more, you will find hedge fund operators paying 15 percent tax rates on their hundred millions while doctors, teachers and other professionals pay twice that rate. No wonder they love the president who decries taxes.

I know some readers will hate this column. I know the arguments about envying the rich. I know the great benefits that capitalism and creative entrepreneurship make possible. I also know that the greatest victories for justice in this country have been won through restraints on capitalism and the supremacy of profit: overcoming child labor, enfranchising manual workers, insuring product quality and job safety.

If you think that only a person steeped in the workings of our economy and investment is worth listening to, perhaps Warren Buffett might move you. At a fundraiser ($4,600 a seat) for Senator Hillary Clinton, he noted that the tax rate on his $46 million income was almost half the rate on his secretary's income, who made $60,000.

"The 400 of us," he pointed out to his audience, "pay a lower part of our income in taxes than our receptionists do, or our cleaning ladies, for that matter. If you're in the luckiest 1 percent of humanity, you owe it to the rest of humanity to think about the other 99 percent."

That calls for a diet.

***John F. Kavanaugh***

**JOHN F. KAVANAUGH, S.J.,** is a professor of philosophy at St. Louis University in St. Louis, Mo.

CNS PHOTO BY GREGORY A. SHEMITZ/THE LONG ISLAND CATHOLIC

Jessica Lacrete, 8, sings with the English youth choir of St. Jerome Parish in Brooklyn, N.Y.

## High point or regression?

# Liturgy 40 Years After the Council

– BY GODFRIED DANNEELS –

FOR THOSE WHO HAVE NOT EXPERIENCED IT for themselves, it must be difficult to imagine just how much liturgical praxis has changed in less than half a century. The evolution that has taken place in the last 30 years is barely perceptible nowadays, since the new liturgical model is considered evident practically everywhere. Such a situation is certainly gratifying, but does it mean that the profound intentions of the "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy" have thereby been realized? Perhaps now is the appropriate moment for an evaluation.

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### Active Participation

From its very beginnings, the aim of the liturgical movement, which originated in Belgium in 1909, was to close the gap between the official liturgy of the priest and that of the people. "Active participation" was first promoted through the circulation of what were called people's missals, which contained the Sunday liturgy. Before long, however, a desire emerged for more than just following along in the book. The Second Vatican Council satisfied this desire by introducing the use of the vernacular, by simplifying liturgical symbolism to make it more transparent, by returning to the praxis of the early church and dropping elements that had later come to overshadow the essentials and by a correct distribution of roles in the service of the liturgy. The result was a far greater involvement of the people, even to the very heart of the liturgy.

The active involvement of the people in the liturgy is, of course, an unparalleled gift from the council to the people of God. As with every worthy reform, however, there is a shadow side. Active participation in the liturgy can lead imperceptibly to a sort of taking possession of the liturgy. The liturgy is not only set free of its untouchable quality—in itself not a bad thing; it also becomes in a sense the property of those who celebrate, a terrain given over to their "creativity." Those who serve the liturgy—both priests and laity—become its "owners." In some cases this can even lead to a sort of liturgical "coup," by which the sacred is eliminated, the language trivialized and the cult turned into a social event. The real subject of the liturgy is no longer the Christ, who through the Spirit worships the Father and sanctifies the people in a symbolic act, but the human person or the celebrating community.

The liturgy is God's work on us before it is our work on God. The celebrating community enters into it as into a pre-established, divine and spiritual architecture. To a certain degree this is determined by the historical location of Christ and his sacred mysteries: the Eucharist involves the making present of a particular meal, that of Christ with his disciples on the night before he suffered. This does not mean that we must exclude any kind of flexibility in our liturgical style; far from being ruled out, creativity is actually called for. But one cannot simply transform and rearrange the whole thing. We are not creators of the liturgy; we are servants and guardians of its mysteries. We do not own them, nor did we author them. Both individually and collectively our fundamental orientation should be toward God, an attitude of grateful reception, wonder, adoration and praise—in short, an attitude of prayer, of handing ourselves over to God and letting his will be done in us.

### 'Understanding' the Liturgy

One of the primary concerns of Vatican II and of the church has been and remains that the liturgy be understood by the celebrating community. "Understand what you do" is a basic demand of everything that we do.

Certain realities pose obstacles to understanding. The liturgy is almost entirely structured on the Bible, and the Bible uses language and images from a bygone era. The nonbiblical texts in the liturgy are also strange: the Latin collects with their succinct and metrical structure are untranslatable, not so much because the words cannot be transposed into a modern language but because the mentality and culture from which they stem have disappeared. A great many other texts, when detached from their musical setting, end up seeming extremely archaic; imagine, for example, the Salve Regina, the Dies Irae or even the ordinary sung Gregorian introits and Communion antiphons, leaving aside the images of God that such texts maintain (e.g., the God who sleeps, the God of wrath). Certain secondary symbols also no longer seem to function: the drop of water in the chalice, the lavabo, mixing a particle of the host with the wine, the washing of the feet. One frequently hears reproaches such as "old-fashioned," "passé," "medieval" and "monastic."

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The remedy employed in most cases is limited to: What can we drop? How can we abbreviate? What would function better to express what is going on in our lives as individuals and as a community? Certain terms are replaced with other, more understandable terms. What do we do, however, with words like "resurrection," "Easter," "Eucharist," "metanoia" and "sin"? They are part of a biblical and liturgical mother tongue that simply cannot be replaced. It has to be learned.

Likewise, does the fact that we no longer see shepherds and flocks every day mean that such images are no longer comprehensible? Is it because no one has ever met a seraph that the metaphorical power of this angelic messenger no longer speaks to us? Half of the poetry ever written makes use of images and terms that are not part of the daily life and environment of the reader.

If the liturgy is not simply a structuring of common human religiosity, but rather the epiphany of God in human history (from Abraham to Christ), then we cannot avoid the need for catechesis and initiation. Because it is both proclamation and the celebration of mysteries that have occurred in the history of Judaism and Christianity, liturgy demands schooling.

### Understanding 'Understanding'

Modern definitions also challenge us. Our contemporaries often conceive of "understanding" as the ability to grasp at first hearing. Something is understandable if we can grasp it immediately. Such an approach is valid for the ordinary objects of our knowledge, which can only be grasped at a purely cognitive level. But where the depths of human and divine reality are concerned, this approach does not work. Love, death, joy, solidarity, knowledge of God can never be grasped at once or on first inspection. Profound realities only gradually yield their full significance. In these cases, understanding is a lengthy and progressive process of becoming familiar with a particular reality.

Analysis, then, is out of place in liturgy; only a prolonged listening and familiarization is appropriate. Our approach must be dialogical: allowing the liturgy time to say what it has to say; listening attentively to its overtones and allowing its deeper meaning to unfold; not looking for an alternative but letting the liturgy speak for itself and expose its own virtualities.

Though this might sound strange to many, our liturgical celebrations are for the most part too short. They do not provide enough time or space to enter into the event. It is not enough that people have heard the liturgy or that it has been spoken. Has it been proclaimed to them? Have they been given the opportunity to integrate it? The liturgy needs time to deliver its riches.

### A Tyranny of Words

A major factor in all of this is silence. The liturgy of Vatican II provides for periods of silence, but in practice silence is not given much of a chance. The liturgy is turned into an unstoppable succession of words that leave no time for interiorization.

Without introducing rhetorical gesticulations and building in theatricality, one can still argue that the tongue and the ear are frequently the only human organs in use during the liturgy. How many celebrants consider the homily to be the climax of the liturgy and the barometer of the celebration? How many have the feeling that the celebration is more or less over after the Liturgy of the Word?

Too much attention is also given to the intellectual approach to the liturgy. Imagination, affect, emotion and, properly understood, aesthetics are not given enough room, and the liturgy thereby fails to reach many of those who participate in it because they are either non-intellectual types or because they do not consider such things to be nourishing for their lives.

Liturgy is neither the time nor the place for catechesis. Of course, it has excellent catechetical value, but it is not there to replace the various catechetical moments in the life of the Christian. Such moments require their own time. Liturgy belongs to the order of the "playful." The uniqueness of "play" is that one plays for the sake of playing. Liturgy's end is in itself.

Nor should liturgy be used as a means for disseminating information, no matter how essential that information might be. It should not be forced to serve as an easy way to notify the participants about this, that and the other thing. One does not attend the liturgy on Mission Sunday in order to learn something about this or that mission territory. One comes to the liturgy to reflect on and integrate one's mission from Christ to "go out to all nations." Liturgy ought not to serve as a warm-up for another activity, even a church activity. While it can indeed happen that one departs from the liturgy with a greater sense of engagement, with faith and love that inform and inspire one's actions, liturgy is not a meeting but a celebration.

The church fathers, too, adhered to the principle that mystagogical catechesis (in which the deepest core of the sacred mysteries was laid bare) should come only after the sacraments of initiation. Their pedagogical approach was "sensorial": participate first and experience things at an existential level in the heart of the community, and only then explain. Prior to baptism they limited themselves to moral instruction and teaching on the Christian "way of life." Immediately after baptism—during Easter week—they spoke about the deep meaning of baptism, chrism and Eucharist. Their entire method of instruction was structured around a framework of questions and answers such as: "Did you notice that...?" "Well, what this means is.…" Celebrate first, then understand.

Perhaps we do not have to adhere to the letter of such a pedagogical approach, but it certainly provides a hint in the right direction. No catechetical method will succeed if it is unable to depend on good, community celebrations of the liturgy. And those who desire to work with the liturgy and vary its themes will first have to listen attentively to those themes and participate in the celebration of the liturgy as it is. If they do not, then their entire liturgical endeavor will turn out to be nothing more than self-expression. What would we think of a composer who refused to listen to his predecessors or a painter who refused to visit a museum? The worthy liturgist listens first, meditates, prays and interiorizes. Only then can he or she "modulate."

### Engaging the Other Senses

The eye is the most active of the senses. In the liturgy nowadays, however, it tends to be somewhat undervalued. There is a lot to hear but little to see. At one time the situation was reversed; the verbal dimension was not understood, the visual dimension was pushed to the fore. Certain secondary liturgical gestures, such as the elevation of the bread and wine at the consecration, are a consequence of this fact. Even eucharistic worship outside of Mass has its roots here.

It is always best to let the great symbols function. How can baptism be understood as a water bath, if it turns out to be little more than a sprinkling with water? How can we speak of "hearing the message," if everyone is sitting with their heads bent reading the texts in their missalettes at the moment when they should be listening? Even the place from which the Scriptures are read has some significance. It is better not to read from the middle of the community because the word comes to us from elsewhere. It is proclaimed; it does not simply arise out of the community. It is also best to read from a Book of the Gospels and from an ambo surrounded by symbols suggestive of respect (light, incense, altar servers).

It is of great importance that different text genres should be respected: a reading is not a prayer, a hymn is not a psalm, a song is not an admonition, nor is a homily a set of announcements. Each of these genres requires its own oral treatment. Furthermore, it is clear that neither rhetoric nor theatricality nor pathos has a part in the liturgy. Reading is not acting; it is allowing oneself to be the humble instrument of a word that comes from beyond. The exaggerated impact of the personal individuality of the man or woman who reads can kill the liturgy and eliminate its harmonics.

The sense of touch finds its most profound expression in the laying on of hands and in anointing. These are among the most physical gestures of the liturgy, and they can have an enormous impact on the human person. The significance of praying in the presence of a sick person takes on quite a different character if one places one's hands on or anoints the person.

Last, the sense of smell is almost completely unused in the liturgy. It is not to our advantage that the use of incense has been pushed aside into the domain of superfluity and hindrance.

### Liturgy and Life

If, as Pope St. Leo the Great said, the Christian mysteries have crossed over into the liturgy, then it is equally true that liturgy must cross over into the moral and spiritual life of Christians. "Do in practice what you do in the liturgy" ("Imitamini quod tractatis..." ) admonishes the ancient text from the liturgy of ordination.

Some have endeavored to draw the conclusion from this axiom that the liturgy is not important when compared with our day-to-day lives or that it is a sort of preparation or warm-up for life itself, an option for those who need it but redundant for those who do not. Others have suggested that liturgy and life coincide and that true service to God takes place outside the church in one's daily life.

The life of the Christian is built on *cultus* and *caritas*. Liturgy does not coincide with life; rather, it has a dialectical relationship with life. Sunday is not Monday, nor vice versa. What we do throughout the week in a varied and diluted way we also do in the liturgy but in a more concentrated and purified fashion: we live for God and for others.

Liturgy, however, is not only a representation of human life. Liturgy symbolizes and makes present, first, the mysteries of salvation, the words and deeds of Christ, and also our deeds insofar as they are reflected, purified and redeemed in Christ. His mysteries—made present to us in the liturgy—are our archetypes. This Christological determination of our lives in the liturgy is of the essence.

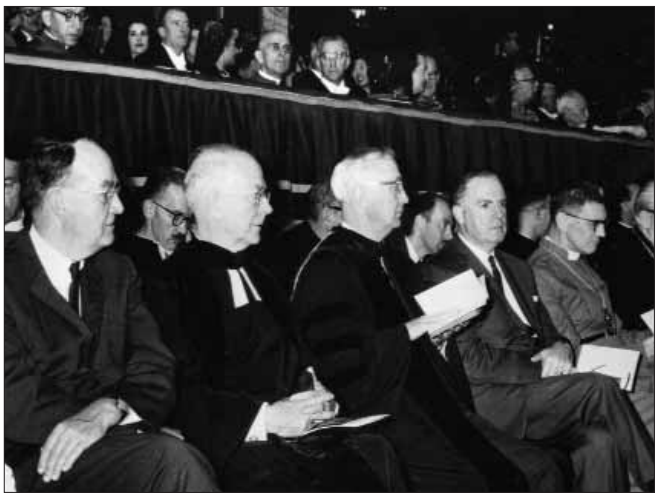
The liturgy is not a feast we have laid out for ourselves, according to our own personal preferences. It is God's feast. We attend at God's invitation. A

# The Church of Christ and the Churches

## *Is the Vatican retreating from ecumenism?*

BY RICHARD R. GAILLARDETZ

VIRTUALLY ANY ACCOUNT of the Second Vatican Council's most important teachings will include the council's positive attitude toward Christian ecumenism. Most of them see the ecumenical movement begun at Vatican II as a tremendous advance in the Catholic Church's relationship with other Christian traditions. Yet the teaching of the council was not without controversy, and over the last four decades a lively academic debate has ensued over exactly what the council intended to say. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has recently published a statement that would appear to call into question much of the contemporary consensus regarding what the council taught. The statement, *Responses to Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine on the Church*, considers the extent to which other Christian traditions participate in the church of Christ and whether and to what extent they can properly be called churches. The statement has stirred concern among Protestant and Catholic ecumenists alike, who wonder whether the Vatican is turning its back on ecumenism. To understand why the recent C.D.F. statement has caused such distress, we need to consider the genesis of the principal Vatican II text under dispute, the council's "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church," also known by its Latin opening words, *Lumen Gentium*.



**Observers from other religious denominations at the Second Vatican Council in 1963. Around 60 representatives from most of the major Christian denominations attended the council sessions.**

### The Development of a Doctrine

In the four centuries following the Reformation, Catholic theology tended to identify the church of Christ completely with the Catholic Church. This helps explain initial Catholic suspicion of the ecumenical movement as it emerged in the early 20th century. In 1928 Pope Pius XI, in his encyclical *Mortalium Animos* (No. 10), wrote:

> The union of Christians cannot be fostered otherwise than by promoting the return of the dissidents to the one true Church of Christ, which in the past they so unfortunately abandoned; return, we say, to the one true Church of Christ which is plainly visible to all and which by the will of her Founder forever remains what he himself destined her to be for the common salvation of human beings.

Fifteen years later, Pius XII issued an encyclical on the church, *Mystici Corporis*, in which he identified the mystical body of Christ with the Catholic Church. Since a number of Catholic theologians questioned this statement, he returned to it in his encyclical *Humani Generis*, where he insisted that the mystical body and the Catholic Church are "one and the same reality."

The preparatory draft document on the church that the bishops were given at the opening session of Vatican II followed Pius XII in identifying the mystical body of Christ

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with the Catholic Church. So many negative comments were expressed about this draft that it was withdrawn, and a new draft was presented to the council in 1963. The new draft still insisted that "the Church of Christ is the Roman Catholic Church," but a clause was added, noting that "many elements of sanctification can be found outside its total structure," elements that properly belong to the church of Christ.

A revised draft presented to the council in 1964 introduced the word *subsistit* into the Latin text. Instead of saying that the church of Christ *is* the Catholic Church, it now said that the church of Christ *subsists in* the Catholic Church. The reason given for this change was "so that the expression would better agree with the affirmation about the ecclesial elements found elsewhere." Unfortunately, the council bishops did not provide a precise definition of the term "subsists," leaving it to later interpreters to derive its meaning from the term's immediate context and from other conciliar texts. Not surprisingly, after the close of the council many commentators thought the change from "is" to "subsists in" signaled a shift in Catholic ecclesiology that recognized the presence of the body of Christ beyond the boundaries of the Catholic Church. Events would show, however, that not all agreed with this interpretation of *subsistit*.

Another significant change concerned the various spiritual gifts shared by Catholics and other Christians: *Lumen Gentium* acknowledged that non-Catholic Christians receive baptism and other sacraments "in their own churches and ecclesiastical communities." When critics objected to this change on the grounds that only "elements of church" could be found elsewhere, the official response of the theological commission was: "The elements which are mentioned concern not only individuals but their communities as well; in this fact precisely is located the foundation of the ecumenical movement."

## Debates Since the Council

The first significant debate on these questions was provoked by Leonardo Boff in his book *Church: Charism and Power*. The Brazilian theologian suggested that the church of Christ subsists not only in the Catholic Church but also in other churches. In 1985 the C.D.F. issued a notification that rejected Boff's interpretation, asserting that there could be but one subsistence of Christ's church, namely the Catholic Church, outside of which there are "only elements of the church." (Notice that the council never used the qualifier "only," but spoke instead of "many" elements of the church that are present outside the boundaries of Catholicism.)

The C.D.F.'s 1985 response effectively denied that the council had initiated a shift in church teaching. Many bishops and theologians closely involved in the formulation of the council's teaching, including Cardinal Johannes Willebrands of the Netherlands, who had served as the head of what was then the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, took issue with the C.D.F., insisting that its position ran counter to the intentions of the council.

In 1989 the American Jesuit Francis Sullivan argued that *subsistere* should be understood not in some metaphysical sense but in its more ordinary sense, meaning "to continue to exist." Sullivan concluded that in the mind of the council, it is in the Catholic Church *alone* that the church of Christ continues to exist with the unity and the fullness of the means of grace that Christ gave to his church. This did not preclude, however, the presence of the church of Christ in other Christian communities.

In its declaration *Dominus Iesus*, published in 2000, the C.D.F. seemed to have been persuaded by Sullivan's interpretation, for it explained: "With the expression *subsistit in*, the Second Vatican Council sought to harmonize two doctrinal statements: on the one hand, that the church of Christ, despite the divisions which exist among Christians, continues to exist fully only in the Catholic Church, and on the other hand, that 'outside her structure, many elements can be found of sanctification and truth, that is, in those churches and ecclesial communities which are not yet in full communion with the Catholic Church.'" This explanation of *subsistit in* would seem to support the interpretation of conciliar teaching that held that the church of Christ continues to exist, though less than fully, in other churches and ecclesial communities. Indeed, in the same document the C.D.F. described the separated Eastern churches as "true particular churches." At a minimum, this implied that the church of Christ continues to exist beyond the Catholic Church.

In December 2005, Karl Josef Becker, a Jesuit theologian teaching at the Gregorian University in Rome, published a major essay in L'Osservatore Romano, arguing that the council did *not* intend any modification in church teaching when it said that the church of Christ subsists in the Catholic Church. The essay was based on his research of council documentation, including the recently discovered papers of Sebastian Tromp, S. J., who served as secretary of the doctrinal commission at Vatican II, but who, as a contributor to Pius XII's *Mystici Corporis*, was invested in the identification of the Catholic Church with the church of Christ. Becker's careful argumentation received an equally nuanced rebuttal from Francis Sullivan in a 2006 essay published in Theological Studies. This brings us to the recent Vatican statement.

## The Recent C.D.F. Statement

The Vatican statement was published in order to correct an "erroneous interpretation" of the council's teaching. The C.D.F. insists, with Becker, that the council's employment

of the *subsistit* passage did not represent any change in church teaching; rather, the council only "developed, deepened and more fully explained it." Later it states that the council used the term *subsistit* to indicate "the full identity of the Church of Christ with the Catholic Church." These claims challenge a solid theological consensus to the contrary that has emerged over the last four decades, one variously affirmed by such distinguished theologians and ecumenists as the late Yves Congar, George Tavard, Guiseppe Alberigo, John Borelli, Joseph Komonchak and Francis Sullivan, among others.

The C.D.F.'s *Responses* must be taken seriously as an authoritative document issued by a Roman dicastery; its authority, however, does not place it beyond respectful yet critical analysis. The document and accompanying commentary contain inconsistencies. In response to Question Two, the C.D.F. appears to affirm a more historical meaning of the *subsistit* passage, one which expresses the idea that while the church of Christ has continued to exist fully in the Catholic Church, it has also been present in a "less full" manner in other Christian communities. Yet in the commentary it attributes a more metaphysical meaning to the *subsistit* passage, suggesting that there is only one subsistence of the church of Christ—the Catholic Church.

### What Has Been Left Unsaid

Many have reacted negatively to certain terms that have appeared throughout this debate, like "fullness" and "defect," which suggest an enduring form of Catholic triumphalism. However, these terms apply only to one legitimate, but limited, perspective on the church: when the council used terms like "fullness," the bishops had in mind certain *objective elements* present in the church. Thus the council wrote of the "means of sanctification and truth"—the sacraments, the Scriptures, the Petrine ministry, etc.—that are fully present only in the Catholic Church. The council admitted that many of these ecclesial elements (the Scriptures, baptism) are present in other Christian traditions, but that non-Catholic communities lack certain other elements (e.g., Petrine ministry). It is often overlooked that the council was content to confine its reflections to the objective "institutional integrity" of the church.

No conciliar document, nor any postconciliar document that I am aware of, has attended to a somewhat different perspective on ecclesial life, namely the more subjective "ecclesial vitality" of a particular Christian community. It is possible, for example, that a particular Catholic community might fail to appropriate or activate the objective "means of sanctification and truth" in its possession. In his book *The Church We Believe In* (pg. 26), Sullivan puts the matter well:

> Of course it must be kept in mind that this is a question of *institutional integrity*: of fullness of the *means* of salvation. There is no question of denying that a non-Catholic community, perhaps lacking much in the order of means, can achieve a higher degree of communion in the life of Christ in faith, hope and love than many a Catholic community.

Cardinal Walter Kasper, current president of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity, made a similar qualification in a report to the council in November 2001 regarding the claim that the fullness of the church of Christ resides in the Catholic Church. He contended that the use of the term "fullness" in this context:

> does not refer to subjective holiness but to the sacramental and institutional means of salvation, the sacraments and the ministries. Only in this sacramental and institutional respect can the Council find a lack (*defectus*) in the churches and ecclesial communities of the Reformation. Both Catholic fullness and the *defectus* of the others are therefore sacramental and institutional, and not existential or even moral in nature; they are on the level of the signs and instruments of grace, not on the level of the *res*, the grace of salvation itself.

This insight has pastoral implications for the church today that have not been sufficiently considered. If we may claim that in some sense other Christian communities are institutionally "defective," can we also say that these communities may in some cases be more effective as vehicles of grace?

### A Thought Experiment

Consider the following thought experiment. Imagine a neighborhood with two churches: Grace Lutheran and St. Bernadette Catholic parish. According to the council's teaching, the Lutheran congregation would be lacking some specific "means of sanctification and truth" available, in principle, to St. Bernadette's. Presumably, they do not have access to a universal ministry of unity (the papacy), the sacrament of reconciliation or the full reality of the Eucharist. Yet Grace Lutheran Church might be fostering a community that emphasizes Christian fellowship, hospitality and the dignity of one's baptismal calling. Church leaders might stress the necessity of being biblically literate and living with fidelity and passion, a biblical vision of discipleship.

On the other hand, St. Bernadette's might be a community where Christian hospitality is almost completely absent and genuine fellowship minimal, a community in which baptism is simply a christening ritual performed on infants, where the Scriptures are poorly proclaimed and the homi-

lies are filled with arcane, pious references and silly jokes but say little about the concrete demands of discipleship in daily life. In this scenario we must grant the possibility that Grace Lutheran Church, although technically lacking ecclesial "fullness," might in fact be fostering a form of Christian communal life that more effectively brings them into communion with Christ than does St. Bernadette's.

### The Danger of Checklists

There are real dangers in reducing an analysis of Christian community to a kind of checklist. At certain points in the history of Christianity, communities flourished in spite of having little if any access to certain "means of sanctification and truth" that the Catholic Church now considers vital. Many churches of the first three centuries, for example, flourished with only minimal if any contact with the church of Rome. For almost 1,000 years there was no access to anything like the sacrament of reconciliation (penance) as we know it today. In Korea, Japan, the Hispanic American Southwest and among some North American native tribes, the faith was kept alive for decades and even centuries despite the absence of ordained clergy.

We must also question whether these "means of sanctification and truth" can be adequately grasped in the juridical language of validity/invalidity. For example, the most essential "elements" at stake in ecumenical debate include apostolic succession, the Petrine ministry, ordained ministry and the Eucharist. But is it not possible that some of these elements might be present in other Christian traditions, even though, from a Catholic perspective, they may lack certain dimensions? Must the Eucharist be seen as either present or absent, valid or invalid, without a more complex recognition that acknowledges disputed issues?

An adequate account of the true catholicity of the church must go beyond an objective list of the means of salvation that ought to be present in every church. We must also be willing to explore in more depth the lived experience of Christian discipleship encountered in concrete communities of believers. As many who have been involved in the ecumenical movement will testify, the experience of shared Christian discipleship often provides a fresh lens for considering the issues that divide us. To pray with other Christians, to celebrate a shared commitment to the Gospel and a common determination to give witness to Christ in our daily lives is to see Christian divisions in a new light. While there is much to overcome in the work of Christian ecumenism, it is hard to imagine making any progress without the conviction that we already, in some real sense, share ecclesial communion in Christ with all who go by the name Christian. A

Bishops from Latin America attend Mass with Pope Benedict XVI at the Shrine of Our Lady of Aparecida in Brazil on May 13.

CNS PHOTO BY ALESSIA GIULIANI, CATHOLIC PRESS PHOTO

# Good News From Brazil

## *A report on the Latin American bishops' meeting*

BY FRANCIS CHAMBERLAIN

*Author's note: The following reflections were written in June, a few weeks after the Fifth General Conference of the Episcopate of Latin America and the Caribbean was held (May 13-31) in Aparecida, Brazil. The conference focused on what it means to be disciples and missionaries of Christ today. I was in Aparecida, not as a delegate, but as an adviser on the outside to several Peruvian bishops. I wrote this article in the light of the fourth and last revision of the bishops' document, before the Vatican approved a final version in mid-July. In the light of that official text, known as the Aparecida document, I have had to make only one minor change in what I had written. The official text, with only very minor changes, has turned out to be what the bishops in Aparecida sent to Rome at the end of the conference.*

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WHAT DOES THE APARECIDA CONFERENCE mean for the Latin American church? The gathering is significant as an important reaffirmation of the Latin American church's identity after the Second Vatican Council, an identity first vigorously affirmed at the bishops' conference in Medellín in 1968. The meeting also marks a new beginning for a church conscious of important changes that have taken place with regional effects, such as the impact of globalization; the growing disparities between the wealthy who benefit from the new economic reality and millions of the poor who are excluded; the threat of ecological devastation; and the significant presence of Pentecostal churches in many countries. The Aparecida document tackles these and other challenges, and on the whole it deserves high marks.

The inaugural address of Benedict XVI served as a benchmark for the bishops' work. The pope touched on themes that for the last 40 years have been central to the Christian experience in Latin America. He made a slip when he said that the Gospel was not "an imposition" on the Indian populations of the continent during the conquest and colonization. Certainly that great Dominican Bartolomé de las Casas would have had a problem with such a statement. While the press and Hugo Chávez made hay with it, the slip certainly ought not overshadow the basic thrust of Benedict's remarks. Upon his return to Rome, Benedict quickly clarified what he had really wanted to say in that sentence.

The basic thrust of the address stems from the pope's affirmation that "the preferential option for the poor is implicit in the Christological faith in the God who became poor for us in order to enrich us with his poverty" (see 2 Cor 8:9). Benedict's affirmation explicitly confirms the thesis grounding both experience and theological reflection in Latin America: that God's love extends to all persons and is most especially directed to the poor. The preferential option for the poor excludes no one; it declares the universality of God's love. Benedict's words were also an implicit rejection of the idea that such an option, which is not "optional" for followers of Jesus, is based on sociological or ideological premises. Instead, its ground is faith in Jesus.

The words quoted above do not come at the beginning of Benedict's address, but throughout his talk, the pope discussed themes that can be understood in light of the preferential option for the poor [see sidebar]. He also raised concerns related to the internal life of the church—the need for more priestly vocations, religious life, the role of the laity, the urgent need for greater attention to adult formation in the faith—and devoted whole sections to family and youth. None of these topics is new. As a friend said, "All the stuff in the speech is 'old hat;' he is saying the same thing we have been saying for many years." That is precisely the point: Benedict put his seal of approval on a way of reflecting and living out the Gospel that has its roots in Medellín and in the succeeding episcopal conferences. The pope's address invited the bishops to be faithful to their inheritance when facing up to the challenges of today's world.

### The Work of the Conference

More than 160 bishops and 35 to 45 delegates worked overtime for nine days (the time dedicated to writing a final draft) to produce a text that may guide the Latin American church for the next decade. Their document went through four revisions, and the one sent to Rome filled 120 legal size pages of small print.

The bishops' first order of business was deciding how to structure the document. The Medellín and Puebla documents had been structured on the Christian social discernment process "see, judge, act." The 1992 Santo Domingo conference rearranged that method. It put judging (i.e., theological reflection) before seeing (i.e., the assessment of reality), reasoning at the time that Christian reflection and action cannot be grounded on mere sociological considerations. A fallacy lay in their thinking that for a Christian "seeing" reality is only a sociological task, when actually, from a Christian perspective, the effort to "see" is always made in the light of the Gospel. Before the gathering at Aparecida convened, a great majority of national episcopal conferences requested that the see-judge-act structure of the bishops' document be reinstated. Despite attempts by a small minority at the conference to stay with the Santo Domingo method, the assembly overwhelmingly chose to return to the structure initiated in Medellín. That decision may not appear to be significant, but it is. Since many bishops had voiced a hope that Aparecida would not be a rerun of Santo Domingo, which had been dominated by the Roman delegation, the decision on how to structure the document was crucial. The outcome was not in any way a declaration of independence from Rome, but rather an affirmation of Latin American Catholic identity. And Benedict's opening address played a role in the bishops' decision.

Several major themes laid out in the bishops' document will, one hopes, serve the church and Latin American society well in the coming years. Four of them merit discussion. A glaring omission in the preparatory document leading up to the gathering in Aparecida was a virtual lack of reference to the kingdom of God, a central focus of Jesus' preaching and practice and a dominant theme in Latin American theology. The kingdom reminds us that what Jesus proposed and initiated was a transformation of humanity individually and collectively, according to God's will. The church is the servant of the kingdom whose full realization extends to all. The kingdom cannot be reduced in the life of the church to preaching and catechetics, however important these activities obviously are. Accepting the invitation to become disciples of Jesus includes a commitment to take part in our small, often fumbling ways in this transformation of the whole of life, both personal and social, so desired by the Lord. The Aparecida document (No. 384) reaffirms the centrality of the kingdom for true Christian living:

> As disciples and missionaries of Jesus Christ so that our peoples attain life in him, we are called evangelically and in the perspective of the kingdom to assume the urgent tasks that contribute to the dignity of every human being. [We are called] to work with all citizens and institutions for the well-being of every human person.... Structures must be created that serve a social, economic and political order in

which inequalities are overcome and in which opportunities are open for every person.

The preferential option for the poor is placed within the perspective of the kingdom, God's will for a new humanity, especially for the poor. To emphasize this the document cites a decisive Gospel text: "Everything that has to do with Christ has to do with the poor, and everything related to the poor refers to Jesus Christ: 'Whatsoever you did to any of these my least sisters and brothers, you did it to me'" (Matt 25:40 at No. 393).

## Ecology

Ecology is a major concern of the Latin American bishops today. Not only is South America one of the richest areas of biodiversity in the world, but it contains the Amazon rain forest, which alone produces close to 30 percent of the planet's oxygen. The continent also has immense resources in water, minerals, timber, oil and gas—all of which are endangered by unfettered economic exploitation. The conference document forcefully expresses the bishops' concern over the growing devastation and contamination of the continent and, in particular, concern for the *campesinos* and native populations whose livelihood is curtailed by such damage. The struggle to defend the natural world is a new way of living out the preferential option for the poor. The document puts it this way (No. 473):

> The natural resources of Latin America suffer today an irrational exploitation, which leaves [in its path] a march of destruction and even death throughout our region. The present economic model must assume an enormous responsibility. It privileges the excessive search for wealth, over and above the lives of individuals and peoples and the care of the natural environment. The devastation of our forests and its biodiversity by selfish and depredatory practices implies a moral responsibility of those who so act. It puts in danger the lives of millions of persons and, especially, the habitat of *campesinos* and Indians.

The Aparecida document declares that the present style of globalization has produced "new faces of the poor"—migrants, for example, and vast numbers of people without access to the new technologies. Globalization benefits a select few, not a majority. The document proposes that the church join the struggle for a new form of globalization, which the bishops call the globalization of solidarity (No. 406), which would entail working for the common good:

> Work for the common global good must promote a just regulation of the world's economy, financial

### From Pope Benedict's Address to the Latin American Bishops in Aparecida, Brazil

*Human development:* "In the effort to know the message of Christ and to make it the guide for one's life, it must be remembered that evangelization has always been united to human development and authentic Christian liberation." Benedict then quotes his encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*: "Love of God and love of one's neighbor are joined together: in the most humble person we encounter Jesus and in Jesus we encounter God."

*Populorum Progressio:* Benedict quotes a decisive passage of this groundbreaking 1967 encyclical of Paul VI, which along with *Gaudium et Spes*, a document from the Second Vatican Council, served as an inspiration for the Medellín document. Benedict said: "This pontifical document makes clear that authentic development has to be integral, that is, oriented to the whole development of each and every person (see No. 14), and it invites everyone to overcome those grave social inequalities and enormous differences in the access to material goods."

*Globalization:* "In today's world the phenomenon of globalization is a complex set of relations on a planetary scale. Although certain aspects [of globalization] represent an achievement of the great human family...nevertheless it also carries the risk of vast monopolies and the conversion of economic gain as the supreme value.... As in all areas of human activity, globalization must be governed by ethics."

*Social structures:* "Just structures are, as I have said, an indispensable condition for a just society, but they do not arise or function without the moral consent of society regarding fundamental values and the necessity of living out of these values with their necessary renunciations, even of personal benefit."

*The Eucharist:* "The encounter with Christ in the Eucharist inspires a commitment to evangelization and the impulse to solidarity. It awakens in the Christian a strong desire to proclaim the Gospel and give witness in society so that it may become more just and human."

movements and commerce. It is urgent that external debt be cancelled to make investment in the social sector viable. Regulations must be put in place to prevent and control capital speculation. Justice in commerce must be promoted along with the progressive lowering of protectionist barriers by the powerful. Just prices for the raw materials produced by poor countries are urgently needed. There must be norms created for attracting and regulating foreign investment and other services.

The bishops also insist that the church in its work for the common good give special attention to the political leaders of our countries, a majority of whom call themselves Christian, but some of whom are frequently unfaithful to the demands of the Gospel in their public lives and actions.

One of the most significant pastoral experiences in Latin America over the last 40 years has been the growth of grassroots Christian communities, which go by different names in different countries. But whatever the name, these are small groups of men and women, especially among the poor, who gather together each week to reflect on the Gospel and its relevance for daily living. The base communities have been accused of "Protestantizing" the Catholic faith, because they invite a supposedly dangerous, free interpretation of Scripture. In fact, most of these communities are integrated into the pastoral plans of the local parish; they are not embryos of any parallel or competing church. The communities have served as a way for poor people to come to know and practice the Gospel.

The Aparecida document (No. 178) puts its stamp of approval on the base-community movement in Latin America:

> In the experience of some Churches in Latin America and the Caribbean the Ecclesial Base Communities have served as schools, which have helped form Christians committed to their faith, missionaries and disciples of the Lord, as witnessed by the unselfish giving of so many of their members even to the shedding of their blood. They recover the experience of the first communities as described in the Acts of the Apostles (2:42-47).

The document goes on to urge the bishops to be careful that the base communities do not identify the Gospel with any particular ideological or political movement. That may have been the case with a few communities, but it certainly does not reflect the experience of most base communities throughout Latin America. That the document approves the pastoral experience of the base communities is good news indeed.

### A Final Word

The Aparecida document is good news for Latin America and its church. It is not, however, a perfect document. It contains quasi-silences on topics that one would have hoped the bishops would address more forthrightly, such as the place of women in the church and in society and the critical shortage of priests. Both concerns are treated in the text, but what is said is simply not enough. On these points, the document does not get a passing grade. But in fairness to the bishops, it must be noted that these concerns touch on structures present throughout the church; they are not just Latin American problems.

I have not been able to keep up with all the press reactions to the conference and its document. A minority of those I have seen strike me as the type of nit-picking criticism that sees a tree, but not the forest. This is especially true in the attention some gave to the Roman delegation, suspecting that there had to be some kind of top-level conspiracy afoot. In fact, the Roman contingent was surprisingly subdued. Benedict's initial address had something to do with that. In no way was the Roman presence felt as it was in Santo Domingo.

At Aparecida, the bishops took the ball that Benedict threw them and played their own game. One of the priest delegates at the close of the conference put it this way, "The spirit of Medellín is alive!" It is a spirit alive and well and open to the new challenges of our day. A

# Taking the Long View

## The year that made my life

BY MARK NEILSEN

A NEWS ITEM CAUGHT my eye not long ago: the minor seminary in Chicago was closing after 102 years, and all the alumni had been invited to see the place one last time before it was to be renovated as a pastoral center. I had attended Quigley Preparatory Seminary for only one year, my freshman year in 1962, and was not invited to the reunion, but learning about it pulled me into a nostalgic undertow.

### 'Set Apart'

Back then, the rector gathered us in an assembly on our first day. "Take a look at the fellow sitting to your right and the one on your left," he told us. "Neither one of them will be here in four years." Freshmen did not live a life of privilege at Quigley, but it was drummed into you from the first that to survive the cut meant you were special, set apart and chosen by God to do great things for him and the church. If not, well, there might be other good things to do, but ours was clearly the best of all vocational worlds. Even the school schedule was special: Thursdays off and Saturday classes—perhaps to cut down on dating.

The message was clear: with swollen pre-Vatican II admissions, they could be selective, and only the few would be chosen. In those heady days, standards could be rigorous and still lead to abundant ordinations. In the past 16 years, by contrast, only one graduate of Quigley had made it all the way to ordination. Keeping the place open, then, no longer made sense.

### Is God Calling?

I was there because a well-intentioned assistant pastor convinced me that if I did not give the seminary a try, at age 13, I would be forever turning my back on a possible vocation. Though his theology may have been flawed and his understanding of human development more so, he was simply following the day's standard practice of steering conscientious altar boys toward the priesthood.

As much as I felt the weighty obligation to listen to God's call, I was also a willing seminarian with a fair share of youthful religious fervor. Besides, for a kid from the suburbs, the daily trek downtown (Quigley was a day school) provided many a wonderful adventure. Encountering the ethnic Catholicism of Polish, Irish and Italian boys was mind-expanding, not to mention the pick-up basketball games, poker parties and learning to navigate Chicago on my own.

CNS PHOTO BY KAREN CALLAWAY

Members of the freshman class pray before the start of algebra class at Archbishop Quigley Preparatory Seminary High School in Chicago Sept. 21, 2006. The 101-year-old school closed at the end of the academic year because of changing patterns of vocation discernment, declining numbers of students and growing costs.

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But when the retreat master challenged us at the end of the year ("If you are not happy here, then you don't belong here. If you still have doubts, you will do yourself and us a favor if you leave now"), I decided he was right. During the summer I decided I would have to leave.

For years I regarded my freshman year of high school as a terrible mistake, an embarrassing detour and a vocational failure. I tried to put myself as far from the experience as possible, which was easy enough to do since I lived 25 miles away from the school. One day many months after I had left, I was walking somewhere downtown, probably to the Chicago public library, when I came around a corner and was face to face with John Cunningham, one of my classmates at Quigley. John, every bit still the seminarian in his sports coat and tie and carrying his briefcase, looked up to recognize me at once. "Bug off," he said with a smirk, and kept on walking. I kept on walking, too—right out of the church.

### A Defining Experience

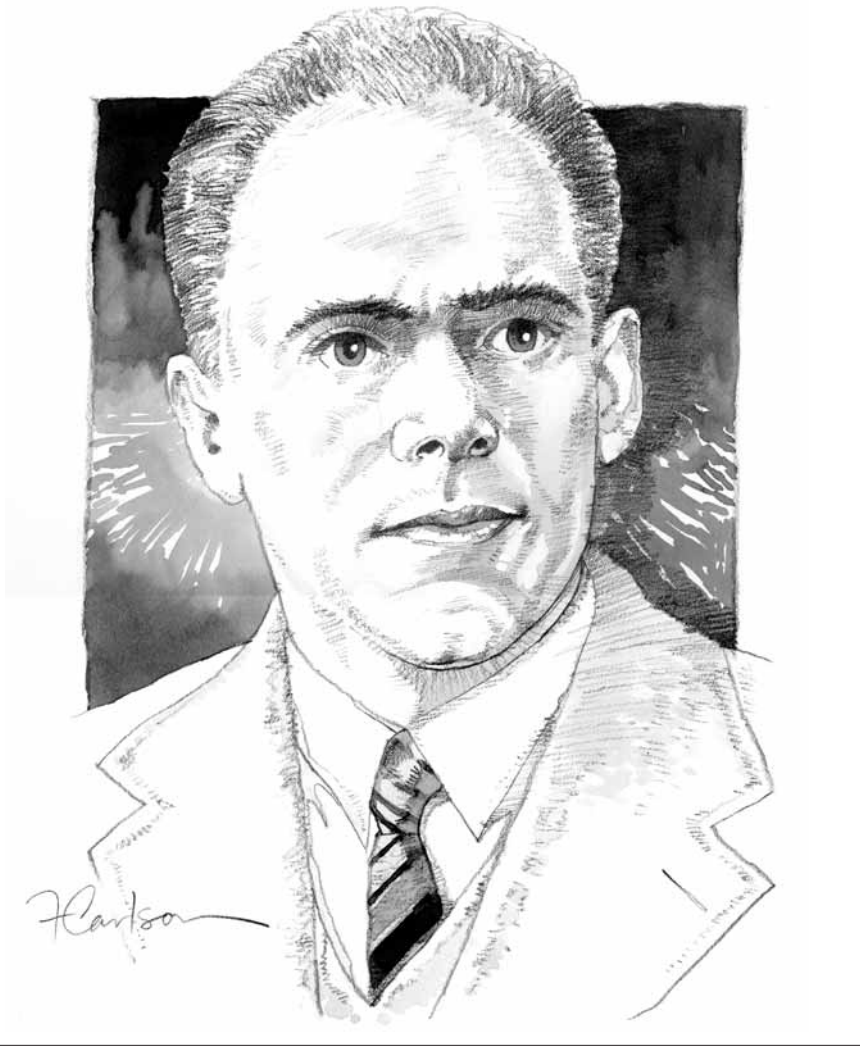
When I was ready to be drawn back some years later, the ethos of that freshman year was something I would gradually tap into. The daily Mass and Rosary, as well as the lofty desire to give one's life to Christ in service to the church, proved to be ballast for a lifetime. Though for many more years I regarded my experience in the seminary as a foolish miscue and a waste of precious adolescence, one day it dawned on me that the whole experience had served me quite well in what had come to define my life. I learned to live in the urban areas that have been home for all of my adult life, found a career in Christian publishing and, most important, discovered the vocation of husband and father. The same stream that took me to Quigley Preparatory Seminary 45 years ago, the Catholic faith, has never meant more to me than it does now.

Seminaries close in the face of the obvious truth that times have changed. The church cannot go back to those days, even if they might sometimes be preferable to the turgid present. Providence being what it is, we cannot regard these days either as simply another failure, a terrible waste in the life of the church. Some day it is bound to dawn on us that good has come out of it after all. A

# One Man's Decision

## An Austrian farmer said no to Hitler and became a martyr.

WILLARD F. JABUSCH



ART BY FREDERICK H. CARLSON

IN BRAUNAU AM INN in upper Austria, some curious people stop to gawk at the "Hitlerhaus" where the infamous man was born and raised. They would be wise to continue on a few more kilometers to the little village of St. Radegund, where a far different sort of person lived. The place is very small: only a beer house, a few houses and a modest church. It is considered so insignificant that the village does not even appear on some detailed maps of Austria. But this may change considerably in the near future. St. Radegund's most famous citizen, Franz Jägerstätter, was named an authentic martyr by Pope Benedict XVI in June 2007.

Does being a martyr make one, ipso facto, a saint? Certainly the young Franz did not appear very saintly. He was a rowdy type, known for getting into brawls with the other young men of the area. It would seem that he fathered a child out of marriage and then disappeared for a year or so, going to another part of the country to work in the mines. When tempers had cooled he returned, fell in love with a local girl and married her. The lovely Franziska was just what this undisciplined young man needed. She was lively and full of fun, but also mature and deeply devout. For their honeymoon they traveled by motorcycle all the way down to Rome and back, a trip unheard of in rural Austria. Franz was, as everyone said, a *lustiger Mensch* ("lively fellow"), who had found the perfect partner.

He became quite devout himself. Neighbors said they could hear him singing hymns as he worked the family farm. He became friends with the Rev. Josef Karobath, the pastor, who named him sacristan and put him in charge of training the altar servers, planning the holy day celebrations and caring for the church.

But some serious political changes were taking place at the time. Franz was the only one in town who voted against the annexation of Austria by Germany. The German army entered the country and was greeted with wild enthusiasm. Hitler made a triumphal entry into Vienna and was met by the Cardinal Archbishop. Franz was one Austrian who was not pleased.

### An Unjust War

A year later Poland was invaded. Franz decided he could not in conscience serve in such an unjust war. Poland had not invaded Germany; Germany had invaded Poland and, very soon, other countries. Many of his friends were enlisting; others waited to be drafted. Franz told his wife, his mother and his pastor that he would not serve. Father Karobath was understanding. In fact, soon he would be removed from his parish for having delivered a less than totally patriotic homily. But he reminded the younger man that his widowed mother, his wife and now his three tiny daughters depended on him. Franz decided to seek advice from the bishop in Linz.

But the bishop simply lectured him about the other young men who were fighting and dying in Russia in defense of the fatherland. He should do the same.

Franz's determination would not be eroded. For a long time the induction notice did not come. The government

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needed farmers like Franz for the war effort. But as the war took more and more lives, older men and even boys were being sent to the front. The notice came in the mail: Franz was needed in the army. There could be no such thing as a conscientious objector.

Franziska remembers that she and Franz got up early in the morning while the grandmother and the three girls were still asleep. Would she ever see him again? They said their farewells and he walked off into the pre-dawn darkness toward the induction center. He refused to take the oath of obedience to Hitler and was quickly put into jail in Linz. He was held there for some time and sent some truly beautiful letters to his wife. Eventually he was sent to a dreaded prison in Berlin.

Franziska very much wanted to visit him. The new young priest who had taken the place of Father Karobath said he would accompany her. They set off by train although the Americans and the British were bombing the rail lines. At the prison they could see through a window that Franz was brought in a van, pulled out and knocked to the ground. Yet he was allowed to visit with them. The priest repeated some of the old arguments: there was still time to change his mind; he could still be saved. But Franziska knew that to her strong-willed husband, saving his body was not as important as saving his soul. For him it was a clear case of right and wrong: the war was unjust; he could not serve.

### Controversial Even in Death

He was taken away, and the two visitors made the dangerous trip back to St. Radegund. Franz was beheaded by the prison guillotine. When the war ended, the prison chaplain, who knew where the body had been buried, had the bones put in a box. A nun agreed to take them back to St. Radegund for burial. Father Karobath had returned as pastor and he announced that Franz would be given a solemn funeral and buried in a place of honor directly next to the church.

Many did not agree, however. Their sons, brothers and husbands had fought and died in Russia, Italy, France and Germany. They were the heroes, not Franz, a man who had refused to serve. When his name was carved with those of other war dead into a village war memorial, the name was defaced. But Father Karobath would have none of it. Franz was worthy of solemn burial. The monument would be repaired and flowers planted on his grave.

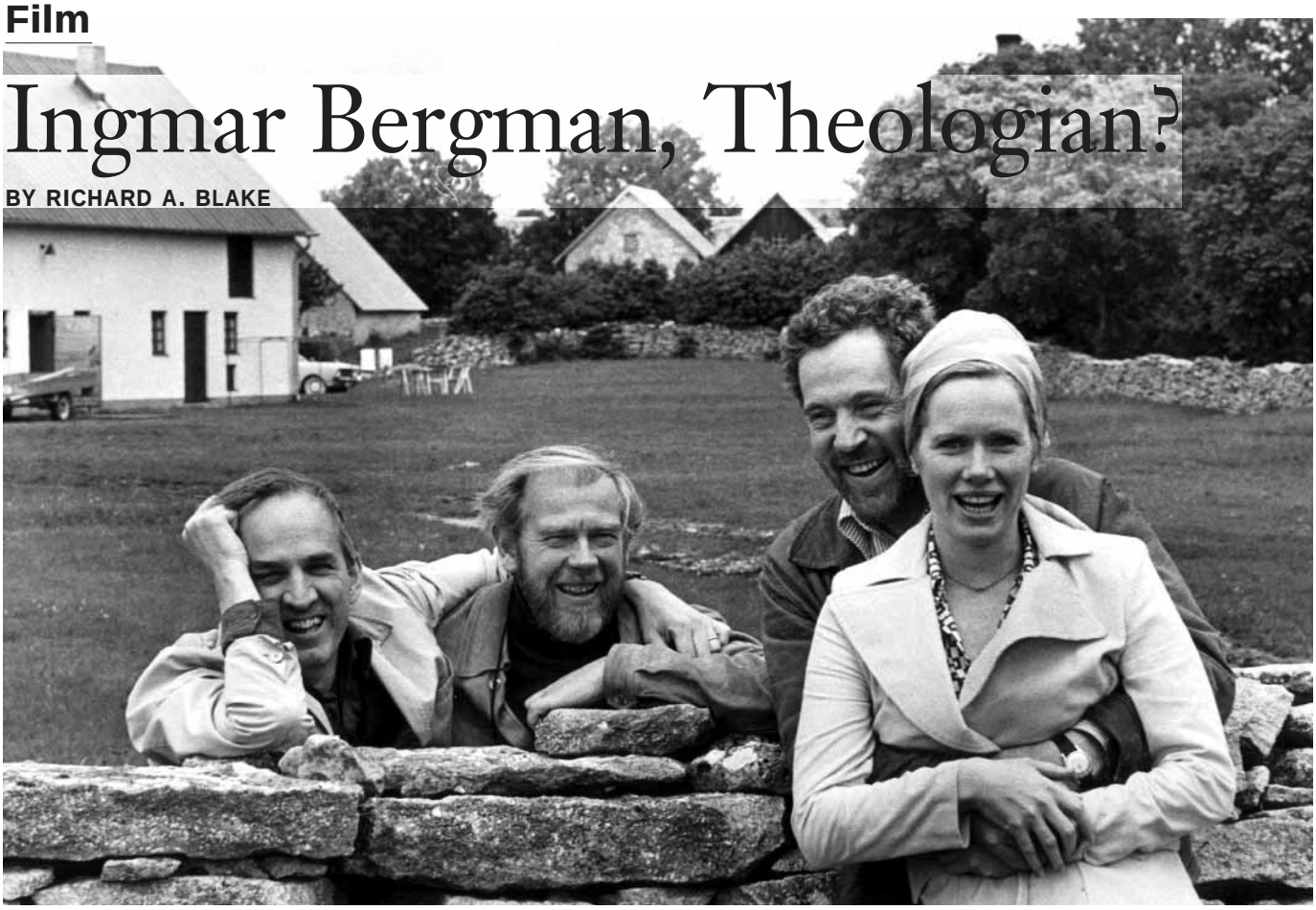
As the years have passed, the local people have taken a more positive view of Franz Jägerstätter. A little museum has been opened in the old farmhouse. Some photos, a rosary and a prayerbook are on display there and, of course, his motorcycle helmet. People have started to come as pilgrims. They pray in the church where he prayed and stop by his grave, which is in an honored place just outside.

There were, I think, two priests in Germany who were executed as conscientious objectors, but Franz seems to have been the only layman. It was a dangerous and risky business to say no to Hitler's insane war. Could he have done it without the support of a strong and loving wife? Now, however, his three daughters know that their father was a martyr. And martyrs are saints.

The beatification ceremony for Franz Jägerstätter will take place on Oct. 26, 2007, in Linz, Austria. A

# Ingmar Bergman, Theologian?

BY RICHARD A. BLAKE



Left to right: Ingmar Bergman, Sven Nykvist, Erland Josephson and Liv Ullman gather at Bergman's combined home and studio at Faaroe, on the island of Gotland, eastern Sweden, in this 1972 file photo.

REUTERS/ GUNNAR LANTZ/ SCANPIX

AT AGE 89, ON JULY 30, 2007, Ingmar Bergman left us. Tragically, he won't be widely mourned by today's movie audiences. His unblinking, introspective examination of the human condition places heavy demands on his viewers. His last film, "Saraband" (2002), was greeted respectfully as a curiosity from an 82-year-old director; it received only limited distribution. Audiences today find his characters narcissistic and his themes lugubrious.

The observation has some merit. Bergman rarely turned his lens on the cheerier side of the human condition, but he never averted his eye from the truth as he saw it. He created films for adults, especially for adults who, he believed, were as serious as he was about making sense of their own humanity. More than any other single director, he established an uncontestable niche for cinema as a true art form. After Bergman, intellectuals no longer had to apologize for writing and thinking about films.

Bergman's legacy staggers the imagination. Looking over his filmography is like picking up a volume of Shakespeare's complete works. One wonders how a person could create so much in one lifetime, and most of it extraordinary. In addition to the more than 50 films Bergman scripted and directed, he wrote for the stage, for radio and television; he authored novels and an autobiography; he taught theater and staged performances of classic plays and operas all over the world. Ever true to his own sense of the self, he remained in Sweden, confident that if he had something important enough to say, audiences would make the effort to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers to listen. He never needed Hollywood, the English language or international stars to ensure his success, since he defined success on his own terms, and these did not include huge box-office returns.

In a flurry of obituary notices, he has been universally praised as one of the great artists of his time. I would like to add a note of appreciation for Bergman the theologian, or at least, Bergman the religious thinker. No doubt he would reject both terms. He uses images where theologians use words. He crafts dialogue where they construct concepts. He exposes the messiness of the human condition, where they seek clarity. He focuses on the struggling, solitary human figures reaching outward, where they begin their inquiry with a God reaching down, revealing himself. But looking at the films, one sees a congruity in their tasks.

Bergman's religious interests came naturally. His father, Erik, was a Lutheran pastor of the old school. One of his associates in Sweden described him to me as "dour." Their relationship was less than cordial, but as a child Ingmar traveled with his father to country parishes, where he

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listened to the sermons and hymns and studied the icons and architecture to pass the time during services that seemed interminable to a restless young boy. His mother, Karin, was a difficult woman, and Ingmar grew up as a somewhat lonely child, who lost himself in his puppet theater and his primitive movie projector.

University life in Stockholm provided the opportunity to react against his family upbringing. He studied literature, but also devoted himself to an amateur theater group. During the war years, he remained active in the Stockholm theater community and began working at Svensk Filmindustri, the national film production company. His first films reflect a sense of late adolescent angst and rebellion against the older generation. The titles say it all. He wrote "Torment" (directed by Alf Sjöberg, 1944), and then wrote and directed "Crisis" (1945), "It Rains on Our Love" (1946), "Port of Call" (1948), "The Devil's Wanton" (1948), and "Thirst" (1949). By the early 1950s, after three failed (of five) marriages and several liaisons, his films began dealing with the mysteries of love, loneliness and commitment. The director, like his protagonists, struggled throughout his life to establish lasting relationships with the women he loved.

Bergman could not exorcise his religious background, however. In the early 1950s, while teaching theater at Malmö, he wrote a one-act play, "Wood Painting," as an exercise for his acting class. It was based on the images he saw as a boy in a country church: devils, flagellants atoning for their sins and Death chopping down the tree of life. By 1955, this germ of an idea had blossomed into "The Seventh Seal," the story of a knight, played by a very young and very blond Max Von Sydow, who returns from a Crusade, tormented by his loss of faith and awareness of his own mortality. The film established Bergman's reputation in art houses and campuses around the world.

It also began a series of seven films that explored the possibility of faith in a post-Holocaust, nuclear age. In "The Virgin Spring" (1960), "Through a Glass Darkly" (1961), "Winter Light" (1962) and "The Silence" (1963), he poses traditional faith questions in identifiably religious language. The characters struggle self-consciously with their inability to believe in God and form relationships with one another. In "Wild Strawberries" (1957) and "The Magician" (1958), the issues are veiled in layers of metaphor. The theological questions become apparent only by placing them in the context of the other films of the period. With "The Silence" he concludes that God is unknowable, and the human person must simply continue life's journey seeking understanding and happiness however one can. At that point, God-questions drop out of his films altogether.

Or do they? For the next 25 years, his self-centered and self-destructive heroes squirm in their own loneliness, unable to find salvation in human terms through their own efforts. In keeping with good Lutheran tradition, Bergman supplies redemption from without, inevitably in the form of a life-giving woman. He never coddles his audience with Hollywood happy endings, however. The hero can reject the woman's advances as in "Scenes from a Marriage" (1981), or the God-surrogate can be destructive as in "Autumn Sonata" (1978), when the God-Mother (Ingrid Bergman) lacerates her daughter (Liv Ullmann) for failing to meet her expectations. The resolution can be com-

plicated by multiple relationships as in "Fanny and Alexander" (1982), or it can be therapeutic as in "Persona" (1966). These later films of relationships can legitimately be read as a continuation in metaphorical terms of the theological questions he explored in his seven "God films." In other words, I'm suggesting a unified rather than disjunctive reading of his work.

The inherent unity of Bergman's sense of alienation from both God and humanity appears most clearly in the dual narrative strands in "Winter Light." One story rests squarely on theology. A Lutheran pastor in a remote rural area senses that he is losing his faith. His congregations are dwindling, he has little to say to those in need, and he finds the rituals "ridiculous." The second story centers around his inability to accept human love offered to him by a parishioner, who remains devoted to him even after what appears to be the end of their previous involvement. She is a redeemer for him, but he rejects the food she offers, just as the congregations stop coming for the Eucharist he provides. Each story stands on its own, but each comments on the other, providing a different optic for viewing the pastor's essential alienation. He longs to find some form of love in his life, but when it comes, he cannot recognize or accept it. In a terrifying final shot, he continues the Communion service before an empty church, as though resigned to continuing his search for meaning in the sparse light of a Scandinavian winter.

During his "God period" Bergman worked endless variations on the first story. After he had banished God in "The Silence," he turned his attention to the second. I'm suggesting something more than parallel narratives or interlocking themes in Bergman's work—that is, a cohesive unity in his divine and human quests. The search for love in the later "post-God" works at the very least reflects the strong influence of his earlier theological concerns. Ingmar Bergman expresses the human search according to a religious template. But I would dare to go further: these troubled human relationships also reflect in metaphorical and poetic terms our contemporary, ongoing struggle to discover an authentic relationship to God. A

# The Time to Move on Is Now!

## Catholicism at the Crossroads

### How the Laity Can Save the Church

By Paul Lakeland

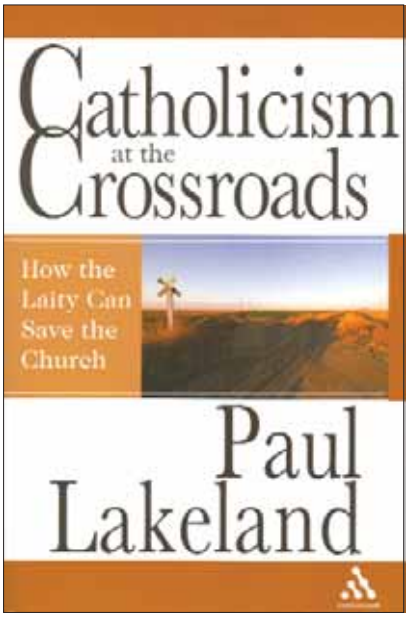
*Continuum. 164p $19.95 (paperback)*
*ISBN 9780826428103*

Without the laity, Cardinal Newman once remarked to his fellow clergymen, we would look quite foolish.

If the faithful and forthright theologian Paul Lakeland is to be believed—and I confess that I do believe him—the clergy and hierarchy are not alone today in looking foolish. We lay Catholics also wear the dunce cap. How else to characterize the best educated and most sophisticated generational cohort of Catholics in the history of the United States, the apathetic majority of whom continue to accept religious "infantilization" within an ecclesial structure that privileges hierarchy at the expense of community, fosters clerical elitism and condescends to the laity in matters theological, spiritual, ethical and (even) financial and administrative?

*Catholicism at the Crossroads* is a less technical, more widely accessible version of Lakeland's recent, incisive treatise *The Liberation of the Laity*. In both works, clericalism is judged to be the prevailing sin of the institutional church. The gross episcopal mishandling of priestly sexual abuse and the nearly complete failure of the U.S. bishops to proclaim doctrine in a morally persuasive way to the majority of Catholics (who blithely "dissent" on matters ranging from sexual morality, war and the sanctity of life to the exclusion of women from the priesthood) are best understood as "presenting" symptoms of our deeper ecclesial dysfunction. The underlying problem is structural—the absolute lack of a formal voice for the laity in the teaching or the governance of the church.

The bishops, not the laity, are the official teachers of the church, of course, but the practice of "consulting the faithful in matters of doctrine," as Newman put it, is the sine qua non for the effective reception of the teaching, not least for Catholics fighting distraction amid the de-centered, pluralist, materialist and secular culture of the United States. And while the bishop is also called to "govern" the ecclesial community, governing and administering is not the same thing, as any bureaucrat knows. The laity can and should be consulted on governance and empowered to a greater degree on personnel and financial matters.




Practices and attitudes vary from diocese to diocese and parish to parish, with strong parish councils a sign of healthier ecclesial communities. The national picture, however, is grim. With the notable exceptions of the preparation of the pastoral letters on war and peace (1983) and the U.S. economy (1986)—eruptions of top-to-bottom collegiality that today seem as distant as Bishop John England's bicameral, lay-clergy diocesan congress in antebellum South Carolina—precious little consulting has occurred in the 39 years since the promulgation of *Humanae Vitae*, Pope Paul VI's reassertion of the ban on artificial birth control. Faced with the horror of the sexual abuse crisis, some bishops, rightly concerned that their teaching has fallen on deaf ears, made precisely the wrong decision by suggesting that those ears be cut off ("pruned"). The ear-restoring Lord would seem unlikely to endorse this pastoral strategy.

Lakeland, not alone in offering a diagnosis of dysfunction, finds the situation untenable and unacceptable. He is most compelling when challenging the theological and ecclesial arguments bolstering the preference of some younger clergy (a.k.a. the "John Paul II priests") for a kind of preconciliar dualism that ends in elevating and thus alienating the ordained from the (merely) baptized. Marked by a mode of interaction among priests and between priests and laity that arrogates religious authority and insight exclusively to the ordained, the new clericalism is based on the erroneous assumption that ordination confers upon the recipient an "ontological change" that need not find expression in an ever more profound openness to the other in mutuality and dialogue.

For Lakeland, by contrast, the "real change" effected by the sacrament of holy orders is relational, not ontological. "In ordination," he urges, "the priest acquires a new ordo, a new set of relationships to the community." Thus, the distinctiveness of ordained ministry lies "in the particular quality of the relation of the priest to the rest of the community, not in some inner, magical change in his very being." Any such "change in being" occurs when a person first becomes a Christian, that is, when she is baptized into the death of the Lord, inherits the mission of the church and eventually assumes one or more of the numerous ministries preparing the world to receive the Gospel.

In promoting a communal/horizontal ecclesiology over a hierarchical/vertical model of the church, Lakeland draws effectively on Trinitarian theology:

> Just as the call to Christian discipleship should suggest to us a life lived according to the values and choices of Jesus of Nazareth, so

## The Reviewers

**R. Scott Appleby** is professor of history and director of the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame.

**Nancy Hawkins, I.H.M.**, associate professor of systematic theology at St. Bernard's School of Theology and Ministry, Rochester, N.Y., did her doctoral dissertation on Dorothee Soelle's theology of God.

**Peter Heinegg** is professor of English at Union College, Schenectady, N.Y.

you would think that the church of God would reflect what seems to be the divine preference for relationship. What would happen if we modeled the church on the life of God instead of on the structures of the Roman Empire or the Ford Motor Company? One would think that it would be a good thing.... When Vatican II made the hierarchical structure of the church secondary to understanding the church as the People of God, it took a giant step toward growing closer to God. Hierarchy does not reflect the divine life; mutuality does.

With its occasional invocation of contested terms such as "the spirit of Vatican II" and hot-button issues such as the dehumanizing effects of global capitalism, *Catholicism at the Crossroads* will not convert (neo-) conservatives who insist that the way forward is not first and foremost the "liberation" of anyone (the poor, women, the laity in general), but rather the restoration of a purified clergy—men who embrace the "eternal priesthood of Jesus Christ" into which they have been initiated as into an ancient mystery cult.

So be it. Within Lakeland's Trinitarian and critical-liberationist framework, the hot-button issues take on renewed meaning. His presentation of "accountability," for example, as an act of mutual stock-taking and ethical boundary-setting that prevents individuals from sliding into morally dangerous self-absorption, thickens that hackneyed term, giving it a resonance for spouses, parents and children—that is, for anyone who has ever been a member of a family. And far from arguing for ecclesial lay ministers to replace the ordained, Lakeland affirms the distinction between the ordained ministry to the church and the lay ministry to the world, while rejecting the dualism that often accompanies it.

Nor does he blame individuals for the dysfunction, but targets unapostolic structures, suggesting in a riveting passage that "the structural oppression at work in the church" oppressed even so great a soul as John Paul II.

Moreover, Lakeland's audience is not readers of the periodical First Things, but rather people like the energetic new grandmother I met recently, who holds a degree in religious education, takes courses at the local Catholic university, is politically active in her community, admires her pastor and loves the church—and worries not a little that prodigious lay talent is being squandered by inadequate structures and unimaginative leadership, precisely at a moment in U.S. Catholic history when we need all the creative dynamism we can muster.

Her worry is for the loss of her granddaughter to the church she loves.

***R. Scott Appleby***

# Her 'Missing Chapter'

## The Mystery of Death

By Dorothee Soelle
*Fortress Press. 146p $15*
*ISBN 9780800638917*

In 2003 the theological community and the world lost one of its most prolific and down-to-earth Christian scholars, Dorothee Soelle. Her work endured five decades and spanned the period from the birth of political theology to our present globalistic cyber-age. Soelle's voice was not silenced at her death. Instead, she left us what she considered the "missing chapter" to her work *The Silent Cry: Mysticism and Resistance*. This small, reflective book on death is a highly personal chronicle of Soelle's final conversation with her inevitable companion, "Mr. Death," as Soelle calls him. As usual, Soelle refuses to give him the last word. Instead she faces the experience of impending death head on, and brings it into the realm of mystical reflection.


Throughout *The Mystery of Death*, the reader will continue to hear the strong themes of all Soelle's theology. There are her ponderings on suffering, which cause her to ask why contemporary people are unable to embrace death instead of sanitizing it. She accuses us of losing and ignoring the skills we need to live radically in an age of violence and death. Once again Soelle calls upon her mentor Meister Eckhart as she challenges us to "live without a why." We are so concerned with success that we fail to see death's lessons, which are all around us. I was delighted to see once again her critique of the persistent classical image of the omnipotent, distant Father-God, whose stoic removal from human experience makes it impossible for so many to embrace the words of Paul in Romans: "Nothing can separate us from the love of God." Soelle reminds the reader of the power of these words. They counter any theology that denies God's presence in the midst of our sufferings and fears.

Early on in her career, Soelle wrote a book entitled *Death by Bread Alone*. In her reflections on death Soelle returns to the core theme of this earlier work—that what truly causes the death of human beings is a lack of relationships and connectedness to others. We of the 21st century work and work for possessions and loaves of bread, but these cannot sustain us as we die from aloneness. We watch endless hours of television and go on the Internet but lack significant, longstanding friendships. These are not words from an aging theologian who longs for a previous time. Rather, they are astute words of an active woman who recognizes that our contemporary culture values the young, the strong and the good-looking. Soelle challenges the reader to work for the bread that lasts forever: the bread of care and community.

I found the weakest section of *The Mystery of Death* to be the author's thoughts on women and death. Her words seem forced, and while Soelle insists that women "naturally" face death "better" than men, she refers the reader to numerous examples of male mystics and scholars to make her point. Her words ring truer

when she concludes that it is mystical experience and language that allow us to embrace death as a natural and necessary part of the spiritual journey. As with all Soelle's books, the reader is exposed to many unique themes being worked out almost simultaneously. As one who has read almost everything Soelle wrote, I am used to this pattern in her writing. But if this book is the reader's first exposure to Soelle, there may be moments of confusion. One has a strong sense that Soelle is making the most of the time given her to write down the final thoughts of a lifetime.

This meaningful book allows the reader to see into the very heart of its author. Soelle, who championed the concept of spiritual resistance, is no longer resisting the coming of death. She sees its shadow and is willing to invite it in. It is especially moving to hear Soelle reflect on the death of her mother in 1990. If she had any doubt that something amazing would manifest itself at the time of death, it ended in that room. Soelle comes to understand more and more that everything she ever worked for, stood for and hoped for will live on after her death. In poetry she offers humor as she tells us all she will do for death is die.

We cannot help but be grateful to Dorothee Soelle for leaving us this final manuscript. That thanks extends to her family, especially to her husband, who honored the requests of so many to publish this book. He says she was tired as she pondered death's arrival. I beg to differ. She was and will always continue to be that feisty, committed, radical Christian who believed in a world where death can and should be conquered by human love and faith. ***Nancy Hawkins***

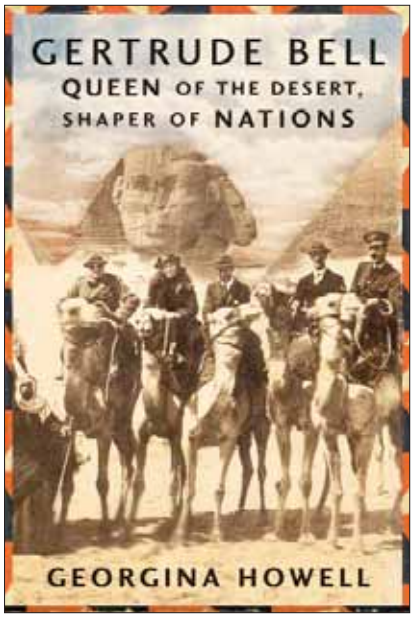
# Hold the Incense

## Gertrude Bell

**Queen of the Desert, Shaper of Nations**
By Georgina Howell
*Alfred A. Knopf. xix + 481p $27.50*
*ISBN 9780374161620*

Here are two incontrovertible truths about Gertrude Bell (1868-1926): she was

a brilliant, wise, fascinating woman; and she played a significant role in the creation of modern Iraq. But "Queen of the Desert"? "Shaper of Nations"? (The original British edition had a quieter title: *Daughter of the Desert: The Remarkable Life of Gertrude Bell*.) Georgina Howell, an experienced journalist, is so smitten with her wonderful, hyperactive subject that she does not mind vaulting beyond the known facts into speculative fantasies (might Henry James have modeled Nanda, the heroine of *The Awkward Age*, on Gertrude Bell?); imaginative reconstructions ("Every day, in her head, she heard the bombardment that was a prelude to an infantry assault...."); and embellishments of Bell's legend (she passes on with a straight face the wild adventures that Gertrude supposedly confided to King Faisal and that he supposedly retold to a reporter from the nondescript Everybody's Weekly, whence the blockbuster article "Secrets of Great White Woman of the Desert Which Were Not Revealed in Her Book"). *Pace*, Ms. Howell, we may greatly doubt that Gertrude ever journeyed and fought alone in the desert, disguised herself as a camel driver or was arrested and nearly tortured by the Turks.

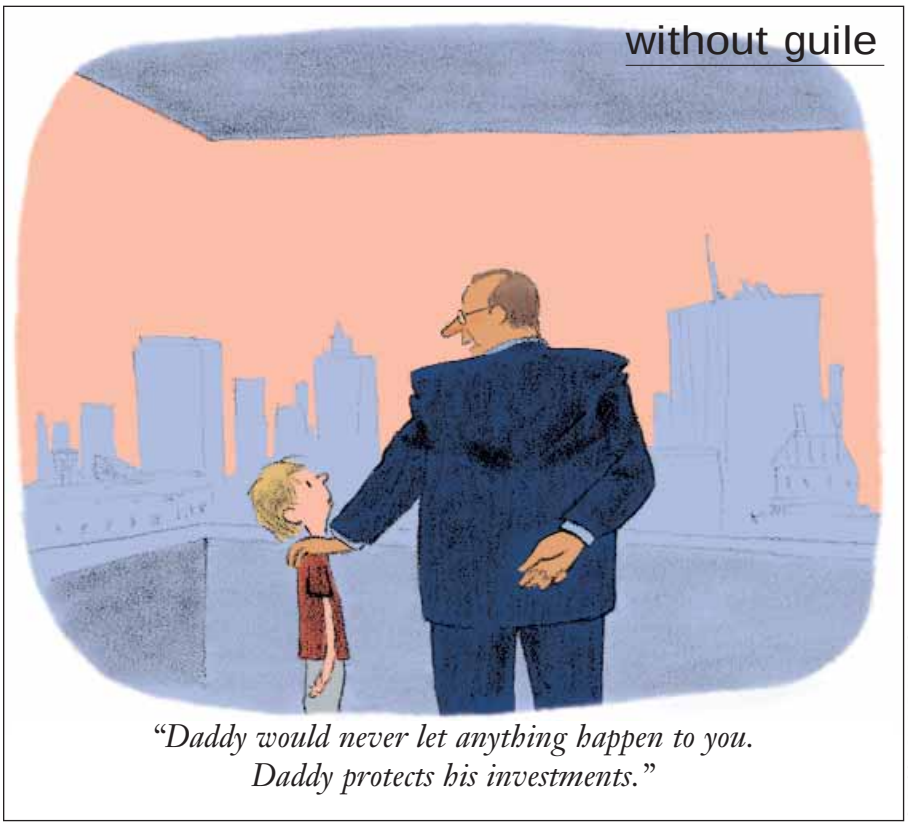



So much for the bad news. Despite such lapses, Howell tells a gripping story and does full justice to the woman whom the Arabs called simply Al Qatun, the Lady, and whose talents won her a unique though not defining place in the annals of the Middle East. (How could any female have led the way in such male-dominated cultures?) Born to a family of rich industrialists, she was the first woman to win first-class honors in history at Oxford (where she sped through in two years). A globe-trotting polyglot, she mastered Persian and Arabic, which she spoke far more fluently than most of the men she worked for, including T. E. Lawrence. In her late 20's she casually took up mountain climbing, and quickly acquired world-class skills as an Alpinist, in between trips to Istanbul, Jerusalem, Damascus, Beirut, Delhi and elsewhere. A vivid, impassioned writer (*The Desert and the Sown*, and 10 other books), she also became a translator of classical Iranian poetry, a Red Cross administrator, horticulturalist, archaeologist, photographer and mapper of the wilderness. Was there anything she could not do?

Bell's personal life was marked by two tragedies: her love for Henry Cadogan, the spirited secretary to the British legation in Teheran (her parents quashed the engagement, owing to his poverty; and soon afterward he died of pneumonia after falling into an icy river) and for Dick Doughty-Wylie, an unhappily married career diplomat, who solved his emotional dilemma when Gertrude refused adultery and demanded he divorce his wife by walking unarmed into certain death at Gallipoli in 1915. This heartbreak doubtless played a role in her own suicide by barbiturate overdose 11 years later.

On the other hand, celibacy left Bell free to do all sorts of amazing things: to be elected the first woman fellow of the National Geographical Society; to serve as a civil and military officer (the first woman again) at the Arab Intelligence Bureau in Cairo; to advise the viceroy in India; to arrange the visit of Ibn Saud to Basra; to be appointed oriental secretary to the civil administration in Iraq; to be made a commander of the British Empire; and to submit a notable paper to the Paris Peace Conference on the future of Mesopotamia—the list goes on.

The jacket-photo of Bell on a camel (she was an expert equestrienne from girlhood) flanked by the similarly mounted Winston Churchill and Lawrence, with the Sphinx and the pyramids in the background, was more than just a predictable photo-op from the 1921 Cairo Conference, which dealt with Iraq and Palestine. If not a mover-and-shaker, Bell




*"Daddy would never let anything happen to you. Daddy protects his investments."*

CARTOON BY PAT BYRNES

was an invaluable, deeply respected resource and, against all odds, "one of the boys." As she had musingly written from Haifa in 1904, "I am much entertained to find that I am a Person in this country—they all think I am a Person!" Bell's younger contemporary and passing acquaintance, Virginia Woolf, would have understood.

Bell has been receiving a great deal of attention lately (biographies by Janet Wallach in 1996, H. V. F. Winstone in 2004, and Liora Lukitz in 2006). Given the Anglo-American-sponsored catastrophe in Iraq, it is hard not to be jolted by the acuteness of her judgments, made long before the end of colonialism. She acknowledged that Western-style democracy meant next to nothing in the *disjecta membra* of the Ottoman Empire. She supported the better-educated, more secular Sunni minority over the majority tribal Shiites ("Otherwise you will have a...theocratic state, which is the very devil"). She worried about the Kurds (still the largest ethnic group in the world without their own country), who could neither be given nor denied autonomy. And she continually predicted that the Balfour Declaration would wreak havoc among the Arabs. If she could see the situation today, she could only shake her head—and tear her hair.

One final paradoxical feature of Bell's career: she fought vigorously against woman suffrage (thinking that poor women would never find the time to learn about political issues). But then she was in a number of ways bourgeois-conventional: an obedient daughter, a fearless explorer surrounded by servants and gigantic piles of luggage and a fashion plate who insisted on modest dress whether scrambling up glaciers or trekking across sun-blasted sands. And she frequently voiced her contempt for the idle, decorative wives of her male colleagues. It is not easy to change the world with nary a role model in sight.

If she had written about a less dynamic woman, Howell might have been accused of puffery. Not here: Bell stands out in Howell's lively account as both a pioneer from the heroic past and a haunting figure for the present: imagine if *she* were guiding our foreign policy through these parlous times. Hold the incense—a sigh will do. ***Peter Heinegg***

Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, Tex., seeks a Superintendent of Schools for its 62 schools. The successful candidate will have a master's degree in school administration or related fields, a doctorate preferred; at least five to seven years' experience in leadership positions at the Catholic school and diocesan level. Texas administrative credential or equivalent is preferred; bilingual in Spanish a plus. An active and practicing Catholic in good standing with the church and a visionary leader able to inspire co-workers, will support and implement the Archdiocesan Strategic Plan, work well with staff and collaborate with the school board and other diocesan officials. The successful candidate will have knowledge and experience in curriculum, budgeting and personnel management, and will provide leadership for the spiritual development of children. The new Superintendent will embrace ethnic and racial diversity, providing welcoming and accepting leadership. Commitment to inner city and less affluent schools and the ability to direct state accreditation are essential.

Salary and benefits are commensurate with education and experience. Nov. 1, 2007, availability preferred; Jan. 1, 2008, will be considered. Interested and qualified candidates are asked to submit a letter of interest addressing the requirements and skills listed above, a résumé and names, addresses, e-mail addresses and telephone numbers of five professional references to: Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston Search Committee, Catholic School Management Inc., P. O. Box 4071, Madison, CT 06443-4071 or by e-mail to: office@catholicschoolmgmt.com. Review of applications will begin Sept. 4, 2007, with interviews scheduled in late September.

## Resources

**HOMILISTS, PREACHERS.** Stories, images and resources to assist you in your ministry: www.connections-mediaworks.com.

## Retreats

**AGING...OUR PERSONAL JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM.** Fall retreat at Bethany Spirituality Center, Highland Mills, N.Y., Nov. 11-15, Director: Ann Billard, O.L.M., Ph.D. For information, call (845) 460-3061; www.bethanyspiritualitycenter.org.

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**BETHANY SPIRITUALITY CENTER** invites you to come with us to celebrate St. Francis and St. Clare in Assisi, LaVerna, Florence, Siena and Rome: March 26-April 3, 2008. Bill Drobach, S.A., and Patricia Reid, O.S.F., will lead the pilgrimage. Liturgy will be celebrated daily at Franciscan sites. A special flier is available with details. Please call (845) 460-3061 or visit www.bethanyspiritualitycenter.org.

# Letters

### Much To Tell Us

Having been a lay missionary, I much appreciated the article "The New, Lay Face of Missionaries," by Vincent Gragnani (7/30). I would certainly encourage anyone who can to spend some time doing mission work, either in the United States or abroad. While we all hope and try to help the persons with whom we work in the missions to improve their lives both spiritually and physically, it often seems that the ones most to gain from the mission experience are the missionaries themselves.

When we joined the Incarnate Word Missionaries, connected to the Incarnate Word Sisters (Texas), one of the things that attracted us was the requirement listed on their brochure: "a willingness to be evangelized by the poor." We found that the poor really did have much to teach us. We began to see how other values, not material things, dominated their lives: family, faith, sharing, caring, conversation, appreciation of small things. When we arrived home, the first thing we noticed was how much, how very much we all had.

Another important aspect of our living in Latin America was the opportunity to see the United States through the eyes of Latinos. It was often not a pretty picture, even though many persons in Latin America would like to have some of the privileges we had. We came home eager to do what we could to change American attitudes toward those who live south of us.

*Lucy Fuchs*
*Brandon, Fla.*

### Radical Change

Thank you for the article "Treatment, Not Prison," (5/28) by Peter Ninemire. Peter is absolutely right. Our approach to drug and alcohol addiction is another case of a long overdue need for a radical change in direction. Thousands of lives are irreparably damaged and billions of dollars are wasted each year by laws and penal practices that are not sufficiently restorative.

*Rudy Cypser*
*Katonah, N.Y.*

### National Interest

When politicians and diplomats speak of our national interest in the Middle East, they avoid mentioning that this interest is due to the fact that the life blood of our commerce and of almost everything that moves in our land—oil—flows mainly there. Since fighting for oil does not evoke popular support, rather the reverse, a series of reasons is given for having troops there. Even though it is no secret that terrorism is spawned by the presence of "infidel" troops in Muslim lands, this too is not mentioned, lest policy be undermined.

Those like Bishop Ibrahim ("Signs of the Times," 7/16), whose thinking is not conditioned by our Mideast needs, can speak candidly and objectively. Iraqi imams agree with the bishop that it is our occupation that sets Sunnis and Shiites against each other. Salman Furaiji, a Shiite, said, "We shall continue our demand for the withdrawal of the occupation forces." Sheik Ibrahim Nima, a Sunni, said, "It is the occupation forces that are responsible for what has happened and what is happening." Sunnis and Shiites co-exist in other Muslim countries, and though not friends, they are not engaged in openly hostile activity.

Instead of using the gun, we can assure our share of oil by friendly relations, diplomacy and the dollar. Otherwise, we will live with hatred and terrorism permanently.

*(Rev.) Connell J. Maguire*
*Riviera Beach, Fla.*

### Tradition of Our Charism

The article "Bless Me, Father," by James Martin, S.J., and the delightful musings of George Wilson, S.J., (5/21) offer a

**To send a letter to the editor** we recommend using the link that appears at the bottom of articles on **America**'s Web site, www.americamagazine.org. This allows us to consider your letter for publication in both print and online versions of the magazine. Letters should be as brief as possible and include the writer's name, postal address and daytime phone number. Letters may also be sent to **America**'s editorial office (address on page 2) or by e-mail to: letters@americamagazine.org. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

# Banquet Wisdom

**Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time (C), Sept. 2, 2007**

Readings: Sir 3:17-18, 20, 28-29; Ps 68:4-7, 10-11; Heb 12:18-19, 22-24; Luke 14:1, 7-14

*"Rather, when you hold a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind" (Luke 14:13)*

ART BY TAD DUNNE

BANQUET SCENES are frequent in the Bible. Jesus used meals shared with all kinds of persons as occasions to impart his wise teachings and as symbols for life in the coming kingdom of God. Banquets are especially prominent in Luke's Gospel, and most of Luke 14 presents Jesus' teachings in the context of a meal at the house of a leading Pharisee.

The two teachings in today's reading belong to the category of wisdom teachings about God's kingdom. By all accounts Jesus was a wisdom teacher. But his wisdom can be properly appreciated only when it is placed in the context of his central theme: the kingdom of God.

Jesus' first wise teaching looks like shrewd and even calculating behavior at a wedding banquet. If you are only a distant relative or friend of the bride or groom, you should not seat yourself at the head table. The chances are that someone will come by and inform you that you belong at the back of the hall. How embarrassing it will be for you to have to move to the back of the hall in front of all the other guests! A wiser strategy would be to seat yourself first at the back. Then if by chance you are summoned to the head table, all the other guests will see you and conclude that you must be very important indeed.

## Praying With Scripture

- Why are banquets often good occasions for sharing wisdom?
- Who might you imagine having prominent places at the banquet in God's kingdom?
- Does your belief in resurrection ever enter into your decisions about doing good deeds?

On the surface this advice may appear to be practical wisdom, something especially significant in an honor-shame society. On the theological level, however, it is Jesus' reminder that the banquet in God's kingdom is not for the rich and powerful only. Rather, it is especially for the humble, for those who recognize that in comparison with God we all are poor and insignificant. Jesus promises that such persons will be exalted.

Jesus' second teaching is about who should be invited to your house for dinner. On the surface, it may not seem very wise at all. Jesus tells his host ("a leading Pharisee") to invite marginal persons ("the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind") to his house. Recall that the Pharisees were the great Jewish proponents of the doctrine of the general resurrection and of rewards and punishments after death. Jesus agreed with the Pharisees on these matters.

According to most practical human wisdom, it would be wiser to invite to your house those who might be able to benefit you in the future. This policy, of course, is

**DANIEL J. HARRINGTON, S.J.,** is professor of New Testament at Weston Jesuit School of Theology in Cambridge, Mass.

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timely framework for discussions about the sacrament of reconciliation. These articles contribute a thoughtful analysis as to why confession is a floating sacrament nowadays, and they give helpful pointers for its renewed cate-chesis in our lives. Our experience hearing confessions here at St. Francis of Assisi may shed some light on this discussion.

We are located just steps from Pennsylvania Station in Manhattan. The lower church serves as a chapel for eucharistic meditation as well as a reconciliation chapel made up of four comfortable and welcoming rooms. The general effect is an atmosphere of silent prayer, a place of calm and peace.

The schedule of confessions is daily, generous and accommodating, with 14 friars sharing this ministry. We have monthly meetings that touch on how well we are ministering to the people as confessors. We share our understanding of the issues our people face and how best to help them. Increasingly we take the view that reconciliation is a healing ministry.

We are aware too how much the grace of penitence invites the confessor to healing conversion in his own life. Sometimes we welcome a person to contact our counseling center or to consider a 12-step or self-help group, of which we host a large number. Our location and the peace tradition of our charism help draw people from far and wide. Christ is here in silent intimacy.

*Kevin Tortorelli, O.F.M.*
*New York, N.Y.*

enlightened self-interest, and it seems to make the world go around. By suggesting that the leading Pharisee should invite those who could not benefit him at all (at least in this life), Jesus challenges the Pharisee (and us) to examine why we do what we do and what we really believe about life after death. Do we do good deeds to get a good reputation or to benefit materially or achieve some other immediate goal? Or do we believe enough in the resurrection and the divine judgment to leave the rewards for our good deeds to the justice and mercy of God?

# The Cost of Discipleship

**Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time (C), Sept. 9, 2007**

Readings: Wis 9:13-18; Ps 90:3-6, 12-17; Phlm 9-10, 12-17; Luke 14:25-33

*"Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:27)*

IN THE LATE 1930s, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, then the most promising Protestant theologian in Germany, wrote a book entitled in English *The Cost of Discipleship*. Several years afterward he was arrested and executed for resisting Hitler and the Nazis. For Bonhoeffer discipleship—fidelity to the Gospel and Christian principles—had a very high cost. His experience has been repeated many times since, for example, by Ignacio Ellacuría, S.J., and his companions in El Salvador.

Today's reading from Luke 14 concerns the high cost of discipleship and the need to count that cost. It consists of three "hard" sayings and two parables. The first hard saying places before the prospective disciple the choice between following Jesus and family ties. This was an even more difficult choice in Jesus' culture than it is for most people in 21st-century America. The term "hate" in the saying, while an obvious exaggeration, underlines the overriding importance of God's kingdom and following Jesus.

## Praying With Scripture

- Can you think of recent examples of persons who have remained faithful to their Christian principles despite the high cost of doing so?
- How do the "hard" sayings of Jesus bring out the overriding significance of God's kingdom in his teaching?
- Has trying to be faithful to the Gospel ever been costly for you personally?

The second hard saying asserts that following Jesus can and will involve suffering. Those who decide to follow Jesus must be prepared to take up the cross, here understood as an instrument of shame as well as of physical torment, and imitate Jesus' example of suffering for the sake of God's kingdom.

The hard sayings are interrupted by two parables about counting the cost of discipleship. The first parable concerns a man who contemplates building a tower. Unless he carefully plans out the project and calculates the cost, he will not be able to finish it and so will appear as a fool before his neighbors. Similarly, a king who wants to go to war must take account of the strength of his own army and what he can expect from his enemies. Otherwise, he will have to beg for a peace treaty and suffer shame before his opponents and his own troops. The point of these parables is that we must take account of the high cost that discipleship may exact.

The third hard saying concerns renouncing material possessions to follow Jesus. This too would have been very challenging in Jesus' time. In some circles having many possessions was interpreted as a blessing from God and a sign of one's cleverness and goodness. Moreover, there was no welfare state or social safety net (beyond the family) to provide the poor with the basic necessities of human life. Again the extreme nature of the challenge highlights the overriding importance of God's kingdom and following Jesus.

While following Jesus may have a high cost, what makes discipleship possible is the grace of God. We are not alone as we accompany Jesus and move toward the fullness of life in God's kingdom. We can deal with the cost of discipleship, as Bonhoeffer and Ellacuría did, only if we are convinced that God is with us, directing and helping us along the way.

***Daniel J. Harrington***

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### Hear Ourselves Confessing

Many thanks to James Martin, S.J., for his article, in the May 21 issue, on the sacrament of reconciliation, written with his accustomed clarity and economy of phrase.

Might I suggest another possible reason for the decline in its usage since the Second Vatican Council? It may have been a carry over from a defective sacramental theology that predominated in the years before the council, in which the sacraments were viewed principally as causes of grace, with little importance attached to their sign value. In the sacramental economy established at the Incarnation we can see a certain pattern in God's dealings with us, whereby God reaches us and we reach God through human realities and gestures.

As Archbishop Donald W. Wuerl was quoted as saying in the article, "It's a human need to hear from the other side."

Yes! And we need to hear ourselves confessing our sins; "this is our gesture of sorrow and repentance" as well as hearing God's word of forgiveness spoken by the priest.

*Thomas L. Sheridan, S.J.*
*Jersey City, N.J.*

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