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THE END OF CATHOLIC HEALTH CARE?

Lessons From New York
DANIEL P. SULMASY



OF MANY THINGS

When someone asked me at the Los Angeles Religious Education Congress if I was enjoying myself, the answer was easy. "It's like being in heaven," I said. My friend laughed, but I was serious. The four-day event that ended on March 1 is the largest Catholic conference in the country, attracting some 40,000 participants yearly. And spending time with faithful Christians bursting with enthusiasm for their church, filled with Christian joy and working hard to spread the good news felt like a foretaste of heaven.

Of course "Congress," as participants call it, is never without snafus. For one thing, I could have done without waking up on the last day at 6 a.m. and turning on the television only to hear a newscaster say gleefully, "Let's go to our big story: the monster storm that has walloped the East Coast!" A six-hour flight delay ensued.

But after Congress, who cares? Besides the roster of some favorite Catholic speakers and authors, I met thousands of Catholics from across the country who are, in a word, happy.

That is no mean feat. These are tough times in the church. For me, the stories about the church's dealings with the breakaway Society of St. Pius X, the hateful comments of Bishop Richard Williamson on the Holocaust and subsequent admissions from church officials that the Vatican's message is being mismanaged have been saddening and, sometimes, maddening.

But in the face of this, the people of God quietly do their work, to great effect. One Christian initiation director from California wiped her brow (literally) as she told me that she's never been busier in 20 years of ministry. "That must be hard," I said. Her face brightened. "Oh no," she laughed, "It's great!"

This year, **America** magazine sponsored its first booth at the congress,

right next to a display of bronze sculptures from Creator Mundi. Our tireless publisher Jan Attridge, along with associate editor James Keane, S.J., and our online editor, Tim Reidy, greeted thousands of people curious about the mag. A few yards away from the booth one morning, a religious sister asked after "Jimmy Keane." "He's right there!" I said, and her face lit up. Later that day, Tim hosted a live demonstration of our new Web site on the convention floor. (The Web site really is new; the redesign was launched last week.)

Our booth received plenty of visitors, and there was something of a run on the free items we distributed, with one family making off with 10 tote bags. How much stuff can you tote?

In the midst of hearing inspiring speakers, leafing through new books at the publisher booths, catching up with old friends and meeting hundreds of hardworking Catholics, it would have been hard not to be happy.

It reminded me of a controverted saying. Last year at the congress I met Anne Kernion, who makes beautiful handmade cards (cardsbyanne.com). On one she features a quotation from Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J.: "Joy is the most infallible sign of the presence of God." But later I saw almost the same lines attributed to the French writer Léon Bloy. So I put the question to Anne: "Who really said that?" She sighed and explained that she had been struggling for years to find the correct provenance.

In its place, I suggested a quotation from the newly named archbishop of New York, Timothy Dolan. When a reporter asked him to sum up his approach for attracting vocations to the priesthood, he said something that rang true for me in Los Angeles, and has rung true since Jesus of Nazareth first brought joy to people in first-century Palestine: "Happiness attracts."

JAMES MARTIN, S.J.

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Daniel P. Sulmasy (right) discusses the state of Catholic health care on our podcast. Plus, a selection of images of St. Patrick, and **America's** take on the 1977 Frost/Nixon television interviews. All at americamagazine.org.



Small Is Beautiful

By many estimates, the Obama administration's efforts to save the financial sector have only begun. Though the fix will cost trillions of dollars, federal grants and stock purchases are only emergency measures. To prevent a recurrence of today's meltdown, the banking sector needs to be restructured. Restructuring, however, faces a paradox. In many places, small local banks continue to do business with no threat of insolvency. It is the 20 largest banks, like Citigroup and Bank of America, that are threatened with insolvency. It was precisely the combination of large size and complexity that brought the old system down.

To overcome the risks of bigness, the administration needs to retrieve the virtues of smallness. A 21st-century Glass-Steagall Act is needed to forbid the merging of financial services and break out commercial banking, investment banking and insurance activities, limit the purchase of banks and curb speculation. As Paul A. Volcker, former chairman of the Federal Reserve and chair of the new Economic Recovery Advisory Board, has said, banks should restrict themselves to banking—providing customers an outlet for their money and sources of credit. Here, as Mr. Volcker points out, the untroubled Canadian system is a model.

Because the redesign must be done on a global scale, however, new banking structures cannot but be complex. To adapt to the global market, a new institutional architecture is needed to provide the networking and integrating functions of the failed megabanks. Within that structure, quasi-public entities on the model of the U.S. Federal Reserve or the European Central Bank could regulate banking networks with an eye to restoring the stability of the system and to the public good, and so reduce the temptation to speculation and greed that arises when the fiduciary function is left to a large-scale, profit-driven private system.

Indicted for War Crimes

The chief prosecutor at the International Criminal Court in The Hague, Netherlands, issued an arrest warrant on March 4 for Sudan's president, Omar Hassan al-Bashir, for crimes against humanity. According to the United Nations, the mass killings in Darfur have caused the deaths of 300,000 people since they began in 2003. In addition, two-and-a-half million people are internally displaced, and an estimated five million are in need of food assistance. The Sudanese government rejects the possibility that General al-Bashir might be prosecuted. Sudan's

ambassador to the United Nations has dismissively said of the indictment that it would not "deserve the ink with which it is written." The League of Arab States strongly opposed it, and the African Union tried to delay it.

In the wake of the indictment, there are likely to be angry demonstrations. The fragile peace agreement between northern and southern Sudan could also be in jeopardy. Against the background of massive violence and suffering, the international community has remained on the sidelines. It must play a stronger role. President Obama supported an indictment, as did Susan Rice, the new U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. But the goal should be steps toward peace and reconciliation, not measures that could provoke waves of retribution.

Save Lives, and Money Too

Gov. Martin O'Malley of Maryland, long opposed to the death penalty, recently added to his argumentation that we should outlaw it because it is "an expensive, outdated and utterly ineffective tool in deterring violent crime." Carolyn McGinn, a Republican member of the Kansas state senate, is another of a growing number of legislators who cite drained resources and severe budget cuts as reasons to ban capital punishment.

Some years ago, a study of costs in Texas (which has carried out more executions than any other state since the U.S. Supreme Court reinstated the death penalty in 1976) showed that death row cases cost taxpayers \$2.3 million per case, compared with \$750,000 for life sentence cases. In Kansas a few years ago the median cost for death penalty cases was \$1.26 million, while non-death penalty cases cost \$740,000 to the end of a prisoner's incarceration. A strong majority of nations around the globe, over 130, have outlawed the practice. It is a requirement for nations wishing to join the European Union.

Most opponents of capital punishment make their case on religious or moral grounds, arguing as Pope John Paul II did that it is "cruel and inhuman punishment." Others argue, from a more pragmatic point of view, that it does not deter crime and that innocent people have been executed. Many claim that the death penalty is applied along class lines: Those with the capital escape the punishment.

Capital punishment is a stain upon our conscience. The fact that one key motive for outlawing it is not respect for life but saving money is still another shame. But we hope that this economic argument, noble or ignoble, helps to win the day and that the death penalty will be prohibited everywhere across the United States.

A Future With Mr. Chávez

In a supremely ironic exercise of their franchise, Venezuelan voters moved one step closer to dictatorship on Feb. 15 by removing term limits for President Hugo Chávez. The result permits Chávez to run for reelection indefinitely and possibly remain in power, as he has suggested, until 2049, when he will be 95 years old. The election was only marginally free, accompanied as it was by the usual trappings of authoritarian rule: violent crackdowns on student protests; a strictly enforced, nearly complete media monopoly for the government; even a seven-hour presidential speech in the oratorical tradition of Fidel Castro. “Chávez’s intention is clear: He aspires to be president for life,” said Michael Shifter of the Inter-American Dialogue in Washington, D.C. “But his capacity to pull this off is far from assured.”

That is an understatement. The plummeting price of oil, which generates an astounding 80 percent of the country’s total export revenue and helped fuel double-digit economic growth earlier in the decade, seriously threatens Chávez’s socialist revolution. Price controls designed to contain hyperinflation have led to food shortages. There is talk that the nation’s banking system faces imminent collapse and that Mr. Chávez may have to devalue the currency. Also, a closer look at the Feb. 15th election results shows that all is not well in this nascent and unlikely workers’ paradise. Even though he had every advantage, the margin of victory (54 percent to 45 percent) for Mr. Chávez’s referendum was only about one million votes, revealing that almost half the voters are displeased with Chávez’s reign.

The Obama administration’s response has been muddled. The State Department at first declared that Venezuela’s election “was held consistent with democratic principles”; then, following an onslaught of criticism, the department backtracked, saying, “The state of health of democracy in Venezuela is not very good” and that there is currently “no change in policy” from that of the Bush administration. It would be a major mistake indeed if there is to be “no change” in U.S. policy. For at least 50 years, U.S. policy toward Latin America in general, and toward Venezuela in particular, has been clumsy, paternalistic and myopic. What is required now is a new policy that is balanced and realistic.

The first component of such a policy should be the clear renunciation of gunboat diplomacy. President Obama should order the Central Intelligence Agency to shred any

plans it may have for anything akin to the attempted coup it indirectly assisted in 2002. Such tactics are usually immoral and almost always impractical, producing little more than popular resentment. The second component of a new policy should be a multi-dimensional analysis of the political and economic situation in the region. While it is undoubtedly true that Mr. Chávez has undermined democracy in his country, it is also true that his policies have cut Venezuela’s poverty rate in half, helping to release the country’s working poor from the grip of an oligarchy that was indifferent to their plight. Mr. Obama’s only public comment about Venezuela thus far was made during an interview with Univision, in which he said that Chávez had “been a force that has interrupted progress in the region.” Perhaps, but Mr. Obama should try telling that to a Venezuelan mother who now has a roof over her head and schoolbooks for her children. Any new policy should recognize the legitimate aspirations of the Venezuelan people for economic justice as well as the legitimate successes of the Chávez regime.

The United States should also not repeat with Venezuela the mistakes it has made with other Latin American countries, particularly Cuba. Every strongman needs a bogeyman, a scapegoat, and for over 40 years successive U.S. administrations have played this role for Fidel Castro, giving his regime a much-needed *raison d’être* in the process. Mr. Chávez aspires to be Fidel Castro’s successor in Latin America, a job that requires a certain degree of hyperbolic anti-Americanism. The United States should not take the bait. Mr. Chávez’s rhetoric will become less persuasive if the U.S. approach becomes more conciliatory.

The final component of a new U.S. policy simply involves Mr. Obama’s keeping his campaign pledge to engage in vigorous and open diplomacy with Mr. Chávez. On a host of policy issues—trade, immigration, economic development, drug policy, even a resolution to the conflict in Colombia—there is common ground and at least the possibility of progress. The administration should pursue initiatives in each of these areas, while leading the way to democracy through its example. In the end, respectful, intelligent dialogue, free trade and the arc of history will do more to counter Mr. Chávez’s anti-democratic antics than anything else.



Religious Leaders Assess Causes, Consequences of Christian Exodus

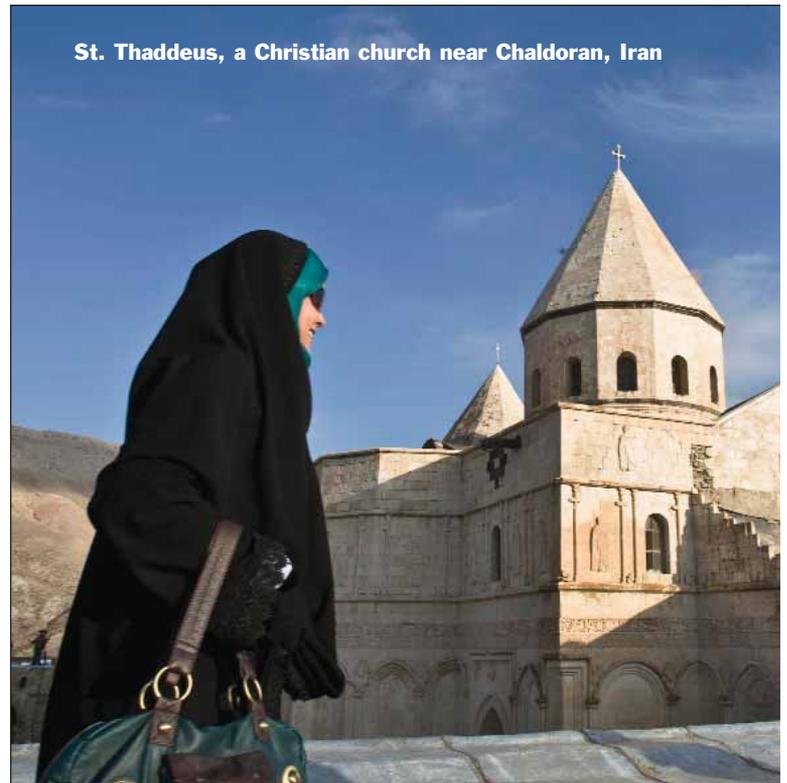
Religious leaders met in Detroit, Lebanon and Rome in February to address the accelerating emigration of Christians from the Middle East, an exodus that seriously threatens the survival of Christianity in the region. Currently between 12 million and 15 million Christians reside in the Middle East, almost half of them in Egypt, and in most Middle Eastern countries less than 10 percent of the population is Christian.

Causes. The Christian population in the Middle East has been in steady decline since the Young Turks Revolt in 1908 and the subsequent persecution of Christians. While persecution is still a contributing factor, most participants in the February meetings agreed that the causes of migration today are primarily social and political. Tarek Mitri, Lebanon's minister of information, said Christians, who are among the better-educated classes, are "victims of their good education" in that they are able to provide a better standard of living for their families by emigrating to where there are better career opportunities. In this way, the increasing rate of migration is in part a consequence of globalization. "If a young Palestinian—Christian or Muslim—can get work in the United

States or Dubai, then they will go," said Bernard Sabella, a Catholic member of the Palestinian parliament and former professor at Bethlehem University.

Archbishop Jean Sleiman of Baghdad said that while economic and

political problems are the major reasons for leaving in most areas of the Middle East, Christians in countries like Iraq and the Palestinian territories leave out of "fear of Islamic fundamentalism and being legally discriminated



Doctors Defend Regulations Protecting Conscience Rights

The Catholic Medical Association has joined forces with the Christian Medical Association and the American Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians and Gynecologists to combat what they see as a major threat to the conscience rights of health care professionals. The groups are joining in an effort to intervene legally against lawsuits filed by the attorneys general of

eight states, Planned Parenthood of America and the National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association.

The suits seek to overturn a Department of Health and Human Services regulation that prohibits discrimination against health professionals who decline to participate in abortions or other medical procedures they believe to be objectionable for moral

or religious reasons. Without the regulation, pro-life health professionals would be subject to "the imminent threat of being forced...to perform abortions, assist in abortions, train for abortions and refer individuals for abortions despite their religious, moral and ethical objections to the practice of abortion," said court papers filed with the U.S. District Court in Hartford, Conn.

"Physicians must defend their right to practice medicine in accordance with their consciences," said John Brehany, M.D., executive director of the Catholic Medical Association. "It's



against” in an Islamic state. In Iraq the problem is particularly acute: at least half of all Christians in Iraq, an area inhabited by Christians since the first century, have left that country in the last five years. The crisis has become

so severe that the bishops of Iraq have called on Pope Benedict to convene an extraordinary regional synod to address the problem.

Consequences. Another area of agreement that emerged from the meetings is that it is desirable for Christians to remain in the Middle East not simply because of their long history in the area or because they are lawful citizens. Archbishop Sleiman said Christians help preserve peaceful coexistence in religiously and ethnically diverse societies. Christians possess a unique culture that displays “the willingness to mediate,” and therefore they “could do so many things because reconstruction [of a war-torn nation] deals above all with souls, culture, mentalities,” the archbishop said.

Some participants in the meetings also said a strong Christian presence could help moderate Muslims to counter the rising wave of Islamic extremism sweeping the region. Mohammed Sammak, a political adviser to Lebanon’s grand mufti and a participant in the Rome meeting, said, “The fewer Christians there are, the more [Islamic] fundamentalism rises,”

fills the void and gains the upper hand; “that is why as a Muslim, I am opposed” to Christians emigrating. For Christians to disappear from the Middle East would be like “pulling out the threads of a cloth so that the whole social fabric risks unraveling and dying.”

Another danger is that if Muslim-majority nations do nothing to protect and encourage their Christian minorities to stay, then Western countries will think that Islam does not accept or respect Christianity, Sammak said. If people living abroad see that Muslims are unable to live with Christians even when they share the same culture, language and citizenship, he said, “then they’ll think, ‘so how can we Europeans live with Muslims?’” Tensions and restrictions against Muslims living in or immigrating to Europe may be exacerbated as a result.

Syrian Orthodox Metropolitan Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo appealed to Muslim nations and authorities, telling them that their role is “to safeguard Christians. It is up to you. We don’t believe our protection can come from outside.”

a very important principle that every physician should support. Without conscience protections, for example, physicians or other health care professionals could be subject to government conscription to participate in the executions of death-row prisoners if the state could not find volunteers to do so,” Brehany said.

The motions to intervene, which were filed by attorneys from the Alliance Defense Fund and the Center for Law & Religious Freedom on behalf of the three pro-life organizations, also argue that pro-life medical professionals could be “forced to relo-

cate to jurisdictions that respect their rights or to leave the profession altogether” if there were no federal laws protecting their conscience rights. The motions further criticize the “plaintiffs’ baseless allegations that medical professionals exercising their conscience place women at risk of serious injury and even death by failing to

render necessary services during medical emergencies.”



Steve Batthany, M.D. at the 2006 Respect Life Convocation

“I’m confident that the court will allow these doctors to intervene because they are the ones who will be forced” to perform or refer or train for abortions, said Matthew S. Bowman of the Alliance Defense Fund. “It’s

a direct attack on the only existing protections” for pro-life health profes-

sionals. "When they try to strike down a regulation that implements laws in place for 30 years, it affects every pro-life health professional."

Meanwhile, on Feb. 27 the Obama administration announced it was reviewing a proposal to rescind the regulation. After the review by the Office of Management and Budget, the proposal is to be published in the Federal Register, opening a 30-day period for public comment. In response, the Catholic Health Association is also initiating an education campaign to raise awareness about the issue. People need to know that even if the regulation is overturned, "there are still laws that protect conscience rights," Brehany said. "We need to continue to defend and respect and explain the reasoning behind them."

Coalition Expresses Support for Sebelius

A group of Catholic leaders, scholars and theologians publicly expressed support on March 1 for the nomination of Governor Kathleen Sebelius, Democrat of Kansas, to be the next secretary of health and human services. In a statement organized by Catholics United, a Washington-based progressive organization, the group said: "In addition to offering our support, we also reject the tactics of those who would use Governor Sebelius's faith to attack her. As Catholics, we find such partisan use of our religion regrettable and divisive." The nomination of Governor Sebelius, a Catholic who is pro-choice, has engendered controversy among some conservative groups and with some bishops. The Catholic League has organized against her nomination and Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann

NEWS BRIEFS

Archbishop Paulinus Costa, president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Bangladesh, criticized the "barbarous killing and looting" that left more than 140 people dead or missing following the **recent mutiny of the Bangladesh military.**

• Poland's chief rabbi, Michael Schudrich, said he hopes **Pope Benedict XVI's trip to Israel** will be an opportunity for the pope to demonstrate to the world his deep knowledge of and respect for Judaism. • The head of the traditionalist **Society of St. Pius X** said on Feb. 26 that his order is not ready to accept the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, which the Vatican has set as a condition for full reconciliation of the order with the church. • The latest church statistics show that the number of Catholics remains stable at **1.147 billion people** worldwide and that the number of priests and seminarians worldwide has been showing a modest, yet steady increase. • The Vatican has announced that a California woman, Heidi Sierras, will be **baptized by Pope Benedict** during the Easter Vigil in Rome.



Michael Schudrich

of Kansas City said, "It is troubling the important influence that she will have on shaping health care policies for our nation." Catholics in Alliance said in a statement that both the Catholic League and Archbishop Nauman are "doing a disservice to those Americans who will benefit from Governor Sebelius's leadership as health and human services secretary."

Snyder Responds to 'Hate Mail'

Despite receiving what he termed "hate mail" that questioned his appointment to the President's Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, the Rev. Larry Snyder, president of Catholic Charities USA, said he welcomed the opportunity to bring the church's views on serving the poor and

marginalized to the national discussion. The letters raised doubts about his role on the council and "told me that I would probably go to hell for accepting this appointment," Father Snyder said. The correspondence was apparently prompted by the fact that President Obama is pro-choice. "There can be no doubt that Catholic Charities is a firmly pro-life organization," Father Snyder said. "Let me assure you the administration is well aware of where we stand on this issue. But I believe God will also not forgive us for missing any opportunity to promote the care of the poor and vulnerable in this country," he continued. "We will be faced with opportunities to do so with the Obama administration, and Catholic Charities will take them."

From CNS and other sources.

MARGARET SILF



New Life in the Wreckage

It was nearly four centuries ago, in 1625 to be exact, that a Portuguese vessel, the Wanli, sailed from China heading for the Straits of Molucca, off the western coast of what is now Malaysia. The Wanli was carrying a cargo of Ming china, but it never reached its intended destination. It was attacked by a Dutch vessel and sank without a trace, and all its priceless cargo with it.

There, at the bottom of the South China Sea, it remained until in 2003 the wreckage was discovered and brought back to the light of day. The china, of course, had been reduced to thousands of shards and was apparently beyond redemption. An enterprising jeweller, however, came up with the idea of making these shards into beautiful pieces of jewelry: pendants, earrings, brooches and so on. New life from the wreckage. A symbol, surely, of the journey through Lent and Passion Week to Easter.

My own encounter with this story happened unexpectedly—as the best encounters always do—when I was taken by friends to visit a tiny workshop in Kuala Lumpur. There I was to meet a Dutch gentleman and his Portuguese wife (only God could have got that particular synchronicity so right) who were marketing these artifacts. As I drank tea with them, I found myself thinking of how life moves in strange directions to speak its truth, and how long-forgotten sea battles between two warring nations led to this creative venture, master-

mindful by nationals of those same two nations.

I came away with a pendant that I shall always cherish. It is made from a shard of Ming china recovered from the wreckage of the Wanli. It had lain at the bottom of the South China Sea for almost 400 years, and it speaks to me loud and clear of how God can bring forth something profoundly, stunningly new from our life's most destructive experiences.

But the connections do not end there. The jeweller had carefully selected the shards so that each piece of jewelry featured a particular motif that reflected its shattered origin. The motif I chose was a lotus flower.

The lotus flower has its own story to tell. The lotus grows from roots embedded deep in the mud of a pond. Slowly and tentatively the first tiny flowers push through and the plant grows steadily up toward the surface of the water, always striving for the light. And there it blossoms. The Chinese recognize this as a parable of how something pure and clean and beautiful can issue forth from the darkness and the mire. They see it as a symbol of how we too can work through our darkest, most painful circumstances to be reborn to something new. Once it breaks the surface, the lotus flower is transformed. It has risen through the mud to reveal its true identity in the glory of the light.

Could such a promise be true for us too? As I roamed around the street markets of Malaysia I discovered another feature of the lotus flower.

Buds, full blossoms and seed pods are all simultaneously present on the same plant. For this reason the lotus is also seen as a symbol of an eternal reality in which past, present and future are all held together in harmony and integrity.

As we journey through the darkness of the last days of Lent and the agony of Holy Week toward the hope and light and joy of Easter, my lotus

Shards into jewelry — a potent symbol of the journey from Lent to Easter

pendant might prove to be a valuable fellow traveller. It has known what it is to be broken by conflict, to be sunk in helplessness at the bottom of an unfathomable ocean and to be left there unregarded and unvalued. But it also knows what it means to be brought back, not to

how it once was, but to what, in the artist's hands, it has the potential to become. It depicts a flower that is rooted in the mud and blossoms in the light. That is not just the way of the lotus; it is the calling of humanity.

When I want to meditate on the mysteries of the passion, death and resurrection, I will take out my pendant and listen again, in silence, to its remarkable story; and I will hear the echoes of a much more remarkable story resonating deep within it: the story of the human journey from the mud to the stars and the story of the One who lovingly gathers us up from the shipwrecks of our lives to the workshop of his grace, where God is making all things new, in the hearts of those who continue, year by year, to strive toward the light of Christ.

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



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/ SHARON HARDING



THE UNRAVELING OF CATHOLIC HEALTH CARE

Then There Was One

BY DANIEL P. SULMASY

In 2007 there were eight Catholic acute care hospitals in New York City. By the end of 2008 there was only one. The reasons for this shift are many and complex, but it would be foolish to dismiss this as a freak event, unique to that city. Indeed, even if one has no special interest in the field of health care, this story speaks volumes about the current state of Catholic institutions in the United States. How did so much happen so fast? And what can be learned?

In the 1990s, fearing increased pressure to conform to secular medical morality and under intense financial stress from managed care, Cardinal John O'Connor of the Archdiocese of New York pushed the somewhat unwilling hospitals and nursing homes of the archdiocese into a loose confederation called the Catholic Health Care Network. Initial plans were for a full merger, but fear on the part of the hospitals that their charisms would be lost and worries about job security on the part of administrators scuttled the effort.

Unable to merge completely with the hospitals of the Catholic Health Care Network, and facing mounting financial difficulties, St. Vincent's Hospital Manhattan explored a possible merger with St. Vincent's Staten Island and the hospitals of the Diocese of Brooklyn, which had been united into one network as early as the 1960s. This too, proved difficult. Brooklyn feared that in a three-way merger they would face a two-against-one dynamic. While St. Vincent's Manhattan was owned by the Archdiocese of New York, and St. Vincent's Staten Island by the Sisters

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of Charity, the religious congregation itself was an order of the Archdiocese of New York. This could provide the archdiocese with an unfair advantage. To facilitate a bilateral structure, Cardinal O'Connor ceded full control of St. Vincent's Manhattan back to the Sisters of Charity, and the merger proceeded. A number of members of the board of trustees of St. Vincent's Manhattan warned that the undertaking was ill advised and expressed skepticism about the financial health of the Brooklyn hospitals. Nevertheless in 2000 the merger was completed and the Saint Vincent Catholic Medical Centers of New York was created.

The chief executive officers and boards of trustees of all the merging institutions were replaced with a new board—consisting of two members of the Sisters of Charity, an auxiliary bishop and a canon lawyer— and a new C.E.O. from the outside with experience running a big system and a history, albeit a highly checkered one, of overseeing mergers.

The Bottom Drops Out

From the moment of its creation, Saint Vincent Catholic Medical Centers of New York was a disaster. The problems of a \$1.6 billion-a-year multi-hospital, multi-nursing-home behemoth were legion. As it turned out, the Brooklyn hospitals were in horrible financial shape. Two hundred million dollars in cash reserves (a meager amount by health care standards) went out from St. Vincent's Manhattan into Brooklyn as soon as the merger took place. Staff in Brooklyn, who had no idea that their hospitals were in such bad shape, immediately blamed Manhattan for mismanagement. Manhattan physicians placed the blame for the financial instability of their hospital on Brooklyn, despite the fact that St. Vincent's Manhattan was hemorrhaging cash independently. And financially solvent Brooklyn nursing homes resented having to carry the load for the hospitals.

Professional relationships did not function properly, either. The physicians refused to refer patients to one another or to function as one system. Attempts to create systemwide bylaws bogged down in endless squabbles.

After Sept. 11, 2001, a decline in the number of employees and residents of downtown Manhattan dramatically reduced the potential patient population around St. Vincent's, and the hospital incurred huge losses. Despite the hospital's national prominence in the wake of the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, no one proved able to make effective use of it to raise funds. When post-9/11 federal dollars were doled out, New York hospitals that had played almost no

role in responding to the disaster received more funding than did St. Vincent's.

The financial picture continued to deteriorate. The economies of scale that the merger was supposed to achieve were poorly realized. Saint Vincent Catholic Medical Centers wound up with the worst managed-care contracts in the city. The system could not pay its creditors; it deferred maintenance and the floors went unwashed. On several occasions the institution came close to missing its payroll obligations. Layoffs included physicians, and essential items like X-ray film became scarce when suppliers imposed credit-holds.

The four trustees, however, did not see that the man they had hired to run the new system was incompetent. While he justified the network's problems as endemic to health care generally and

An outmoded Catholic parochialism continues to plague Catholic institutions. Yet if we cannot work together, we will die alone.

called for more consultants, the budget for the system's corporate offices ballooned. Finally, in 2004 the C.E.O. was fired.

Survival came at a still higher price. Saint Vincent Catholic Medical Centers declared Chapter 11 bankruptcy in 2005; when it emerged from bankruptcy in 2007, large chunks of Manhattan real estate that had provided office space, housing for residents and students and a convent for the sisters had been sold, along with three of the hospitals. Worse still, the hospitals located in the poorest neighborhoods had to be closed; no one wanted to buy them.

In the meantime, under the leadership of a new prelate who had inherited a financially troubled system, the Archdiocese of New York was busy extricating itself entirely from the acute-care hospital business. Our Lady of Mercy Hospital was sold to Montefiore in 2008. Operation of the former St. Clare's was ceded to St. Vincent's Manhattan in 2003; it continued to operate until it was finally closed in 2007 by the state's Berger Commission, which had been established to reorganize and streamline health care throughout the state. The commission also shut down Cabrini Medical Center, another financially ailing Catholic acute care hospital in Manhattan.

And then there was one: St. Vincent's Hospital Manhattan.

What Went Wrong?

Mergers often fail because of inattention to differences in culture between the merging institutions. That was clearly true in this case. Beyond this generic issue, however, what observations can be made? Why did the Catholic hospital system in New York City collapse so rapidly? Several lessons emerge.

1. *The marketplace is a harsh environment for faith-based institutions.* New York is one of the world's most high-cost, inefficient cities for health care delivery. The average New York City family spends 18 percent more cost-of-living-adjusted dollars on health care than does the average American. A New Yorker is also 45 percent more likely to be X-rayed than a patient in Seattle.

To reduce costs, managed care used the same major technique in New York that it had used nationally: it forced shorter hospital stays. As a result, New York City eventually had many unused hospital beds. Rather than close, however, all of the city's hospitals (except the university hospitals) tried to stay afloat by shrinking. The competition for paying patients and for the physicians who admit paying patients became fierce. Such a cutthroat commercial environment sits uneasily with a mission-based approach to care.

Moreover, consistent with their missions, Catholic hospitals were often built in poor neighborhoods. Medicaid cutbacks and an increasing burden of care for undocumented immigrants meant even less income; the financial stress proved too much.

Yet it is possible to hold one's own without selling one's soul. In other places during this era of managed care, Catholic and non-Catholic hospital systems still serve the poor and flourish. Some Catholic institutions have joined relatively well-paying suburban hospitals to inner-city hospitals, and in so doing are able to balance their losses with gains. As Jesus said, we must be wise as serpents and as innocent as doves.

2. *Catholic philanthropy is weak.* Surviving intense market competition and financial stress often requires generous but wise philanthropic support. New York's Catholic hospitals saw precious little support, even when philanthropy elsewhere was robust. New York's Mount Sinai Hospital, for instance, was in deep financial trouble in 2001 with an operating loss of \$26 million. But after asking for and receiving enormous philanthropic support, they made a complete turnaround.

Today many Catholics have risen to prominence and have amassed great wealth. Catholic philanthropy, however, while often generous to direct service projects, does much less to support educational, cultural and health care institutions. Catholic universities and hospitals are notoriously under-endowed compared with similar institutions. It is a great irony: Catholics complain that they do not influence culture, but when they have the resources to make a difference, they tend not to support the institutions that can achieve such influence.

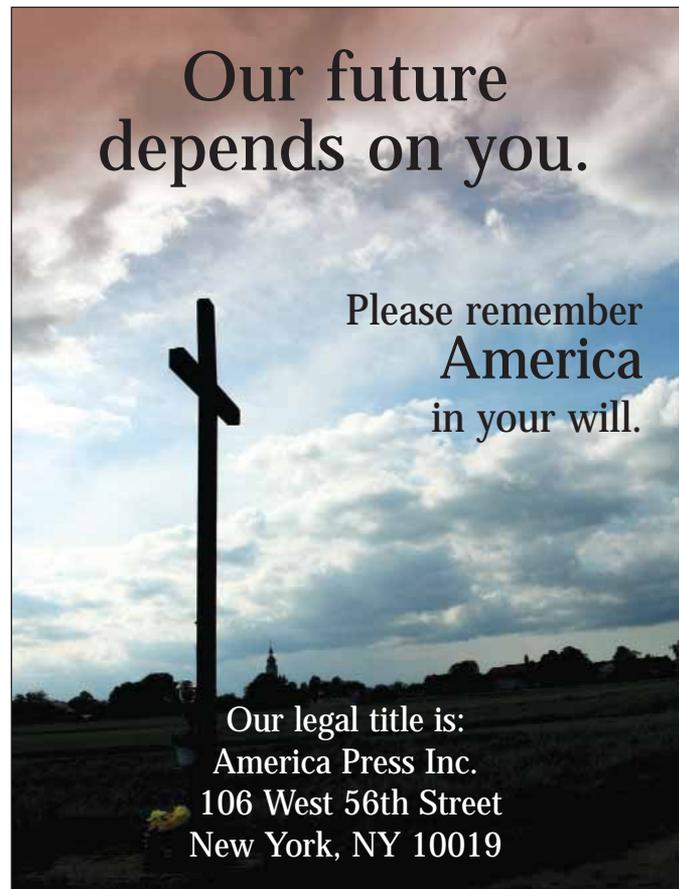
3. *Catholics operate under outdated institutional assumptions.* In the 1950s loyalty and subservience could be valued over competence, and institutions would still survive. In today's complex environment, however, this is no longer

true. Perhaps New York's Catholic hospitals failed, in part, because too many of the administrators hired were good Catholics rather than good managers.

In some parts of the country, religious orders, conscious of their declining numbers, started years ago to plan for leadership succession in their institutions, truly "forming" lay leaders in their charisms, creating a knowledgeable and dedicated leadership workforce. New York's Catholic health care institutions, unfortunately, operated as if the sisters would always be there. As a result, the sisters were relegated to being spectators when disaster struck.

An outmoded, 1950s-style Catholic parochialism continues to plague Catholic institutions. Catholics were afraid to engage with non-Catholic institutions, religious orders were wary of other religious orders, and each diocese was wary of the other. The collapse that followed illustrates quite clearly: If we cannot work together, we will all die alone.

4. *Catholics are opting for secular values.* Exceedingly few people, including Catholics, seem to have noticed that there has been an 89 percent reduction in the number of Catholic hospitals in New York City in a very short period of time. I suspect one reason is that Catholics no longer prize Catholic institutions. This is partly good. Many Catholic institutions were founded because Catholics could not break through barriers of prejudice. As Catholics have become part of the mainstream, they no longer need such



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institutions for access to services.

But something has also been lost—a culture, a spirit and a community of faith. In a consumer society, people seek the best brand. Parents who once sent their children to Fordham now send them to Harvard. Even Cardinal O'Connor, when diagnosed with a brain tumor in 1999, sought care at Memorial Sloan Kettering rather than at St. Vincent's Comprehensive Cancer Center. Medically, Memorial offered nothing that St. Vincent's could not have offered for his cancer, but St. Vincent's could have offered also a spiritual atmosphere and approach to palliative care that Memorial cannot match. Excellence and compassion are not antithetical. Catholic institutions can offer both in a truly distinctive way.

5. *Ecclesiastical culture can be enervating.* The hospital crisis could have been a time for a robust display of ecclesiastical leadership. Unfortunately, none was forthcoming. It seems that in the current ecclesiastical climate, one succeeds not by one's accomplishments but by not making mistakes. Hospitals are costly and can drain enormous amounts of time. They can also spell trouble if someone in a Catholic hospital does something that some group thinks is a violation of church teaching. In such an environment, there is little incentive for church leaders concerned about their own future to take a decisive role.

6. *Catholic institutions often have poor political connections.* When hospitals looked for relief after 9/11, when market pressures pushed all hospitals to the brink of disaster, when the Berger Commission decided which hospitals to close, Catholic hospitals in New York consistently fared poorly. A major reason was the loss of Catholic political power in the city and state. Because of the influence of unions and local neighborhood political power, it was politically impossible to close any of New York's 11 city-owned hospitals. And no one would dare close the big university hospitals. What remained were the small to mid-sized private hospitals. Those without political clout (for the most part, that meant the Catholic hospitals) were the most vulnerable.

ON THE WEB

An interview with
Daniel P. Sulmasy, O.F.M.
americamagazine.org/podcast

Why Bother?

Some might wonder why one should bother to save Catholic institutions. Perhaps the time has come to abandon bricks-and-mortar Catholicism and instead to live the faith by blending like yeast into the secular society. Personally, despite all the obstacles, I continue to be convinced that Catholic institutions (and, in particular, Catholic hospitals) are worth fighting to save. Catholic institutions help to nourish the faith of those who work in them and are served by them. Our Catholic hospitals also provide a vehicle for proving that our moral convictions are compatible with 21st-century technology, and they embody the ideal that service institutions ought to have service missions. In health care, patients and practitioners alike are becoming alienated from the health care delivery system. Hospitals that treat patients with true respect, recognize their dignity, attend to their spiritual needs, value people over technology and value service over the bottom line are precisely the remedy that people need. Given their mission, Catholic institutions should be leading the way.

Institutional presence also brings with it a place at the political table and greater potential to lobby for the good. A bishop who can say that Catholics operate one-third of the hospital beds in his state is much more likely to be heard on health care justice for the poor, than if he is speaking from the sidelines.

Recently St. Vincent's tended survivors from the US Airways jet that went down in the Hudson River, just as it had tended survivors from the Titanic in 1912, survivors from the Lusitania in 1915 and survivors from the World Trade Center attacks of 1993 and 2001. Located in the heart of our communities and serving us often in the circumstances when we are most in need, Catholic institutions are worth saving. But the story of what happened to health care in New York suggests we had better learn well, and quickly, if we wish to succeed. **A**



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A Long Struggle for Peace

Mauricio García on Colombia's violent history

BY GEORGE M. ANDERSON

Ongoing violence in Colombia has led to the internal displacement of three million people over the last 25 years. These Colombians—women, men and children—are forced to live as refugees in their own country. “Although the Colombian government claims that there is no armed conflict, only a terrorist threat from rebel groups,” Father García told me, “a war dynamic is very present,” said Mauricio García, S.J., executive director of Cinep, the Jesuit Center for Research and Education in Bogotá, during a recent interview with *America*.

Some human rights groups focus on abuses by the army, and others direct their attention toward the right-wing paramilitary groups or the main rebel insurgency, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the smaller guerrilla group, the National Liberation Army (E.L.N.). Segments of the population legitimize one or the other of these arms-bearing organizations as a means of stabilizing a country that has been crippled by unrest for decades. A consensus on the need to work jointly for peace still needs to be developed.

The Intractable Drug Trade

The major obstacle to peace is the drug trade. Money from the drug trade flows to guerrilla groups and to various paramilitary organizations; it also flows to corrupt officials within the army who engage in drug trafficking. “We have witnesses who know of army officials who have been involved in drug dealing,” Father García said.

The current large-scale drug trafficking is of relatively recent origin. Before 1980, most coca crops were grown not in Colombia but in Bolivia and Peru. Colombia served mainly as a transit point for cocaine on its way to the United States. “This situation changed in the 1980s, when the United States began to press Bolivia and Peru to fight more aggressively against the coca production,” said García. “As a result the coca plantations simply moved from there to



Colombia. That's when the violence in my country began on a large scale.”

By 1990 the violence had turned into a major armed conflict, with 1,000 or more deaths each year. “And all the parties involved,” Father García said, “used the money from drug trafficking to buy their arms.”

Pressure from the United States on Colombia eventually led to efforts to eliminate coca crops there by means of aerial fumigation. As Father García pointed out, however, the spraying kills the food crops, but not the coca: “The leaves of coca plants that have been sprayed can simply be cut off, and the plants will continue to grow.” Also, drug dealers realized that the coca plantations could be moved to other parts of the country as needed. Such mobility is possible in part because the small farmers who raise the coca plants do not carry out the processing beyond mashing the leaves into

GEORGE M. ANDERSON, S.J., is an associate editor of *America*.

paste. “They then sell the paste to drug intermediaries who...pass it on to powerful groups that turn it into cocaine, often in laboratories hidden in the jungle,” said Father García.

Although both guerrilla and paramilitary groups are involved in the drug trade, they differ in that the latter derive much of their support from big landowners, a number of whom have political connections with members of Colombia’s congress. FARC, the major insurgency, has consistently refused to negotiate with the government of

The Bush administration, which saw Colombia as its closest ally in Latin America, hesitated to press extradition issues with President Uribe. As for demobilizations, the International Crisis Group, a human rights organization, has pointed out that “the Uribe administration prioritizes a quick fix removal of the paramilitaries from the conflict at the cost of justice for victims and the risk of leaving their economic and political power structures largely untouched.”

In the view of Father García and other rights activists, the Justice and Peace Law fails to address the issue of legal impunity in a meaningful way. According to García, some members of Colombia’s congress, like Senator Rafael Pardo, “have criticized the law for its failure to take steps to reveal and dismantle the inner power structures of the paramilitaries.” As matters stand now, “people in regions where they [the paramilitaries] operate feel that the structures are still in place, and that the drug dealing is continuing.” So powerful are the paramilitaries in some parts of Colombia that even lesser paramilitary leaders can dictate the outcome of minor local elections.

Of the people forced from their homes in rural areas, most tend to migrate to the cities. There, many conceal their status as internally displaced persons out of fear “that something might happen to them,” as Father García put it. Some crowd into the homes of relatives in poor neighborhoods.

Local diocesan organizations, along with such international human rights groups as Oxfam, Catholic Relief Services and the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development try to alleviate the suffering. Yet the number of displaced persons is so great that many receive little in the way of health care, education for their children or other forms of assistance. Father García mentioned a positive

shift in allocating resources by the U.S.-funded Plan Colombia. Until recently, 80 percent of its annual funding went to military uses, leaving only 20 percent for humanitarian assistance. Now, thanks to advocacy by human rights groups in Washington, D.C., the proportion has shifted: 65 percent for military aid and 35 percent for humanitarian purposes, including aid for internally displaced persons. Still, the imbalance in the funding is pronounced.

Grabbing Land and People

Paramilitary groups in Colombia cast other dark shadows. As Father García observed, “For labor organizers, Colombia is by far the most dangerous country in the world.” The major human rights groups would agree with

Above left, Colombian marines stand guard next to part of 13 tons of cocaine confiscated near Tumaco.



For labor organizers, Colombia is by far the most dangerous country in the world.

President Álvaro Uribe.

In 2005 Uribe’s administration approved the so-called Justice and Peace Law as a means of negotiating with the paramilitaries and moving forward the process of demobilizing their ranks. “Those who had taken part in war crimes or atrocities were to present themselves before a jury and declare what they had done, in return for receiving a lighter sentence than would otherwise have been the case,” Father García said.

Many, however, think the process falls far short of what justice demands, such as the right of victims to take part in the court proceedings or to receive compensation. The process does not force the paramilitary commanders to reveal their organizations’ mafia-like drug dealings either, a step that allays their fear of being extradited to the United States to face prosecution there.

PHOTO: REUTERS/EL PAIS/DM/DY

his assessment. Since 1985 more than 2,600 labor organizers have been killed in Colombia. Between January and April 2008, 17 union members were assassinated; some of their bodies have shown signs of torture. In specific cases, businessmen have paid paramilitary groups to kill labor organizers. Although the situation is complex, said Father García, conservative groups generally mistrust labor organizations that try to promote union activities. Some wealthy people, he noted, see union organizers as tainted by Marxist ideology. The situation underscores an aspect of the overall problem, which is that violence continues to be used to resolve conflicts. Said García, "In the countryside people sometimes say, 'we have a problem, but we also have guns.'" Groups like Cinep seek to redirect their thinking away from arms.

Land theft contributes to the turmoil that grips Colombia. Drug traffickers often use part of their proceeds to acquire fertile land left behind as owners flee the generalized violence. For small farmers land ownership is a relatively recent mark of progress. Between the 1960s and the 1980s, Father García said, small farmers received plots of land from the government in an agrarian reform program. "The idea in itself was good and was carried out," he observed. But as violence increased, drug traffickers appeared on the rural scene. "I witnessed this in several parts of the country," said García. "A trafficker might say to a farmer, 'Your land is worth a million pesos—I'll give you two million, a good price.' But in other cases, he might say, 'You must sell me your land at minimum value, or you'll be killed.' This kind of forced sale has contributed to the flight of many people to the cities." Some call such land grabbing a "counter-agrarian reform," because the land is redistributed in a way that runs counter to the intent of the original reform. "If the drug dealers themselves do not take possession of the land," said García, "they find someone loyal to them who will manage it for them." Nothing in the Justice and Peace law makes mention of returning such land that has, in effect, been stolen. Millions of acres are involved.

Kidnappings increase the level of fear throughout the nation. FARC carries out most of them, said Father García, though some ordinary street criminals kidnap too, and then "sell" the captive person to FARC, which sets a ransom price and contacts the kidnapped person's family.

The high-profile case of Ingrid Betancourt, a one-time Colombian presidential candidate who holds both Colombian and French citizenship ended in early July with a dramatic rescue. The Colombian government peacefully managed to rescue Betancourt and a handful of others. But hundreds still remain captive. The fact that Ms. Betancourt's state of health was not known during her six years in captivity (some people believed her to be dead) reflects the difficulties in dealing with FARC. This is partly

because it remains unclear just who holds the group's major leadership positions.

Early in 2008 Colombian troops pursued one FARC leader, Raúl Reyes, across the border into Ecuador and killed him. Ironically, since Reyes to some extent served as a spokesperson for FARC with the outside world, his death makes it even more difficult to communicate with the guerrillas in a meaningful way. To maintain their secrecy, Father García said, they carefully restrict their use of satellite or mobile telephones and computers, lest the technology reveal their location.

Peace Work

Father García has a longstanding involvement in peace-related work. "During the 1990s, while I was in my formation program as a Jesuit seminarian, I was investigating human rights violations in Colombia," he said. "Eventually, though, I wanted to move beyond 'counting dead people,' so to speak." His superiors sent him to work at Cinep in Bogota. "I began to focus on wider issues, like peace negotiations...addressing the ongoing violence, and in time I went to England for four years to do a Ph.D. in peace studies at the University of Bradford," said García. He wrote his dissertation on the peace movement in Colombia. "Over the last decades," he noted, "it has become one of the largest mobilizations for peace in the world, with millions mobilizing for it."

During our conversation, Father García mentioned "peace territories," a relatively recent concept that began as conflicts escalated in the 1990s. Unicef reports that schools, offices, parks and whole villages in some parts of the country have identified themselves as peace communities, declaring that no conflicts there would be resolved through violence. (Similarly, the American Friends Service Committee has said that some indigenous groups and Afro-Colombians practice nonviolence as a way of life, in the midst of struggles to protect their lands from paramilitaries, guerrillas and armed forces.)

Many of the peace groups in Colombia operate at a grassroots level. One, for example, focuses on women victims of armed conflict; it is called *Amor* (Love). Father García described a woman who had been raped and whose three brothers were killed. Although all but inert from shock and sorrow when she joined *Amor*, she found healing through an aspect of the program called *abrazos* (hugs), and "she was even able to say she had found God," said the priest.

Peace initiatives persist in Colombia. Through the efforts of groups like Cinep, some of them are even growing. Peace groups, law enforcement and the Colombian government, however, can do only so much. The drug trade is an international problem, driven by demand, and any long-term solution will have to reduce demand as well. **A**

LENTEN REFLECTION

Bon Appetit!

The fourth in a series for Lent

BY KAREN SUE SMITH

Every year, like millions of other people, I resolve to lose weight. Often I work hard and shed a few pounds, but then fail to keep them off. While I've won battles against the bulge, I am losing the war. Even so, I think of myself not as a glutton (since weight gain takes just 100 calories extra a day) but as a "foodie"—I reward myself with food and love to eat, cook, grow and even paint food. By genetic predisposition and by temperament, I am a person of big appetites, prone to enthusiasms and excesses. Often I have had to force myself to the dinner table, loath to leave whatever I was doing. That is no contradiction, but another manifestation of the same vice: intemperance.

Some of my intemperate traits—excessive enthusiasm, being loyal to a fault—are qualities that I like not only in myself but in others, and that others like in me. Which could explain why, when I first learned about temperance as a young adult and a new Catholic, it repelled me. If it meant moderation, temperance seemed gutless, fence-sitter-ish, bland, lacking passion—totally uninspiring. It also sounded oxymoronic when applied to the noblest ideals: What is a temperate martyr? Is it temperate to give up one's life? Would temperance have stopped St. Martin de Porres from dragging the ill into his monastery for care—can it impede holiness? What is temperate about giving a beggar not just your money but your cloak too? Maybe the

beatitudes need editing: Blessed are those who mourn a little, but not too much.... Could Jesus have pled temperance to rationalize his way to old age and avoid the cross? How temperate is love?

For decades, I hated temperance with a passion and joked that it should be allowed only in moderation. Yet while I argued that lack of restraint—the kind that withholds nothing and gives all—sounded Christ-like to me, I wondered whether people of big appetites must learn restraint to follow Christ. Must I renounce my temperament? Then I read the prayers of Blessed Pope John XXIII, asking God to help him lose weight.

Temperance is much more than moderation. It is one of Plato's virtues, a fruit of the Holy Spirit, one of the cardinal virtues of Catholicism and one of the precepts of Buddhism. It acknowledges the power of the appetites, then governs them through self-control, not outside restrictions. And St. Augustine saw temperance as "love giving itself entirely to that which is loved." I had that part right!

Aging has a tempering effect on a person who has experienced the hazards of excess. Obviously one cannot always feast or fast, and one needs much ordinary time to understand the meaning of fasting and feasting, holidays and holy days.

Temperance enables balance, which in many respects is a metaphor for

perfection. Maintaining a graceful balance takes effort, skill, timing, creativity and considerable maturity, for one must juggle personal matters with one's relationships and responsibilities to family, work, church and community. The best jugglers smile, almost dance, enjoying the thrill of rhythmic balls in motion, careful to drop none. In life such balance requires not just temperance but prudence, courage and the other virtues.

Even love for others must be balanced with competing demands for one's time and energy. That was as true for Jesus in his day as it is for us in ours. Today I hold lightly a Bible verse I cherished as a child: "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might" (Eccl 9:10). Many tasks do not need much might. These I relegate to late evening when my brain is fuzzy, saving my peak energy for important work. I pray in the morning before the sun comes up these days, though I used to pray best at night as I recalled my day hour by hour. Now if I try that, I fall asleep.

Temperance allows us to toss some things into the air while we do what is urgent or foundational. It also urges us to keep attempting the virtues, despite years of defeat. Those attempts might include losing weight, exercising more, tending to someone or fulfilling a commitment. Learning the virtues takes a lifetime. Lent is the best time I know to begin, again.



KAREN SUE SMITH is editorial director of *America*.

APT: JULIE LONNEMAN

The Well

A thing of mystery, a hint of eternity

BY TIMOTHY M. DOLAN

One summer day when my family was out for a Sunday drive, we stopped at a shrine at the neighboring parish of St. Joseph in Manchester, Mo. The old church had a well, perhaps the first I had ever seen. Dad held me up so I could peer down, but I could see no bottom. I cupped my ear and heard only silence. Dad gave me a rock to drop into it, and I waited for what seemed forever before I heard a muted splash of water, way down deep. Mystery, meaning, depth, a hint of the beyond, life-giving water—all seemed evident at that well.

Seventeen years later, in summer 1973, I visited Ireland as a 23-year-old seminarian. When a friend and I walked, rode bikes and buses through lush villages, and hitchhiked back roads, I found them again—the wells. But I was not alone in sensing mystery and meaning in them. The Irish called them “holy wells.”

“Why are you surprised?” asked the parish priest in Kilbeggan, as he hosted us for tea and brown bread. “Think of Jacob’s well or the Samaritan woman at the well in the Bible,” he went on. “Wells have always been places of meaning, mystery, the beyond, life itself.”

Never, though, has my appreciation for the power of a well been deeper than it was last May when I traveled to Ethiopia on a trip sponsored by Catholic Relief Services. Our destina-

tion was at the end of a rough ride of two hours south of the capital, Addis Ababa. The heroic local bishop, Abraham Desta, was waiting for us in Meki, where he invited us in to freshen up and take a cup of potent Ethiopian coffee (coffee was first brewed here) and then packed us back into our four-wheel drive vehicle for another dusty ride through 15 miles of desolate fields.

“Simply put, there’s no surface water here in Ethiopia,”

my brave brother bishop explained to me and my companions, Joseph Kurtz, the archbishop of Louisville; Carolyn Woo, dean of the school of business at Notre Dame; and Art

Wigchers, a benefactor of C.R.S. “We’ve only got two main rivers in the whole country,” he went on. “The rains are completely unreliable. Our people are always only one dry season away from famine. The frustration is that water is abundant way down deep, but our people can’t dig that far to get to it.”

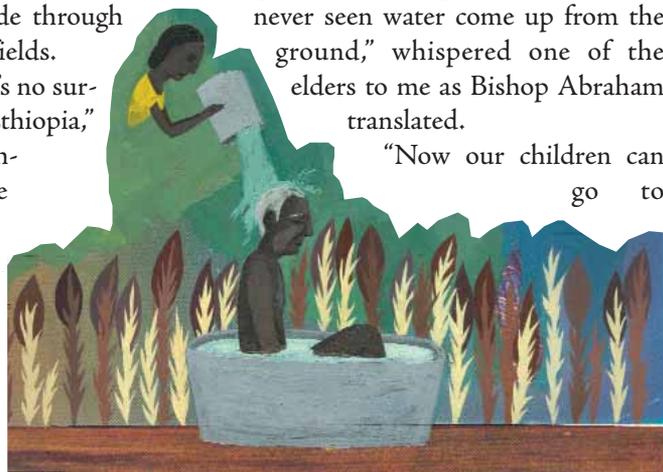
That explained the carcasses of cows and sheep we saw through the clouds of dust, the drooping crops, and the emaciated, parched people who stared at us from the cracked fields. That explained why C.R.S. was so committed to digging wells all over Ethiopia; \$45,000 does the job, we were told.

As we neared the site of the C.R.S.

project, there they were: hundreds of jubilant, applauding, beaming, hopeful folks. They had all come to the new C.R.S. well. We prayed, we hugged, we blessed the well and the pump. And I got to throw the switch!

Rising from deep down, a rushing swirl came through the silence and burst through: the clean, clear water from the well. The stream spread...cisterns brimmed over...the thirsty cattle sniffed the water and started to trot toward us...the children splashed...the jugs were filled up...the tears of jubilation flowed...the villagers danced...the hoses carrying water to the surrounding fields and villages swelled up. “I’ve never seen water come up from the ground,” whispered one of the elders to me as Bishop Abraham translated.

“Now our children can go to



school,” another exclaimed. The bishop explained that the nearest river was a three-and-a-half-hour trek away, so the children spent seven hours every day to get the essential water. They could hardly go to school.

“Our crops will be green again,” beamed another villager. “Our cattle and sheep will live.”

“Our babies will not get sick, and we can soothe and bathe our elders as they prepare to die.”

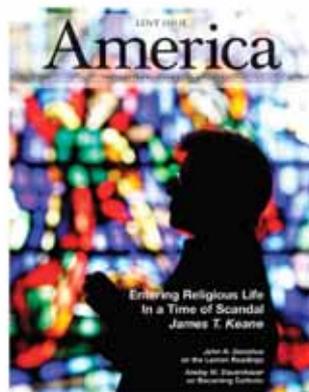
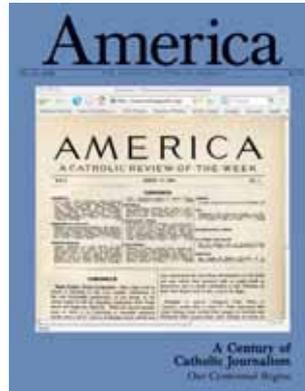
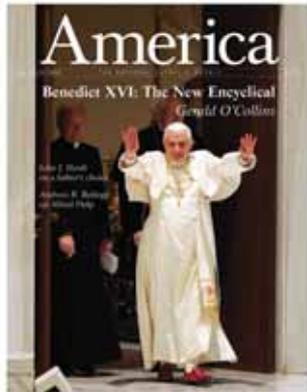
No wonder Jesus referred to himself as “living water.” No wonder C.R.S. is committed to digging wells. There is indeed mystery, meaning, depth, a hint of the beyond, life itself, in a well.

MOST REV. TIMOTHY M. DOLAN is archbishop of Milwaukee and chair of Catholic Relief Services.

ART: STEFANIE AUGUSTINE

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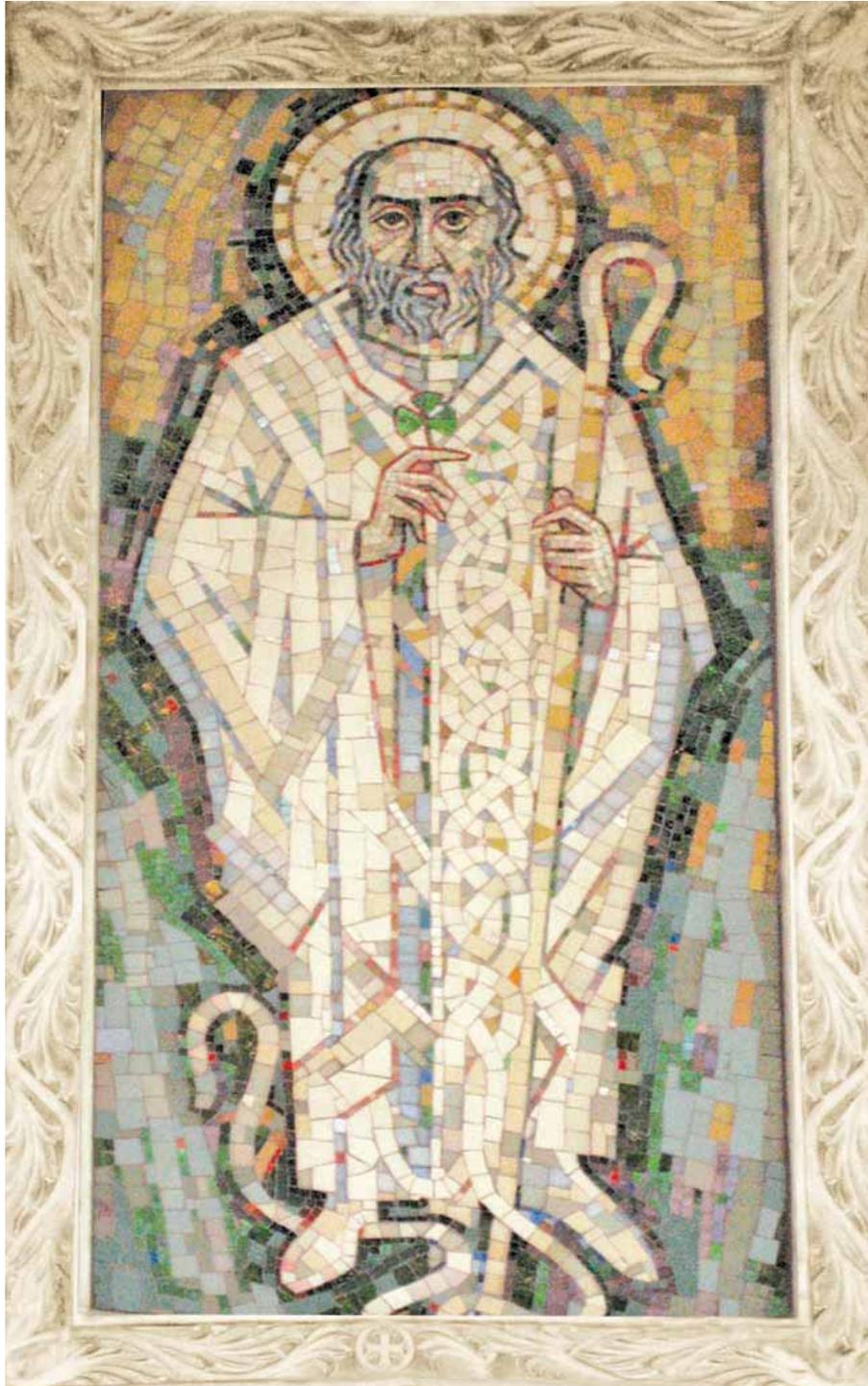
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BOOKS & CULTURE

ART | JON M. SWEENEY

THE LOOK OF THE IRISH

Images of St. Patrick in art



Mosaic of St. Patrick, Westminster Cathedral

Some scholars doubt that St. Patrick ever existed. They say that the Irish may have felt a need to create a powerful founder in order to glorify the origin of their church. Rome had Saints Peter and Paul; the founding of the church in England was definite, but muddy as to provenance; so, this argument goes, the Irish would do the British one better and find themselves a strong, saintly leader.

Perhaps the powerful Patrick and the legends about him (some are indeed quite fanciful) were invented and then placed upon the life of a much more ordinary missionary of that name. Heinrich Zimmer held this line of reasoning about a century ago in his book, *The Celtic Church in Britain and Ireland*:

It would not require a long stretch of imagination if we assume that, about 625 [when the first *Life of Patrick* was published], Ireland's pious wish of having an apostle of her own was realized by reviving the memory of this Patricius, who had been forgotten everywhere except in the southeast. It was in this way, I think, that the Patrick legend sprang up with its two chief premises: first, that Ireland was entirely pagan in 432...and secondly, that Patrick converted Ireland within a short time and introduced a Christian Church, overcoming all obstacles and winning the favor of King Loigaire.

Zimmer's is one response to the fantastic legends: Do not believe them at all; they must have been manufactured. But most scholars disagree with Zimmer. They say that Patrick not only existed but did some remarkable

PHOTO COURTESY OF AUTHOR

things, even if he was not the first missionary to Ireland.

Patrick's two acknowledged writings are the *Confession* (written when he was an old man responding to charges made against him by British priests) and the *Letter Against Coroticus* (also polemical, written earlier). These are the only reliable witnesses to Patrick's life and work. From these we know that Patrick's Latin was not good; that his father was a deacon named Calpornius; and that Patrick's grandfather, Potitus, was a presbyter in his village in Britain. At age 16 Patrick was kidnapped by pirates and taken to Ireland, where his faith was kindled while in captivity; he worked as a shepherd and heard the "voice" of God speak to him. After six years, he fled Ireland, stowed away on a ship. The ship traveled for three days until reaching land; Patrick visited his parents in Britain a few years after he escaped; he returned to Ireland and claimed to have baptized thousands of people.

If none of that sounds familiar, it is because you rarely see any of it in the iconography of the saint. The St. Patrick of art tells stories that move beyond what the experts say we can know for sure. Some of us heard legends of St. Patrick as children, and we repeat them to our own children. That great Irish poet of the last century, Patrick Kavanagh, wrote in "To Be Dead":

*And you perhaps, take up religion
bitterly
Which you laughed at in your
youth,
Well not actually laughed
But it wasn't your kind of truth.*

I do not think it harms anyone to believe that Patrick combated Druids in remarkable ways, that he performed magician-like miracles and all of the other stories that fill the pages of Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend* and Alban Butler's *Lives of the Saints*.

In art, Patrick is most often represented in these legendary ways.

Most often, Patrick is shown holding a bishop's crosier, a serpent snaking around the length of it. Various legends exist as to how, where and when he was supposed to have obtained this staff. One legend intimates that Christ himself had once used it—hence one of the other names for it, *baculus Jesu*. Medieval believers latched onto Patrick's comments in his autobiographical *Confession* about being divinely instructed in his mission as evidence that the crosier had been mystically passed from Jesus to Patrick, over a circuitous route spanning four centuries. Now there is a story to be told! It would be beautiful, whether true or not.

Patrick is supposed to have used that staff to beat the snakes, symbolizing heathenism and evil, out of Ireland. Other legends say that a black bell (which can still be seen in The National Museum of Ireland in Dublin) was the tool for driving the snakes away. For this reason, you will often see Patrick in paintings with a bell. Legend has it that Patrick rang this bell from the summit of Croagh Patrick and then threw it over the side of the mountain. Angels retrieved and returned the bell to him. Again and again this happened, and each time snakes and other crawling creatures fled.

There are no snakes in all of Ireland. Natural scientists tell us that, in fact, Ireland never had any snakes. When snakes first evolved from lizards about 100 million years ago (the same era as the first tyrannosaurs), they lived entirely on the

southern continents. Meanwhile, the land that became Ireland was underwater. Sixty-five to fifty million years ago, when the climate of Earth changed, drying out, snakes quickly proliferated—but not by swimming across vast bodies of water to islands, such as Ireland, Greenland and New Zealand. Somewhat more recently, ice ages have eliminated snakes from northern continents, only to see them return again, but not across icy waters such as the English Channel or the

The Starry Night

The sky exults in shimm'ring stars,
In haunting curves of scimitars.
And fleeting is the Milky Way
That swirls in luminary play.

A crescent moon in haloed bowl
Transcends the artist's tortured soul.
The firmament is bursting free
In one exquisite filigree.

And underneath the canopy,
Touched only by the cypress tree,
A village sleeps imbued in light
From magic of the starry night.

ROBERT D. JOHNSON

ROBERT D. JOHNSON, of West Boylston, Mass., is a former traffic engineer of the city of Worcester.

Northern Channel, which separates Ireland from Scotland (where a few species can occasionally be found).

In the iconography of Patrick, two other traditional images appear: a three-petaled shamrock and a wind-

swept scene. A shamrock is pictured most often in trinkets and on saint cards; it captures the story of when Patrick, who was always known to use ordinary things to make extraordinary points, picked up a shamrock to explain the Trinity to a group of pagans. The wind-swept imagery recalls a particular scene, as well as a nonparticular setting. The scene was the one preserved in the *Golden Legend*, when Patrick dug a circular hole with his staff, and the earth opened to reveal purgatory, demonstrating the existence of such a place and the necessity of being baptized. Hot air rushed to the surface and scared the people straight. The nonparticular setting, common in more contemporary illustrations of St. Patrick, shows him in the west of Ireland—the land to which, by most scholarly accounts, he may have genuinely been the first Christian missionary. Patrick probably spent many occasions standing on high and craggy bluffs in the west of Ireland, the wind buffeting and strengthening him.

Another image of St. Patrick intrigues me more than the others, and it is especially meaningful now, as Easter approaches. It is the image of Patrick on the Hill of Tara, the ancient seat of the Irish kings, where he lit the Paschal fire as a dramatic nighttime gesture (some of the greatest saints were also dramatic virtuosos) to sanc-

tify the island for Christ. Look for this remarkable story in any major biography of the saint, and look to—of all things—a postage stamp for one of its most beautiful representations. The artist is unknown. The stamps were issued from Dublin in 1937, and you can see them on the

ON THE WEB
More images of St. Patrick.
americamagazine.org/slideshow

Web page about notable events in postal history (<http://shoebox.heindorffhus.dk/frame-StPatrick.htm>).

Both the hard facts and the fanciful legends about Patrick have the power to fascinate and instruct; it is best to strike a balance between the two. Since so many centuries have passed, we will likely never know more about the man who was Patrick than we do today.

JON M. SWEENEY is the author of several books and the editor of a new edition of J. B. Bury's classic biography of St. Patrick, Ireland's Saint: The Essential Biography of St. Patrick (Paraclete Press, 2009).

FILM | MICHAEL V. TUETH
MANO A MANO

Ron Howard's 'Frost/Nixon'

In March 1977, almost three years after Richard M. Nixon became the only U.S. president forced to resign from office, the British television personality David Frost spent nearly two weeks interviewing him for American television. In 2006, the British playwright Peter Morgan dramatized the preparation, the deal-making and the taping of the now famous interviews. His play, "Frost/Nixon," a critical and popular success in London and on Broadway, has come to the screen under the direction of the veteran filmmaker Ron Howard.

Almost halfway into the film, as Nixon (Frank Langella) arrives for the

first interview session, one of Frost's researchers, James Reston Jr. (Sam Rockwell), watches the ex-president through a window. "I've written four books about him, but this is the first time I've actually seen him in the flesh," says Reston. "He's taller than I imagined." A minute later, standing face-to-face with the man, a mesmerized Reston stares silently at Nixon. Having declared that he will not shake the hand of a man he despises, Reston does just that when the president greets him.

The film's audience can understand Reston's dilemma. Despite all that we have come to know of Tricky Dick—his abuse of presidential power, his wiretapping of his enemies and his attempts to cover up the high crimes for which he was impeached—Nixon still comes across in the film as "taller than we imagined." His intellect, his political savvy, his ability to intimidate lesser mortals and his easy manipulation of any conversation demand our respect, however reluctantly given. In Frank Langella's hands, Nixon comes across as a lion of a man, brutal when in power, fiercely defensive when cor-

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nered. Can this lion be tamed?

The interviews resemble boxing matches between Nixon the political heavyweight and Frost, his unimpressive opponent. At one point, Nixon gets pugilistic advice from his post-resignation chief of staff, Jack Brennan (Kevin Bacon), who coaches him to “control the space. Don’t let him in.” Likewise, Frost’s coaches tell him: “Keep your distance till the taping begins. Don’t engage. You’re in there with a major operator.” Up to the final interview, the two remain locked in verbal combat. Frost tells Nixon,

had,” making him admit his guilt and apologize to the American people for betraying their trust. Reston’s hopes appear to be dashed until the night before the last interview and a fateful telephone conversation between the two combatants.

In the last half-hour of the film, the suspense of the contest builds to a powerful climax. In the final interview, armed with previously unknown information that Reston has unearthed among the tapes of Nixon’s conversations with one of his Watergate co-conspirators, Charles

points of view. Except for the scenes at Nixon’s San Clemente estate, the palette throughout most of the film employs dark browns and black, keeping the mood of the story heavy and even menacing in spots.

Howard and his fellow producers imported much of the play’s talent. Frank Langella, who won the 2007 Tony award as Best Actor for his Broadway performance, and Michael Sheen repeat their roles as Nixon and Frost; Peter Morgan has reworked his script for the screenplay. Langella’s performance avoids anything like the

standard stand-up impersonations of Richard “I am not a crook” Nixon. But with his hunched shoulders, his swinging arms, his heavy gait, his nervous mouth and, most of all, his growling bass voice, Langella conjures a frighteningly recognizable figure from one of our country’s darker moments.

Michael Sheen does not succeed as well in his representation of David Frost. While Sheen might have managed to impersonate him onstage, in the closer view of the camera, he does not resemble Frost, either in appearance or in personality. Even as others in the film describe Frost as a slick, shall-

low entertainer more suited to be a game show host than one who interviews ex-presidents, Sheen comes across as refined, polished and emotionally intelligent. The inclusion of the character of Caroline Cushing, a lovely young woman whom Frost meets on the flight from London to America and takes with him to California, serves no recognizable purpose in the narrative other than to document Frost’s reputation as a womanizer, meanwhile wasting the considerable talents of newcomer Rebecca Hall.



Kevin Bacon and Frank Langella in “Frost/Nixon”

“Only one of us can win.” Nixon: “I shall come at you with everything I’ve got. I’m going to be focused and ready for the battle.”

The first three interview sessions are seen as disastrous for Frost because Nixon manages to intimidate him even before the taping begins. To Frost’s embarrassing questions, Nixon offers rambling reminiscences and other diversionary tactics. The sessions prove particularly frustrating to Reston, the journalist who had agreed to participate in the production only if it would “give Nixon the trial he never

Colson, Frost moves in for the kill. The cameras also close in on Nixon’s face; he is betrayed by what one person later calls “the reductive power of the close-up.”

Ron Howard makes exciting use of close-ups and quick-cut editing throughout the film, keeping the mental battlefield constantly energized. Not only during the interviews but also in the heated arguments between Frost and his production staff and researchers, the camera is in constant motion, moving from face to face and angle to angle, frequently changing

The film is also diminished by the fact that outside the interviews themselves, much of the dialogue and many of the scenarios—including Nixon's late-night telephone call—did not actually occur, turning parts of the film into political fiction rather than historical drama. For a more factual, detailed account of the proceedings (and a good read), see James Reston's *The Conviction of Richard Nixon: The Untold Story of the Frost/Nixon Interviews* (Harmony, 2007).

"Frost/Nixon" closes with the relatively accurate observation that after the interviews, Richard Nixon "remained largely absent from official state functions until his death, of a stroke, in

ON THE WEB

From the archives, America on the Frost/Nixon interviews.
americamagazine.org/pages

1994." Yet Nixon lives on in the political mythology of our nation as a man who, despite the many accomplishments of his administration, "let the American people down," as he confesses in that final interview. By all measures, he lost the boxing match.

Frost, whose professional reputation soared as a result, may be considered the winner. But the real victory belongs in another realm, wherever truth and justice reside and continue to offer us hope that every now and then, the arrogance and dishonesty of the powerful will not prevail.

MICHAEL V. TUETH, S.J., *teaches film and media studies at Fordham University in New York.*

retired from the University of Notre Dame, Professor Jay Dolan is one of the leading historians of the Irish in America and the history of the American Catholic Church. Here, rather than offering a work of heavy scholarship, he provides a synthesis of this wide-ranging literature for a broad audience, albeit likely an Irish-American one. He brings to this effort decades of research and teaching, the wisdom and judgment that come with such lifelong endeavors and the confidence that translates into an easy, entertaining and very informative read.

But such broad surveys of complex stories can be distinguished as much by what they omit as by what they include. There are many ways to view the history of Irish America—sociological, cultural, religious, political—and Dolan acknowledges in his preface that this story will be only a partial one that focuses on religion, politics, labor and the impact of Irish nationalism. Irish-American literature, sports and the entertainment field in general receive the briefest of references. While occasionally the female experience is differentiated from that of the

male, there is very little gender analysis. No new theoretical frameworks in which to place immigrant communities are explored. It would be churlish, though, to criticize a book of such broad sweep for its omissions; yet concern lingers that the more lovingly stereotypical representations receive an attention that could be more critical.

Dolan starts promisingly by reminding his audience that the first wave of Irish immigration to colonial

BOOKS | NANCY J. CURTIN

FROM PREJUDICE TO POWER

THE IRISH AMERICANS

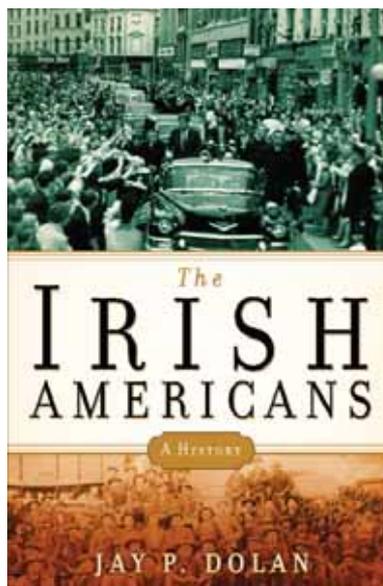
A History

By Jay P. Dolan
 Bloomsbury Press. 368p \$30
 ISBN 9781596914193

Fundamental to the American dream is the story of immigrant peoples beckoned by the Statue of Liberty. In Emma Lazarus's poem, inscribed on its base, the "Mother of Exiles" welcomes "the wretched refuse" of foreign "teeming shores," "huddled masses yearning to breathe free." Inevitably this is a heroic story, all the more because great obstacles are overcome to realize the full promise of the land of opportunity. In many ways Irish America represents the archetype of this heroic narrative. The greatest concentration of Irish immigrants were exiles from the Great Hunger of the mid-19th century, wretched indeed as they escaped starvation, disease and

enduring poverty, only to be greeted with "No Irish Need Apply" in their less than welcoming adopted homeland. A little over 100 years later, one of their own was inaugurated president of the United States, and as a group the Irish Americans surely had arrived, ranked among the best educated, wealthiest and most accomplished ethnic groups in American society.

Much has been written by historians, sociologists, political scientists and biographers charting the contours and complexities of this triumphant long march. Now



North America was largely Presbyterian in its denomination, and that those Catholics who came over remained largely unchurched because of the scarcity of their clergy. They were followed by a smaller group of political exiles in the early 19th century, who added hostility to England into the mix and found their way into the Jeffersonian Party.

But it was the Famine immigration that forged the identity that most concerns Dolan. That is when the Irish Presbyterians became Scotch-Irish, and the real Irish were exclusively Catholic. And that is when an American Catholic Church began to emerge from humble beginnings to Promethean heights, overwhelmingly staffed by Irish and Irish-American clergy. The story now becomes a familiar one of prelates and politicians—Archbishop John Hughes building that monument to American Catholicism, St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York; Boss Tweed and Tammany Hall. All this was made possible by the concentration of so much of the Irish immigrant population in the cities. But to what extent were machine politics a reflection of an Irish genius for political mobilization, or simply a function of urbanization? Other ethnic groups had their big-city political machines, though admittedly the Irish may have set the mold. But Dolan does not address such questions. Rather, he offers a series of vignettes highlighting notable Irish-Americans.

This is one of the problems as well as one of the many delights of this book. Irish America is not defined except, it seems, in reference to a place of origin. What, indeed, constitutes Irish-American identity? Dolan says the Irish have a gift for politics and are endowed with charm, wit and eloquence, which make them effective union leaders, priests and politicians. Are these national traits or simply the characteristics of the most successful

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Irish-Americans? Is there anything that links the Kennedys to the anti-busing crowds of South Boston or the Westies of Hell's Kitchen? Dolan's Irish-Americans reside mostly in New York, Boston and Chicago. Do they become less Irish as they leave the cities for the suburbs, or bypass the cities altogether? Irish-Americans were fairly solidly behind the Democratic Party until the 1960s, and then they become as politically polarized as the rest of the nation. They were equally polarized on integration, despite being visibly hostile to African-Americans.

The underbelly of Irish-American behavior is acknowledged, but receives very little attention. The crime gangs of Hell's Kitchen and South Boston, for example, are accorded a single paragraph, and Irish urban racism receives only a little more consideration. The political

machines of New York, Chicago and Boston, with their colorful bosses and corrupt practices, are presented as progressive institutions that take care of the huddled masses and open the doors to upward mobility. Indeed, this book is the most fun to read when it covers those bosses. It is also most authoritative when it covers the Catholic Church, about which Dolan is so clearly an expert. But he tends to use Irish and Catholic as if they were interchangeable.

The Irish Americans is, after all, only a survey, masterfully done within the limits set by Dolan, and lively and engaging in its narrative. What it is meant to do, it does—it offers an appealing and inspiring history of Irish America to the many Americans of Irish descent.

NANCY J. CURTIN is professor of Irish History at Fordham University in New York

own assessment of the contents, one should not expect *secrets*. Successful leadership is not an arcane and esoteric art. Over and over again the authors offer common-sense advice on the need to plan, to tell the truth, to be courageous and to exemplify a host of good behaviors that will make one a success at whatever the task at hand, from leading a mega-corporation to Lowney's example of a maintenance man who took great pride in polishing floors. The books reiterate basic moral lessons that we have all heard, whether in Aesop's fables or Spinoza's *Ethics*. In the 19th century, British civil servants sent off to manage the empire were instructed to read Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* as a guide to leadership.

Given the ubiquity of wisdom on how to lead and live a good life, why do we need these books? I suggest that if they do not reveal, they remind. The reminders come in two principal forms: style and story. Metaphorical style is everywhere. Within two pages Baker and O'Malley advise leaders to consider "pit stops" and "tune ups," to "change the weather," avoid promoting folks because they have "been on the bus" or "belong to the right clubs." Why use metaphor rather than telling folks to rest, refresh, change the corporate culture, avoid promotion just because the individual has been long in the company or belongs to an office clique? Baker and O'Malley characterize leadership as "the distillation of chaos." The corporate leader is an "artist" who produces "stirring images that capture attention." Metaphors, by avoiding flat fact, create "stirring images" that offer distance and perspective to illuminate the messy mundane.

Lowney points out that we live in a new world of "change, culture clash, increasing scale and complexity." No wonder mastering life can also seem like distilling chaos. The reason that leadership and life books proliferate is

DENNIS O'BRIEN

A MIGHTY PURPOSE

HEROIC LIVING

By Chris Lowney
Loyola Press. 248p \$22.95
ISBN 9780829424423

LEADING WITH KINDNESS

How Good People Consistently Get Superior Results

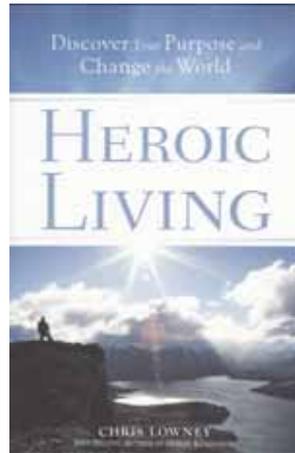
By William F. Baker
and Michael O'Malley
American Management Association
256p \$24.95
ISBN 9780814401569

The first question that comes to mind about these two eminently sensible books is "who reads them and why?" There must be an audience for the issues addressed. Baker and O'Malley's *Leading With Kindness* is one of an exhausting number of books

on the topic. Amazon lists 311,487 results under the heading "leadership." You can choose from titles like *Leadership 101*, *The Indispensable Qualities of Leadership*, *The Leadership Secrets of Genghis Khan* or that perennial bestseller, *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (15 million copies sold since publication in 1937). Chris Lowney's *Heroic Living* would probably reach an even higher total in the category "how to lead your life," and he is also the author of an earlier book, *Heroic Leadership*. There is readership for leadership.

What should one expect from books about leadership on the path of life or on the fast track at Time-Warner—one of the companies cited as leading with kindness? Based on the explicit claim of the authors and my

the same reason that tomes on spirituality abound, or the reason that we listen to the same sermon lesson week after week. The good life and good leadership are not secrets we have not discovered, but we need cheerleading to stay in the game (metaphor) despite changing fortune and complexity. Summing up the struggle in metaphor reminds us of the goal. We chant the metaphoric watchword to encourage us on the march.



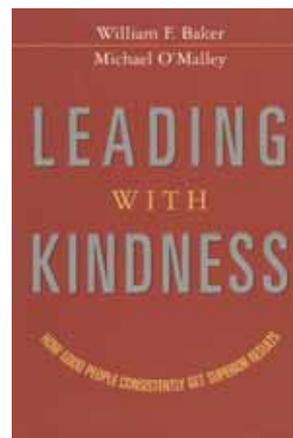
It would be unfair, however, to characterize either of these efforts as extended pep talks, replete with memorable phrases that can be pasted to the cubicle wall. Both books ground aphorism in biography. O'Malley and Baker held extensive interviews with some two dozen exemplary leaders, ranging from corporate C.E.O.'s to a university president and the head of the Service Employees International Union. Lowney is a former Jesuit who along life's course became a successful investment banker at J. P. Morgan. He grounds his lessons not only in the life of St. Ignatius but in stories of various saintly individuals, like Sister Saturnina Devia, who established a school in the slums of Caracas. The leaders and spiritual guides are exemplars of desired conduct and often the source of phrases and instructions in which they sum up the lessons of life and leading. Robert Lane, C.E.O. of John Deere, commenting on success, says: "The moon has no light of its own." Serving and satisfying customers is the light that illuminates the company. Walter Cizsek, S.J., imprisoned in the Soviet gulag for years, relied on the motto: *age quod agis*, do what you are doing. Instead of retreating into bitterness and self-pity, Cizsek did what he could do: pray and treat his captors with civility and kindness.

Given the multiple books of advice on achieving success in life and business, an author will seek some novel approach, a model that surprises and persuades like the striking metaphor. O'Malley and Baker stake out the unusual claim that "kindness" is the key to leadership; Lowney advances the cause of a 16th-century spirituality. Both approaches are meant to be surprising. "Kindness" would not seem to have

been Genghis Khan's secret. Machiavelli gets regular play in shrewd advice books for leaders. And there is, of course, Donald Trump, firing folks each week on television. As for the Spiritual Exercises, the late Cardinal Avery Dulles noted that the work is "unprepossessing." The power of the work is certainly "not due to its literary qualities.... The order of presentation could seem confusing.

The succession of meditations is interrupted by sets of rules that might irritate the casual reader." Given Machiavelli in the wings and Ignatius' plain style, do these unusual paradigms really work?

Baker and O'Malley create a sort of "apophatic" kindness: Kindness is identified most clearly by what it is not, rather than what it is. Bullying, barking, domineering leadership is finally counter-productive. The essential of "kind" management is not, however, soothing words, but speaking the truth at all times. It is real kindness



when we tell an unknowing patient that he has an inoperable cancer. Truth or authenticity becomes the hallmark of kind leadership, because all other leadership gestures can be mere pretense. You can say you put the customer or the employee first, but the bottom line is the only truth.

If "kindness" gets redirected toward truth, Lowney's advocacy of Ignatius is not directly Christian or

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even religious. Lowney wants to advocate “holiness” as a goal but not in the contours of a 16th-century saint. Ignatius writes, “We should strongly praise religious institutes, virginity and continence, and marriage too, but not as highly as the former.” As Lowney says, “No mainstream Catholic, starting with the Pope, would suggest that a priestly vocation excels a married person’s.” He goes on, “We live and work in a radically different world than Ignatius...and so, as we make our way from one job to another, the conscientious among us sometimes wonder if we are doing what God would want us to be doing.” Lowney’s answer? “What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God” (Mi 6:8). We come around to kindness again.

Lowney expands on what is required by citing the parable of the widow’s mite. Placing her two coppers

in the temple treasury, she “put everything she had into it.” Self-giving is kindness, God’s will and the goal for heroic living. Authenticity in corporate leadership is also a form of self-giving to the cause of the enterprise in its manifold moral dimensions: to stockholders, employees and customers. Baker and O’Malley would applaud Lowney’s example of corporate integrity: the decision by Johnson & Johnson to recall all bottles of Tylenol after a bizarre poisoning incident. The widow was out two pennies; J&J lost \$750 million. But both showed the sort of self-giving that constitutes the authenticity that is kindness.

There is a long literary tradition behind these two efforts. This is not highfalutin philosophy, but one can find precursors in serious thinkers whose primary interest was prudent living: Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius and Francis Bacon. A recent translation of Marcus Aurelius was entitled

The Emperor’s Handbook, and it came with the endorsement of Steve Forbes: “A must read for business leaders.” If I have any lingering doubts about the tradition from Marcus to our modern genre of leadership books, it would be a lesson from Ignatius. The Spiritual Exercises do not shy away from the dark side of the self that seldom appears in sensible advice books. Ignatius speaks of “spiritual desolation” which comes from “true knowledge and understanding of our selves, so that we may have an intimate perception...that it is not within our power to acquire and attain...spiritual consolation; but that all this is the gift and grace of God.” The counselors listed above and their modern counterparts have more confidence in our ability to succeed than the anguish of saints would suggest.

DENNIS O’BRIEN is emeritus president of the University of Rochester, in New York.

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BETHANY SPIRITUALITY CENTER, Highland Mills, N.Y., announces the following retreats: "From Calvary to Emmaus...Renewed Hope," Ann Billard, O.L.M., April 19-23; "From Religion Back to Faith: A Journey of the Heart," Barbara Fiand, S.N.D., June 5-12; "God in Transition," Margaret Silf, June 22-28; directed retreats, July 1-9, 12-20, 23-31 and 1-31. Please visit www.bethanyspiritualitycenter.org.

CARMELITE SUMMER SEMINAR. The annual summer seminar on Carmelite spirituality will take place at Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, Ind., 46556, June 14-20, 2009, with the theme "Carmel's Search for Wisdom: Prayer and Contemplation." For brochure: (574) 284-4636 or Kathy Guthrie at kguthrie@saintmarys.edu. Speakers: Chowning, Culligan, Egan, Frohlich, Kavanaugh, McMahon, Sealaus and Welch.

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TOPIC: Emerging
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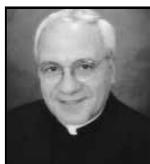
Rosa Monique Pena, OP
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Ministry &
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Catechesis



**Mary Angela
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TOPIC: Legal Concerns
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TOPIC: Identity and
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LETTERS

Violence Voyeurism

The review of “Slumdog Millionaire,” by Richard Leonard, S.J. (“Cashing In,” 2/23) was the only one to put into words the reasons I left that movie after watching 35 minutes of brutality. I went to see the movie because my acquaintances raved about it; not one of them understood my point of view, so I was happy to read Leonard’s criticisms of the film.

ELEANOR SOPKOVICH
Newport Beach, Calif.

Back to Our Roots

Finally! I have been waiting for years for someone in this magazine to admit there is a connection between war and abortion. James R. Kelly’s call for the pro-life movement to return to its roots (“Finding Renewal,” 2/16) is really about returning to the teachings of Jesus.

We all know that the majority of people killed in modern warfare are innocent. In modern times, we have a concept of just war that is at least a step in the right direction. But where were the demonstrating Catholics when the church said the invasion of Iraq did not meet the criteria for a just war?

I agree that we need to get “back to our roots.” We need to ask ourselves what it is that makes Christianity different from all the other religions of the world. And here is a more difficult question: “Was Jesus a pacifist?” Do we have the courage to face these questions honestly?

JOHN BRUCE TURNBULL
East Lansing, Mich.

R.E.S.P.E.C.T.

Your editorial on “The Roots of Terrorism” (1/19) missed the tap root of international terrorism: respect. Or, it should be said, the lack of respect by all parties (religious, political and eth-

nic) for each other manifests itself in the international terrorism that we fear. Sincere respect for the traditions, values and culture of others is the only path that will lead all parties out of the current Mideast quagmire.

ROBERT BROWER
Walnut Creek, Calif.

Golden Years

Thank you to Patrick J. McDonald and Claudette McDonald for their article on couples practicing *lectio divina* together (“The Word Between Us,” 3/9). I am in my 80s and am blessed that my husband is still with me. But I always wondered why we went our own ways spiritually. Now that we have grown old together and have more time for silence and the children are gone, I am going to be less selfish when I practice *lectio divina* in hopes that we may both experience God’s love as we near his presence.

CECILIA MCCAMBRIDGE
Westminster, Md.

Misplaced Priorities

As a Catholic lay woman serving in ministry, I feel compelled to respond to “The Glass Ceiling” (Letters, 2/16), in which the writer bemoans the fact that a young woman considering religious life “will be limiting her opportunities to be a leader and power player in the church because she is a woman.”

I would argue that this point of view in no way represents anything remotely resembling Christianity. Whether women or men, we are called to wash feet, to decrease so that the Lord might increase in us—not to strive as “church professionals” to be “leaders and power players,” however enticing such goals might seem.

AMY KULESA
Frederick, Md.

Harbingers of Hostility

How could anyone take offense at Greg Kandra’s essay on blogging (“A

Virtual Church,” 2/9), which expresses such an open-minded, compassionate and, yes, “catholic” viewpoint? I too take no offense. But neither am I persuaded to be quietly Catholic. Sadly, many Christians are succumbing to the pressures of a popular online culture that seeks to minimize the public expression of their beliefs. While such a middle-of-the-road and lukewarm mindset might bring about a more “catholic” secular community, it will not bring about a more Christian community.

By lauding and coaxing a “go along to get along” type of passivity, online culture is effectively proselytizing for a new religion that is universal and secularist.

There are many enemies out there; it has always been so. If we are foolhardy enough to minimize, ignore or deny the existence of those enemies (subliminal though they may be), we are surely missing the furtive harbingers of hostility lurking in many of the streets and alleyways throughout our virtual neighborhoods. Even though the inside of our virtual church may feel friendly and comfortable, the reality remains that its doors are securely locked and its outer walls covered with the profane graffiti of a world that despises its existence here.

HAROLD A. FISCHER
Virginia Beach, Va.

Blessing in Disguise

Thank you for publishing “Finally, God’s Voice,” by Frank Moan, S.J., and the review by William A. Barry, S.J., of *Mother Teresa’s Secret Fire* (“Confounding the Strong,”) in your 2/9 issue. The two go together so closely and so appealingly because one suggests a problem and the other a solution.

The problem is that mentioned by Barry: the “nearly 50 years of dark-

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ness in prayer” experienced by Mother Teresa, in spite of and yet mysteriously because of her love of God and devotion to God’s poor in Calcutta. The solution is that proposed by Moan, in terms of the equally mysterious way in which “God never stops speaking to me.” Maybe if Mother Teresa had heard God’s voice speaking to her all the time in prayer, she would have dissolved in tears and would never have been strong enough to serve God in his poor.

PETER MILWARD, S.J.
Tokyo, Japan

Milk Man

Grateful thanks to Michael V. Tueth, S.J., for his review of the film “Milk” (“San Francisco Giant,” 2/23). I found myself inspired both by Father Tueth’s insights and by the fact that this magazine would publish the piece. Harvey Milk was until the end a “man for others.”

For an American Catholic publication to reflect positively on this openly gay man’s place in our history gives hope to the whole human family.

DAVID BISHOP
Tucson, Ariz.

With God in Winter

In his reflections on wintertime, Stephen Martin (“In Praise of Winter,” 2/23) refers to a “rather obscure book with a clunky title,” *He Leadeth Me*, by Walter Ciszek, S.J. I could not agree more with his endorsement of the book as the “best how-to manual on prayer I have ever read.” A shoe salesman recommended this work to me some years ago when I was searching for a comfortable pair of dress shoes. As much as I love the insights of Augustine, Meister Eckhart, Julian of Norwich and more recent writers, none compares with the impact of Ciszek on my own

spiritual journey. Thanks to Stephen Martin for his lovely reflection and for bringing this wonderful book to the fore.

CHUCK SPECHT
Colorado Springs, Colo.

Hunt at Work

How wonderful to see George Hunt, S.J., in the pages of *America* again (“Updike at Rest,” 2/16). His commentary on the life and work of John Updike brought back so many pleasant memories of Hunt’s *Of Many Things* columns when he was editor in chief.

The guy can still write—with his eloquent simplicity in full march. With all due respect, comparing Hunt to you young chaps is like comparing Beethoven to Bobby Vinton. Oh well—God bless the lot of you and thanks for the treat.

F. E. SCHLAX
Buffalo Grove, Ill.

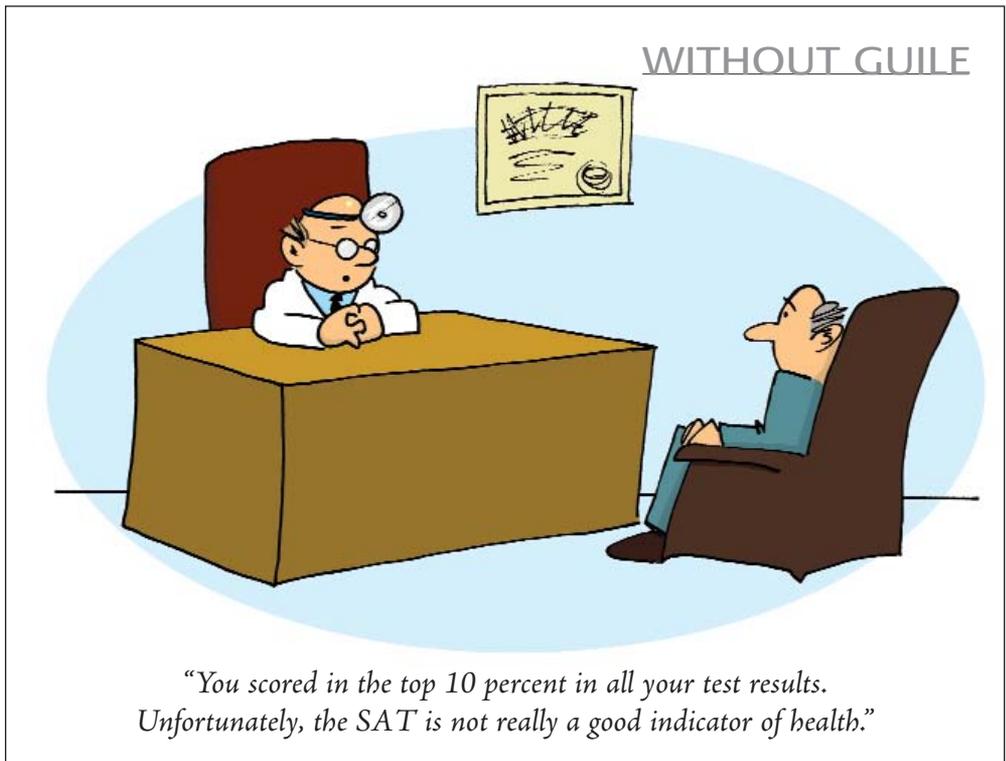
True Colors

In “Real Americans, Real Catholics” (2/16), Vincent D. Rougeau makes some valid points about persons of color being “made to understand that we are invisible to many of our fellow U.S. Catholics,” among other points. But regardless of the social goods that any one political candidate may represent, such “progress” can never be supported if that candidate supports the legal destruction of human beings not yet delivered (many of whom are persons of color).

I myself am a Latino, and I support all people in their right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, regardless of their age after conception. For a Catholic professor of law to support a political candidate on the grounds of social and cultural goods while ignoring this inherent truth is nothing less than incredible.

(REV.) CECILIO REYNA
Westphalia, Mich.

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Coming to the Light

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT (B), MARCH 22, 2009

Readings: 2 Chr 36:14-16, 19-23; Ps 137:1-6; Eph 2:4-10; Jn 3:14-21

"Whoever lives the truth comes to the light" (Jn 3:21)

Nicodemus came to Jesus at night. Darkness provides a cover for deeds we do not want known, whether good or evil. Night is also a traditional time for study of the Scriptures (Ps 1:2). It can be a time when "my heart instructs me" (Ps 16:7) or when God visits us (Ps 17:3). Night brings rest and restorative sleep. During winter, when the nights are longer than the days, darkness incubates the earth and invites cocooning and inward journeying. Whether darkness is masking sinful actions or simply letting us rest, it is shattered when light pierces it. The fourth Evangelist, in language evocative of the creation story in Genesis 1, tells how the "light shines in the darkness," a light for all people, and "the darkness did not overcome it" (Jn 1:4-5).

Light, in Genesis 1 and in our own springtimes, brings a burst of creative energy that shatters all lethargy and moves the earth and us into a growth spurt. Very often in the Scriptures, the divine presence and power are spoken of as light or radiance. Shekinah, the glory of God, filled the Temple (Ex 40:35) and was reflected on the face of Moses after his encounter with the Holy One on Mount Sinai (Ex 34:29). In John's Gospel, it is Jesus who embodies the light (1:9; 8:12; 9:5; 12:35, 46), the enfleshed glory of God (1:14).

In today's Gospel, coming to the light is presented as a conscious choice,

BARBARA E. REID, O.P., is a professor of New Testament Studies at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, Ill.

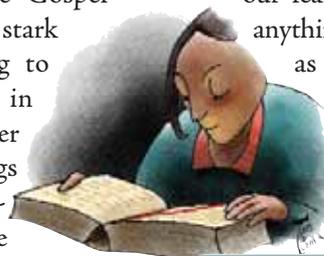
one that can be difficult to make. Some people "preferred darkness." Jesus contrasts those doing wicked things who shun the light with those who live the truth, who come to the light so that their works "may be clearly seen as done in God." The Gospel paints the two in stark opposition, seeming to leave no space in between: we are either doing wicked things in the darkness or living the truth in the light. Yet our experience is that we all do wicked things that we want to hide, while at the same time we carry that spark of divine light that urges us toward truth.

Just as Earth only gradually comes into the full light between its turn at the spring equinox and the summer solstice, so our coming to the Light is a gradual process. That is the way it is for Nicodemus. He first meets Jesus in the darkness, taking an initial tentative step toward the Light. By the end of John 3, he is still not ready to commit himself fully to Jesus. He reappears in Jn 7:50, where he tentatively defends Jesus before his fellow religious leaders, who are looking to arrest Jesus. Finally, at the end of the Gospel, he comes with Joseph of Arimathea, bringing 100 pounds of spices for Jesus' burial (19:39)—a truly grandiose expression of his definitive choice to come to the Light.

Whatever fears keep us from coming to the Light can be allayed by the mercy

and compassion to be found there. All of today's readings stress God's mercy and compassion, the great love, kindness and grace extended to us in Christ. He lifts us up from whatever darkness holds us bound. To Nicodemus, Jesus recalls the time when the Israelites were bitten by poisonous snakes in the desert and Moses fashioned a bronze serpent on a pole; whenever people were bitten, they looked upon it and lived (Nm 21:8-9). In the same way, whenever we look at the battered body of Jesus raised up on a cross, he helps us to overcome our fears of violence and death, or of anything else that the darkness hides, as not only he, but all of us are raised up with him in God's light (Eph 2:6).

It is for life eternal, which we can already taste now, that



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- Is there a darkness in your life where the Light wants to shine?
- What is the choice you face at this time to embrace more fully the Light?
- What does Earth teach us about coming to the Light?

the Light has come, not for condemnation. The famous verse Jn 3:16 ("For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son") stresses God's love, not any wish to condemn the world. The "world" is the special object of God's love and the arena in which we respond to the offer of divine love. The giving of the Son is not the handing of him over to death, but rather the giving of him to us as Light incarnate. Refusal of the gift is choosing darkness that brings condemnation. Acceptance of the gift draws us into deepening faith as we choose again and again to live into the Light.

BARBARA E. REID