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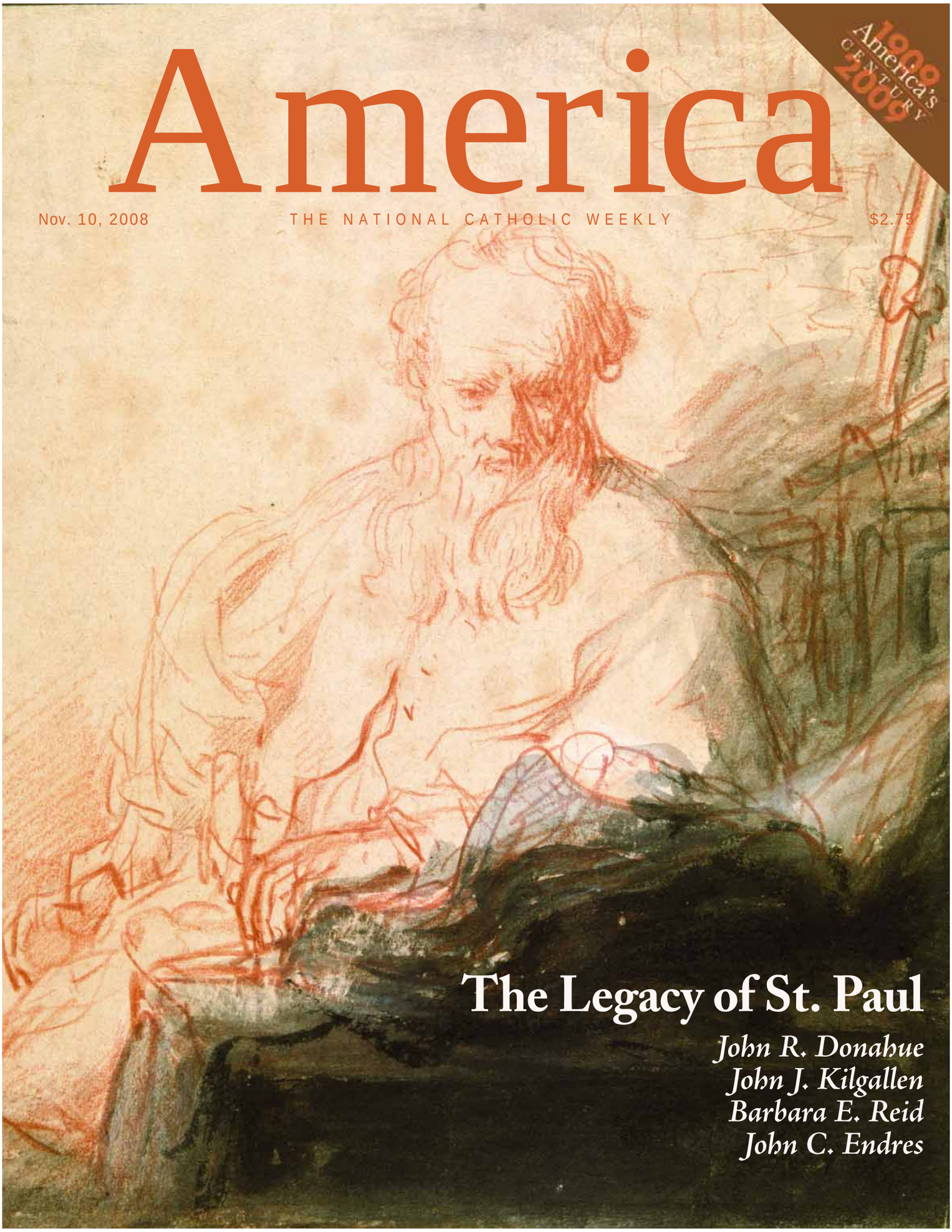

The Legacy of St. Paul

John R. Donahue
John J. Kilgallen
Barbara E. Reid
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Of Many Things

EVERY AUTHOR HAS AN IMAGE of St. Paul. For Martin Luther he was an enemy of works-righteousness. When I first studied Paul, he was regarded as the primordial dogmatic theologian, the source for doctrines like justification, original sin and the Mystical Body of Christ. More recently, among sociological exegetes the image of Paul as an enemy of Roman power and the archetypal critic of imperial domination has been popular. In this issue, the editors have invited some leading Scripture scholars to share their impressions of Paul in observance of the Pauline Year.

Frequently an image reveals the preoccupation of an age. I remember from my graduate school days the late Richard A. McCormick, S.J., and his close friend the late Bruno Schüller, S.J., belittling Paul's ethics as *paranesis* (Greek for exhortation). It was some time before I realized they had been voicing a prejudice of mid-20th-century German Protestant theology that serious scriptural texts dealt with the great theological themes beloved of the Reformation, like Law and Gospel, spirit and flesh, sin and grace. For that reason, they believed Paul's ethical passages could be dismissed as mere motivation or exhortation. In fact, some of Paul's profoundest theology—like the hymn to Christ in his self-abandonment (Phil 2:4-11): "Have this mind in you which was in Christ Jesus..."—comes in the midst of a plea for mutual service.

For me Paul is a pastoral theologian, penning his theology while addressing disputes within the communities he had founded. The much discussed passage on "the mystery of the Jews" (Rom 11:25-32), a key text in today's Catholic-Jewish dialogue, emerged out of his personal perplexity over the rejection of the Gospel by the vast majority of his fellow Jews. His eucharistic theology—"For this is what I received from the Lord and passed on to you..." (1 Cor 11:21-27)—was occasioned by his correction of the Corinthians for the class divisions in their communities, just as his theology of baptism (Rom 6:1-11) was a repudiation of libertines who would use freedom from the Mosaic law as a warrant for self-indulgence.

From my late friend Bill Spohn I learned a special appreciation for the loving bond Paul had with the communities he founded. Sometimes, of course, he sounds like an overly sensitive parent. But a reader needs only examine the prayers he makes for these communities to appreciate how much he esteemed them.

To the Romans he wrote: "I never fail to mention you in my prayers and ask to be allowed at long last the opportunity to visit you, if he so wills. For I am longing to see you either to strengthen you by sharing a spiritual gift with you, or, what is better, to find encouragement among you for our common faith" (Rom 1:10-1). To the Corinthians he wrote: "I never stop thanking God for all the graces you have received through Jesus Christ. I thank him that you have been enriched in so many ways...so that you will not be without any of the gifts of the Spirit, while you are waiting for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed" (1 Cor 1:4-7). The joy Paul takes in the spiritual progress of his churches is one every priest, deacon and lay ecclesial minister should know.

With the divisions in the U.S. church today over abortion and electoral politics, Paul's insistence on the unity of the church in charity is especially relevant. Again and again he pleads for mutual deference and forgiveness. He reproves division: over apostolic origins (Cephas, Apollos, Paul), ethnic heritage, class divisions and, appropriately for us, moral perfectionism. Remarkably, he pleads for charity over moral principle (1 Cor 10:23-11:1). As Pheme Perkins puts it, "The individual may be 'right'...acting out of full conviction...and yet 'wrong' because of [the] effects [of moral absolutism] on the other members of the community." Or, as the late Krister Stendahl wrote, Paul's principle is "love rather than integrity."

For Paul, however, love meant mutual deference, each one ceding to the other, each faction respecting the other, acting, as he writes in a stunning phrase, "for the other's scruples, not your own." No standing on principle, just "being helpful to everyone at all times."

"Take me," Paul urged, "as your model, as I take Christ." In our fractured American church, Paul is a pastor we would do well to emulate.

Drew Christiansen, S.J.

America

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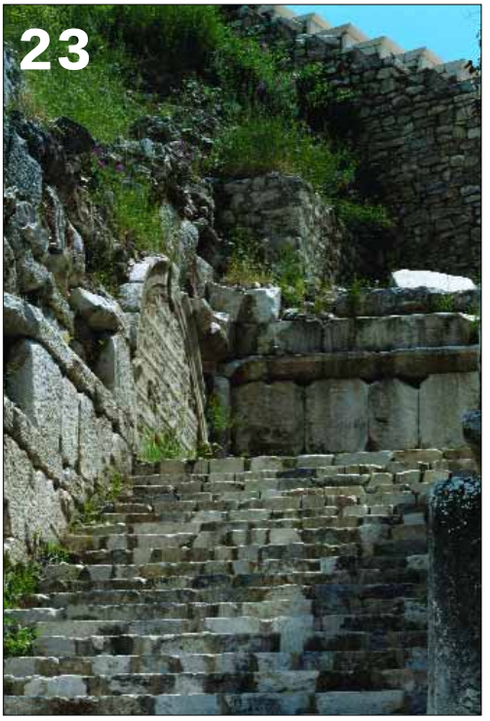

Articles

This week @
America Connects

St. Paul stops by for an interview, and Tim Reidy visits the Paulist mother-house in New York. Plus, a slideshow of Pauline pilgrimage sites. All at americamagazine.org.

Bishops and the Conference

Parishioners at St. John's Church in Honesdale, Pa., might be excused for being confused about the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. On Oct. 19, at a forum on the presidential election sponsored by the parish, Bishop Joseph F. Martino of Scranton interrupted a seminar in progress. As the local newspaper reported the event, he expressed his opposition to the way in which the forum was representing the church's teaching on voting for pro-choice candidates. When Margaret Gannon, I.H.M., of Marywood University, referred to *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, a document on the moral responsibilities of Catholic voters published by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, which was approved by a 98 percent majority, Bishop Martino replied, "No U.S.C.C.B. document is relevant in this diocese…. The U.S.C.C.B. does not speak for me."

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops traces its history as far back as 1917, when the American bishops organized to provide spiritual care for servicemen during wartime. Today, like many nationwide and regional conferences, the U.S.C.C.B. helps to articulate a unified Catholic voice on important national issues. According to canon law, bishops' conferences "jointly exercise certain pastoral functions on behalf of the Christian faithful of their territory in view of promoting that greater good which the Church offers humankind" (Canon 447). The conference's mission statement speaks of evangelization in a "communal and collegial manner." Indeed, some of their most influential documents, like *Economic Justice for All*, *The Challenge of Peace* and *Always Our Children*, are the more powerful because of this "communal and collegial manner."

Collegiality is an important aspect of the exercise of episcopal authority in our church. When a bishop speaks, we should listen. When the bishops speak together, with one voice, we should listen all the more.

Tasers as Deadly Weapons

An emotionally disturbed man fell to his death from a building ledge in Brooklyn, N.Y., after a policeman stunned him with a Taser in late September. The death of Iman Morales gives new impetus to a long-simmering debate over how and whether to use Tasers, high voltage devices that cause muscular disruption. Some 12,000 police, jail and prison agencies in the United States use them. Amnesty International, while acknowledging that the use of a Taser can sometimes be justified as an alternative to firearms, has long been critical of their use against mentally disturbed people.

Last year, Amnesty issued a statement calling for a U.S. Justice Department inquiry into Taser-related deaths. Though "less injurious than firearms...the vast majority of people who have died," its report said, "have been unarmed men who did not pose a threat." Mr. Morales, for example, was unarmed and posed no threat. The statement added that Tasers are being too widely used before rigorous testing as to their potential health risks. Mr. Morales's death, moreover, makes it clear that police chiefs should require far more training for their officers in the use of these control devices. The use of Tasers can be harmful even for conscientious law enforcement personnel. The officer who gave the order to fire at Morales committed suicide a few days later, a grim sign of the Taser's doubly lethal potential.

Do Rocks Have Rights?

Dec. 10 is the 60th anniversary of the adoption of the U.N. Declaration on Human Rights. Various groups have been pushing for the recognition of animal rights, and over 100 law schools in the United States teach courses on animal law. In California voters just cast ballots for or against Proposition 2, regarding how much space should be allotted to industrially farmed chickens, cows and pigs.

A new stage beyond human and animal rights was reached, however, on Sept. 28, when Ecuadorans approved their new constitution. Article One of the chapter on rights for nature states: "Nature, or Pachamama, where life is reproduced and exists, has the right to exist, persist, maintain and regenerate its vital cycles, structure, functions and its processes in evolution." Having granted inalienable rights to nature, the state now has the responsibility to protect vegetative life and mineral resources. Trees now have standing, and rocks have rights!

The Vatican's Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace has listed damage to the environment as a new deadly sin. Respect for the world is respect for God the Creator. The attitude advocated is neither anthropocentric nor ecocentric but theocentric, centered on God, the giver of all good gifts.

Perhaps speaking of the rights of nature is simply a new way to speak of environmental ethics. In light of the multiple threats to our environment, we hope it is an effective way that does not lead to legal absurdities and skewed public policy.

Editorial

Guarding Democracy

FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS, a marvel that citizens of mature democracies can too easily take for granted, are still uncommon in our world. Despite the long primary races and an equally long general election campaign, the U.S. presidential election generated enormous popular interest. We have seen increased voter registration, lines at early voting stations, young people becoming involved in politics for the first time and creative fundraising. World citizens also have expressed overwhelming interest in this presidential race. Will American citizens see this election as one step in their ongoing participation in self-government, or will they consider it a "mission accomplished" and leave governing up to the new president and Congress? In this time of financial uncertainty, growing unemployment and involvement in two wars, what can Americans do for their country?

It takes more than casting a vote. Although there can be no democracy without elections, what elections can accomplish is limited. A winner can prove ineffectual or misguided. An elected leader can even use democracy to establish a dictatorship, as happened in Germany under Hitler. Electing a strong leader is not all a democracy needs. If the transference of power every few years without violence does not sustain a democracy, what does make it work? Under-standing, vigilance and activism on the part of citizens.

Understanding. Citizens must understand how their government works and their role in it. Democracy depends on an effective and cautious governing system, like the checks and balances on power set up in our Constitution and Bill of Rights, with a separate judiciary, legislature and executive branch designed to prevent one branch from exerting excessive power, and with military and police under civilian control. Democracies must guarantee specific freedoms (of the press, association, worship and so on), levy taxes and perform public works—infrastructure, social welfare and security.

Once such a system is in place, citizens keep a democracy going. Citizens turn what is essentially a proposal on paper into a living, breathing reality. It seems counterintuitive that a democratic government in which power is decentralized—like a table upheld by a million legs—is inherently fragile. Yet for self-government to succeed, every new generation must take up the cause. If it does not, the democracy can be thrown off balance, or fall into the grip of a powerful few, or become captive to a majority whose treatment of minorities mocks democratic principles, or become isolated from the rest of the world. What makes a democracy work are citizens who know that at its heart democracy is about securing liberties that promote the common good, and who take the initiative to achieve that goal.

Vigilance. Good citizens are vigilant, aware of governmental and societal trends and continually trying to educate themselves about current events. Citizens must know their rights and insist upon them, while also performing their civic duties. Good citizenship means looking intently beyond one's own personal interests to protect the rights of others. In Christian parlance, it means looking after the stranger, the poor, the imprisoned, whoever is "the least," an attitude with crucial civic consequences beyond its religious meaning.

Activism. Democracy thrives when citizens are active participants, engaged in expressing their will through public discourse and at work to bring about their hopes through voluntary associations, like churches, unions and a host of other civic groups. Civic involvement takes on many forms, including participation in watchdog groups and politically motivated organizations. Such affiliations can build social networks and the habits of participation and vigilance that a democracy needs to succeed. Groups that serve the poor, educate children, develop consciences, discuss social concerns and perform a wide range of charitable actions strengthen a democracy.

THE TASK BEFORE THE AMERICAN PEOPLE now is to sustain the citizen interest evident during the 2008 election. It is tempting for a voter whose candidate does not win an election to give up and drop out, or for a winner's supporters to sit back as though the hard work of governing does not involve them. Apathy is the great enemy of democracy.

There are many causes for concern. Developments over the past eight years, for example, have greatly expanded executive authority, pushing our government off balance to a degree not seen for generations. This situation will not correct itself; lobbyists and others with an interest in making the imbalance permanent are working toward that end. Our new president holds more power than any of his predecessors in the last six decades. It is up to ordinary citizens to ensure that he uses it wisely, that our democracy upholds the shared ideals of its citizens and founders and that our political system is restored to health.

Report Links Religious Freedom to Democracy

Joaquin Alliende Luco

A nation that lacks freedom of religion is stunting its own social, economic and political development, said speakers presenting an annual report on religious freedom around the world. Religious freedom guarantees the establishment and protection of democracy and "without religious liberty, there can be no democracy or peace in the world," said the Rev. Joaquin Alliende Luco, president of Aid to the Church in Need. This Catholic organization, which funds religious projects in 136 countries, released its annual report at a press conference Oct. 23 in Rome.

One of the panelists presenting the 2008 report, the Rev. Bernardo Cervellera, who heads the Rome-based missionary news agency AsiaNews, said violations of religious freedoms impoverish a nation. He said today violence against people professing a particular religion decreasingly stems from "irrational fundamentalism," colonialism or political ideologies. Instead, such aggression is mostly "simply motivated by power," he said.

The organization's annual report compiles information directly from the churches the aid agency assists, news articles, official government documents and human rights organizations.

Two Jesuits Murdered in Moscow

Two Jesuit priests were murdered in Moscow after being brutally attacked with blunt objects. Otto Messmer, S.J., 47, and Victor Betancourt, S.J, 42, were found dead late Oct. 28 in their Moscow apartment. In a note distributed to journalists at the Vatican press hall, theVatican spokesman, Federico Lombardi, S.J., said a police investigation was under way.

Father Lombardi reported that authorities suspect Father Betancourt had been killed before Oct. 26, since he had not shown up to celebrate Sunday Mass that day. Father Messmer may have been killed Oct. 27, since he had returned to Moscow from Germany that night. Concerned about not having seen or heard from the priests, another Jesuit went to their apartment Oct. 28 and found them dead.

Father Adolfo Nicolás, superior general of the Jesuits, called on all Jesuits to pray for their brothers in Russia and for an end to all violence. Father Messmer, a Russian citizen, was born in Kazakhstan. He had been head of the Russian independent region of the Society of Jesus since 2002.

Father Betancourt, an Ecuadoran citizen, studied in Argentina, Germany and Rome and had been working in Russia since 2001. The two priests worked together at the Church of St. Louis de France in Moscow.

Nun Raped by Extremists in Orissa State

A Catholic nun who was raped during anti-Christian violence in the Indian state of Orissa addresses a press conference in New Delhi Oct. 24. The nun recounted how Hindu fanatics attacked her.

The government of Orissa State has decided to expedite the case of a Catholic nun who was raped during the recent anti-Christian violence in the eastern Indian state. The move came after the nun spoke at a press conference Oct. 24 at the Jesuit-managed Indian Social Institute in New Delhi, according to a report by UCA News. The 28-year-old nun, who addressed the media with her face covered up to her eyes, was flanked by another nun and a female lawyer. She fought tears while reading a four-page handwritten statement recounting how Hindu fanatics attacked her. She said she had no faith in the Orissa police, who she alleged refused to help her but aided her attackers. A day after the nun met the press, Orissa's Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik convened a meeting in the state capital and directed officials to speed up the case.

Sister Emmanuelle's Life of Charity Recalled

Catholic bishops in France and Belgium have praised the veteran charity worker Sister Emmanuelle, the Notre Dame de Sion nun who died on Oct. 20, just before her 100th birthday. At a Mass on Oct. 22 in Notre Dame Cathedral, Cardinal André Vingt-Trois of Paris said Sister Emmanuelle's personality and use of the media "made her an emblematic figure. But the authenticity of her service showed itself in her capacity to gather all kinds of people behind her work."

The Belgian bishops' conference said in a statement on its Web site: "For almost a century, this great lady radiated generosity and contagious enthusiasm throughout the world. Her life invites us to increase solidarity in times of trial and reminds us it is love which saves the world."

The Paris-based Friends of Sister Emmanuelle said the nun had died peacefully in her sleep of natural causes in her order's retreat house in Callian, in southeastern France.

Symposium on Gifts of People With Disabilities

The message proclaimed at the Diocese of Harrisburg's Symposium on Disabilities Ministry was clear: People

with disabilities bring many gifts to the church and are witnesses of hope for all. From its morning liturgy and keynote presentation to its workshops and general atmosphere of camaraderie and togetherness, the Oct. 18 symposium celebrated what people with disabilities bring to the church and offered practical information on how to include them in the life of the church. "In God's Image: Disabilities Ministry and Catholic Social Thought," organized by the diocese's Commission on Catholic Social Doctrine, drew hundreds of clergy, religious and laity, with disability advocates and disabled people among them. Dennis McNulty, director of disability services for Catholic Charities' Health and Human Services in the Cleveland Diocese, who was the keynote speaker, gave highlights of the U.S. bishops' 1978 pastoral statement on people with disabilities.

In Hard Times, Be Both Generous and Prudent

In these uncertain economic times, "the church has to set an example of what it means to be generous but also be very deliberate about how we spend the temporal goods the people have given to us," said Bishop Robert J. McManus of Worcester, Mass. He sent a letter to pastors recently urging them to be vigilant with the finances of the parishes. "In times like this the wisest thing is not expansion," he said during an interview with The Catholic Free Press, the Worcester diocesan newspaper, in late October. "We have to be very prudent" not to embark on any parish improvement projects that involve significant funds, he added. The economic crisis also can lead people to seek spiritual comfort from the church. "Sometimes challenging times help people to put things into perspective. And if we are honest in our evaluation of what's gone on for the last number of years, in some ways some people have been living over their heads," the bishop said. In a pastoral letter dated Oct. 24, Bishop McManus said, "For many, the opportunity exists to rediscover a life of trust in God, of simpler choices, or the blessing of family life."

New York Seminar Against Torture

Participants in a Fordham University forum on Oct. 21 discussed the response of American political, military, religious and medical groups to the use of torture during interrogations of prisoners by the United States since the 2001 terrorist attacks.

Retired Col. Patrick Lang, president of the Global Resources Group and a former defense intelligence officer, said the Army "understands fully that physical coercion is almost never an effective thing, and is destructive.... If you let people do things forbidden by the Uniform Code of Military Justice, they become uncontrollable and you lose control, you break down self-respect and things go to hell in a handbasket very quickly."

Lang said the government has to make it clear that torture is a crime and will be punished, and the Army has to inculcate its higher values in a new generation of officers.

"The intellectual justification of torture began with St. Augustine, who justified what he called 'coercion' by distinguishing between the good of the body and the good of the soul," said Drew Christiansen, S.J., editor of **America**. "You could torture the body for the sake of the good of the soul," he said. Although this position was not universally accepted within the church, Father Christiansen said it persisted until Pope John Paul II on the first Sunday of Lent in 2000 issued an unprecedented jubilee-year "request for pardon" for the sins of members of the church, committed at times in the name of the church, including the Inquisition. In June 2008, the U.S. bishops issued a study guide entitled *Torture Is a Moral Issue*, looking at church teaching as it relates to the use of torture by government authorities around the world.

The event was sponsored by the Fordham Center on Religion and Culture and drew 150 people to two sessions at the Lincoln Center campus of Jesuit-run Fordham University in New York.

Campion Award to Jon Hassler

Chris Manahan, S.J., superior of the Jesuit Novitiate in St. Paul, Minn., and a former editorial intern at **America**, presents the 2008 Campion Award and accompanying citation to Gretchen Hassler, widow of the honoree Jon Hassler, who passed away last spring. Hassler was a gifted storyteller whose Catholic imagination imbued a score of works—fiction, short story, nonfiction, children's books—from *Staggerford* (1977) to *North of Hope* (1990) to *Dear James* (1993) and more. Small-town life in the Midwest was often the setting depicted by this literary talent and Minnesota's favorite son. The award, named after St. Edmund Campion, S.J., a writer, champion of the faith and martyr, is given by the editors of **America**.

From CNS and other sources. CNS photos.

Morality Matters

A Hungry World

'Food production is again not keeping pace with demand.'

FOR OVER A DECADE I have been asking students at The Catholic University of America what the world would be like if two billion Chinese and Indians ate hamburgers and drove cars the way Americans do. It used to be a rhetorical question. It now describes the world we live in and points to some of the causes driving the global food crisis.

More families than ever will have trouble putting food on the table this Thanksgiving. A gallon of milk and a dozen eggs cost nearly $10 at my local market. In the United States rising prices and falling wages are sending more and more of the working poor to food pantries, whose larders are thin. Worldwide nearly a billion people go hungry each day.

A "perfect storm" of factors causes these hunger pangs. China and India are richer than they used to be. Their two billion people not only eat more; they eat more like Westerners, with diets richer in meat. Meat consumption has quadrupled in China since 1980, to 109 pounds per person per year. While much less than the 234 pounds per person annual consumption in the United States, this still takes a large bite out of the global food supply, since it takes about seven pounds of grain to produce one pound of beef or pork.

As more grain supplies India and China and other emerging markets, like Brazil, less is available for the rest of the world. Exporters have stopped exporting. China changed nearly overnight from being one of the world's largest exporters of corn into an importer competing for scarce supplies with others. Fearful that their own citizens might go hungry, and fearful of the food riots that have erupted from Mexico and Haiti to Pakistan, many countries from Argentina to Russia are stopping their exports to global markets to safeguard food at home.

As demand has increased, supply has decreased. Severe weather patterns have cut harvests, particularly a multi-year drought in Australia, a key grain exporter. Global climate change will continue to disrupt food supplies. Production of biofuels, particularly ethanol, has siphoned some food from our dinner plates into our gas tanks. Wheat stocks are at a 60-year low, and rice supplies are at the lowest levels in 25 years, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The rising price of oil jacks up food prices as production costs more from fertilizer to transporting food to market. But rising oil prices have also cut production, as farmers who cannot afford the higher costs of fertilizer, seeds and transportation respond by planting less. Norman Borlaug, winner of the Nobel Prize for his role in the "Green Revolution," notes that "we need another breakthrough," because food production is again not keeping pace with demand.

The global financial crisis has not helped. The same unregulated casino capitalism that toppled markets with bad mortgage loans also allowed speculators to flood food markets, raising prices beyond the means of the world's poor. Oxfam reports that the global financial crisis has pushed an extra 119 million people into hunger. Charities and the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization fear that governments will cut food and agriculture aid to cover the huge sums they are spending to rescue failing banks.

Emergency food aid has not been able to keep pace with growing hunger pains. Because of rising prices, aid dollars buy less food at a time when more people need it. The United States has traditionally been generous, providing half of the world's food aid. But this generous intention does not go as far as it might, because the United States purchases surplus U.S. farm crops and sends them by U.S. shippers thousands of miles away for distribution, instead of buying cheaper local food and using local distributors—which would feed more people and help build self-sufficiency.

Some farmers have benefited from rising prices. African farmers unfortunately have not. They do not have access to credit with which to buy more seeds or even keep up with rising fertilizer costs. At a time when the world needs the fruits of their labor more than ever, poor farmers have been sidelined because they lack the basic tools of their trade.

Smart organizations, like Catholic Relief Services, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Warren Buffett's foundations, are not only providing emergency rations, but are working to help poor farmers grow more, to raise themselves and their communities from hunger. According to Ken Hackett, director of C.R.S., projects like the Rice Initiative are "helping small-scale farmers to boost local crop production, increasing their incomes and putting more food on the market, which should lower prices for all."

Josette Sheeran, executive director of the U.N. World Food Program, finds seeds of hope in the enduring food crisis. "This is an opportunity, not only for the American farmer, but hopefully for poor farmers in Latin America, Asia, Africa and elsewhere. Seventy percent of African farmers are women, and they often bear more of the risk and receive less of the gain for their efforts than any farmer in the world. In fact, almost half the world's hungry are marginalized farmers with little or no access to fertilizer, seeds, tractors, credit, markets or extension services. Perhaps, the time has finally come for the African farmer." For these seeds of hope to bear fruit, though, we must not let scarcity and fear divide us; we must continue to work in solidarity with the poor.

Maryann Cusimano Love

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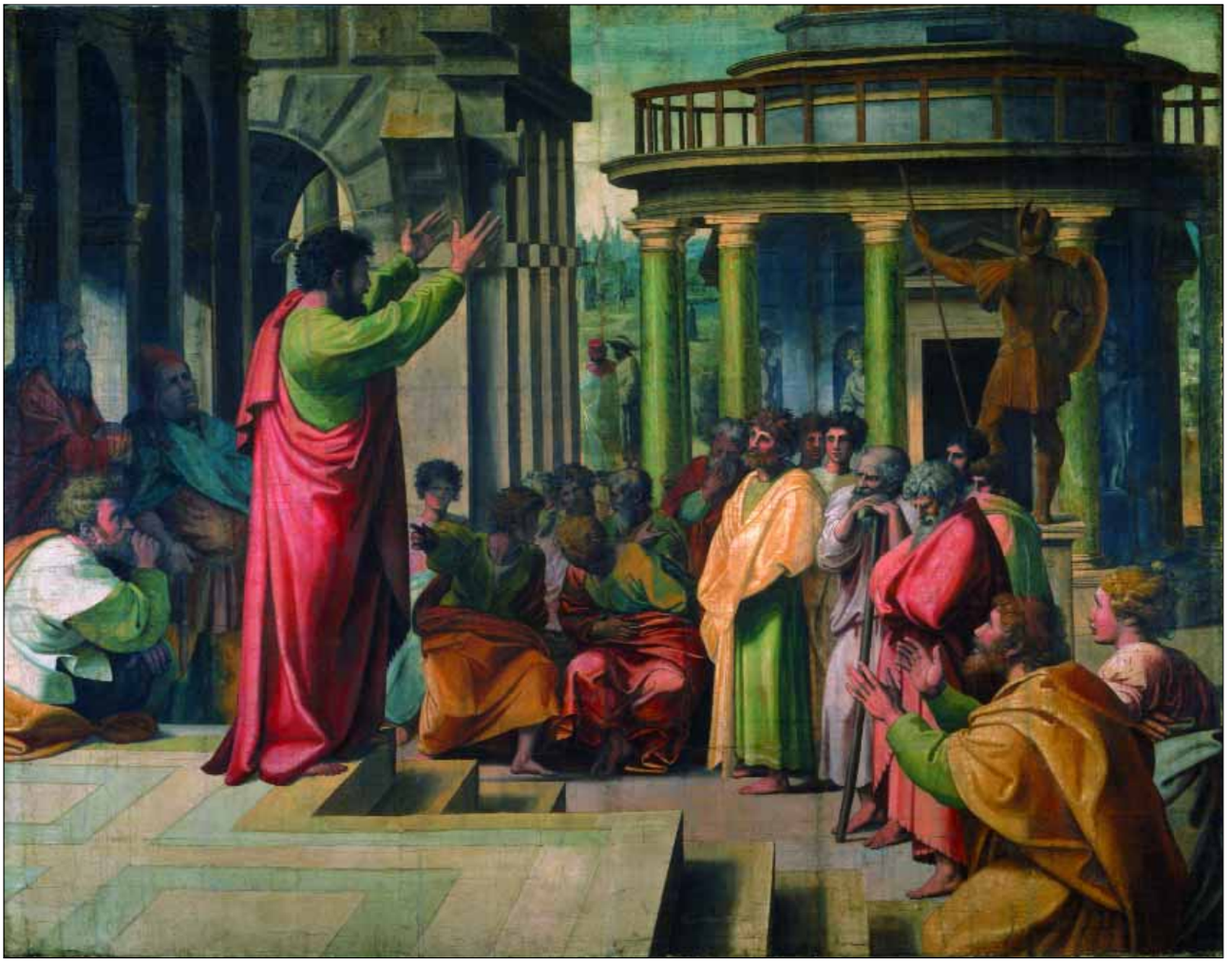

"PAUL PREACHING AT ATHENS." RAPHAEL. PHOTO: VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON/ART RESOURCE

Pastoral theology and practice in Paul's letters

Model of Persuasion

BY JOHN R. DONAHUE

"PICK IT UP; READ IT"—twice a young Roman rhetorician on the fast track to success heard these words, uttered in a sing-song voice: "*Tolle, lege; tolle, lege.*" Augustine then picked up and read Paul's Letter to the Romans, and his life was turned around along with theology in the West. Centuries later a troubled Augustinian monk in Germany read the same letter and wrote: "I raged furiously and with a confused conscience. Then, thanks to God's mercy and

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meditating on it day and night, I paid attention to the context.... I began to understand God's righteousness as something by which the righteous lives as by God's gift, that is, by faith" (Martin Luther on Romans).

St. Teresa of Ávila was consoled by Paul when reflecting on her spiritual trials: "But while I was in an oratory, in great affliction, and not knowing what was to become of me, I read in a book, which it seemed as if the Lord had put into my hands, those words of St. Paul, that God is very faithful and never allows people who love Him to be deluded by the devil." And Jerome Nadal (1507-80), commenting on the newly issued Jesuit *Constitutions*, wrote, "For us Paul provides the pattern of our lives."

On May 24, 1738, a young John Wesley went to a meeting in Aldersgate Street, London, where Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans was being read, and remembered that "about a quarter before nine, while he [Paul] was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone...."

Yet Friedrich Nietzsche called Paul the "dysangelist" (herald of bad news), and George Bernard Shaw described him as the "monstrous imposition upon Jesus." Paul has been pilloried as the first Christian misogynist, an advocate of slavery and an apostate anti-Semite. Will the real Paul please stand up? While Paul has truly been many things to many people (apostle, missionary, theologian and martyr), I will focus on elements of Paul's pastoral practice as he grapples with problems in his complex urban churches. And I hope this Paul will speak to those engaged in pastoral service to the pilgrim church today.

Today, when a wide spectrum of men and women are committing themselves to ministry, Paul is a paradigm of fruitful, mutual and affectionate cooperation.

It is very significant that Paul wrote letters to the different communities he founded or intended to visit. In the ancient world letters, in contrast to ancient stylized epistolary literature, were a substitute for personal presence. Though we have a trove of letters from this period dealing with such matters as divorce, property disputes and errant sons asking for money from parents, none match the personal engagement and religious depth of Paul. From his letters we can derive elements of Paul's pastoral theology and practice. His pastoral theology is an interaction of at least five overlapping elements, which should be seen as a prism (rather than as discrete elements) that refracts aspects of Paul's initial "enlightenment" (Acts 9:3).

Foundations of a Pastoral Theology

A prophetic call to be an apostle to the nations. Though often termed a "conversion," this is an inaccurate description of Paul's life-changing experience. Rather, he understands himself in the heritage of the great prophets of Israel. While confronting those in Galatia who preached "another gospel," Paul retorts "the Gospel preached by me is not of human origin. For I did not receive it from a human being, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal 1:11-12). He later thanks God "who from my mother's womb had set me apart and called me through his grace, and was pleased to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him to the Gentiles," a clear echo of Jer 1:5: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you." Ultimately it is rooted in a deep experience of grace and love: "I live by faith in the Son of God who has loved me and given himself up for me" (Gal 2:20). Paul rejoices in his new identity, "I even consider everything as a loss because of the supreme good of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil 3:8).

Jewish identity and heritage. A major objection to using the word "conversion" in Paul's case is that it suggests a move from one religion to another. Paul never thought of himself as anything but a Jew who had accepted the crucified and risen Jesus as the hoped-for messiah of his people, whom he so loved that he would consider himself "accursed and separated from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kin according to the flesh [for] they are Israelites; theirs the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; theirs the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, is the Messiah. God who is over all be blessed forever. Amen" (Rom 9:3-5). Contrary to earlier interpretations that the burden of the law brought Paul to throw himself completely on God's mercy, Paul claims that he is "in observance of the law, a Pharisee," and "in righteousness based on the law, blameless" (Phil 3:5-6). Though clearly educated in Hellenistic rhetoric, Paul never quotes Greek writers; instead the Jewish scriptures provide the foundation of his most enduring insights.

His lived experience of the Christ event. Paul's revelation was the "Christ event," the saving significance of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and the gift of the Spirit

along with the living presence and power of Christ in the community (Phil 3:7-16; 2 Cor 1:1-11; and 2 Cor 10-12, esp. 12:1-10). Paul reproduced in his own life the pattern of this event. After citing an early Christian hymn in Phil 2:5-11, that Jesus "did not regard equality with God something to be grasped...but emptied himself, taking on the form of a slave, even to death on the cross, but was exalted by God and given a new identity" (a name above every name), Paul goes on to describe a personal emptying of his own—of his status and privileges in Judaism—that he considered no loss compared with the knowledge of Christ and the power of his resurrection (Phil 3:4-11).

Writing to a fractious group of Corinthians, Paul narrates a "death" experience when he "despaired of life itself," only to realize "that we might trust not in ourselves but in God who raises the dead" (2 Cor 1:8-9).

A prayer-filled life. Paul begins every letter with that most Jewish of prayers, thanksgiving, and most often ends with a blessing. Philemon, the shortest letter, is typical: "I give thanks to my God always, remembering you in my prayers, as I hear of the love and the faith you have in the Lord Jesus and for all the holy ones." Virtually all forms of prayer echo through his letters: thanksgiving to God, petitions for the community, blessings and glorifying God. Prayer binds him to the communities when he constantly speaks of his prayers for them and asks them to pray for him. When challenged by super-apostles he reluctantly speaks of his mystical experience of being caught up into paradise (2 Cor 12:3-4), and proclaims "we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings" (Rom 8:26). No better insight into prayer as an abiding presence of God in all things can be found than Paul's deep faith; "I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20).

Traditions handed on in his communities. However dynamic he was, and however willing to stand up to church leaders, like Cephas, when he felt the Gospel was in peril, Paul drew on the traditions of the community that were handed down to him. When beginning his long reflection on the meaning of the Resurrection, he says he "handed on what I also received," the confession of the death, burial, resurrection and appearances of Jesus (1 Cor 15:3-7). He counters what he sees as a parody of the Lord's Supper when some in the community start eating their choice food before the poorer members arrive and thus humiliating the "have nots." He then invokes the eucharistic words of Jesus uttered "on the night before he was betrayed," bringing home that the deepest meaning of the supper is one of self-giving for others. The hymn in Philippians (2:6-11) may have been used at baptism. Though admitting that he did not know Jesus in the flesh, Paul invokes Jesus' prohibition of divorce (1

Cor 7:10) and paraphrases Jesus' teaching on reconciliation (Rom 12:14-17).

Paul's most enduring fidelity to tradition embraces not only teaching and liturgical fragments, but practice, mainly a concern for the poor embodied in the Jerusalem agreement with the "pillars": "only we were to be mindful of the poor, which is the very thing I was eager to do" (Gal 2:10). During his missionary journeys he continually raises funds for the Jerusalem church (the poor), and his arrest and journey to Rome in chains is the result of his efforts to deliver the collection to Jerusalem.

Pastoral Theology in Practice

While clearly there is no gap in Paul between belief and practice, even a cursory sketch of his interaction with various communities can challenge contemporary pastoral ministry. Paul gives *primacy to the proclamation of the Gospel.* He is "set apart for the Gospel" (Rom 1:1) and called "to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel" (Rom 15:16); he has been sent not to baptize but to proclaim the Gospel as the power and wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:17-20), and he will put up with anything rather than hinder the Gospel of Christ (1 Cor 9:12). Paul's whole self is caught up in this proclamation. "With such affection for you," he tells the disciples at Thessalonica, "we were determined to share with you not only the Gospel of God, but our very selves as well, so dearly beloved had you become to us." Paul illustrates this by the image of a nursing mother and a gentle and challenging father (1 Thes 2:7-8; 11).

Today, when a wide spectrum of men and women are committing themselves to ministry, Paul is a paradigm of fruitful, *mutual and affectionate cooperation.* Timothy is a co-sender of significant letters and a frequent emissary (as is Titus); Paul refers to Timothy as a brother and describes Timothy's devotion to him as that of a son to his father (Phil 2:22). The married couple Aquila and Priscilla (named Prisca in 1 Cor 16:19 and Rom 16:3) welcomes Paul to Corinth, works with him in Ephesus and is in Rome when he writes to the church there. Phoebe, a deacon of the church at Cenchreae, near Corinth, carries Paul's letter to Rome. Paul not only is dependent on co-workers; he is delighted at the work of others, like Cephas or Apollos, who might appear to be in competition with him: "For we are God's co-workers; you are God's field, God's building" (1 Cor 3:9).

Paul's faith rests on the bedrock of the Gospel, which breaks down the barriers between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female (Gal 3:28). To proclaim the Gospel he travels through many lands and many cultures, while constantly *adapting his proclamation* to changing circumstances and people, so that he becomes "all things to all...for the sake of the Gospel" (1 Cor 9:22-23). He affirms his freedom to eat meat offered to idols, since even though there are "so-called gods in heaven and on earth," the idols are empty representations, because "for us there is one God" (1 Cor 8:5-6). But if this causes a brother or sister to sin, he will never eat meat again (1 Cor 8:13). Paul's missionary practice is a beacon for us in the rapidly changing cultural landscape of the modern church.

Paul never set out to produce commentaries on the Torah, or even sustained reflection on the Christ event. His "theology" is *responding theology*, which emerges in dialogue with the questions and difficult situations that existed in his sometimes fractious communities. Chloe's people (1 Cor 1:11) alert him to problems in Corinth. Other letters follow with a laundry list of problems: divisions in the community, justification of strange sexual practices, disedifying legal disputes and marriage issues, a dispute between the weak and strong over ritual laws, liturgical problems and difficulties understanding the Resurrection. He writes to the community in Philippi because of a dispute between two leading women, Euodia and Syntyche (Phil 4:2). Even in Romans, the most theological of his letters, the final chapters confront serious divisions in the community. Were it not for these disputes, we might never have had the eucharistic tradition of 1 Cor 11:23-26 nor the Philippians hymn (2:5-11). Even bitter attacks from his opponents allow Paul to reflect most deeply on the meaning of Christ in his life: "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness," and "When I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor 12:9-10). Paul plumbs the depth of his own experience, his heritage and the traditions of the church, but assimilates the experience of his communities in evolving a pastoral theology.

Paramount to Paul's engagement with community issues is *leadership through persuasion.* A legacy of Paul's training in Tarsus, a center of ancient rhetoric, is his use of various styles of argument to enter the world of his hearers. His letters reflect the ancient tradition of *psychagogia*, "spiritual direction." Rarely does he simply invoke authority. Rather, he spells out the implications of the views of others to allow them to see the contrast between their views or practices and their shared experience of the Christ event through baptism and life in community. Paul's patient pedagogy is a model to our contemporary church where issues of authority—invoked or rejected—are so prevalent.

Thus does Paul offer guidelines for pastoral theology during and beyond this Year of Paul. His body of writing has transformed lives for centuries. *Tolle, lege; tolle, lege.* Take and read. A

Gilbert Martinez, C.S.P., reflects on the Pauline Year, at americamagazine.org/podcast.

A Complicated Apostle

Who was St. Paul?

BY JOHN J. KILGALLEN

FEW WOULD QUESTION the lasting value of St. Paul's contribution to the content of our faith. But when one reads or hears what Paul wrote, one often meets a personality that can seem unpleasant or even antagonizing. In short, Paul can put people off by who he seems to be. Though we say that he is promoting a doctrine, not himself, he can still leave unfriendly impressions upon his readers, appearing pompous, cantankerous, superior, harsh and even a misunderstanding son of the presumptions of his culture. Unlike storytelling (as in the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles) where little of the author is revealed, letter-writing brings the personality of the writer very close to the surface. Paul's personality cannot be avoided. Worse, it can stand in the way of appreciation of what the Spirit says through him. It is best, then, to try to understand the man. Perhaps we still will not like him much, but, once understood, his contribution to faith will be appreciated more than ever.

"THE APOSTLE PAUL IN MEDITATION," REMBRANDT HARMENSZ VAN RIJN. PHOTO: REUNION DES MUSEES NATIONAUX/ART RESOURCE, NY

So who was Paul?

The Person of Paul

St. Paul was a genius. This is a common and ancient assessment of Paul from specialists of every (or no) persuasion who have extensively studied his writings. His writings were so profound that they were used by defenders of the faith who were themselves recognized as brilliant thinkers. And as with most geniuses, Paul often expressed himself in leaps we do not follow easily. This type of realization has left us the understatement in 2 Pt 3:16 that in Paul's letters "there are some things hard to understand." If you know a genius, you know Paul. Quick, deeply perceptive, highly intellectual, impatient or unaware that others could not keep up with him—Paul had many of the attributes we associate with genius.

St. Paul was emotional. Though it is important to avoid caricatures, it seems safe to say that the Psalms portray the Jewish people as emotional—highly, visibly so. They wear their heart on their sleeve, as Shakespeare says. They are very expressive, rarely hiding their feelings, whether this public expression is pleasing to others or not. There is no "stiff upper lip" for them; you have to make room for this often intense expression of this personality type if you deal at length with a person like Paul.

St. Paul had an education far beyond the normal. Paul's education was lengthy and profound, a measure for his genius; it was also exceptionally broad. On the one hand, Paul sat in Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel, the greatest Jewish teacher of the first-century A.D. From this man Paul would have learned the most abstruse meanings of Jewish tradition and the varied and complicated methods of Jewish interpretation of their Scriptures. He would have become very adept at arguing over the significance of scriptural texts. On the other hand, Tarsus, his hometown, was a retirement locale for certain philosophers after their teaching careers in Rome. Tarsus was loosely akin to a university town. As such,

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it afforded the young Paul access to some of the profound philosophies of his time, attendant with methods and argumentation practiced in the philosophical schools and circles. It is within this twofold education—both Jewish and Gentile—that Paul's genius developed and flourished throughout his life.

St. Paul was a Pharisee. Paul was an adult convert. Widely educated, he had made the choice to be a member of the "strictest form of the Pharisees." In doing this, he was a radical. The Pharisees ("Separated Ones") emerged from the Jewish struggles nearly 200 years before Paul, after the long-lasting and successful revolt of the Maccabees to free Israel and, later, the lapse of the Jewish ruling authority (once free from foreign domination) into secularism. In each historical situation, fierce loyalists or zealots arose to defeat the foreigners and challenge the secularism of new Jewish governments. Over their history, the Pharisees had many martyrs, as they single-mindedly defended the tradition of Yahweh against threats from without and within Israel.

Pharisees never made up a large percentage of Israelites. They were highly respected by most people for their unswerving dedication to Yahweh and his Law; yet they were often impatient with those who, as they saw it, did not give first place in their lives to the Law of Yahweh. Common to this relatively small group of fiery people was a fierce dedication to the Law, obedience to which assured one of salvation. It is not too much to say that the personality profile of a Pharisee was capped by total commitment, an unbending interest only in the Law and its traditions.

Paul never had any doubt about what he wanted to be or do. Not everyone likes a person so intense and fixed on goals, but such was the character of the strictest of the Pharisees. Given this life orientation, in Paul's adult conversion we see that powerful drive (like water from a fire hose) turned from dedication to Judaism to dedication to Christ. Only the object of intensity and devotion changed, not the psychology or characteristics that Paul already possessed. Readying oneself to read Paul means readying oneself to stand in the presence of utter devotion—first as a Pharisee, then as a follower of Christ. It is hard to imagine a Pharisee to be other than stubborn, ready to make great sacrifices, able to "go it alone" if necessary. Such was Paul.

St. Paul was a founder of churches. While we rightly speak of him as apostle to the Gentiles (though his letters readily show him an apostle to the Jews, too), Paul founded a number of Christian communities. Among the New Testament writings are eight letters written to communities Paul founded (he did not found the church at Rome). He founded churches in Galatia as well as the towns of Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth, Ephesus and Colossae. It is worth noting that Paul was also a mentor and guide to Titus and Timothy; to them, too, he sent three letters.

We can anticipate how Paul would relate to these various Christians. On the one hand, he had a love for them that only a founder could have, and a desperate fear of losing people whom he considered to be his children. Protective of his fledgling churches, encouraging, correcting, making decisions for them, guiding them and rejoicing with them—all of this in Paul's letters flows from his status as a founder of what he refused to lose. It is important to remember that when we meet these church communities in his letters, they are only between five and 10 years old. Most of these Christians were adult converts, who inevitably entered Christianity with the baggage of years of false worship and immorality. Paul called these Christians "the saints," but he struggled mightily to make them so. One has to appreciate the tension that Paul allowed himself to live with throughout his missionary life, as he tried to preserve and help to grow what he rightly knew was good and of God and should not die. He spoke of himself as the mother, the father, the brother of these communities. Much of his writing must be understood as flowing from such love and respect, wanting only the people's good in all circumstances.

Paul's World

St. Paul lived in his own particular circumstances. The entry of the divine into Paul's life was most extraordinary. It is hard for us today to understand fully the impact that moment had forever in his life and psychology. We can only acknowledge it and live with it. Further, Paul's letters (except possibly Romans) were written to deal with particular historical situations. To understand these letters well, one must understand the circumstances that led Paul to compose them, for this will help to appreciate their tone. If these circumstances were threatening to the communities affected, we must realize that there was no other way for Paul to communicate with them than letter-writing, a form of communication that took a long time to reach its readers. Moreover, to what extent can one solve a problem by letter? Many of Paul's decisions were framed so as to bring to an immediate halt whatever was eroding the communities; the tone of his letters seems to have been secondary to him. Actually, the letters in many instances were only a stop-gap; Paul implicitly hoped to meet his communities again, at which time he would try to handle problems with greater polish and study, and with a charitable, frank exchange of opinions.

Paul's letters occasionally communicated decisions that do not touch the essence of Paul's witness to the saving death and resurrection of Jesus. When left to himself to decide matters, especially from a long distance, Paul often fell back on his Jewish, Pharisaic training. What else could

he be expected to do? He, too, was limited by his own religious understanding of God's will, and he used that as his best tool to stop problems and create at least temporary harmony and peace. Again, would we, in his position, do things differently?

Paul had a unique sense of Christian apostleship. "To me life is Christ…. I long to be with Christ" (Phil 1:21). Paul reached this psychological unity in himself by the end of his life, if not earlier. But he could still write, "God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus…you, my brothers and sisters whom I love and long for" (Phil 1:8). Paul, like so many of us, could say, "I have not attained perfect maturity, but I continue my pursuit in hope that I may possess it" (Phil 3:12). Paul at the end was single-minded, whether in serving God or loving his neighbor. He learned and then taught; undeterred by persecution, he defended and offered Christ to anyone who would listen. He assured those baptized and intent on living in Christ that he could serve as their model, but never asked anyone to reach God in precisely the way he did. His hope? "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things, and keep on doing what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me" (Phil 4:8-9).

A Chosen Vessel

Paul withstood frightening opposition from man and nature. He knew fear and joy. Occasionally Paul corrected authorities when he thought it necessary. He preferred not to be a "loner apostle" but instead to work together with other preachers and teachers; he enjoyed the company of friends. Often other teachers misrepresented Christianity or castigated Paul's person. Though chancing the appearance of vanity, at such times he could only recount his "credentials" that made him trustworthy.

Paul was a small man, not handsome and not a great orator. But then, it was not himself he was selling. He was convinced he had the right understanding of life's essentials and wanted everyone else to have it too. He, like us, was an "earthen vessel" holding a treasure. The Spirit of Christ made use of him, not least to give us 13 of our 27 New Testament documents, the charter of Christianity. Paul was a chosen vessel, a willing vessel, who tried tirelessly to give to others, to anyone, what God had given him and who ultimately, like every human being, longed "to know Jesus and the power of his resurrection, to be conformed to his death if somehow I may attain to unending life" (Phil 3:10). A

Jim McDermott, S.J., puts St. Paul on the couch, at americamagazine.org/video.

Women and Paul

Was Paul an egalitarian or a chauvinist?

BY BARBARA E. REID

When Christians look to Paul's letters for guidance in answering contemporary questions about women's roles in church and society, they find conflicting messages. In some texts Paul appears egalitarian; in others he subordinates women to men and insists they keep silent. How should we read him?

Egalitarian?

It is important to remember at the outset that Paul was not a systematic theologian. He never formulated a coherent "theology of women." Rather, his letters are pastoral in nature, addressed to the specific needs and questions of particular communities. Also, Paul was a man of his day, shaped by the patriarchal attitudes of Greco-Roman and Jewish cultures toward women. We cannot expect him to think exactly as we do.

Having said that, the phrase "no longer male and female" from Gal 3:28 is often held up as a banner for women's equality. But while the inspiration of the Spirit can indeed take us in that direction today, it would be anachronistic to think that Paul intended that phrase as a declaration of women's equality in the social and political arena. Gal 3:28 is a baptismal formula that Paul has inserted into his letter to help make the point that right relationship with God does not depend on works of the Law; all distinctions, including those based on ethnicity, race, social status and gender, are overcome through baptism into Christ. Paul is likely speaking, then, only on a theological level. In fact, it is doubtful that Paul thought this equality in Christ should be made manifest in social structures in his day at all; as he states in 1 Corinthians, "the present form of this world is passing away" (7:31).

The best measure of Paul's egalitarian sensibility lies in the way he talks about different Christian women. Paul was no lone ranger in his apostolic ministry, and many of his coworkers were women. Looking at the passages in Paul's letters and in the Acts of the Apostles in which these women are mentioned, one finds a great sense of collegiality and many examples of women given authority.

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Phoebe, deacon of Cenchreae. The last chapter of Paul's Letter to the Romans is a letter of recommendation for Phoebe, who is deacon (*diakonos*) of the church of Cenchreae (Rom 16:1). Romans dates to the late 50s, a time when there were not as yet any set job descriptions, titles or ordination rites for Christian ministers. The term *diakonos* is best translated "minister" or "servant." In the Gospels, Jesus speaks of his own mission this way, saying he has come "not to be served (*diakonēthēnai*), but to serve (*diakonēsai*)" (Mk 10:45). In Luke's Gospel, Jesus likewise defines a leader as "one who serves (*ho diakonōn*)" (22:26-27). In Acts 6, we find a distinction made between two kinds of *diakonia*: ministry of the table (6:2) and ministry of the word (6:4).

Diakonia can also entail financial ministry. Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna and the other Galilean women disciples "provided (*diēkonoun*) for" Jesus and the other disciples out of their monetary resources (Lk 8:3). Paul's collection for the church in Jerusalem is also called *diakonia* (Acts 11:29; 12:25) and Paul often refers to himself as a *diakonos* (e.g., 1 Cor 3:5; 2 Cor 6:4).

Phoebe's ministry, then, could have entailed any or all of the above kinds of service. But Paul goes further, saying Phoebe has become a "leader" of many, including himself (Rom 16:2). Many translations dilute this sense, rendering the Greek word *prostatis* as "helper" (Revised Standard Version), "good friend" (New English Bible), or "a great help" (New International Version). The NRSV and the New American Bible more correctly translate it "benefactor." As benefactor or patron, Phoebe would have supplied her home for the community's worship and likely would have presided over the eucharistic celebrations. And she would have overseen and provided funds for all its various ministries.

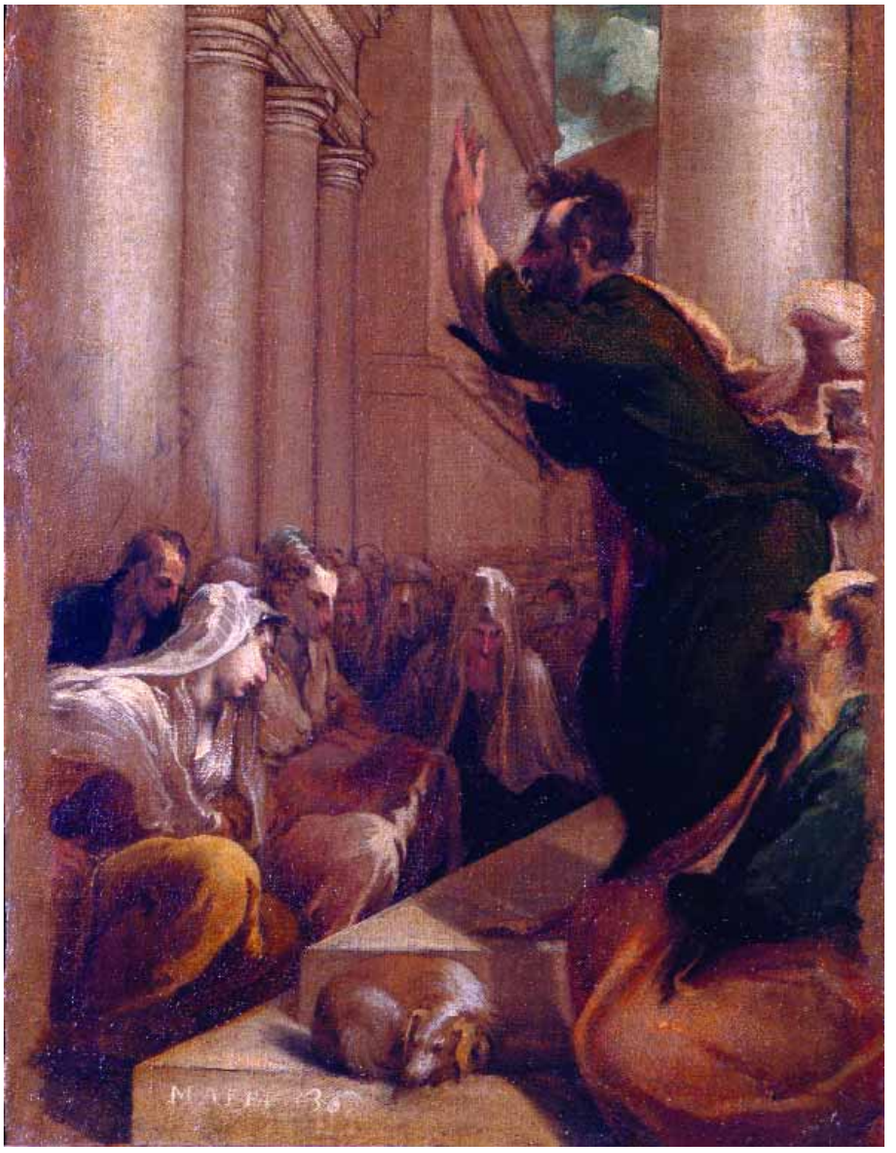
Prisca, Nympha, Mary, Lydia: heads of house churches. Another frequently mentioned leader of a house church is Prisca, along with her husband Aquila. Paul calls them his "co-workers" (Rom 16:3), a term he also uses of four other women who have "worked hard in the Lord": Mary (Rom 16:6), Tryphaena, Tryphosa and Persis (Rom 16:12). Paul expresses particular gratitude for Prisca and Aquila; they "risked their necks for my life," he states in Rom 16:4. Twice Paul mentions "the church in their house" (Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19; see also 2 Tm 4:19). In Acts they are

depicted helping Paul found the church in Ephesus and teaching Apollos, an eloquent preacher from Alexandria, to whom they "explained the Way of God...more accurately" (Acts 18:26).

It is striking that four of the six times Prisca is mentioned in Acts and in the Pauline letters, her name precedes her husband's. In Greco-Roman culture it would have been customary, when referring to a husband and wife, to put the man's name first. Paul and Luke's reversed order shows the high esteem in which they held her.

Other female leaders of house churches are also noted in the New Testament, including Nympha (Col 4:15) and Mary the mother of John Mark, in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12). Luke also tells of Lydia, a dealer in purple goods, who was baptized with all her household by Paul (Acts 16:11-15). When Paul is released from prison, it is to Lydia's house he goes, because the community in Philippi has found a home there (16:40).

Other women mentioned by Paul. Two other women ministers named by Paul are Euodia and Syntyche, co-workers in Philippi who have "struggled beside" Paul "in the work of the gospel" (Phil 4:3). The verb *synathlēō*, connotes a "struggle" in which every muscle is strained, as in an athletic contest. And in Rom 16:7, Paul sends greetings to "Andronicus and Junia, my relatives who were in prison with me." He continues, "They are prominent among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was." Some find it startling that a woman is called an apostle, thinking that only the Twelve were apostles. In Paul's letters many others bear this title, including Paul himself (Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 9:1-27, etc.), Apollos (1 Cor 4:9), Barnabas (1 Cor 9:5-6; see also Acts 14:4, 14), Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25), Silvanus and Timothy (1 Thes 1:1 with 2:7).



"SAINT PAUL PREACHING." FRANCESCO BASSANO. PHOTO: CAMERAPHOTO, VENICE/ART RESOURCE, NY

Chauvinist?

"Women should be silent." Alongside these texts illustrating Paul's high estimation of his women co-workers can be found a number of Pauline texts that appear to restrict women. So in 1 Cor 14:34-36 we find the statement: "Women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as the law also says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. Or did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only ones it has reached?"

This passage is especially puzzling in light of Paul's instructions to the Corinthian women prophets in chapter 11 of this same letter (vs. 2-16). Here, Paul says that any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled disgraces her head (v. 5). Debate continues about whether Paul is speaking in this instance about veils or hairstyles, but it is clear that the problem is not that women are speaking aloud in the assembly.

So why would Paul then silence women in Chapter 14? Some scholars think that 14:34-36 is an addition, not written by Paul but inserted by a later copyist. Others propose that we read these verses not as Paul's instructions, but as a dialogue between Paul and the Corinthian men. Verses 34-35 would be the voice of the men of Corinth, insisting the women keep silent, and verse 36 would be Paul's response, effectively, "Do you think you're the only ones who have a word to share?" There are several other instances in this letter where such a dialogue between Paul and the Corinthians is apparent (1 Cor 7:1; 8:1). Still another solution is that the two chapters concern different kinds of speaking. In

Chapter 11 the women are prophesying with inspired speech. In Chapter 14 the women may have been asking questions or giving theological interpretations that differed from those of their husbands, something that would have been considered shameful or disruptive in a patriarchal culture. Yet in light of what we have seen from Paul—his willingness to allow women to serve as teachers, patrons, church leaders and prophetic speakers—this last interpretation seems unlikely.

"*Wives, be submissive to your husbands.*" Another problematic passage occurs in Col 3:18-19, where wives are admonished to be submissive to their husbands "as is fitting in the Lord." The next verses expound on how children must be obedient to their parents as well, and slaves to their masters (Col 3:20–4:1). A similar instruction is found in Eph 5:21-33, with more elaboration on the husband-wife relationship.

These instructions are not in fact original to Paul. Household codes like these had been used since the time of Aristotle, who outlined the proper workings of a Greek home in terms of the *paterfamilias* as ruler, to whom the women, children and slaves are subordinate. In Colossians and Ephesians the effort being made is to infuse Christian values and motivation into the socio-political structure that functioned in the Greco-Roman world.

Furthermore, most biblical scholars agree that Ephesians was not written by Paul himself, but by a later leader who assumes his mantle of authority. Many consider Colossians similarly. And it is notable that such insistence on subordination of women is not found in any of the authentic Pauline letters. Rather, we find sayings that point toward equality and mutuality, such as: "In the Lord woman is not independent of man or man independent of woman. For just as woman came from man, so man comes through woman; but all things come from God" (1 Cor 11:11-12); also 1 Cor 7:4: "The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; likewise, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does."

Nevertheless, in these later letters written in Paul's name we see a concerted effort to restrict the leadership of women. While reading these letters, it is good to remember that they represent only one voice among many in the early church. Still, it would be interesting to know the responses of the women leaders when they heard these texts read aloud. Women like Phoebe, Junia and Prisca could provide insight for Christians today on how to resist efforts toward patriarchy.

For Further Reading

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Women Who Knew Paul, by Florence Gillman (The Liturgical Press, 1992)

A Feminist Companion to Paul, edited by Amy-Jill Levine, with Marianne Blickenstaff (Pilgrim Press, 2004)

A Woman's Place. House Churches in Earliest Christianity, by Carolyn Osiek and Margaret MacDonald (Fortress, 2005)

Paul: Midwife and Mother

On a number of occasions, Paul uses maternal imagery to speak of his mission. He likens himself to a nursing mother caring for her children (1 Thes 2:7) and describes himself as giving milk to babes until they can take solid food (1 Cor 3:1-2). Several times he speaks of labor pangs (1 Thes 5:3; Gal 4:19; Rom 8:22). By using such metaphors, Paul validates the experience of female believers and makes his message more appealing to them. Their use also suggests that Paul allowed himself to be influenced by his women co-workers, listened to their experience and their language and learned from them uniquely female expressions of God's movement within. In this aspect, too, he provides a good model for collaboration in ministry today. A

In His Shoes

A pilgrim's guide to some Pauline sites

BY JOHN C. ENDRES

LAST SPRING Pope Benedict XVI dedicated a special jubilee year to the Apostle Paul, from June 28, 2008, to June 29, 2009, to mark the second millennium of his birth. Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople joined the pope in Rome for the opening liturgies, and both of them invited Christians to celebrate this jubilee, which includes the making of pilgrimages. Having made Pauline pilgrimages in Turkey on a number of occasions, I will describe some destinations that fall a bit off the popular tourist routes but provide ample opportunity for learning and spiritual experience.

Anatolia, Cappadocia, Tarsus...

Let us begin in southeastern Anatolia. If your group flies into Ankara (Ancyra), you will want to visit the Temple of Augustus and of Rome and the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, with the world's best display of Hittite materials. Most tourists also visit the Mausoleum of Ataturk, founder of modern Turkey. An international team of Jesuit priests staffs a small Catholic community with Masses in English at the Meryem Ana Church on the ground of the Apostolic Nunciature (Vatikan Büyük Elçiligi) in Çankaya.

After a few hours on a bus you arrive in Cappadocia, which is a World Heritage site and has in recent years become a major tourist destination in Turkey. (Alternately, your air carrier may take you directly to Cappadocia or to Adana.) Some of the most surreal and amazing landscapes in all of Asia Minor await the visitor here. You may visit remains of ancient cities, vineyards and wineries, and stunning rock-cut churches from the sixth through the 11th centuries. These small chapels, carved in tufa rock, contain original iconic representations of biblical scenes and saints of the Eastern Church. Cappadocia provides a rich entree to the church life of the patristic era.

Traveling south you pass through the famous Cilician Gates in the Taurus Mountain range, and as you near the Mediterranean coast you arrive at Tarsus, birthplace of St. Paul. This town has grown recently because of tourism related to St. Paul and a population shift in Turkey from the country to cities. Dating back to Hellenistic times, Tarsus was an important site; in Roman times Cicero was governor there, and Antony and Cleopatra met there. Pilgrims can visit St. Paul's Well and a Roman street section, recently excavated, that gives an excellent idea of a city scene in the time of St. Paul. The church building has been tastefully renovated and now operates as a museum; pilgrim groups may receive permission to worship there. Two sisters, members of an Italian congregation, live next door and staff a center; they offer kind hospitality to pilgrims and people of the town.

Visitors to this part of Turkey generally stay in the provincial capital, Adana, a bustling city with a growing population

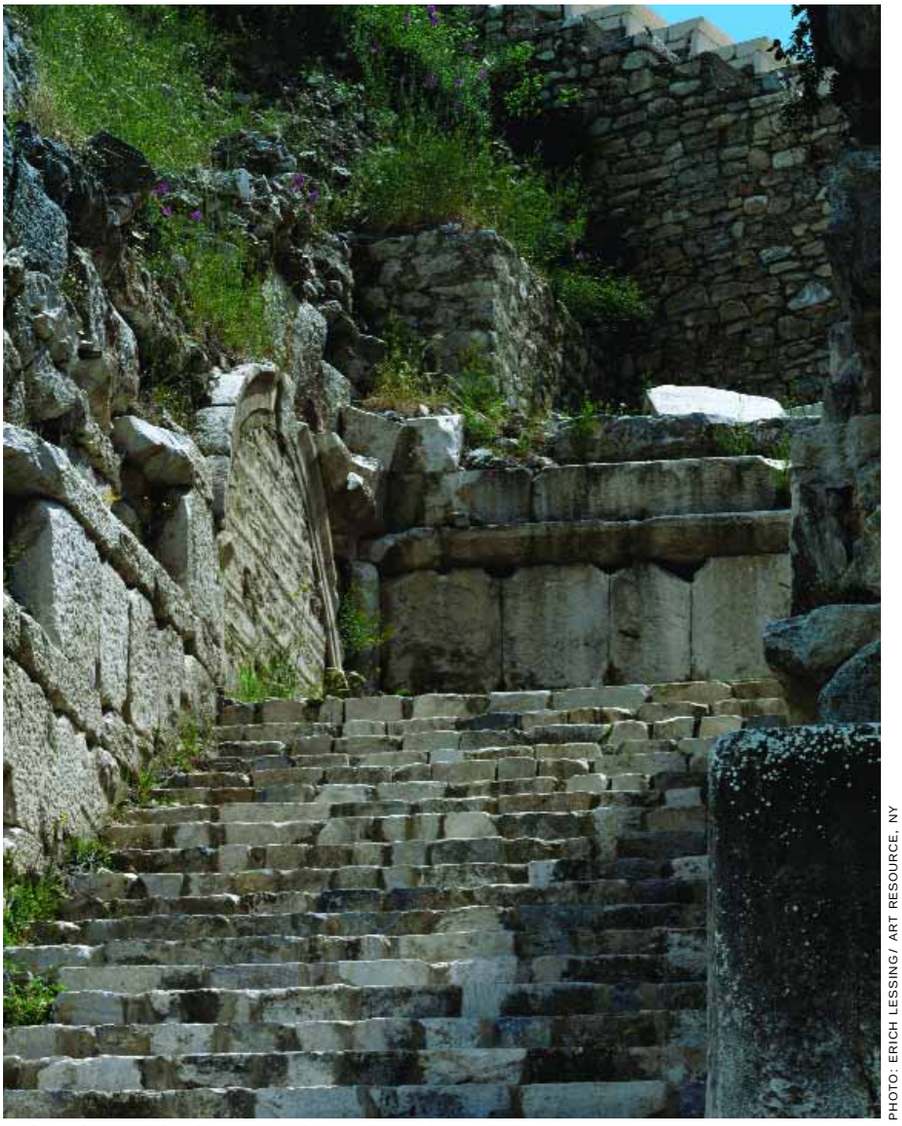

PHOTO: ERICH LESSING/ ART RESOURCE, NY

Main stairway of the theater at Ephesus. St. Paul preached here.

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and one of the largest new mosques in Turkey. The Catholic parish here is served from the diocesan headquarters in Iskenderun.

A 100-mile journey south leads to Antakya (Antioch on the Orontes), "where the disciples were first called Christians."

MAP: SHUTTERSTOCK/OLINCHUK

Because of its remote location, this city receives fewer visitors than most other cities in western Asia Minor. Originally built as a Hellenistic city after the death of Alexander the Great, it was the seat of the Antiochus Epiphanes IV, archenemy of the Jews in the Maccabean era. In Paul's day it was the third largest city in the Roman Empire. Later, Antioch was home to St. Ignatius of Antioch and St. John Chrysostom.

The ancient city is situated between the Orontes River on the west and Mount Stauris. On its western slope one finds St. Peter's Grotto, originally a cave possibly used as a meeting place by the early Christian community that included Barnabas, Paul and Peter. Capuchin Franciscans administer this sanctuary and celebrate Mass occasionally, especially for pilgrims.

Visitors to the area today should not miss the Hatay Museum in the city center; it contains one of the world's largest collections of Roman mosaics (from the second to the sixth centuries A.D.) from Antioch, Daphne and nearby Seleucia, the port from which Paul and Barnabas embarked. Pilgrims will want to visit the historical center in the Jewish quarter, where a Jewish synagogue, an Orthodox church and a Catholic church are found today. A Capuchin priest, Domenico Bertogli, and his parishioners welcome pilgrims; and he happily describes the warm relations between Catholics and Orthodox in this city, built on mutual respect and the ability of Catholics there to follow the Orthodox Church calendar. Located in a cluster of houses and a courtyard, this church offers a unique model of an early Christian "house church."

Theaters, Museums, Shrines

Several other areas on the Mediterranean coast of Turkey beckon Pauline pilgrims. Antalya (Attalia) offers a pleasant site for visiting, with a lovely harbor, some remains of first-century Roman walls and Hadrian's gate (second century). Nearby you find the impressive remains of Perge (Perga), a typical Hellenistic city, through which Paul passed when traveling to Pamphylia from Cyprus; he also visited at the end of this journey before sailing back to Antioch. One can imagine Paul walking through the imposing Hellenistic city gate that one sees today, as he and Barnabas headed north to Antioch in Pisidia. Visitors should take a short trip east to Aspendos (and also to Side) to see impressive Roman theaters; the theater in Aspendos still hosts a summer opera season. The Antalya Museum contains a rich collection of Hellenistic and Roman sculpture and art, as well as a small collection of early Christian remains and some relics of St. Nicholas, who lived in the nearby region of Lycia.

On the southern shore I recommend a particularly scenic drive east into Lycia to visit Demre (ancient Myra, where Nicholas was bishop) and Kalkan (for the archeological park of ancient Patara, birthplace of Nicholas). You could be the only visitors at Patara, located near a popular Mediterranean beach park, but here you can breathe in the feel of an ancient city as you sit in its amphitheater, which provides an excellent place for group prayer. Further east in Demre you will find large groups of pilgrims from Russia and Ukraine coming to visit the church of St. Nicholas; he was buried here before Italian merchants took his remains to Bari. You can find shops and cafes named after Santa Claus (Baba Noel in Turkish), as well as Orthodox icons and texts in Cyrillic characters. Midway between Patara and Demre lies the beautiful Turkish coastal town of Kas, a good place for an overnight stay.

Traveling north from Antalya past Lake Egirdir, set amid mountains, you come to a cluster of cities visited by Paul

Antalya, Anatolia

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/DOGA YUSEF DOKDOK

and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (Acts 13-14). First is the Anatolian highland town of Yalvac (Antioch in Pisidia), where one can visit spectacular excavations of the Roman colonial town, with remains of a Byzantine-era Basilica of St. Paul. You can view a Roman aqueduct in the distance nestled at the foot of snow-capped mountains. Next on the route comes Konya (Iconium), where little of the former Roman city remains visible; but one should visit the mausoleum shrine of the Sufi Mevlâna Jalâluddîn Rumi, "founder" of the Whirling Dervishes. In Konya seek out the Catholic Chapel of Sts. Paul and Thecla, administered by two sisters from Italy; there again expect great hospitality. Catholic priests visit Konya only four or five times a year, so these sisters welcome visiting pilgrim groups, especially for prayer or Mass. From Konya some travelers go southeast to Hatunsaray (Lystra) or to Kirbasan (the mound of ancient Derbe), identified but not yet excavated. You would need to ask directions to find these sites.

Farther north, I recommend a visit to the Lycus Valley; the regional center is Denizli. Here all tours go to the charming site of Pammukale (ancient Hierapolis), with its chalklike cliffs and warm mineral springs. Behind the site lies a Roman city and an extensive cemetery; a martyrion of St. Philip the deacon greets those enthusiastic enough to trek up the mountainside. From this site you can look west across the valley at the remains of ancient Laodicea, one of the seven cities of the Book of Revelation ("neither hot nor cold"); just recently archaeologists have begun to work there. Looking southwest one can almost see the site of Colossae, which has not been extensively excavated and is not easy to reach. Yet one may imagine the people whom Paul addressed in his Letter to the Colossians and in his Letter to Philemon, who lived in Colossae.

All tours and pilgrimages will move west to Selcuk (ancient Ephesus) and its wonders: a beautifully excavated site of streets and temples, the library of Celsus, an ancient theater and a Christian basilica that may have been the site of the Council of Ephesus (431), which named Mary "Mother of God" (Theotokos). Nearby you can visit the famed Temple of Diana (Artemis) and the Basilica of St. John the Evangelist. Pilgrims should conclude this visit with a drive up to the House of the Virgin Mary, considered by some to be her home and the place where she died. A serene, beautiful site for a stop, for prayer or for celebration of Mass, it also offers a lovely surprise: both Christians and Muslims venerate this site as a holy place, affording a unique interreligious experience. Here again one finds Franciscan friars and sisters welcoming pilgrims.

Antakya Mosaic Museum

A final stop should take you to Miletus, about an hour south of Ephesus. Here St. Paul stopped on his final journey to Jerusalem and invited all the elders and leaders of the church in Ephesus to come for his touching farewell to them. Since it is situated in a very rural area, you might experience some quiet here as you walk around extensive ruins and another beautifully preserved Roman theater. A group might find the theater a good setting for prayer, recalling the mutual affection of Paul and his friends from Ephesus now memorialized in this place.

Choosing a Tour

St. Paul's journeys were many and the distances covered vast. A complete itinerary would require travel to Israel (Jerusalem), Syria (Damascus), Cyprus, Rhodes, Turkey (Asia Minor), Greece, Malta and Italy (especially Rome). Most of these destinations appeal to tourists, but a comprehensive itinerary lies beyond the reach of most pilgrims.

You will need to consider the differences between pilgrimage, study tour and sightseeing tours. Many tours focused on sightseeing visit some sites associated with St. Paul (e.g. Ephesus, some Greek Islands, Athens and Corinth, Delphi) but do not treat them as religious sites. Study tours include informed talks on the life and mission of St. Paul and the spread of the early church. They usually add the seven churches of the Book of Revelation to places already mentioned, and give a good sense of religious history as well as cultural and historical introductions.

Pilgrims may follow a similar itinerary but devote more attention to daily prayer and worship, and to some encounters with contemporary church people who live in these sites. Often these visits provide longer-lasting memories than any others and remind us what we share with those Christians who still live in these areas. Views, vistas and visits will leave a lasting impression of the world of Paul and the early church; afterward you will never hear or read the Acts of the Apostles or the Pauline Epistles the same way again. A

View a slideshow of Pauline pilgrimage sites, at americamagazine.org/slideshow.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/CENAP REFIK ONGAN

Heart of the Matter

Rediscovering a time-honored devotion

BY DAVID M. KNIGHT

ART BY JULIE LONNEMAN

THERE WAS A TIME when devotion to the Sacred Heart needed no introduction. Not any more. Many people today have never even heard of it. Should we try to revive it or let it die?

Before answering that question, let us recall that at least two popes have written encyclicals presenting this devotion as "no ordinary form of piety" but rather "a summary of all our religion." These are strong words. Four popes have been calling for a "new evangelization." What better time to launch a revival of the devotion to the Sacred Heart than during the Year of Paul, which began on June 29, 2008?

The devotion to the Sacred Heart as we know it today began with a vision of Christ given to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque in 1673 at Paray-le-Monial, France. In that vision the heart of Jesus was visible, on fire with love, pierced by a lance and thorns. Christ's words were, "See the heart that has loved so much and receives so little in return." Christ's desire was to focus people's attention on his love. He asked that individuals and families display a picture of his Sacred Heart in their home.

The devotion encouraged people to begin each day with a morning offering, to consecrate themselves to the Sacred Heart and dedicate themselves to making reparation through prayers and penance for the failure of people to respond to Christ's love. Devotion to the Sacred Heart encouraged frequent Com-munion and adoration of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, especially during a holy hour before the first Friday of every month, in order to promote "a truly grateful love for Jesus."

How might each of these elements be practiced today in ways consonant with the progress Catholic spirituality has made since the 17th century?

The Image

Focusing on the image of the Sacred Heart should recall us to a deeply personal relationship with Jesus Christ as the very center of our spirituality. We need to live and experience our religion, not as a system of laws and practices, but as a spirituality of exciting, personal and even passionate interaction of love and friendship with Jesus. Christianity is a religion of love aroused by an awareness of God's love for us first. In St. Paul's words, it is the "love of Christ" that "urges us on."

Consecration

The act of consecration fundamental to Christian life is baptism. We need to deepen our understanding of the commitments inherent in the sacrament that made us Christians, until we all say with St. Paul, "I live now, not I, but Christ lives

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in me" (Gal 2:20). This is the mystery of our identity as Christians. The image of the Sacred Heart reflects the promise of the Christian identity bestowed by baptism. Contemplating that image should lead us to live as the saving Christ, fired by his love. This means inviting Jesus constantly to act with us, in us and through us to "save" and lift up all of our activities and engagements—at home, at work, in our social and civic life.

Our act of consecration and morning offering are combined in the ongoing affirmation of our baptismal promises: "Lord, I give you my body. Live this day with me, live this day in me, live this day through me." We extend this by repeating the WIT prayer before everything we do: "Lord, do this *with* me; do this *in* me; do this *through* me."

Reparation

Reparation to the Sacred Heart is realized in the prayers and penances we offer to Jesus to make up for the failure of people to respond to his love. For ordinary Christians leading busy lives in the world, the most practical form reparation can take is repair work. We need to respond effectively to the landslide loss of faith among those around us, to the distressing defection of Catholics who no longer attend Mass and to the uncritical acceptance of the distorted values of our contemporary culture, including the relativism that Benedict XVI has called the "greatest threat to faith in our day." We need to recognize and resist the implicit idolatry of so many for whom religion is just a part, and not even the most important part, of their life. Our resistance should be fundamental and radical.

Baptism commits us to such a response. The minister's words as he anointed us with chrism were, "As Christ was anointed priest, prophet and king, so live always as a member of his body." This is our job description as Christians: to bear witness as prophets, to minister to everyone with love as priests by baptism, and to take responsibility for the transformation of society as stewards of Christ's kingship. This is radical reparation.

As *prophets* we can repair the damage sin has done and is doing to the world by bearing witness to the Gospel through a

lifestyle that wins people to faith. If we contemplate the contrast between Christ's passionate love and the lukewarm response given to it by most believers, the image of Christ's heart will motivate us to live a lifestyle radically different from the conventional expectations of our society.

Pope Paul VI defined witnesses as those who "radiate faith in values that go beyond current values, and hope in something not seen, that one would not dare to imagine. Through this wordless witness, they stir up irresistible questions in the hearts of those who see how they live: Why are they like this? Why do they live in this way?" Witnesses are those whose lifestyle raises eyebrows.

To commit oneself to a life of witness is to change one's whole standard of morality. We would never ask again just whether something is right or wrong, but whether it bears witness to the values of the Gospel. This is reparation that echoes the teaching of Paul: "If with Christ you died [in baptism]… why do you live as if you still belonged to the world?.... Live your life in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ" (Col 2:20).

As *priests by baptism* we say in our hearts to every person we encounter, "This is my body, given for you; my flesh for the life of the world." The contemplation of Christ's heart, wounded by the denial of love, leads us to recognize those same wounds now borne by others; it motivates us to make reparation through the healing ministry of love.

It is not just the heart of Christ that is wounded by the absence of love in the world; all of us are. People sin because they are not loved. People sin seeking love. People live mediocre lives because they feel they are only moderately loved. People do not respond to God with passion because they do not believe God loves them with passion. And they do not believe this because they do not experience the passionate love of Jesus reaching out to them in the visible members of his body.

The problem with the world is that the church does not love enough. The heart of Christ is not a vivid presence in today's world, because it is not sufficiently visible in his body on earth. The Sacred Heart needs to be seen as a living heart, full of love for living people.

When we "presented our bodies" at baptism "as a living sacrifice to God," we pledged that we would be "sacrificed" to continue the mission of Jesus, both priest and victim. As Christians, we never deal with anyone on a purely professional or impersonal level, ignoring their humanity. Paul saw ministry as the mystery of bringing Christ to birth and to full stature in every member of the human race. Our ministry of reparation must "build up the body of Christ" in love.

As *stewards of Christ's kingship* we repair what sin has done to the world. We address the social structures, policies and practices that produce environments that breed destruction and deceit.

Our baptismal anointing as sharers in Christ's kingship makes us responsible for extending the reign of his love over every area and activity of human life on earth. This commits us to leadership, to taking the initiative in promoting the changes we perceive as desirable in family, church, business, politics, social life and neighborhood. If we love Jesus Christ and understand his love for the world, we cannot remain indifferent or passive in the face of false principles and destructive policies that block the "peace and unity of his kingdom."

Jesus said that in devotion to his heart people will find "all the sanctifying and saving graces needed to draw them back from the abyss of destruction." John Dear, S.J., has identified this abyss in "The Politics of the Sacred Heart," (National Catholic Reporter Conversation Café (http://ncrcafe.org), 6/19/07):

> Today we stand at the brink of unprecedented global destruction, global warming and global violence. This violence pushes us personally and internationally ever closer to the abyss of destruction, but the grace of the Sacred Heart—with all its burning social, economic and political implications—has the power to convert us into people of Gospel nonviolence, pull us back from the brink, and create a new world of peace with justice.... If we were to adopt the image of the Sacred Heart as our image of a nonviolent, peacemaking God, and live not just individually but communally, nationally and globally according to that nonviolent, radiant love, the world would be disarmed.

If we love Jesus Christ and share his love for the world, we will "make reparation" for the sins of the world by working against anything that delays what Paul described as God's "plan for the fullness of time," which is to "gather up all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth" so that Christ might be "all in all."

Adoration

Adoration has always been part of devotion to the Sacred Heart, especially before the Blessed Sacrament. But adoration, in its pure form, is just wordless absorption in the awesome reality of God. In the act of adoring we do not do anything else. But most people cannot sustain this for more than a few minutes at a time. So instead of adoration we pray the Rosary, read Scripture or other books, or say other familiar vocal prayers. These are all good things to do, but they are not what the church understands by adoration.

Before we can practice adoration, we need to know the heart we are to adore. So when we invite others to adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, we should teach them to prepare themselves for it by learning the mind and heart of Christ. We enter Christ's heart by letting his words abide in us: by reading and reflecting on Scripture and by making the connection constantly between what we learn and what we live.

True devotion to the Sacred Heart is not simply the repetition of certain acts; it is a profound change in consciousness that we acquire as a result of that repetition. St. Paul exhorts us, "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus" (Phil 2:5). This is a call to discipleship: a lifelong commitment to studying the mind and heart of Christ.

Why revive devotion to the Sacred Heart?

Devotion to the Sacred Heart is not a particular devotion that needs to be revived. Rather, it is the fundamental center of all Catholic spirituality that needs to be revitalized by a "new evangelization." If we revive devotion to the Sacred Heart in its authentic identity, we will have revived Christianity in the church. This would be a great way to celebrate the Year of Paul. A

From May 26, 1956, "**America** and the Sacred Heart," by Carl J. Moell, S.J., at americamagazine.org/pages

One Rescue Revisited

BY MIMI SCHWARTZ

SEVENTY YEARS AGO this November, a synagogue was burning in a little German village of Christians and Jews. Many smelled smoke wafting through the windows. Someone heard Mrs. Lowenstein shouting, "Our synagogue is burning. Please, help!" But the street remained silent. The only other voice was a man shouting, "Stay inside and shut the curtains!"

People did as they were told except for a few men from the fire brigade (including two Jews who were members before Nazi times). They ran to put out the fire, but strangers in brown shirts aimed rifles from a truck and said, "No!" Only when the house next to the synagogue started to burn did these "hoodlums from Sulz" (that is what the villagers called them later) give the command to use the water hoses to quell the fire.

The next day the whole village of 1,200 knew that the heart of the Jewish community was destroyed. The fire ruined the synagogue's beautiful interior: the dark wooden benches for 500, the delicate candelabras hanging over the center aisle, the carved wooden balustrade leading to the women's section and the ark for the Torah with its sacred scrolls.

All was lost, people thought. And with it, the optimism of those who had believed their non-Jewish neighbors who kept saying that "the crazy house painter from Austria, Hitler, will disappear and things will be as before!"

When my father was born there in 1898, it was a community where "everyone got along"—or so he often told me in Queens, N.Y., where I was born. But good neighbors or not, after this night everyone knew that the Jews must leave 300 years of shared history if they still could. And all over Germany, as synagogues burned on this night, now infamous as Kristallnacht, it was the same message: Get out.

One night, a month or so later, a young Jewish couple in the village heard a knock on their door. They were frightened. They became even more frightened when they opened the door and there was the local policeman. "Don't be afraid!" he said softly. "I won't hurt you. I have something to give you."

The wife backed away, but the husband said, "What is it?"

"A Torah."

"A what?"

This policeman, it turns out, had seen the Torah lying in the street as the synagogue burned and thought it was not right—a holy book, treated so badly. So he took it home, a heavy thing, and dug a hole for it in his garden. When he heard that the young couple who lived a few houses from his was packing to leave, he hoped they might take the ancient scrolls with them.

The wife suspected a trick, but the husband thought: This man is a good man, a decent man I've known all my life! He told him yes, bring the Torah. The next night, another knock, and there was the policeman carrying the sacred scrolls like a giant baby wrapped in a blanket. A day later this Torah, rolled in a living room carpet, was placed in a huge crate that the couple was shipping by boat to Haifa.

I first saw this Torah in 1973, north of Acco near the Mediterranean Sea in Israel. It was in a Memorial Room built by those, including the young couple, who escaped the village in time to start again. On the wall beside the Torah were the names of 87 village Jews who did not make it, who were not rescued by anyone and were murdered in Riga, Theresienstadt and Auschwitz. I bowed my head to honor them, but as I looked up full of anger and sadness, there was the rescued Torah. Its edges were soiled and slightly charred and there was a knife gash; but its Five Books of Moses, saved by one honorable policeman, were open for all to read as before.

Years later, especially on Nov. 9, I see this Torah in my mind and wonder how many like that policeman it would take to rescue human decency—in Baghdad, Darfur, Sarajevo, Gaza, wherever—from the ongoing fires of hate that are consuming it. A

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/SCOTT ROTHSTEIN

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Book Reviews

A Master of Metaphor

The Power of Images in Paul

By Raymond F. Collins

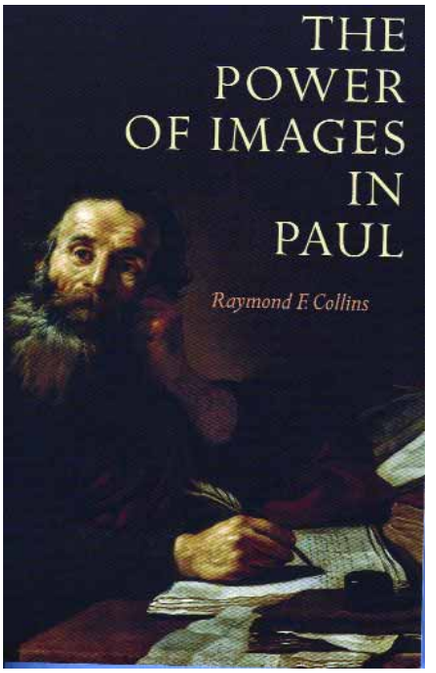
Liturgical Press. 296p $49.95 (paperback)
ISBN 9780814659632

To understand what St. Paul was saying in his letters, we also need to appreciate how and why he was saying it. Paul's letters, which are the earliest complete documents preserved in the New Testament, were written to predominantly Gentile Christian communities in the Greco-Roman world. With the exception of Romans, all the undisputed Pauline letters were addressed to communities that Paul had founded. They were intended to deal with problems and questions that had arisen after Paul moved on to found new communities. Paul was basically a pastoral theologian. That is, in his letters he dealt theologically with the pastoral concerns of his beloved converts.

Raymond F. Collins, professor emeritus of religion and former dean of the School of Religious Studies at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., contends that Paul was a master of metaphor. He notes that metaphor, like a poem, articulates an affective value, and observes that through his images Paul strove to shape the affective values of those to whom he wrote. Thus he examines how Paul used metaphors in each of his letters to clarify the Gospel for a particular audience and to persuade the various churches about the truth of his message. By exploring how and why Paul wrote, Collins offers a fresh and sound point of entry into what Paul wrote.

One of Collins's longstanding scholarly interests has been Greco-Roman rhetoric and its influence on Paul's writings. This concern is manifest especially in his marvelous commentary on 1 Corinthians (1999) in the "Sacra Pagina" series. As a Jew born in Tarsus, Paul was not only initiated into Jewish Scriptures but also exposed to the conventions and practices of classical rhetoric. In addressing Gentile Christians in the Roman Empire, it was natural that Paul would write in ways that would be most intelligible to them. Moreover, since he was writing mainly about God, spiritual matters and the future, Paul had to make abundant use of such figurative language as metaphors, similes, analogies, hyperbole and so forth.

After a brief introduction to the role of metaphor in Hellenistic rhetorical theory,



Collins analyzes Paul's use of images in the seven letters that almost all scholars agree came directly from Paul: 1 Thessalonians, Philippians, Philemon, Galatians, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians and Romans. Also included are a synthetic classification of Paul's principal images and general observations about his use of them.

According to Collins, Paul drew his metaphors from his Jewish religious heritage, cultural milieu and personal experience. Their major semantic domains are kinship, the body, the senses, life cycles, walking and stumbling, running and fighting, occupations, agriculture, animals, construction, the temple and its cult, finances, social status, public life, the courtroom and the cosmos.

Collins shows, for example, how Paul, in the very short letter to Philemon, used the images of family and kinship, mutual love and finance to persuade the slave owner Philemon to take back his (now Christian) runaway slave Onesimus as "a beloved brother." Likewise, in his longest and most theological letter (Romans), Paul builds a case first for the universality of human sin, largely with anatomical imagery, and then for the gratuity of God's grace, mainly with courtroom imagery. Next, Paul uses images of stones and botany (especially the olive tree) to describe the renewal of Israel and the salvation of Gentiles. Then he develops his portrait of Christian life in terms of temple and sacrifice, struggle and clothing. As Collins observes, without metaphors Paul's letter to the Romans would not be the masterpiece that it is. Paul's genius was his ability to adapt his imagery to the situations and needs of the people to whom he wrote and to convey to them profound theological truths.

It is sometimes difficult for modern readers to discern the precise meaning of Paul's figurative language. This is where Collins's vast learning and pedagogical skill come in. As an expert guide to the Greco-Roman and Jewish literary context, to Paul's writings and to current scholarship, Collins is able to explain what the images most likely conveyed to Paul's first readers and what they might signify to readers today.

The Power of Images in Paul is a work of sound scholarship that is also accessible to a general audience. An individual or a Bible study group can use it profitably alongside a careful reading of each letter. Those who do so will become more careful readers of Scripture (since Scripture communicates largely through images) and will encounter Paul in new ways. It provides fresh insights to preachers and teachers working through specific Pauline passages and themes. The various images that Collins treats may also provide abundant material for meditation and prayer. For those in search of a reliable and creative resource during this Pauline year, I recommend this volume with great enthusiasm. ***Daniel J. Harrington***

The Reviewers

Daniel J. Harrington, S.J., the Word columnist for **America**, is professor of New Testament at Boston College School of Theology and Ministry, Chestnut Hill, Mass.

William Reiser, S.J., whose most recent book is *Seeking God in All Things*, teaches theology at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Mass.

‘And the Word Became Primate’?

Ancestral Grace

Meeting God in Our Human Story

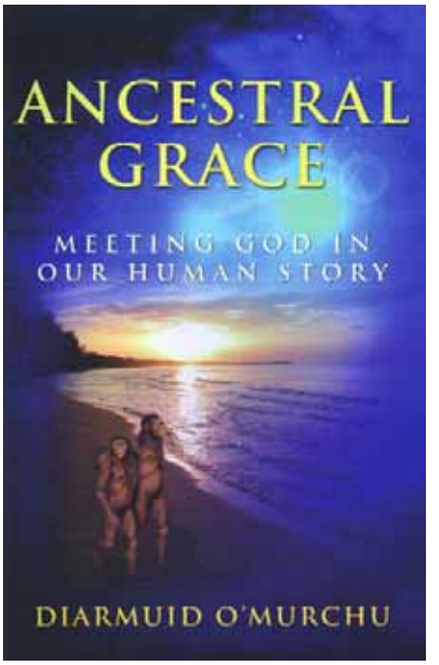
By Diarmuid O’Murchu

Orbis Books. 288p $22 (paperback)
ISBN 9781570757945

A priest of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (M.S.C.), Diarmuid O’Murchu has published a number of religious books (*Quantum Theology*, *Evolutionary Faith* and *The Transformation of Desire*). Here, in 32 brief chapters, O’Murchu (who identifies himself as a social scientist) explains how the incarnation, which began unfolding seven million years ago among the primates, has not been sufficiently developed by Christian theology. The book tackles other aspects of theology and spirituality as well, or what the author considers to be the failures of Christian theology and spirituality to appreciate how human beings are intimately connected with the rest of the created world. He writes, repeatedly, that our thinking about God, ourselves and the universe has been gravely infected by the evil of patriarchy (for which the image of “birthing” seems to be his favorite antidote). He argues that Jesus, the embodiment of compassion, wisdom and the human being at one with the world, was seriously misunderstood by the apostles and (by implication) the Gospel writers, since they too had been contaminated by patriarchy. Jesus’ liberating message about the kingdom of God was eclipsed by the church’s increasing preoccupation with the messenger.

With respect to our distant ancestors, O’Murchu believes that we should pay particular attention to the bonobo communities—peaceful, non-patriarchal, sexually free primates—because their behavior helps us to understand how wisdom gradually entered the world, a primeval wisdom that continues to dwell in the depths of our subconscious. Deep in their consciousness, O’Murchu suggests, human beings realize that creation is an organism of which they are all a part.

With respect to the Incarnation he states: “Incarnation basically means God entering fully and identifying with human embodiment. God did that in our species for the first time 7 million years ago. Unambiguously, without reserve or regret, the divine became manifest in creation in a totally new way, namely, in human form.” And again: “The Immanuel of the Gospels is fully embodied in our ancestral inheritance of 7 million years



ago, initiating a process of growth toward that fullness of life exemplified in the life and ministry of Jesus—and also in the incarnational figures of the other great religions.” One is tempted to wonder whether the fourth evangelist, if he had been able to read *Ancestral Grace*, might have written, “And the Word became primate.”

O’Murchu would have been on much firmer ground if he simply said that divine self-communication began long before the birth of Jesus. In an essay entitled “Christology within an Evolutionary View of the World,” Karl Rahner explained some 50 years ago that the notion of Savior “does not imply that God’s self-communication to the world in its spiritual subjectivity begins in time only with this person.... It can quite easily be conceived as beginning before the actual coming of the Savior, indeed as co-existent with the whole spiritual history of humanity and the world.”

The author is right when he insists that theology needs to be more ecologically sensitive, and that it needs to attend to the human being’s relatedness to the rest of creation. He is right when he complains that we need to approach reality less as folks who want to control and manipulate everything and more as people who try to see and listen to the world contemplatively. He is also right when he argues that the church needs to develop Christological perspectives that take into account contemporary sensibilities about the presence of the divine in other religions. I hope he is right when he claims that spirituality is innate: “We were born with it. We have always had it.” I agree with him further (as many theologians would) that excessive interest in how Jesus is divine led to a neglect of his also being fully human, that Christian missioners were often agents of cultural imperialism, and that clericalism compromises the church’s evangelical witness.

But then he goes overboard. Jesus was certainly spiritual; but, O’Murchu wonders, was he religious? The distinction, heard so often, has become tiresome, and the author’s appeal to scriptural texts is tendentious. The imminent collapse of priesthood, he notes, will spell the death of clericalism and, at last, “Jesus will be liberated to be the Christ of all people.” And then: “Jesus did not come to rescue human beings from anything.” On the one hand, he tells us, the notion of original sin has no footing in evolutionary evidence. But then he writes that the “past eight thousand years of patriarchal domination...has been one of our dark ages, and the massacre of 62 million civilians in the wars of the twentieth century amply verifies this.” But, he adds, 8,000 years are a mere fraction of our history: “Our God will forgive us for these cultural misadventures.”

Such events are not signs of a flaw but of a paradox. I have never heard anyone refer to such tragic events as “cultural misadventures” or suggest that evils like war and genocide are signs of a historical paradox that needs to be “befriended.” O’Murchu laments, correctly, that the “dangerous memory” that Jesus represents no longer subverts how we look at reality. But for him, that danger seems to have consisted in the way Jesus resisted patriarchy, defended women and drew attention to the earth that gives birth and

mothers us. What happened to Jesus' solidarity with victims and his being numbered among the crucified ones? Does that part of the story hold any theological significance? Apparently the dangerous memory housed in the cross belongs to our cultural misadventures.

O'Murchu quotes approvingly the biblical scholar Robert Funk: "Jesus himself should not be, must not be, the object of faith. That would be to repeat the idolatry of the first believers." But not only does this view ignore much of what the New Testament says and centuries of Christian liturgical practice; the sentiment's frustrating lack of nuance also overlooks Christian religious experience itself and how the mystery of God is discovered in and through the process of discipleship.

Since evolution seems to be a permanent feature of nature as we know it, the third part of the book begins to imagine what sort of beings we are evolving into. Here O'Murchu finds the terms "transhuman," "protean" and "transpersonal" to be helpful expressions. Aided by technology, human beings will need to co-evolve with "the larger creation" as a new world order is born. The "culture of civilized imperialism" will mightily resist this birthing, of course; but the "evolutionary goals of life win out in the end, thanks to the power of ancestral grace that has always guided the process of evolutionary emergence." And the Word became cyborg.

O'Murchu gets into any number of issues that educated believers might enjoy puzzling over. Occasionally I wonder: What would it feel like to be reading about the first-century world of Galilee if we should one day find ourselves residing on a different planet? I don't know. But the Gospel story unfolds an imaginative world with historical, cultural, social, political and geographical determinants. I do not live back there, but neither would I relish the prospect of outgrowing or transcending the Gospel determinants of my religious identity.

Ancestral Grace wants incarnation without those particular historical coordinates that make us who we are. In a classroom setting, at any rate, the Christological ideas in *Ancestral Grace* would require a lot more straightening out than the effort is probably worth.

William Reiser

Books in Brief

The Duty of Delight

The Diaries of Dorothy Day

Edited by Robert Ellsberg

Marquette Univ. Press. 700p $42

This first edition of the collected diaries of Dorothy Day is bound to become a modern spiritual classic. Many Catholics already know some basic facts about the American-born founder of the Catholic Worker movement. But even those who have read her autobiography, *The Long Loneliness*, will be unprepared for surprises that await them in this astonishing work. Sometimes portrayed as a woman who set aside family life to begin the Catholic Worker, for example, Dorothy is revealed as intimately involved in the lives of her daughter, grandchildren and, later, great-grandchildren. Her diaries, written over the course of almost 50 years, show a woman striving each day to become a better Christian, hoping to fulfill the "duty of delight," in a phrase from John Ruskin.

I have never read the journals of any saint (or soon-to-be-saint) that are so unflinchingly honest. Some were written for publication. Others were sanitized to be more "edifying." Here, though, is an achingly human testament, in which Dorothy frankly discusses the joys and sorrows at the Worker, her affection for a vast network of friends and her complicated reactions to a period of volcanic change in her beloved Catholic Church. In short, this is one of the most powerful works of Christian spirituality I have ever read.

J.M.

The White King

By György Dragomán

Houghton Mifflin. 272p $24

A collection of short stories loosely based on author György Dragomán's childhood in Romania, *The White King* revolves around Djata, a young boy living under totalitarian rule. Coping with the wrongful imprisonment of his father and a gnawing fear of authority, Djata finds himself surrounded by people who have internalized the government's cruel tactics, their actions colored by intimidation and their own anxiety. The prose is often engaging and sprinkled with moments of levity, as Djata navigates the hazards of adolescence under extraordinary circumstances. But witnessing Djata's constant pummeling at the hands of peers, teachers and members of the community takes a toll on the reader. Various authority figures wield their limited power with impunity, and there is an overwhelming sense of helplessness: a vicious soccer coach nearly beats one of his young players to death for the boy's failures on the field ("End of the World"), while a teacher coerces Djata into participating in and losing a school competition (one that turns out to be fixed anyway). Djata's schoolmates and peers react similarly to the oppressive climate; they stage territorial war battles against each other ("War") and, in another instance, a few of them are about to strike Djata with bricks for winning at gambling ("Pact"). Dragomán succeeds in sharing a story that is steeped in brutal reality and undeniably affecting.

R.N.

Why We Hate Us

American Discontent in the New Millennium

By Dick Meyer

Crown Books. 288p $24.95

Ever wonder how a sane person could live in a culture dominated by boorish cell phone and "crackberry" users, loudmouth talk-show hosts, hypersexualized advertising, absurd reality shows, attack-dog bloggers, media outlets focusing exclusively on "celebutards," mendacious politicians and more "conspicuous consumption" than Thorstein Veblen could have imagined when he first coined that phrase?

Dick Meyer, a longtime journalist, wonders about that too in *Why We Hate Us*. At one time or another, all of us have fretted or complained about the stressors listed above, but it is Meyer's insight to link them together as general indicators of a larger culture of selfishness. Each chapter takes aim at one aspect of our increasingly individualistic world, with plenty of hair-raising examples (they're not hard to come by) and a full measure of wit (harder to come by). Along the way, the author proffers solutions: sacrifice, good manners and charity among them. He clearly admires Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone* for its emphasis on the lost art of community; he also points to virtuous figures who embody "authenticity."

One drawback is that Meyer devotes scant attention to the cohesive factor of religion and the way that it enables participants to embody a coherent moral code. And he is better at diagnosis than cure. His overall advice is, "Strive to make thoughtful choices using a sound moral temperament." But which moral temperament? That is one area where a fuller discussion of religion would have helped. But overall Meyer's book is insightful, provocative, funny, frequently brilliant and always fascinating. At the very least, you will never *ever* speak loudly on your cell phone again.

J.M.

The Suicide Index

Putting My Father's Death in Order

By Joan Wickersham

Harcourt. 336p $25

On a February morning in 1991, Joan Wickersham's father woke up, brought in the newspaper and made coffee for his wife before retiring to his study, where he shot himself in the head. He left no note. Unexpected suicide, Wickersham tells the reader, not only severs the earthly connection between two people but kills "every memory everyone has of you. You're saying, 'I'm gone and you can't even be sure who it is that's gone, because you never knew me.'" Unmoored, Wickersham is forced to reconsider her entire conception of her father. In an effort to impose order on her chaotic feelings, she constructs an index with entries cataloging different aspects of her father's suicide and its aftermath. Eschewing a linear structure and strict chronology, the memoir jumps forward and backward in time, showing how Wickersham's recollection of past events helped to piece together a clearer, though still incomplete, picture of her father's mental state. Wickersham finds herself moving forward but not toward a conclusive answer. Yet while the ultimate explanation for her father's suicide remains elusive, Wickersham takes readers on a cathartic journey, gracefully rendering the pain and confusion that accompany such paralyzing loss.

R.N.

Books in Brief is written by James Martin, S.J., associate editor of **America**, and Regina Nigro, literary assistant.

Classified

Appeals

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Positions

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FOR HIGHER EDUCATION. Secretariat of Catholic Education at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in Washington, D.C. Major responsibilities include, but are not limited to: serving as primary staff to the U.S.C.C.B. Committee on Catholic Education on issues related to higher education and campus ministry; fostering good relationships between bishops and institutions of Catholic higher education, campus ministry and student organizations; providing staffing for implementation of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae;* administering the annual grant for the Frank J. Lewis Institute and the Campus Ministry Leadership Institute. The Assistant Director for Higher Education will also assist in supporting and implementing the bishops' strategic plan for the Conference.

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To apply, please submit a résumé with a cover letter and salary requirements to: Office of Human Resources (E.D.U.), United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 3211 Fourth Street NE, Washington DC 20017-1194; e-mail: resumes@usccb.org; fax: (202)541-3412. EOE/M/F/D/V.

DIRECTOR. Creighton University, a Jesuit-sponsored university in Omaha, Neb., is seeking a Director of its Institute for Latin American Concern (ILAC) office at Creighton. The director maintains the mission and vision of the ILAC program, and is responsible for forming policy, procedures and coordinating the budget. The Director is responsible for coordinating, in cooperation with the center in the Dominican Republic, the summer health care program, as well as other programs that take place at the center under the sponsorship of ILAC. The Director will spend approximately 8 to 10 weeks each year in the Dominican Republic. The ideal candidate will have: 1) experience with Ignatian spirituality, 2) experience with living in another culture, 3) a good command of Spanish and 4) experience in supervision. All candidates will submit a brief essay describing these four areas of their experience. Bachelor's degree in related field required; master's degree desired. Please see our Web site for complete details and to apply: http://careers.creighton.edu. Click on "Search Postings" and enter the Posting Number 20080436.

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Letters

Hammering Out the Issues

In contrast to the sledgehammer approach used by many priests and bishops, the Rev. J. Brian Bransfield ("Conscientious Election," 10/13) offered a thoughtful and nuanced argument. However, his list of significant moral dilemmas is telling. He writes that "marriage, racial equality, the environment, adequate distribution of resources and the right to life are not competing events. They are cousins, if not siblings."

How is it, however, that he fails to mention the issue of the morality of war? Is it because he cannot defend the Bush administration's unjust and immoral war in Iraq, which was wholeheartedly supported by the Republican presidential candidate? Such a pretense of nonpartisanship is even more cynical and insidious than that sledgehammer approach favored by other Catholic clerics.

Rosemarie Zagarri
Arlington, Va.

A Southern Pen

I am from the apparent "non-place" where Walker Percy lived and wrote, and am flabbergasted at the Rev. Andrew M. Greeley's omission of Percy's name from his list of truly "Catholic" writers ("The Last Catholic Novelist," 11/3). Otherwise, I enjoyed Greeley's reflections.

Edie Eason
Covington, La.

Midwestern, Too

Many thanks to the Rev. Andrew M. Greeley ("The Last Catholic Novelist," 11/3) for his thoughtful and evocative essay on the Catholic imagination and Jon Hassler, whose recent passing I had failed to note. The death of a favorite novelist is like a sacrament of the communion of saints—the author's characters, like Hassler's, become our friends over time and live on and nourish us as we remember them through rereading.

It surprised me, however, that Ron Hansen's name was not among the other Catholic novelists mentioned by Greeley. Coming from Nebraska, Hansen is a worthy successor to Hassler, who may not have been the last Catholic novelist after all.

James J. Conn, S.J.
Rome, Italy

Time for a Bailout

Re Terry Golway's article on "Print's Demise" (11/3): I cannot imagine a world without newspapers, yet I am aware of the reduced readership and revenue opportunities for this industry. I fear their demise is a threat to democracy. A good example is the story in The Washington Post that revealed the poor condition of military hospitals and how our wounded soldiers were being treated. This story could not have been told without the diligent work of a newspaper reporter.

Let us hope that a rescue plan will arise and save the printed word.

Thomas Mackay
Hopewell, N.J.

Eating Away

Thank you to Terry Golway for his article on the troubled newspaper industry ("Print's Demise," 11/3). I have been a newspaper reporter for 18 years and expected to retire as one, but then termites started eating away at the foundations. I deeply appreciate defenses of the newspaper industry like this one.

Dan Sheehan
Emmaus, Pa.

The Shadow Side of Sports

I found your issue on "The Soul of Sports" (10/20) informative, given the knowledge and experience of its authors, but also deeply disturbing, because the negative sides of sports culture were only hinted at.

While Dave Anderson ("The Games of Tomorrow," 10/20) gave a nice overview of amateur and professional sports worldwide, I would have liked him to comment on the corrosive effects of big-time sports on higher education: the recruiting abuses foisted upon high school athletes as well as the way an institution's mission is frequently undermined by watered-down courses, dishonest mar-

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CARTOON BY RICK PARKER

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keting and the extensive class time athletes must miss to be competitive.

Elinor Nauen ("A Sporting Chance," 10/20) attests to the positive shift in women's sports due to Title IX legislation, but she fails to note that the same abuses long acknowledged in men's collegiate sports are now rapidly appearing in women's sports as well, particularly in college basketball.

Brian McCue
Bay Shore, N.Y.

Harrumph

The cover photo of your issue on "The Soul of Sports" (10/20) featured three basketball players, two from the University of Notre Dame and one from Marquette University. My first impression was that this was a tribute to two headliner Catholic universities and a fine example of Jesuit ecumenism. Inside, however, I found no story about these schools, but an explanation of the cover photo—Marquette beats Notre Dame in 2008! Another look at the cover conveyed the sweet Jesuit message—one Marquette is worth two Notre Dames? So much for hopefulness about a story equating excellence with both Notre Dame and Marquette.

I'll just be thankful that "snootiness" has not thus far been designated a deadly sin. I will follow the training I received from the good Holy Cross order to overlook others' faults, ignore this supercilious Jesuit tidbit, keep my subscription and enjoy the worthwhile content.

John F. Dunn, Esq.
Decatur, Ill.

Youth in Sports

Your editorial on sports ("The Sporting Life," 10/20) contributes to a much-needed dialogue regarding sports and their role in our society. We also need to give serious consideration to the role of sports in our Catholic institutions. How do the sports programs in our Catholic schools and organizations reflect or violate our mission and values?

Sports are a great way to connect with young people and to help them discover what individuals and teams can do and be. More than a few young people and families have decided that sports arenas, and the lessons learned therein, are more deserving of their weekend time than going to Mass.

Sports in Catholic settings can be a vehicle for learning moral lessons, catechesis, service to others, prayer and much more. This requires that we train coaches and work with our Catholic schools to integrate intentionally and strategically our Catholic mission and values into all aspects of sports programs.

The measure of our success in sports in Catholic settings is how well we help young people grow as disciples of Jesus Christ. Since young people and parents care deeply about sports and invest significant time and resources in them, the opportunities are plentiful.

Greg Dobie Moser
Executive Director, National C.Y.O. Sports
Washington, D.C.

Life Lessons

Re your editorial "The Sporting Life" (10/20): I have had the great privilege of coaching football and wrestling for eight years. Two lessons I have learned dominate the way I approach sports as a coach, fan and parent.

First, regardless of the sport, success demands a team effort. A team consists not just of players and coaches, but also spouses, parents, students, administrators and community members.

Second, sports are not an end in themselves, but merely a means to an end. While winning is fun and important, it is not the ultimate goal, but rather a mark of progress on the way to that goal. I have told my players during our prayer services that we go to practice for the same reason we go to the chapel—to become better people. The virtues necessary to be successful in sports are Christian virtues: discipline, self-sacrifice and a commitment to something bigger than oneself.

Jerry McGrane
Dyersville, Iowa

Angelic Message

Lyn Burr Brignoli's prize-winning essay ("Dragen, Here is Your Letter," 10/27) on her relationship and experience with Dragen, a young man afflicted with Down syndrome, leaves all of us closer to God. Through Brignoli's effort and eloquence, God has spoken to us through the angel that is Dragen.

Brignoli's spiritual journey with Dragen would seem to be the essence of continuing mystagogy. Dragen is clear evidence, if not "proof," that human suffering does not need to be meaningfully explained but embraced and shared. As for the God who indeed lives in our hearts, we can only thank him for the grace that inspires our "letters" and our acts of love.

Bob Redig
Youngstown, Ohio

Where Is Thy Sting?

Lyn Burr Brignoli's essay ("Dragen, Here is Your Letter," 10/27) provided much-needed perspective on the depth and breadth of God's love. Brignoli wrote that "he already knew of God himself. I was merely giving him a language to express it." But she gave him more than language; she participated in his life, and he in hers. This is a tribute to Brignoli and Dragen both, and indeed to the broader community that fosters living in this way.

What is suffering in comparison to such living?

Clyde Christofferson
Reston, Va.

Without Prejudice

"Can Citizenship Be Earned?" by David DeCosse (10/13), was an excellent, balanced article that, if read carefully and without prejudice, can help many people (as it helped me) to understand a bit more objectively the complexities of the immigrant problem in our country. DeCosse speaks of legitimate concerns and shows a real understanding of sincere people on both sides of the issue.

Pushing Catholic social doctrine without even acknowledging the injustices caused by illegal actions does not help in finding solutions. If our politicians and fellow citizens could read this article without letting their prejudices or fears interfere, they would be able to discuss the immigration problem more openly and objectively.

Roger J. Bourgea, S.M.
Boston, Mass.

The Word

Fear of the Lord

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time (A), Nov. 16, 2008

Readings: Prv 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31; Ps 128:1-5; 1 Thes 5:1-6; Mt 25:14-30

"Blessed are you who fear the Lord, who walk in his ways" (Ps 128:1)

ART BY TAD DUNNE

IN THE BIBLE a beatitude ("Blessed are you/they who…") declares someone especially happy or fortunate. Yet it may seem odd to call happy or fortunate those who fear the Lord; in this case "fear" is clearly something positive. Today's Scripture readings can help us clarify what the Bible means by fear of the Lord and how it can be put into practice.

Fear of the Lord is an attitude of proper respect for God, based on a realistic appreciation of who God is and who we are. It expresses itself in actions that are appropriate to a servant of God. Fear of the Lord is not a recipe for passivity and inaction. Rather, it is the beginning of true wisdom.

The capable wife described in Proverbs 31 is praised as one "who fears the Lord." She is anything but passive. In the ancient Greco-Roman world, the household, at a certain economic level, was the site of what might be described today as a small business, and the woman of the household was the business manager. The woman praised in Proverbs 31 is not only the overseer of a weaving enterprise but she is the one responsible for the care of all the members of the household. She does all things well. This capable woman brings honor to her husband, her family and herself. According to Proverbs 31, the basic reason for her success is fear of the Lord. She knows who she is and why she does what she does. Her many activities are motivated by a proper recognition of who God is and who she is.

In Psalm 128 also, fear of the Lord is the key to human happiness and success. Those who fear the Lord get to experience the good things in life. Here the main character is a husband and father, complementing the sketch of the capable wife in Proverbs 31.

Today's Gospel text from Matthew 25 is traditionally known as the parable of the talents. It is through this parable that we have come to use the word "talent" to refer to one's natural and/or God-given abilities. Originally, though, a talent was a large sum of money, something like $100,000. In the parable, a wealthy man going on a journey gives five talents to one servant, two talents to a second servant and one to a third. On his return the man who gave the talents demands an accounting. He finds that the servant given five talents has made five more and that the servant given two talents has made two more. But that the servant who was given one talent buried it in the ground and so made nothing. While the first two are praised and rewarded, the third servant is criticized and condemned. The moral is: Do something positive, constructive and life-affirming with your talents here and now.

The parable suggests that entering God's kingdom demands appropriate actions motivated by fear of the Lord, understood positively. The first two servants respected and understood their master and did what was positive, constructive and life-affirming with what had been entrusted to them. The third servant, however, who buried his talent in the ground and failed to make anything out of it, succumbed to "fear" in its negative sense and became paralyzed by it. We can assume that if the third servant had done something positive with his one talent, he too would have been praised and rewarded. But he did nothing. In the end he became a victim not of an unjust master but of his own lack of initiative, courage and hope.

The challenge to turn fear of the Lord into positive, constructive and life-affirming action can also be glimpsed in Paul's instructions to the Thessalonians. These people were being reduced to passivity and inaction by their expectation of the imminent full coming of God's kingdom. Apparently they believed Christ's second coming was going to occur very soon. Here again fear in its negative sense reduced good people to inaction. Using an image ("like a thief at night") found in several other New Testament writings, Paul reminds them that the second coming of Christ will be sudden and unexpected. Therefore he urges them to be prepared always and to be ever vigilant. That means continually acting as "children of the light" by doing what is positive, constructive and life-affirming. In other words, they are to act out of fear of the Lord in its positive sense as the beginning of wisdom.

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Praying With Scripture

- What reaction do you have to the expression "fear of the Lord"? Can you think of a better way to express the biblical concept?
- How can fear of the Lord be the beginning of wisdom?
- What does the parable of the talents contribute to your understanding of the kingdom of God and the fear of the Lord?