

# America

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VINCENT ROUGEAU ON  
THEA BOWMAN

DAVID CORTRIGHT ON  
NUCLEAR NONPROLIFERATION

# OF MANY THINGS

**G**od indeed appears in diverse places, sometimes hidden. Two examples stand out for me, one in Manhattan, the other in the South Bronx. Both concern poverty and prayer. The first is Pennsylvania Station. Whenever I am nearby, I walk through its vast passageways to experience the painful sense of disconnectedness they evoke. Strangers cluster together with little awareness of one another. The main concourse is crowded, especially at holiday times, with travelers who stare up at the huge electronic sign reporting arrivals and departures. Some might be praying, but only they would know.

A plexiglassed area, with a section of seating for those with more expensive tickets and another for those with less expensive ones, is off limits to others; and many travelers sit outside this area on the floor or lean against the walls.

But in cold weather, Penn Station also serves as a huge shelter for homeless people. Their tattered plastic bags contrast sharply with the sleek luggage of ticketed travelers. Sometimes asleep on the floor, homeless men are generally left to themselves in severe weather. At such a sight, the hidden God becomes present to me as I recall Paul's words, "God chose what is low and despised in the world to shame the strong" (1 Cor 1:28).

The other place for finding God in a more direct and positive way is Abraham House in the South Bronx. There God is front and center. No disconnectedness, but a community in which prayer and service act as the keys to seeing the face of Jesus precisely in the "low and despised of the world." No matter how cold the weather, inner as well as physical warmth characterizes what occurs on wintry days among the primarily Mexican families who gather for weekend Masses as well as for various forms of assistance—material and spiritual. A group of Little Sisters of the Gospel and an elderly priest are the

catalyst. Most have ministered at Rikers Island, the huge jail and prison facility in the East River. Given their firsthand awareness of the link between incarceration, race and poverty, it is all the more understandable that Abraham House should have a live-in program for prisoners, who also are among the low and despised to whom God is close. A number of the local people who attend Mass or who seek food, moreover, have relatives who are in prison, so they know what prison is like, if only from the long waits and frustrations of visiting loved ones behind bars. The prisoners, assigned by the courts as a rehabilitative measure, help on weekends with all the activities, while during the week they go to their jobs or continue a search for them or else attend substance abuse programs.

Mass there is the Mass of "the least" among the poor, many of whom are affected by our harsh immigration laws. As I arrived one Sunday morning, a sister told me that the Mass would have as a special intention an elderly woman who had died three days before in Mexico. None of her adult children here, however, could attend the funeral because of their undocumented status. They brought fresh flowers as a way of expressing their love for the one who had died. In New York, the sons survive on off-the-books jobs, which pay little and in the bad economy are increasingly hard to find.

These two scenes—Penn Station and Abraham House—are reminders that seen or unseen, God is present everywhere and reminders, too, of God's special love for the world's disenfranchised. One of the sisters said on a recent visit that it is precisely in those they serve, "the least," that they find their own strength. Bolstered by an hour's prayer each day before the Blessed Sacrament in their tiny chapel, they are sustained by this awareness day by day and by their faith.

**GEORGE M. ANDERSON, S.J.**

# America

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### How Compelling?

The administrative committee of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops gave a half-hearted welcome to news of the passage of the Obama administration's health care reform bill. "We applaud," wrote Cardinal Francis George, the conference president, "the effort to expand health care to all." "Many elements of the health care reform measure signed into law by the president," he noted, "...help to fulfill the duty we have to each other for the common good."

Praise was muted, however. The bishops had opposed passage of the centerpiece Senate bill that failed to meet all their expectations. They cited in particular provisions for protection of the conscience of health professionals, the coverage of undocumented immigrants and possible funding for abortions. All merit further legislative and legal action as health care reform is implemented. The law's imperfections are many, but with the reform in place these priorities provide a platform to address its shortcomings in the months and years ahead.

The great stumbling block to endorsing the bill was the fear that under the terms of the core Senate bill, financing might seep out through community health clinics to fund abortions. The evidence, the bishops argue, was "compelling." Certainly compelling for the bishops, and for some others who have made extraordinary efforts to examine the legislative language and weigh legal scenarios for possible future court suits, but not compelling for many other legal analysts. Tenuous legal arguments somehow hardened into matters of principle. (While the conference's general counsel later disclosed his legal reasoning, the bishops' reasons for drawing their conclusion were not available for others to probe during the debate on the bill.)

The desire to make the prohibition on abortion funding airtight is admirable, but the argument for doing so seems to have been built on a tissue of hypotheticals that was far from conclusive. How could such a hard and fast position have been founded on such contestable foundations? How did the bishops come to depend so heavily on debatable, technical questions of law? How did they banish doubt when opinions differed so? If there ever was a prudential judgment that might have been left to the practical reason of legislators, the possible backdoor funding of abortion is surely such a case.

How, in the end, did very fine points of abortion-denial come to weigh more heavily than guaranteeing health care to all?

### Smile for the Camera

This year's U.S. Census form is the shortest in history, with just 10 questions, but that has not stopped it from stirring up controversy. The constitutionally mandated survey has occurred every 10 years since 1790, but the type of information it gathers has evolved, much to the chagrin of some conservative pundits and politicians. The census counts the population of the United States, but it also contains questions about race and gender. The radio and television host Glenn Beck has stated that he and others "don't want to give the government all this kind of information." A fellow objector, Representative Michele Bachmann, Republican of Minnesota, urged a boycott.

But U.S. residents have many reasons to complete the census—aside from the fact that failing to do so is illegal. The information it collects will be used to determine how \$400 billion in federal aid is distributed. This population count also ensures that each district is accurately represented in the House of Representatives, in state legislatures and at county seats. Representative Bachmann should take note: A Minnesota newspaper pointed out that if her state loses a Congressional seat because of a low response to the census, her district would likely be the one carved up. Privacy is protected. The Census Bureau is legally bound to refrain from divulging any personal information gathered, so neither Beck nor undocumented immigrants need worry about completing the form.

Accurate information about a neighborhood's population and demographics helps government and nonprofit organizations determine which areas are in need of such resources as additional roads, schools or hospitals. But participation is key to the census' success.

The Census Bureau has increased its efforts to reach out to all residents, especially minority populations, which often are underrepresented, and even aired an ad during this year's Super Bowl. Although the cost of the ad was criticized, such expenditures have proved worthwhile. The first-ever paid campaign, in 2000, turned around a three-decade decline in mail response rates.

Neglecting to return the census form also comes at a cost to taxpayers. Census takers must visit the nonresponsive households, a more costly way of collecting information than by mail. The \$100-million campaign in 2000 resulted in a \$205-million net saving. Take part in this year's Snapshot of America. This is one picture in which every resident should appear.

# The Millstone

The shame associated with the abuse of children by Catholic priests is borne these days by all Catholics forced to explain to incredulous friends and acquaintances how this could have happened, how it could have gone on so long, how it could have been allowed to become so extensive—questions that still require a proper answer. Like a millstone around our necks, the scandal, year after endless year, drags us all down with it. How the church as the people of God respond to it should not be a question of loyalty to the pope nor even more demands for his resignation; it is a matter of restoring the church's integrity as an institution and renewing the life of holiness for its members. It is a matter of corporate conversion.

It is clear we are no longer dealing with an "American problem." We never were. This is a global crisis that requires a church-wide strategy. The whole church—from parish to diocese to Roman Curia—needs to respond with the resources and the urgency it demands. Cardinal Walter Kasper, head of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, argues it is time for a thorough housecleaning. "We need a culture of alertness and bravery," he said, "to do the housework," and we must begin with caring for the victims.

*Seek out the victims.* Instead of waiting for victims of abuse to step forward, we should seek them out. During his 2008 visit to the United States, Pope Benedict XVI met with victims of abuse; he has promised to do the same in Ireland. These meetings need to be replicated by bishops and pastors wherever abuse is alleged. Though he seems to have had a tragic blind spot with respect to sexual abuse by the clergy, the late Pope John Paul II set a precedent for a ministry of apology and forgiveness for the offenses of church people. Small- and large-scale apologies need to be offered and forgiveness requested by bishops in dioceses where abuse has been committed. Public repentance needs to be demonstrated, as Cardinal Sean O'Malley showed with a penance service early in his healing ministry in Boston. Finally, funds should be established for the psychological healing and social support, where needed, of victims aimed at making them as whole as possible. Acts of piety and even reparation will be insufficient, however, without church reform as the manifestation of institutional conversion. Deeper institutional conversion will entail transparency, accountability and lay empowerment.

*Come clean.* "There is nothing that is concealed that

will not be revealed," Jesus said. The image of the church has been so profoundly diminished that there is now no point in forestalling investigations or attempting to stamp out brushfires of scandal. Innocent lives have been desecrated. At this point Catholics and others feel that desecration is drawn out wherever the church's response is perceived to be halting and defensive. But the distressing truth is that surely more revelations await in countries where the poor have few resources or where legal systems are inadequate to respond to such crimes. Church offices should reveal all they know about the breadth and depth of this crisis. As in all organizational recoveries, transparency is necessary.



*Be accountable.* There are the sins of the clerics to contend with, but there is also the sin of clericalism that helped feed this crisis through silence and denial. Many bishops have persisted in their refusal to accept accountability for failure in supervision of priest personnel.

A handful of bishops have resigned, and in his letter to the church in Ireland Pope Benedict admitted the failures of the hierarchy in perpetuating the scandal. Members of the hierarchy may continue to find enemies in the media, and the media is not without fault, but for the most part the complicity of superiors in these crimes remains to be acknowledged. For genuine conversion in this matter, a searching examination of conscience over the sins of the institution will be needed.

*Empower the laity.* Lay participation in church governance is a conciliar value more honored in the breach than in the practice. That is no longer acceptable. The faithful must insist that parish and diocesan pastoral councils be activated and that they be given greater authority in canon law. Positions of real responsibility also need to be assigned to lay people and women religious for decision-making roles in church government. Humility should be a virtue for all to embrace just now, but especially for church leaders in seeking the guidance of the faithful. Whether what emerges in the future is a more humble but institutionally stronger church or a community in decline may be decided by the actions the church takes in the coming weeks and months to renew the spirit and structures of its own governance. For there is a conversion for institutions as well as for individuals, and it is often even harder to embrace.

# SIGNS OF THE TIMES

ROME

## Vatican Goes on Defense In Response to Media Reports

Church officials at the Vatican and elsewhere amplified their defense of Pope Benedict XVI and his decisions regarding sexual abuse of minors by members of the Catholic clergy and rejected accusations of a continued cover-up after a series of reports in *The New York Times* and publications around the world that criticized the pope for alleged inaction on abuse cases. Vatican authorities emphasized that it was the pope who, as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, pushed for harsher measures against abusers and made it easier for the church to laicize them.

On March 27, the Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, ran a front-page commentary by Archbishop Vincent Nichols of Westminster, expressing shame over sexual abuse by clerics but strongly defending the pope's efforts to curb it. "What of the role of Pope Benedict? When he was in charge of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith he led important changes made in church law: the inclusion in canon law of Internet offenses against children, the extension of child abuse offenses to include the sexual abuse of all under 18, the case by case waiving of the statute of limitations and the establishment of a fast-track dismissal from the clerical state for offenders," Archbishop Nichols wrote. "He is not an idle observer. His actions speak as

well as his words," he said.

Federico Lombardi, S.J., the Vatican spokesman, said impartial observers would recognize that the



pope and the doctrinal congregation are continuing to guide bishops and help them "combat and root out the blight of abuse wherever it appears."

HAITI

## C.R.S. Seeks Shelter From Storms For Homeless in Haiti

With the rainy season on the doorstep in Haiti, Isaac Boyd, an emergency shelter expert for Catholic Relief Services, and a coalition of relief agencies from around the world are trying to confront an impossible task: getting the hundreds of thousands of people who remain homeless after the Jan. 12 earthquake into better housing, even if that means nothing more than a sturdy tent on safe ground.

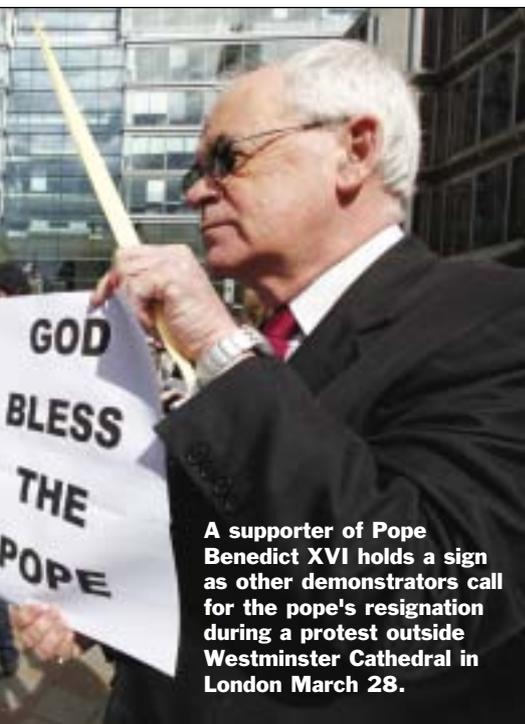
The rainy season peaks in May, but sporadic drenching rains already are

occurring, turning many of the temporary tent camps around Port-au-Prince, the Haitian capital, into muddy quagmires. Boyd and some of the world's leading emergency shelter experts fear the flimsy shelters that people now call home will be inundated by the rainy season's daily downpours, compounding an already taxing humanitarian crisis.

Accustomed to improvising, Haitians in the camps have salvaged whatever they could from collapsed homes and destroyed businesses: cush-

ions, pillows, sheets, blankets, rope and sometimes a few pieces of wood. The more fortunate received an emergency shelter kit, bought plastic tarps or perhaps obtained a small nylon or canvas tent. None of those items were meant to be permanent, however.

The impending rains will create runoff that will push human waste into the walkways in the camps and perhaps even into the makeshift tents, creating the potential for a major outbreak of disease. Experts are scrambling to identify alternatives. The situation is complicated by the widespread devastation of the capital region that left few safe structures for people to occupy. C.R.S., which has raised nearly \$121 million for Haitian earthquake



**A supporter of Pope Benedict XVI holds a sign as other demonstrators call for the pope's resignation during a protest outside Westminster Cathedral in London March 28.**

The pope's letter to Irish Catholics earlier this month demonstrated his commitment to "healing, renewal and reparation" in the church, he said.

Father Lombardi pointed to the "many positive signals" that indicate the church has understood the problem and addressed it. For example, he said, a recent report showed that the number of reported sexual abuse cases declined between 33 and 36 percent in U.S. dioceses and religious institutes between 2008 and 2009.

"It must be recognized that the decisive measures currently being implemented are proving effective: the church in the United States is on the right road to renewal," Father Lombardi said. And Cardinal Walter Kasper, the Vatican's top ecumenical official, said on March 27 that the pope's "courageous" letter to Irish Catholics indicated that the church was on an "irreversible" path toward greater transparency and severity in dealing with sexual abuse by priests.

But even as Vatican officials defended Pope Benedict, U.S. victims of sexual abuse by priests visited Rome on March 25 to call on the

Vatican to establish universal and immediate norms for responding to reports of abuse of children. Peter Isley of the Survivors' Network of those Abused by Priests said, "We want Pope Benedict to break down this wall of secrecy which has caused so much damage and harm in our church and to open up the files so that we can see exactly how he's been handling these cases."

The founder and president of SNAP, Barbara Blaine, said church files should be handed over to the police because the information represents criminal evidence. "The church should not be investigating sex crimes any more than the police should be telling the pope how to prepare his homily for Easter Sunday," she said.

Isley said universal norms are imperative, because the sexual abuse of minors by religious is not a problem that affects only one or a few countries. "This is a global problem" that has to be dealt with, he said.

relief, has provided 14,350 displaced families with emergency shelter.

Boyd's primary concern is the 35,000 people living on the golf course at the Pétionville Club. The tent city rose within hours of the earthquake and quickly blossomed into a town of its own, with businesses and a quasi-government council. The U.S. Army continues to maintain security at the site, while C.R.S. oversees aid and food distribution.

But a recent overnight downpour left the tent city in "pretty bad" shape, Boyd said. "We've got to find a Plan B for Pétionville pretty darn quick." Pétionville Club is just one site that worries shelter experts; more than 400 similar camps of various sizes have

sprouted in devastated neighborhoods. Much of the relocation effort is focused on 21 sites with at least 5,000 people each. Seven of those sites—including the Pétionville Club—are in zones prone to flooding and mudslides, and relief workers are rushing to find alternatives for residents.

Some are in city parks and others are on parking lots and open land. None are adequate for long-term occupation. Except for a few hundred portable toilets that were delivered to some of the camps, there are no sanitation facilities. Very few have access to clean water. Boyd hopes to relocate people

into safe structures in Port-au-Prince. Teams of engineers from around the world are assessing about 2,000 build-



**Haitians wait in a muddy line to receive food after rain showers in Port-au-Prince, March 19.**

ings a day to determine which are safe, which can be repaired and which must be demolished.

## Pakistan: Light Over Darkness

Holy Week in Pakistan this year was set against a backdrop of the war on terror and suicide bombings. Workers at several Catholic institutions have died and many have lost their houses in recent bomb blasts. Price hikes are making it harder for the poor to meet their daily needs, and the country is experiencing major power shortages. With the country in the grip of these crises, low-profile Easter celebrations were scheduled in Catholic parishes in the Archdiocese of Lahore. Auxiliary Bishop Sebastian Shah asked Christians to keep their faith in God amid the warlike conditions in the country. In an article in a publication of the Lahore Archdiocese he wrote, "Let's see how we can become a source of good news for the worried people of our times as we celebrate the feast of the glorious resurrection of Jesus in 2010." And Archbishop Lawrence Saldanha of Lahore wrote: "The feast of Easter brings us a message of hope and joy amid these difficult circumstances. In his resurrection from the dead, we celebrate the victory of light over darkness, life over death and hope over despair."

## Vatican Pursues Unity in China

A Vatican commission asked Chinese bishops and China's state authorities to engage in "respectful dialogue" and expressed the hope that bishops and priests deprived of freedom would be allowed to resume their pastoral ministry. In a statement on March 25, commission members unanimously asked that all bishops in China work toward an increase in unity, "therefore avoiding gestures [like sacramental celebrations, bishops' ordinations and participation in meetings] that would

## NEWS BRIEFS

A group of more than 100 Palestinian Christians, Muslims, internationals and some Jewish supporters managed to breach the tight **security separating Bethlehem and Jerusalem** on Palm Sunday in a demonstration demanding the right of movement between the two cities. • Vatican historical documents, including material regarding the role of the church during World War II, are now online and available for consultation on the official Vatican Web site. • The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Office of Migration and Refugee Services was the recipient of the University of Dayton's 2010 Archbishop Oscar **Romero Human Rights Award** on March 29. • Top officials of the **Legionaries of Christ** acknowledged on March 26 that the order's founder, the late Marcial Maciel Degollado, sexually abused young seminarians, and they asked for forgiveness for failing to listen to his accusers. • Welcoming news of a new U.S.-Russia treaty to **reduce nuclear weapons** stockpiles, Joseph Cirincione, president of Ploughshares Fund, said, "This vision of a world without the Damocles sword of nuclear weapons hanging over it...is one whose time has come."



**Border guards in Jerusalem**

contradict communion with the pope...and create problems, sometimes distressing, in the heart of the respective church communities." The commission, started by Pope Benedict in 2007, has worked to promote reconciliation between Catholic communities that have registered with the Chinese authorities and the so-called underground Catholic communities that have practiced the faith in a more clandestine fashion, professing full loyalty to the pope.

## Hopeful in Iraq

Archbishop Avak Asadourian, primate of the Armenian Orthodox Church of Iraq and secretary general of the Iraqi Council of Christian Church Leaders, said he was pleased with the level of public participation in

the recent Iraqi elections. "There was a high level of participation among Christians, as well," he said. "Now all we are waiting to see is which direction the government will take. We hope that the guiding principle of action will be to ensure peace and security to the nation," he said. "The Christians have hopes for a stable and strong government. We are citizens of Iraq and we have been in this land, our home, for millennia. Politicians leading the country say they hope that Christians will remain in the country and continue to contribute. We ask them not to remain in good intentions, but to put them into practice through works," ensuring a peaceful life to Christian minorities, who are still under fierce attack.

From CNS and other sources.



# Baselines of Faith

In 1996 Senator John Ashcroft of Missouri crafted and President Bill Clinton signed the first federal law broadening support for faith-based organizations that serve the poor without proselytizing.

During the 2000 presidential campaign, Vice President Al Gore championed faith-based programs. In a speech on May 13, 1999, he extolled how they “face down poverty, drug addiction, domestic violence and homelessness” and weave “a resilient web of life support under the most helpless among us.”

On July 22, 1999, George W. Bush, then governor of Texas, launched his presidential bid by proclaiming that America’s “armies of compassion” do great civic good works but are forced “to make bricks without straw.” On Jan. 29, 2001, as president, he established the first White House office of faith-based initiatives plus five related centers in as many cabinet agencies.

On Jan. 19, 2005, New York’s Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton preached that nobody “is more likely to go out onto a street to save some poor, at-risk child than someone...who sees God at work in the lives of even the most hopeless.” Rather than “have a false division or debate about the role of faith-based institutions, we need to just do it and provide the support that is needed.”

On July 1, 2008, Senator Barack Obama of Illinois laid out ambitious plans to provide that support. His plans echoed through the August 2008 Democratic Convention’s “faith

caucuses.” In 2009, during his first months as president, he established a White House office and an advisory council on “Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships.”

Now we are 14 years, three presidents and much bipartisan sentiment into faith-based initiatives. What has been accomplished?

Measured by the actual level of government support for community-serving congregations and other religious nonprofits that serve the needy and neglected, the answer is “not much, really.”

From coast to coast, with record numbers of poor people requesting their services and crowding their facilities, the godly republic’s “armies of compassion” are still making bricks without straw.

From Catholic Charities affiliates to street-level “blessing station” shelters, inadequate funding has widened already gaping holes in the faith-based web of life support beneath the least, the last and the lost of our affluent society.

Last year in these pages (2/9/09), I professed my belief that President Obama, a former Catholic Charities community worker in Chicago, truly wanted “to help the civic saints who go marching in to help people in real need.” I still believe that, and I have only the highest regard for most members of his faith-based office and council.

Still, even allowing for the financial crisis and the health care policy battle, the Obama administration to date has not done nearly enough either to assist community-serving faith-based organizations or to resolve longstanding

controversies like those surrounding religious hiring rights.

I say that having just read “Under God,” the Obama council’s March 2010 report. It offers recommendations on faith-based initiatives in relation to domestic and global poverty, climate change, inter-faith cooperation and more, and discusses restructuring the White House faith office and centers.

Fine, but the report is more a discursive academic document, complete with dissenting views, than an actual policy blueprint. Specific policy pledges that Obama made during the campaign seem to have gotten lost in the council’s deliberations.

Diverse faith-based leaders all across the country, including many

who strongly support Obama, were puzzled by the report and have been disappointed by what one termed the “all talk, no action office.”

Such disappointment is understandable, but it is too soon to despair. And charges by legacy-minded Bush loyalists, including that the office’s young director, the Rev. Joshua DuBois, functions as a mere political operative, are not entirely fair.

Still, significant policy action to help faith-based programs can and should be taken by or before January 2011. President Obama, it is widely reported, begins each day reflecting on a Scripture verse selected for him by the Rev. DuBois. When it comes to faith-based initiatives, it is time for Mt 7:16: “You shall know them by their fruits.”

America’s  
armies of  
compassion  
are still  
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bricks with-  
out straw.

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



REVIVING THE NUCLEAR NONPROLIFERATION AGENDA

# Countdown?

BY DAVID CORTRIGHT

**T**he rhetoric of a “world without nuclear weapons” is about to face political reality. In May the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty Review Conference convenes at the United Nations. Later this year the Obama administration hopes to begin the process of seeking United States Senate ratification of treaties to reduce strategic arsenals and ban nuclear tests. The outcome of these political processes will shape the direction of

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**Former state representatives of the United States and Germany at the Global Zero Summit in Berlin, Feb. 3, 2010.**

nuclear policy for years to come and will determine whether the goal of nuclear abolition is merely an aspiration or becomes an objective of public policy.

Political support for disarmament has increased in recent years, propelled by worldwide concern about the twin dangers of nuclear proliferation and a nuclear terrorist attack. The urgent need to address this deadly nexus has prompted a growing chorus of calls for disarmament. President Obama articulated this new consciousness in his historic address in Prague in April 2009, in which he pledged American leadership for concerted efforts to reduce and eliminate nuclear weapons. This commitment was on display in September at a special session of the United Nations Security Council, attended by heads of state and chaired by the president, that strengthened global nonproliferation programs and vowed to create the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons.

Leading the charge for nuclear abolition are two former United States secretaries of state, George Shultz and Henry Kissinger, a former defense secretary, William Perry, and a former senator, Sam Nunn. These unlikely “four horsemen” of disarmament have endorsed the vision of a future free of nuclear weapons and have identified concrete steps for moving toward that lofty goal. The steps include strengthening global nonproliferation efforts, negotiating a new agreement with Russia for deeper cuts in

PHOTO: REUTERS/TOBIAS SCHWARZ

nuclear arsenals and bringing the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty into force. The Shultz initiative in the United States is matched by similar efforts among high-level groups of former officials in the United Kingdom, Russia, Germany, France, Norway, Poland, Japan, Australia and other countries. Many of the national initiatives, following the model of the Shultz statement, are nonpartisan and cross-party in character; Democrats join Republicans in the United States; conservatives, liberals and social democrats speak together in Europe and beyond.

At its core the commitment to nuclear disarmament is a moral issue. It is an ethical response to the threat these weapons pose to human life. Archbishop Edwin O'Brien of Baltimore stated in a recent address at the Global Zero conference in Paris that the moral teaching of the Catholic Church is "profoundly skeptical" of nuclear deterrence and unequivocally opposed to any use of weapons of mass destruction. The church's position "grows out of a deep and abiding commitment to protect life that is rooted in the teachings of Jesus," O'Brien said. He reminded his listeners of the judgment in the "Church in the Modern World," adopted at the Second Vatican Council, which states that the nuclear arms race is "an utterly treacherous trap for humanity," and that mutual, verifiable disarmament is a necessary path to true peace.

### Strengthening the Treaty

The nonproliferation treaty has withstood major challenges over the decades and remains an essential pillar of international security. The treaty has prevented the cascade of proliferation that many feared in the 1960s and 1970s, when it was commonplace to predict that as many as two dozen countries would possess nuclear explosives by 2000. Only four countries have obtained nuclear weapons since the treaty entered into force in 1970, while more than two dozen have abandoned nuclear weapons development programs.

The treaty contains a grand bargain in which the five officially recognized nuclear weapons states (the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia and China) agree to "pursue negotiations in good faith" for disarmament, while all other states (184 nations) give up the nuclear weapons option. Three states—India, Pakistan and Israel—remain outside the treaty, and one, North Korea, has withdrawn. The treaty also guarantees the "inalienable right of all the

parties to the treaty to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination."

There are inherent tensions among these provisions. The guarantee of the right to develop nuclear energy increases the risk of proliferation. The technologies, materials and scientific skills required for developing civilian nuclear energy can be used to develop nuclear weapons. The spread of nuclear technology complicates the challenge of maintaining a separation between peaceful and military uses of the atom. The treaty does not prohibit uranium enrichment or plutonium reprocessing, as long as these are under International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards. This makes the border-

line between civilian and military uses the key focus of the inspection regime. It also creates technical difficulty and political uncertainty as to the nature of a contested nuclear program, like that of Iran. It is noteworthy that the claim to an "inalienable" right is exactly the lan-

guage chanted in pro-government rallies organized by Tehran to protest foreign attempts to constrain its nuclear program.

Non-nuclear states have urged greater progress toward disarmament by the nuclear weapons states. This demand was stressed at the very first nonproliferation treaty review conference in Geneva in 1975 and has been prominent in every conference since then. Coalitions of nonaligned states, spearheaded by Ireland, Sweden and other countries, have criticized the five nuclear weapons states for not honoring their part of the bargain. Officials in the United States respond by pointing to the large reductions in nuclear stockpiles they have achieved since the end of the cold war. Many non-nuclear states, however, are not satisfied. They want an end to nuclear discrimination and more rapid progress toward disarmament.

At the treaty review conference in 2000, the nuclear weapons states committed themselves to an "unequivocal undertaking" to "accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals." They also agreed to take 13 "practical steps" to fulfill the treaty's disarmament obligation. Few of these steps have been implemented. This perceived disregard for disarmament pledges causes resentment over double standards and makes it more difficult to reach global agreement on urgently needed steps to stem proliferation dangers. To achieve the latter it is necessary to make progress on the former.

**Many non-nuclear states,  
however, are not satisfied. They  
want an end to nuclear  
discrimination and more rapid  
progress toward disarmament**

## Debating Disarmament

Disarmament issues may soon come before the United States Senate. Russia and the United States have negotiated terms of a new treaty to lower their nuclear weapons stockpiles. The proposed reductions are modest, but they are important in helping to re-establish momentum for nuclear reductions by the two major nuclear powers, which together possess more than 90 percent of the world's 23,000 nuclear weapons. The new treaty also reinforces monitoring and verification protocols that are crucial to preserving confidence in the arms reduction process. Ratification of the treaty in the Senate will require the support of 67 senators, a two-thirds vote. Senate approval would not only assure continued progress on nuclear reductions but also help to improve U.S.-Russian political relations, which have become testy in recent years. The United States and Russia have many political differences on a range of issues, but they share a common interest in promoting disarmament and preventing nuclear proliferation. Ratification of the treaty will advance this common arms control agenda and foster cooperation on other security issues.

Following passage of the strategic reduction treaty, the Senate may be asked to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. This will be a more difficult and contentious debate. A legal prohibition on nuclear testing would significantly advance nonproliferation and disarmament objectives, but the test ban treaty in the past has been caught in the vicissitudes of domestic politics. In 1999 a Republican-led Senate rejected the treaty 51 to 48. Whether the senators will be able to rise above partisanship to approve the treaty next year remains uncertain.

The United States and Russia have maintained a voluntary moratorium on nuclear explosions since the early 1990s, and neither country has plans to conduct tests in the future. Security officials in both countries support the test ban treaty because it helps to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons capability. Without the ability to conduct test explosions, states seeking to build nuclear weapons cannot be certain of the reliability or effectiveness of their weapons. Without a testing program, aspiring nuclear powers will not be able to improve and miniaturize warhead designs for deployment on ballistic missiles and possible multiple warhead systems. These are important protections that would help to prevent the emergence of new nuclear weapons threats.

## Verifying a Comprehensive Test Ban

Critics question whether a comprehensive test ban can be verified, but in recent years monitoring systems and detection technology have reached advanced states of reliability, in part because of the continuing efforts of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization, which was

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**Frank Barry** works in New York's City Hall as a policy advisor and director of speechwriting for Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg. Author of a recent book titled, *The Scandal of Reform: The Grand Failures of New York's Political Reformers and the Death of Nonpartisanship*.



**Terry Golway**, Director of the John Kean Center for American History at Kean University, and the author of many books, including *Irish Rebel: John Devoy and America's Fight for Irish Freedom* (1998) and *Washington's General* (2005).

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established in 1997. The organization has an International Monitoring System of more than 300 seismic detection and monitoring stations all over the world. The United States and other member states also can monitor treaty compliance with their own highly sophisticated satellites and other intelligence means. Thousands of high-quality civilian seismic stations around the world provide further detection capabilities.

This extensive international detection network proved its worth when North Korea conducted its first nuclear weapons test explosion in October 2006. The global network of sensors easily detected Pyongyang's relatively low-yield (0.6 kiloton) blast. (Most nuclear tests are considerably larger.) The explosion was promptly detected and identified from signals recorded at 31 seismic stations in Asia, Australia, Europe and North America, including 22 international monitoring stations. No nuclear explosion of military significance can escape this global detection network.

U.S. ratification of the test ban treaty would be important in its own right and might also serve as a catalyst to ratification by other countries. Action by the United States could lead to ratification by China, which would increase pressure on India to ratify as well. Pakistan would follow suit. U.S. ratification might also help to per-

suaide Israel to ratify, which would make it easier for Egypt to do likewise. All of this, were it to come to pass, would be a major boost to the Nonproliferation Treaty regime. It would establish a pattern of reciprocal international endorsement that might be applied to future treaties, including a ban on the production of weapons-grade fissile material and an eventual prohibition on the production and possession of nuclear weapons.

The test ban enjoys strong political support among Americans. Opinion polls have consistently found majority support for the treaty among Republicans and Democrats alike. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Vatican have endorsed the treaty as part of a consistent life ethic. Many other religious bodies, scientific groups and professional associations have also expressed support for the treaty's ratification. Whether this public support will be sufficient to overcome the spirit of partisan rancor in Washington remains to be seen. Much will depend on the degree of engagement by citizens, including religious leaders, to press for enlightened leadership on a vital matter of national and international safety. One hopes that the urgency of security can rise above the expediency of politics to create bipartisan support for protecting life and stemming the nuclear danger. **A**

### ON THE WEB

From 1945, the editors on the dropping of the atomic bomb. [americamagazine.org/pages](http://americamagazine.org/pages)

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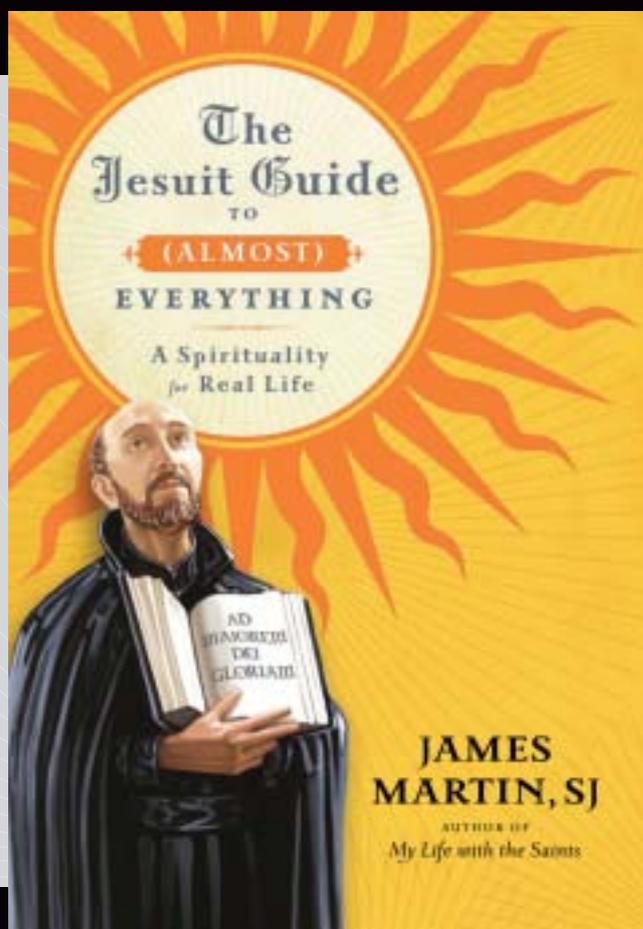
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From the author of *My Life with the Saints*

# The Pastor's Toolbox

How your parish can get down to business

BY THOMAS J. HEALEY AND JOHN ERIKSEN

**T**raining in how to do a budget wasn't part of the seminary curriculum," said the Rev. Stephen Gemme, who became a pastor only 14 months after his ordination in 2002 for the Diocese of Worcester, Mass. "Being the chief administrator, not only for the parish, but for the largest elementary school in the diocese," he told Catholic.net, "was a heavy responsibility."

While the mission of the Catholic Church has never been centered on financial and management skills, such administrative necessities are more critical than ever for effective pastoral leaders. Unfortunately, those skills are rarely taught in seminaries, where the focus is forming priests for the vocational call of the priesthood and not to become managers. As a result, new pastors often feel overwhelmed and under-prepared for the administrative rigors that confront them daily, making it even tougher for them to succeed on a spiritual plane.

Mindful of this critical need, a concerned group of lay, clerical and academic practitioners teamed up to find a solution. They created *Pastors for a New Millennium: A Toolbox for Parochial Management*, an innovative training program designed to give new pastors the skills they need to handle the complexities of church management. The program covers vital temporal issues that seminaries rarely have time for.

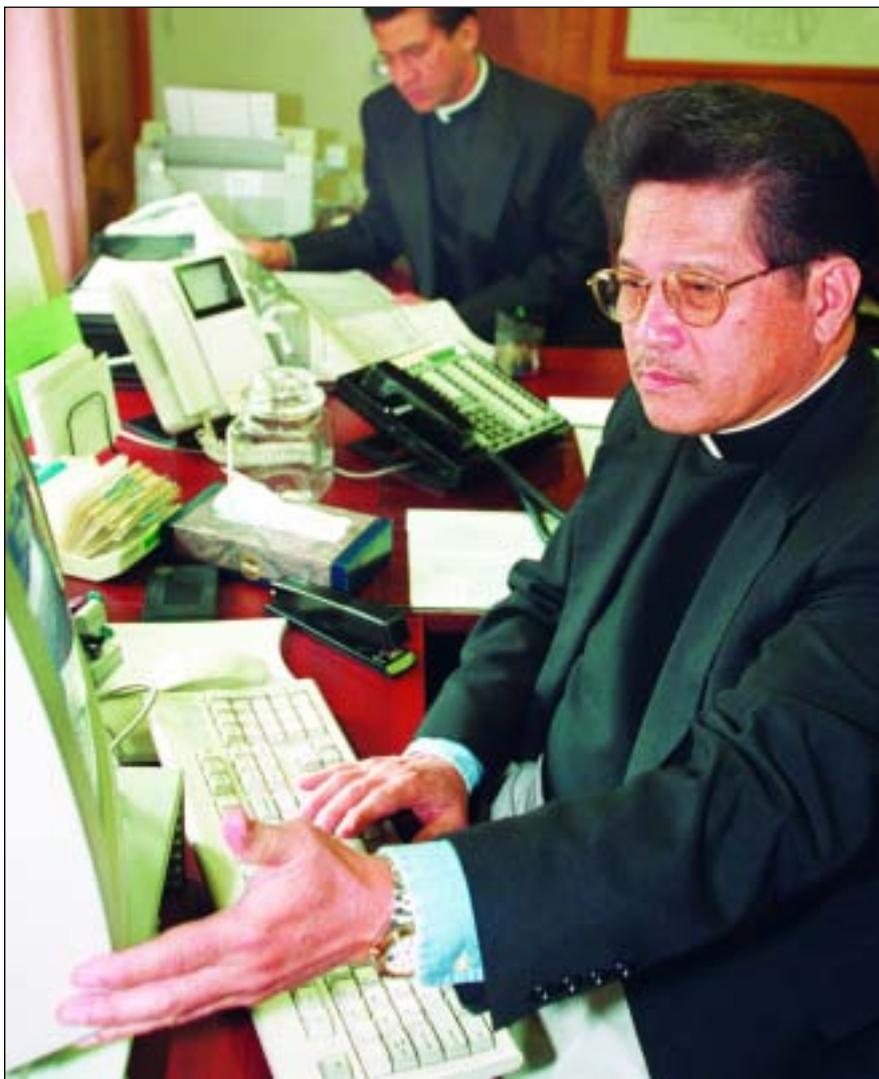
The results have exceeded expectations. The program held its inaugural six-day training session in July at the San

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**THOMAS J. HEALEY**, a retired partner of Goldman Sachs, is a senior fellow at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government and treasurer of the National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management. **JOHN ERIKSEN** is superintendent of schools for the diocese of Paterson, N.J., and former director of consulting for the National Leadership Roundtable.

Alfonso Retreat Center in Long Branch, N.J. The 28 priests who attended from 13 different dioceses (as far away as St. Petersburg, Pittsburgh, New Orleans and Galveston-Houston) found helpful not just the management tools they acquired, but also the opportunity to reflect with one another on their role as pastors and to engage in dialogue with management experts.

What makes *A Toolbox for Parochial Management* unique is that it is patterned after executive leadership pro-



**The Rev. Fidel de Ramos at work in the parish office of St. Michael's Church in Silver Spring, Md.**

PHOTO: CNS/MARTIN LUEBERS

grams at many of the nation's top business schools, like the Harvard Business School and the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. Developed with extensive input from successful pastors, the program staff includes laypeople and members of the clergy who are recognized experts in their fields of church management. The first conference included presentations by Bishop Arthur Serratelli, of Paterson, N.J., on the new missal and liturgical renewal; Charles Zech, professor of economics at Villanova University and director of its Center for the Study of Church Management, on parish internal financial controls; Jim Lundholm-Eades, director of parish services and planning for the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis and a widely published author on church management, discussing a "six-month game plan"; and Kerry Robinson, executive director of the National Leadership Roundtable, on communication and Christian stewardship.

But the 15 presentations delivered during the week were only part of the program. Over lunch and dinner and after Mass and each day's final session, participants gathered in groups of three and four to share stories of parish life today, replete with priest shortages, merging parishes, ministerial

burnout and financial challenges. Conversations ranged from what works and what does not to the importance of lay leadership and strategic planning, and to the significance of becoming a "mission-driven" parish.

Piloting the Toolbox program is Seton Hall University, which runs the International Institute for Clergy Formation, a continuing education center for priests. The National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management co-sponsored the program. The goal is to give participants a deeper understanding of what it takes to be an effective pastoral manager today, particularly in the tricky areas of finance, administration and personnel management.

## The program attempts to replace trial-and-error pastoral management with effective stewardship.

### Coping With the Pressures

The speed with which priests nowadays become pastors has made a smart, contemporary formation more urgent than ever. A survey in 2005 found that on average 54 percent of diocesan priests and 18 percent of religious priests were made pastors within seven years of ordination. Indeed, it is not uncommon for newly ordained priests to become pastors almost immediately. Compounding the challenge is the fact that 36 percent of the diocesan priests and 20 percent

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of the religious order priests were responsible for more than one parish, according to the survey. The rapidly growing number of international priests face a variety of cultural challenges and obstacles.

No wonder the early years as the parish leader are considered to be the most critical—and most difficult. During these years, pastors must come to grips with an enormous workload and with what many find to be the loneliness of the job, the lack of support, the personality conflicts and the often unrealistic demands and expectations of the people of the parish.

Toolbox attempts to replace trial-and-error pastoral management with effective stewardship. In the area of finance, for example, participants learn which principles and practices are essential to any well-run organization, public or private: transparency, accountability, economies of scale and use of “best practices.” Pastors—many of whom are the first to admit that their knowledge of financial fundamentals is thin—learn which budgeting and financial analysis and operations competencies are critical to running a strong fiscal house. These include creating and disseminating timely financial reports and providing parishioners with a confidential way to report any suspected improprieties or misuse of parish resources. Participants learn how to work effectively with their finance councils, how to manage the new skills essential to fundraising, how to achieve cost savings through cooperative purchasing and staffing agreements with other parishes and how to deploy best practices in managing their facilities.

The curriculum is no less comprehensive in the field of planning. Here pastors are challenged with the overarching question: How can they become meaningful agents of growth for their parishes? To that end the Toolbox program instructors underline the importance of working with the laity in their parishes to plan and execute well-designed programs—including capital campaigns—and to develop six-month (and longer) “game plans” to inform their strategic decision-making. Learning to assess the needs of the parish accurately and continuously is another major component of the planning discussion.

So is the “Standards of Excellence,” a set of performance guidelines introduced over the past two years by the National Leadership Roundtable and covered by the Toolbox program. “Standards” provides a solid ethics and accountability code that can be used by virtually every parish to guide it in the planning process.

Another area of vital skills training is personnel and risk management. Pastors learn the importance of assembling a high-performance lay staff with talented individuals who can assume some of the pastor’s daily responsibilities, leaving pastors more time to concentrate on “big picture” issues and concerns. Toolbox gives pastoral leaders insights into hiring, evaluating, coaching and inspiring that team. On the

risk-management side, the discussion turns to timely issues like: What steps can a parish take to protect its assets? When does a parish need to seek legal counsel? What concerns should a parish risk-management program address?

## A Continuing Learning Process

Reinforcing the lessons learned from the Toolbox for Parochial Management is its broad-based support. It is a joint effort of the International Institute for Clergy Formation at Seton Hall University, the Archdiocese of Newark, the Diocese of Paterson, N.J., and the National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management. Each sponsoring group hopes to ensure that the program will become part of a continuing learning process. Thus, “alumni” will receive periodic newsletters and have electronic access to groups of peers and experts they can contact to pose questions and seek advice.

The success of the program’s maiden voyage suggests an optimistic future for this clerical-lay-academic consortium. Planning is underway for the next session of the program in summer 2010, and a book is being developed based on its content. As pastors left the weeklong gathering of education, prayer, relaxation and renewal to return to parishes around the country, they seemed energized by the message they had heard: Do not fear change, but use it to achieve positive results. A



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# BOOKS & CULTURE

**THEATER** | ROB WEINERT-KENDT

## STAR TURNS

*Three plays showcase stage and screen talent.*

The days when the American theater minted its own bonafide stars seem to have faded like so many yellowing playbills bearing the names of the Lunts and Sarah Bernhardt, Uta Hagen and George Grizzard. In the Netflix age, can an actor build a commanding body of work, let alone engender a devoted following, with the stage as the main platform? Three recent Broadway plays that had limited runs gave a hearteningly affirmative answer, even as they exemplify what looks like a trend

toward celebrity casting that has invited much critical hand-wringing but was mostly vindicated by the fine performances all around.

In "Time Stands Still," Donald Margulies's well-crafted new play about war reporters adjusting poorly to the home front, Laura Linney played an obsessive photojournalist with a magisterial mix of wariness, wit and well-concealed pain, alongside a cast of stage pros and one Broadway newcomer, Alicia Silverstone, who slotted into the ensemble effortlessly. In "A View From

the Bridge," Arthur Miller's mid-century portrait of working-class resentment and repression, Liev Schreiber and Jessica Hecht gave towering, indelible performances as a strained married couple, while the young Scarlett Johansson, in her first major stage appearance, held her own as the unwitting cause of the marital strain.

And in an uneven new revival of William Gibson's "The Miracle Worker," a diminutive firecracker named Alison Pill, as the willful governess and teacher Annie Sullivan, staked her claim as a native stage talent alongside Abigail Breslin, "Little Miss Sunshine" herself, who disappeared convincingly and movingly into the showpiece role of Helen Keller.

But those are not "stage stars," I

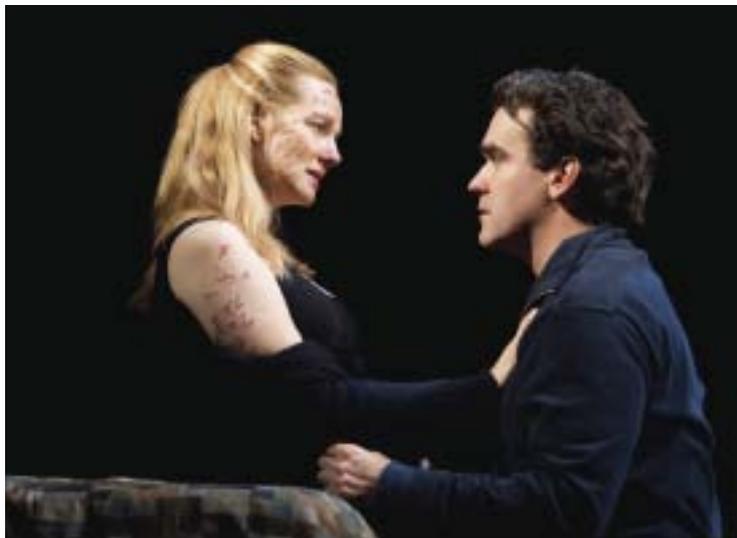
The cast of William Gibson's "The Miracle Worker"



PHOTO: JOAN MARCUS

hear you protest. After all, you've seen Linney and Schreiber in many movies. (You might recognize Hecht from a recurring role on "Friends" and Pill from a memorable turn in the biopic "Milk.") Well, yes; no working actor with any ambition, not to mention rent to pay, can afford to forgo lucrative film and television opportunities. But with due respect to these actors' fine work

PHOTO: JOAN MARCUS



**Laura Linney and Brian d'Arcy James in "Time Stands Still"**

onscreen, not everyone rushes to see them onstage because they were brilliant in "Love Actually" or "Scream." Linney and Schreiber, in particular, are the kind of stage-seasoned actor's actors whom discerning theatergoers line up to see primarily on the strength of their stage work, and whose performances they will talk about for years. Hecht is not far behind their rank, and Pill is fast becoming the same kind of you-must-see-her-live theatrical star.

It is easy to see why great stage actors attract devotees. The best among them are a unique blend of long-distance athlete and fine-grained craftsperson. To realize a role onstage every night requires a mastery of time and space no editor or director of photography can provide, as well as a heightened sensitivity to the small moments, accidents and felicities that crop up differently every night. Few actors anywhere can catch and release a stage with such firm delicacy as the hulking Schreiber, who played the Brooklyn longshoreman Eddie Carbone with a burn so slow you did not notice it until the whole stage was ablaze—figuratively speaking, of course. Schreiber's intensity almost never rose to a full roar. What's remarkable is how little he does to convey even the hugest of emotions.

He understands that even in a big Broadway theater, acting is still about capturing nuances of behavior that illuminate larger truths.

This is particularly true of Miller's thematically ambitious 1955 play, which traces the disastrous effects of Eddie's quasi-incestuous infatuation with his wife's niece, Catherine, when she reaches maturity and finds a likely mate in a fey Italian immigrant.

Miller, writing outside his own culture, seems to have been inspired by

the play's Italian-American setting to strive for a kind of gritty operatic verismo à la "Cavalleria Rusticana." In the process, he also included his most explicit references to one of his lifelong projects: to graft the pressing moral quandaries of everyday American life onto the god-crossed tragedies of the Greeks. Here, a lawyer named Alfieri (played with casual lyricism by Michael Cristofer) offers narra-

tion that would have been provided by the chorus in ancient Greece, as he watches a terrible destiny unfold among Eddie and his long-suffering wife Beatrice (Hecht, pinched yet sympathetic, without a drop of sentimentality), the budding Catherine and a pair of illegals from the old country, Marco and Rodolpho.

Schreiber's overwhelming restraint, under Gregory Mosher's unflustered, concentrated direction, set the sobered-up tone and rendered the



PHOTO: JOAN MARCUS

**Scarlett Johansson, Liev Schreiber, Morgan Spector in "A View From the Bridge"**

play's stark colors—rage! jealousy! betrayal!—in burnished, battered shades rather than in florid extremes. That may explain in part why the resourceful Johansson blended in so well. Adjusting herself to this grayish-brown world, she was more russet than Scarlett.

“Time Stands Still” handled its pressing moral dilemmas—the proper role and responsibility of those who document the world’s worst atrocities,

the passivity of the audiences who consume their work—in a more familiar contemporary register. No operatic soliloquies about justice here, just a tetchy ongoing argument between Jamie (Brian d’Arcy James), a traumatized war reporter who is ready to pack it in for a saner life stateside, and Sarah (Linney), a photographer who has

come home only because she has been injured in Iraq and who plans to return as soon as she is back on her feet.

Their bond, initially forged but now frayed by frontline adrenaline, is further tested in contrast with the all-

too-cozy romance between Richard, Sarah’s phlegmatic assignment editor (Eric Bogosian) and Mandy, his much younger girlfriend (Silverstone).

This is a finely made and serious play, and it was smoothly directed by Daniel Sullivan. But there is no suspense in its central relationship drama. For all D’Arcy James’s eloquent sputtering, we could predict the ending from Linney, who remained too stubbornly true to her character’s complications for us to have believed that Sarah will relent. All that’s left between the curtains, then, is moderately amusing and mildly challenging banter over divergent lifestyle choices, the cultural representation of violence and the state of publishing. In other words, “Time Stands Still” is more or less indistinguishable from a slightly edgy dinner party.

“The Miracle Worker” was the odd one out of this Broadway power trio because the real draw here was not any actor but the play itself. Sure enough, on the night I attended the show, the house was packed with parents and tweens on hand for this generation’s ritual retelling of Annie Sullivan’s inspiring breakthrough with a young, near-feral Helen Keller. Seen today, William Gibson’s 1957 play remains an engaging but almost shockingly slight work that looks like a TV-movie prototype.

But if its structure is spindly, its tentpole moments still hold up. Our introduction to the feisty orphan Annie; her repeated faceoffs with Helen’s stubborn parents (Jennifer Morrison and Matthew Modine, both of them weak tea); and, above all, her brutal scrimmages and hard-won

**ON THE WEB**

John P. McCarthy reviews the Irish film “The Eclipse.” [americamagazine.org/culture](http://americamagazine.org/culture)

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progress with the blind-and-deaf but hardly disabled little bully Helen, reaching its peak in the easily parodied but still effective water-pump epiphany.

Kate Whoriskey's uneven direction never made peace with Circle in the Square's in-the-round configuration. We seldom felt we are where we want to be as the action unfolds. But as she demonstrated in last year's "Ruined," Whoriskey excels at shaping scenes of connection, and competition, among women in close quarters. As Annie struggles first to tame, then to teach Helen, we are privy to the emergence of what will be a lifelong bond, though the play ends with but a hint of it.

We are also witness to the emergence of a true stage star—not Breslin, who was good as Helen but remained, in part because of the role's unique demands, somewhat opaque. The title, after all, tells us whom the play is really about, and the indomitable Pill worked her own brand of miracles. The first of these is to take full possession of a role created by Anne Bancroft, a stage-minted star if there ever was one. That Pill owned it so neatly and totally is cause to hope for the future of this irreducibly live art.

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**ROB WEINERT-KENDT** is an arts journalist who has written for *The New York Times* and *TimeOut New York*. He writes a blog called "The Wicked Stage."

## BOOKS | VINCENT ROUGEAU

# A SOULFUL PRAY-ER

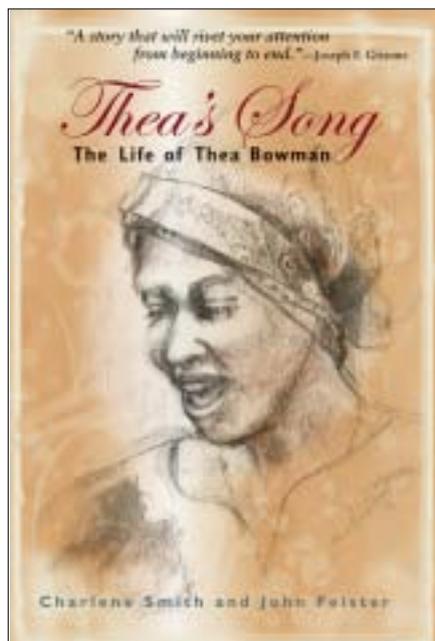
### THEA'S SONG The Life of Thea Bowman

By Charlene Smith and John Feister  
Orbis. 352p \$28

What an auspicious time for this heartfelt and inspiring book to be released. Part diary, part travelogue and part remembrance, *Thea's Song: The Life of Thea Bowman*, tells us the story of an "unlikely black heroine," a Franciscan sister born in Mississippi at the tail end of the Depression. Given the alacrity with which many Americans have embraced the concept of a "post-racial society," Thea Bowman's long struggle to open the Catholic Church to African-American spirituality is a story all American Catholics should know. Furthermore, her life's work has much to tell us about current intellectual and cultural divisions within the church that have been exacerbated by the failure to appreciate a fundamental lesson of her witness: Universal does not mean uniform.

Thea Bowman's home was the fer-

tile Delta region of Mississippi. Its rich alluvial soil supported huge plantations that produced the prodigious



wealth on display in places like Vicksburg, Natchez and Memphis. Enormous numbers of slaves were required to keep the money flowing, and well into the 20th century the descendants of these slaves labored as

sharecroppers to provide the cheap labor vital to this economic system. A relatively small class of wealthy, white landowners and a very small white middle-class were supported by poor blacks, who far outnumbered them. Consequently, the Delta became an area of the South with some of the most rigid and harshly enforced Jim Crow laws and social practices. Thea (born Bertha) Bowman was born into the relatively privileged (but materially modest) household of the only black doctor and one of the few black schoolteachers in Canton, Miss. They were an educated couple who, when blessed with their only child late in life, provided the loving home and high expectations that would ground Sister Thea for her entire remarkable life.

It is hard for us to imagine today the leap of faith that was required for young Bertha Bowman to leave the tightly knit confines of the black community in Canton to become a nun in La Crosse, Wis. Attracted by the improved educational opportunities made available by the opening of a Catholic mission to blacks, Bertha's family had become involved with Holy Child Jesus parish and eventually converted to Catholicism. The parish school was staffed by the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, strong, inspiring women who lovingly encouraged young Bertha's intellectual gifts and who modeled the unimaginable—a loving community of faith made up of blacks and whites. These women ultimately set the example that moved Bertha to leave everything she had ever known. In 1953, at the age of 15, she became a Franciscan aspirant at the motherhouse in La Crosse. In 1958, Sister Mary Thea became a professed sister. She would remain dedicated to her vocation as a nun for the rest of her life—no easy task for anyone, but particularly not for an African-American woman in an all-white congregation during the tumultuous decades that followed the Second Vatican Council.

The council created an opportunity for Sister Thea to find her authentic spiritual voice, which knitted together her black Southern self, her remarkable intellect and her fierce devotion to her Catholic faith. She earned her doctorate in English at Catholic University of America in 1972 and went on to teach in and chair the English department at Viterbo College in Wisconsin. Her life as a graduate student in Washington, D.C., exposed her to the intellectual ferment of the civil rights movement, and as she befriended men and women from around the world, she began to realize the rich possibilities offered by life in a cosmopolitan community. She would later make extended trips to Europe and Africa. Ultimately, the seeds were planted for her ministry of African-American expression in Catholic worship and, more generally, greater cross-cultural awareness within the church.

Thea Bowman's life was cut short by cancer in 1990, but during the 1980s, she achieved international renown sharing and spreading the African-American spiritual traditions of her Mississippi childhood. An accomplished singer, she demonstrated through song, dance, body movement, moaning, humming and chant that people of African descent had important messages and gifts to offer the universal church.

At a time when much of Catholic worship was suffering an identity crisis, Sister Thea reminded Americans that there was a vibrant, soulful and prayerful spirituality that had long been nurtured by their black brothers and sisters. This tradition could offer richness and authenticity to Catholic worship through its ability to reach people of all cultures emotionally, spiritually and physically. Perhaps the most enduring symbol of Sister Thea's legacy is the *Lead Me, Guide Me* hymnal, a collection of hymns in the African-American tradition for use in

Catholic churches. It can be found in parishes throughout the United States, regardless of the ethnic makeup of the congregation.

Would that Sister Thea were with us now! No doubt she would be thrilled to see the election of the nation's first African-American president, and she definitely would have something to say about those who think they can decide who is a "real" Catholic and who is not. Perhaps she would quote her grandfather, a former slave, who told her that the worst form of slavery is not that

which comes with chains and shackles from the outside, but the enslavement of the mind that "keeps us from reaching out to one another and being to one another the cause of freedom and the cause of strength and the cause of life." She would tell us to stop tolerating the boundaries of race, class, education and money. She would urge us to dance. She would definitely sing.

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VINCENT ROUGEAU is associate professor at Notre Dame Law School and the author of *Christians in the American Empire* (Oxford Univ. Press).

MATTHEW WEINER

## LIVING OUTSIDE TIME

### THE SABBATH WORLD Glimpses of a Different Order of Time

By Judith Shulevitz  
Random House. 288p \$26

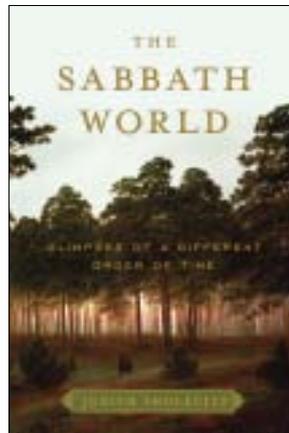
The journalist and culture critic Judith Shulevitz opens her book about the Sabbath, part spiritual memoir, part history lesson, part critique of our contemporary overly busy lives, with an obvious observation: "...we all look for a Sabbath, whether or not that's what we call it." She rightly points out that our lives, through the industrial revolution, technology and the 24/7 nature of our compulsive, overworked universe could use some restructuring.

Readers who approach this elegantly written book most likely already have their idea of what the Sabbath is and agree that we all need some kind of rest from the hectic pace of our lives. At the same time the Sabbath, in its traditional context and as developed and carried out by the Jewish

people today, is something radically different from regular old rest. It has a particular theological and doctrinal meaning, as well as hyper-detailed rules of ritual practice. In this way Sabbath is a strange term, at once dramatically particular in its traditional proscriptive sense, and universally understood and looked fondly upon in its vernacular.

Shulevitz's book, if nothing else, makes this important point and argues that it is something worth thinking more about, and in a variety of ways. Why else write a book about the Sabbath, when so many are already out there, and some brilliantly conceived, the most famous

being Abraham Joshua Heschel's *The Sabbath* (which everyone should read)? For Shulevitz, a personal account of Sabbath that intertwines some interesting history of Sabbath's effect on our Western and finally American society is worth writing about. For Shulevitz it is also worth arguing that a little downtime benefits everyone.



While the bulk of her book delves into history and observations about our busyness, Shulevitz frames it all in the context of her own personal encounter with the Sabbath and Judaism and where she, as a modern woman drawn to her faith, fits. Raised in a Jewish household in the particularly non-Jewish world of San Juan, Puerto Rico, she later dates an Orthodox boy in college and experiences the traditional Sabbath life, and then as an adult studies the Talmud in her synagogue in Brooklyn.

Within the genre of Jewish memoir are found strands of Jewish return stories: the observant Jew who leaves orthodoxy to find him/herself more spiritually attuned; the secular or very reformed Jew who returns to orthodoxy and a renewed commitment to her faith (sometimes this happens after one has for a while followed a different faith, like Buddhism, an example of which was notably played out by Rodger Kamantz's *The Jew in the Lotus*); the Jew who re-identifies with his Jewish identity, but in a less religious sense; and finally the maintenance of ambivalence. Shulevitz falls into the last category, and while perhaps that makes for a less satisfying narrative, it certainly feels authentic to what many educated people, drawn to their faith, must experience.

Since the book covers the idea of a traditional Sabbath only briefly, readers interested in this area should turn to Heschel's classic book, which serves as a poetic but sophisticated account of the way in which Judaism, through the Sabbath, is a religion that sanctifies and celebrates time over space. Heschel asserts it to be a radical departure from other religions, both philosophically and practically. "The Sabbaths," he says, "are our great Cathedrals."

Shulevitz puts most of her good effort into tracing the history of how other communities have encountered the idea of Sabbath and adopted it for their own use. She begins with an

extended reflection on how Jesus probably observed Sabbath, but also interpreted it in a way that influenced Paul's reinterpretation of Jewish law, changing the role of Sabbath and circumcision for Christians forever. She then traces how the ideas of the Sabbath continued to reappear throughout Christian history.

The most interesting account describes how the Reformation and the printing press lead to a reading and reinterpretation of the Bible, which sends some new Christian groups back to earlier Jewish practices, including the Sabbath. Martin Luther was appalled at these practices most influentially practiced by Anabaptists, dubbing such heretics "Sabbatarians." But it was this return on the part of such groups that led to the relearning of Hebrew, from local Jews of course, and eventually a renewed interest in Jewish customs and laws. Through a study of Hebrew and the lens of Jewish monotheism, radical interpretations of Christian Scripture emerged, questioning, for example, the Trinity.

Shulevitz follows the importance of Sabbath from the Sabbatarians to the American pilgrims, and finally to the development of the blue laws in Boston, which restrict work. She demonstrates the connection between the Sabbath, the blue laws and Supreme Court decisions as recently as 1961 that draw a connection between an official, religiously rooted, if now secular, day of rest and good civic behavior.

This aspect of *The Sabbath World* should interest Jews and non-Jews alike. Jewish readers will be fascinated to see the role their ritual practice has played throughout history. Christians and secularists who always imagined that the Jewish minority never had much of a religious effect on the structure of their lives will be forced to think again.

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**MATTHEW WEINER** is program director for the Interfaith Center of New York.

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# URBANITY IN THE WILDERNESS

## WILD CHILD

### And Other Stories

By T. C. Boyle  
 Viking. 320p \$25.95

In his prolific literary career, T. C. Boyle has crafted numerous novels and short stories that deliver trenchant cultural critiques while at the same time they offer a good-humored metaphysical shrug at the craziness that passes for life. Many of his best stories take place in environments threatening to humans in some unexpected way, but they come from an authorial voice that is irrepressibly sociable. Think Jack London after a couple of gin and tonics—the snow or ice are just as life-threatening, but somehow there's a warm glow sustaining people through it all.

Boyle's newest collection of short stories, *Wild Child*, features 14 tales that in one way or another feature lost or threatened souls. Boyle chose the epigraph for his book from Henry David Thoreau: "In wilderness is the preservation of the world." Thoreau had a vision of environmental sustainability in mind when he made this statement, but Boyle is also interested in the wilderness that either strengthens or undermines human nature. He notes the limits, contradictions and vulnerabilities of "civilization," calling the reader not to a nostalgic revision of the notion of Rousseau's noble savage, but to a more nuanced sense of the predicament of being human in a world that can quite suddenly and unexpectedly become threatening.

This thematic concern connects Boyle to early moments in American literature, when Puritan authors sharply contrasted their fledgling "City on a Hill" with the dark surrounding

forest wilderness, whose denizens were regarded as ignoble savages in league with the devil. Of course Puritans were projecting their own fears of inner wildernesses, but they were also referring to very real external threats to civic and individual survival.

In Boyle's opening story, "Balto," 12-year-old Angelle faces a no-win courtroom situation after her father had picked her up at school in an intoxicated state and asked her to drive the car, leading to a minor collision with a pedestrian. If the girl lies in court and confirms her father's statement that he was driving he will lose his driver's license but keep custody of her, whereas if she tells the truth that she was driving, he may be deemed an unfit parent and lose custody of her. So Angelle faces a triple wilderness here—the court of law, her father's abuse of alcohol and a severely fractured family context.

In "Question 62" two sisters living in different parts of the country experience revelations that free them, at least momentarily, from somewhat bleak existences. Mae lives in Moorpark, Calif., and to her complete amazement she encounters an escaped tiger near her garden. The tiger suggests Boyle's view that contemporary American cities are still something of a jungle, at times literally so, and the large feline provides a flash of illumination, in the vein of William Blake's "Tyger, tyger burning bright," helping Mae to transcend the boundary between civilization and wilder-

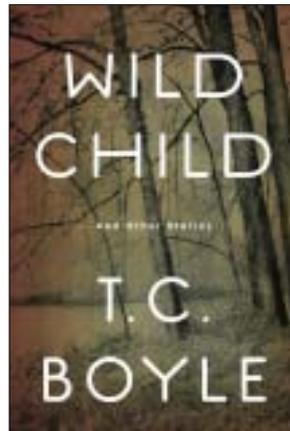
ness. Boyle observes, "What she felt then was grace, a grace that descended on her from the gray room of the morning, a sense of privilege and intimacy no one on earth was feeling."

As Mae's story unfolds, Boyle weaves in a tale about her sister Anita, who leads a lonely life in a Wisconsin trailer park. Her husband was murdered by a crazy, drunk neighbor, and she now works the graveyard shift at a nursing home. A very strange stranger comes into her life, bringing her a momentary surcease from her sorrows, but he is like Manly Pointer, the weird bible salesman in Flannery O'Connor's short story

"Revelation." He is not what he seems to be on the surface.

Several times in this collection Boyle juxtaposes two characters in distress such as Anita and Mae, so that his thematic concerns may resonate or bounce between the characters to amplify their sense of alienation. In one of the collection's best stories, "Ash Monday," an alienated and alienating teenage boy comes across as a threat to his next-door neighbors, Japanese immigrants who fiercely miss their homeland and struggle to coexist with their neighbors in a fire-prone canyon near Los Angeles. The result is a haunting, disturbing and quite beautiful story.

The collection's title piece, "Wild Child," is a novella set in 1797, when a feral child was discovered in the forests of southern France. Boyle's masterful descriptions in this 60-page work make clear that the first reports of a child wandering in the forest sparked a series of challenging questions and issues: "People needed a mystery to sustain them, a belief in the arcane and the miraculous." Once the boy is captured, major philosophical and social questions arise: "Was man born a tab-



### ON THE WEB

Scott Korb discusses his new book  
*Life in Year One*.  
[americamagazine.org/podcast](http://americamagazine.org/podcast)

ula rasa, unformed and without ideas, ready to be written upon by society, educable and perfectible? Or was society a corrupting influence, as Rousseau supposed, rather than the foundation of all things right and good?" Boyle makes clear that the boy also is making assessments of his captors/liberators: "What he smelled was ranker than anything he'd come across in all his

years of wandering the fields and forests of Aveyron, concentrated, pungent, the reek of civilization."

By the end of this collection, it is clear that the wild child of the title may just as easily be a teenager in a California courtroom, a middle-aged divorcée or a true feral child rescued from a French forest. Boyle seems to imply that we are all wild children, and

that the best coping mechanism is to employ a mature, imaginative voice to keep telling stories of the wilderness. That way we may keep in the forefront of our consciousnesses how the wilderness keeps us human.

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**GERALD T. COBB, S.J.**, is associate professor in the English department at Seattle University.

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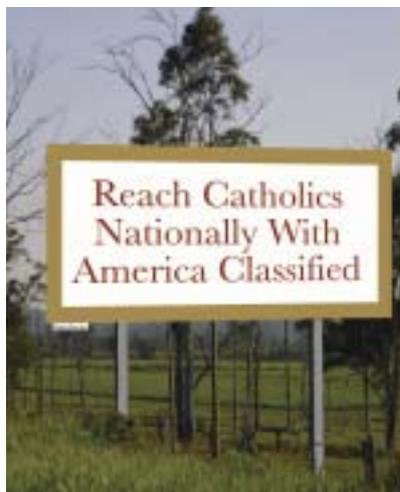
**CARMEL'S QUEST FOR THE LIVING GOD** is the theme of the 25th anniversary conference of the annual seminar on Carmelite Spirituality, June 16-20, 2010. Speakers: Camilo Maccise, O.C.D., Fernando Millán Romeral, O.Carm., D. Leckey (Woodstock). Workshops by the Carmelite Forum. Contact: Kathy Guthrie: (574) 284-4636 or [kguthrie@saintmarys.edu](mailto:kguthrie@saintmarys.edu). Conference at Center for Spirituality, Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, Ind. 46556-5001. See [saintmarys.edu/Carmelite-seminar](http://saintmarys.edu/Carmelite-seminar).

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## LETTERS

### An Analogy That Hurts

Wow! Your editorial “Toyota in Reverse” (3/22) could serve as an analogy to the issues with our institutionalized Catholic Church and its structure. Just substitute *church, clergy, bishops* and *hierarchy* for *Toyota, executives* and the like and you have a pertinent definition and description of the mess we are in with our church and its leaders.

When the American problem of sexual abuse surfaced in 2002, Rome, the magisterium, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and prelates throughout the world dismissed it as a reflection of the liberal, secularized standards of the United States, then of Ireland, Germany and now the Netherlands.

Analogous to Toyota, the players are different but the process is the

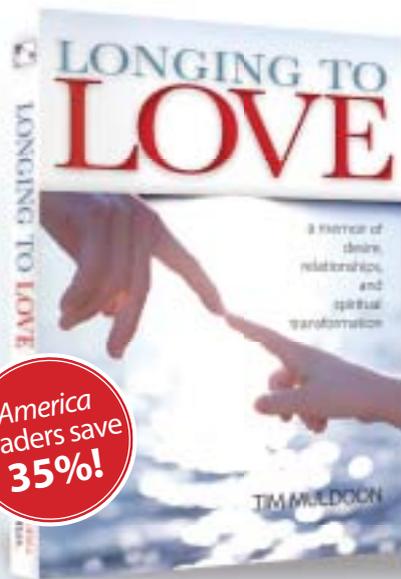
same. I would label it deceit, possibly corruption. Toyota is an organization in turmoil caused by unethical and immoral actions throughout the corporate executive structure, including the chief executive officer.

The Catholic Church likewise has perpetrated immoral and unethical actions by its “executives” and needs to come before a universal lay congress (we the people), to explain how they allowed this problem to continue, how they enabled it and, most important, what specific actions will be taken to expunge the perpetrators from their executive responsibilities. Instead of rewarding clerics with plush assignments in Rome, I recommend they all be sent to Haiti to minister to the flock—with lay oversight, of course, to ensure they never repeat their tragic past.

EDWARD WADE  
*Gloucester, Mass.*

**Those Who Had Ears to Hear**  
Re “Women and Parents Needed,” (Current Comment, 3/29):  
Everywhere that I read about continuing revelations of sexual abuse by clergy members in our church, I am hearing the language, often verbatim, used by Voice of the Faithful when we organized in 2002. We spoke about the many factors contributing to the abuse and its coverup: clericalism, a culture of secrecy, the institutionalized absence of female voices in decision-making positions, etc. V.O.T.F., made up of the eucharistic ministers, lectors and other volunteers who collectively lent vibrancy and longevity to the church for decades, was banned from meeting on church property. That was a common parish and/or diocesan response across the United States. The organization has been vilified in one way and another, on one blog after another, frequently abetted by

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ordained members of our church. I think it is important for readers to take note: The laity do have a voice and have used it. It is time for the laity to listen to one another and hope that sooner than later the patriarchy will do the same.

PEGGIE L. THORP  
 Founding Editor, Voice of the Faithful  
 Boston, Mass.

### Equality of the Sexes

Re “Women and Parents Needed,” (Current Comment, 3/29): We can hypothesize that a greater female presence, not at a subordinate level, would have been able to rip the veil of masculine secrecy that in the past often covered the denunciation of these misdeeds with silence. It is impossible to test such assertions, but I find them of doubtful validity. Women in power have shown themselves no more virtuous than men.

Church government needs serious reform, beginning with decentraliza-

tion of authority along the lines of the Orthodox churches; but women bishops, for example, would probably behave very much like men bishops.

T. P. FARRELLY  
 Seattle, Wash.

### New Life and Energy

Thanks to the Rev. William D. Karg for his article, “Retirement Ministry” (3/22). It sounds as if he is keeping very busy. But do not wait for ideas from the dioceses, for they won’t come. I will be 77 years old in a couple of weeks and have been retired for close to two years. I suggest that a priest should begin preparation for retirement about a year in advance.

It is interesting and rather fun to live now like “normal” people. Now I must pay for my food, utilities, the maintenance of my home, laundry, house cleaning, keeping the outside of the house presentable and preparation of my own meals. I did not realize how spoiled I was, for the parish took care

of all of these aspects of life for my almost 49 years of priesthood.

There are plenty of priestly challenges out here in retirement. All we have to do is get in touch with a couple of pastors who need help. I find myself busier than I want to be at times. A good bishop friend of mine encourages me to learn to say no once in a while.

But being pastorally involved fulfills and energizes me, and I am thoroughly enjoying it. I find myself praying more, relaxing more, reading more, enjoying the arts and preparing for the last segment of my life, which has been an exciting journey so far. Don’t be afraid of retirement.

(REV.) JOE ANNESE  
 Henderson, Nev.

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# Arms Outstretched

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER (C), APRIL 18, 2010

Readings: Acts 5:27-41; Ps 30:2-13; Rv 5:11-14; Jn 21:1-19

“When you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you” (Jn 21:18)

At a recent liturgy, a couple who had been married for 50 years came forward and renewed their marital promises to one another. Similarly, at the yearly gathering of our congregation, we sisters publicly renew our vows before returning to our mission. The commitment to love is not something professed only once but again and again. Recalling one’s first fervor of infatuation with the beloved fans into flame again the ability to continue loving despite hardships and challenges.

So it is with Peter in today’s Gospel. When pressed by a servant girl in the courtyard of the high priest, he had failed to acknowledge that he even knew Jesus, much less that he loved and believed in him. Earlier, at the tumultuous moment of Jesus’ arrest, he had hotheadedly lashed out with a sword and had cut off the ear of a slave of the high priest. His failures to love are symbolically depicted in his inability to catch any fish.

Yet Peter still does love Jesus and is still able to bring many others into that circle of love. Allowing himself to be fed by the source of love, he experiences forgiveness, renewal and empowerment to extend that love to others. It is an efficacious and uniting love, symbolized by the great haul of fish and the untorn net.

**BARBARA E. REID, O.P.**, a member of the Dominican Sisters of Grand Rapids, Mich., is a professor of New Testament studies at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, Ill., where she is vice president and academic dean.

Three times Peter professes his love. Three is a complete number, signaling fullness. Some commentators note that there are two different Greek words for love in this exchange between Jesus and Peter. The first two times Jesus uses the verb *agapao*, signaling the kind of Christian love that is totally self-giving and



(*boskein*, vv. 15, 17) and tend (*poimainein*, v. 16), and the nouns for lambs (*arnion*, v. 15) and sheep (*probation*, vv. 16, 17). Moreover, in this

Gospel, there is no greater love than the love of a friend who lays down his or her life for a friend (15:13).

The love between Jesus and his own is both fruitful and costly. It is not a love that encloses the lovers in an exclusive bubble of bliss. It is a love that bears

fruit, extending itself outward in mission, feeding the hungers of those who are most vulnerable. It asks disciples to stand with arms outstretched—extended in prayer, in embrace of the Beloved and all his friends, in service to those in need and, finally, in cruciformity—as the outstretched arms of Christ draw all to himself.

## PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- Say a prayer of recommitment to the loving relationships to which you are bound.
- In what ways are your arms outstretched to and with the Beloved?
- • •
- How do you experience the life-force of the Lamb of God?
- Pray for the equality of all people, because all are clothed in the inclusive love of the Lamb.

inclusive. Both times Peter responds with the verb *phileo*, which refers to the love of friends. The third time Jesus switches to *phileo*, to which Peter again responds with *phileo*.

Some commentators think this shift in vocabulary reflects Peter’s inability to achieve the highest form of love for which Jesus asks, and that Jesus comes down to Peter’s level the third time. More likely the Evangelist is simply varying the vocabulary, as is the case with the verbs for feed

## Washed in the Blood

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER (C), APRIL 25, 2010

Readings: Acts 13:14-52; Ps 100:1-5; Rv 7:9-17; Jn 10:27-30

“They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Rv 7:14)

There are all kinds of detergents for which the claim is made that they can remove the most stubborn of stains. When those fail, home remedies abound. Everyone knows that once a

ART: TAD DUNNE

stain is set, it is all the more difficult to get out. The sooner the treatment is applied, the better the chances the mark can be lifted. One of the hardest stains to remove is blood.

In today's reading from the Book of Revelation, there appears the startling image of blood as a cleaning agent. The seer recounts a vision of the end time, when a huge multitude "from every nation, race, people and tongue" stands together before the throne of the victorious Lamb, bedecked in brilliant white robes. The seer is told that these are "the ones who have survived the time of great distress" and that their robes have been washed in the blood of the Lamb. The paradox of whiteness resulting from being washed in blood invites us to reflect more deeply on these powerful symbols.

At first we may think of the blood as Christ's atoning, sacrificial blood, which removes the stain of our sin. But in Johannine literature, there are very few traces of atonement theology. The

Lamb in the Gospel of John is the Passover lamb, whose bones are not broken (Ex 12:46, Jn 19:36) and whose blood, as in the Exodus, protects his people from the destroyer, and whose flesh fortifies his own for their journey to freedom. This is the one whose blood came forth from his pierced side, along with waters of rebirth (19:34), cleansing, renewing and opening the way to new life for all. Paradoxically, the Lamb is also the shepherd, whose sheep respond to the sound of his voice and from whose hands no one can snatch the sheep. In the Book of Revelation, the Lamb is now enthroned in glory, clothing everyone in the resplendent robe of his life and love.

The robes are brilliant white, the color of purity, victory and innocence. As Sir Isaac Newton showed, the color white combines all the visible colors of light in equal proportions. So too, in the vision of the end times in Revelation, people of every color and race are gathered together into one,

not to have their own distinctiveness erased, but for all to be formed into one body with equal dignity and purity. The blood that washes over each is the life force unleashed by the crucified Jesus and infused into his followers by the Spirit. It does not white-wash the shedding of blood from racism and other forms of sin, but empowers all who are bloodied in the earthly struggles to emerge cleansed in his loving life force.

The seer envisions this life force enduring for all eternity. Those who "remain faithful to the grace of God" (Acts 13:43) are sheltered by the Lamb sitting on the throne. They no longer suffer hunger or thirst, either for physical food or for justice and peace. The scorching heat of the struggle is past, and overflowing tears are replaced with life-giving springs of water. Even the most stubborn of stains can be overcome when placed in the hands of the victorious Lamb who shepherds us.

BARBARA E. REID

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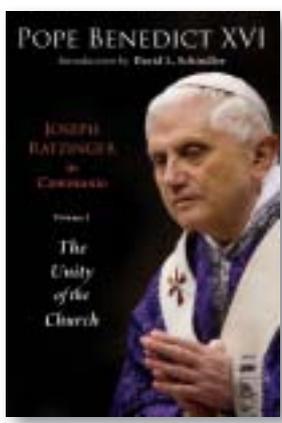
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