

# America

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RE ALL GOD'S CHILDRE

## Education and Social Justice

Drew Christiansen • Alicia Lincoln  
Robert J. Birdsell • Roger Bergman



# OF MANY THINGS

**T**he calls have started from journalists inquiring about what to expect during Pope Benedict XVI's visit to the Holy Land from May 8 to 15. The stories are already set, it seems, by the series of troubles the Holy Father has had with Jews, by the high expectations set by his predecessor's pilgrimage for the Great Jubilee in 2000 and by the pope's choice of this time to make the trip—at a low point in Israeli-Palestinian relations and with a new Israeli government that is unfriendly to foreigners and native Palestinians. The tendency, understandably, is to set expectations low. For myself, I am ready to be surprised.

The first four years of Benedict's pontificate have been somewhat uneven. Some problems to be sure, like the Good Friday prayer in the restored Latin liturgy, are of his own making. But some, like the Williamson affair, were media-driven controversies that played to people's desires for stereotypes and simple story lines. Other moments, however, have been glowing achievements. Two years ago Benedict turned around the debacle of his Regensburg speech with a flawless visit to Turkey; and last year in the United States, where a host of problems awaited him—from independent-minded Catholic universities and their vociferous critics to the demands of victims of clerical sexual abuse—the pope made a joyful, inspiring pastoral visit that included multiple apologies to the victims. Smart-aleck commentators are too ready to underestimate him.

This trip is far more complex than his earlier trips, with a variety of audiences with disparate and in some cases desperate expectations: Jordanians, Israelis, Palestinians; Muslims, Christians and Jews; citizens of sovereign states; a people under occupation; and refugees with no state of their own.

Much of the attention will focus on

the Israel portions of the trip, but, in some ways, the trips to Jordan and the Palestinian Territories hold the greater interest. If there is a model for the future presence of Christians in the Middle East, it is probably to be found in Jordan. The kingdom's Hashemite rulers have been greatly encouraging of the country's Christian minority. The patriarchal vicar in Amman, Bishop Salim Sayyah, once said, "We are the happiest Christians in the Middle East." The blessing of cornerstones for the Latin and Melkite churches in Bethany beyond the Jordan—the probable site of John's baptizing and Jesus' preaching—the evening of May 10 will be a reminder of the continuous Christian presence in the desert kingdom since the first century.

The pope's brief visits to the Palestinian Territories will be the most difficult. Palestinians were vexed at the announcement of the pope's pilgrimage just after the monthlong Israeli assault on Gaza and at a time when there is no letup of Israeli pressures on Palestinians even in relatively better-off regions like Bethlehem and East Jerusalem. Many have felt that by planning the trip now, the Vatican surrendered whatever diplomatic leverage it retained to help sustain the dwindling Christian presence in the Jerusalem-Bethlehem area.

A host of restrictive policies and impositions make the prospects for living communities of native Christians in the land of Israel dim indeed. How Pope Benedict addresses his dispirited flock in the birthplace of Christianity will be the most demanding test of the trip. What they need is hope that things will improve and a commitment that the universal church will not abandon them. If Pope Benedict can put a spotlight on their plight, then for the Church of Jerusalem—and who should count more?—the visit will have been a success.

**DREW CHRISTIANSEN, S.J.**

# America

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*Cover: Cassie Clemente, who is with the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, assists students in 2007 at Holy Wisdom Academy in Milwaukee, where she teaches and tutors students. (CNS photo/Sam Lucero, The Compass)*

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### Taking a Beating

Millions around the world looked on with horror last month as women in Pakistan and Afghanistan became subject to Sharia law, Taliban-style. A cellphone video of the flogging of a 17-year-old girl, encircled by male onlookers in Pakistan's Swat valley, made a spectacle of the Wahhabist leaders' disregard for women's rights and highlighted the Pakistan government's role in ceding control of the region.

The Afghanistan parliament also passed a law that was signed by President Hamid Karzai, but which, after international protest, is now being "reconsidered." The law would prohibit any Shiite woman from working or attending school without her husband's permission; it would also require her to make herself up and to have marital relations whenever her husband desires it. Critics say it legalizes "marital rape." Shiites are a minority in Afghanistan (about 10 percent of the population). Hundreds of schools for girls have just been closed.

Remarkably, 300 mostly young and courageous Afghan women organized a public protest in Kabul, demanding that the law be repealed. The local police protected the women protesters from the much greater number of men who opposed them on the streets. What will become of those women? Will their number grow? Will they be made an example? Can the United States and the world community protect such women, especially during wartime? Until better tools are devised, the old ones must be used: monitoring women's welfare, continued media coverage of their fate, urging lawmakers to keep equal rights in the constitution and legal system, extending safe harbor to imperiled individuals who seek it. Women and their human rights should not have to take a beating while the world looks on.

### I Dreamed a Dream

At last count, the YouTube video of Susan Boyle singing on the British television show "Britain's Got Talent" has been seen by a jaw-dropping 60 million viewers. (That is probably up another few million by now.) Ms. Boyle, an unemployed, unmarried, unprepossessing woman from a remote village in Scotland, is a devout Catholic who spent the last few years quietly caring for her ailing mother, who recently died at 91. And when she strode on stage to sing "I Dreamed a Dream," a poignant song from "Les Misérables," the judges visibly smirked—until she opened her mouth. She silenced them with her glorious voice.

What accounts for the astonishing interest in Ms. Boyle? A cheer for an unlucky person given a lucky break?

Perhaps. But there may be more. The way viewers are seeing Susan Boyle is like the way God sees us: worthwhile, special, talented, unique, beautiful. The world generally looks askance at people like Susan Boyle, if it sees them at all. Without classic good looks, without a job, without a spouse, living in a small town, people like her may not seem "important." But God sees the real person and the value of each person's gifts: rich or poor, young or old, single or married, matron or movie star, lucky or unlucky in life. God knows us. And loves us.

Susan Boyle's story recalls Psalm 139. Every person, no matter what his or her talents, is "fearfully and wonderfully made."

### Quality of Life

Apostolic visitations are initiated by the Vatican in response to grave problems. The visitation of U.S. seminaries, completed this January, was in response to the sexual abuse crisis. The visitation of the Legion of Christ, announced in March, will investigate issues of "truth and transparency" linked to sexual abuse and financial malfeasance by the order's founder. But what grave problems prompted two other recently announced visitations: one of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, the other of all women's religious orders in the United States?

The L.C.W.R., which represents 95 percent of women's orders in the United States, is being investigated for theological reasons, mainly because of annual assemblies in which speakers addressed topics on priestly ordination, the universality of salvation and homosexuality. Yet the L.C.W.R. is a loose consortium of women's religious orders, not a governing body, much less a theological school. Some of the underlying impetus for the visitation may be gleaned from an address given last year at Stonehill College in Massachusetts by Cardinal Franc Rodé, C.M., the Vatican's point person for religious life, in which he criticized the orders' "disastrous" decisions after the Second Vatican Council, which he called "pseudo-aggiornamento" and said led to declining vocations.

It is hard not to feel sympathy toward the women religious being investigated for their "quality of life." Vatican II instructed women religious to revisit their original charisms, reinvigorate their work with the poor (as their foundresses had done) and update their way of life. They did so—in fidelity to the council documents. We hope that this fidelity, as well as the rest of their astonishing contributions to the church, will be acknowledged by Vatican investigators.

# Sectarian Catholicism

“The clouds roll with thunder, the House of the Lord shall be built throughout the earth, and these frogs sit in their marsh and croak—‘We are the only Christians!’” So wrote St. Augustine about the Donatists, a perfectionist North African sect that attempted to keep the church free of contamination by having no truck with Roman officialdom. In the United States today, self-appointed watchdogs of orthodoxy, like Randall Terry and the Cardinal Newman Society, push mightily for a pure church quite unlike the mixed community of saints and sinners—the Catholic Church—that Augustine championed. Like the Circumcellions of old, they thrive on slash-and-burn tactics; and they refuse to allow the church to be contaminated by contact with certain politicians.

For today’s sectarians, it is not adherence to the church’s doctrine on the evil of abortion that counts for orthodoxy, but adherence to a particular political program and fierce opposition to any proposal short of that program. They scorn Augustine’s inclusive, forgiving, big-church Catholics, who will not know which of them belongs to the City of God until God himself separates the tares from the wheat. Their tactics, and their attitudes, threaten the unity of the Catholic Church in the United States, the effectiveness of its mission and the credibility of its pro-life activities.

The sectarians’ targets are frequently Catholic universities and Catholic intellectuals who defend the richer, subtly nuanced, broad-tent Catholic tradition. Their most recent target has been the University of Notre Dame and its president, John Jenkins, C.S.C., who has invited President Barack Obama to offer the commencement address and receive an honorary degree at this year’s graduation. Pope Benedict XVI has modeled a different attitude toward higher education. In 2008, the pope himself was prevented from speaking at Rome’s La Sapienza University by the intense opposition of some doctrinaire scientists. The Vatican later released his speech, in which he argued that “freedom from ecclesiastical and political authorities” is essential to the university’s “special role” in society. He asked, “What does the pope have to do or say to a university?” And he answered, “He certainly should not try to impose in an authoritarian manner his faith on others.”

The divisive effects of the new American sectarians have not escaped the notice of the Vatican. Their highly partisan political edge has become a matter of concern. That

they never demonstrate the same high dudgeon at the compromises, unfulfilled promises and policy disagreements with Republican politicians as with Democratic ones is plain for all to see. It is time to call this one-sided denunciation by its proper name: political partisanship.

Pope Benedict XVI has also modeled a different stance toward independent-minded politicians. He has twice reached out to President Obama and offered to build on the common ground of shared values. Even after the partially bungled visit of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi with Pope Benedict, Vatican officials worked quickly to repair communication with her. Furthermore, in participating in the international honors accorded New Mexico’s Governor Bill Richardson in Rome last month for outlawing the death penalty (See Signs of the Times, 5/4), Pope Benedict did not flinch at appearing with a politician who does not agree fully with the church’s policy positions. When challenged about the governor’s imperfect pro-life credentials, Archbishop Michael Sheehan of Santa Fe responded on point, “We were able to help him understand our position on the death penalty... One thing at a time.” Finally, last March the pro-choice French president Nicolas Sarkozy was made an honorary canon of the Basilica of St. John Lateran, the pope’s own cathedral.

Four steps are necessary for the U.S. church to escape the strengthening riptide of sectarian conflict and re-establish trust between universities and the hierarchy. First, the bishops’ discipline about speakers and awards at Catholic institutions should be narrowed to exclude from platforms and awards only those Catholics who explicitly oppose formal Catholic teaching. Second, in politics we must reaffirm the distinction between the authoritative teaching of moral principles and legitimate prudential differences in applying principles to public life. Third, all sides should return to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council and Pope Paul VI that in politics there are usually several ways to attain the same goals. Finally, church leaders must promote the primacy of charity among Catholics who advocate different political options. For as the council declared, “The bonds which unite the faithful are mightier than anything which divides them” (“Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World,” No. 92).



# SIGNS OF THE TIMES

JORDAN

## Hopes High for Papal Trip Among Religious Groups

**T**he four-day papal visit to Jordan in May could spark a renewal of interreligious relations in that country and in the region, according to Muslim and Catholic analysts. “He’s coming after Sept. 11, after the American invasion of Iraq—so many things have changed” in the Middle East, said Farouq Jarar, a Muslim who is director of the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute in Amman. “Understanding among Muslims and Christians is much more important now than at any time before. His visit will send a strong message to all Muslims, especially after the speech in Germany,” Jarar said, referring to the pope’s address in Regensburg in 2006, which sparked protests from Muslims around the world because of Benedict’s use of a quotation from a Byzantine emperor that many Muslims found offensive. The pope later clarified his remarks, insisting that he did not agree with the emperor’s words.

The upcoming visit “will give another side of the coin, and it will be a much better message for Muslims in general and for Arabs in particular,” Jarar said. “We think that when the pope understands the issues well, it is something great for humanity, because he’s a very influential man. Hopefully, he could be very effective in changing things for the better.”

Christians in the region expressed similar hopes. The visit “is considered a new horizon of collaboration between Muslims and Christians, not only in Jordan, but in all the world,” said the Rev. Rif’at Bader, who is managing media relations for the visit. “We are looking forward to his visit to the mosque in Jordan,” Father Bader said. On May 9 the pope will visit Jordan’s new King Hussein Mosque, which can accommodate 6,000 worshippers. “What will the pope do in these moments? I think he will pray to God, a silent prayer. A pope inside of a mosque—it is a sign of mutual respect...just to be there, without say-

**Above: Archbishop Harvey escorts Jordan’s King Abdullah and his wife to meet the pope in 2005. The pope’s Holy Land visit will begin in Jordan.**



ing anything,” Father Bader added.

The pope also will give a formal speech outdoors, in front of the mosque. “We cannot predict what the pope will say, but we can imagine that he will talk about the dialogue between Muslims and Christians,” Father Bader said. Christians account for 3 percent of the Jordanian population, but have a disproportionately large cultural impact in Jordan, Father Bader said, adding, “We don’t focus on the numbers; we focus on the presence.”

Sister Caroline Shara, a Chaldean who is a member of the Daughters of the Sacred Heart, said the papal visit to Jordan “will be a time of great blessing for me.” A native of Baghdad, Iraq, Sister Shara has been in Amman for seven months serving Jordan’s Iraqi refugee population of between 500,000 and 750,000 people, according to

United Nations estimates. Many refugees are asking her to obtain tickets for them for the papal Mass at Amman’s soccer stadium. “Even Muslims want to see the pope,” she said. “I wish, I hope, for the Holy Father to visit my country [Iraq], but it’s not a good time for a visit now,” Sister Shara said, explaining that many of the horrors she witnessed in Iraq are still vivid in her mind and continuing in the country. “The pope’s visit [to Jordan] will help to give me the strength and power to continue my walk with the Lord.”

Following his visit to Jordan, Pope Benedict will travel to Jerusalem on May 11. Jarar also expressed hope that the pope “will help in pushing the peace process toward achieving peace in the area and settling the conflict and availing all those concerned of their lawful, legitimate rights.”



## U.S. CHURCH

# Candidates for Priesthood Reflect Increasing Diversity

**A**lthough Caucasians are still statistically overrepresented, the class of U.S. seminarians due to be ordained priests in the next couple of months shows a continuing increase in the racial and ethnic diversity of ordinands in recent years, according to data released in April by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and compiled by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University.

The new study shows Asian-Americans represent 11 percent of this year's ordinands—the term for those about to be ordained—even though Asian-Americans account for only 3 percent of the total U.S. Catholic population. Most of the ordinands of Asian descent were Vietnamese (6 percent of

the total), or Filipino (2 percent). After years of underrepresentation, African-American Catholics have apparently regained a proportional representation among those being ordained. About 3 percent of U.S. Catholics are black, and the same percentage of this year's ordination class is black.

Non-Hispanic Caucasians now make up only about 58 percent of the U.S. Catholic population, but they continue to constitute a larger majority of ordination classes—72 percent this year. The most underrepresented group was Hispanics. U.S. Catholics of Hispanic or Latino heritage make up an estimated 34 percent of the nation's Catholic population. But only 12 percent of the ordinands answering the CARA survey described themselves as Hispanic.

The total annual number of U.S. ordinands has been stable for several years at around 450. But that is barely half of what would be needed to replace fully those priests leaving active ministry each year because of death, retirement, illness or other reasons. The average age of this year's ordinands

## THE VATICAN

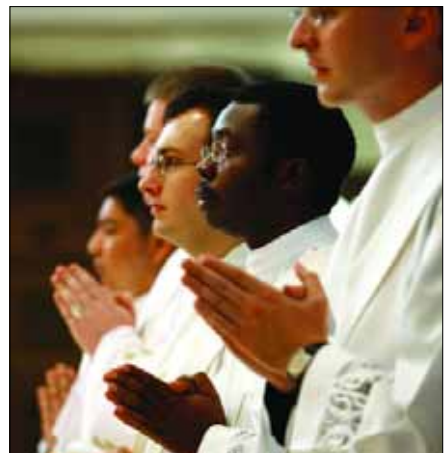
# Assessing Obama's First 100 Days

The Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, has said that President Barack Obama's first 100 days in office have not confirmed the church's worst fears about radical policy changes in ethical areas. The newspaper wrote in its April 29 edition that the new president has operated in most areas with more caution than predicted. "On ethical questions, too—which from the time of the electoral campaign have been the subject of strong worries by the Catholic bishops—Obama does not seem to have confirmed the radical innovations that he had discussed," it said.

The article noted that the administration's new draft guidelines for stem-cell research, for example, do not con-

stitute the major change in policy that was foreseen a few months ago, writing that while the new guidelines "do not remove the reasons for criticism in the face of unacceptable forms of bioengineering" they are "less permissive" than expected. The newspaper also saw a positive sign in the recent introduction of the Pregnant Women Support Act, pressed by congressional pro-life Democrats. "It is not a negation of the doctrine expressed up to now by Obama in the matter of interruption of pregnancy, but the legislative project could represent a rebalancing in support of maternity," the newspaper said.

From CNS, staff and other sources.



is 36, consistent with the average over the past five years. The average age at ordination in the 1950s and 60s by contrast was 26, but that gradually climbed in the next three decades. It now has apparently leveled out. Age at ordination is significant for projecting the future pool of active priests, because a man ordained at 26 might be expected to have as many as 50 years of active service, while one ordained at 36 would more likely have at most 40 years ahead of him before retiring or removal from service by illness, death or other causes.

A senior research associate at CARA, Mary L. Gautier, said that another recently completed but not yet published CARA study found that only 64 percent of the nation's 27,614 diocesan priests are fully active. She said that study's findings are consistent with figures from the 2008 *Official Catholic Directory*, which listed 8,433 of the country's diocesan priests, or 31 percent, as retired, ill or absent on leave. Just 10 years earlier, the directory reported that there were some 4,000 more diocesan priests, but at that time only 24.6 percent of them were listed as inactive because of retirement, illness or leave of absence. Thus the number of active diocesan priests has dropped from nearly 24,000 in 1997 to a little over 19,000 in 2007.

**JERRY FILTEAU**, a freelance journalist, retired in 2007 after 35 years with *Catholic News Service*.

## Bishops Urge New President to Fight AIDS

The leader of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference has urged Jacob Zuma to intensify the fight against AIDS when he takes office in May as that country's next president. AIDS and H.I.V. need to be "our national priority, for it is deal-

## NEWS BRIEFS

Pope Benedict XVI and the secretary-general of the League of Arab States **signed an agreement** on April 23 at the Vatican, pledging to cooperate more closely in the promotion of dialogue, justice and peace. + **Northern Ireland's Catholic bishops** have met with representatives of a loyalist group in an effort to build "peace, understanding and reconciliation," Cardinal Seán Brady of Armagh, Ireland, said on April 25. + The Israeli Civil Administration has ordered workers to stop constructing a platform inside the **Aida refugee camp** in the West Bank for use during Pope Benedict XVI's visit to the camp. An Israeli spokesman said the construction is in an area under Israeli jurisdiction and is being carried out without a permit. + Citing concerns about plans to honor President Barack Obama, former U.S. Ambassador to the Vatican **Mary Ann Glendon** has turned down the prestigious Laetare Medal from the University of Notre Dame, which was to be awarded to her on May 17.



**Seán Brady**

ing death to so many South African families and communities," said Archbishop Buti Tlhagale of Johannesburg in a letter to Zuma published in South Africa's Sunday Times on April 26. Calling H.I.V. and AIDS "the greatest threat to our country's health and security," Archbishop Tlhagale said the non-governmental sector "can and must be given a supportive role in attacking this threat, but it is important that the government takes the initiative and leads the broader society in this new struggle." The archbishop said non-governmental organizations "are weary of fighting the government for what it is constitutionally, legally and morally bound to deliver."

## Activists Lobby U.N. on Sri Lanka

Leading human rights advocates, led by the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, have written an open letter calling on the U.N.

Security Council to take immediate action to prevent atrocities in Sri Lanka. A rebel force fighting the Sri Lankan government, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, is refusing to let noncombatants leave the combat zone and is using the noncombatants as human shields. The Sri Lankan army has begun a final assault on the rebels that could lead to the deaths of thousands of civilians.

John Holmes, the U.N. Emergency Relief Coordinator, has said that "a bloodbath...seems an increasingly real possibility." Navi Pillay, the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, has stated that casualties may reach "catastrophic levels" if the fighting is not stopped. "At the core [of the responsibility to protect] is the obligation to act preventively to protect people from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing, rather than waiting until atrocities have already occurred, as states have too often done in the past," said the letter's signatories.



JOHN J. DIJULIO JR.



# Slowing the Exodus

A national survey in 2008 by the Pew Forum got America's Catholic clergy and lay leaders talking. It found that a third of Americans who were raised Catholic had left the church. One in 10 Americans was an ex-Catholic. Ex-Catholics outnumbered converts to Catholicism four to one.

In March 2009 the national American Religious Identification Survey found that between 1990 and 2008 the church's flock fell from 26.2 percent to 25.1 percent of the total U.S. population, even though roughly half of all immigrants to the United States were Catholic.

The March 2008 Pew survey also found that only 41 percent of all Catholics attend Mass weekly; only 57 percent consider religion important in their lives; only 44 percent believe that abortion should be prohibited in most or all cases; and only 35 percent oppose the death penalty.

Ex-Catholics and lapsed Catholics are a twin reality that cannot be attributed simply to changes in American culture. Many Americans now favor self-styled "spirituality" over "religion." Old, religion-rooted moral codes are often mocked or worse by the nation's secular elites.

Still, from sea to shining sea, over the last few decades many Protestant evangelical and Pentecostal churches have boomed with new members, new ministries, new megachurches and new multimedia outlets that reach millions here and abroad.

Cathedral-building American

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JOHN J. DIJULIO JR. is the author of *Godly Republic: A Centrist Blueprint for America's Faith-Based Future* (University of California Press, 2007).

Catholics used to know how to do all that, and more. Despite anti-Catholic laws and a hostile culture featuring Know Nothings, 19th- and early 20th-century Catholic leaders created America's parish-anchored religious communities. They mastered their own faith-testing times by sympathetically and successively sharing in real-life struggles faced by immigrant, Mass-going Catholic masses, underpaid Catholic urban workers and emerging Catholic suburban middle-class families.

From scratch they built entire Catholic elementary school systems, high schools and universities. Like today's Catholic leaders, they had their intermittent intramural squabbles over doctrine, politics, finances and ethnic identities; but in public, if not always in private, they normally sounded united on essentials and generally remained charitable toward one another.

Today's American Catholic leaders, both clergy and lay, face challenges their earliest predecessors could not fathom. And for all the criticism Catholic bishops routinely receive, both just and unjust, most do their big executive jobs pretty well.

Still, today's church is running on institutional fumes and atrophying affinities. No organization, sacred or otherwise, can stem or reverse decline if massive membership and loyalty losses go on for decades. Missing from church leaders' diagnoses and responses to the crisis is any overarching empirical reality principle.

For instance, over 80 percent of

young adult Catholics attend non-Catholic colleges and universities. There are more Catholic undergraduates at Philadelphia's nonsectarian University of Pennsylvania, for example, than at most of Philadelphia's Catholic colleges and universities.

So is each diocese rushing Catholic campus ministers to secular colleges and universities, where most college-age Catholics reside—robust outreach

Catholic leaders face challenges their predecessors could not fathom.

operations led by talented religious, bolstered by lay ministers and teeming with spiritual formation and service-learning activities that bring the pro-life, pro-family and pro-poor catechism to life for young adult Catholics? No.

Well, maybe an apostolic team from each of the 28 Jesuit universities is readying to jet in to each nearby secular school? Nope.

The hottest debates over Catholics and education are instead about how "Catholic" this or that Catholic college truly is and whether to allow pro-choice speakers on Catholic campuses.

A December 2008 Pew survey reported that Catholics, by more than three-to-one, think that "behaving like Jesus" and other "actions," rather than just "relationship with Jesus" and other "beliefs," determine "who obtains eternal life."

Amen, I say. And faith-motivated actions, not beliefs or public battles over beliefs, will also determine whether, a generation hence, Catholics figure more or less prominently on the American religious landscape than they do today.

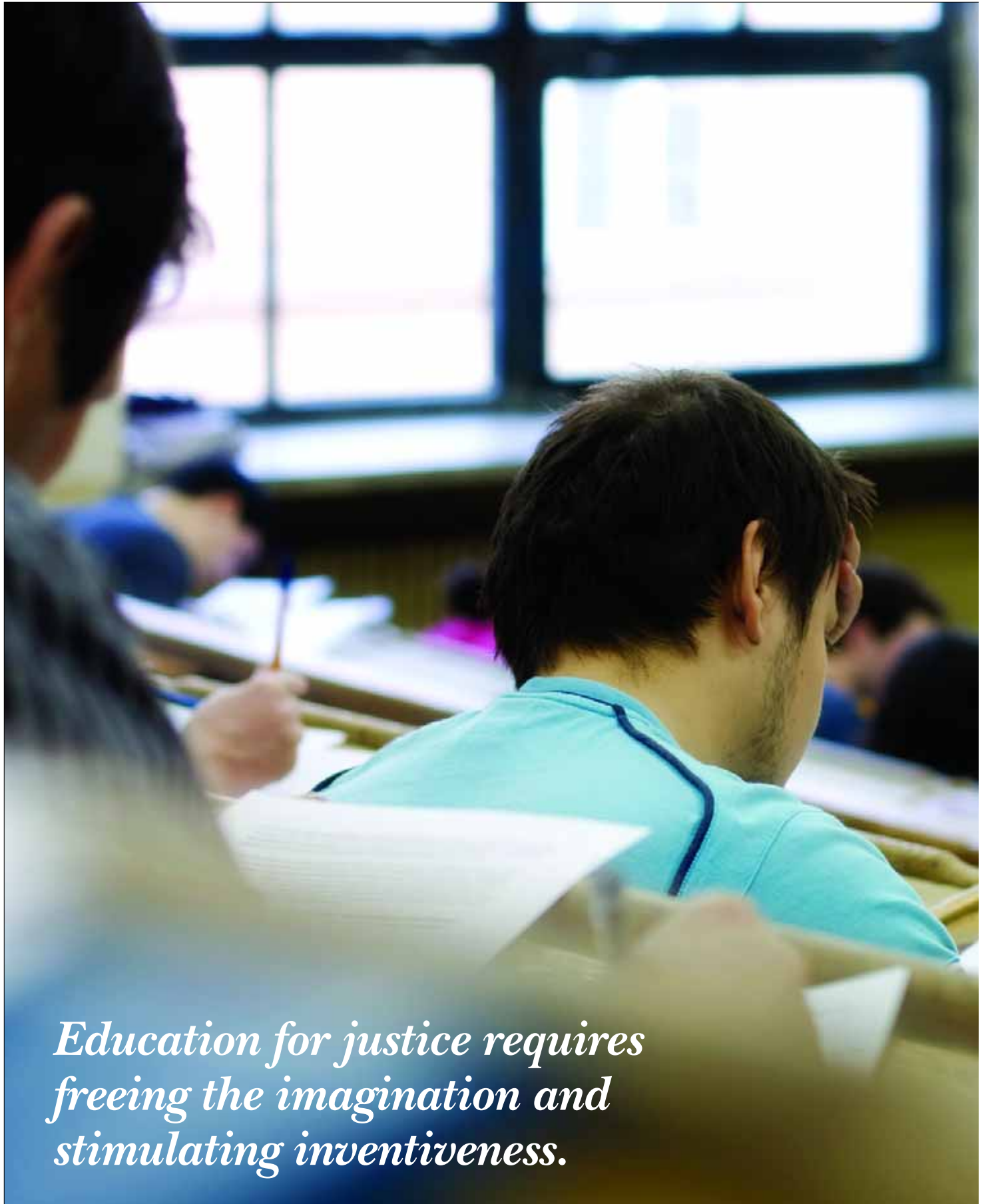


PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/ M. CRISTIAN

*Education for justice requires  
freeing the imagination and  
stimulating inventiveness.*



# Four Lessons for Teaching Justice

BY DREW CHRISTIANSEN

**T**hough it has been nearly 20 years since I was a classroom teacher at the University of Notre Dame, I still believe in the engagement of the teacher with the minds of the students through Socratic dialogue, attentive reading and the practice of the written word. Here are four lessons from one who still loves teaching, who has worked for justice and peace in the international field and who is eager to help others share in that work.

## Conative Education

I first stumbled on the term “conative education” in a Saturday Review profile of the educational psychologist Jerome Bruner. Conation refers not to willpower in the Victorian sense, but to a disposition for striving, a combination of aspiration, competitiveness and perseverance. It is the faculty Plato termed *thumos*, the spirited fighting character of “the guardians” of the *Republic*. Rollo May wrote about similar ideas in his *Love and Will*. “Will” he defined as the discipline to realize our desires. The development of disciplined desire is a necessary dimension of education for justice.

The challenge of conative education is captured in the transition from St. Thomas Aquinas’s notion that we must “avoid evil” to the contemporary notion that evil must be resisted. I have argued that the logical coherence of the church’s current teaching on peace and war, embracing both nonviolence and the just war, lies in the realization that everyone is obligated to *oppose grave, public evil*, whether by *nonviolent* or *military* means. In Catholic teaching, acquiescence in the face of grave evil is unacceptable; action is required.

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DREW CHRISTIANSEN, S.J., is editor in chief of *America*. This article is an edited excerpt from a keynote address delivered Nov. 20, 2008, at the Huether Lasallian Conference in St. Louis, Mo.

Often teachers do not even know that they are teaching conative skills. One day I ate lunch with two Catholic Relief Service staffers who had just finished a workshop on leadership styles. They reported to me how they had characterized various personalities in the field of social ministry, and to my surprise one said, "Then there is Drew Christiansen: 'casual relentlessness.'" I hardly knew Kate Moynihan; I had met her only once before in a hurried meeting when I was escorting a bevy of bishops in war-torn Croatia, but she had studied my working style from afar. Casual relentlessness—that's how I work. Not with a lot of fuss, but steadily, thoroughly, doggedly. It has made a difference.

To illustrate education for struggle, perseverance and sacrifice, I will use a few examples from my own teaching. For a doctoral seminar on equality, I assigned Richard Kluger's *Simple Justice*, a history of the fight against segregation from *Plessy v. Ferguson* to *Brown v. Board of Education*. I would allow students two weeks without class to read the enormous book, but it was always a success. The students got the point of the long and many-sided effort necessary to achieve racial justice.

Teaching undergraduates about nonviolence, I assigned Phillip Gallie's *Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed*, the story of the nonviolent witness of the Huguenot pastor Andre Trocmé and the townspeople of Chambon sur Lignon, France, who during World War II provided some 500 Jews asylum right under the eyes of German troops. Then we would view the film "Weapons of the Spirit," based on Gallie's book. We discussed the feasibility of nonviolence, as well as the spiritual qualities and practical stratagems necessary to make nonviolent resistance effective. Richard Attenborough's film "Gandhi" fascinated even the most skeptical students, convincing them of the practicality of nonviolence.

An important reason for cultivation of the will is that we can easily become satisfied with a low level of goodness, what the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead called "anesthesia." From anesthesia it is only a short step to atrocity, for we have ceased to see the big moral choices before us. To illustrate how complacency with conventional goodness dulled the capacities for moral action, I used to assign undergraduates Langdon Gilkey's memoir *Shantung Compound*, moral tales drawn from his internment in a Japanese prisoner of war camp in China during World War II. The moral contrast, Gilkey found, was between the majority of interned Christian missionaries, whose conventional morality prevented them from extending themselves to new inmates, and the prostitutes, monks and nuns who in very straitened circumstances found ways to share limited resources with newcomers.

Finally, education for justice requires freeing the imagination and stimulating inventiveness. What often inhibits people from taking moral responsibility is the thought that

the practice of nonviolent resistance is impossible. A lack of feasibility and the size of the obstacles become excuses for not rousing oneself to action or for avoiding difficulty; but inhibition may also stem from a failure of moral imagination to see possibilities. History, biography and drama can free the imagination to visualize opportunities for doing good and for resisting evil. Role-playing, drafting model programs for action and sketching campaigns for social change, which bring the imagination into play, can help students visualize the practical steps that can be taken.

## Organizational Skills

I harbor some suspicion of the solitary-prophet model of doing justice and making peace. The church does posthumously recognize heroic peacemakers like Franz Jägerstätter and, I would hope, one day Gordon Zahn. But by and large, the people who effect change are not singular prophets; rather they are leaders of movements and builders of institutions. Even Gordon Zahn, who was for many years a lonely voice and who suffered for his convictions at the hands of both church and state, helped organize Pax Christi USA and contributed to the acceptance of nonviolent witness by the Second Vatican Council.

*Movements.* Movements are the dynamic phase of any social change. Marvin Mich has shown how Catholic social teaching closely interacts with social movements. Movements generate ideas and transmit them. Movements possess a transformative power in relationships, first on their own followers and then on the wider society. Think of the influence that Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement or Jean Vanier and L'Arche have had on the social witness of our church and society.

For young people, the appeal of social movements is many-sided: they challenge the status quo and conventional thinking; they provide opportunity for new relationships and for the excitement of collective action in protests and rallies, in what Charles Taylor describes as a distinctive form of postmodern religiosity that he calls festivity. Movements call for sacrifice and discipline, what William James called "the moral equivalent of war," and with it the development of alternative markers of identity, so attractive to the young today.

While the classroom is not a place to recruit for movements, the study of Catholic social teaching alongside the movements and personalities that have contributed to it and carried it can bring the bare ideas to life. In classrooms students can become acquainted with movements and local social justice organizations.

*Institutions.* Sociologists claim it takes seven years for a charismatic movement to become an institution. Sometimes we speak disparagingly of "the routinization of charisma." We might instead speak of the success of a movement as it

enters into the fabric of a society through a variety of institutional adaptations. Especially for older students, who desire expertise and a career, an experience of the church's justice institutions (like Catholic Charities, diocesan social action offices and the Catholic Legal Immigration Network) should be a goal of justice education. As young people consider careers in service, they ought to look at the opportunities in such agencies.

A few students, especially older ones, should be weaned from the attraction of direct service in favor of more organized efforts. Our service will be stronger if young people understand the importance of institutions, appreciate the complexity of their operations and acquire the skills for institutional development. Lacking today is a willingness to meet the challenges of spreading the good through institutions, which many find less engaging than face-to-face ministry. Such training includes running chapters in schools or parishes of Bread for the World or Pax Christi, or internships with Catholic Relief Services or the Holy See Permanent Observer Mission to the United Nations through its Paths to Peace Foundation, or in study with the Catholic Peacebuilding Network.

## Networking

In the digital age students need little encouragement to learn networking. As a form of solidarity, this can have a multiplier

effect in work for justice and peace. Despite the noise out there, the Internet and the Web can provide extraordinary national and cross-border ties in the struggle for justice. The justice curriculum ought to include exploration of how to link with church and other advocacy groups in faraway places. Mapping the way appeals from zones of conflict are received, passed on, reported and acted on, for example, would provide a lesson on solidarity in action. The U.S.C.C.B. Office of International Justice and Peace and Catholic Relief Services would be two nodes that students could use to map in both directions—back to the source and out to the field in dioceses, parishes and social action networks. With shrinking staffs and budgets, networking also could strengthen the church's social ministry. The comparative analysis it provides of concerns and efforts in different regions may educate students as to the variety of work the church is doing. Awareness of what others are doing elsewhere could be an incentive for institutions, parishes and dioceses to engage or re-engage in work at the heart of the Gospel.

Just as letting students follow their own interests has a place in education, so does steering them to less popular topics: causes and conflicts like the plight of Christians in Iraq, Catholic peacemaking in Colombia, the work of Caritas Internationalis for the Millennium Development Goals or the U.S. role in nuclear proliferation. Each year demonstrations take place at the School of the Americas

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in Columbus, Ga. While protesting the teaching of torture has its place, there is much more suffering that students need to learn about. Their entry points into social responsibility should be as diverse as the world's suffering. The Web can help students discover ways to begin social involvement.

## Command the Text

The point that justice and peace educators should command the text is a very personal one, for two reasons. First, following the development of Catholic teaching on nonviolence led me to participate in the International Mennonite-Catholic Dialogue and then to help draft *Called Together to Be Peacemakers*, the dialogue's final report, a breakthrough document both for ecumenism and for peacemaking. Second, I have been very active in defending Christians in the Holy Land. Having followed various waves of physical assaults on Christians there, I have several times warded off false propaganda efforts to blame Muslim authorities for the attacks. Following issues and knowing the facts are essential when doing justice and making peace.

Educators for justice should know the primary sources of Catholic social teaching, watch their development, be ready to pick up changes in their formulation and execution, and

be prepared to steer students and audiences around misrepresentations, even those that have some official standing.

Spinning goes on outside and inside the church. In the United States, a particular temptation is to try to fit Catholic social teaching into the categories of American politics. Here are five examples. First, when the U.S. invaded Iraq, neoconservatives spent much energy trying to make preventive war acceptable under the just war tradition. Second, upon the release of Pope John Paul II's encyclical

**ON THE WEB**  
Clips from "Weapons of the Spirit."  
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letter *Centesimus Annus*, no one commented on the passages endorsing nonviolence. Third, the same encyclical was widely misconstrued as an endorsement of the unfettered free market. Fourth,

readers of the early edition of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* might be forgiven for thinking the only thing that mattered in the church's environmental ethic was the status of animals; it was, I think, the only topic treated. Fifth, the growing stature of nonviolence in the church's teaching on war and peace still does not sit well with many, who limit it exclusively to the just war tradition.

Only if you have read the primary texts closely, and only if you follow the statements proceeding from them, especially the annual World Day of Peace Message and the pope's yearly address to the diplomatic corps, will you be able to help students see beyond the vigorous statements of the special pleaders and the certainties of the self-appointed defenders of orthodoxy. It is necessary to be up to date. That means reading beyond *The Challenge of Peace* to *Centesimus Annus*, *The Harvest of Justice Is Sown in Peace* and a succession of U.S.C.C.B. statements on the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, Iraq and Afghanistan. *The Challenge of Peace* was a landmark document. It still has important things to say about nuclear weapons and remains a good tool for teaching about the just war; but it is 25 years old, and the church's teaching and the problems of peacemaking have evolved. The progress of the church's social mission depends on the accuracy of teachers' knowledge of Catholic social teaching. Accurate and advancing knowledge is a precision tool in the service of justice and the promotion of peace.

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I have discussed some missing components of education for justice and skills students need to help them advance the church's social mission in the 21st century and to build solidarity around the world. If you prepare students with the discipline for a long struggle, equip them with movement and organizational skills, guide their explorations on the Web in the interest of human solidarity and present them with models of justice and with educators in command of the church's teaching and of the facts, then the church's social ministry will be greatly strengthened in the decades ahead. **A**

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# Learning, Living, Doing

Education in and out of the classroom

BY ALICIA LINCOLN

**T**he setting is Professor Joanne Pierce's religious studies seminar at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Mass. For today's conversation on Hindu concepts and beliefs about the afterlife, Pierce has invited a colleague, Mathew Schmalz, to join the group. Schmalz is an associate professor of religious studies and an expert in the field of Hinduism.

"Do you guys talk in the dining hall about ways you can get into heaven?" asks Schmalz.

At first, most of the class laughs at the question. Then the students begin to provide some answers. One says she does not know enough about heaven to discuss it; another says simply that it frightens him. One student mentions that he hopes heaven is not a pressing issue—he's only 19, after all.

Schmalz explains to the students that although they may think they know what happens when a person dies, individual understandings of the mechanics of dying vary even within Christianity. He urges the students to resist the temptation to define things in a cut-and-dried manner when sharing worldviews.

As the conversation continues, it is apparent that these freshmen have not only done the assigned reading, but have also reflected on it. One student brings up a previous lecture on Buddhism and points out a parallel among nirvana, moksa and heaven, in that all three are forms of release from physical existence. Others ask well-formulated and thoughtful questions about the connections between Hinduism and Catholicism and discuss the ultimate goals of humanity across different worldviews.

When class ends, the students file out, joking that now in the dining hall they will be discussing getting into heaven. It is clear that this seminar is a step beyond a typical freshman 101 course.

## Montserrat

Pierce's course is part of Montserrat, a new program at Holy Cross designed to enhance the academic and campus

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*ALICIA LINCOLN, a member of the class of 2009 at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Mass., has published an English translation of works by Giovanna Fozzer, *Sixteen Poems* (Il Bisonte Press, Florence), and plans to teach high school students in Denver, Colo., as a member of Teach for America.*

experiences of all first-year students. By immediately immersing students in an intensive academic experience complemented by residential and co-curricular activities, Montserrat integrates three parts of college life that are often treated as separate—learning, living and doing. "As part of Montserrat, we want to encourage students early in their academic careers to ask essential questions of life, of studying and experiencing God," said Pierce. Her sentiments about the program reflect the college's commitment to care of the whole person.

"Taking things together reflects our Jesuit roots and ide-



COLLEGE OF THE HOLY CROSS. PHOTO BY JOHN BUCKINGHAM

als,” says Nancy E. Andrews, director of Montserrat. “Montserrat provides a sense of community, belonging, contributing to something larger, which is central to developing the whole person.”

The concept for this program for first-year students grew from the success of the college’s First-Year Program. Established in 1992, the First-Year Program gave 150 students each year the option of living in the same residence hall and taking a yearlong course together. “Students involved with F.Y.P. were doing statistically better as student leaders, in academics and in post-graduate decisions,” says Timothy Austin, vice president for academic affairs and dean of the college. “And so, as part of a comprehensive curriculum review, we decided to redefine the program and offer a similar, though much more comprehensive, opportunity to the entire incoming class.”

### Engaging the World

Montserrat has five thematic clusters—The Self, The Divine, Global Society, The Natural World and Core Human Questions, each of which includes seminars, like Pierce’s, that examine a theme from a variety of perspectives. Courses vary

greatly. “Finding Identities: Coming of Age,” for example, is a team-taught course that examines adolescence from the distinct yet overlapping perspectives of psychology and literature; “World Religions, World Music” is taught in the fall by a religious studies professor and in the spring by a member of the music faculty. There are 44 yearlong interdisciplinary seminars, each one limited to 17 students. In seminars the students are encouraged to interact, ask questions and offer opinions. The environment allows them to engage in the “Jesuit ideals of being open and attentive to the world, and the way God acts in the world,” says Pierce.

Students in the same academic cluster live together in the residence halls, where they can easily continue and share discussions from different seminars and participate in events with faculty, administrators and special guests. Co-curricular offerings also help to connect academics to real life and to connect the students with one another themselves through ongoing common experiences. Activities have included field trips to nearby museums, participation in environmental initiatives, town meetings on election night and Inauguration Day, retreats and expert panels. Guest lecturers have included the Caribbean writer Maryse Condé and Baba Brinkman, author of *The Rap Canterbury Tales*.

Two class chaplains are selected to follow students throughout their four years at Holy Cross, providing ongoing spiritual resources and a sense of continuity. “Spiritual life is integral to student experience, and we’re really focusing on deliberate integration,” says Marybeth Kearns-Barrett, a chaplain for the class of 2012. The chaplains continue past programs like Student Programs for Urban Development, a community service organization; retreats; and alternative spring break and immersion trips. This year, they have increased the Escape retreat offerings to three times a year to encourage freshmen in Montserrat to have spiritual as well as academic interactions. The point is to help the students integrate faith into everyday life, to introduce them to St. Ignatius Loyola, to reflective practices and the history and traditions of the Jesuits.

The mountain of Montserrat, in Catalonia, has a special meaning for a Jesuit college. At the Benedictine abbey on this mountain, St. Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus, laid down his soldier’s weapons and started a new life devoted to faith, study and service. Students coming to Holy Cross in their freshman year should be ready to change their lives and find a vocation. “Ignatius completely changed his life at Montserrat, which takes a leap of faith,” says Nancy E. Andrews. “We’re hoping that Montserrat gives students faith in themselves and the courage to follow their hearts.” **A**

## ‘We want to encourage students to ask essential questions of life, of studying and experiencing God.’



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# A Catholic Alternative

What's missing in the debate on education

BY ROBERT J. BIRDSELL

**T**he failure to educate poor minority children has remained an intractable problem, unsolved after almost 40 years of sustained federal efforts, despite the creation of the U.S. Department of Education in 1979. Arne Duncan, President Barack Obama's choice for education secretary, has a big surprise coming: the problem he inherits is about to get exponentially worse. In short order, President Obama's education team will be buffeted by three converging forces poised to overwhelm America's K-12 school system: the swift decline in revenues available to fund public schools; the unsustainable cost of K-12 education as currently delivered; and the economic collapse of the Catholic parochial school system.

Already, the unnecessary and tragic closing of hundreds of inner-city Catholic schools has caused the first crushing waves of pressure to be felt. If this crisis is not addressed soon by more enlightened policies that support faith-based schools as a critical component of our national educational landscape, then hundreds of thousands of students—who previously were educated at little or no cost to the state—will enter public school systems that will be unable to accommodate them.

It is time to invite faith-based schools to be part of the national solution to public education's woes. What does that mean? At its simplest, it means making sure that faith-based schools are part of the national conversation. At its most complex, it means public support for these schools beyond lip service or mere financial relief, as a genuine and effective alternative for inner-city children who have no access to quality public education.

Defining exactly what "public support" means should be high on Secretary Duncan's agenda if he has any hope of reversing the deterioration of our educational system. Many of us in faith-based institutions are watching with interest to see whether bodies like the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Initiatives will accomplish something or produce only empty talk.

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**ROBERT J. BIRDSELL** is president and chief executive officer of the Cristo Rey Network, which operates 22 Catholic schools in 19 U.S. cities.



Certainly things need to begin with talk, but that talk needs to set a clear agenda leading to concrete action. So let us get an honest conversation started that includes all the players. And let us also be clear on the daunting financial issues facing public education across the country.

The decline in property and other tax revenues that pay for public education will soon put public schools under enormous budgetary pressure to accept cuts. More money is almost always the proposal to fix public education, but that option is gone for the moment. Instead, brace for announcements like the one almost made in Detroit earlier this year, that large urban school systems cannot make payroll and will have to close their doors.

At the same time, however, the costs involved in delivering K-12 public education continue to skyrocket. In inflation-adjusted dollars, public schools are spending more than 10 times per student what they spent just after World War II. Yet the United States now has math and science scores

that are among the worst in the developed world, and fewer than half of black males graduate from high school.

In short, public education is often too expensive and the quality is often unacceptable, while the demand for better outcomes increases. Public education as a whole is not working well, and to help fix it, Secretary Duncan should

cities across the country. Since its inception in 2001, the network has grown to 22 schools throughout the country and now serves more than 5,000 students, with four more schools planned in the next two years.

The Cristo Rey Network has some lessons for all schools in the United States, but especially for those serving the poor, because it is a direct response to three immediate needs: providing college preparatory education that accelerates student learning; providing proper preparation for students to enter the workplace; and running schools on a sound financial basis.


As a result of an innovative work-study program and college prep educational model, Cristo Rey students graduate and enroll in colleges at rates substantially higher than their peers. This is an important fact, given that students who earn a college degree generally earn higher incomes and have greater opportunities than those without one. The financial return on a college education continues to grow as the economy worsens and good jobs become fewer.

The Cristo Rey corporate work-study model, which ensures building core skills needed to succeed in college and the workplace, is not limited to the classroom. Each student works five days each month in an entry-level clerical job in a professional work environment. Teams of four or five students share a full-time job. The objective of these jobs is to reinforce the capabilities—reading comprehension, mathematics, discipline, a strong work ethic—that students need to be successful in college and career, as well as to provide students with new opportunities for growth often lacking elsewhere in their lives.

It is essential to note that the money Cristo Rey students earn from their jobs covers most of their school's operating costs. The remainder is covered by modest tuition payments and similarly modest fundraising campaigns. Since money is hard to come by in a struggling economy, Secretary Duncan should consider the Cristo Rey solution as an innovative model that could help sustain America's educational system as a whole. But public schools will not learn how to adapt this model—or other successful models created by faith-based schools—unless faith-based schools are at the table.

Faith-based schools are only a part of the solution, but as they grow stronger and make this kind of education available to more children in need, they solve a significant portion of the overall problem that many other schools have failed to address. Together, we can fix education at a cost America can afford. **A**

**Above left: A Cristo Rey high school in Silver Spring, Md.**



It is time to invite faith-based schools to be part of the national solution to public education's woes.

turn to elements outside the system to give it some much-needed relief.

### The Cristo Rey Network

For generations, faith-based schools, particularly Catholic schools, have subsidized our inner cities by educating millions of disadvantaged students at no cost to taxpayers. What is more, the Catholic school system has produced responsible, productive citizens that the broader system would have left behind. America's schoolchildren still need the benefit of this service, but because conditions have changed for the Catholic Church, a new response is required.

The Cristo Rey Network was formed eight years ago to replicate the original Cristo Rey Jesuit High School in Chicago and provide top-quality, Catholic, college preparatory education to economically disadvantaged students in

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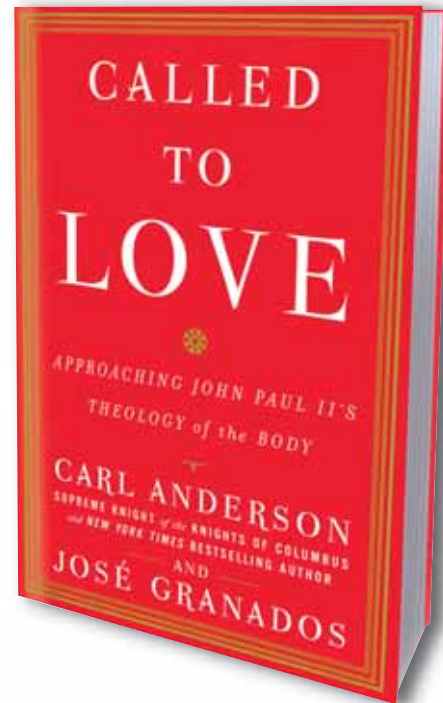


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# In Class With Romero

BY ROGER BERGMAN

Since 1995, I have taught more than 50 sections of “Faith and Moral Development,” an upper-division undergraduate seminar at Creighton University and also a required course in the justice and peace studies program that I direct. The course is innovative in several respects, but particularly in subject matter, for we study personal exemplars of faith and moral development and various theoretical perspectives on that development.

Recently, the case study for one section was Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador. We read two books: *Romero: A Life*, by James Brockman, S.J. (2005), and *A Sacred Voice Is Calling: Personal Vocation and Social Conscience*, by John Neafsey (2006). Despite the centrality of Romero to my own sense of vocation, this was the first time I had taught a course on the archbishop. Indeed, the previous summer was the first time I had read Romero’s biography, although I certainly knew the outline of his story from the powerful film “Romero,” starring Raul Julia. That was enough to help change my life. I became a Catholic, discovered a vocation in social justice ministry and education and moved my young family across the country so I could study at Weston Jesuit School of Theology, then in Cambridge, Mass.

## A Model and Guide

I think I was afraid that getting closer to Romero by reading his biography

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would be too demanding, would set the bar (or should I say the cross?) way too high. But after visiting our son, who was then a student in Santa Clara University’s Casa de la Solidaridad program in San Salvador in March 2006, and after visiting Romero’s small apartment and the chapel of the cancer hospital for the poor where he fell to an assassin’s bullet on March 24, 1980, I could no longer keep him at a safe distance. I screwed “my courage to the sticking place” (as Lady Macbeth put it) and ordered the Brockman book.

Midway through that semester, during one of our first sessions together, a wonderfully simpatico spiritual director asked me where or how I had experienced consolation and desolation over the last month. As he allowed me quietly to settle into that question, I felt welling up within me the very Ignatian experience of tears. Gradually regaining my composure, I suggested that teaching the life of Oscar Romero, the one figure above all others who had brought me into the life of Christ as an adult, had given me—and was giving me at that very moment—an experience of both consolation and desolation.

I was consoled, as I had been when I first heard Romero’s story, because he

made it plain that it is possible to live a life of profound Christian integrity and commitment to the kingdom in our day. But 27 years of my own vocation and one biography later, I knew



Archbishop Oscar A. Romero

much more intimately, if still at some distance, what that integrity had cost Romero, even before his death. As Jon Sobrino, S.J., has said, in the person of Archbishop Romero God visited El Salvador. That visit, that life, conformed to the life and passion of El Salvador (the Savior) almost 2,000 years before. That was deeply consoling. Christ had risen again magnificently in a humble priest from the hinterlands of a poor developing country.

## Desolation and the Dark Spirit

Yet my experience of Oscar Romero 24 years after I had become a Catholic was also one of desolation. I was too timid to take Oscar as my confirmation name. One of my students expressed my own feelings well: “When looking at what Romero had

PHOTO: CNS/OCTAVIO DURAN

done with his life and how he essentially gave his life to others, I feel very self-centered about what I have done in my life thus far." In the midst of a vicious civil war, often in bitter dispute with a majority of his fellow Salvadoran bishops and with the papal nuncio, libeled repeatedly and outrageously in the reactionary national press and seen as suspect by some in the Vatican, and with his life under constant threat, Romero grew stronger, deeper and more prophetic. Accused of betraying the Gospel of love and justice for self-promotion, ideology or even terrorism, Romero lived it out ever more authentically. By comparison, in my comfortable circumstances, I seemed a fraud.

Desolation is the work of what Ignatius called the "dark spirit" of the Enemy, of the anti-kingdom. I have

been learning the hard way just how seductive, perverse and persistent the voice that insinuates "Fraud!" can be. I know the need to confront that dark voice head-on. But I also know that Ignatius instructs the retreatant in the first week of the Spiritual Exercises to pray for the grace of shame and confusion—the only sane, honest responses to one's own complicity in the sin against

God's world. What was I experiencing in my relationship to Oscar Romero: consolation from God, desolation from the Enemy, or the grace of honest self-assessment? So I made my own prayer:

God, grant me the grace to accept, with gratitude, shame and confusion when they come from you, courage to resist them when they come from the

Enemy, and the wisdom to discern the one from the other.

I do not pretend to know fully what goes on in the hearts and consciences—the "secret core and sanctuary," in the words of Vatican II—of my students in this course. Occasionally they give me glimpses of something like consolation, which they feel when inspired by exemplars and saints like Oscar Romero or Dorothy Day. Since the world they are about to enter as idealistic young adults is riddled with injustice, violence and suffering, such guides and models are crucial. And occasionally they allow me to glimpse something of the shame and confusion they feel in the very same context. God help us, we are not yet who we need to be.

I once heard that teachers should never give students an assignment that they themselves have not undertaken. To that I say Amen. ▲

**ON THE WEB**  
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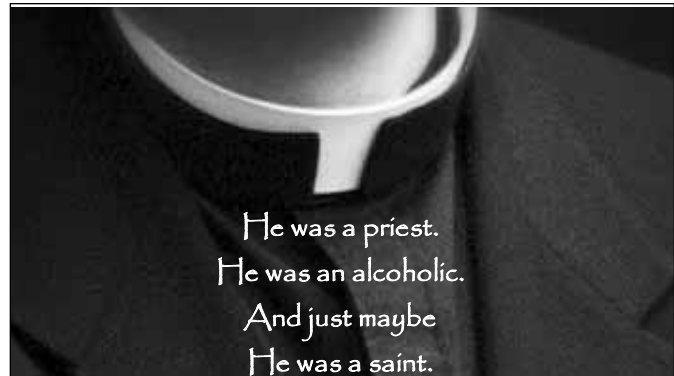
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## BOOKS & CULTURE

ART | KAREN SUE SMITH

### THE DEAD LIVE

*The Easter hope of Maurice Denis's 'Three Marys'*

After someone I love has died, I often find myself unconsciously waiting for that person. I still expect Msgr. Philip Murnion, my longtime colleague at the National Pastoral Life Center, for example, to whistle his way to my office, put his arm around me and whoever else is present and tell a funny story that elicits a hearty laugh.

Long after the death of friends and family, we still relate to the people we

love. We carry them inside us, and they come to us because death cannot erase their presence, their imprint on us, the effects of their kindness, which shape our actions and our future. Death cannot diminish even the smell of their cologne or perfume. The dead live.

The gauze curtain hanging between life and death allows us to encounter our loved ones as through a glass, darkly. That gauziness is a

God-given mercy fortifying our belief in the hereafter and sustaining us in the present.

But how would I feel if I saw one of my beloved friends who had died, standing before me in the way the Gospel writers describe Jesus appearing to his friends? In these accounts (Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20) the women first, then Peter and John saw Jesus' empty tomb. Of course, all of the disciples knew of the torturous circumstances of his death. But to see him, speak with him, embrace him, eat with him again—that is something of an ideal, a deep human longing for the beloved dead realized once in history. Such an



"SAINTES FEMMES AU TOMBEAU" BY MAURICE DENIS. PHOTOART RESOURCE/ ERICH LESSING

experience is not easy to put in words.

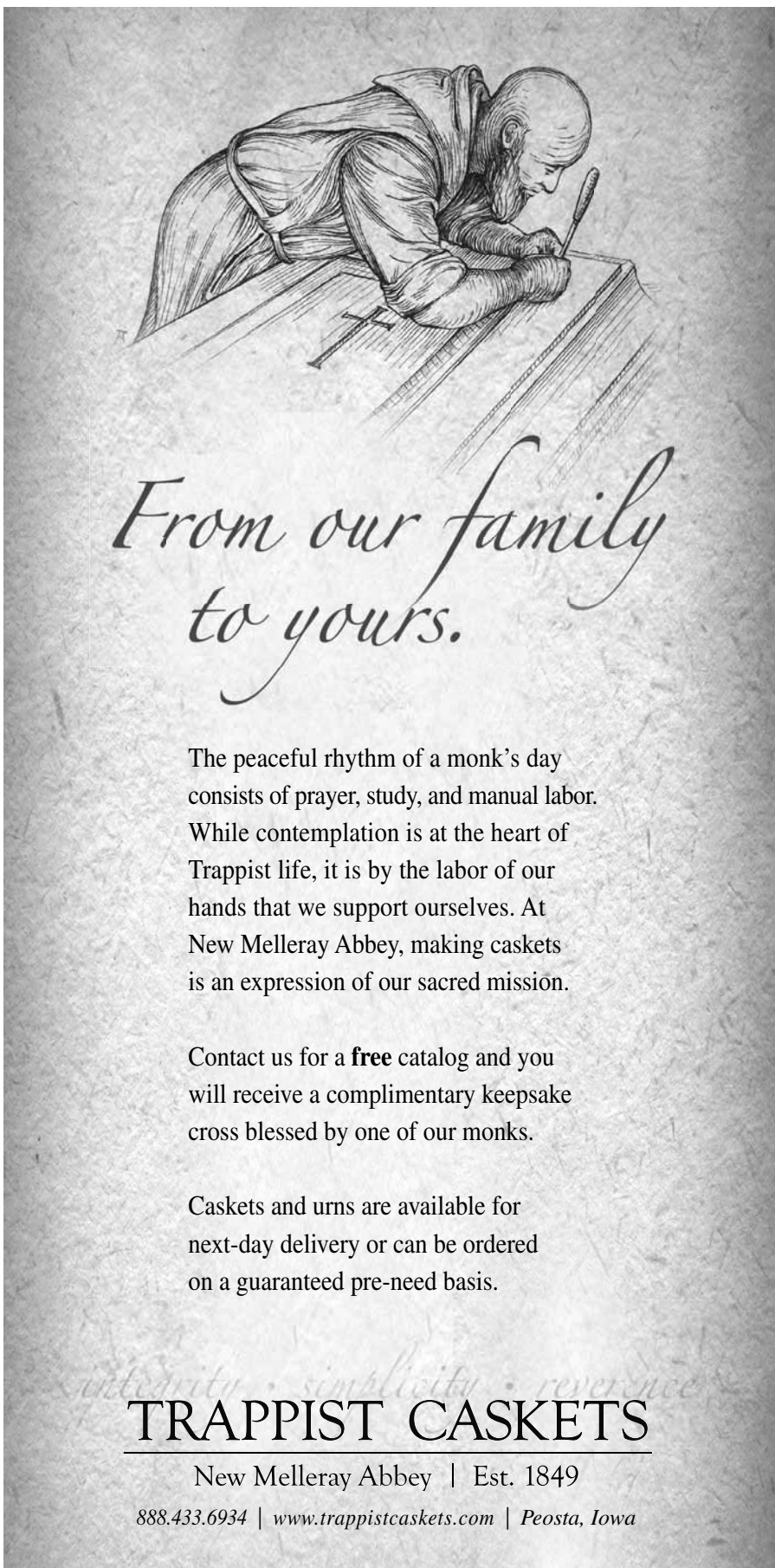
The world needs artists who can explore mystery and present the most puzzling spiritual truths using color, shape and line. Artists may not resolve our theological questions, but they can create a world for us to enter. I like to step into such art and linger there as a conscious act of reflection. Lent and Easter invite such mini-retreats as this “laying on of eyes” provides.

Take this image by Maurice Denis (1870-1943), an artist from Saint-Germain-en-Laye, outside Paris. Six figures in white occupy the foreground. The two on the left motion to the three women and the child on the right. We cannot tell whether they are waving good-bye or saying hello. Nor is it apparent who these figures are. What we can see is that they are outdoors on a lovely morning as the sun rises over a hillside, bathing in strong light the trees, full of white blossoms, and the facades of red-roofed, white houses. The mood is bright, the scene full of light, the morning quiet.

We seem to be in a French village, perhaps in Denis’s hometown. The blossoms betoken spring, but the bare trees with a few red leaves seem autumnal. We cannot pin down the season, the place or even the historical period. Nothing about the women’s style of dress identifies them. The gender of the two on the left is not clear. Perhaps, then, these are not the actual residents of any particular town; residents would not be dressed all alike or in such garments at dawn. And the townspeople are conspicuously missing.

But wait. Denis guides our eyes down a path toward the garden wall to two other figures: a woman in deep blue apparel kneels before a standing red-headed figure in white; the glowing hair reflects so boldly on the robe that it looks almost orange. What is going on?

This oil painting is often called



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“Three Marys at the Tomb.” It was painted in 1894 by a 24-year-old artist with deep religious sensibilities. Denis, who followed on the heels of the Impressionists, was not interested in presenting a historical or realistic image of the women at Jesus’ tomb.

Denis has not given us Jerusalem, but the French countryside. He has not shown us male angels with wings but androgynous, shrouded figures (left). Nor has he shown us a tomb, nor details to distinguish one Mary from the others, nor the spices and ointments the Scriptures mention, since the women had come to prepare Jesus’ body for burial. These women are empty-handed, though they have brought a child—a charming, imaginative touch. The generic angels imply that any messenger might be an angel; the generic women imply that even women like you and me, or women from our town or city block could be there. And while the landscape may have been specific, recognizable to the artist’s peers, for those who view it today it is symbolic. It shows modernity, our time, not history. Denis used white for dazzling clothing and the light of a new, post-resurrection dawn.

How astounding to see Jesus portrayed as a frizzy redhead, the warm red color projecting itself forward. Even though he is small in size and set in the distance, Jesus holds his own at the center of this painting largely because of his improbably red hair.

The foreground figures seem to represent one of several versions of the story (since the Gospel accounts differ). The intimate moment near the garden wall, however, comes from John’s account, which gives Mary Magdalene a cameo moment with Christ. Ironically, the Magdalene has often been portrayed as a redhead,

based on a mistaken notion throughout Christian history that she had been a prostitute. Recent scholarship makes plain that she was not; the woman in Scripture forgiven by Jesus for her flagrant sins was someone else.

Whoever Mary Magdalene was, Jesus is said to have appeared to her and spoken to her. She did not recognize him at first, but—in a detail that makes John’s rendering both unforgettable and convincing—she recognized him by the way he said her name. It was then that a woman’s voice echoed down the annals of history,

#### ON THE WEB

A review of “Cézanne and Beyond” at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. [americamagazine.org/culture](http://americamagazine.org/culture)

witnessing to the resurrection, “I have seen the Lord.”

In Genesis the human story begins in a garden. In these Gospel accounts, it reaches its climax in a garden as well. In this garden, the one who willingly faced crucifixion, died and was buried, left his tomb and all of death’s attempts to constrain him, and appeared to the women who loved him. He came in his glorified new flesh to greet his sisters and brothers one morning and drenched the world for all time in his light.

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KAREN SUE SMITH is editorial director of *America*.

## BOOKS | ROBERT P. IMBELLI

### TABLE FELLOWSHIP

#### PEOPLE OF BREAD

##### Rediscovering Ecclesiology

By Wolfgang Vondey  
Paulist Press. 420p \$29.95 (paperback)  
ISBN 9780809145591

In this careful, richly researched work, Wolfgang Vondey makes a genuine contribution to theological reflection on the nature and mission of the church. He does so through a single-minded focus upon the image of bread in the hope of rekindling and redirecting the ecclesial imagination.

From one point of view, then, his enterprise is a modest one, since he readily admits that “people of bread” is but one of many images—flock of God, body of Christ, temple of the Holy Spirit, among many others—none of which can exhaust the mystery of church. But from another point of view, his proposal is quite radical, for it is his conviction that recovering the image of bread can foster a truly ecumenical and indeed ecological and cosmic ecclesiology. It can guide the church beyond its more parochial fixa-

tions to embrace its truly universal mission. Indeed, his earnest hope is that his book will be a contribution toward fostering “the visible unity” of the churches.

Vondey, an associate professor of systematic theology at Regent University, Virginia Beach, Va., traces the theme of God’s people as a people of bread through a close reading of both Old and New Testaments. God’s provision of manna during the desert wanderings of Israel receives privileged attention, but so do elements within the Abrahamic cycle that extend the image of bread to underscore its implications for hospitality and companionship.

This breaking and sharing of bread among the people of God reaches a fulfillment in the ministry of Jesus, whose “last supper” with his companions was the culmination of the many meals of hospitality he hosted that were open to all, but especially the marginalized and the stranger. After the resurrection, the “first supper,” which the risen Lord celebrated with

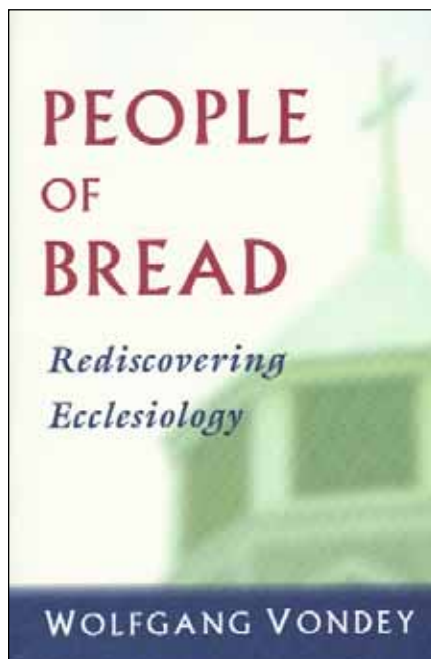
the disciples at Emmaus and later shared again with his other companions, impels them upon the mission of extending the hospitality and friendship they experience in the presence of Jesus to the very ends of the earth.

The image of a “people of bread” thus highlights the corporate and social nature of the church, countering the perennial temptation to reduce ecclesial existence to individualistic piety. It also insists on the responsibility incumbent upon those called in the Eucharist to be the body of Christ in the world, to be stewards of God’s creation, as well, and ministers of God’s blessing to all.

In many ways Vondey is wonderfully “catholic” in his theological sensibility and insight. He does not shun the challenge of a both/and imagination nor opt for a more facile either/or. His perspective is robustly Christo-centric, as when he writes: “The bread, in a real sense, is the continuing presence of the incarnate Word in the Church” (emphasis his). At the same time, as one would expect of a student of the late German theologian, Heribert Mühlen (to whom the book is dedicated), there is no slighting of the role of the Holy Spirit. Vondey espouses “a pneumatological approach to the breaking of the bread,” which suggests that “the unique finality and collective character of God’s work of salvation in the companionship of God’s people is made possible by the perpetuating work of the Holy Spirit.”

This same both/and comprehensiveness characterizes other theological claims by the author. The insistence on human companionship and hospitality is founded upon God’s prior gift of bread and covenantal blessing. The breaking of bread of material nourishment is fulfilled and transformed in the celebration of the living bread come down from heaven. The fellowship meal is made possible by the once-and-for-all sacrifice of the cross. The church that celebrates the

Eucharist is charged with the divine mission of hospitality of which it is itself the fruit. Christian existence is



eschatological by its nature: rejoicing in the presence of its Lord and yearning for the fullness of that presence in the banquet feast of the kingdom, when God will be all in all.



*People of Bread* succeeds in rekindling and stretching the imagination by helping the reader appreciate more fully one crucial dimension of the mul-

tifaceted mystery of the church.

At the same time there are some reservations that deserve to be expressed. From a stylistic point of view, the book, though clearly written, tends to be unduly repetitive. Tightening and revision would have rendered it more compelling. Further, there is a tendency to pile up quotations in a somewhat haphazard manner, especially when Vondey invokes contemporary theologians to support his case. Multiplying quotations from different authors who are writing with different theological aims and listing them with little commentary does not always add cogency to one’s arguments.

From a theological point of view, three areas of concern need addressing. First, though I welcome a Mühlen-inspired recovery of a theology of the Holy Spirit, it has not yet been integrated into a satisfactory theology of the Trinity. Having rightfully reclaimed the proper mission of the Spirit, the risk is that the continuing mission of the Word is obscured.

Second, though I appreciate Vondey’s concern to do full justice to the evangelical and social mission of the people of bread, his fear of a reduc-

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tion of the Eucharist to its ritual celebration can, paradoxically, counter the radical thrust of his vision. Thus he writes at one point: "It would be inexact to speak of a 'eucharistic nature' of the Church." In my view the promise lies precisely in allowing the burning bush of the Eucharist to foster and form a eucharistic vision and ethic that grounds a distinctive Catholic identity and mission.

Finally, Vondey's commendable concern for ecumenical unity leads him to advocate full eucharistic hospitality among the churches and ecclesial communities, a stance at variance with Roman Catholic and Orthodox practice. It is not even clear whether, in Vondey's proposal, baptism is a prerequisite for participating in the Lord's supper. In this regard one receives the impression that the doctrinal tradition

of the church suffers benign neglect, and *magisterium*, so important a component of Roman Catholic ecclesiology, goes unmentioned. It seems that, for Vondey, the many diverse forms and modes of ecclesial "hospitality" and "companionship," short of full eucharistic communion, have scant significance—a position I find problematic.

One finishes this otherwise stimulating book with a nagging sense that it has too quickly abstracted from the historical and theological traditions of the different ecclesial bodies and that for all the savory attraction of its focus upon the image of bread, one rises from the table less than fully satisfied.

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REV. ROBERT P. IMBELLI, a priest of the Archdiocese of New York, teaches systematic theology at Boston College.

is capable to a large extent of grasping the basic structure of reality (what Schall consistently refers to as *what is*, always in italics), it is nonetheless limited in what it can achieve. Ultimately, reason's inquiries raise questions that reason, left to its own devices, cannot answer, and awaken longings that it cannot satisfy. It is here that revelation comes into play because it can supply (not unreasonable) answers.

Take, for example, the questions raised by Aristotle's treatise on friendship in the *Nichomachean Ethics*, where the possibility that human beings can enjoy friendship with God is denied because the gulf separating them is held to be too vast; or by Aristotle's conception of God as the Unmoved Mover, the self-thinking thought, a rather remote and aloof figure who seems unconcerned with human affairs. In both cases, we see the power of reason at work at a very high level and achieving great insight. Yet we are nonetheless left with an understanding of friendship and of our relationship to God that leaves us dissatisfied; we feel that something important is missing.

Fortunately, however, Thomas Aquinas took Aristotle's already rich understanding of the nature of friendship and of God and proceeded to deepen and complete it by relating it to the doctrines of the Trinity (in which God is understood as a community of three persons sharing the same nature) and the Incarnation, which teaches that God united himself with humanity by becoming human (while still remaining God). The result was that Aristotle's basic insights into the nature of friendship and the divine are preserved even as they are enlarged and elevated.

For Schall, then, the mind that is Catholic is one that is open to truth wherever it finds it, whether from rea-

WILLIAM GOULD

## WHEN REASON AND REVELATION MEET

### THE MIND THAT IS CATHOLIC

#### Philosophical and Political Essays

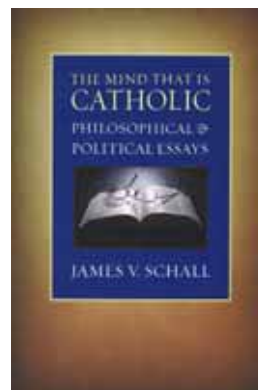
By James V. Schall

The Catholic University of America Press.  
337p \$34.95 (paperback)  
ISBN 9780813215419

James V. Schall, S.J., a well-known Jesuit political theorist who teaches at Georgetown University, is the author of numerous books on political thought, philosophy and education. His newest book, *The Mind That Is Catholic*, is a learned, insightful and stimulating collection of previously published essays, most of which date from the past decade and a half, although a few of them go back as far as the 1960s and late 1950s. The range of topics is wide, including chapters

devoted to the political thought of Jacques Maritain, Plato on piety, Aristotle on friendship, the Trinity, medieval political thought, Étienne Gilson on reason and revelation, political realism in Augustine and Machiavelli, sports and philosophy, the just war and C. S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia*.

Yet despite their apparent variety, these essays display considerable unity of theme. For the central theme of the book, surfacing in essay after essay, is the traditional Thomistic conviction that faith and reason are fundamentally in harmony and that grace does not destroy, but rather perfects nature. Although human reason





son or revelation, and that recognizes the pursuit of truth is best served when reason and revelation complement and assist each other. Not surprisingly, Schall believes that this understanding of the relation between reason and revelation has important political implications. For reason tells us, as Aquinas (following Aristotle) recognized, that we humans are political animals and that politics at its best is a noble activity. At the same time, revelation, with its teaching about original sin and its insistence on the supernatural destiny of man, calls much-needed attention, as Augustine saw so clearly, to the limits of politics. Accordingly, any sound political philosophy will be one that acknowledges the transcendent and supernatural destiny of man.

Unfortunately, beginning with Machiavelli and Hobbes, the dominant tendency of most modern political thought has been to deny the transcendent dimension of humanity and to identify human fulfillment in exclusively this-worldly terms. Schall argues that this denial of transcendence encourages people to invest their earthly existence with utopian expectations and to entrust the state with unlimited powers in order to realize these utopian expectations—a danger that found monstrous expression in the fascist and Communist movements of the last century. Moreover, even where it does not lead to totalitarian politics, this closure to the transcendent (often motivated by an exaggerated respect for tolerance) can also lead to a society burdened with paralyzing skepticism and moral relativism, a situation that Schall believes characterizes much of the contemporary Western world.

On the whole, I find myself in fundamental agreement with the basic argument that Schall advances in this book, and I think he does a fine job of showing how faith and reason, when working together, deepen and illumi-

nate our understanding of reality, not least political reality. There are times, however, when his sharply negative stance toward modernity impedes the Catholic mind's openness to truth wherever it may be found. For example, he tends to be dismissive of post-Vatican II Catholicism's strong support for global peace and justice, even though this has been initiated and explicitly endorsed by the magisterium. I am thinking especially of his chapter on the just war, in which he not only rejects pacifism (rightly, in my view), but argues instead for a conception of just war shaped by the context of "the clash of civilizations" and the threat of terrorism rather than by recent Catholic teaching on just war. (He disparages, for example, the American bishops' pastoral on war and peace.)

Similarly, attempts to work

toward some sort of worldwide public authority to promote the universal common good are also dismissed, even though Jacques Maritain (one of Schall's heroes) proposed something along these lines in *Man and the State*, as did Pope John XXIII in *Pacem in Terris* (1963). My concern here is less with Schall's rejection of church social teaching (troubling though this is) than with his broader contention that church support for peace and justice represents a capitulation to modernity.

These reservations aside, *The Mind That Is Catholic* will be of interest to scholars, graduate and undergraduate students, and to the intellectually adventurous general reader.

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WILLIAM GOULD is assistant dean of juniors at Fordham College at Fordham University in New York City.

BILL WILLIAMS

## LOVE'S BEGINNING

### FORGIVENESS

#### Following Jesus Into Radical Loving

By Paula Huston  
Paraclete Press. 298p \$21.99  
ISBN 9781557255709

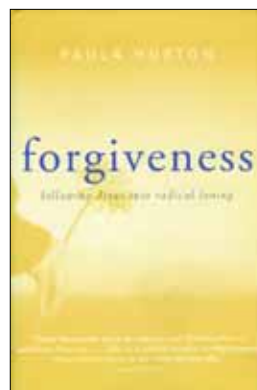
Many authors have addressed the tricky subject of forgiveness. The 2007 book *Amish Grace: How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy* offered a particularly insightful account of how the Amish forgave the gunman who shot 10 schoolgirls in Nickel Mines, Pa. Now Paula Huston has written a worthy addition to this genre in her new book, which describes her long struggle coming to terms with forgiveness.

As a teenager Huston volunteered

at a clinic in the mountains of Honduras, where she lost her Christian faith because she could not understand why God did not intervene to help a dying baby in her care. Her doubts "soon hardened into a cynical agnosticism" that lasted nearly 20 years.

She married at age 19, but divorced 13 years later to marry another man she had fallen in love with. Eventually Huston returned to her Christian roots, this time as a Roman Catholic. She

believes that one of Jesus' "most mind-boggling declarations" is that those "who hope to follow him must first be willing to forgive the people who have hurt us." In a nuanced discussion of what forgiveness entails, she says that



first of all it does not mean that “evil be overlooked, explained away, or excused.” Moreover, it recognizes the common humanity of all people, regardless of their misdeeds or crimes. Original sin “suggests that, given the right combination of circumstances, we are *all* capable of unspeakable deeds.”

Forgiveness involves letting go of vengeance, anger and hatred directed at the wrongdoer, who must still be held accountable in court for any crimes committed.

In the first third of the book Huston often veers away from the main theme, but the text comes alive when she begins to relate forgiveness to her own life story. She writes frankly of her own shortcomings—reminiscent of Henri Nouwen’s writing. She recalls a time in her late 30s when she dreamed of killing someone who was spreading malicious lies about her. The dream shocked her because “this level of killing anger did

not fit into my view of myself.”

Huston also candidly describes how her blind ambition to become a famous writer interfered with her spiritual development. When a publisher rejected her second novel, she felt “persecuted.” Her misguided forgiveness prayer asked God to show her tormentors their errors.

Only gradually did Huston recognize that love was a precondition to forgiveness. If we do not first love our “neighbors,” we will not forgive them.

In three insightful chapters the author applies forgiveness to parents, marriage partners and communities. She encourages readers to view their parents “as vulnerable children themselves” and to understand how their parents were shaped by family history.

Regarding her divorce, for years Huston played the role of victim, but in time realized she was “98 percent” responsible for the breakup of her marriage, which followed her extramarital love affair. She eventually apol-

ogized to her ex-husband, who told her he already had forgiven her.

She encourages couples to pray for each other because “it’s impossible to keep hating a person we are sincerely praying for.” Mutual forgiveness, she says, may be the single most important factor in saving marriages.

As a Benedictine oblate, Huston was distressed at the infighting within her small community, but learned that she had to stop brooding over wounds and realize that “we may literally have to forgive the same person for the same annoying trait over and over and over again until we’re ready to scream...and then forgive him or her again.”

Citing Jesus’ words on the cross, “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do,” Huston says it is hard to imagine a “more eloquent demonstration of the central role forgiveness is meant to play in Christian living.” Forgiveness, she notes, does not always require reconciliation. Someone who was abused or mistreated need not seek a restored relationship with the abuser and thereby risk additional mistreatment.

Huston could have made the additional point that forgiveness does not need to take place in person, a prospect that might be too painful or frightening. There are many ways to express forgiveness, like journal writing or through the mail, without a face-to-face encounter.

Although “hostility, strife and bloodshed” plague humanity, Huston writes, these horrors pale in comparison to what a world without forgiveness would be like. “We truly cannot imagine life without the possibility of forgiveness and reconciliation, for unrestrained animosity would have brought the human species to a bloody end long ago.”

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

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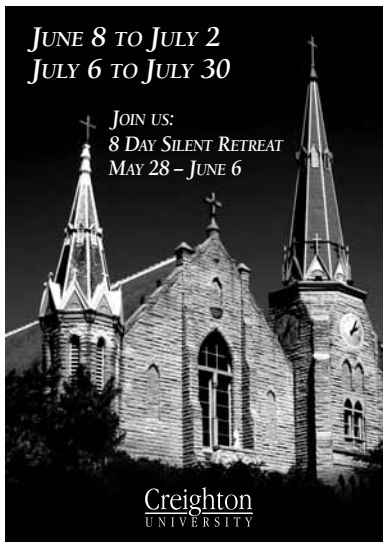
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## LETTERS

### Some, But Not All

A correspondent in a recent issue (Letters, 4/20) wrote that “it is a great pity that the American bishops do not choose to lead by recognizing the complexity of the issue on which they are called to teach, and then teaching in a way that produces more light and less heat.” To place all bishops in that above category is both false and dishonest. The fact that the president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops wrote a negative and prohibitive letter to the University of Notre Dame regarding the issue of President Obama speaking at the graduation does not mean it represents all bishops.

I, for one, strongly support the president of Notre Dame, and although retired, know many active bishops who hold to the same position, precisely because we understand that holding a strong conviction about abortion (which I do) even as a fundamental moral imperative does not abrogate the need for cooperation with and recognition of our current U.S. president, especially considering the multiplicity of issues in our complex world.

To honor President Obama for what he represents simply as the president, and especially as the first African-American president, is a genuine and deserved action from and by the University of Notre Dame. I hope your writer could

learn the use of the word “some” or “not all.”

(BISHOP) SYLVESTER D. RYAN  
*Nipomo, Calif.*

### Winds of Change

In the challenging and optimistic article on the future of the church (“The Shape of the Church to Come,” 4/13) by Timothy Radcliffe, O.P., I was delighted to hear him say that “I expect a massive revival of religious life soon, even in the West.” As a formation minister in a religious community and a former vocation minister, I have the same intuition. I wonder what the indicators are that he has seen regarding this notion.

MIKE O’GRADY, S.M.  
*Dayton, Ohio*

### Transplanted

Hooray for Elizabeth A. Johnson, C.S.J., and the uniquely feminine gift of divine imagination she shows in “An Earthy Christology” (4/13). She transplants the pot-bound, withering tree of Catholicism into the larger context of our “great story,” so that it might thrive and flourish in the universal, sacred soil of the cosmos.

Through the human consciousness of Jesus, we are becoming aware of all creation as the Christ, the beloved of God. Taking responsibility collectively to create a future worthy to manifest this inherent dignity is the human/divine task that will see us through the next turn on the evolutionary spiral. Here we celebrate our true homecoming to the all-inclusive love that is our source—as it was in the beginning, is now and ever evolving. Amen!

ALICE MACDONALD  
*Santa Barbara, Calif.*

### Keep on Keepin’ on

I have enjoyed reading the decade-by-decade replays of your coverage of the past century of the church and the world by Charles R. Morris (“The First 50 Years,” 4/13, and “A Catholic

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

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Moment," 4/20). Some of the events in the second half of the century I remember distinctly—not only how they happened but how full of joy and elation (or distress) we all were at some of the things that were taking place. This reminds me that this present time too will pass, and one day we will be able to look back in a similar way at the wars and injustices of these years, as well as at the hope for change in both the country and the church. We have to ask ourselves if what we are doing now will make us glad we did it when we see it in the future.

Please continue what you are doing at **America**. I cannot tell you how much it means to me to be able to look forward to your take on the events of the present day. I know you will continue to address the issues with faith, intelligence, knowledge, compassion and human concern—even though you make a few mistakes from time to time!

LUCY FUCHS  
*Brandon, Fla.*

### About Those Mistakes...

In the article by James T. Keane, S.J., on the mistakes your magazine has made over the years ("Oops!" 4/13), he neglected to include your support of Barack Obama, whom you should have seen for the scourge he would be on America. You intentionally muddied the waters and diminished what the U.S. bishops wrote in their document *Faithful Citizenship* about the priority that should be given in considering one's vote to matters of intrinsic evil. These mistakes contributed to a majority Catholic vote for a socialist without a moral grounding in natural law.

JOHN J. VAN BECKUM  
*Brookfield, Wis.*

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# God's Favorites

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER (B), MAY 17, 2009

Readings: Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48; Ps 98:1-4; 1 Jn 4:7-10; Jn 15:9-17

*"No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (Jn 15:13)*

As a youngster I had two best friends, which is why it troubled me when others would ask me who was my best friend. I knew there was supposed to be only one, but I had two, and I loved them both equally. Today's readings speak of how God befriends humanity and shows no partiality.

In the verses previous to today's reading from Acts, Peter struggles with this new insight. Three times God speaks to him in a vision, so that he is able to say to Cornelius, "In truth, I see that God shows no partiality." Peter recognizes that in every nation, whoever fears God and acts uprightly is acceptable to God. The "fear" about which Peter speaks is not cowering or cringing before God, who has the power to crush you. Rather, it is becoming enraptured with awe at the Holy One whose immense love is beyond comprehension and then responding by acting "uprightly," that is, in right relation toward all: God, self, others and all that is created.

Even as Peter is speaking and still trying to grasp the implications of all this, the Holy Spirit pre-empts any further attempts at explanation, and in the divine erratic, inexplicable way, falls upon all without distinction. As Peter rightly asserts, those who consider themselves already to be God's

best friends must try not to put any obstacles in the way of the new best friends upon whom the Spirit falls. Like a parent who loves each child differently yet equally, so is the divine embrace.

The Gospel is a continuation of the Last Discourse of Jesus to his disciples. The Fourth Evangelist uses the term "disciple" more than 70 times to refer to all the women and men who believed in and followed Jesus. There is no scene in this Gospel of choosing or sending the Twelve, nor do the Twelve figure in any prominent way in the narrative. They are mentioned only in passing at 6:67, 70 and 20:24.

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus speaks of having chosen and befriended all who have remained with him. The offer of friendship to disciples is part of a chain of love that begins with the Father, whose love is poured out in the self-gift that is Jesus, who offers friendship to all.

Jesus then tells his friends how to keep that chain unbroken: pay the love forward to others, befriending them in the way that he has done for them. He speaks of this as a "commandment," which seems an odd term in this context. How can one be commanded to "love" another person? In biblical parlance, "love" signifies not so much the feelings one has toward another. Rather, it designates deeds of loving kindness toward another that commu-

nicate to that one that he or she is part of the community of chosen friends of God and Jesus. We are commanded to act this way toward others, no matter how we might feel about them and whether or not they reciprocate the love offered.

Jesus demonstrated what such love entails when he washed the feet of all "his own" (13:1), the many beloved friends gathered for their final meal with him. He did not skip Peter and Judas. He explains this as the greatest kind of love: the willingness to lay down one's life for one's friends. This is not an obligatory service, such as a slave is bound to render. Rather, the love of friendship is freely chosen self-surrender. The most challenging aspect of this love is that the friends of Jesus



## PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- Spend some time with Jesus, your best friend. Let his love and joy abide in you.
- Ask God for the grace to love those you find most difficult to befriend and love.
- Savor with Jesus the joy you experience in choosing to surrender yourself in love to another.

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are asked not only to embrace within the community of beloved disciples all those whom Jesus befriends, especially those to whom we are not naturally drawn, but even to be willing to risk our own lives for such people. When this seems a humanly impossible choice, Jesus assures disciples that when they ask God in his name, the necessary grace will be given.

Abiding with Christ in communion with all his best friends brings an inner joy that is full to brimming over (15:11).

BARBARA E. REID

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

# Twelfth Annual Summer Institute

## Classes

### ❖ Week One Classes: July 6-10 ❖

**From Burnout to Burning Hearts; From Surviving to Thriving:  
Self-Care in Ministry to Reclaim the Abundant Life**

*With Rev. Charles Cicerale and Dr. Linda Baratte*

**How Do I Know I'm Doing the Right Thing? Catholic Ethics,  
Health Care and Pastoral Ministry in the 21st Century**

*With Sister Fran Gorsuch, CBS*

**The Historical Jesus: Fact and Fiction**

*With Rev. Jerome Murphy-O'Connor*

**The Catechetical Documents:  
The Challenge to Explore the Ideal in Light of the Real**

*With Dr. Marilyn Kravatz*

### ❖ Week Two Classes: July 13-16 ❖

**History of Irish Spirituality**

*With Dr. Phyllis Zagano*

**Trinity & Transformation: A Doctrine That Makes a Difference**

*With Dr. Michael J. Corso*

**Liturgy and Life**

*With Dr. Joseph Martos*

**The Book of Exodus**

*With Rev. Gerard Lair*

## Retreats

**July 11th**

*Retreat with Dr. Michael J. Christensen and Dr. Rebecca Laird*

**“Living the Questions of the Spiritual Life...  
with Spiritual Director Henri Nouwen”**

**July 12th**

*Twilight Retreat with Dr. Mickey Corso*

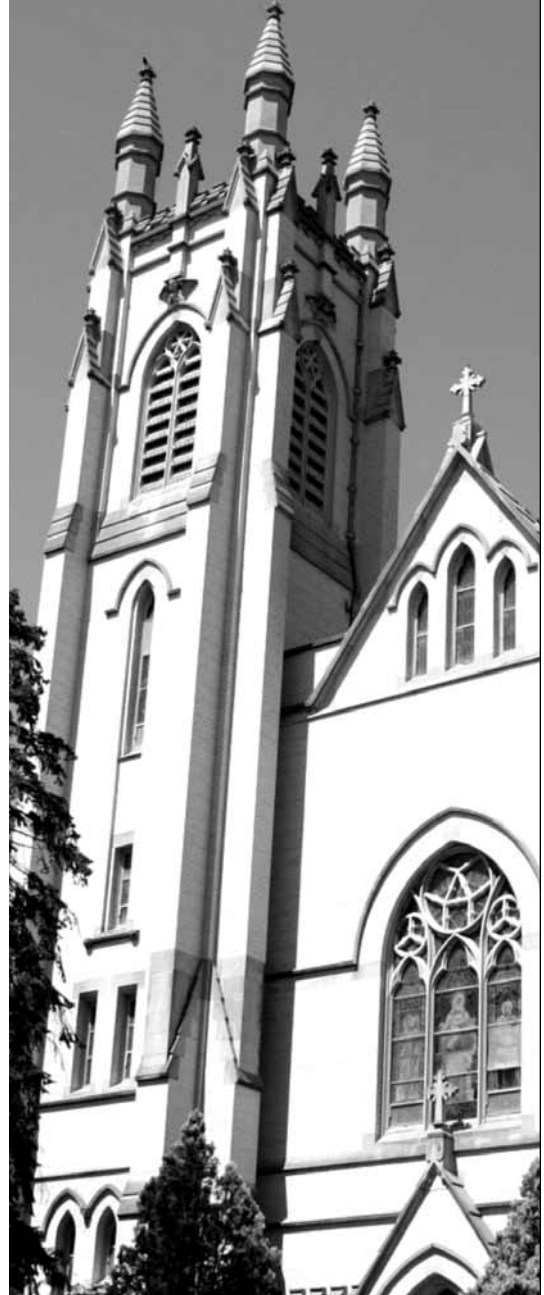
**“Saint Mark’s Gospel: The Message Comes Alive”**

*Retreat with Rev. Tom Florek, SJ*

**“Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius Loyola”  
(Spanish-speaking community)**

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