

America

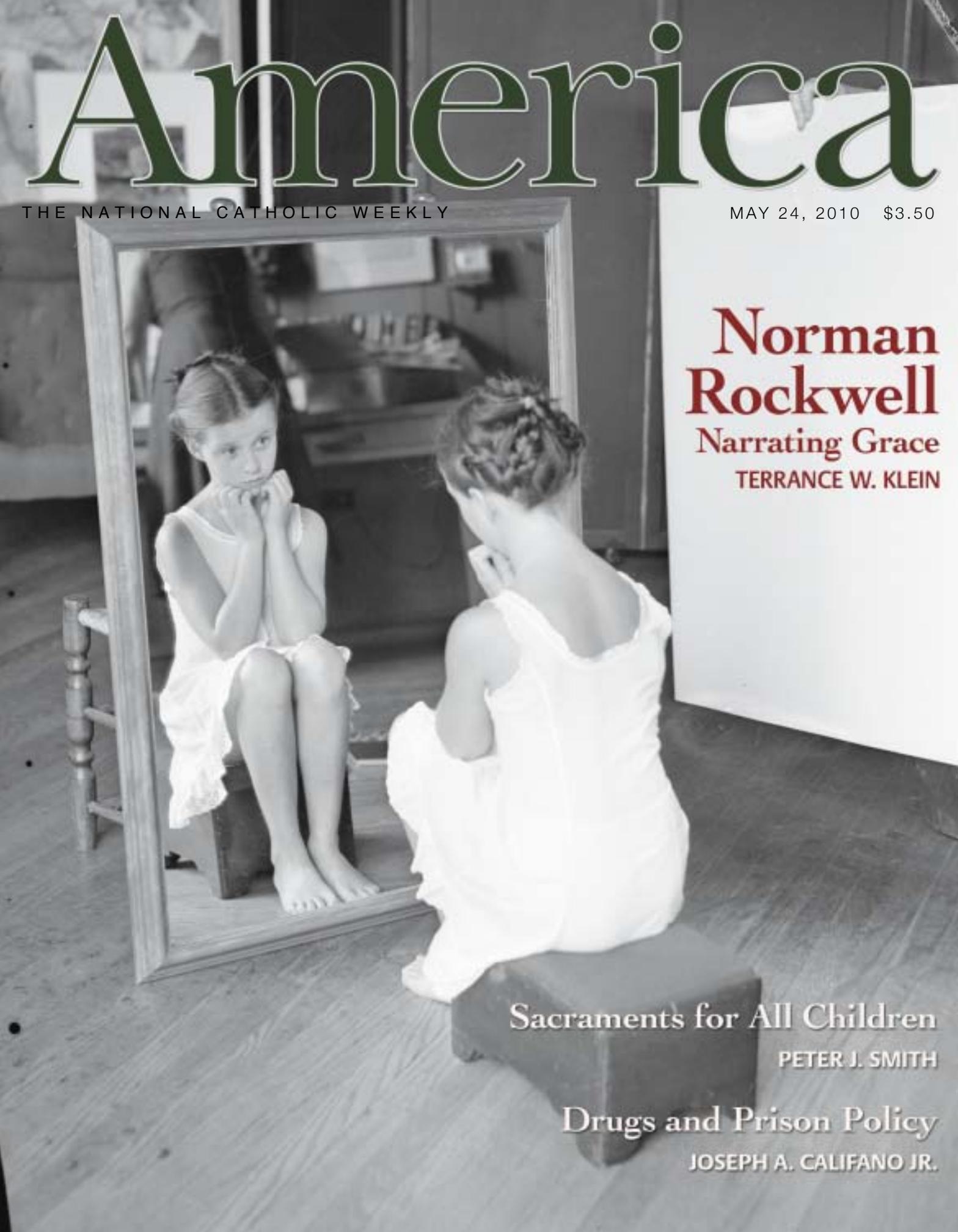
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Norman Rockwell

Narrating Grace

TERRANCE W. KLEIN



Sacraments for All Children

PETER J. SMITH

Drugs and Prison Policy

JOSEPH A. CALIFANO JR.

OF MANY THINGS

In the blackness of the early morning, vandals hit the rabbi's home. Posters were affixed to the front door and the fence bordering the property declaring him a "terrorist" and "Islamofascist." The vandalism followed hate mail and death threats, but according to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency (5/4), the police in Berkeley, Calif., are not treating it as a hate crime because the rabbi was being "attacked for his politics, not his religion."

Rabbi Michael Lerner, the editor of Tikkun magazine and leader of the Network of Spiritual Progressives, had come under attack from right-wing Jews for his support of Judge Richard Goldstone, whose report to the United Nations Human Rights Council on Israel's Operation Cast Lead, the attack on Gaza during December 2008 and January 2009, found both Israel and Hamas possibly guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Tikkun had announced that it would present Goldstone, a respected South African jurist who served with distinction as a prosecutor in both the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, with its 2011 Tikkun Award for his work on behalf of human rights and social justice. The vandals branded Rabbi Lerner as a "terrorist" because of his backing of Goldstone's report. Though the report also found Hamas responsible, defenders of Israel regarded those who accepted the report's criticisms as enemies because its assembled evidence pointed more emphatically to Israel.

Reaction to support for the Goldstone Report was swift and strong. During the first hour after America's editorial "Siege Mentality" (10/5/09) appeared online supporting the report's recommendation for U.N. action, our office received 25 angry calls. In South Africa, the rabbinic establishment sought to prevent Justice Goldstone from attending his own grandson's bar mitzvah. Some of the complaints may have been fair, but they also appear to

have been orchestrated. Planning for Operation Cast Lead is reported to have included an aggressive public relations campaign to deal with critics.

Rabbi Lerner and Judge Goldstone are Zionists. They believe in the dream of a Jewish homeland, as do I. Their fault is to believe that in its conduct of public policy and military affairs Israel should be a "light to the nations." At the very least, it should adhere to the minimal demands of international law on civilian immunity in armed conflict. Goldstone's and Lerner's adversaries want to make Israel a standing exception to those common standards, so it can never be held accountable for the violence it does to others.

There is a growing movement among American Jews that sees an alternative for Israeli security in an end to occupation, in peace with the Palestinians, in justice at home and in responsible membership in the community of nations. In his recent book, *Fatal Embrace: Christians, Jews and the Search for Peace in the Holy Land* (Synergy Books, 2010), the psychologist Mark Braverman calls on Jews to examine the shadow side of Zionism and on Christians "to overcome their reluctance to question the actions of some Jews" in the interest of restoring the values of justice and compassion as fundamental to Israeli identity.

Support for such an alternative is growing among young American Jews in the boomer and millennial generations, writes M. J. Rosenberg, in his illuminating blog post "The Answer Is Jon Stewart" (5/7) at www.mediamattersaction.org. Jews under 60, he writes, "are not going to support Israeli policies designed to perpetuate an occupation by expelling Palestinians from their homes to make room for settlers." He goes on, "But an Israel that establishes peace with the Palestinians, that brings the settlers home, that ends the tyranny of the Orthodox...will have their support. Their support, not their allegiance."

DREW CHRISTIANSEN, S.J.

America

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Joseph A. Califano Jr., right, discusses prison reform on our podcast, and a video profile of an **intentional Catholic community** in New York City. Plus, Carolyn Martin Buscarino reviews FX's "**Justified.**" All at americamagazine.org.



Experiment in Kinship

Though American families have been adopting children from abroad for decades, the process remains beset by uncertainty. Every decade, it seems, a new country becomes a popular source of adopted children just as another fades away. Not too long ago, China and Guatemala ranked near the top of the list, only to recede as national governments implemented stricter regulations. Last month Russia instituted a moratorium on foreign adoptions after an American mother sent her adopted boy back to Moscow unaccompanied on a plane. She said she could no longer handle him.

Adopting a child from another country often presents such unexpected challenges. The medical histories of these children, many of whom suffer from neglect, are sometimes shrouded in mystery. In Russia fetal alcohol syndrome is a particular scourge. The adoption process can take years, and even after a child is “matched” to a family in the United States, the final adoption is far from guaranteed.

In light of such daunting facts, it is a wonder that American families press on with the process. That they do is a sign of a laudable humanitarian spirit. Parents willing to adopt children with potential developmental problems deserve not only our admiration but our hands-on support. It takes a village to raise any child, but especially one with disabilities. The prolife community, too often focused on legal battles, has a special responsibility to foster the human and institutional networks necessary to create an environment welcoming to all children. Though obstacles may exist to international adoption, may what one writer called this “remarkable experiment in human kinship” continue.

Dawn of the Superweed

Proponents of sustainable agriculture have long worried over the reliance of U.S. farmers on Monsanto Corporation’s line of “Roundup Ready” genetically modified products. These are proprietary soy, corn, cotton and other commodity crop seed lines that have been genetically altered to tolerate another Monsanto product, Roundup herbicide. One major concern has been that the overuse of this herbicide would inevitably lead to an era of “superweeds,” plants that have evolved, without the kind attention of Monsanto geneticists, to likewise tolerate Roundup. Since the advent of the era of genetic modification in the 1990s, such worries were downplayed by big agriculture, but the time of the superweed is apparently already upon us.

Roundup-resistant weeds like horseweed and giant ragweed are raging across the American farm belt. The arrival of the superweeds does not herald the dawn of an age of

monster plants, but it is forcing farmers to seek out more toxic herbicides or to revert to labor-intensive methods of weed control or else give up completely and plow under their overgrown fields. The coming of the superweed promises higher prices at the market and greater environmental degradation as more aggressive weed-control techniques are adopted.

Big-Ag corporations like Monsanto have touted the benefits of their expensive—and profitable (to them at least)—biotech approach to wrestle food out of the ground even as they have muted voices that promote a less confrontational, sustainable path to food production. That alternative vision seeks not to defeat Mother Nature but to cooperate with her. It is not hard to imagine that Monsanto’s answer to the superweed will likely involve a superherbicide, but is this an arms race with Earth that we want to win?

A List Too Far

You can find almost anything on Craigslist, and that is becoming a problem. The Web site, which allows users to list or browse free classified ads for everything from new roommates to used furniture, has grown into one of the most popular sites in the United States. It has also become the country’s largest source of prostitution, according to law enforcement officials and advocates for victims of sex trafficking. In April, 14 members of the mafia were arrested, in part for using the site to sell sex with teenage girls.

An increasingly large percentage of Craigslist’s revenue comes from one section of paid listings. Titled Adult Services, this has become an online hub for prostitution and sex trafficking. The Advanced Interactive Media Group recently estimated that the site will earn \$36 million in revenue from the adult listings this year.

When Craigslist began charging for the adult ads, the site promised to donate the profits from these ads to charity (although several organizations now say they would not want money earned from the sale of such ads). Under increasing pressure from several state officials, Craigslist chose to monitor manually each post in their adult services category. But this monitoring has done little to slow the sale of the listings, and advocates and officials remain concerned. Craigslist is not the only place such ads can be found, but the company must recognize that their presence on the site offers posters an unprecedented combination of easily accessible, low-cost listings and a vast audience. Craigslist funds two charities of its own, but the good work these might facilitate do not outweigh the harm to which these ads can lead.

A Path to Citizenship

The state law passed last month in Arizona has pushed immigration reform once again onto the nation's front burner. The law makes illegal immigration a state crime, as well as a violation of federal law, and allows police to request proof of citizenship from anyone they reasonably suspect of being an illegal immigrant. While the front burner is where immigration policy ought to be, Congress is unlikely to pass an immigration reform bill this election year. Much of the electorate is still reeling from effects of the recession, which has put it in a contrarian, anti-immigrant state of mind.

A week after the Arizona bill was signed, however, Senator Charles E. Schumer of New York and several other Democrats introduced a "framework on immigration reform" in preparation for what may soon become a bill. The framework is both timely and important. It also happens to be the sole comprehensive proposal on this issue, and it addresses the thorniest question of the immigration policy debate: What should be done about the 12 million illegal immigrants now living in the United States? Most are from Mexico, and many are members of families that include U.S. citizens or legal immigrants, a fact that has made compliance with current immigration policy destructive of family life. Immigration reform must remedy that situation.

The 26-page framework, "Real Enforcement with Practical Answers for Immigration Reform" (known as Repair), has four components: 1) enforcement and internal security; 2) a new biometric, "fraud-proof" Social Security card for all U.S. workers; 3) a process for admitting temporary workers; and 4) a pathway to citizenship for illegal immigrants. Enforcement would include tighter border controls and a requirement that all visitors to the United States provide biometric information by which the government can track visa overstays. Overstays account for some 40 percent of all illegal immigration.

The proposed path to citizenship is long and difficult. To become a "lawful prospective immigrant" requires registration, fingerprinting, a background check and payment of fines for having broken the law. Step two, "lawful permanent residency," requires eight more years of residence, a crime-free record, an application for a green card, proficiency in English, the filing of tax returns and payment of back taxes.

Other provisions pertain to the status of spouses and children, relatives and same-sex partners; workers in agriculture and the dairy industry; students with advanced degrees;

and professional work visas. The framework also includes the Dream Act, which makes the children of illegal immigrants who have graduated from a U.S. high school or served honorably in the military eligible for citizenship.

The plan was originally prepared by Senator Schumer and Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, a Republican. The two co-introduced the framework in an article on the op-ed page of *The Washington Post* on March 19, but Senator Graham pulled out later. The proposal ought to have bipartisan appeal, and eventually it may.

So far, however, opponents have balked. Some have called for "border patrols first," an enforcement-only approach that has been tried with little success, despite the billions of tax dollars spent. That strategy would leave 12 million immigrants in the shadows, and the employers who need immigrant workers would continue to depend on a supply of illegal laborers.

A comprehensive approach—to enforcement, lawful assimilation of undocumented residents and employment of immigrants—is imperative. The biometric identification card raises privacy concerns, but it is a tracking tool and should not trump the main issues in formulating a reform bill.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has long promoted a comprehensive, bipartisan immigration reform bill. With some reservations, Bishop John C. Wester of Salt Lake City, chairman of the bishops' Committee on Migration, has called the framework "an important first step" and welcomed its "general direction," which includes "the legalization of the undocumented and improvements to our employment and family-based immigration systems."

Arizona has launched the discussion. Now Congress must act. Yet legislators cannot shoulder this load alone, nor should they. Latinos themselves must press both parties to think long-term and act in the national interest. Immigration reform will also require strong presidential leadership. Catholic leaders will be needed to help shape the national debate. After all, most of the immigrants in question are Catholics. The voters, too, especially Catholics, ought to consider their own immigrant beginnings, the church's social teaching and the biblical injunctions to welcome the stranger. That perspective could promote a policy that is generous or, at the very least, fair and forward-looking.



SIGNS OF THE TIMES

CLIMATE CHANGE

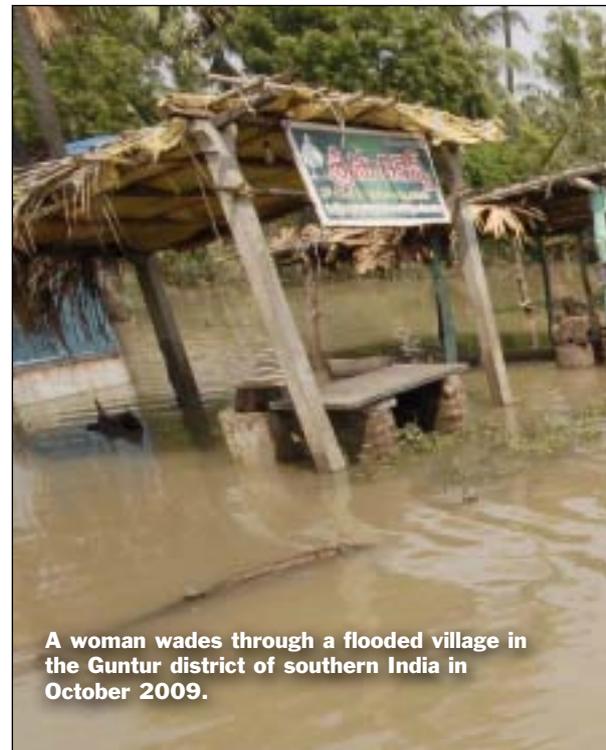
Who Watches Out for a New Class of Global Refugees?

The international tug-of-war over carbon emission thresholds and other instruments meant to limit the climate effects of greenhouse gases has generated a lot of talk—and some reluctant commitments. But one pressing item related to climate change has so far escaped serious discussion among international policymakers: how to respond to potential waves of “climate refugees,” people forced from their homes because of climate change. If even moderate effects from climate change occur as predicted, millions of people will be uprooted in the near future by rising sea levels, extreme weather events, droughts and water scarcity.

When it comes to climate-change migration “everybody jumps on the bandwagon and waves their own agenda,” said Professor Frank Biermann, an expert in global environmental governance, in a keynote presentation at a recent conference on the issue in Geneva, Switzerland. The event was sponsored jointly by the World Council of Churches, Bread for the World and the Pacific Conference of Churches. Even environmentalists, Biermann said, are guilty of dramatizing the plight of Pacific islands likely to be submerged by the end of the century without proposing a practical response. To them Tuvalu, a threatened Pacific island state, is just a canary in a coal mine, Biermann charged.

“In order to put the rights of these vulnerable populations on the agenda of the international community, we

must build bridges between academia, civil society organizations, governments and churches working on the



A woman wades through a flooded village in the Guntur district of southern India in October 2009.

THE ECONOMY

Faith-Based Investors Push For Financial Transparency

As Congress debates legislation to restrict the activities of financial traders, a group of faith-based institutional investors is pressing four of the nation’s largest banks for greater transparency on investment deals. The investors, member congregations of the New York-based Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, have introduced shareholder resolutions that call upon the banks to act more openly and with clarity in the trading of financial products known as derivatives.

If votes at two recent shareholder meetings mean anything, the campaign seems to be catching on. Resolutions offered during shareholder meetings at Citigroup and Bank of America met with unprecedented success. A Citigroup resolution on April 20 captured 30 percent of the vote; a similar measure at Bank of America on April 27 garnered 39 percent of shareholder votes. Traditionally, such shareholder resolutions receive single-digit support the first time they are offered.

I.C.C.R representatives say transparency in derivative trading is necessary to prevent another economic meltdown and a deepening of the current steep recession. Two more banks were being targeted by I.C.C.R.-backed resolutions: Goldman Sachs (May 7) and JPMorgan Chase (May 18). These firms are four of the five financial institutions that account for 96 percent of all derivatives trading in the United States. Derivatives are financial contracts whose value has been linked to the expected future price movements of an asset, for example, a corporate equity or currency.

Questions have arisen over how derivatives were packaged and marketed and whether investors before the economic collapse in 2008 were fully



issue of climate change,” said Guillermo Kerber, a World Council of Churches program executive on cli-

mate change. Finding the right words to describe people who will be forced to migrate because of deteriorating climatic conditions is the first difficulty on the road toward building protocols that could be codified in international law. United Nations terminology makes fine distinctions between migrants, refugees and internally displaced people, depending on the hows and whys of their displacement. Did they cross international borders? Were they the target of persecution? How immediate was the threat to their lives and their human rights?

Similarly a specific international regime is needed for the people uprooted by climate change, according to Biermann. Those affected share a number of characteristics that set them apart from the political refugees and economic migrants the world has seen in the past. Climate refugees will not be able to return to their homelands after a temporary asylum; they are likely to migrate in large numbers,

collectively and relatively predictably; and, most important, they have a strong moral and legal claim against the international community, since the world’s richest nations have done the most to cause their problems.

That is why Biermann argued that “a new legal instrument specifically tailored for the needs of climate refugees” needs to be created “as well as a separate funding mechanism.” A protocol to the existing U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change could be such an instrument.

However the international community determines to respond to this new breed of refugee, more urgency on the issue is required. At the conference Peter Emberson, a climate change campaigns officer for the Pacific Conference of Churches, described the experience of Carteret Islanders whose evacuation was ordered by the government of Papua New Guinea in 2003. “Resettlement is already taking place in the Pacific,” Emberson said.

informed about what they were buying. Seamus Finn, an Oblate priest who is the director of social justice for the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate and a leader within the I.C.C.R., said the resolutions evolved from a 30-year effort to call attention to banking practices that enrich a few while placing people worldwide at deeper risk of financial losses and deeper poverty. “We believe derivatives, improperly handled, are a risk for the entire financial institution,” Father Finn said.

Catherine Rowan, corporate responsibility coordinator for the Maryknoll Sisters, was to present the I.C.C.R.-backed resolution at Goldman Sachs. She expected the meeting to be interesting in light of the

recent negative publicity the company has received.

“We see this as an opportunity to educate our fellow shareholders,” Rowan said. “It’s the shareholders’ responsibility to hold management accountable. We’re trying to illustrate the need for greater transparency and disclosure.”

Goldman Sachs is the poster child for banking practices run amok. The firm remains under fire from politicians and regulators because of the way it packaged and sold mortgage-related securities before the 2008 collapse of the housing market. The firm’s practices led the Securities and Exchange Commission to file

civil fraud charges on April 16, alleging Goldman Sachs misled clients in the marketing of mortgage securities. The Justice Department has opened a criminal investigation into the firm’s activities. Goldman Sachs executives have denied any wrongdoing.



Goldman Sachs chairman and C.E.O. Lloyd Blankfein testifies before Congress in April.

Pope Calls Crisis 'Terrifying' Failing

The pope made his strongest remarks to date on sexual abuse cases at a press conference on May 11 during his flight to Portugal for a four-day visit that included the Marian shrine of Fatima. The pope suggested that the message of Fatima, which foresaw times of trial for the church, could be applied to the crisis. Catholics have long known that attacks on the church can come "from sins that exist inside the church," he said. "Today we see it in a really terrifying way, that the biggest persecution of the church doesn't come from the enemies outside but is born from sin inside the church," he said. "And so the church has a profound need to relearn penance, to accept purification, to learn on the one hand forgiveness but also the necessity of justice. And forgiveness is not a substitute for justice," Pope Benedict said. "We have to relearn these essentials: conversion, prayer, penance," he said.

Catholic Education's 'Mission Confusion'

Catholic education is in a state of "mission confusion," according to Patricia Weitzel-O'Neill, the outgoing superintendent of schools in the Archdiocese of Washington. More and more schools in city centers are closing their doors, shutting out a potential immigrant and non-Catholic student body, as affluent families elsewhere are targeted to enroll their children in expensive Catholic schools. Weitzel-O'Neill said vigorous support for Catholic education is lacking from both parents and pastors. Parents, she said, believe their children get a satisfactory education in suburban public school districts, while a growing number of pastors never attended Catholic

Catholic Sentiments by the Numbers

U.S. Catholics' approval of Pope Benedict XVI's job performance dropped a "dramatic" 15 points over the past two years according to a new poll conducted by Zogby Interactive, sliding to 56 percent from 71 percent. Meanwhile, 66 percent of Catholics disapproved of President Obama's job performance, although Obama achieved essentially an even split on job approval among all Americans. Sixty-eight percent of Catholics believe the country is in worse shape now than it used to be and indicated they will vote for Republicans in the November midterm elections by a 2-to-1 ratio. Catholics were against health care reform, 60 percent to 33 percent. Asked which party best represents their values, 25 percent said Republican and 12 percent said Democratic, but most Catholics—58 percent—said it depended on the specific issue. Sixty-seven percent of Catholics said the Eucharist should not be denied to politicians who take stands contrary to church teaching. Close to two-thirds of Catholics polled said abortions should be performed rarely or never. A 58 percent majority of Catholics said women should be ordained to the Catholic priesthood. (Interactive polls report a self-selected sample.)



schools themselves. Nationwide 5,645 fewer Catholic schools are operating now than in 1960. Meanwhile, what Weitzel-O'Neill termed "faux Catholic schools" are springing up, led by those who have been in the Catholic home-school movement. "They're teaching the Catholic faith, but they're not approved by any bishop," she said.

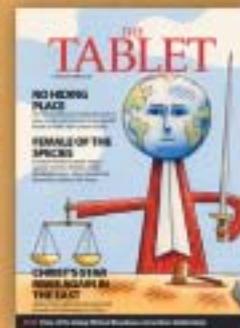
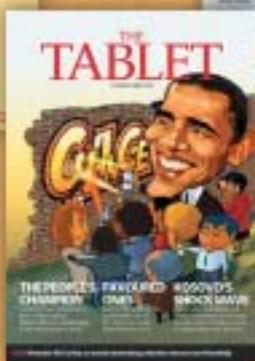
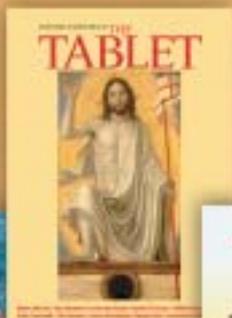
Dublin Archbishop Discouraged by Denial

The church's unwillingness to begin "a painful process of renewal" in the wake of the clerical sexual abuse scandal has left Dublin's Archbishop Diarmuid Martin "disheartened and discouraged." The archbishop was most discouraged by the "drip-by-drip, never-ending revelation about child abuse and the disastrous way it was handled."

He said, "There are still strong forces which would prefer that the truth did not emerge.... There are worrying signs that despite solid regulations and norms, these are not being followed with the rigor required." Noting the continuing need for accountability, Archbishop Martin said, "I am struck by the level of disassociation by people from any sense of responsibility." Archbishop Martin also said the Irish church needed to look carefully at priestly formation. He said that in the future Dublin's seminarians, deacons and lay pastoral workers will share some of their studies together with an eye to creating a better culture of collaborative ministry. "The narrow culture of clericalism has to be eliminated," Archbishop Martin said.

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—DREW CHRISTIANSEN, S.J., Editor-in-Chief, *America*

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Out of the Ashes

A recurring dream used to visit me for a while when I was a teenager. I have never forgotten it and have sometimes wondered whether it was in some mysterious way picking up one of the underlying signs of the times. First I must explain that our home was just next door to a large Roman Catholic church with a commodious presbytery. A narrow public footpath separated it from our garden, but for me it might as well have been an electric fence. I grew up in a district that was staunchly—although not militantly—Protestant. None of us children would have dreamed of entering that church, any more than the few Roman Catholics who lived in the neighborhood would have dreamed of entering ours.

I was about 13 when my dream began to occur almost nightly. I would dream that the church across the path was on fire. I can still almost feel the heat of the blaze, so vivid were the images. When I awoke in the morning I would rush to the window, expecting to see the church reduced to ashes. But, of course, the church was always still standing there, unscathed. I began to think of it as a kind of burning bush. It seemed little short of a miracle, and however often the dream came, I never lost my sense of amazement that the church had survived the night.

It was many years later that I realized that my dream had come not so long before Pope John XXIII convoked the Second Vatican Council.

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

Was it just the dream of an overactive adolescent mind, or was it, just possibly, a little bit prophetic? Who knows what happens in the deeper layers of our psyche as we sleep?

Today a different kind of fire is sweeping through the church: flames of betrayal, dark smoke of concealment and evasion and racing winds of escalating fury. What kind of fire might this be? When forest fires rage through the Australian bush, they leave utter devastation in their wake and claim many innocent victims. Yet the seeds of the eucalyptus trees cannot burst open and germinate until they are exposed to the intensity of heat that only a forest fire can generate.

What brings death and destruction also brings new life that would not be possible otherwise. It is a purgatorial fire, a refining fire, stripping down the bush to its bare bones but also releasing a new generation of possibility. Is it a purgatorial fire that is sweeping through the church in our times? If so, what will survive and what will perish? Can the flames of this purgatory become, in God's grace, the fire of a new Pentecost?

A jeweler friend told me of her visit to a silversmith. He had demonstrated how the silver ore is held in the heat of the refining fire until it is purified. "How do you know when it has been long enough in the fire?" she asked. "That's easy," replied the silversmith. "When the silver is fully refined, I can see my own image in it. Then I know it has been in the fire long enough." How long will it take before God can look

into the church and see God's own image reflected back?

But if these large and dramatic images are too terrifying to contemplate, let me share a more intimate glimpse of Pentecostal fire. At a retreat center near Chicago the conference organizer lit a bonfire in the courtyard and invited us to gather round and simply get in touch with what the fire evoked in us. Meanwhile a drummer beat out an insistent rhythm, more and more urgently as the fire burned down. Just as the last of the fire subsided into ash, the drumbeat reached a climax, then stopped abruptly.

We sat in the silence, each making our own connections. Then came the miracle: the

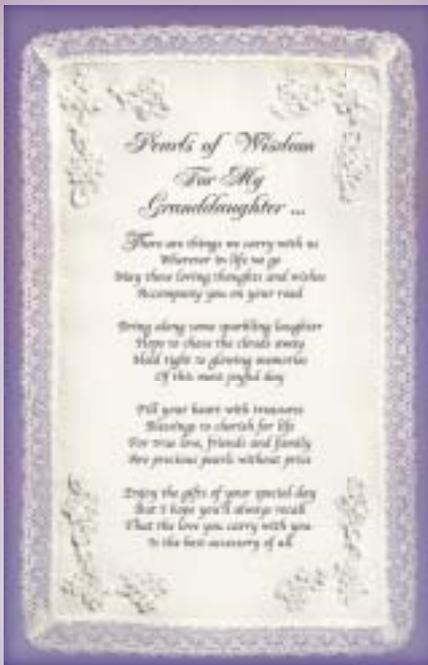
fire had died, but all around the place where it had been flew thousands of fireflies, like living sparks, each emitting tiny flashes of light. It was as if small but power-packed seeds had been born out of the ashes of the old and moribund—a vision of a new integrity thrusting forth from the grass roots around a blasted oak.

The full power of the fire—be it purgatorial or Pentecostal—is beyond our comprehension. But the fireflies remind us that we all have the light of Christ within us and the power to choose to let it shine, in our own personal way, upon a world increasingly lost in darkness. Every choice for the path of greater integrity in our own circumstances is a spark that can help turn dream into reality and purgatory into Pentecost.

Can the flames of the church's purgatory become a new Pentecost?

"Pearls of Wisdom for My Granddaughter"

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HOW PARISHES CAN WELCOME
CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Sacraments for Every Child

BY PETER J. SMITH

When Jimmy was baptized as an infant, he had no apparent physical problems. But as a young boy, he began to experience difficulty walking and running. Eventually he was diagnosed with Duchene muscular dystrophy. In order to receive the physical and occupational therapy he needed, as well as other mobility supports, Jimmy's parents moved him from the parish school to a local public school. As a result of this switch and his parents' later divorce, the boy never received the sacraments of Eucharist and confirmation. Then Jimmy's mother unexpectedly died when he was an adolescent, and his grandmother became his guardian. She realized that the boy had missed the final two rites of initiation and approached the pastor about administering them in their large, inner-city parish. By this time, though, Jimmy's condition had grown worse; he regularly used a wheelchair. The pastor was unsure how to include Jimmy because the church building contained a large number of physical barriers.

I heard about the request from Jimmy's grandmother and called the pastor, who had never thought about the physical obstacles involved for such a child. The pastor told me he had met with the grandmother and worked out the situation, which started a whole process of changes, including the construction of a graded plane or ramp for one entryway. The family still attends Mass regularly at the parish.

Such stories are not uncommon. How can parishes welcome children with disabilities and ensure that they receive the sacraments and become active Christians to the fullest extent they can? Since most families do not want to stand out or make demands, the parish staff and parish leaders must anticipate the needs of children (and others) with disabilities

PETER J. SMITH, M.D., is assistant professor of pediatrics at the University of Chicago in Illinois.

Altar servers, from left, Chris Olsen, Steve Fitzgerald, Maria Grace Russo and Chris Nowak assist at a Mass for people with disabilities at St. Frances de Chantal Church in Wantagh, N.Y., on April 17.

and initiate changes. That means holding a meeting focused on welcoming those with disabilities and inviting parents so they can help make the list of potential problems or obstacles before their children reach the age for reception of the sacraments. Then the parish should address the issues raised.

Sacraments, according to St. Augustine, are “a visible sign of an invisible reality.” Since they lead us into a deeper relationship with God, the sacraments are vital to all. The U.S. Catholic bishops expressed this sentiment in their 1978 pastoral statement on persons with disabilities: “Just as the church must do all in its power to help ensure people with disabilities a secure place in the human community, so it must reach out to welcome gratefully those who seek to participate in the ecclesial community.”

To “reach out” to people with disabilities most Catholic parishes need to use inclusive language; learn the different types of disability and respond appropriately in reshaping the physical parish environment and the educational preparation for the sacraments; and allow a spirit of welcome to overcome any misconceptions, inertia and bias toward persons with disabilities, including children.

Careful Language and Distinctions

Much progress has been made in the area of language. Today, parishioners typically understand that many formerly acceptable terms (crippled, Mongoloid, handicapped, even “the disabled”) are no longer acceptable. It is better to use precise and accurate terms like a “child with cerebral palsy” or to speak of a “person with a disability,” which communicates that one sees the person first and the disability second. If needed, parish leaders can invite experts to instruct parishioners on such changes in a workshop format.

Parishioners and parish leaders must also learn to recognize distinctions within disabilities and the different patterns of disability. Those who plan the parish initiation rites may have already begun to account for them. The most obvious examples relate to physical spaces, the very issues that stumped the pastor in Jimmy’s case. Other examples include children with hearing or visual impairments; they can be seated close to the action and/or be given amplification (earphones) and other assistance, like signing or someone to accompany them throughout the rite. Children with motor impairments may need a wider pew, an aisle seat, a walker, wheelchair or other seating supports. Good resources are easily available to help guide parish leaders (see <http://www.ncpd.org/ministries-programs/catechesis>).

More subtly, impairments and disabilities may require parishioners to revise their general understanding of the sacraments and what sacramental preparation entails. Religion teachers and parish staff in particular should be schooled in such matters. For example, certain conditions of

childhood lead to a shortened lifespan, which necessitates an accelerated pace in receiving the sacraments. Does this apply to someone in your parish? Or consider: What is the role of the anointing of the sick with regard to childhood impairments and disabilities? It is not always clear. But for a young man with Duchene muscular dystrophy, like Jimmy, which tends to cause increasing breathing difficulties, ritual anointing may be appropriate, particularly when or if he and his family decide to forgo a tracheotomy and permanent mechanical ventilation. Or consider an adult sacrament: it is now quite common for individuals with Down syndrome to date and marry. If this is the case in your parish, how does the pre-Cana program take it into account?

When working with people with disabilities, parish leaders should emphasize unity rather than difference. This is not only the Christian thing to do but has also become the basic principle of “universal design,” a new standard in commercial architecture.

Leaders should also be prepared for surprises, like the unintended benefits that will probably emerge for the parish at large. One of the most beautiful liturgies I ever attended took place at the Rochester Institute of Technology, which has a large community of individuals who have significant hearing impairments. By sheer chance, during a visit I witnessed an entire liturgy that was seamlessly bilingual: both spoken aloud and through American Sign Language. I found it moving and powerful to see literally embodied the prayers I thought I knew so well but only heard or thought of in the abstract before this. There are practical benefits, too. When a parish builds accommodations for wheelchair use, it eases the transportation of children in strollers and helps all who use canes or walkers or have joint problems. In creating large-print resources for children with visual impairments, a parish assists many other individuals, too.

Of course, building a ramp or buying large-print music materials may not address the most significant needs of parishioners with disabilities. Nothing takes the place of asking the people affected what would help them. In the case of children, the parish must work closely with their parents or guardians and teachers. It also helps when parish leaders become acquainted with the communities and agencies nearby that work with persons who have disabilities. In turn, the parish can help families connect with these agencies. All children with disabilities are entitled to therapies through early intervention programs (from birth through their third birthday) and through the public school system (from age 3 to 22). Those who attend public schools will have tailored support detailed in an individualized education plan, called an I.E.P. The plan may also be helpful in making accommodations for children to receive the sacraments.

Whereas Jimmy dealt with physical disability, Xavier must cope with a developmental disability. (Xavier is a com-

posite character—not a single individual—whose story includes features from several real-life people.) Xavier was diagnosed with autism at two. He currently attends a full-day, year-round therapeutic school with a one-on-one aide in the classroom with him. Now age 12 and in seventh grade, he is able to converse with the other children, though he is better with adults. Xavier’s parents would like him to participate in the sacrament of reconciliation, either in a private meeting or within a larger community celebration during Lent. The deacon who coordinates this program told them this would not be possible. They complained to the pastor, saying of Xavier: “He keeps more detailed track of his sins than anyone else we know!”

In such a case, the pastor or deacon or other appropriate member of the parish team should meet with Xavier and see what he actually understands about reconciliation and how he can engage with the sacrament. Since the case shows that Xavier has reached seventh grade and is good with adults, it is likely in this example that the deacon sees the boy’s disability as a stigma; that is something the deacon and the parish (not the boy) should overcome.

The biggest distinction between physical and developmental disabilities is that the latter are more often misunderstood or even missed. The similarities are even more important than distinctions. The parish must see each individual as unique instead of dividing people into classes or classifications.

A Welcoming Spirit

Sometimes a change in practice can lead a community to a change of attitude. At other times, the change of attitude precedes the change in practice. Compare the real-life cases of Nancy and Angie, born 30 years apart.

In the late 1950s Nancy (not her real name) was born, the third child of devout parents. She was diagnosed with Down syndrome. In the hospital run by a Catholic order of women and staffed by Catholic doctors, her parents were told that Nancy would be better cared for and her two brothers would be less negatively affected if Nancy were placed in a local institution for children like her. Her parents agreed, as did most families at that time. Nancy was never baptized, never received a full educational experience and died young (as did many persons with Down syndrome who were sent away from their families).

In the late 1980s, Angie was born, the third child of devout parents, and was diagnosed with Down syndrome. But Angie lived at home with her two brothers, was baptized, attended public school with an I.E.P., received first Communion with her classmates, was confirmed with them, finished high school, learned to drive (better than her brothers, according to her parents) and is now dating and considering marriage.

What is different? Certainly it’s not Down syndrome. What changed was the attitude (and knowledge) of the community. The United States has a long history of housing “undesirables” outside the home and local community. But it has gradually become clear that separate means unequal, that is, less than equal, which is detrimental not only for the individuals who are separated but for the larger community, too.

My own children benefit from sharing classes and parish activities with other children who are different from them. They instantly recognize difference, and they have learned that I welcome a discussion about it. Such conversations allow them to be comfortable with their own uniqueness and with what is different about others.

Any discussion of individuals with “disabilities” contains irony, but that is especially true for Christians, who embrace a host of unexpected exceptions to the norm: a king born in a manger, redemption won on a cross, life found in a tomb. For Christians, no barrier in attitude or thought or practice should prevent us from extending a hearty welcome to all parish children and inviting them to the sacraments. All of us are “individuals with disabilities.” All of us need the healing power that comes from “the water flowing out from beneath the threshold of the temple.” And none of us will achieve self-actualization outside union with Christ. 

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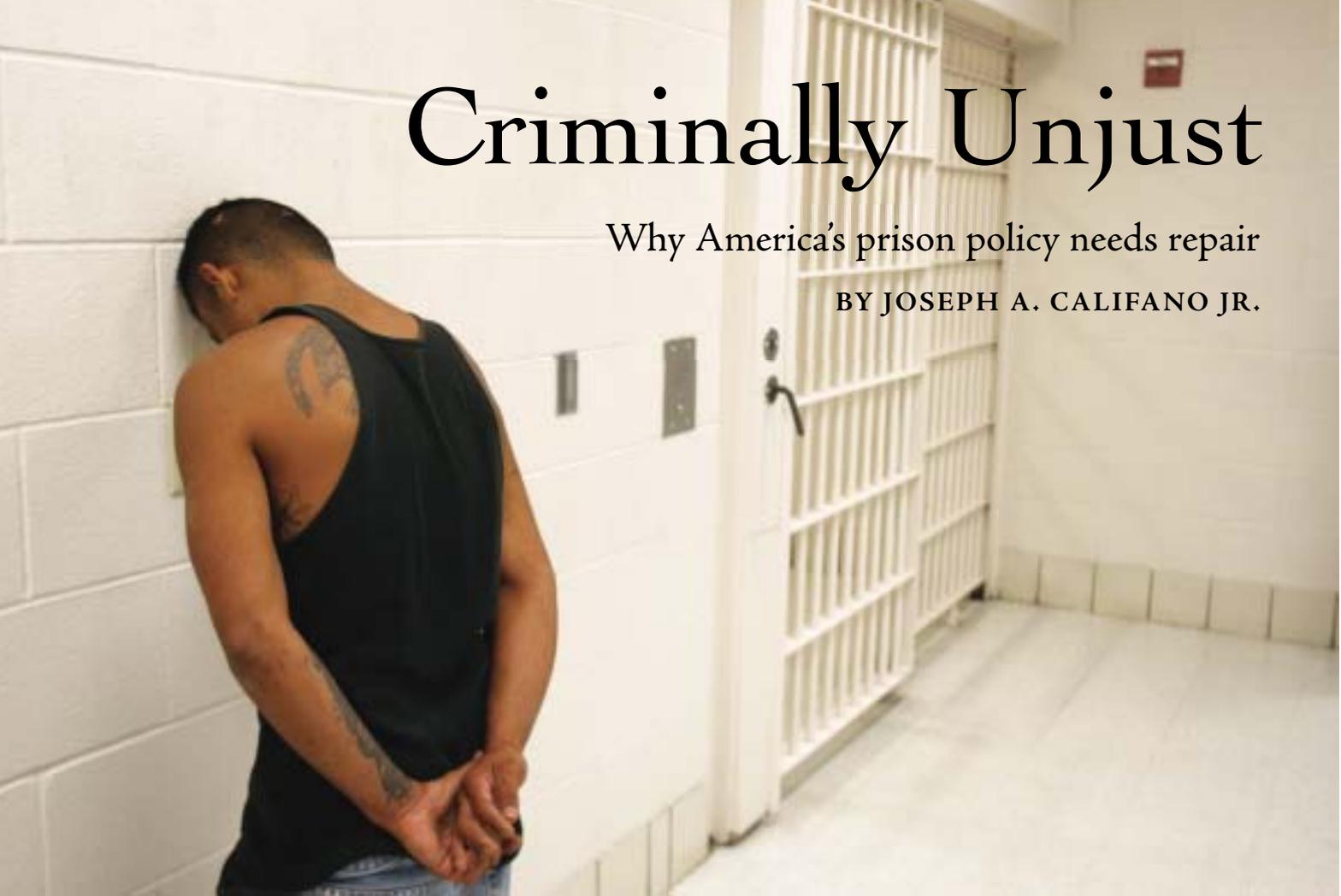


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Criminally Unjust

Why America's prison policy needs repair

BY JOSEPH A. CALIFANO JR.



Consider these three facts: We in the United States make up 5 percent of the world's population. We consume 66 percent of the world's illegal drugs. We incarcerate 25 percent of the world's prisoners.

It is no coincidence that of the 2.3 million inmates in American prisons, 1.5 million—or 65 percent—meet the standard medical criteria for drug and alcohol addiction and abuse. Another 20 percent of inmates, who do not meet those criteria, nevertheless were either under the influence of alcohol or drugs at the time of their offense, stole money to buy drugs, abused drugs, violated the alcohol or drug laws or share some combination of these characteristics.

Yet only 11 percent of the 1.5 million inmates with substance abuse problems receive any treatment while incarcerated. And the treatment they receive routinely fails to meet even minimum professional standards, much less approach

that of high-end centers like the Betty Ford Center and Hazelden's Center for Youth and Families. As a result, most inmates who have undergone treatment end up back in prison months or even weeks after their release.

The problem is growing. The prison population is rising at a faster pace than that of the general population, and the number of inmates with drug and alcohol problems is climbing even faster. Between 1996 and 2006, the U.S. population rose by 12 percent, but the number of adults incarcerated rose by 33 percent and the number of inmates with drug and alcohol abuse and addiction problems jumped by 43 percent.

Crime and drugs (including alcohol) are related. Those who committed a crime to get money to buy drugs average seven past arrests, the highest rate in the prison system. The second highest, inmates with six prior arrests, includes those with a history of alcohol treatment and those who were under the influence of alcohol or other drugs at the time of their crime. Alcohol is implicated in the incarceration of 57 percent of all inmates in America.

The tragedy is that we know how to stop spinning this costly and inhumane revolving door but have not acted on what we know. It starts with a recognition that addiction is

JOSEPH A. CALIFANO JR. is founder and chair of the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University and author of *How To Raise a Drug-Free Kid: The Straight Dope for Parents* (2009). He was U.S. Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare from 1977 to 1979.

a complex disease, that scientifically proven prevention and treatment programs can counter it and that such programs can be administered effectively through the criminal justice system.

Addiction Treatment for Prisoners

Our society provides treatment for prisoners with other chronic diseases like hypertension and diabetes. It should do so also for the chronic disease of addiction, where treatment offers the added benefits of reductions in crime and prison costs.

Christian compassion demands that we help this prison population. Our failure to do so runs counter to fundamental precepts of social justice. As Pope John Paul II said during his Jubilee Year 2000 homily when he celebrated Mass in Rome's Regina Coeli prison, "Punishment and imprisonment have meaning if, while maintaining the demands of justice and discouraging crime, they serve the rehabilitation of the individual by offering those who have made a mistake an opportunity to reflect and to change their lives in order to be fully reintegrated into society." Without such efforts at rehabilitation, however, punishment and imprisonment are mostly acts of vengeance.

One need not be a saint or a liberal to favor treatment for all inmates who need it. Even the most hard-nosed, tough-on-crime, anti-tax citizens should put treatment and job training for substance-involved inmates high on their list of essential public policies because these reduce both crime and taxes.

Behind Bars II: Substance Abuse and America's Prison Population, a recent study by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (and the source of most of the statistics cited in this article), reveals that drug and alcohol abuse and addiction are implicated in 78 percent of violent crimes like assault and rape; 83 percent of property crimes like burglary; and 77 percent of weapon, public order and immigration offenses and probation and parole violations.

The continued failure of government to prevent and treat addiction actually enables such crimes and reflects an inexcusable misallocation of funds. In 2005 (the most recent data available) federal, state and local governments spent \$74 billion in court, probation, parole and incarceration costs for drug and alcohol-involved offenders. Yet federal and state governments spent only \$632 million—less than 1 percent of that amount—on prevention and treatment for them.

Reducing Crime

Even at low rates of success in treating this admittedly difficult population, dramatic savings and reductions in crime are likely. *Behind Bars II* reports that providing professional treatment and aftercare to each inmate in this population (and connection with services for the mental illness that a quarter of them suffer concurrently) would cost on average \$9,745 for each inmate. Yet calculations in the report show that the nation would recover its investment in such treatment if only 11 percent of those inmates remained substance- and crime-free and employed for the year following their release. For every additional year of sobriety and employment, the nation would reap enormous economic benefits, estimated in the report to exceed \$90,000 per inmate. The return on investment would cause even the greediest Wall Street banker to salivate.

Providing such treatment also offers our nation the greatest opportunity it has to reduce crime. On average, a drug addict is conservatively estimated to commit at least 100 crimes a year. Reducing substance abuse and addiction in just 11 percent of this population would eliminate millions of crimes, making it the most effective crime reduction program in our nation's history.

We should seize this opportunity by offering individuals with drug and alcohol addiction the option of effective treatment and by encouraging them to take advantage of the option. Unfortunately, we do the opposite.

Mandatory Sentences

The most counterproductive criminal justice policy in our nation is the mandated sentence, which arbitrarily sets the term of incarceration for an offender and requires that it be served in its entirety. Shaking an addiction to drugs and alcohol is tough stuff. Addicts need every carrot and stick that can be mustered to assist them in their effort. By mandating sentences, we take away the carrot of early release for those inmates who enter treatment and maintain sobriety. Moreover, if an offender must serve his entire sentence, we lose the stick of placing him on parole, which requires him to enter aftercare programs, Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous or face a parole violation and return to prison.

Even greater opportunities for cost control and crime reduction can come from treatment-based diversion programs, such as drug courts and prosecutorial initiatives, like the Drug Treatment Alternative Program instituted in Brooklyn by District Attorney Joe Hynes. Such initiatives avoid imprisonment if the offender enters treatment and becomes a sober, law-abiding citizen, returning to school or

**Without rehabilitation,
imprisonment is an act of
vengeance.**

getting a job. These initiatives have been shown to reduce recidivism rates by more than 50 percent.

Providing addiction treatment to inmates also benefits the correctional system. In prisons where therapeutic community treatment takes place, guards report less stress, greater job satisfaction, lower rates of illness and sick leave, fewer inmate-on-inmate and inmate-on-guard assaults and less disruptive behavior among inmates. Violent behavior is more than twice as likely to occur among inmates not in treatment programs.

Failure to provide treatment to substance-abusing inmates helps create another generation prone to abuse drugs and alcohol and fill the criminal justice system.

Prisoners as Parents

Inmates who abuse drug and alcohol are also parents to more than 2.2 million minor children. Three-fourths of these children are under the age of 13. The children of inmates are at a high risk of juvenile delinquency, adult criminality and substance abuse.

Female inmates have special needs. They make up almost 9 percent of the total prison population and are about as likely as the males to be drug and alcohol abusers and addicts. But they are almost twice as likely to have mental

health disorders as well. One explanation is that compared with incarcerated males female inmates are more than seven times as likely to have been sexually abused and almost four times as likely to have been physically abused. Before their imprisonment, 80 percent of these women were daily primary caregivers to their children.

Pope John Paul II could have been talking about the United States during his jubilee year prison message when he said, "We are still a long way from the time when our conscience can be certain of having done everything possible to prevent crime and to control it effectively...and at the same time, to offer to those who commit crimes a way of redeeming themselves and making a positive return to society. If all those in some way involved in this problem tried to...develop this line of thought, perhaps humanity as a whole could take a great step forward in creating a more peaceful and serene society."

The U.S. prison system could take a giant step forward by providing treatment for its inmates. It should also measure the effectiveness of its prisons not by how many law-breakers it can put behind bars, but by how many of those it releases become sober, law-abiding, tax-paying citizens. Breaking the cycle of re-arrests and re-incarceration requires breaking the cycle of addiction. **A**

ON THE WEB
Joseph A. Califano Jr.
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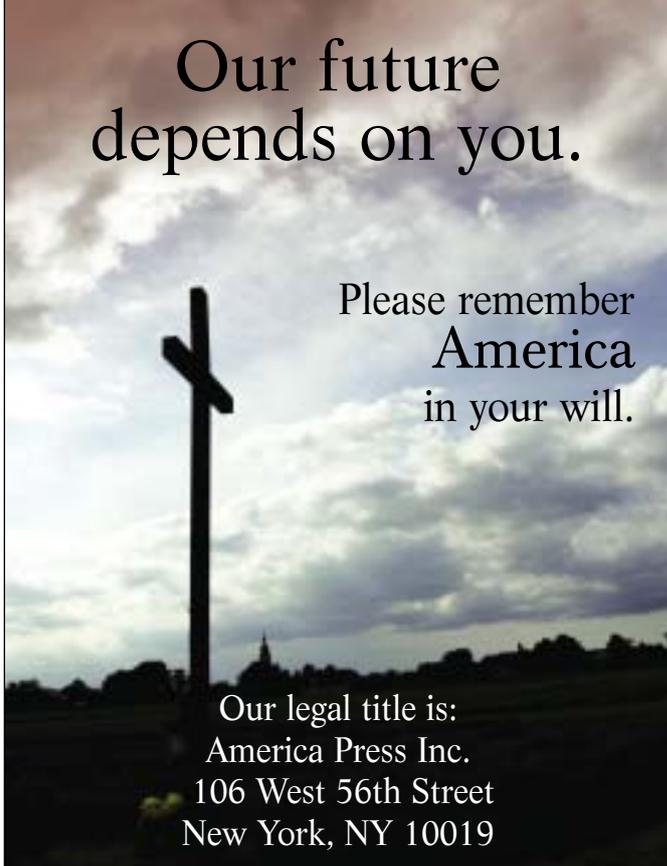
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It's a Match

A look at Catholic dating online

BY MATTHEW MOLL

She winked at him. He winked back. And so began a month of online instant messaging. She took the usual precautions for meeting in person a guy from the Internet: a public first date and telling her friends where she was going. During their date, Anna Tusim, 25, and Matthew Richards, 26, looked past their Ohio State-Michigan allegiances and agreed to meet again but not the following day. He would be busy teaching Sunday school.

Online dating is not new. Match.com, one of the largest dating Web sites, was launched in 1995. Back then cellphones did not have touch screens, online purchasers were skeptical of a start-up called eBay, and online dating seemed sketchy at best. But as millions more add browsing profiles to blind dates, friend-of-a-friend setups and chance encounters to the list of ways couples meet, the taboo against online dating is evaporating.

Catholics joined the action in 1997 with the site CatholicSingles.com. Today it is one of three major Internet sites about holy union, including AveMariaSingles.com, which emphasizes Catholic courtship over dating, and CatholicMatch.com where, according to its creators, 150,000 active users mix their search for love with some of the Gospel.

CatholicMatch.com, which began

in 1999 as St.Raphael.net, is a convenient site for self-identified Catholics who want to date and then marry other self-identified Catholics. Users can e-connect, arrange a date, find love and ultimately work some sacramental matri-magic.

But before they argue over whose childhood pastor will celebrate the wedding Mass, users of the site must complete a survey. Most of the required information is like what you are asked on a first date or what is revealed on a Facebook profile—until you arrive at the Catholic faith/doctrine section. There users confront seven topics—single words or short phrases—followed by the option to choose “Yes, I accept the church’s teaching” or “No, I do not.” The topics are: Eucharist, contraception, sanctity of life, papal infallibility, premarital sex, Immaculate Conception and holy orders.

Brian Barcaro, one of the founders of CatholicMatch.com, said that the seven faith questions are difficult and often controversial by design, but that asking these questions is critical to a successful Catholic relationship.

“The questions are a good part of the vetting process,” Barcaro said. “They help people find those who are like-minded in their faith and in interest in their faith.”

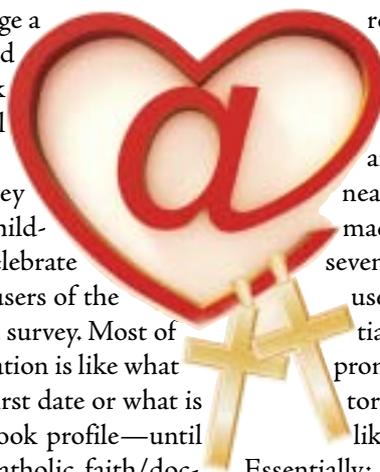
Tusim said she never had trouble meeting men prior to dating online, but the usual post-college courting rituals netted her less than promising results. Initially she was hesitant, even shy, about entering the online ranks, but after a few cocktails and with her lady friends nearby, Anna signed on and made contact. For her, the seven-question checklist was a useful gauge to assess potential partners. But it can also prompt accusatory interrogatories from potential dates like, “Why weren’t you 7/7?” Essentially: Are you Catholic enough for me?

“I tended to shy away from people who were not close to my numbers,” Tusim said and recalled being either a five or six out of seven. “It showed the degree of seriousness in following the church’s teachings.”

Richards’s numbers matched hers, so the couple was able to relax about the topic of faith. “It made the religious aspect a no brainer,” he said. “It made the question, ‘Do you want to go to church sometime?’ much easier.”

Tusim and Richards are set to marry in July.

As with any dating adventure—cyber or otherwise—CatholicMatch.com does not lack entertaining encounters. Liz Sisson, 31, was a casual user. She wanted to date and ulti-



ON THE WEB

A profile of an intentional Catholic community in New York.
americamagazine.org/video

MATTHEW MOLL is a multimedia journalist who lives in New York City. He blogs frequently at www.tasteoflocal.com and can be followed on Twitter at @tasteoflocal.

mately marry a Catholic but felt she could go on a first date with “just about anybody—as long as it was short.”

“The men I met [online] were very nice,” Sisson said. “But they were looking for wives and fairly quickly. I was looking for a relationship too, but I didn’t want to jump into it.”

After a year-and-a-half of online exchanges with an Elvis impersonator and a man who asked probing questions about her feelings on papal infallibility and a date with a man who had posted his high school yearbook picture and another who brought his cat on their first and, not coincidentally, last date—she had had enough. Despite her father’s pleas to put more effort into the site, Sisson let her membership lapse permanently.

Yet Sisson was able to find her match. She and her husband are happily married and plan to raise their children Catholic. They met at a party. **A**
How 1994.

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Rediscovering Norman Rockwell

American Chronicles: The Art of Norman Rockwell" has been touring the country since the fall of 2007. Since its record-breaking opening at the Akron Art Museum, attendance in every city the exhibition has visited has been high. There is every indication that the tour will attract capacity crowds until it completes its run in spring 2013 in Bentonville, Ark.

Meanwhile, the National Museum

of American Illustration in Newport, R.I., sent its show "Norman Rockwell: American Imagist" on the road, which features 322 vintage covers made for The Saturday Evening Post between 1916 and 1963. And in July the Smithsonian Institute will open yet another Rockwell exhibition, "Telling Stories: Norman Rockwell from the Collections of George Lucas and Steven Spielberg."

Though often spurned by critics,

Norman Rockwell has always been popular. David Kamp, a contributing editor to *Vanity Fair*, recently noted that the beloved painter, whom many called an illustrator but not an artist, is enjoying a re-evaluation by the artistic intelligentsia. "It has taken a while," wrote Kamp, "but the nose-holding ambivalence with which educated people have been conditioned to treat Rockwell—*He's good in a corny backward, non-art sort of way*—is giving way to outright admiration."

Understanding why the critical attitude has changed may offer insight into the role of sacred art. What does good art accomplish where the trivial fails? What sort of art should be in our churches? What is art, especially sacred art, supposed to do? The answer may be as simple and supple as a Rockwell painting. Good art could be called incarnational, because it uses material to nourish the spirit. Art helps us to perceive aspects of reality we could not see otherwise. This is not a struggle between old art and new or between representational and abstract art. Each can reveal what we have never before seen, or each can simply tread a tired trail.

As shown in the new book *Norman Rockwell: Behind the Camera*, by Ron Schick, published in collaboration with the Norman Rockwell Museum in Stockbridge, Mass., the question is not whether Rockwell was an illustrator. He was. Unlike conceptual art, which seeks to evoke only a notion or an emotion, the nature of illustration embraces narration and storytelling, an attribute it shares with medieval stained glass windows, which taught the Gospel by means of visual imagery.

"I love to tell stories in pictures," Rockwell said. "For me, the story is the first thing and the last thing." Rockwell



Rockwell's "Girl at Mirror," for *The Saturday Evening Post*, 1954.

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IMAGE COURTESY OF NORMAN ROCKWELL MUSEUM, STOCKBRIDGE, MA

labored diligently, first conceptually and then physically over the clothes and artifacts, the postures and profiles of his carefully composed subjects. Then he would photograph them before turning them into illustration. "In my opinion nothing should ever be shown in a picture which does not contribute to telling the story the picture is intended to tell."

Behind the Camera presents the photographed subjects with whom Rockwell worked. The Stockbridge museum has put much of the same content on ProjectNORMAN, a new section of its Web site, nrm.org. Examining these photos, one can argue that Rockwell could have been considered a great artist as a photographer alone thanks to the human reality he captures in his carefully organized photographs (see cover). His hands refashion everyday subjects into grace made visible, which is what elevates his work.

Keats perfectly defined kitsch when he rejected poetry "that has a palpable design upon us." That flaw is what Peter Schjeldahl, *The New Yorker's* art critic, finds in Rockwell. "The complete absence of mystery in his art makes me sick," wrote Schjeldahl.

But great art is not synonymous with obfuscation. As the literary critic George Steiner has pointed out, "there are countless texts, paintings, statues—perhaps even the Moses of Michelangelo, so talismanic to Freud—whose strength, whose enunciations of organized sense, lie 'at the surface.'"

Consider Rockwell's "Girl at the Mirror" (opposite page) An 11-year-old girl sits on a stool in front of a large mirror. Dressed in a slip, she's been busy with her toilette. A comb and brush lie at her feet, as does her mother's lipstick. Her doll, arms akimbo, is face down. The childhood friend has been momentarily abandoned. In the girl's lap lies a glossy movie magazine, open to a full-page spread of Rita

Hayworth.

Although Rockwell's painting captures only a single moment, it's clear to the viewer that the girl's eyes have swung repeatedly between the glamorous woman in the magazine and her own image in the mirror. She's a pretty girl, but lacks Hayworth's cheekbones and lustrous, wavy hair. Of course, at 11, she does not expect to possess these things. But what if she never does? Who is she? Who will she become? Some people stare into mirrors because they already like what



Photo reference for "Day in the Life of a Little Girl," 1952.

they see, but most of us keep looking, hoping that sooner or later we will see the person we've been looking for. Part of the journey from youth to old age includes pondering who we are, who we will become and wondering how we became who we are. That first question, the one adolescents ask—"Who am I?"—is an important one.

It is strange that Rockwell's critics never anchored him in Aristotle, who thought representation the very purpose of art and presumed that good art always carried emotional heft.

Michael Kimmelman of *The New York Times* credits Rockwell with producing "a people's history of America during the first half of the century."

Kimmelman explained, "He reminded people that the little things sometimes matter more than we think, and we could say the same about his pictures." Often Rockwell used his neighbors as models. As he said, "I paint human-looking humans and the professional models just don't qualify," adding, "All of the artist's creativeness cannot equal God's creativeness."

The Sacred Real

Art that reveals, that finds the truly human, may or may not be "pretty." A good example is a statue of the Madonna in the chapel of the Catholic Care Center in Wichita, Kan. It is a contemporary piece in vibrant colors that depicts Mary as an old woman. From a distance it looks like a life-size candle figurine, one that has begun to melt after exposure to heat. Come closer and you realize that the artist has captured time's wrinkles and an old woman's girth. This is the Virgin long after the birth of the Messiah and his earthly life, beyond the many years of prayerful, patient waiting for his return. She is old and weathered but beautifully faithful.

The French philosopher Jacques Maritain insisted that "artistic creation does not copy God's creation, it continues it." Good art helps us to perceive something of this world's truth and, this world's beauty. By helping us see that loveliness, it helps us to see God. Though as Sam Mendes's 1999 film "American Beauty" shows, for example, the beautiful that we see in art may well be the easily overlooked ugliness of quotidian life, something as simple as a plastic bag blowing in the wind.

Consider two further examples of art that elevate the quotidian—two cathedrals. The clear glass windows of San Francisco's modern cathedral, St. Mary of the Assumption, frame the everyday cityscape at ground level, while its vault reaches up in a vortex toward heaven. Perhaps the best feature of the second cathedral, Our Lady

of the Angels in Los Angeles, is the way it claims and makes sacred a portion of the real-life L.A. sprawl. Its surrounding courtyard walls jut out to embrace an adjacent freeway. Like a Spanish colonial mission, the walls create a sanctuary. Both churches find ways of claiming their cities for Christ, of revealing the divine presence suffering the urban reality. They are examples of modern art at its best, because they find tangible ways to connect our modern, ever more urban narrative to the divine.

The Second Vatican Council's "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy" noted "the church has not adopted any particular style of art as her very own; she has admitted styles from every period according to the natural talents and circumstances of peoples, and the needs of the various rites." The council insisted that the arts "by their very nature, are oriented toward the infinite

beauty of God, which they attempt in some way to portray by the work of human hands."

Since the Gospel is a proclamation, the "success" of liturgical art depends on its ability to communicate. For instance, I have yet to see good, conceptually stark Stations of the Cross.

ON THE WEB

Carolyn Buscarino
on FX's new series "Justified."
americamagazine.org/culture

The Stations are a narrative medium and demand illustration of the sort Rockwell offered. Stained-glass windows, by contrast, do well without being realistic; color and symbols carry the weight, as they do in the masterful work of Marc Chagall.

Still, most people prefer more narrative pieces in churches. Are they artistic philistines? Or do they intuitively grasp, as Norman Rockwell did, that the Gospel is all about narrating grace?

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will, it might seem reasonable to expect that matters of conscience and civil law are unlikely to impinge much upon your life.

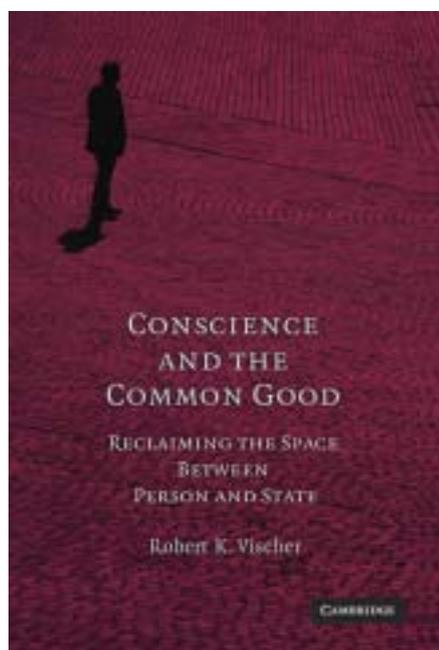
Robert Vischer, a law professor at University of Saint Thomas in Minneapolis, has written a book that challenges any such minimalistic notions of the meaning of conscience as it relates to law and government. Through case studies that illustrate his points as well as insightful forays into the history of ideas, Vischer demonstrates the many ways by which all members of our society are bound up in a web of conscience-related matters. Anyone who shops, consumes, works, pays taxes or sends children out to school participates in a network of relationships that involve conscience broadly understood.

Although modern life features many garden-variety conflicts regarding matters of conscience, Vischer directs the reader's attention to the subtler ways in which our very participation in social life requires an application of conscience. At the root of his analysis is the contention that in order to retain coherence, any adequate definition of conscience must include more than the mere holding of opinions and recognition of values. Rather, "conscience is not just belief, passively held by the individual. It is belief applied to conduct, an act."

Vischer is particularly eager to emphasize that our interior moral judgments acquire real meaning when they are directed outward, especially as contemporary people come to play distinctive roles in such institutions as families, corporations, schools and even the legal system. Much appreciated in this regard are the occasional references to Robert Bellah and four of his colleagues, whose 1991 collaborative volume, *The Good Society*, called overdue attention to the key role that such public and private institutions indispensably play in shaping the very moral possibilities we enjoy today. If

BOOKS | THOMAS J. MASSARO

SOCIAL SERVICE



CONSCIENCE AND THE COMMON GOOD

Reclaiming the Space Between Person and State

By Robert K. Vischer
Cambridge Univ. Press. 328p \$34.99
(paperback)

Issues of conscience and state power are other people's concerns, not mine. That, anyway, is a preliminary conclusion that might be reached by many readers of this magazine. Unless you are a member of a sectarian religious group that on principle refuses to pledge allegiance to a nation or salute its flag, or expect someday to be drafted into the armed forces against your

U.S. society is to break the disheartening partisan gridlock and “culture war” impasses that have blocked further social progress in recent decades, then attention to a variety of such mediating institutions will have to be part of the solution. Vischer’s fresh analysis of conscience contributes greatly to our understanding of what is at stake and how we may map a way forward.

As a corrective to the narrowly individualistic ways conscience is perceived in the popular imagination and how it is treated in most contemporary discourse, Vischer has produced a book-length reminder of the relational dimensions of conscience. Two early chapters surveying philosophical and theological analysis of conscience reveal how a range of classic thinkers indeed recognized conscience (however they named and understood that human faculty) as corresponding to the social nature of the person. Vischer chronicles how Enlightenment concerns and several influential early modern thinkers (especially Hume) subsequently came to erode the received understanding of conscience in the direction of emotivism and arbitrariness. Freedom of conscience was reduced over time to mere freedom of belief, without its social moorings, practical dimensions and thrust toward the common good. In our modern setting of value pluralism, we are thus tragically less able than ever before in human history to give an account of our moral convictions, and we find ourselves locked in a cage of mere preferences. A more robust approach to conscience, as something more complex than an all-purpose trump card to preserve autonomy and individual choice, may just hold the key.

If this tour of intellectual history sounds heavy (and it often is), the second half of this volume supplies a felicitous dose of balm. With a lively but still rigorous lawyerly touch, Vischer guides us through several sec-

tors of modern life where conscience plays an important role in shaping behavior. In the course of encountering vivid case studies involving schools, families, corporations and courts, the reader gains a rich appreciation of the dangers of relying on an overly individualistic framework regarding conscience today.

Particularly rich is the author’s analysis of the current “pharmacist wars.” Disputes over the availability of controversial contraceptives (the product “Plan B” receives much attention here) illustrate how matters of conscience regarding personal behavior as well as corporate policies come to unfold in marketplaces and beyond. How should society provide for the seemingly conflicting rights of consumers and professional dispensers holding moral qualms about certain products? Vischer’s consistently moderate approach, with an abundance of com-

mon sense, fits the sensitive subject matter in a most commendable way.

Safeguarding the conditions of human flourishing and freedom is rarely a simple matter of fending off government intrusion or asserting one’s abstract rights. As readers of this volume will better appreciate, it turns out to involve a project of tending more deliberately to the overall social ecology, with attention to the complex ways people communicate and interact in shared spaces. Vischer’s erudite and skillful analysis highlights the thick interpersonal commitments situated within the myriad associations that mediate between individuals and the state. Only within this context will a healthy respect for conscience be guaranteed today.

THOMAS J. MASSARO, S.J., is a professor of moral theology at Boston College School of Theology and Ministry, Cambridge, Mass.

JOHN SAVANT

GRACE ABOUNDING

THE LIVING FIRE New and Selected Poems

By Edward Hirsch
Knopf. 256p \$27

It may not be too much to call Edward Hirsch a theological poet. It is not simply that in *The Living Fire* so many of his poems deal with issues like the problem of suffering or the “absence” of God, or with personages like St. Francis of Assisi or Simone Weil. Rather, in this selection from his seven previous volumes (1981-2008), something numinous seems to haunt his musings, an intuition, perhaps, of spiritual meaning in the daily news; and even more to the point, a quality of compassion that transcends sentiment in a conviction of mystery.

In an interview in 1988 with Artful

Dodge magazine, Hirsch, noting a lack of tenderness in much American poetry, said, “It was that tenderness I wanted to establish in my own work.” In “Edward Hopper and the House by the Railroad” (1925), Hirsch imagines the bleak urban world so prominent in Hopper’s work, the deserted house standing for its former inhabitants with its “utterly naked look of someone/ Being stared at, someone American and gawky,/ Someone who is about to be left alone/ Again, and can no longer stand it.” The hesitation before “Again” in the last line is not only technically adroit but emotionally on target—the poet’s compassionate response to human loneliness and anomie.

A similar mixed-media strategy informs “Still Life: An Argument.”

Here, the temporal “stop” effected by the artifice of painting alerts us to the dilemma of moral choosing that haunts even our most uneventful moments. Granting that “even lovers have still lives,” he warns, “we will always be about to destroy/ each other, always about to touch.”

Hirsch’s tough but compassionate questioning is notable in poems like “The Village Idiot,” “Elegy for the Jewish Villages” or “Simone Weil: The Year of Factory Work.” In “My First Theology Lesson” an old man laments the lost Jews of Poland: “Rumpled and furious,” he declares the withdrawal of God from “our deranged and barbaric century,” leaving us “to contemplate the ghostly absence,/ ourselves alone in a divine wilderness.” This paradoxical affirmation of God manifest in absence calls to mind Abraham Heschel’s “Even the darkness is God’s darkness.” Indeed, it is in this mystery of darkness that Hirsch finds hope. In his countercultural “Song Against

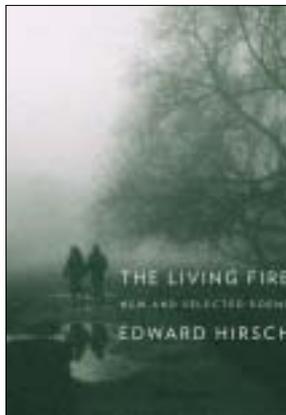
Natural Selection,” he states his premise: “The weak survive!” and implies that the very violence and suffering that incite the rage of the atheist are the indispensable stuff of our transcendence: “we survive/ so that losing itself becomes a kind/ of song...this/ is how we recognize ourselves, and why.” Current cosmological theologians, who see in the chaos of evolution a template for the drama of salvation, should find in this poem a measure of affirmation.

Ironically, a poem entitled “Away from Dogma” I found to be Hirsch’s most profoundly theological. Based upon the writings of 20th-century mystic Simone Weil, this three-part poem begins with her declaration: “I was prevented by a sort of shame from going into churches. Nevertheless, I had three contacts

with Catholicism that really counted.” “In Portugal,” her first contact, expresses the ambiguity of one overwhelmed by a sense of the divine but unable to embrace a particular religious response to it.

Watching the peril-accustomed fisher wives processing with candles at eventide and “singing/ hymns of heartrending sadness”, she identifies with them in this tenebrous ambience that echoes their lives, even as she “will not kneel/ before Him.” “Still,” Hirsch notes, “the faith of

the fishermen’s wives/ lifted her towards them...” Here Hirsch discovers the grounding of her faith—not in dogma or dialectic, but in the sacrament of compassion—the same compassion, perhaps, that marks his own poetry. What is most important is that her (and his?) questing, more ontolog-



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ical than discursive, reveals the role of love in the mysterious venture of belief.

Weil's second contact, "In Assisi," shows her still hostile to "miracles in the Gospels and to popular tales of apparitions," but so moved by St. Francis' compassion for all creation that "something she neither believed/nor disbelieved...forced her to her knees." Her third contact, "At Solesmes," takes place during Holy Week and describes her own Christ-like suffering as she embraces the labor and hardship of the poor—a choice some believe led to her physical decline and early death. A strange assurance accompanies her distress: "She felt an invisible hand wavering/ over the rags she was leaving behind." "Away from Dogma" concludes: "between the word forsaken and the word joy/ God came down and possessed her."

Edward Hirsch is, in many senses, a graceful poet. His technique is certain

and hidden, his style so generally colloquial that his judicious lyric eruptions have enormous effect and resonance. In some later ventures into repetitive forms suggesting the villanelle or sestina, I sensed a certain self-consciousness of craft—a dancer watching his feet through a new step. Though many poems in this collection are not explicitly theological, grace abounds throughout. Against the postmodern darkness, Hirsch offers a counterpoise of compassion, a sense of intimacy with suffering and a breadth of wonder embracing art and learning, the ordinary and the cosmic. And he does so in the great adventure of faith, the dark wrestle with God. As with the mystic Simone Weil, whom he so clearly admires, he will not settle for a God of easy assurances.

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day. Haley successfully brings to life the vanished era of San Francisco in the early 1900s, documents "The Crowd" of writers, artists and bohemians who settled in the city in those years—Ambrose Bierce, Sinclair Lewis and Emma Goldman all have cameos—and outlines the political tides upon which rose and fell London's publishing fortunes.

Unfortunately, the book stints in describing the works for which he gained his fame, and Haley rarely quotes from the novels or short stories. (London's letters are quoted more frequently.) But the book, like the life of the man his best friend called "Wolf" never fails to fascinate or entertain.

J. M.

FLIGHT OF FAITH

My Miracle on the Hudson

By Fred Beretta
Saint Benedict Press. \$14.95

This is an account of the dramatic emergency landing of U.S. Airways Flight 1549, written by a passenger (who is also a licensed pilot). "It was a unique event in the modern commercial jet era," Fred Beretta notes. That all 155 passengers and crew survived will mark this 2009 event indelibly in the minds of millions. This is a slim book, but a careful and thoughtful rendering; the author's control in recounting harrowing details is a testament to his strong faith—which has also been in evidence among all who shared the experience. As he remarks at the outset, if one reader is "inspired to deepen his trust in God," the book will have accomplished its purpose.

Time has a way of blurring memory, and so this brief up-close and personal account of the moments leading up to landing in the Hudson River, the heroic rescue efforts that followed, the courage displayed by passengers and crew—along with several color photographs—makes remembering easier. Parish book racks, where they still

BOOK BRIEFS

LONDON'S CALL; SAFE LANDINGS

WOLF

The Lives of Jack London

James L. Haley
Basic Books. \$29.95

For those who know Jack London only from their high school days, that is, as a writer of supposedly "young-adult" tales like the novel *The Call of the Wild* or the supreme short story "To Build a Fire," this riveting biography by James L. Haley may come as a surprise. London, who was born in San Francisco in 1876 and died not far from there at age 40 (after a physically taxing and alcohol-besotted life) was, during his prime, one of the most popular writers in this country. Indeed, President Theodore Roosevelt once felt obliged to correct what he mistak-

enly saw as a "nature fakery" in London's *White Fang*: a lynx would never best a wolf in a contest. But T.R. had it backwards: it was the fictional wolf who had triumphed. "The president is evidently a careless reader of my stories," replied a confident London.

That same robust confidence had led London from an impoverished childhood to a turbulent adolescence as an "oyster pirate," and then to "lives" as a freewheeling tramp, a so-so student at the University of California, a muckraking journalist, a failed prospector, a war correspondent, a dedicated socialist (in the critical style of a Dorothy Day) and a splendid writer. A tireless one too: London wrote, without fail, 1,000 words each

exist, might make this item available to interested parishioners. P.A.K.

THE LIFE WE WERE GIVEN

Operation Babylift, International Adoption, and the Children of War in Vietnam

By Dana Sachs
Beacon Press. \$26.95

Just published, to commemorate the 35th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War, this affecting and eye-opening book recounts the airlifting of thousands of babies and children out of South Vietnam. Backed by the United States, the plan was to find homes for these orphans in the States and elsewhere. Except they were not all war orphans. Sachs, who has written about Vietnam for 20 years, teaches at the University of North Carolina-Wilmington. To get at the full details of this wrenching story, she focuses on the activities of some adoption agencies, the controversy over the legitimacy of the

airlift and the plight of scattered families and refugees. She recounts in moving detail the complexity of the mission, aware that children left behind may fall victim to the Communist regime. Lost birth records, in many instances, regrettably meant lost identities for many adoptees, whose own background—even today—they want to know about.

A balanced presentation of a controversial operation, this book reminds us of the dark underside of all wars.

P.A.K.

MANY MILES (AUDIOBOOK)

By Mary Oliver
Beacon Press. \$19.95

The Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Mary Oliver recorded her first CD/audiobook, *At Blackwater Pond*, in 2006. Now her publisher has released a second, *Many Miles*, in

which she reads more than 40 of her poems, taken from many of her collected works—an impressive and inspiring literary canon that includes “House of Light,” “Red Bird,” “Why I Wake Early” and four brief, as yet uncollected, poems.

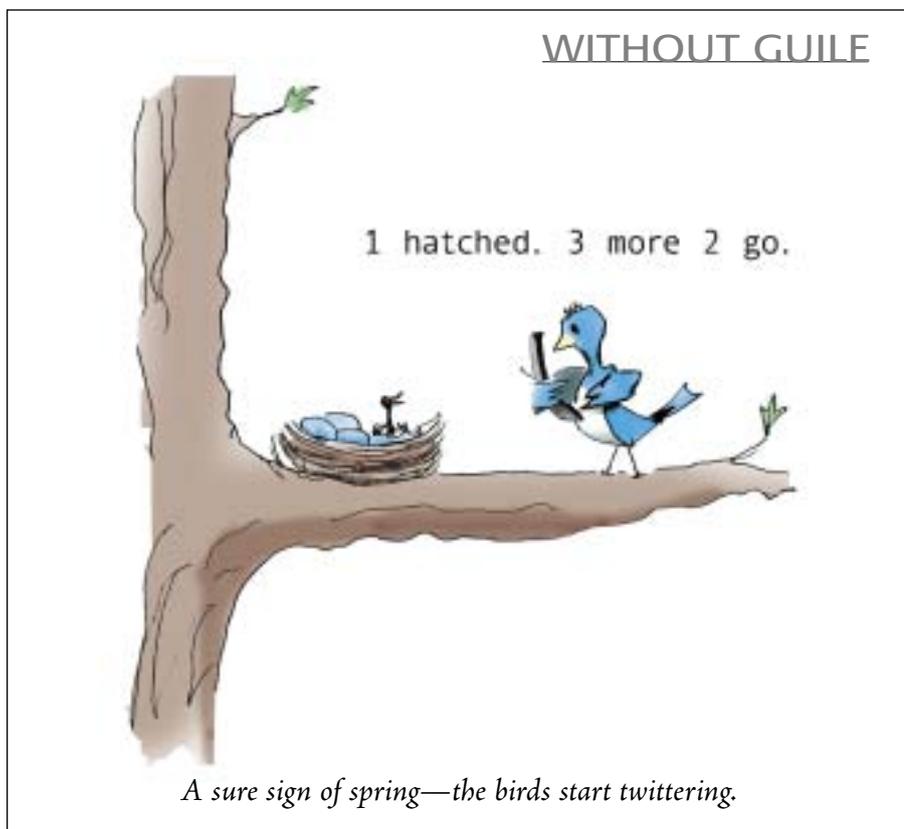
The CD is housed in a shrink-wrapped full-cloth package, with ribbon marker and an introductory story on the dynamic between a speaker and a listener. “Oh, what if one had no kept record,” the poet ponders, “of the voice of someone loved and now gone? What an extra dish of sorrow that would be.”

There is a magnetism about Mary Oliver, a lyricism, a keen power of observation—all on grand display in this recording. Hers is a clear, steady and authoritative voice that draws the listener to the power of words, to the image in ways that cannot be experienced by simply reading her books. She is one with nature and the natural world, with simple things and what she calls, in one poem, “the imponderables of life.” Themes range widely—from owls and horses on a Midwest farm, to rivers, stars, “the blessed earth,” her dog Percy (named after Shelley), unrequited love, using imagination and paying attention (the latter two she labels “our life’s work,”), angels and Jesus in Gethsemane.

I sat entranced while listening to this eminently gifted poet, unwavering in her attention to every detail, large and small, always “in the moment.” Her excitement and appreciation of all life is palpable; her delivery is strong, clear, uplifting, rhythmic and soulful. She sees, it often seems, what others do not. *Many Miles* is a joyful experience. I plan to listen again and again, expecting to receive more each time.

P.A.K.

Book Briefs is written by James Martin, S.J., culture editor, and Patricia A. Kossmann, literary editor, of *America*.



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Requirements for the position, which becomes available in August 2010, are: master's degree in spirituality, psychology or sacred sciences or equivalent; and experience in spiritual direction and formation. Responsibilities include one-on-one advising and group sessions with possibilities for teaching. This is an ideal opportunity for an experienced priest looking for a new challenge.

Send letter and résumé by June 15 to Director of Human-Spiritual Formation, Sacred Heart School of Theology, P.O. Box 429, Hales Corners, WI 53130-0429, or to pschuessler@shst.edu.

VOCATION DIRECTOR SOUGHT. The Sisters of the Holy Family of Fremont, Calif., are seeking a qualified, full-time Vocation Director responsible for coordinating their vocation plan. Candidate needs to be a practicing Catholic, knowledgeable about Catholic teaching and have a background or experience in human development and religious

life. Applicant needs relational and marketing skills, especially with adults 40-50 years of age and the ability to "think outside the box." Candidate must have excellent oral and written communication/marketing skills and be willing to inspire teamwork and implement new thinking. Experience in church ministry preferred. Salary and benefits competitive. For more information about the Sisters of the Holy Family visit us on the Web at www.holyfamilysisters.org; Facebook fan page: www.facebook.com/pages/Fremont-CA/Sisters-of-the-Holy-Family/19423411523; Blog: <http://holymfamilysisters.wordpress.com>. Applicants should send a letter of interest, résumé and photo to: Sr. Carolyn Whited, 245 Magnolia Ave., #96, Manteca, CA 95337; e-mail: carolyn@holymfamilysisters.org. Applications due by Sept. 1, 2010.

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laboration with the pastoral staff. Applicants should possess at least a bachelor's degree in Catholic religious education or a discipline related to youth ministry and have some experience in either or both. Send a letter of application and curriculum vitae to Our Lady Help of Christians Parish, Newton, Mass., by June 13 to youthminister@ourladyds.com

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BETHANY RETREAT HOUSE, East Chicago, Ind., offers private and individually directed silent retreats, including Ignatian 30 days, year-round in a prayerful home setting. Contact Joyce Diltz, P.H.J.C; Ph.: (219) 398-5047; bethanyrh@sbcglobal.net; bethanyretreathouse.org.

BETHANY SPIRITUALITY CENTER, Highland Mills, N.Y., offers the following retreats: "Praying With Creation: An Exploration of Ecological Spirituality," June 3-6, with Alexandra Kovats, C.S.J.P.; "Sacred Spaces," July 2-9, with Margaret Silf; Ignatian directed retreats in June/July; "Are You Talking to Me, God? Discernment in Everyday Life" (women's retreat), July 23-25, with Janice Farnham, R.J.M., and Rosemary Mangan, R.J.M.; Retiro Predicado, Aug. 5-12; Silence and Awareness Retreat, Aug. 14-22.

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LETTERS

Loving Fidelity

I have long insisted that authentic reform in the church must proceed through passionate love for the church: *Ecclesia semper amanda et reformanda*. Your recent editorials “Pilgrim People” (5/10 and 5/17) are bracing and compelling because they join, in a distinctive way, a loving commitment to the uniqueness of Christ’s church with a clear call for greater fidelity to its mission.

I know I am not alone in being grateful.

(REV.) ROBERT IMBELLI
*Boston College
Chestnut Hill, Mass.*

Mowing the Lawns

In “Pilgrim People, Part II” (Editorial, 5/17) you write: “Finally, the council called for laymen and laywomen to be given greater voice and to take greater part in church affairs.”

I won’t hold my breath. I was a teenager when the Second Vatican Council convened. I am in my 60s now. I was on a Catholic school board for many years. Our pastor showed up occasionally for board meetings but hired and fired the teachers and administrators at will and spent money on what he thought was important. This church is a “gated community,” and sometimes the owners hire some of us to mow the lawns.

DAN HANNULA
Gordon, Wis.

Glimmer of Hope

Congratulations on “Pilgrim People, Part II.” I am delighted that **America’s** editors have recovered from their timidity following the forced resignation of Thomas J. Reese, S.J., as editor. I am not confident that the hierarchy and the Roman Curia are capable of reform. I

have watched with dismay as several of our children, raised in the faith, have walked away from the church. I am resigned to the likelihood that many of our 11 grandchildren will not be Catholics as adults. If **America** continues to point out courageously the need for reform in the church, there is at least a glimmer of hope that church reform could happen. Please keep it up.

WILLIAM H. GREEN, M.D.
Springfield, Pa.

In Need of Reminders

Please never despair of making the case that you have been making for change in our church. Your editorial “Pilgrim People, Part II,” is an example of what I want more of from you. I see you as following in the footsteps of the great prophets of old. Until what needs to be done in our church has been done, we will continue to need to be reminded of it.

We are a pilgrim people, with busy days and short memories. We need to be reminded. Reminding us is a holy task. Thank you for undertaking it. I pray that you, the editors of **America**, will continue to be there to remind us as long as it takes us.

WELLBORN JACK JR.
Shreveport, La.

Prophetic Voice Needed

America is beginning to get there, getting ever closer to being the prophetic voice that the church needs. What we need is some institution or individuals within the church to stand up and be prophetic. We need someone or some group to speak truth to power and demand real reform, radical reform of the papacy and the Curia. Is **America** going to be that voice?

Play the prophet by addressing the issue that money has played in this scandal and plays in the hierarchical church. It seems that the most notori-

ous villain in this scandal, Marcial Maciel Degollado, used the vast sums of money at his disposal to insinuate himself into the papal apartments and the confidence of Pope John Paul II. The role of money and the influence it wields in the affairs of the Vatican need to be unmasked. The hierarchy needs a good dose of Christian poverty. Can **America** make them swallow the medicine?

JOHN D. FITZMORRIS JR.
New Orleans, La.

Roses Amid Thorns

Re “Hallelujah,” by Thomas G. Casey (Books & Culture, 5/17): Thank you from the bottom of my heart for this article. You are absolutely correct—this song gives hope to the dirt in our lives, the brokenness, the awfulness, the raw and seemingly desperate pieces that keep floating to the surface waiting to be redeemed or fished out and tossed onto the garbage heap in the landfill.

My life in a L’Arche community was like that; and my stories tell of the good, bad and very disturbing. But the God part is that all can be redeemed, eventually, in God’s time, through the cracks and splits and open festering sores.

This is the paschal mystery. It’s also what Jesus meant when he said “Follow me.” Follow me all the way through the Last Supper, into the garden, up the hill to Golgotha, onto the cross and then into the tomb of waiting, and, yes, to the resurrection. He didn’t say, follow me to the rose garden. Unless he did, come to think of it, but if so, he also reminded me about the thorns.

KATHLEEN C. BERKEN
St. Paul, Minn.

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What Is Mine Is Yours

TRINITY SUNDAY (C), MAY 30, 2010

Readings: Prv 8:22-31; Ps 8:4-9; Rom 5:1-5; Jn 16:12-15

“Everything that the Father has is mine” (Jn 16:15)

M*i casa es su casa,* “My home is your home,” is the greeting extended to visitors in many Hispanic households. The hospitality offered is boundless, as hosts outdo themselves in generosity, eager to share with guests everything they have. Most humbling is the way in which communities that have little more than tortillas, rice and beans as daily fare will find a way to add a bit of meat or other delicacies when guests are present, expending their last resources to ensure the comfort of the visitor.

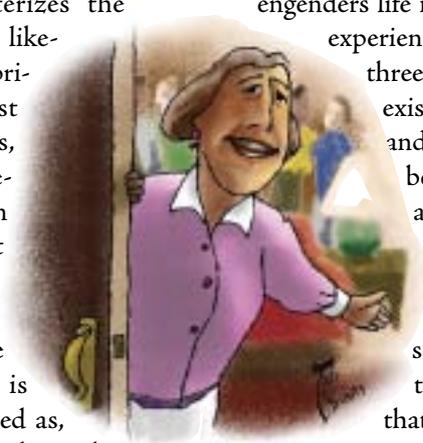
In some ways this example of persons who pour out themselves in generosity to others gives us a glimpse of the relationship among the persons of the Trinity and of their outpouring of love for us. In today’s Gospel reading Jesus has been speaking with his disciples about the Paraclete that will come when he departs. As he describes all that the Paraclete, the Spirit, will be and do, we recognize these as the very things that comprised Jesus’ person and mission. Jesus explains that the Spirit “will take from what is mine and declare it to you.” But what is Jesus’ is also what is the Father’s, as Jesus asserts, “Everything that the Father has is mine.” There is no “yours and mine,” in the Godhead—only “ours,” as the three interweave in a communion of love in which there is no possessiveness.

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.

Along with the lack of possessiveness that characterizes the Trinity, there are likewise no claims of priority. As the first reading asserts, Wisdom was present at the creation of the cosmos, at the side of the Creator as a skilled artisan. The opening verse is sometimes translated as, “The Lord possessed me, the beginning of his ways” (N.A.B. lectionary), reflecting the usual meaning of the Hebrew verb *qana*, “to acquire.” But here the context implies acquisition by birth so that the verse is better rendered, “The Lord created me at the beginning of his work” (N.R.S.V.) or “The Lord begot me, the firstborn of his ways” (revised N.A.B.).

The last part of the phrase is also ambiguous. The Hebrew *reshit* can signify temporal priority, “firstborn,” or it can connote excellence. The author of Colossians applies this expression, “the firstborn of creation,” to Christ (Col 1:15). There are also strong parallels between what is said of Wisdom in Proverbs 8 and what is said of the Logos in the prologue of the Gospel of John, so that Christ is understood as Wisdom incarnate, pre-existent one, participating in the work of the Creator. The Spirit, too, which hovered over the watery chaos at the beginning of creation (Gn 1:2), con-

tinues to be the revivifying force that engenders life in the post-resurrection experience of the disciples. All three persons of the Trinity existed from the beginning and interrelate as equal in being and function, creating, saving and enlivening all that exists. They invite us to replicate their nonpossessiveness in our relationships, recognizing that nothing I have is mine



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- How do your acts of hospitality replicate the way the members of the Trinity interrelate?
- Ask the Holy One to help you let go of possessiveness.
- Pray with Prv 8:30. Feel the delight of the Creator and Holy Wisdom in one another, in Earth and in the human race.

ART: TAD DUNNE

alone, but is “ours” for the common good.

The final verses of the reading from Proverbs capture the utter delight that characterizes the relationship among the members of the Trinity. Just as Wisdom was the Creator’s delight, so Wisdom finds delight in the human race and in playing on the surface of Earth. The holy three-in-one invites us to share in this playful delight, enjoying the freedom that comes from saying, “Everything I have is yours.”

BARBARA E. REID

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