

# America

THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC WEEKLY

SEPT. 27, 2010 \$3.50



## JOHN HENRY NEWMAN FOR TODAY

Robert P. Imbelli • Drew Christiansen

Austen Ivereigh on  
GAUDI'S SAGRADA FAMILIA

# OF MANY THINGS

**D**orothy Day's life and writings have long influenced my personal life. A friend once described her to me as a living saint, a person whose life focused both on reaching out to the poorest and on non-violence. After becoming a Catholic, I followed her travels and thoughts in her column, *On Pilgrimage*, in the Catholic Worker newspaper. Now, all these years later, I remain in touch with her when I stop in at her former room at Maryhouse on Monday evenings. There I give Communion to her friend and co-worker, Frank Donovan, who turned 93 on July 20. That second-floor room remains much as it was in Dorothy's time.

It was only when I read her diaries, though, published in 2008 as *The Duty of Delight*, that I began to realize the spiritual depth of her life. Reflecting on her spiritual life has helped me navigate my own. Her close-to-constant prayer, even in the midst of all the physical demands of a Catholic Worker house, amazed me. She wrote one day in her 60s: "I wake up at 7. Often I find that I have started praying before I am really awake, just as I fall asleep praying." Nor did she view prayer as requiring solitude: "I do not have to retire to my room to pray, it is enough to get out and walk in the wilderness of the streets." The presence of God in her life was almost physical: "God is closer to us than the air we breathe," she wrote in her old age, in 1971. Around the same period, she could speak of a "strange experience of being penetrated by God." A decade earlier, she had this to say of a similar sensation: "Woke this morning with [a] feeling, very strong, I belong to Someone to whom I owe devotion. Recalled early love and that joyous sense of being not my own but of belonging to someone who loved me completely."

The reference above to "someone who loved me completely" was probably to Forster Batterham, the father of her one child. But love in its broader sense

she saw as the key to loving all people: "Love is a matter of the will.... If you will to love someone and try to serve him as an expression of that love, then you will soon come to feel that love." She liked to quote her priest friend John Hugo, who said, "You love God as much as the one you love the least," to which she added, "So all our life is a practice to learn to love God." It was a demanding practice indeed. In a reference to St. Francis of Assisi's *Little Flowers*, she wrote in the 1940s, "To be hated and scorned by one's own—this is poverty, this is perfect joy."

But despite her sense of the abiding presence of a loving God, Day was acutely aware of her own failings, like anger and resentments that "muddy the heart." She knew her failings and could say, "I am ashamed of my own tart tongue," which could inflict hurtful wounds. She commented, for example, on her remorse at having offended a member of the community "by my brusqueness." At the time she was feeling unwell, and so added, "Must keep away from people when I'm under the weather." Here was a person who knew her ups and downs intimately. Her struggles in this regard are reflected in this: "Two things we have to learn, not to judge others and not to mind others judging us."

Her sense of voluntary poverty led her to make her room available when she was away on speaking trips, but the theft of beloved personal objects saddened her. Her daughter had given her a handwritten book, which disappeared once during one of her trips. "So many of my treasures are taken from me when one's room is used continually in one's absence," often by poor visitors whom Peter Maurin, the Catholic Worker's co-founder, called "the ambassadors of God." Dorothy too saw such visitors as ambassadors of God and loved them accordingly. She wanted others to do the same.

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

# America

PUBLISHED BY JESUITS OF THE UNITED STATES

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Customer Service: 1-800-627-9533

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*Cover:* A painting of St. Philip Neri adorns the retable in St. Philip's Chapel of the Oratory in Birmingham, England. Cardinal John Henry Newman brought the Oratory of St. Philip Neri to England in the mid-1800s. Photo: CNS/Marcin Mazur, courtesy of Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

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### Disappearing Forests

Indonesia's rainforests are fast disappearing. Forty percent of those that existed in 1950 have been destroyed.

Indonesia now has the world's second largest levels of greenhouse gas emissions, adding to global warming. The deforestation is largely the result of a corrupt political and economic system. Former president Suharto awarded huge logging concessions to family members and political allies. Much of the forest loss stems from the expansion of Indonesia's plywood, pulp and palm oil industries. Wood processing industries openly acknowledge their dependence on illegally cleared wood. Millions of acres of forest have been cut for palm oil plantations, and owners have frequently used fire as a cheap method of forest clearing, which leads to uncontrolled wildfires that destroy even areas meant to be preserved.

During a climate conference last May in Oslo, Indonesia announced a two-year moratorium on granting new permits to clear rainforests, a potentially important advance toward slowing global warming. The move is scheduled to go into effect next January. Norway has donated \$1 billion toward the moratorium, partly for monitoring and verification of reduced emissions, with a goal of 26-percent reduction by 2020. Activist groups like Greenpeace point out, however, that the moratorium leaves unprotected millions of acres already in the hands of logging companies, and deforestation will surely continue.

### Bad Harvest

Thirteen people were killed and more than 600 wounded in Mozambique in early September as police tried to contain with rubber bullets and live rounds what had started out as a peaceful protest. Cars and tires were burning in the streets in the capital city of Maputo. Children were caught in the crossfire; two were killed. At the root of this little-reported mayhem were food prices. Mozambicans were enraged by a government plan to remove subsidies and allow prices for food staples like bread to rise as much as 30 percent, bad news for an already impoverished population.

The government quickly backtracked on its plans, but the violence was an unwelcome reminder of food riots around the world in 2008 that followed sharp spikes in basic commodity prices. Then market-distorting agricultural subsidies in the developed world, diversion of food crops to ethanol production and increasing transportation

costs due to high oil prices were blamed for sudden increases in food costs.

In 2010, different but still worrisome factors are driving commodity prices. The world recession has taken a toll on production while simultaneously reducing the buying power of many of the world's poorest people. Responding to tightening reserves and a poor expectation for this year's harvest, Russia has banned grain exports. In August wheat prices had their most significant spike in 37 years. In Egypt food protests have already broken out, and more disorder is likely as price increases ripple across Africa and the Middle East. We hope an emergency U.N. meeting in Rome on Sept. 24 produces more than well-intentioned rhetoric; a practical, multilateral plan of action now to head off hunger and violence would be a most welcome harvest.

### Unqualified Failure

The U.S. troops in Afghanistan face a host of uncertainties, but wondering about the reliability of an interpreter should not be one of them. Unfortunately, more than one quarter of the interpreters supplied to U.S. troops by the Ohio-based contractor Mission Essential Personnel may be unqualified, according to Paul Funk, a former employee of the company. Mission Essential Personnel denies any wrongdoing, but Mr. Funk alleges that someone at the company changed the grades on the language exams of many Afghan-linguist applicants from fail to pass. Among other charges, he also said that more highly skilled stand-ins often took tests on behalf of unqualified applicants.

Civilian interpreters can help troops make inroads with a community and collect valuable information for U.S. troops, but unqualified interpreters put lives at risk. "There are many cases where soldiers have gone out into the field and have spoken to elders [who] handed messages to the interpreter that a possible ambush three miles up the road would occur," Funk told ABC News. "If the interpreter cannot read the message, they may be attacked."

The problem of unqualified interpreters goes beyond Mission Essential. It is important to consider the ramifications of using subcontractors during wartime. Closer attention must be paid to the quality of their work. Americans were rightly angered to learn that U.S. troops were sent to war without sufficient body armor or with defective equipment. Unqualified civilian and Army interpreters also can put troops in unnecessary danger, resulting in failed missions and ill will between troops and local communities. Better regulation and accountability are needed.

# Robbing Peter to Pay

The United States remains one of the richest countries in the world, but many Americans go to bed hungry at night. Local agencies that assist low-income people have seen significant increases in requests for food. At the Father McKenna Center at St. Aloysius Church in Washington, D.C., for instance, a staff member, Virginia Jenkins, spoke to *America* of an African-American mother who “comes in every 15 days for food for herself and her five children. We give her enough to finish out the month—otherwise she would go hungry.” This mother is just one of the increasing number of men, women and children who visit the center in search of food as a stopgap against hunger. The fact that the church is within walking distance of the U.S. Capitol reflects the federal government’s inability to cope with the rising tide of hunger nationwide. Food insecurity (uncertain access to adequate food) has become an increasingly serious problem as the recession continues. Black and Hispanic households experience food insecurity at far higher rates than white ones. Some 50 million people currently live in food-insecure households.

Sadly, the situation is likely to get worse rather than better. In late July the Senate majority leader, Harry Reid, Democrat of Nevada, attached an amendment to a job and education bill that would increase federal matching funds to help states cover Medicaid expenses and teachers’ salaries to prevent more teacher layoffs. But funding cuts that must be made elsewhere to finance this (almost \$12 billion) would include reductions in the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program that provides food stamps. Food stamp enrollment has grown rapidly during the recession, and enrollment is at an all-time high, with over 40 million recipients—a 50-percent increase since the economic downturn began. The media periodically carry stories of impoverished men and women who, along with their children, depend on food stamps from month to month as their only source of income. In Lee City, Fla., for example, 15,000 people reported earlier this year that they had no income at all apart from their food stamps.

But now, because of the cuts, a family of four can expect their food stamp benefits to drop by \$59 a month. Anti-hunger advocates who strongly oppose the cuts note that this would mean returning benefits to lower levels at a time when many households already run out of food by the third or fourth week of the month. Advocates also point

out that the cuts could increase obesity by making it more difficult for families to buy healthful foods, such as fresh fruits and vegetables. At a time when the unemployment rate, now around 10 percent, is predicted to remain high through 2013, Senator Reid’s amendment is indeed what Representative Rosa de Lauro of Connecticut called a “bitter pill.” Cutting back on one necessity to pay for another is a cruel tax on some of America’s most vulnerable people.

Growing food insecurity became evident last December, when the U.S. Conference of Mayors issued its status report on hunger and homelessness. The report found that the number of requests for emergency food assistance increased by 26 percent the preceding year, the largest yearly average increase ever in the cities surveyed. Half the cities reported that the demand jumped by 30 percent. Not surprisingly, unemployment was cited by 92 percent of the reporting agencies as the primary cause of this increase, followed by housing costs. Six cities reported that even middle class families who used to donate to food pantries are now seeking assistance for themselves. This circumstance, as the survey put it, was one of the elements that has caused new challenges for food pantries, not least because middle-class families in need of assistance are “unfamiliar with accessing social services.”

Because of these increased demands in both pantries and soup kitchens, food assistance agencies, according to three-quarters of the respondents in the survey, have had to cut back on what they can offer. Philadelphia, for instance, reported a 45-percent unmet need because of cutbacks food pantries were forced to make in the amount each client was allowed to receive regularly.

Families should not have to cut back on one necessity to pay for another, like having to choose between food and medical care. Food stamps, one of the key elements of the safety net for poor American families, are too important a lifeline for families already weighed down by the recession. Jim Weill, president of the nonprofit Food Research & Action Center, has said that it would be “an outrage to fund even the best of programs by taking money away from the neediest people in the country, and we’re going to oppose it.” So should Congress.



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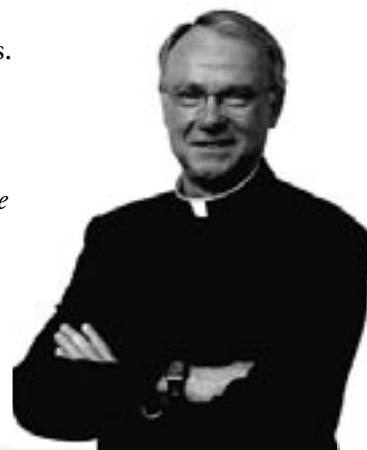
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### About Your Presenter

Donald Senior, C.P., is President of the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, where he has taught the New Testament since 1972. A Roman Catholic priest of the Passionist order, Fr. Senior has served on the Pontifical Biblical Commission since Pope John Paul II named him to it in 2001. Fr. Senior is general editor of *The Bible Today* and *The Catholic Study Bible*, as well as coeditor of the 22-volume commentary *New Testament Message*. He earned his doctorate in New Testament Studies from the University of Louvain, Belgium, and completed further graduate studies at Hebrew Union College and Harvard University. In 1994, the Catholic Library Association of America gave him its Jerome Award for outstanding scholarship. In 1996, the National Catholic Education Association awarded him the Bishop Loras Lane Award for his outstanding contribution to theological education. He is also the presenter of Now You Know Media's program on *The Gospel of John*.

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# SIGNS OF THE TIMES

THE ECONOMY

## Stimulus Too Little, Too Late? U.S. Poverty in Record Surge

**T**he latest U.S. Census Bureau figures indicate a significant turnaround in the nation's fortunes, with 43.6 million people—about 14.3 percent of the population—who could be characterized as poor last year. In 2008, the year the federal government set the poverty level at \$22,025 a year for a family of four, 13.2 percent of the country lived in poverty, just under 40 million people. The increase in 2009 is the second-largest year-to-year uptick since 2004.

"It's clear there is an enormous amount of suffering out there," said Fred Kammer, S.J., the executive director of the Jesuit Social Research Institute at Loyola University in New Orleans and one-time president of Catholic Charities USA. "As always happens, it is the poor who are suffering more in hard times, and that's what we're seeing with these numbers." Demographers report the U.S. working-age population was especially hard hit in 2009. About 12.4 percent of Americans aged 18 to 64 were poor—up from 11.7 percent in 2008 and the biggest annual increase since 1965.

Father Kammer thinks Loyola's neighboring gulf states will be particularly hard hit in 2009. "Our states are always at the bottom of these numbers." Louisiana may be an exception, Kammer added, as its economy remains artificially pumped up by federal aid related to Katrina rebuilding.

The increase in poverty raises questions about the impact of President Obama's much-touted \$787 billion economic stimulus package. Republicans are using the new poverty figures to charge that the stimulus did not work and to promote deficit reduction and, simultaneously, more tax cuts as a better strategy for solving the nation's economic woes. But Father Kammer wonders if the 2009 stimulus package just wasn't large enough to move the country clear of its economic malaise. It could be, he said, that the nation would have been in even worse economic condition without it, but "we didn't do enough."

There seems to be little political appetite for more government spend-

ing now to address the nation's rising poverty rate or move more citizens off the unemployment rolls. In fact some analysts have begun to talk of long-term structural unemployment as an inevitable fact of U.S. life in the future.

Father Kammer said that while the last election cycle focused on America's declining middle class, poverty and unemployment grew among the poorest. While Catholic Charities USA promotes a campaign to reduce U.S. poverty by 50 percent by 2020, Father Kammer said there appears little public support for such antipoverty crusades. "It's sort of like [Michael] Harrington's 'other America,' that no one sees anymore."

But changing that perspective could

be only a matter of altering what the public perceives as an emergency. The billions of dollars quickly appropriated during the Bush administration for the Troubled Asset Relief Program that bailed out Wall Street and the U.S. banking system indicates that federal money can still be made available in a time of crisis. But does the recent acceleration of U.S. poverty and unemployment warrant crisis-level attention? Father Kammer thinks so. "The investment we made in our banking and our financial institutions is the kind of investment we ought to be making in poor America," he said, "and we have not. And we don't seem to have the political will to do so."

From CNS and other sources.





BELGIUM

## Bishops Pledge Response to Sexual Abuse by Clergy

**B**elgium's Catholic bishops said they would learn from their errors after an independent report highlighted hundreds of cases of sexual abuse by clergy. The bishops said the church would work with Belgium's Justice and Interior ministries in devising ways of preventing abuse and bringing past cases to light, and that officials would honor victims' demands to be personally involved in

new "healing initiatives."

They pledged to set up a "center for recognition, healing and reconciliation" and to draw up plans for financial compensation for victims. The bishops said they would establish guidelines for all church personnel working with children and young people.

The initiatives were presented at a Sept. 13 news conference, three days after the report from a commission headed by Peter Adriaenssens recounted sexual abuse in most Catholic dioceses and all church-run boarding schools and religious orders. The commission said 475

cases of abuse had been reported, including more than 300 cases that involved boys younger than 15 at the time the abuse occurred. Two-thirds of the victims were male; 14 had killed themselves; and six more had attempted suicide.

The commission reported clergy assaulted more than 160 girls; many were abused into adulthood. The problem was worst in the 1960s but declined in the 1980s, when there were fewer priests in Belgium and the church was less involved in education.

Pope Benedict XVI has been following the situation in Belgium very closely, said the Vatican's spokesman. "Like everybody, he feels much pain after the publication of the report, which again reveals the huge suffering

of victims and gives us an even more vivid sense of the gravity of the crimes," Federico Lombardi, S.J., said. According to Father Lombardi, the pope and his collaborators were in direct contact with Belgian bishops, offering advice on how best to deal with the situation.

Although prosecutors had yet to bring charges against those accused, half of whom are now deceased, the commission recommended punishing those who failed to come forward and setting up a solidarity fund for victims. "These accounts and the suffering they contain make us shudder—they confront us with something which should never have happened and deserve our deepest and greatest attention for the human drama played out in them," the bishops said in a statement.

"Sexual abuse fundamentally undermines everything one can say about God, the Gospel or a Christian life," the bishops said. "The words *evil, sin, confession, reparation, healing, asking and giving forgiveness* form the core of the Christian language. These words are tragically, terribly polluted and deformed by the many accounts of sexual abuse. However regrettable the confrontation may be, these accounts and the faces of their victims cannot be hidden from our community."

Victims complained that the bishops' statement included no clear proposal for pursuing abusers or for compensating victims. Walter Van Steenbrugge, a lawyer who represents 35 victims, said his clients were "very angry with this scandalous reaction."

"We were thinking they were ready to pay the costs of all the therapy the victims needed in all these years." Instead, the response was "very disappointing," Mr. Van Steenbrugge said, adding that his clients would pursue civil cases against the church.

## Failure to Break Cycles Of Poverty

A U.N. Development Program report on Latin America and the Caribbean finds that despite economic growth during much of the past decade, distribution of per capita income in Latin America is nearly as inequitable now as it was 20 years ago. In fact, Latin America is the most unequal distributor of income in the world, with an inequality index 18 percent higher than that of sub-Saharan Africa. Only 9.3 percent of Panama's nonindigenous population is poor, but more than half of indigenous Panamanians and those of African descent live in poverty. Such disparities are similarly high in countries like Mexico, Bolivia, Guatemala, Paraguay, Brazil and Peru. Even more insidiously, poverty passes from generation to generation in the same households partly because a lack of education limits future employment opportunities. If countries really want to break the cycle of poverty, experts say, they must change their policies to address these internal inequalities.

## Aussies Are Top Donors

Australia's spot on the top of the list of the world's most generous donor countries reflects its citizens' "very big hearts," said the head of the nation's Catholic aid agency, Caritas. The survey of 153 countries compiled by the British-based Charities Aid Foundation found 70 percent of Australians had given money to a charity. Australians "see the fundamental need of people in poverty throughout the world," said Jack de Groot, chief executive officer of Caritas Australia. "Even through the time of the global financial crisis, Australians were still generous." Released Sept. 8, the World Giving Index placed Australia and

## NEWS BRIEFS

The 2010-11 Respect Life Program is now available for **Respect Life Sunday**, Oct. 3. • The Catholic aid agency Caritas appealed on Sept. 7 for food and clothing for the victims of torrential **rains in Guatemala** that left more than 14,000 people homeless and more than 40 dead. • Kenya signed an agreement Sept. 6 with the **International Criminal Court** to investigate the 2007-8 violence that claimed 1,133 lives and uprooted more than 600,000. • **Peru's bishops challenged** two presidential decrees of Sept. 1 aimed at clearing human rights offenses by the military, charging the new measures "facilitate a process of impunity that would be another embarrassment for the country." • Muslim employees of Catholic Relief Services in Pakistan experienced the "most **meaningful Ramadan** fasts" of their lives, said a Catholic Relief Services manager, exchanging Ramadan celebrations for extra work responding to the nation's floods. • In a joint statement issued Sept. 9 the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops responded to threats of Koran burning: "All **acts of intolerance** aimed at a religious community should find no place in our world, let alone in our nation which is founded on the principle of religious freedom."



**A funeral for a landslide victim in Guatemala**

New Zealand first, with Canada and Ireland tied for third, the United States fifth and the United Kingdom eighth. Australians give approximately \$800 million (US \$741 million) a year to all international aid agencies. Caritas Australia receives about 3 percent of that, with more than 50 charities benefiting.

## Catholics in Vietnam Defy Government

Catholics in three northwestern Vietnamese provinces have defied a government ban on religious activities by gathering at people's homes to pray. Joseph Nguyen Van Tien, who lives in Dien Bien province's Muong Ang district, said that he started inviting local Catholics to pray at his home three

months ago. "I am very happy that 120 local Catholics now gather regularly at my home on Sundays to pray," he said. "We fear nothing because we gather to pray for ourselves to live better lives and for our relatives on their death anniversaries," said Tien. "We do not cause public disorder." Pastoral activities for Catholics in Dien Bien and Lai Chau provinces, where religious activities are banned, started in 2007, says Father Pierre Nguyen Thanh Binh from Sa Pa church in Lai Chau. At that time, small Catholic communities gathered at homes for prayers. There are now more than 4,000 Catholics attending such meetings. Many Catholics say they want the local government to recognize their religious activities and allow them to build churches.



# Horse Sense

As BP's oil hemorrhage catastrophe unfolded, my wife and I tried to explain to our children what was happening in the Gulf of Mexico. It was mostly lost on our happy-go-lucky 3-year-old son. Our 6-year-old twin daughters, however, had an especially insightful response to the crisis.

"Cars use gas," Eva said with a frown, "and gas is made out of oil. We need to stop driving cars so much."

"How would we travel?" I asked.

"That's easy," Clare chimed in excitedly. "We could just ride horses!" (She conceded that we could keep one small car "for long trips.")

Their response didn't surprise me. After all, they live on an organic farm with conservationist parents. And like most 6-year-old girls, they are mad about horses. Horses figure into almost any book they read. Horses gallop through their dreams and appear on any scrap of drawing paper. Eva and Clare act out elaborate scenes in which their large herd of toy horses provides the main characters. And since we live on a farm, our girls want nothing more than to own horses.

The thought of taking on equine responsibilities does not make my heart sing. As a parent, though, I have learned never to dismiss out of hand the ideas of my children, however outlandish they may seem. There is always a grain of truth, and often a boulder of it, in what comes from the mouths of babes.

From the standpoint of energy and

technology, horses are astounding. They operate exclusively on solar energy in the form of grass and grain. Their waste products are an essential resource for healthy agriculture and could yield methane fuel to boot. They breed their own replacements. They are completely recyclable, with no input of energy. Of what machine can such claims be made?

Of course, if my daughters had their way and horses became a significant part of the transportation sector, head-spinning changes would result. The slower pace of travel would prevent commuters from quickly driving long distances for work, goods and services. This in turn would require a shift from the current pattern of crowded megacities, bland suburbs and depopulated rural wastelands. Smaller towns and gutted rural villages would have to become their own economic and cultural centers.

I do not desire a return to bygone days. Nor do I romanticize the Amish (though I deeply admire them) or wish to preach a neo-Luddite gospel. However, I do think my daughters' suggestion contains valuable insights for a saner path forward.

First, it embodies a kind of post-modern creativity that is essential to any ecologically and socially sustainable future: open-mindedly discerning, preserving and building on the best of the present and the past. Why not a future in which horse carts, high-speed Internet and rail and induced pluripotent stem cell therapies exist side by side? Isn't such an

approach the genius of Catholic tradition as well?

Second, Eva and Clare's proposal implies sacrifice for a greater good: ceding some of the control and comfort to which Americans cling and for which we are rapidly destroying creation. Why should some degree of selfless sacrifice be anathema to those who follow the crucified Christ?

Finally, my daughters' idea invites a conscious consideration of what kind of society we want and what choices would help or hinder that vision. If we keep all our cars but power them with renewable energy, we would mitigate the climate problem but have done nothing to address the social and economic maladies that an individualistic car culture has helped create.

On the other hand, the limitations and sacrifices implied by horse travel—or other ways of life not subsidized by cheap fossil fuel—would likely make us need each other more, and needing each other more might actually make us happier and more content. As with the great Christian paradoxes, what looks like self-limitation might actually turn out to be strength (in numbers); what appears to be self-denial could become a path to fulfillment and even pleasure.

If we continue our current fossil fuel addiction, disasters like BP's will continue to occur; and our overheating planet will soon become unlivable. If a lower-carbon future requires creativity, meaningful sacrifice and stronger communities, we win on every front.

Why not a future in which horses and high-speed rail exist side by side?

KYLE T. KRAMER is the author of the forthcoming *A Time to Plant: Life Lessons in Work, Prayer, and Dirt* (Sorin Books, 2010).



## **The Intersection of Virtue and Ethics Today**

### ***The Relevance of Virtue for the Christian Life***

September 29, 2010

William Werpehowski – Villanova University

### ***Ten Reasons for Doing Virtue Ethics Today***

January 26, 2011

James Keenan, SJ – Boston College

### ***Sin as Bondage and Sickness: Reclaiming Medieval Perspectives on Sin and Vice***

October 21, 2010

Jean Porter – University of Notre Dame

### ***Making More Space for Moral Failure***

February 16, 2011

Lisa Tessman – SUNY Binghamton

### ***Virtue and Augustine***

November 9, 2010

Jennifer Herdt – Yale Divinity School

### ***Children, Consumerism and the Common Good***

March 16, 2011

Mary Roche – College of the Holy Cross

All events are held at 4:30 PM at the Driscoll Hall Auditorium

*The Intersection of Virtue and Ethics* is the first of a series of annual lectures dedicated to reflection on the many facets of the Catholic intellectual tradition. The series is sponsored by the Office for Mission & Ministry in collaboration with the departments of Theology & Religious Studies, Philosophy, Center for Peace and Justice Education, Villanova Center for Liberal Education, the Ethics and Honors programs.

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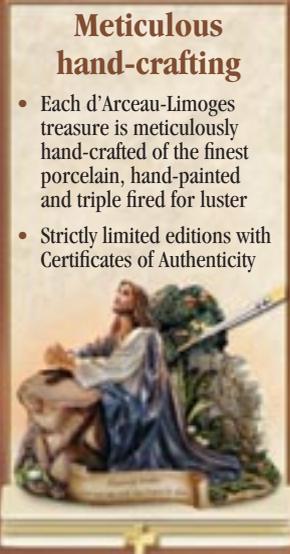
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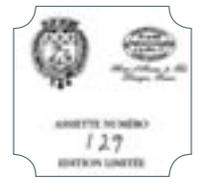


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Katherine Milby from Abbotsford House looks at two vestments once owned by Cardinal John Henry Newman in Abbotsford, Scotland, on Sept. 7. The two vestments will become relics after Cardinal Newman's beatification by Pope Benedict XVI on Sept. 19.



CNS PHOTO/DAVID MOIR, REUTERS



NEWMAN'S WRITINGS OFFER A FRAME-  
WORK FOR A NEW WAY OF THINKING.

# Refashioning Catholic Imagination

BY ROBERT P. IMBELLI

**C**ardinal John Henry Newman, whom Pope Benedict is to beatify on Sept. 19, is one of the Catholic Church's most profound and prolific thinkers. Yet he was no ivory tower theologian. His masterful sermons, as well as classic treatises like *The Idea of a University* and the "Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent," clearly display a pastoral inspiration and intent. Like that of the fathers of the church, from whom he drew intellectual and spiritual nourishment, Newman's unitary vision permits no separation between theology, spirituality and pastoral care.

Reading Newman, one quickly becomes aware of both his many-sided genius and his rootedness in the specific context of 19th-century England. He would not be so exemplary a pastoral theologian were that not so. In addition, he is acknowledged to be one of the great stylists of the English language, skilled in many literary genres. Many enjoy the complex cadences of his writings, while others find that his Victorian rhetoric raises a barrier to appreciation.

But more impressive than Newman's command of the language are the creative principles that animate his vision and guide his practice. Four principles can play a part in the re-centering of the Catholic imagination in a secular age—an age whose coming Newman foresaw and whose challenges he sought to meet. In keeping with his lifelong commitment to education, these may be described as four "learnings": learning to see whole, learning Christ, learning holy living and learning to praise.

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

## Learning to See Whole

In the lectures published as *The Idea of a University*, Cardinal Newman makes clear that his goal is not to propose a curriculum but to promote a quality of mind. The aim of education is to cultivate a discriminating intelligence, one able to perceive relationships and discern connections. The person who possesses these traits is not a passive assimilator of data or a thoughtless purveyor of opinions. He or she strives for a comprehensive view of the real that counters reductionist approaches, whether these take the form of a narrow rationalism or a sentimental romanticism.

Thus Newman's approach to knowledge is radically personalist. It is the whole person—head and heart, reason and imagination—who engages the real. And reality manifests itself as multidimensional: physical and spiritual, aesthetic, moral and religious. Scientific reason provides valid access within the scope of its competency; but so too do poetic imagination, moral conscience and religious faith. Pope Benedict sees in Newman a matchless proponent of that integral humanism he himself advocates in the encyclical "Caritas in Veritate."

Tutored by Newman's careful and expansive teaching, the contemporary believer can learn anew both reverence and gratitude: reverence before the pied beauty of reality that offers itself so generously to human experience and reflection; gratitude for the intimations it provides of mystery that both transcends and beckons.

## Learning Christ

At the heart of Newman's religious faith and theological vision stands the person of Jesus Christ. Here human yearning finds its consummation, and "all the providences of God" cohere around this vivifying center. Thus Incarnation is the central idea or principle that grounds and sustains Christian life and imagination. Moreover, Cardinal Newman views Incarnation not merely as remedy for sin, but as fulfillment of God's creative and sanctifying purpose. In this he consciously resembles his great Oxford predecessor Duns Scotus.

But in Newman's thought, the idea of Incarnation is no impersonal notion. It has all the concrete particularity of its historical embodiment in Jesus Christ. In Jesus men and women encounter the Word of God in person and are called to genuine newness of life.

In Newman's usage the terms *idea* and *image* are often interchangeable, as when he writes in the *Grammar of Assent*:

[Christ has] imprinted the Image or idea of Himself in the minds of His subjects individually; and that

Image, apprehended and worshipped in individual minds, becomes a principle of association, and a real bond of those subjects one with another, who are thus united to the body by being united to that Image.... It is the Image of Him who fulfills the one great need of human nature, the Healer of its wounds, the Physician of the soul, this Image it is which both creates faith, and then rewards it.

This real presence of the risen Christ is implanted in believers through the church's sacraments, especially the Eucharist. The Holy Spirit, who gathers the community in worship, does not replace Christ; the Spirit effects a new presence of Christ. As Newman says in one of his sermons: "The Holy Spirit causes, faith welcomes, the indwelling of Christ in the heart. Thus the Spirit does not take the place of Christ in the soul but secures that place to Christ."

Indeed, the whole purpose of Newman's splendid sermons is precisely to help his hearers to "realize" Christ: to appropriate not merely cognitively but experientially their life-giving relationship to the incarnate Word of God. The motto Newman chose when he was made a cardinal, *Cor ad cor loquitur*, "Heart speaks to heart," sums up his spiritual and pastoral program. Christianity is not adherence to propositions (though they are necessary), nor is it reducible to moral dictates (though they are crucial). Christian faith is to adhere to, to dwell in him who is savior of the world and head of his body, the church. Newman thus unites the objectivity of revelation with the urgent call to realize that revelation in believers' lives.

Newman's understanding of revelation as centered in the person of Jesus Christ fully accords with the Second Vatican Council's path-breaking presentation of revelation and tradition in the constitution "Dei Verbum." He had, with keen foresight, looked forward to a new council to complete the partial labors of the recently adjourned First Vatican Council. Newman's personalist understanding of revelation is reflected in the Second Vatican Council's teaching, in part through the work of the young Joseph Ratzinger. Ratzinger had come to know Newman's work as a seminarian and young professor and found in it resources to broaden and deepen a too constricted neo-scholasticism.

One post-Vatican II development, however, seems much less consonant with Newman's conviction. Some theologians have proposed a separation between faith and beliefs, suggesting that not only is faith not exhausted by beliefs, but that the latter breed intolerance and are expendable. For Newman, Catholic faith always bears dogmatic substance: an objective content that cannot be compromised. Hence

### ON THE WEB

Michael Paul Gallagher, S.J., on  
Cardinal Newman's adventure of faith.  
[americamagazine.org](http://americamagazine.org)

his stalwart opposition to religious and theological “liberalism” that reduces faith to private preference and sentiment. Heart does indeed speak to heart. But the heart has its reasons; it includes cognitive claims. And if we are not to fall into illusion and idolatry, we must “apprehend” the truth of him whom we confess “Lord and Messiah, the Holy One of God.”

## Learning Holy Living

In the final chapter of his careful study, *What Happened at Vatican II*, John W. O’Malley, S.J., offers an intriguing insight. He writes: “Among the recurring themes of the council expressive of its spirit, the call to holiness is particularly pervasive and particularly important.” If Father O’Malley is correct, then the success of Vatican II will ultimately depend upon whether that call is received by the whole people of God. Here too we have much to learn from Newman, especially from the sermons that make up close to one-third of his published works.

It is clear that for Newman, as for Vatican II, revelation was given not primarily for the sake of notional information, but for the sake of the real transformation of the recipient. He fully subscribed to the doctrine of the Eastern fathers that, beyond redemption from sin, the salvation won by Christ aimed at the divinization of humanity, a participation in the very life of God through Christ in the Spirit. But

as the sermons cogently show, there is nothing ethereal for Newman about the implications of this doctrine for the everyday life of the Christian. His is a decidedly mundane view of divinization. His abiding concern is holiness in the everyday.

Before Thérèse of Lisieux had formulated her little way, Newman was instructing his hearers to practice self-denial “in those little things in which obedience is self-denial.” And he insisted: “Nothing is more difficult than to be disciplined and regular in our religion. It is very easy to be religious by fits and starts.” With realistic wisdom he cautions that we may “profess in general terms to wish to be changed,” yet “when particular instances of change are presented to us, we shrink from them.” As the Newman scholar Ian Ker sums up, “Newman’s sermons are distinguished not for vague platitudes and pious aspirations, but for their utter concreteness and definiteness.”

Indeed, one finds in Newman’s sermons and writings rare insight into humanity’s propensity for self-deception. In a private reflection he remarks wryly of an English bishop: “I quite believe him well-disposed to me, but justice, truth, kindness, paternity, generosity would have no chance with him, if Pope or Propaganda spoke otherwise.” Still, so as not to yield to a facile anticlericalism, it bears recalling that on other occasions Newman is quite ready to replace *pope* and *propaganda* with *party* and *publication*. He would whole-

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heartedly endorse Dostoyevsky's admonition, "Above all, avoid lies, all lies, especially the lie to yourself...for active love is a harsh and fearful thing compared with love in dreams."

Only in the graced light of authentic discernment regarding the illusory or real nature of one's faith commitment is ongoing transformation possible. A daily examination of conscience, a reality check, is required to learn holiness. And the reality offered is not less than the grace of new life, a new self transformed in Christ. In a sermon for Pentecost Newman exults: "Christ himself vouchsafes to repeat in each of us in figure and mystery all that he did and suffered in the flesh. He is formed in us, born in us, suffers in us, rises again in us." Christ's grace, though freely given, is ever costly, never cheap.

## Learning to Praise

Finally, the first and last word of Newman's teaching and preaching is reserved for Christ-centered praise. His well-known hymn, "Praise to the Holiest in the Heights," includes these stirring verses:

O wisest love! that flesh and blood  
Which did in Adam fail,  
Should strive afresh against the foe,  
Should strive and should prevail;

And that a higher gift than grace  
Should flesh and blood refine,  
God's Presence and His very Self,  
And essence all divine.

The re-centering of the Catholic imagination could well begin with these words. 

## READ MORE ABOUT NEWMAN

Cardinal Avery Dulles, *John Henry Newman*  
(Continuum)

Ian Ker, *John Henry Newman: a Biography* (Oxford)

Ian Ker, *The Achievement of John Henry Newman*  
(Notre Dame)

John Henry Newman, *Selected Sermons* (Paulist)

[www.newmanreader.org](http://www.newmanreader.org). An extensive listing of Newman's writings and related books.

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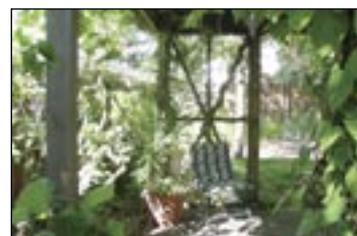
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# A Conspiracy of Bishops and Faithful

Reading Newman's *On Consulting the Faithful* today

BY DREW CHRISTIANSEN

**T**he situation seems so contemporary it is nearly painful. A British school inspector, a Catholic layman, wrote a piece for the Catholic periodical *The Rambler* arguing that Catholic schools, which received state funding, should welcome government inspection. Though the bishops of England had taken no public position, the argument came up against their very decided opinion that school inspections would amount to government interference in the life of the church. For publishing an opinion on church affairs independent of the bishops, *The Rambler* was threatened with ecclesiastical censure. John Henry Newman, the most famous convert in England and an Oratorian priest, believed that the maturity of the church depended on an educated and vigorous laity. So to prevent the suppression of *The Rambler*, he agreed to serve as its editor.

In an editorial, Newman apologized to the bishops, writing that before promulgating the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, Pope Pius IX had taken into account the faith and devotion of the laity. Newman pleaded for a similar sensitivity on the part of the English hierarchy. "It is at least natural," he wrote, "to

anticipate such an act of kind feeling and sympathy in great practical matters." All the same, the hierarchy remained unhappy, and Newman was forced to resign. Before taking his leave in 1859, however, he published, unsigned, an essay that attempted to justify a fuller participation of the laity in the life of the wider church.

## Sympathy in Practical Matters

"On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine" was newly edited and republished in 1961 on the eve of the Second Vatican Council and has since become a minor classic. It argues that the church does not consist of pastors attended by dutiful faithful, but that it is rather "a conspiracy of pastors and faithful" (*pastorum et fidelium conspiratio*) in which the faithful should have a respected place justified by their proven witness to Christian orthodoxy. In the bishops' relationship with the laity, Newman argued, "there is something...which is not in the pastors alone."

The burden of Newman's proof for the role of the laity came from the accumulation of evidence he presented of the erring of bishops and the fidelity of the laity in a number of doctrinal controversies in the ancient and modern church, but especially the Arian heresy of the fourth century, on which he was an expert. During much of that period, he wrote, "there was a tempo-

rary suspense of the functions of the 'Ecclesia docens,' the teaching church. "The body of Bishops failed in their confession of faith." Agreeing with the Italian theologian Giovanni Perrone, S.J., Newman argued "the voice of tra-



dition may in certain cases express itself, not by Councils, nor Fathers, nor Bishops, but 'the *communis fidelium sensus*'—that is, the shared sense of the faithful.

Newman backed his position with 22 thumbnail sketches of defection on the part of the hierarchy and 20 instances of faithful witness by the laity. In a later summary (in 1871), Newman concluded, "taking a wide

view of history, we are obliged to say that the governing body of the church came up short and the governed were pre-eminent in faith, zeal, courage and constancy.”

Newman’s point was not to praise the one group and shame the other. It was rather to assert their importance to one another, to affirm their lived unity in the one body of Christ. In particular, he wanted to urge upon the hierarchy an intellectual as well as affective consideration for the laity. He proposed that the magisterium is “more happy” when it has “enthusiastic partisans” than “when she cuts off the faithful from the study of her divine doctrines and the sympathy of her divine contemplations, and requires from them a *fides implicita* in her word.” When the teaching office leans excessively on its authority, it mistakes commanding for teaching. “In the educated classes,” he counseled, such use of the pastoral office “will terminate in indifference and in the poorer in superstition.”

### Policy Deliberations Today

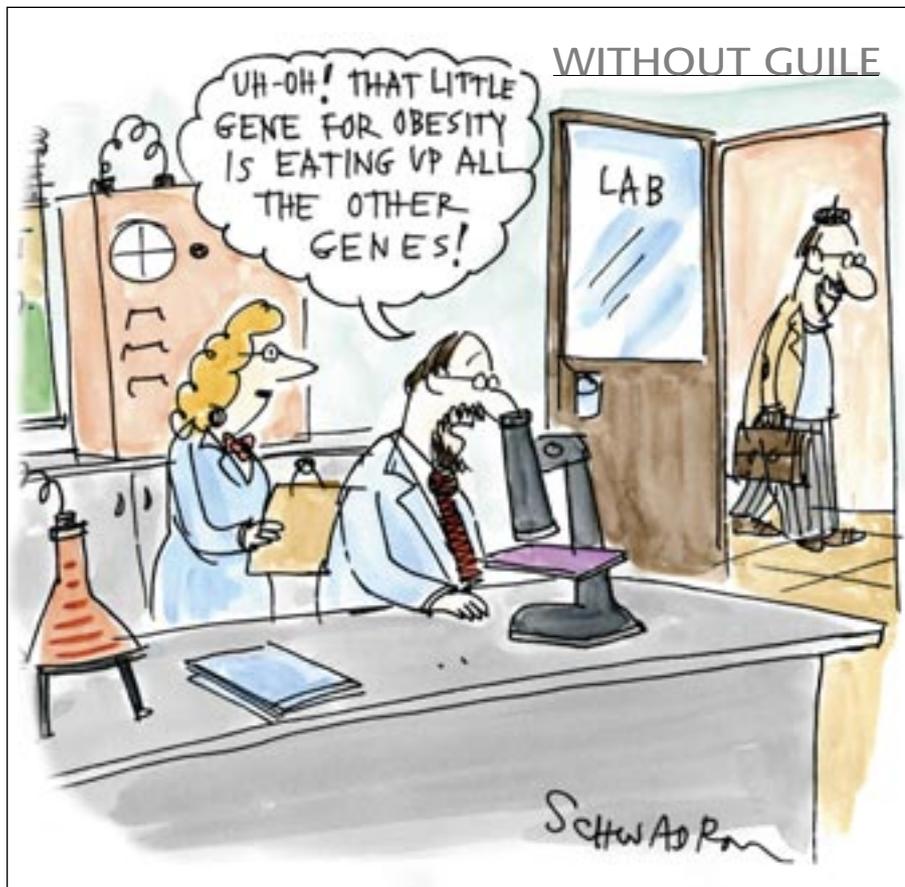
As Pope Benedict XVI formally beatifies John Henry Newman this week, it seems that neither Newman’s reading of church history nor his articulation of the place of the faithful in the full life of the church has been held against him. As Catholics in the United States, in the wake of the passage of health care reform legislation, consider the scope of episcopal authority in public life and the freedom of religious and lay people in the same sphere, it would be good to take a look again at Newman’s argument. Since the modern church has repeatedly held that the church’s witness in secular affairs belongs properly to the laity, his appeal to bishops for affective and intellectual alertness to the judgment of the laity seems to apply in a special way to deliberations on public policy. The Rambler essay, after all, aimed to back the freedom of thought and speech of the faithful in public affairs.

Newman’s prediction about the neg-

ative consequences of excessive reliance on episcopal authority have proved prophetic. As one close observer has lamented of the reception of some especially stern episcopal comments last spring on health care reform, “The Left no longer listens to the bishops, and the Right only listens to learn whether the bishops are saying what they want said.”

Healing the tensions now fracturing the U.S. church would be aided by restraint in extending teaching authority into political decision making and by a greater realization of the need to persuade both the faithful and non-Catholic audiences as free people of mature judgment. Especially as preparation of the 2011 statement by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops on political responsibility gets underway, the exercise of the teaching office on matters of public ethics needs to be adapted, as has been done for several decades past, to addressing an educated, mature and responsible community of laypeople, clergy and religious. We would do well to remember, too, the particular danger Cardinal Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, feared episcopal conferences would face through engagement in public affairs—namely, that they would become too closely entangled in the political rough-and-tumble of the day, thereby obscuring the light of the Gospel for the world.

A revival of the church in the United States as “a *conspiratio* of pastors and faithful” will begin with expressions of that natural consideration of which Newman wrote. It will be augmented by renewed recognition of the proper role of the laity in public life, with space for their prudential judgment with respect to public policy decisions; and it will be fully realized when there is wide consultation and cooperation by the bishops with Catholics of varying shades of opinion in bringing the Gospel to life in our increasingly secular culture. **A**



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## GOD'S ARCHITECT

*The Sagrada Familia basilica in Barcelona*

When Pope Benedict XVI visits Spain's most popular tourist attraction on Nov. 6, he will consecrate the 128-year-old structure known as the Expiatory Temple of the Holy Family, and it will become a Catholic church. Since Barcelona is already home to a cathedral, this monumental building by the famed Catalan architect Antoni Gaudí (1852-1926) will be designated the Basilica of the Sagrada Familia.

Even in its unfinished state, the Sagrada Familia is a jaw-dropper. The building can hold 14,000 worshippers; and its towers, when finished in the next two years, will soar over the Barcelona skyline. Yet it is not just the building's size that amazes, but the scale of Gaudí's spiritual ambition: the geometric forms he found in creation have been placed at the service of liturgy and worship. Perhaps only St. Thomas Aquinas and Dante can

match Gaudí in having attempted, in their own genres, to condense the entirety of Catholic doctrine into a single work.

As I stood recently under its just-finished golden canopy, like the roof of a magical forest, I found it hard to imagine the finished building. A huge truck sat in the nave amid the whiz and whirl of machines, while men in hard hats worked furiously to ready the altar.

Work has not yet begun on the Glory facade, where the Credo will float heavenward on suspended clouds. At least two more decades will be needed to complete Gaudí's vision. But when the interior is ready, a milestone will have been reached.

The recent progress has been astonishing. The Sagrada Familia has been financed privately—in Gaudí's time, the late 19th century, through donations, these days by three million

tourists a year (more than visit either the Prado or the Alhambra), who pay 12 euros each. Ten years ago, when the Japanese-born sculptor Etsuro Sotóo became a Catholic, he could never have imagined that the building would be so ready so soon. "There were few tourists and not a lot of money then," said Sotóo, who began working on the Sagrada Familia in 1978.

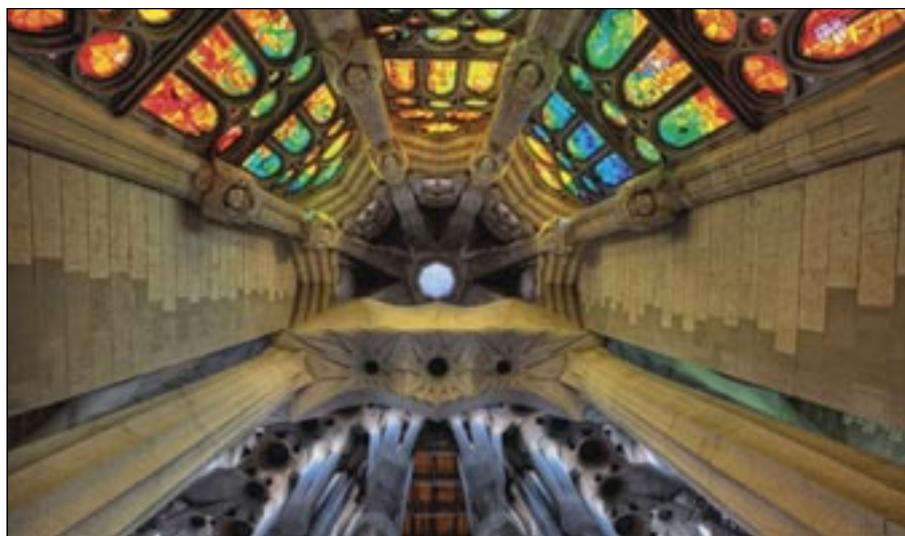
The 1992 Olympics put Barcelona and Gaudí's *templo* on the tourist map. But only in the past five years, as popular fascination for Gaudí has grown, have visitors brought in sufficient cash to accelerate construction. It is easy to miss the irony of the story: Europe's largely secular, agnostic crowds have funded the construction of the continent's last great Catholic church.

The archbishop of Barcelona, Cardinal Luis Martínez Sistach, believes the Sagrada Familia will be "an 'atrium of the gentiles' open to all who seek beauty, truth and kindness" in Barcelona, city of hedonism and tolerance, *el Amsterdam del sur*. Gaudí's church "brings the religious and the divine—the Gospel message of human dignity—into the heart of secularised western European culture," said the cardinal.

The papal Mass of consecration in November will be attended by Spain's royals, its anticlerical prime minister and at least 50 cardinals. The consecration will also give Pope Benedict XVI an opportunity to summon European culture to its Christian roots by re-twinning faith and art.

### Gaudí's Art

Gaudí is the antithesis of postmodern subjectivity. For him, beauty is the splendor of truth. A truth exists in the material world that echoes Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word. The artist



Looking upward in the Basilica of the Sagrada Familia

PHOTO: JOAN JOSEP BONET/TEMPLE EXPIATORI SAGRADA FAMILIA

unveils but does not create this truth, which is accessible to anyone from anywhere, for the Word is at once objective and universal.

For Gaudí, an artist must obey creation, the manifestation of God's will. Take gravity, for example. Gaudí sought to work with gravity, converting an enemy into a friend. His buildings look curiously upside-down. The Sagrada Familia is a summary of the geometric forms—hyperbolic paraboloids—from which eggs, bones, muscle and mountains are made.

“With two rulers and a cord,” Gaudí once said, “one generates all architecture.” In those two straight lines Gaudí saw the Father and the Son, each unique and infinite, with the cord of the Holy Spirit (the love between the first two persons of the Trinity) binding them together. All of creation is formed from these surfaces, which bear the Trinitarian imprint. When you pray in the Sagrada Familia, you will be enveloped by structural forms that are closer to God's designs than are those of any other church. “People will find answers to their questions, to their dissatisfaction with materialism,” says Sotóo.

### Human Family, Holy Family

It falls to Joan Rigol, a former president of the Catalan parliament who is now in charge of the building works of the association that owns the Sagrada Familia, to manage the delicate shift from tourist mecca to Catholic basilica. He must do so without alienating the millions of nonbelievers who support it. The Sagrada Familia, he told me, must keep the tourists but also attract the pilgrims. Hence his plans to create “not just spaces” within the structure, “but also times of day” when visitors—believers and nonbelievers alike—will be asked to pause and reflect. He says the basilica will be dedicated to promoting the human family, “not just in the biological sense



of father, mother, children but in the sense that we all form one large family.”

How will the spiritual infrastructure—Mass, confession, adoration—happen without an upsurge in vocations? “That all still has to be worked out,” Rigol shrugs.

Josep Maria Tarragona, a leading authority on Gaudí who is currently

writing the *positio* (position paper) for his beatification, believes that opening the Sagrada Familia for worship is an act of faith by the cardinal in the architect's massively optimistic vision of Christianity in Europe. “Gaudí saw his church as a kind of Lourdes dedicated to the Holy Family. The liturgies he foresaw would involve a bishop and 200 priests. It was pretty outrageous

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for his own time, but for our own," laughs Tarragona, "it's incredible."

### St. Gaudí?

Tarragona is one of a small group of visionaries who in the early 1990s proposed the idea of beatifying Gaudí. The Junta de Obras (the building association), then under a different president, opposed the move, resenting what its members saw as an attempt to "restrict" Gaudí's appeal, while secular Barcelona deplored what it saw as the church stealing "their" artist.

Finding little support from bishops, the Association for the Beatification of Antoni Gaudí was established as a civil association, printing prayer cards and documenting Gaudí's sanctity. The church endorsement came in 2000 from Pope John Paul II, who asked Cardinal Ricard Carles if it were true that Gaudí was a layman. With Pope John Paul's blessing, the *nihil obstat* was granted in months. The association is awaiting a miracle, but with Barcelona's archbishop, the new president of the Junta de Obras and Rome (now in the person of Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone) all now eager, Gaudí's road to canonization is clearly open.

The architect's conversion took place when he was in his 40s, a decade after he had begun work on the Sagrada Familia; it was a mature decision that he saw through to its final consequences.

While in his 30s Gaudí was the most sought-after (and expensive) architect in Spain, whose wealthy patrons hired him to design some of the most remarkable houses ever built. Some are Barcelona landmarks. The artist's base for many years was a workers' colony south of the city, funded by the industrialist Eusebi Güell. It was the most advanced architectural studio of its day.

Favoring the fibrous forms of nature, Gaudí designed structures that can be, on first encounter, deeply

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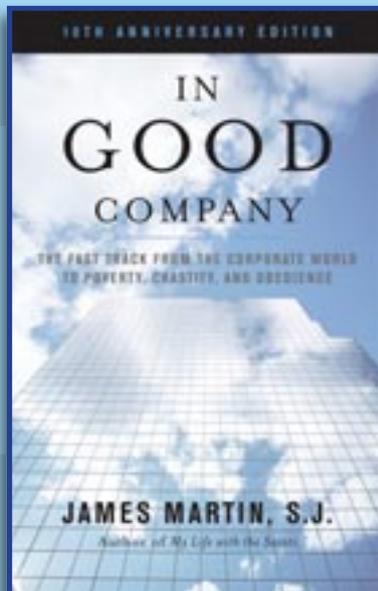
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unsettling: walls swell, columns defy gravity, surfaces flow like lava. But as in nature, his forms serve function. An architect who seeks that function, Gaudí believed, can arrive at beauty. “Those who seek out the laws of nature as support for their new work collaborate with the Creator,” he said. “Originality consists in returning to the origin.”

Genius and success threatened Gaudí’s rapid-burn life. After Pepita Moreu, a beautiful woman who fascinated Gaudí, spurned his offer of marriage, his life took a sharp turn. The architect shed his wealth and, from his 40s until his death at 74, took up asceticism, including a meat-and-alcohol-free diet and regular prayer.

Gaudí took over work on the Sagrada Família in 1883, revising the original architect’s plans from scratch. But in 1906 Gaudí’s life was framed by daily confession and Mass; his spiritual life and great work began to merge. He devoted himself singlemindedly to the “expiatory temple,” knowing it would take generations after his death to make good his epic vision. “My

client,” he would joke when people asked when it would be finished, “is not in a hurry.”

Thanks to Tarragona and the other promoters of Gaudí’s beatification, including Etsuro Sotóo, the architect has been rescued from the myths that attached to the popular interest in his work. The Catholic ascetic Gaudí is now part of the guidebook account.

“Gaudí, apart from his faith, is incomprehensible,” Tarragona says. “What the Sagrada Família offers artistically is the same

whether you have faith or not. But only understanding Gaudí’s religious culture and purpose can you grasp his art and message.”

That will be easier after November, when form will at last meet the function for which “God’s architect” designed the Sagrada Família: Europe’s last great church—or the first of its new Christian age.

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**AUSTEN IVEREIGH** is *European correspondent for America* and author of *Faithful Citizens: A Practical Guide to Community Organizing and Catholic Social Teaching* (Darton, Longman & Todd).

### ON THE WEB

Raymond A. Schroth, S.J., reviews the film “The American.”  
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# THE JUDGMENT OF HISTORY

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### POPE AND DEVIL The Vatican’s Archives And the Third Reich

By Hubert Wolf  
Belknap/Harvard Univ. Press. 336p  
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In 1929, shortly before he was to leave Germany to become cardinal secretary of state, the then papal nuncio and future pontiff, Eugenio Pacelli, expressed his apprehension about

Hitler: “This man is completely obsessed,” he said. “All that is not of use to him, he destroys; all that he says and writes carries the mark of his egocentricity; this man is capable of trampling on corpses and eliminating all that obstructs him.” Four years later, when Hitler became chancellor, Pacelli’s prophecy was fulfilled.

The Catholic Church’s record during the Nazi era has long been the subject of intense discussion, not all of it

edifying. Part of the problem is that emotion and speculation, rather than documented facts, have too often driven the debate.

Most of the controversy has focused on the church’s reaction to the Holocaust, when Pacelli himself ruled as Pope Pius XII (1939-58). Still, the preceding papacy of Pius XI (1922-39) is of equal importance, especially as it casts light on subsequent events and decisions. Those years encompass the early part of Hitler’s dictatorship, when Cardinal Pacelli was second in command at the Vatican, serving as Pius XI’s secretary of state.

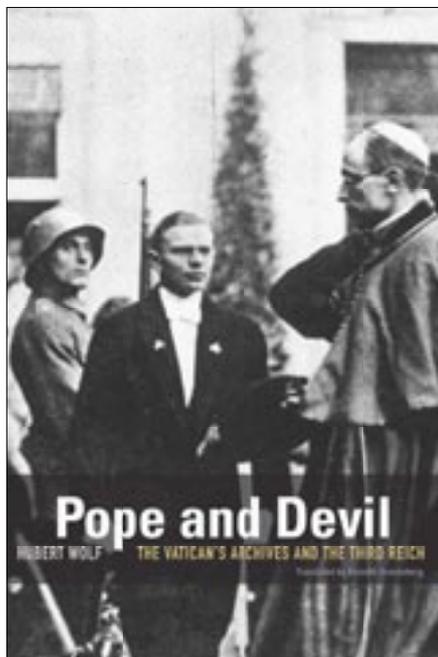
Any informed treatment of that era has to begin with the primary sources. The great value of *Pope and Devil* by Hubert Wolf, a respected priest-scholar at the University of Münster, is that it draws heavily upon the Vatican archives now available—those from the entire pontificate of Pius XI and (some) from Pius XII’s.

*Pope and Devil* begins with the years of Germany’s Weimar Republic, where Pacelli served as nuncio (1917-29). His reports to Rome reflect a preconciliar mind-set, but also stand out for their intelligence and prescience. In 1923, for example, after Hitler’s failed putsch, Pacelli sent a dispatch to Rome warning of the future dictator’s hatred of Jews and Catholics. The following year he called Nazism “perhaps the most dangerous heresy of our time”—a remarkable comment considering the church’s fear and loathing of Communism.

By the time Pacelli became secretary of state, in 1930, the Vatican had been fully apprised of the danger of Hitler’s movement. Why, then, did the Vatican sign a concordat with Germany in 1933, just six months after Hitler came to power? For the same reason the Holy See offered diplomatic recognition to the Soviet Union even earlier: because it wanted to secure religious freedom and uphold the rights of the church as an

institution. Were those rights suppressed, the church would never be able to defend Catholics—let alone non-Catholics—who looked to it for protection.

The Vatican did not regard either venture as a friendship pact, but rather



as bulwarks against ruthless totalitarian movements.

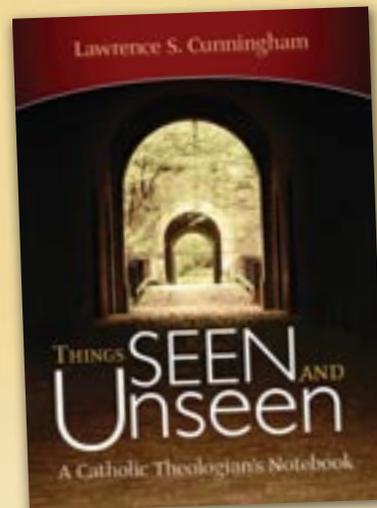
This and more becomes clear in the book's outstanding treatment of the concordat's origins, context and reverberations. For years, critics of the Vatican have accused the "Roman party," led by Cardinal Pacelli, of sacrificing the Catholic resistance in Germany in exchange for the concordat. According to this narrative, Pacelli's supposed machinations also explain why the German bishops qualified their hard-line stance against National Socialism. Now, using the new archives, Wolf refutes the charge, vindicating Pacelli. Claims that Vatican officials were behind the dissolution of the Catholic Center Party, as well as the latter's earlier decision to vote for the Enabling Act (which helped Hitler consolidate his power), "have absolutely no basis in fact." The party "acted completely independently" of Rome, writes Wolf. The same is

true of the German episcopacy's decision to moderate its declarations, after the Nazis took power. In fact, had Cardinal Pacelli had his way, "Hitler would have paid a heavy price for the Center's consent to the Enabling Act and the bishops' retraction of their condemnation."

Wolf does not, however, let the Vatican off there. An underdeveloped theology toward Judaism prevailed at the time, and Wolf believes it hampered even good men like Pius XI. Though justly praised for his famous 1938 declaration, "Anti-Semitism is inadmissible. Spiritually, we are all Semites." Both that statement and a similar one 10 years earlier were weakened by simultaneous cautions against Jewish faith and culture. Pius XI's 1928 statement condemned "with all its might" that "particular hatred which today commonly goes by the name of anti-Semitism." But what precipitated it were efforts by the Friends of Israel, a Catholic organization, to cleanse the traditional Good Friday liturgy of its insensitivities toward "unbelieving" Jews. After internal discussion and debate, the pope refused, believing any such changes might compromise the church's evangelical mandate. The Friends of Israel organization was dissolved—albeit with the accompanying condemnation of anti-Semitism—and its ecumenical concerns were not properly addressed until the Second Vatican Council.

Valuable as his book is, Wolf occasionally trips up. He misses numerous papal statements and interventions on behalf of Jews, suggests that the Vatican ignored Edith Stein's plea to warn the faithful about the evils of Nazism (that was done in abundance) and claims there was a "lack of response" from Rome to Kristallnacht (the historian Martin Gilbert notes the Vatican *did* protest the pogrom, earning the Nazis' wrath). And it is a serious error to write that the concor-

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dat “gave Hitler’s government its first agreement under international law.” That agreement, signed on July 20, 1933, was preceded by Germany’s trade agreement with the Soviet Union (May 5); the Four-Power Pact with France, Britain and Italy (June 7); and a separate Anglo-German exchange pact. The League of Nations recognized Germany’s new government before the concordat was signed; and the Haavara agreement on emigration—between Germany and Palestinian Jews—was completed in August 1933, one month before the concordat was finally ratified. The latter was hardly an isolated international event.

Further, though Hitler rejoiced over the concordat’s signing, he later railed against it as a means of anti-Nazi sub-

version; for one thing, it was being used as a vehicle to shield Jews.

*Pope and Devil*, while imperfect, makes an important contribution to Catholic historiography. The disputes it explores are likely to continue, even after the wartime archives of the Vatican are fully released. But progress is being made. The historian John Lukacs once said that the job of a good historian is not to fix truth once and for all, but to correct history’s untruths so that posterity will have a better chance of coming closer to it. In *Pope and Devil*, Professor Wolf has helped us do just that.

### ON THE WEB

Francis X. Clooney, S.J., blogs on comparative theology. [americamagazine.org/things](http://americamagazine.org/things)

**WILLIAM DOINO JR.** is a Catholic researcher and writer who specializes in the history of the Holocaust.

ANNA NUSSBAUM KEATING

## TRUE CONFESSIONS

### LIT

#### A Memoir

By Mary Karr  
Harper Perennial. 432p \$14.99  
(paperback)

A few weeks ago I spent a muggy evening on my front porch ruminating. I wondered how it was that in a lifetime of reading I had seldom encountered a book whose primary character was a mother—let alone a wise, funny, faithful mother, like the one I hoped someday to be?

Several weeks later, as Mary Karr might tell it, a book showed up like an “unearned gift,” like proof that some “mystery [was] carrying me.” *Lit* (released in 2009; re-released in paperback this year), is Karr’s masterful new memoir about her life: as a writer and mother, her marriage and divorce, her alcoholism, recovery,

search for God and ultimate decision to join the Catholic Church.

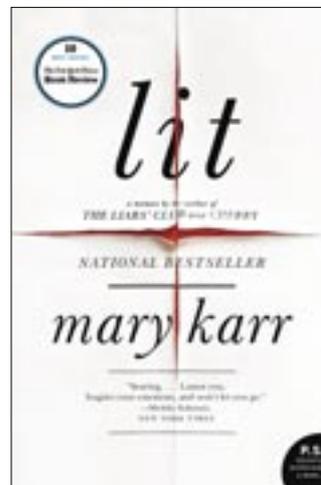
The third in a trilogy of dark, funny memoirs, *Lit* follows on the heels of Karr’s previous best-sellers, *The Liars Club* and *Cherry*, which tell the stories of her wretched small-town Texas childhood and rebellious adolescence. Even if you haven’t read those previous books, *Lit* stands on its own. In it, Karr summarizes much of her backstory and speaks for the first time as an adult. Honest and not about settling scores—if anyone comes off looking bad, it is usually the author herself—*Lit* is the best memoir I have ever read and, incident-

tally, a great comfort and guide.

In a time when the church is particularly embattled, this book reminded me of all the good, funny and flawed people who comprise it and even justify its existence. What’s more, it made me want to get down on my knees and pray. As one of Karr’s Alcoholics Anonymous friends barks at her, “Try getting on your effing knees tonight. Just find ten things you’re grateful for.”

Karr writes of her life as an alcoholic, disposing of empty bottles like body parts in dumpsters all around town, ruled by fear and full of anxiety and excitement, but never true sorrow or lasting joy until she “lets go” and begins to pray on her knees multiple times a day at the urging of other former addicts, who convince Karr that she needs some kind of prayer life if she wants to stay sober. She is reluctant. She writes, “I’m trying to start hearing the word God without some reflexive flinch that coughs out the word idiot.”

Karr began her writing life as a poet, and it shows in the care she takes with each line. For instance, when her husband comes to visit her in a mental hospital after a suicide attempt, Karr describes kissing his cheek this way: “I place my lips on his square jaw and taste the living salt of him.” Like Augustine’s before her, Karr’s prose often sounds more like poetry. Also like Augustine, Karr is intelligent, well connected and a bit self-conscious to find herself in this ragtag religion. She knows what you’re thinking. She knows how crazy this all sounds. It used to sound pretty crazy to her as well. That is part of Karr’s charm as a narrator. She takes herself lightly, even when dealing with the heaviest of matters.



In the end, *Lit* is perhaps a *Confessions* for our age. Like Augustine, Karr is a public intellectual and university professor with something to lose. And here she is being schooled on how to live a meaningful life by broken and unexpected sources. A heroin addict, for example, tells her, "Say thanks to your higher power"; her 8-year-old son in Power Ranger pajamas announces he would like to go to church "to see if God's there"; a schizophrenic tells her in a moment of clarity, "Surrender.... Yield up what makes you want to scream and cry. Enter into that quiet...and pray to be an instrument of peace"; and an elderly Coke-swilling, cigarette-smoking monk who hears her confession says by way of closing, "Leave all that stuff here with me.... Go wear the world like a loose garment." Karr is aware of how strange this all sounds to a secular audience and of how circuitous her own journey has been. After all, her father used to tell her as a little girl in Texas, "Church is a trick on poor people." But ultimately, for Karr, faith is a choice like any other: "You can only try it out."

Tellingly, *Lit* is not marketed as spiritual autobiography. The groping for God that occupies much of the second half of the book is not mentioned in the publisher's blurb, but it is clearly at the heart of the story. Unlike most conversion narratives written by or about people who go on to live extraordinarily holy or influential lives—St. Augustine, Thomas Merton, Dorothy Day—Karr's book reminds us of the remarkable and quiet heroism of ordinary life: getting up every morning, staying sober, working, saying thank you, kneeling in prayer and trying not to scream obscenities at the people we love the most, the people who have failed us and whom we have failed.

It's lovely, too, to read a book by a self-described "black belt sinner" who is female. Male narratives of sin and redemption are seemingly ubiquitous, but there are fewer female guideposts along the way. Thanks to Mary Karr, who has done something to change that.

---

ANNA NUSSBAUM KEATING *lives and writes in South Bend, Ind.*

an overview of the field of comparative theology.

The central process Clooney proposes is that Christians read others' scriptures under the guidance of expert commentators and then return to their own tradition, where new insights might emerge. There is some elitism embedded in a methodology that expects expertise not only in one's own tradition, but in another's as well. Yet Clooney is confident that this reading practice is accessible to a broad audience:

With some focused effort, a Christian reader can pick up and read a Hindu text such as *Mutal Tiruvantati* 44, trace the use of it within the Hindu tradition, re-read it in light of some remembered Christian parallels, then re-read some Christian sources in that new light. In some cases, at least, this complication and expansion of the reading process changes us religiously. We do read; we do learn from what we read; we do ponder our reading; this does affect how we read other texts; and all of this does have a yet deeper effect on how we imagine our encounter with God.

Since scriptures and commentaries from the traditions of the globe are available in translation, it makes sense that they might provide a basic orientation to the faith, even for the outsider. And yet it is questionable just how much understanding can be gained without reference to wider fields of meaning in lived practice, historical memory and a tradition's interrelated system of symbols. Clooney himself recognizes that text-study and broader engagement with a living tradition are mutually informing in the task of interreligious learning. In arguably the most moving passage of the book, Clooney brings the reader

JEANNINE HILL FLETCHER

## A WORLD OF FAITH

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### COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

#### Deep Learning

#### Across Religious Borders

By Francis X. Clooney, S.J.  
Wiley-Blackwell. 200p \$29.95  
(paperback)

The proximity of religious difference in our globalized world raises new tasks for Christians. As our workplaces, schools and communities are increasingly multireligious, it's a good idea to have some understanding of the faiths our neighbors profess. But as this volume suggests, our interreligious milieu provides a new impetus

not just for learning about our neighbors' faiths but learning from them. Francis X. Clooney, S.J., is a most trustworthy guide.

Clooney, a professor at Harvard Divinity School, has spent his years as a Jesuit Catholic priest deeply involved in the life and learning of the Hindu religious community. He has written a wide range of volumes on the theological traditions of Hinduism. He demonstrates with his life's work what it means to cross over into other religious streams and come back home again to one's own. Sharing the contours of his practice, Clooney provides

along on one of his frequent visits to Laksmi's temple in India and the *darshan* of the Goddess (in which deity and devotee are "seen"). As awkward as the experience may be to fit back into a Christian framework, the experience eventually brings him back to his home tradition in a new way. The book, then, charts the path of the comparative theologian beyond and back, in text and in life.

*Comparative Theology* also chronicles earlier comparative projects, surely to establish a distance from them but also to recognize how we are indebted to these forerunners. Clooney first identifies with the early Jesuits in mission, whose explicit aim was conversion but who nonetheless hoped to learn as much as possible about the religion of the other. From them we are encouraged to make explicit our faith commitments.

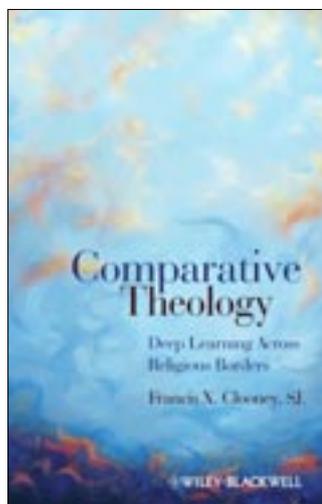
Today's comparative theology also has roots in the comparative study of

religions. In this case, scholars were not interested in converting those whose religion they studied, but in providing careful and detailed scholarship on these traditions. Yet while purporting to be objective, these academics often employed theological judgments to ultimately argue for Christianity as the superior truth. From both trajectories we learn that faith and scholarship can go together, but hear cautionary tales of rushing to "comfortable conclusions." A spiritually grounded, intellectually rigorous inquiry into another tradition that may destabilize theological certainties is what Clooney has in mind. A chapter devoted to presenting contemporaries who share his inclina-

tion as academic theologians interested in interreligious learning demonstrates that this discipline is now emerging as a distinctive field.

Although comparative theology is opening up as a new discipline for theologians in the 21st century, its importance is not merely academic. Nor is it ultimately practical. The primary aim is not simply to get to know the faith of our neighbors. Rather, the importance of this project is deeply theological, culminat-

ing in the argument that through the faith of the other we might be opened up in new ways to the mystery that Christians call God. From a deep rootedness in the practice of Christian prayer, Clooney reflects that:



in contemplation we construct a path of religious belonging that suits our own spiritual imagining; we do this according to our traditions but also the possibilities available in our time and place. In all of this, God agrees to meet us there; if our contemplation happens to cross religious boundaries, God agrees to meet us there too.

Although framed as a descriptive account of the new theological task, the text is, finally, a theology in its proper sense: a treatise on the God who wishes to be known, "to be recognized in recognizable terms." Clooney invites us to witness God being recognized within diverse religious traditions and to be drawn into God's presence there.

**JEANNINE HILL FLETCHER** is associate professor of theology at Fordham University in New York City.

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Institute, "Money and Faith," Oct. 29-30: Speakers include Margaret McCarthy, Barbara Cohen, Rev. Terry Wysong and Mufti Ikram ul Haq. For other retreats and programs, visit [www.wisdomhouse.org](http://www.wisdomhouse.org), or call (860) 567-3163.

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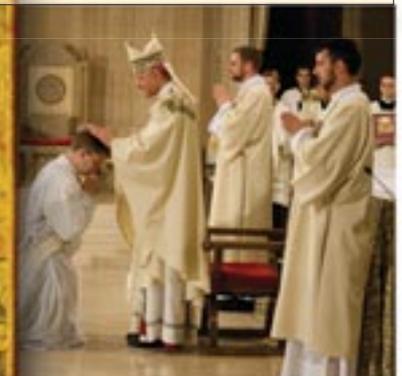
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## LETTERS

### Relax, They Won't Hurt

I have just perused the changes referred to in "Musicians Prepare for Coming Changes in Mass Text" (8/2). They are very minor. They seem to reflect a return to translations that older members might remember from the joint Latin-English missals. In this respect, Novus Ordo might be considered the "change," whereas the new texts represent a traditional and more faithful translation and continuation of the original Mass texts. I welcome them. I'm sorry for the inconvenience to musicians and choirs. Maybe they can readapt some of the music and lyrics from the pre-Vatican II days. The changes are so minor there should not be anywhere near the disruption caused in the wake of the Second Vatican Council.

JAMES CARUSO  
*Fairfax, Va.*

### A Realized Flight of Fancy

In your Current Comment, "Duty Bound" (7/19), you say that frustration among laypeople mounts when they have no way to respond to the sexual abuse crisis other than by writing letters, curtailing donations or stopping church attendance. But they want to help the church.

The problem is not that they cannot express their opinions, come forward with their ideas and so forth, whether individually or through Voice of the Faithful or another group. The problem is that no one with any authority is willing or courageous enough to listen to them and engage their ideas. Last spring in Vienna, Cardinal Christoph Schönborn not only held a service of penance and reconciliation for the victims of ecclesiastical abuse and not only invited We Are Church, the European version of V.O.T.F., founded in Austria, to attend, but also asked them to help

plan the service in the Cathedral of St. Stephen. Can you in your wildest flights of fancy imagine anything remotely similar happening in the United States? Where are our leaders when we need them?

NICHOLAS CLIFFORD  
*New Haven, Vt.*

### We Broke It and Cannot Fix It

Concerning your editorial on Iraq, "Turning Point" (8/16), I would like to ascribe honorable motives to President Bush, but after having followed events closely since Sept. 11, 2001 and read several books, I believe the decision to invade Iraq was neither honorable nor honestly portrayed. He undermined the Constitution and U.S. treaty obligations, introducing an amoral view of the law that a disturbingly large number of Americans now accept. Bush's belief that democracy can be exported like so many bushels of wheat reflects astounding ignorance. To make sure ardor for his adventure did not wane, he declined to ask the public to share in the sacrifice through taxation, passing the debt to our children.

Now we are weary and withdrawing from a country we broke and cannot fix. Now sectarian conflicts will plunge the country into civil war, resulting in a Muslim theocracy under another strongman, harboring antipathy toward the West, a place no longer tolerant of Jews or Christians or the rights of women. Democracy, like morality, cannot be imposed.

MIKE APPLETON  
*Winter Park, Fla.*

### To Remember Is Better

Kerry Weber's Of Many Things column on Aug. 16 reminds me how several years ago I lost my favorite camera in 400 feet of water in a bay in Alaska. I have never taken a vacation picture since. The freedom of seeing the world with my own eyes and remembering with my own mind is wonderful. When I need to bring an image home, I buy a postcard. I realize that no one

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else really wants to see my vacation pictures, and I can cherish my mental images more clearly.

LORETTA KALINA  
*Elmhurst, Ill.*

### Reagan Rides Again

In the current comment “An Acting President” (7/5) your author described President Ronald Reagan as an actor who “never saw military service.” In fact, Reagan was an officer in the U.S. Army, commissioned out of R.O.T.C. into the horse cavalry. His eyesight was so poor that he could not serve in combat. This service gave him a lifelong love of horses, and replicas of his boots were placed in the stirrups of the caparisoned horse at his state funeral. Assigned to Hollywood, he helped produce training films for the troops, several of which I saw as an enlisted man during the war.

RICHARD L. D'ARCY  
*Manassas, Va.*

### V.O.T.F. Struggles On

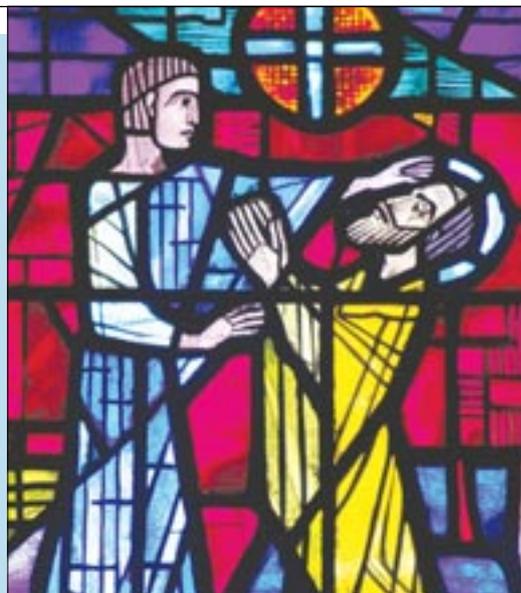
I feel duty bound to write about your brave editorial on lay involvement in the church, “Duty Bound” (Current Comment, 7/19). As one of the original members of Voice of the Faithful on Long Island in 2002, I have wondered if anyone in any position of authority really cares about the need for a committed laity to voice its opposition to the anti-Vatican II forces which seem to have taken over the reins of the hierarchical church.

On Long Island the reputation of V.O.T.F. is mixed. We are painted as radicals by the present leaders. While some priests “cheer us on,” few do so publicly. We struggle because our cause is just and in keeping with the best reform-minded members of the church.

EDWARD J. THOMPSON  
*Farmingdale, N.Y.*

### Don't Blame Immigrants

I agree with Andrew Selee's “Crossing the Line” (8/16), that the United



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### 2010 Homily Resources

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#### OCT. 10, 28th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Sr. Carolyn Osiek, RSCJ, Th.D.

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States is the primary reason for the Mexican drug wars; but I disagree with his suggestion that immigration is the root cause.

America's insatiable appetite for marijuana and other illegal drugs is the major cause of the war and murders in Mexico. Our nation's tolerance for drug use and the lack of immediate rehabilitation for addicts exacerbates the problem. As our demand requires a supply, a person in Mexico can make a small fortune getting cocaine across the border. Ignoring these aspects and blaming immigration laws is to avoid the painful truth.

MICHAEL YOUNG, C.S.S.P.  
Cape Coral, Fla.

### Cancel—No, Don't!

A month ago I cancelled my subscription, although it was partly under the inspiration of *America* articles that I had started a master's program in pastoral theology at Loyola Marymount. Overwhelmed by the required readings and the growing pile of issues of *America* in my bed-

side drawer that I had only glanced at, I thought a leave of absence would ease my frustration.

Now here I am at 5 a.m., looking for inspiration for a research paper; and I find myself searching your Web site for recent articles that piqued my interest. So I owe you one. I'm back. Thank you for what you do.

MICHELE VOLZ  
Newport Beach, Calif.

### Dignity vs. the Feeding Tube

Re "What's Extraordinary?" (8/30): Is there not a contradiction between respect for the dignity of the human person, even in a persistent vegetative state, and the demand that this person be kept "nourished" and "hydrated" through a surgically installed "feeding" tube?

Can one die naturally and with dignity intact while being subjected to such an inhumane medical procedure, which is without realistic possibility of permitting reversal of the P.V.S. and regained health?

FRANK BERGEN  
Tucson, Ariz.

### Feeding Tubes and Dementia

In response to "What's Extraordinary?" by Gerald D. Coleman, S.S. (8/30): Nursing homes have boiled all this hifalutin philosophy down to this: "If you want to go to a Catholic nursing home, you have to have a feeding tube." It is much cheaper for the nursing home to drip or pour a can of liquid into a feeding tube than to employ expensively trained aides to hand-feed patients with advanced dementia who are no longer able to eat. A better alternative: an army of volunteers to feed patients three times a day.

A human being is not a machine into which you just pour a can of fluid (which gives you diarrhea) several times a day. Advanced dementia is a progressive, terminal condition, so most patients with dementia who need feeding tubes are within weeks of their deaths. Hospices will offer "comfort feeding" of food and fluids, but if the patients don't want it or can't take it, that's the end of it. But nursing homes don't offer this. It is probably too hard to supervise the staff. I am a physician anesthesiologist who has cringed every time I have been called upon to sedate an extremely sick person with end-stage dementia in order to insert a feeding tube. I wish the Catholic bishops could see this.

JOAN CARROLL, M.D.  
Perth Amboy, N.J.

### Resign in Protest?

I read with interest your current comment "Resignation Refused" (8/30) about the pope's refusal to accept the resignations of two Irish auxiliary bishops, rebuffing Archbishop Martin and his leadership to address the abuse scandal in Ireland.

Can you imagine the powerful, positive impact that should result if Archbishop Martin were now to resign himself?

TOM EICHLER  
Bear, Del.

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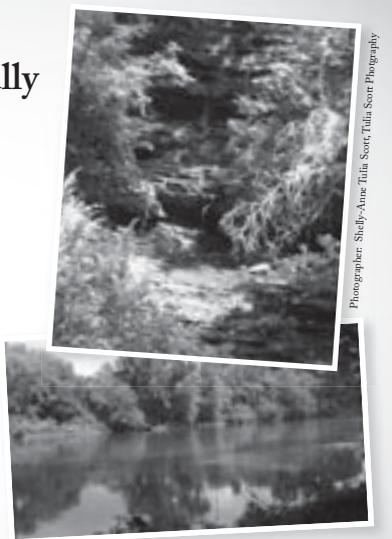
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# The Timely Vision

TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (C), OCT. 3, 2010

Readings: Hb 1:2-3; 2:2-4; Ps 95:1-9; 2 Tm 1:6-8, 13-14; Lk 17:5-10

“Write down the vision clearly” (Hb 2:2)

The lament of the prophet Habakkuk, as he decries the violence, strife and clamorous discord in his day, seems to have a timelessness to it. During the hot summer, several U.S. cities saw a spike in gun violence and senseless deaths. Public discourse has grown more rancorous as marchers promote competing visions for what would make for a peaceable world.

Habakkuk wants God to intervene and put an end to the distress of his time. God’s answer to Habakkuk is an order to write down the vision clearly upon tablets so that everyone can read it readily. The prophet is reminded that although it seems long in coming, the vision of God’s peaceable reign will surely be fulfilled. He must be patient and stay faithful.

The divine directive to Habakkuk is an excellent reminder to us that no transformative change ever comes without groundedness in the vision of God’s peaceable reign. It is not enough, however, to wait patiently and persistently keep the vision alive in one’s own mind and heart. God directs the prophet to write down the vision, not only to keep it before his own eyes as a way to bolster his own flagging hope, but also to publicize it so that it boosts communal faith and committed action.

It is precisely when things seem at

their worst that the prophet is called to articulate the vision. In the struggle for civil rights in the United States, it was when the backlash against Martin Luther King Jr.’s vision for an end to racism was most intense that he publicly proclaimed his dream for equality and freedom for all. Likewise, it is from prison, where Paul is suffering great hardship, that he writes the vision for Timothy, reminding him that God has given him the power of love, self-control and strength. By stirring this gift into flame, he can overcome any fear or cowardice in giving testimony to the Gospel.

Not unlike Habakkuk, the disciples in today’s Gospel want Jesus to fix things by giving them more faith. Jesus reassures them that they already have faith enough to transform what seems utterly immovable. A mulberry tree has a deep and extensive root system and is extremely difficult to uproot and replant. It is an apt image for deep-rooted systems of injustice and violence. A mustard seed, by contrast, is tiny, but the plant spreads like wildfire and is also nearly impossible to eradicate. Disciples who feel puny in the face of massive systems of injustice have all they need to do the transformative work toward fulfillment of Jesus’ vision of the reign of God. Jesus encourages them by say-

ing not only that they have all the faith they need, but that it is by their persistent, day-in, day-out service that the transformation of seemingly intractable systems comes about. Moreover, just as fieldwork and table service were simply what was required of a slave in Jesus’ time, so faithful service on behalf of the Gospel is what is expected of disciples. One way in



## PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- What is your vision of God’s peaceable reign? Write it down.
- Pray with gratitude for the sufficiency of your mustard seed-sized faith.
- Pray for the gift of self-emptying so as to be “without need.”

which the analogy limps, however, is that discipleship is a freely chosen service, not an imposed servility embedded in an unjust system.

The final verse of today’s Gospel asserts not that faithful servants are “unprofitable” (NAB), “worthless” (NRSV) or “useless” (NJB), as some translations render the Greek *achreioi*. Rather, the word means literally that they are “without need.” Proclaiming the empowering vision of God’s reign and rendering faithful service to bring it about satisfies every want and need of disciples.

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