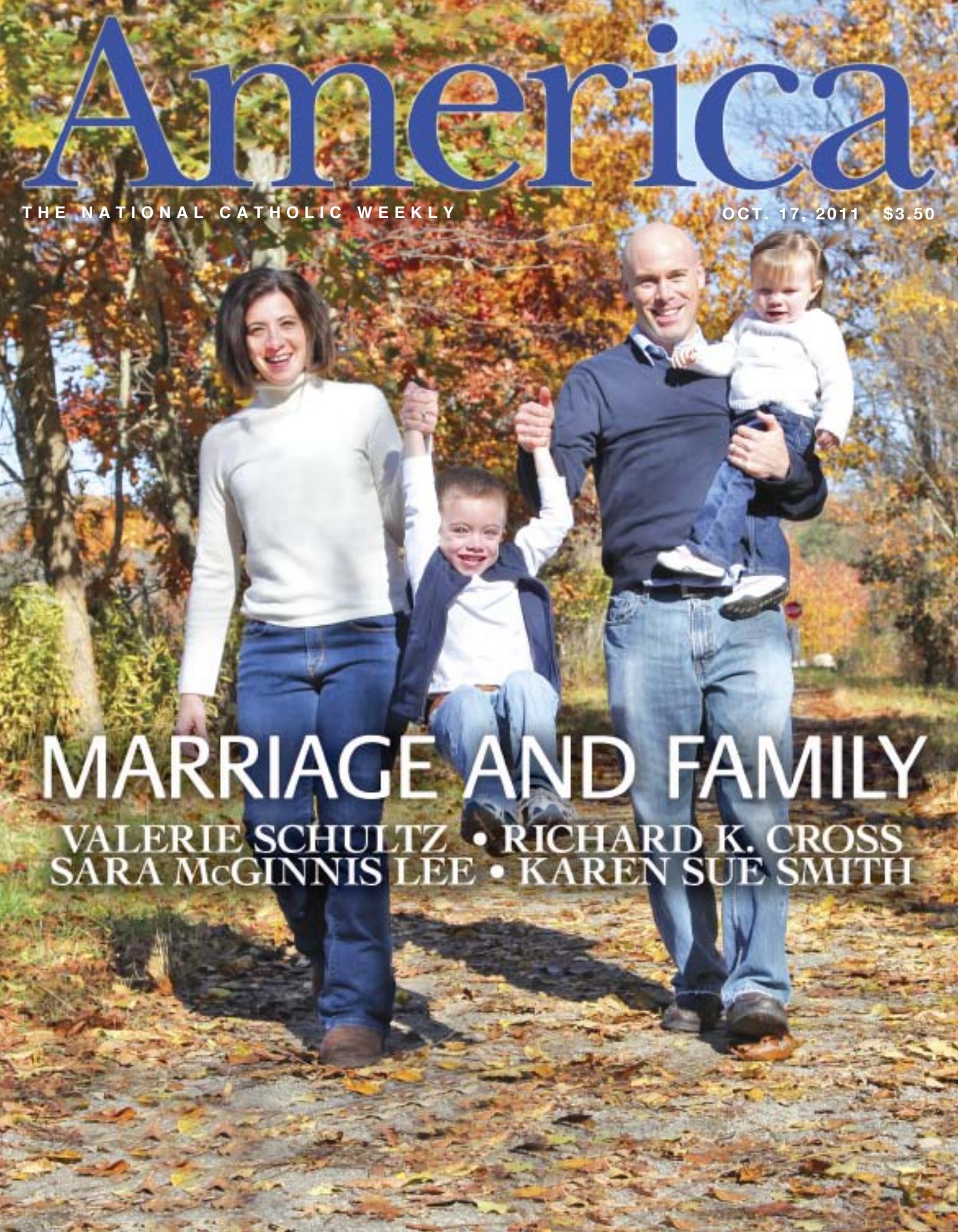


# America



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## MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

VALERIE SCHULTZ • RICHARD K. CROSS  
SARA MCGINNIS LEE • KAREN SUE SMITH

# OF MANY THINGS

I have spent much of my life in the Catholic world: first grammar school, then high school, followed later by almost 10 years in the Catholic press. It is telling that while studying journalism at Columbia University, I worked at a parochial school in the Bronx. I guess I could only wander so far from the fold.

When my wife and I decided to adopt a child, a Catholic adoption agency seemed the natural choice. We were in search of a community that shared our values to help shepherd us through a difficult process. After some research, however, we found that the agency that best met our needs was not Catholic. A local nonprofit agency offered an impressive array of services and support. Their values were in keeping with our values. In the end, it was not a difficult decision.

Part of me felt guilty for not supporting an important Catholic ministry. I imagine many young parents feel the same way when, for various reasons, they choose to send their child to public school. In my case, my feelings were complicated by the fraught state of the Catholic adoption industry. In Boston and elsewhere, church officials have closed adoption agencies rather than comply with state laws mandating that same-sex couples be allowed to adopt. The future of other Catholic agencies is cloudy.

I began this column thinking I would write about these challenges. Perhaps I would note, with sadness, that another era in Catholic life seems to be coming to an end. Catholic orphanages were once part of a vast network of institutions that sought to serve every Catholic's need from birth to burial. Perhaps I would explore the reasons for this decline, such as the high rate of abortion and the exponential growth of the fertility industry.

Instead of dwelling on these facts, however, I would like to offer a more hopeful tale. Three years ago, my wife

and I applied to be adoptive parents. Nearly a year later, we brought our daughter, Elizabeth, home. Though we did not use a Catholic agency, we were deeply gratified by the process, which we found to be profoundly pro-life.

Ours was a domestic adoption. Early on, we met with a group of other prospective parents to ask questions and discuss our anxieties. Agency representatives explained the process in detail. Over 50 percent of mothers who meet with the agency choose to keep the child. Birth mothers and prospective parents are assigned their own social workers. Newborn babies stay with temporary caregivers for a short time before placement to ensure that the birth mother is confident in her decision.

My wife and I found great comfort in these facts. It was clear that the agency wanted to make sure that a mother's choice of adoption was the right one for her.

We also found ourselves persuaded by the logic of open adoption, in which adoptive couples are encouraged to maintain an ongoing relationship with birth parents. We agreed to do so because we believe it is in Elizabeth's best interest. We want her to grow up with a full sense of her own identity.

Open adoption appealed to us for other reasons, too. In a real way, it seeks to make the world more welcoming to children. The sad fact is that some women do not see adoption as a legitimate alternative to abortion. They cannot imagine having a child and then never seeing that child again. Open adoption offers them a life-giving choice.

Our family life is now shaped by this practice. We exchange pictures and e-mail messages with Elizabeth's birth parents. On a few occasions, we have met. We did not learn these habits from our church, but they feel true to our identity as Catholics. Sometimes you have to venture afield to find your way home.

**MAURICE TIMOTHY REIDY**

# America

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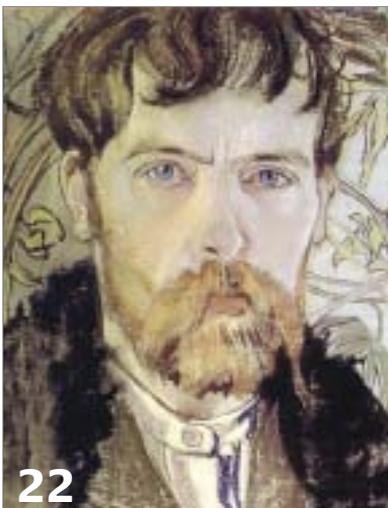


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Christine Firer Hinze, right, reports on the “**Learning to Listen**” conference at Fordham University. Plus, Karen Sue Smith presents a video commentary on **Stanislaw Wyspianski’s “Self Portrait.”** All at [americamagazine.org](http://americamagazine.org).



### Promise of the Sea

The Salton Sea in southeastern California is the state's largest lake, but because it is shallow and its water is saltier than the ocean, the lake has never been developed as a major water park, like Lake Tahoe. Diversion of fresh water from the rivers that feed the lake for use in crop irrigation has left the lake water even saltier; few fish can survive. This huge, muddy pit is a paradise in summer for worms and hence for birds, but few others have seen it as a place of promise.

Until now. Simbol Materials, the builder of a geothermal plant near the lake, has announced its development of a new, quick, inexpensive and ecologically neutral process for filtering the briny lake water to extract lithium, manganese and zinc—three valuable elements. All of a sudden, this mud pays. Because the United States currently imports the first two elements, a domestic market already exists for them. Lithium has the greatest potential, since it is used in the manufacture of lithium-ion batteries, the kind required for electric and hybrid cars like the Chevy Volt, the Nissan Leaf and newer models of the Toyota Prius. If the lithium can be extracted at the rate and cost Simbol hopes for, the United States could become an exporter of the mineral and compete on the world market.

Lithium from the Salton Sea could do more than enrich California. Extracting it domestically could lower the cost of batteries for use in homemade products, which could further the manufacture of electric and hybrid cars—the very cars that can reduce the nation's oil dependency.

### Making the Grade

The Martin Luther King Jr. National Memorial in Washington, D.C., was dedicated this summer, and while there has been some debate over its design, the powerful impact of King's life and the civil rights movement in which he participated is indisputable. One hopes that the memorial will prompt young visitors to learn more about the man and the movement, especially in light of a new study that found many students are not getting enough civil rights history in school. The study, conducted by the Southern Poverty Law Center, which graded each state's curriculum requirements, shows that 35 states do not require or barely require schools to teach students about the movement.

Teachers must cover a great deal of historical ground and often have little time for lessons on post-World War II history, but efforts must be made to ensure that students understand not only the events of the civil rights move-

ment but the emotions, the struggles and the suffering that came with it. Alabama, Florida and New York, which received A grades from the study, present a wide-ranging curriculum to their students, covering 15 years' worth of events. Other states and schools must follow suit. Students must be presented not only with familiar names like King and Rosa Parks but with lessons on *Brown v. Board of Education*; Medgar Evers, the activist and N.A.A.C.P. field secretary who was murdered; and Mary McLeod Bethune, a determined educator who founded a school for women of color. Students must also be made aware that, unfortunately, the actions of King and others did not bring a definitive end to racism. The latest statistics from the Federal Bureau of Investigation show that there were 7,789 hate crime offenses in the United States in 2009. Clearly, the country still has a long way to go.

### Fiscal Follies

As if more evidence were required, some recent reports related to prominent Catholic not-for-profit charities have made it obvious that fiscal transparency and effective independent oversight remain critical needs at some Catholic organizations. In recent weeks questions have been raised regarding poor management of the multimillion dollar budget of Priests for Life, and its founder, the Rev. Frank Pavone, has been suspended from ministering outside his home diocese of Amarillo, Tex.

The American Life League has been criticized for maintaining a partly salaried board of directors who have far too cozy a relationship with its charismatic leader, Judie Brown. More troubling, it has repeatedly awarded substantial contracts to a company owned by Ms. Brown's husband. Meanwhile at the Vatican, Jesus Colina, the founder and editorial director of the Catholic news agency Zenit, resigned in September, apparently weary of his struggle to separate not only Zenit's identity but its bank accounts from the Legionaries of Christ, an order with well-known fiscal management and transparency issues.

The church has endured about as many scandals as it can tolerate. Times are hard, budgets are tight and laypeople have thousands of worthy charities competing for their attention. A charity's professionalism and fiscal prudence, though they can never be taken for granted, should be something donors can rely on. We are no longer living in a time when donors will be satisfied that "Father" or a charismatic lay person knows best about how to spend their money. Catholic agencies should not merely be following best practices; they should be setting industry standards.

# Let Others Lead

After he returned from a diplomatic mission to Iran that led to the release of two American hikers, Cardinal Theodore McCarrick explained the impetus for the trip. “The political channel doesn’t do too well right now,” he said of the meeting with Iranian religious leaders. “There should be another channel. The other channel is the religious channel.”

The same week, Nicolas Sarkozy of France called for European and Arab leaders to take a greater role in mediating the conflict between Israel and Palestine. “Let us stop believing that a single country or a small group of countries can resolve so complex a problem,” President Sarkozy said. “Too many crucial players have been sidelined for our efforts to succeed.”

The two events underline an emerging reality of 21st-century diplomacy: the U.S. government no longer serves as the world’s negotiator in chief. That fact may be troubling to some, but it should not be. The cause of peace is better served when it is embraced by the entire international community.

The waning influence of U.S. power has been difficult to ignore. Weakened by two wars abroad and an anemic economy at home, Washington simply does not command the same respect it once did. In May, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel publicly challenged President Obama on his plan for Middle East peace. It is hard to imagine a previous Israeli prime minister treating Bill Clinton or Ronald Reagan this way, even if he enjoyed the same support from Congress as Mr. Netanyahu. Clearly, the prime minister knew the political winds were shifting.

Washington has also failed in other international endeavors; free trade agreements with South Korea, Colombia and Panama languished for months. Even the New Start treaty with Russia carries with it the whiff of political disappointment. While previous missile treaties helped pave the way for political reforms, change is unlikely to come to Vladimir Putin’s Russia anytime soon. The Obama White House should not be blamed for these failures. A Republican president would face the same constraints on American power.

There have been positive developments, too, notably the campaign in Libya. Here the United States wisely chose not to take the lead in the military action. The White House was ridiculed by the right for describing its policy as “leading from behind,” but that approach was just what was required. By allowing France and Britain to direct the cam-

paign, the United States both strengthened the bond of the international community and furthered the cause of peace. President Obama’s approach to foreign policy has been called “consequentialist,” a sophisticated way of saying that he cares more about results than appearances. This tactic may not sit well with some Americans, who seem to prefer isolationism to a reduced role for the United States in foreign affairs. Yet at this point in American history, a lower international profile is necessary; it could also prove surprisingly effective.

The United States ought to follow that policy in relation to the statehood of Palestine. Unfortunately, on this issue the United States seems to care more about appearances than results. In his speech to the United Nations, President Obama spoke strongly against Palestine’s bid for U.N. recognition despite wide international support for the proposal. His remarks were political, not practical, and threaten to isolate the United States and Israel even more than they already are. At this crucial juncture it would be better for the United States to step away from negotiations and allow other countries to explore paths to peace. President Sarkozy has proposed one such plan; and other international leaders, including members of the Arab community, should be encouraged to do so as well. Recall that the first direct agreement between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization originated in Oslo, not Camp David.

It is also important to remember that not all successful diplomatic initiatives originate from the halls of power. Cardinal McCarrick’s mission to Iran is a classic example of what can be achieved by leaders who are not associated with the U.S. government. In other regions Catholic peace-builders play an essential role in bringing warring factions together. In South Sudan the church will be a crucial player in the country’s journey toward democracy. The U.S. government should allow these initiatives to flourish without undue interference. It can begin by revisiting the section of the Patriot Act that makes it a crime for any group, including those working for peace, to have contact with designated terrorist organizations. Political reconciliation will not be achieved if we prohibit contact with unsavory individuals. In the new world order, the United States must be concerned about peace above all and must work with all willing parties to move closer to that elusive goal.



# SIGNS OF THE TIMES

ELECTION 2012

## ‘Faithful Citizenship’ Reissued Without Major Changes

Despite calls from Catholic conservatives for a substantial rewrite of the statement “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship” published in 2007, the U.S. bishops reissued the document on political responsibility unaltered on Oct. 4. The statement, however, does include a new introduction warning that “Faithful Citizenship,” one in a series of documents that have been issued before every presidential election for nearly 35 years, “has at times been misused to present an incomplete or distorted view of the demands of faith in politics.” The new introduction reminds U.S. Catholic voters that some issues “involve the clear obligation to oppose intrinsic evils which can never be justified,” while others “require action to pursue justice and promote the common good.”

“Faithful Citizenship,” according to the new introduction, “does not offer a voters’ guide, scorecard of issues or direction on how to vote,” but “applies Catholic moral principles to a range of important issues and warns against misguided appeals to ‘conscience’ to ignore fundamental moral claims, to reduce Catholic moral concerns to one or two matters, or to justify choices simply to advance partisan, ideological or personal interests.”

The introduction lists six “current and fundamental problems, some involving opposition to intrinsic evils and others raising serious moral questions.” They are: abortion “and other threats to the lives and dignity of others who are vulnerable, sick or unwanted”; conscience threats to Catholic ministries in health care, education and social services; intensifying efforts to redefine or undermine marriage; an economic crisis that has increased national and global unemployment, poverty and hunger; “the failure to repair a broken immigration system”; and “serious moral questions” raised by wars, terror and violence, “particularly the absence of justice, security and peace in the Holy Land and throughout the Middle East.”

Deal Hudson, president of Catholic Advocate and a frequent adviser to Republican candidates, had been among those pressing bishops to tighten the language in “Faithful

Citizenship.” In an open letter to the bishops in July, Hudson wrote: “If the bishops republish...‘Faithful Citizenship’ for the 2012 election—without changes—they will be providing Catholic voters another carte blanche to cast their vote for any pro-abortion candidate they want.” All the same, Hudson pronounced himself satisfied with the cautions included in the introduction to the unaltered reissue, calling it “a positive step toward clarifying some of the ambiguities that were advantageously spun by some seeking to water down church teachings for their own agenda.”

From a different perspective, John Gehring, the Catholic outreach coordinator at Faith in Public Life, was “pleased the bishops have again affirmed that Catholics should not be single-issue voters.” Gehring said, “This document reflects the fullness of church teaching in ways that will sure-

ly challenge both liberals and conservatives. But at a time when the radical individualism and anti-government ideology espoused by the Tea Party and Religious Right clash with the communitarian values of Catholic social teaching, the bishops have presented a strong case for a politics of the common good and a government that takes a proactive role in caring for all its citizens.”

While both men may be concerned that Catholics may be drawing the wrong conclusions from “Faithful Citizenship,” U.S. bishops should perhaps be worried that most Catholics are not drawing any conclusions at all from their guidance. A recent poll conducted by Georgetown University’s Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate found that just 16 percent of U.S. Catholics had even heard of the bishops’ document, and a mere 3 percent reported they had read it.



Waiting to vote outside a Washington, D.C., church



FRANCE

## Multicultural Society Creates A New Reality

France's Catholic bishops have urged citizens to accept the fact that their country is no longer culturally homogeneous and to be ready to look at candidates in new ways as the nation's 2012 presidential election approaches.

The bishops' declaration, presented in Paris on Oct. 3, said the global financial crisis had added to existing "social and political difficulties" and coincided with a "formidable development of scientific techniques" that risked a backlash against human dignity. It said mass immigration had ended the "cultural homogeneity" of Western societies, while the spread of individu-

alism risked damaging social life and the sense of a common good.

"For citizens of more or less old stock, this provokes a sense of instability which is hard to live with, while for many new arrivals it translates into a feeling of being ill accepted and unable to find one's place in a society one cannot leave," the bishops' council said. "These transformations question our conception of man, his dignity and vocation and confront rulers and legislators with new questions. The outbreak of ethnic references poses an ever heavier moral weight in the formulation of laws," it added.

"Voting cannot just be dictated by habit, membership in a social class or the pursuit of particular interests—it should take account of the challenges presenting themselves and aim for what could make our country nicer and more humane to live in," said the permanent council of the bishops' conference, headed by Cardinal André Vingt-Trois of Paris.

Catholics traditionally make up two-thirds of France's 60 million inhabitants, although fewer than one in 10 attends Sunday Mass. Before winning the country's presidential election in May 2007 on a platform of public-sector reforms and curbs on crime and immigration, President Nicolas Sarkozy, a Catholic, pledged to improve ties with religious communities. Since his election, he has called for religion to play a more prominent part in public life. The president is seeking a second term in the April-May 2012 election but is expected to face challenges from candidates within and outside his party.

The bishops' council said that when considering a candi-

date, voters should look at protection of life and the family as well as "freedom and responsibility of parents" in education and help for the handicapped and dying. It said Catholics should also consider what presidential candidates offered to improve life in poor communities around France's cities, safeguard the environment, secure economic justice and strengthen international cooperation.

"In recent debates, certain excessive reactions have shown that intolerance toward the Catholic Church [and religions in general] is not just a remnant of the past," the bishops' council said. "As citizens in a democratic society, Catholics do not intend to be barred from speaking. In explaining what they think, they are not going against the intelligence and free judgment of those who do not share their faith. Instead, they favor calm, open application of the laws and rules that define the secular pact of our shared republic."



**Kenza Drider, a French Muslim of North African descent, protests against a ban on full face veils outside Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris in April.**

## New Deportation Policy Endorsed

Archbishop José H. Gómez of Los Angeles, chairman of the U.S. bishops' conference's Committee on Migration, applauded the recent announcement by the Department of Homeland Security that prosecutorial discretion would be exercised on "low-priority" deportation cases. "The decision embodies the kind of common-sense, compassionate immigration policies that can serve to simultaneously enforce federal immigration law while respecting the dignity and vulnerabilities of the migrants in our midst," Archbishop Gómez said in a letter on Sept. 29 to Secretary Janet Napolitano. Archbishop Gómez said those categories of immigrants who should receive stays of deportation and qualify for work authorization included members of families and children and individuals who were brought to the United States at a young age and who would benefit from the Dream Act. He also asked for protection for "clergy and religious" who serve in faith communities across the nation.

## Broader Exemption Demanded

In a united appeal, 18 Catholic colleges asked the Obama administration in September to broaden the religious exemption offered within new guidelines on women's health issued by the Department of Health and Human Services. They say the requirements would force religious institutions to participate in health insurance plans that include contraceptives and sterilization. The schools' appeal followed a scorching critique by Carol Keehan, of the Sisters of Charity, a health care reform supporter who represents the Catholic Health Association. She

## NEWS BRIEFS

**Somali children** are the victims most affected by the food crisis in the Horn of Africa; the latest estimates indicate that people under 18 represent 80 percent of the 121,000 refugees at U.N. camps in Ethiopia.

• Thanks to the healing of a young American, severely injured in a rollerblading accident, Blessed **Louis Guanella**, an Italian, will be among three new saints canonized by Pope Benedict XVI on Oct. 23. • The face of a 14th-century former archbishop of Canterbury, **Simon of Sudbury**, has been revealed, 630 years after he was beheaded by

angry peasants, in a 3-D model now on permanent display alongside his real skull in St. Gregory's Church in Sudbury, Suffolk. • "Catholicism," a TV series developed by the Rev. **Robert Barron** of Chicago, will be aired on 90 public television stations this fall. • **John P. Schlegel, S.J.**, former president of Creighton University in Omaha, Neb., has been appointed publisher and president of America Press in New York, effective in November. • The Vatican has dismissed newspaper reports on Oct. 2 that **Pope Benedict** was considering resigning when he turns 85 next April.



Escaping the famine in Mogadishu

called the proposed religious exemption "wholly inadequate to protect the conscience rights of Catholic hospital and health care organizations." In a letter to H.H.S. Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, the president of the University of Notre Dame, John Jenkins, C.S.C., said the current guidelines place Catholic institutions in the "impossible position" of paying for contraception, sterilization or abortifacients or depriving students and employees of health insurance plans.

## Elections in Egypt

Commenting on elections planned for Egypt on Nov. 28, Joannes Zakaria, the Coptic bishop of Luxor, said on Oct. 3 that Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafis, conserva-

tive Muslims, appeared to be the most organized political groups. But, he said, "those who want a truly democratic regime that respects the rights of all" should have a strong say in the elections. "One has to keep in mind that since 1952, from Nasser's revolution, until today, Egypt was ruled by a military regime that did not prepare society for democracy," Bishop Zakaria said. "The main problem in Egypt today is political ignorance, for which everything ends up having a religious connotation," he said. "This is true both for Christians and for Muslims. We all need to mature politically." Bishop Zakaria said, "I would not have any problems to vote for a Muslim if I considered him appropriate for the office."

From CNS and other sources.



# The Unkindest Cuts

In chapter 23 of Matthew's Gospel, Jesus directs a series of "woes" at the scribes and Pharisees. The list of damning charges includes the hypocrisy by which they pay lip service to the prophets of old, even erecting tombs in honor of the social critics of earlier times, but by their present complicity with injustices prove themselves to be "the sons of the prophets' murderers." These are harsh accusations, hardly an easy springboard for a pleasant sermon on a sleepy Sunday morning.

But, as with all scriptural warnings, we are wise to keep this one in mind and to be vigilant against the possibility of falling into the very errors we decry. As we ponder our national policies and our collective responsibility for them, we have to ask: Is American society guilty of tolerating a large gap between the values we profess to champion, on one hand, and deplorable policy outcomes we allow to persist, on the other hand?

At stake is racial fairness, specifically the economic prospects of people of color. There has been a spate of attention to racial progress these past few months, occasioned by Civil War anniversaries and a new memorial to the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Millions viewed "The Help," a film that revisits the struggles of African-American domestic workers in the deep South half a century ago (Am. 9/12/11). Reviews note the film's subtle psychological lure: how we today still derive satisfaction from feeling superior to the white Southerners who

so cruelly demeaned the desperately poor and underpaid domestics who heroically raised their children and cleaned their houses.

But how far have we really come as a society? Are there any ways in which we still collectively exhibit the hypocrisy that Jesus decried? It is true that overt racism is not socially acceptable today. But sociologists like William Julius Wilson of Harvard University have documented how no direct present-day discrimination is required in order to perpetuate the disproportionate burdens that have historically fallen upon African-Americans and other minority groups. If public policies today do not address established patterns of residential segregation and blocked educational and employment opportunities, then those policies are part of the problem. It requires no ill will, but merely inattention, for those policies to cast ethical shadows upon us, the citizens who are ultimately responsible for collective social actions.

If you seek evidence of disproportionate burdens falling on segments of our population, the best place to look is in aggregate statistics. New Census Bureau findings document the wide and growing gap between whites and the rest of Americans in social indicators such as unemployment, childhood poverty and inadequate health insurance. The current unemployment rate for blacks is 16.7 percent, nearly double the rate for white non-Hispanic Americans. To oppose measures addressing the jobs crisis is tanta-

mount to turning one's back on the serious struggles of the black community, even if such a stance is not explicitly motivated by racial bias.

Other studies reveal that the most serious losers in the recent economic turmoil have been those with the fewest resources, the most modest savings and the highest personal debt. These are disproportionately members of racial minorities, whose annual incomes and stocks of wealth lag behind those of others. The deeper and longer the mortgage and credit crises run, the more these groups bear the lion's share of financial harm, as they fall further and further behind in the struggle to save for college and retirement.

**Budget deals that favor spending cuts add to the problem.**

Budget deals that favor spending cuts (especially on programs that serve low-income Americans) over raising revenues (most taxes come from the upper brackets) certainly add to the problem.

Attending to deep structural economic issues like these always raises profound questions about culpability and complicity in the racially skewed consequences of national policies. It is notoriously hard to establish clear lines of economic causality, much less to clarify conscious or unconscious motivations behind public policies. The ethical challenge is not so much to point the finger of blame in the right direction, but rather to keep the proper questions and priorities ever before our eyes. After all, none of us relishes being identified as "sons of the prophets' murderers."

THOMAS MASSARO, S.J., teaches social ethics at the Boston College School of Theology and Ministry, Chestnut Hill, Mass.



PHOTO: REUTERS/ROBERT GALBRAITH

Protesters against the Iraq war gather in Berkeley, Calif., in February 2008.



MY ADULT CHILDREN ARE KIND,  
SMART AND JUSTICE-ORIENTED.  
BUT THEY ARE NOT  
PRACTICING CATHOLICS.

# Raised On Faith

BY VALERIE SCHULTZ

Catholic parents may well imagine that raising the child Jesus was a picnic compared to parenting today's children. How hard can it be to turn an infant who is fully divine into a decent adult? Yet Jesus was also fully human and so, one can assume, a challenge and a riddle to his mother and foster father. Like modern mothers and fathers, Jesus' parents were given the task of modeling compassion and wisdom—the prerequisites of social justice—as they brought their child up in their Jewish faith.

Some of our work as contemporary Catholic parents is uncomplicated: baptize our children, teach them traditional prayers, take them to Mass. As our children grow, we involve them in parish activities, teach them about social justice, engage them in liturgy. We soon grasp that bringing up our children in the faith is both a daily task and a lifelong commitment. As parents we can instill in our children the values that are important to us without necessarily being aware of it, just by the way we live. As Joseph and Mary must have done, we also teach without words by the way we respect and love each other, the way we handle crises and conflict, the way we show compassion and mercy. But as our children grow, we may begin to think more consciously about the values we want to teach them.

As Catholics raising our children at the end of the last century, my husband and I believed that teaching them the Catholic concept of social justice was as important as embodying a love for the Eucharist and a devotion to it. We tried to cultivate in their fertile

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VALERIE SCHULTZ, of Tehachapi, Calif., is an occasional contributor to *America*.

hearts the church's core principles of justice: to work for the common good, to insist that political authorities behave justly, to uphold human dignity and human solidarity and to exhibit a preferential option for the poor. To that end, we took active roles in the parish religious education program and made choices in our family's lifestyle that honored those beliefs.

But when our children begin to flex their minds and pose theological and existential questions, the black-and-white of rules and dogma swirled into the nuanced gray of spirituality and faith. While my husband and I encouraged our daughters to be independent thinkers and ask questions, we, like other honest parents, did not have every answer. Who has not doubted his or her own wisdom when responding to a young and developing conscience? What sinful Catholic parent has not wanted to tell the children to "do as I say, not as I do"? The complexities of parenting grow alongside the miraculous growth of the skeletons, brains and muscles of our children. Theological parenting, like following any sacred call, is enlivening, humbling, confusing and best done with the most selfless love parents can muster.

An online search yields a treasure trove of teaching aids on the topic of social justice. But the corporal works of mercy—to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, care for the sick, visit the prisoner, welcome the stranger and bury the dead—are best learned hands-on and by example. The surest way to teach social justice is to act justly. Like the public ministry of Jesus, teaching children to practice mindful social justice is a radical departure from the path of mainstream society.

### **Good, But Not Christian**

The best, most practical advice on this usually comes from those working in the trenches: other Catholic parents. I consulted with experts by e-mail. I was curious about the experiences of other Catholic parents who had endeavored to raise their children—now adults—to embrace the teachings of social justice. As replies arrived, I discovered an unexpected common thread running through their responses. As one succinctly put it: "I believe I failed at raising an adult Catholic."

While others did not phrase that feeling so baldly, the sentiment was the same. Coming from the loving and grace-filled parents of some pretty great children, I found this conclusion dismaying, even shocking. Yet it exactly expressed

my own deep-down self-evaluation as a Catholic parent. Somewhere along the way, these parents and I feel that we must have gone wrong, because although our children are good people, many of them do not go to church regularly. We feel we have fallen down on the job of raising the next generation of Catholics. I include myself among the Catholic parenting failures, because of my four daughters one goes to church sporadically, one is thinking about returning to practicing the faith and two are emphatically not Catholic.

And yet all the parents in my decidedly nonscientific survey raised children who are kind, compassionate, generous and mindful of others and who exhibit a strong sense of justice. "He is not overly religious," one friend wrote of his son, "but does seemingly have a sound set of moral principles. Of course he makes his mistakes, just like I do, but overall he is a good son."

"We may not see the influence of our guidance in their everyday lives, outside of the fact that they are responsible, socially and politically involved and caring people," wrote another about her three grown children. She concluded with my own private hope: "I suspect that as life happens, they will each find they do need the experience of, and commitment to, a larger community."

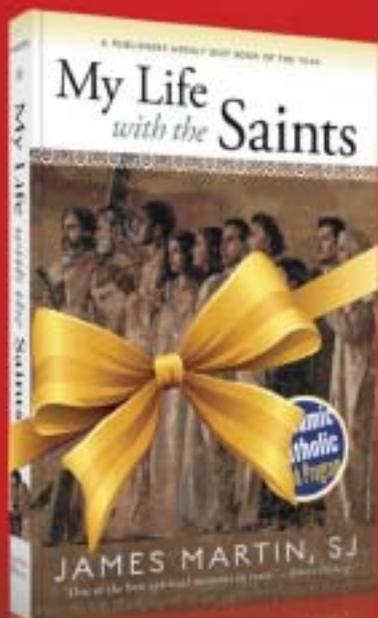
Despite good intentions, success in their endeavors to raise children steeped in the Catholic faith can elude many parents. "He questioned the existence of God from fourth grade on," wrote a friend about her son, who is now in college. A single mom, she was active with him in the parish, in the choir and in ministry to the homeless in Los Angeles. "He fought going to church and being confirmed, and the pastor told me not to force him, which I was shocked to hear... I know I rebelled in high school and even somewhat in college, so I don't know if he'll come around as I came around. I think he's a good person, caring and loving, so maybe church attendance is not the right measure. Who knows?"

From the East Coast came the thoughts of a friend in New York. He and his wife, long active in the church, "believe strongly in the seamless garment." They have raised a doctor, a teacher and a lawyer, all of whose work serves underprivileged populations. "Our children are very well adjusted, emotionally mature and have a depth of care and spiritual presence to them," he wrote. Nevertheless, they too have drifted. "As they grew into their college years, the

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church simply did not respond to what they were looking for.... [It offered] nothing about the lives they were leading.” Of his daughter, “who is a smart and capable and competent and professional woman...the church simply insults her for being a woman...a woman who is a leader in every right except in her faith community.” He ended by saying: “The sexual abuse scandal has probably been the nail in the coffin.”

## An Unaffiliated Generation?

A recent study by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life bears out the anecdotes: Among young adults aged 18 to 29, one in four has no religious affiliation, although one in three was raised as a Catholic. In fact, 10 percent of all Americans are former Catholics. The survey tracks a constant movement among faiths as opposed to constancy. Catholicism has experienced the greatest net loss from people of faith having changed their religious affiliation. For American Catholics these are sobering statistics.

Last Christmas season, I found myself driving with several of the young adults about whom their parents worry. Tentatively explaining my journalistic interest, I asked for their thoughts about their own Catholicism and their understanding of social justice. They talked fondly about

their earlier years, about serving meals at a soup kitchen, helping at a thrift store, walking in peace marches, visiting seniors in nursing homes. “We may not go to church, but we do some of the things our parents taught us,” said one. “Even something silly, like donating the hotel soaps and shampoos to the homeless shelter. My mom always did that.”

“I tried going to my boyfriend’s Christian church,” said another. “It was lame. They talked down about other people, especially gays. That’s when I knew I was Catholic or nothing. So I guess right now I’m nothing.”

I just listened. I tried to imitate the mother of God: “His mother treasured all these things in her heart” (Lk 2:51). But my heart was heavy.

“I don’t think we have let the church down,” added a young adult, addressing my unspoken question. “I think the church has let us down.” A busload of issues then stopped at my door: a church that too often seems to care more about a person’s sexual orientation than whether people are being bullied to death in school, a church that seems to care more about the unborn child than about the one who is abused or hungry or in his seventh foster home placement in two years, a church that seems to care more about the trappings of liturgy than the destruction of God’s green earth, a church that seems to care more about the gender of a priest than about a homily that changes hearts, a church that seems to care more about protecting its clergy from lawsuits than protecting its young from predators, above all a church that too often demands blind devotion but does not itself consistently walk the talk of the Eucharist.

As I listened, it occurred to me that by educating our children so well in social justice, we may have unwittingly made it infinitely more difficult for them to go along with a church they see as hypocritical or as concerned with image over substance. The more passionate our children’s belief in social justice, the less tolerant they are of institutional posturing and inaction. Their lived experiences in their neighborhood parishes do not easily match up with the social teachings of Jesus.

I thought of Mary and Joseph, finding their young son in the temple, far from where he was supposed to be. Mary says: “Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety” (Lk 2:48). Certainly parents do not always understand or agree with the paths their children take. In intimate acquaintance with Mary and Joseph’s “great anxiety” over a lost child, today’s parents may not always trust that they can keep their children connected to the church. As a friend gently reminded me, “We need to remember and trust that God is working in their lives, and though they seem to have abandoned him, he does not abandon them.” **A**

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# Just Parenting

## Raising children in the Christian Family Movement

BY RICHARD K. CROSS

**M**y wife, Christa, and I were well into our 30s when our two girls arrived. It takes some effort, though, to remember a time when they were not at the center of our world. They seem to have been implicit in our life together from the outset—which is not to say that we were born parents. The truth is we were academics not especially in touch with our instincts. Birthing anxieties, unfriendly postpartum hormones, sleep deprivation, the plumber's sensibility that kicks in after the hundredth diaper and the vigilance on steroids that attends the whole business—you mean we're supposed to immerse this fragile being in a tub full of suds?—all took us pretty much by surprise.

It did not help that our families lived thousands of miles away. We lived in Pacific Palisades, Calif., when the girls were small; my parents were on the East Coast, and Christa's mother was in Germany. For child care we depended on play groups, babysitting co-ops, whatever backup we could cobble together. In the 1970s, we had not yet heard the maxim "It takes a village to raise a child," but we would surely have been grateful for a village like Langendernbach, in the Westerwald, where Christa spent her first 11 years. There people were in general agreement about what raising children entailed and ready to stand in for parents whenever that was called for.

What we needed, in addition to practical advice and support, was an integral community that shared our values and concerns, an American counterpart to that village in the Westerwald—not to be found amid the slackly woven fabric of southern California society. At any rate, we did not

happen upon it. It took a move across the continent to find what we were seeking, in the form of a Christian Family Movement group associated with Blessed Sacrament Church in Maryland. But I am getting ahead of myself.

### Love for Children

To this point I have dwelt on the difficulties of bringing children into the world—by far the smaller moiety of the experience. Taking an infant into one's life is like nothing so



**Taking an infant into one's life is like nothing so much as falling in love. One's boundaries turn rubbery. What could be more perfect than those delicate fingers?**

much as falling in love. One's boundaries turn rubbery. What could be more perfect than those delicate fingers? Look, miniscule nails! Those are your mother's ears, aren't they? To make sure the ears stayed warm Christa crocheted a yellow cap that our firstborn, Catherine, wore home from the hospital.

I think of myself as a fairly stolid sort, but I recall having visions of phantom babies in the night. Sometimes I would

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**RICHARD K. CROSS** is a professor of English at the University of Maryland in College Park, Md.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/ZDENEK FIAMOLI

awake to find that they would come true; Tinka, as we called her, had joined us for a 4 a.m. feeding. (If I make a lot of our daughters' early years it is not just because that was a decisive time for them. The memory of those years is a source of emotional sustenance for Christa and me, much as the remembrance of our courtship is.)

Our reaction to babies is akin to—arguably, *is*—a religious experience. Why else is the nativity narrative so dear to us and Christmas a pivotal feast in the liturgical calendar? At least in good moments, it is possible to see a child, one's own or somebody else's, as a gift from another realm, like the infant Christ sliding down a sunbeam in Robert Campin's "Annunciation" triptych. We seem to be programmed, whether by nature or culture, to respond to new life with fascination, tenderness, a sense of awe. That is true not just with human babies but with the young of other species as well. And why not? The genomic research indicates that we are cousins of everything animate. The sympathetic response we have to babies is crucial; not only do they need all the nurturing and protection they can get, but insecure and weary parents need support as well.

During our years in Pacific Palisades, Christa's "foster mother" would fly down from Northern California when we seriously needed help, as was the case when our second daughter, Anna, was born. For her first six months Anna seemed unsure that this was the right world for her. Then she evidently concluded there was no going back, and from that point on the photos of her show an alert, happy child. There is one set of pictures from a visit to the Odenwald, a farming district south of Frankfurt, that I particularly cherish: 2-year-old Anna blowing a dandelion puff; Anna in a currant patch popping fruit into her mouth, not at all bothered by its tartness. Both girls admiring the hedgehog our hosts had nursed through the winter.

Catherine told her preschool teacher, Mrs. Jahn, that bliss was having a little sister. There were times when her enthusiasm waned. One picture has Anna, all smiles, sitting

athwart a scowling Tinka. Another, a couple of years later, shows the two girls on our front stoop, Anna with her index finger outstretched, the future advocate admonishing her big sister, who appears to be paying no attention. On the basis of Catherine's solicitude for a schoolmate who had scraped a knee, Mrs. Jahn predicted she would become a nurse. Twenty-two years later, when Catherine graduated from the U.C.L.A. School of Medicine, we looked up Mrs. Jahn and included her in the celebration.

Christa and I found bringing up children in the Palisades a daunting task. On his way to school the boy from two doors down would pause when he reached the cover of our eugenia hedge and light a joint. The social climate in southern California was certainly among the factors that prompted our move to Maryland when the girls were 4 and 6. Bethesda was no more that village in the Westerwald we fantasized about than the Palisades, but we did gain some

leverage on suburbia by sending our daughters to the German School of Washington. Half our girls' education took place in schools, here and abroad, in which the language of instruction was German. Fluency in their mother's

mother tongue and familiarity with another culture have given them a measure of critical distance on whatever environment they find themselves in and very possibly made them more their own people than might otherwise have been the case.

## The Christian Family Movement

We had been in Maryland for some while before we discovered the Christian Family Movement. In a posting at Blessed Sacrament Parish, Christa noticed that a new C.F.M. group was forming. We knew nothing about the organization, but the name sounded promising. Only Christa and one other woman, a single mother in search of child care, signed up. A disappointment, but speedily redeemed! The members of an existing C.F.M. group took pity and invited us in. I don't think we have ever encountered

a more welcoming set of people. From the first meeting we attended it was clear that this was the community we had been looking for.

C.F.M. is one of those lay Catholic associations that flourished during the 1960s, only to fall on leaner days in succeeding decades. Happily the group at Blessed Sacrament proved hardier than most; it has been in continuous existence since 1967, with a number of members from the early years still active. The C.F.M.ers have established

### ON THE WEB

From the archives, an introduction to the Christian Family Movement. [americamagazine.org/pages](http://americamagazine.org/pages)

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a network that supports families in their concern not only with one another's well-being but with that of the parish and the larger society as well. Members of the group have taken the lead in developing Blessed Sacrament's folk Mass, chaired the parish council, served on the boards of Catholic schools, earned degrees in theology, worked with the homeless, helped rebuild houses damaged by Hurricane Katrina and engaged in a host of other projects.

The main mission of the group during its first 15 years was a home school of religion that pioneered a curriculum more in keeping with the spirit of the Second Vatican Council than was true of conventional religious education at that time. (Eventually mainline religious instruction caught up and by the 1980s C.F.M.ers felt comfortable sending their children to regular parish C.C.D. classes.) Because of home schooling, a large number of parents and children became involved in one another's lives and generated what was in effect an extended family. We came on board too late for our daughters to participate in the home school, but the spirit that had animated it persisted. They benefited from the counsel and encouragement we received from C.F.M. friends with a great deal more experience raising teenagers than we had.

Where do matters stand now? Well, for one thing all the couples in the group have stayed married and remained Catholic. It is a sign of the times that not all the children have, although of those who left the church most still practice some form of religion. (Christa and I feel fortunate that our girls continue to be involved in Catholic life.) Through much of its existence, our C.F.M. group has held regular picnic reunions. The most recent of these multigenerational gatherings took place two years ago. At this point the C.F.M. children range in age from their late 20s to mid-50s; there are scores of grandchildren. (The presider at our liturgy was a priest who has a long history with our C.F.M. group and whose name will be familiar to readers of **America**: Drew Christiansen, S.J.)

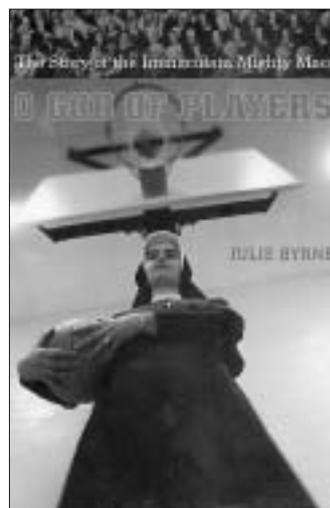
For a number of years, professional pursuits took our daughters away from the D.C. area: Catherine to Los Angeles to study medicine, followed by a residency and several years as an attending physician at Children's Hospital in Boston; Anna to study law in Cambridge and clerk for a federal appeals court judge in Minneapolis. More than anything else it was the family bond that drew them back to Washington. Christa and I continue to offer our daughters advice and support when that seems apropos, but now that we are in our 70s and have health issues, they minister to us more than we do to them. They are attentive not just to the two of us but also to my 94-year-old mother, who has been in and out of the hospital in recent months. It was ever thus, I suppose. The gyre of generations curls back upon itself. **A**

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# A Mother's Blessing

BY SARA MCGINNIS LEE

**T**reasure every moment, dear.” As a mother of young children, I have heard these words of wisdom a thousand times. But that is not the advice I am passing on to my sister, a new mother.

Many of the moments of motherhood are hard to survive, let alone treasure—like the moments of sleep deprivation and colic. There is no real way to prepare for being stripped of your confidence, having your will broken and rebuilding your sense of self with a new vision of what matters and just who God might be. To receive the fullness of what motherhood has to offer, a woman can be present to each day only as it comes. The self-transformation that occurs as a result is significant, if fleeting.

Before having children myself, I entered into a year of full-time study of theology to complete a master's degree, leaving my high school campus ministry job to do so. I loved my work leading students on retreats, service projects and in prayer and worship. My life framework consisted of the best of incarnational, sacramental Catholic theology mixed with the bliss of being young and healthy with a full social life. That year of full-time theological study opened a door into feminist thought and the imper-

fection of the church I loved, a door I would need desperately when I became a mother, as it would give me permission to alter my worldview.



When my husband and I had our first child, everything changed. I had no job and had finished school. The pace of my days slowed so much that it seemed as if I had gotten off the ride of life altogether. The new life in our midst had shifted my sense of self and the world.

Upon seeing my son for the first

time, I was completely overcome with love and astounded at the miracle of life. I quickly became a mystified prisoner of his every sound and movement. Breast-feeding presented personal challenges that trumped the complexities of work projects or comprehensive exams. My son would eagerly bump his head against my chest (or neck or shoulder, depending on his position when hunger struck), turn his face from side to side searching for the smell of milk and desperately shove his little fists into his open mouth, mistaking them for a more nourishing body part of his mother. This little fury of food-seeking behavior became frustrating for both of us. He started to cry if milk didn't hit his palate within seconds, and I could not coordinate removing my clothing-obstacles, positioning him in a "football hold" and holding back his interfering clenched fists fast enough while preparing him for a proper "latch."

My life as I knew it had been ripped from me, and I was frantically trying to respond to the new king of my days and nights and his every need. The subject

of my thoughts and actions was something about which I knew next to nothing. I searched deep within myself for answers about whether to breast-feed for six months or one year, whether I should let him "cry it out" at night or continue to soothe him, whether to feed on demand or at scheduled times. Also to be decided at

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SARA MCGINNIS LEE, of Belleville, Ill., is the author of *Daily Prayer and Celebrating the Lectionary for High School 2011-2012* (Liturgy Training Publications).

ART: DAN SALAMIDA

some point was whether to have day care at home or at a center. I learned that my dependence on experts and books, which had served me well as a student, combined with my obedient trust in the church's wisdom, left me with zero confidence in my inner compass.

As this breakdown in my frames of reference occurred, I filled my time gazing at my son, singing to him and relishing the feel of his warm little body curled up in my arms. I discovered that so many values I had held made no difference in a day filled with routine, manual labor, physical love and a developing human being.

The almighty God I had worshipped, studied and served bore no resemblance to the little person I was enraptured by, nor to the women I admired for their grace-filled patience and wisdom as mothers. Unconditional truth, certainty, institutions and hierarchies of power—these

were irrelevant to the daily work of mothering. Rather, in birthing, nursing, weeping, toiling, rejoicing, marveling and mourning, the face of God was being revealed to me in ways I had never known.

Without knowing it, I began to practice detachment, belly breathing and mindfulness, all due to the rhythm of caring for my child. I stayed in the present nearly constantly. I more often paused before reacting and gradually became gentle in my response to loud noises and chaos. I joyfully received love in the form of a grasping hand and an open-mouthed kiss on the cheek. My goal was front and center, and I was grounded in it: caring for and loving the person of God in my midst—a little child.

As I welcomed the slowness, time seemed to almost stop. I discovered what a day without a plan felt like: it stretches for an eternity! Like my child, I was completely in the moment.

Living this way day after day tore away my need for lists, accomplishments and the ability to quickly summarize any news. I had little activity to report. I was practicing—and becoming an expert in—the art of the pause. As my patience was tested over and over, I learned to do small things with great love—prepare beds, feed meals, clean bodies, teach facial meanings, sing and touch with tenderness. I felt more alive, needed, fulfilled and beloved than ever before. Being a mother full time shaped me into a new person. The shift in focus from me to another human life, one that demanded my full attention at every turn, changed who I am at my very core.

As a result, once my children grew a little older, I could not easily return to my former life of structure and control. I had found God outside my once-beloved church. Now I wanted to write, make decisions slowly, practice yoga, learn meditative sitting, talk and listen

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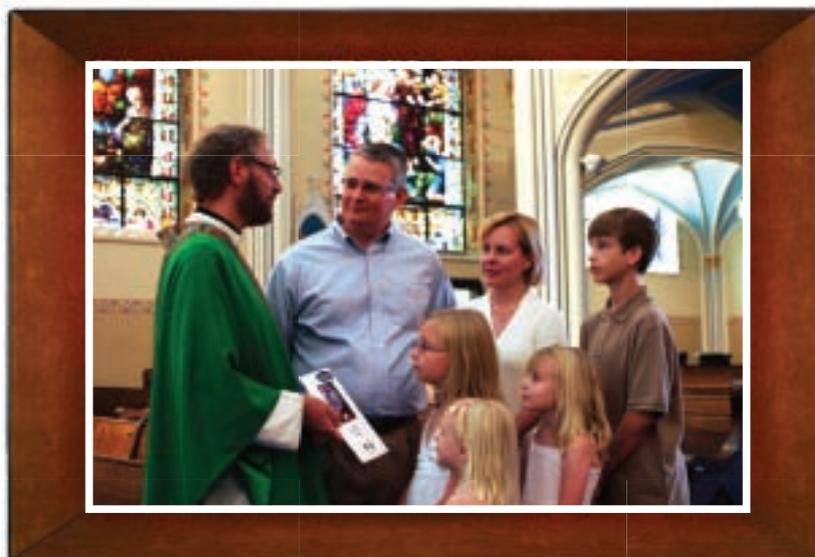
for hours, be outside daily and feel there was enough time for everything.

Unfortunately, the world had not changed along with me. I limp along with a cobbled-together existence of semi-satisfying work, yoga squeezed in once a week and glimpses of once well-known serenity; and I alternate between sitting calmly with my children observing their growth and yelling at them to “hurry up!”

My boys are both in school full time, and I feel their loss as one would a phantom limb. From time to time, I remember the curve of their tiny bodies against mine and how my whole day revolved around them. The challenge of being open to God’s movement in small, slow ways eludes me. I am at risk of losing much of what I found as a new mother. I rush around on errands; I lose myself in tasks. And part of me welcomes this dizzying pace, sadly. It returns me to the “normal” world, to the company of adults around me, valuing success, achievement and efficiency. But, oh, what I have lost!

My only hope seems to lie in my new little niece and visits with her and my sister. When spending time with them, I have to slow down. My sister shares with me the tiny details of her changed life. She tells me about the mysterious differences between one breast-feeding session and the next; she shares the frustration of a night of smooth waking-sleeping patterns juxtaposed with the next night of constant fussing.

I treasure every moment with my nieces. I treasure the lessons they bring back to me about myself, the meaning of life and the essence of God. My prayer is one of thanks for another little child to teach me. My hope is that one day I can integrate the slow, tender mother within me and the speedy, efficient woman of the world who I also am. In so doing, I believe I will somehow know more deeply the God who has led me along the way. **A**



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ART | KAREN SUE SMITH

## A FAMILY MAN

*The pastel portraits of Stanislaw Wyspianski*

In his 38 brief but busy years, Stanislaw Wyspianski (1869-1907) became a 19th-century cultural giant. He is to Krakow what Henrik Ibsen is to Oslo or James Joyce is to Dublin. Yet largely as a result of the isolation imposed on Poland, which for decades was hidden behind the Iron Curtain, few in the United States know his name or his work.

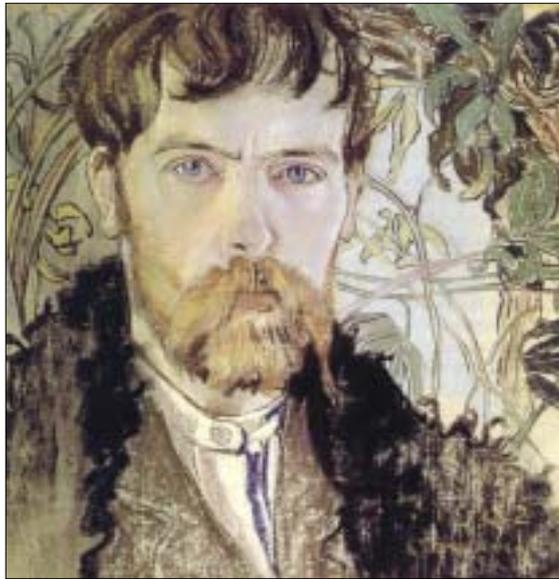
An artist, playwright, designer, poet and dabbler in architectural restoration and opera librettos, Wyspianski gained stature as a public intellectual throughout Europe during the time of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He exhibited his paintings in Munich, a European art center linked to the burgeoning Viennese Secession movement started by Gustav Klimt and other artists, of which Wyspianski was an early member.

His graphic legacy is visible throughout Krakow today: in the unique floral and geometrical murals painted on the interior of the Church of St. Francis of Assisi; in the stained glass windows there and in three windows he designed for Wawel Cathedral but which were not executed until a century after his death; and in his collected works, which fill a museum named for him that is a branch of the National Museum in Krakow.

### A Public Intellectual

As a dramatist, Wyspianski (pronounced Vispee-AN-skee) not only wrote groundbreaking plays but also

designed the stage sets, furnishings and costumes. “The Wedding” (“Wesele”), his play about class-con-



“Self-Portrait,” 1902

sciousness and class conflict, brought him lasting fame and stature in the theater. It is considered by many to be the best Polish drama of the turn of the century. The plot draws “a bitter picture of the powerlessness of a society that was triply fettered: by the political regime, by the inert national tradition and by the skepticism of its intelligentsia,” writes the art historian Marta Romanowska. Some of those same social forces, particularly the foreign occupation and the Marxist goal of a “classless society,” gave this play new life during the Communist takeover of Poland. In 1972 “The Wedding” was made into a film by Andrzej Wajda, an Oscar-winning director. (An English translation of the script is available.)

The artist was born in Krakow. After his mother died when he was 7 and his father, a sculptor with an alcohol problem, proved unable to care for him, the young Stanislaw was raised by an aunt and uncle. He received a classical education in ancient history and mythology and learned Polish folklore and history—all of which informed his adult creative work. He illustrated *The Iliad*, for example, and wrote a historical epic about the Polish king Casimir the Great; he also created major stained glass windows: “Apollo: the Copernicus Solar System,” “God the Father” and “Polonia,” the widowed queen Mother of Poland, who symbolized the nation itself.

Wyspianski entered adulthood at an auspicious time. After graduating from Jagiellonian University and the School of Fine Arts in Krakow, where he was later asked to join the faculty, the young artist traveled through the Hapsburg Empire on a grant. Later he rambled across Europe, taking in the momentous developments in fin-de-siècle art, architecture, music and literature. Remembered bits of what he had seen would soon reappear in his own modernist/neo-romantic style. In Paris, Wyspianski studied painting in one of the many ateliers that surrounded the École des Beaux Arts and visited galleries with Paul Gauguin before the Frenchman left for French Polynesia, where he died. Wyspianski showcased the best of Polish culture, while bringing it into the modern world.

In 1905 Wyspianski was elected to the Krakow City Council, despite a conflict with the Krakow Theater that caused him to ban temporarily the

staging of his works. He died two years later of syphilis. At the time there was no cure for syphilis, called “the French disease,” which blinded Degas and afflicted Gauguin, Manet, Van Gogh and Toulouse Lautrec, among thousands of others. Unlike any of these artists, however, Wyspianski, who was recognized in Poland as a cultural light now extinguished, received a hero’s burial.



“Sleeping Stas,” 1904

Soon after, a critical edition of his works was compiled. Collections of his writings, art and letters have been published and translated. Many contemporary graphic artists cite Wyspianski’s paintings as a major influence on their work. Modern playwrights and producers cite Wyspianski’s dynamic scripts and stagecraft as a model. His legacy touched at least one pope. The young Karol Wojtyła (Pope John Paul II), as a student at Jagiellonian University, studied Wyspianski’s writings and as an actor played the leading role in a production of “The Wedding.”

### The Artist at Home

For a glimpse into the personal life and sensibility of this very public figure, consider the artist’s pastels, which include landscapes, self-portraits and portraits of friends and family. The drawings and paintings of his wife and children reveal a tender side of the artist’s personality and rank among his best-known and best-

loved works. Many of these were on view in the Planty, a park that rings the Old Town of Krakow, when I visited in 2007 and saw them as part of the city’s centenary celebration of Wyspianski’s death. Completely taken by their loveliness, I spent an entire day in the Wyspianski Museum, which is housed in a former palace.

Since these informal, mostly small and intimate works served as my initial introduction to the artist, I thought they might well do the same for others.

In 1900 Wyspianski married Teodora Pytko, an uneducated peasant employed as his aunt’s servant, and they had four children: two sons (Stas and Mietek) and two daughters (Elizy and Helenka). These children were still young when Wyspianski died in 1907.

In these pastels one sees the artist’s quick hand, attention to natural poses, imaginative use of color and flair for the drama of daily life. (He used pastel, polychrome and stained glass because he was allergic to oil paint.) His daughters peer at their infant brother, who is nursing at their mother’s breast; children fall asleep with



“Motherhood,” 1905.

complete abandon wherever they happen to be or gaze at the viewer with fingers in their mouths or with gaping expressions of wide-eyed wonder. In one portrait, Helenka exudes a half-asleep bleariness, oblivious to her own tousled hair; in another she reaches out to touch a vase of flowers.

#### ON THE WEB

Karen Sue Smith discusses Stanislaw Wyspianski's "Self-Portrait."  
[americamagazine.org/video](http://americamagazine.org/video)

These family pictures and works showing other children compare well with similar works by Wyspianski's peers. In Mary Cassatt's Impressionist drawings, formal etchings and oil paintings of children, many of the subjects were her own nieces and nephews or children of friends, relationships that seem to have deepened their appeal to her and, hence, to the viewer. John Singer Sargent's portraits of children, with and without their well-heeled parents, were mostly paid commissions, yet his work also shows a quick eye and brush as he catches the innocence and elegance of his subjects. Edgar Degas painted teenage ballerinas at rehearsal, backstage or onstage. When he captured their unguarded expressions, his pictures convey a certain sadness or fatigue; these are working girls.

By contrast, in Wyspianski's portraits one finds impish faces beneath hats, tots lost in thought, youngsters embracing one another in childhood friendships. While there may be a bit of Norman Rockwell in one or two, I find refreshing the lack of tacked-on "cuteness." These children are presented as fully formed, with God-given dignity and grace, which gives the images authenticity. Real children have contemplative moods, compassion, intelligence, curiosity, longings, angst; even their trusting presence is worthy of respect. As both an artist and a father, Wyspianski had the humility to study children and learn from them. Later he incorporated these observations into the young people he depict-

ed in his monumental and formal stained glass windows.

At times Wyspianski presents his soft-bodied, square-faced wife as a Madonna or earth mother surrounded by children; several of these paintings he titles "Maternity" or "Motherhood." I am heartened that he painted himself into joint portraits with his wife, that he was not only an artist-observer but a participating husband and parent. He saw family, and each family member, as deserving of his time and creativity, even when the works were not made to be sold but were for himself and for them.

PEGGY ROSENTHAL

## BEATIFICATIONS

### SAINT SINATRA AND OTHER POEMS

By Angela Alaimo O'Donnell  
WordTech Communications. 100p \$18  
(Paperback)

Angela O'Donnell's new collection of poems is a lives of the saints—of a sort. Nearly every poem is a tribute to a particular saint, but not all are officially canonized in O'Donnell's own Catholic tradition. Yes, Teresa of Ávila, Thomas Aquinas and St. Francis of Assisi are here. But O'Donnell also boldly proclaims many saints of her own, including the biblical Eve, Emily Dickinson, Seamus Heaney and of course the book's title saint, Frank Sinatra.

In calling these people saints, O'Donnell—a professor of English at Fordham University—is not being heretical (though heresy does play an intriguing role in the volume, as I'll discuss below). Rather she is conceiving of sainthood in its core New Testament sense of a "holiness"

The artist's positive attitudes about family and the importance of children gives these works a spiritual centeredness. The depth of character he observes and the beauty he communicates give them soul.

Stanislaw Wyspianski, whose dynamic inner life once helped to fuel the cultural life of Poland and still infuses its cultural history with genius and dignity, was grounded in the private, personal world of family. The home, its living spaces peopled by children, served as the studio where he transformed his observations of family life into works of art with universal appeal.

(*hagiasmos* in the Greek) that is available to anyone. The early church, as reflected in the Epistles, referred to all members of the new Christian community as *hagiotes*. The Letter to the Ephesians, for instance, is addressed "to the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus."

What so interests O'Donnell about saintliness that she would write poem after poem on the topic? I think she wrote them in order to explore from the inside the texture of what holy living might mean. Sometimes her vision is consistent with our usual concept of saintliness. Take the marvelous sonnet "St. Vincent," which rings changes on Van Gogh's statement that "the best way to know God is to love many things." But then there is the deliberately shocking poem "St. Eve," which imagines the biblical Eve in her exile complaining to God, even partially blaming him for her inadequacies: "Ever a disappointment,/ I grew breasts/.../You cut me in two./ I take half the blame."

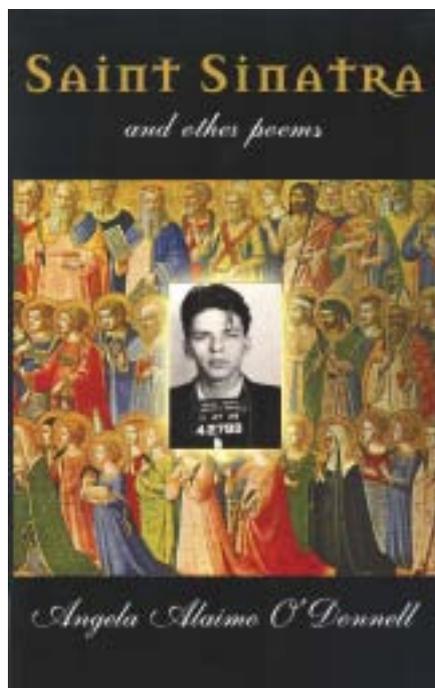
Words like this border on heresy; and it is this borderland that O'Donnell chooses to explore in the six poems whose title begins "Heresy," one closing each of the book's sections. "Heresy #1" details the mutilations of several female canonized saints, tortured and killed for what their eras defined as heresy. Silently, implicitly, the poem condemns the male treatment of these faith-filled women, and this condemnation is perhaps the poem's own heresy. In Heresy #3, "St. Ahab," the primary heresy is the very naming of *Moby-Dick's* dark protagonist as a saint. But further, as this fine poem proceeds, all of us are implicated in the angers and hatreds that are Ahab's very being. "You are us, you heartless martyr, / we are you through and through." The final couplet is chilling: "How we bless our horrors with abstraction. / Vengeance. Justice. In Ahab's Holy Name."

Another reflection on life's dark side is "Heresy #5: St. Hawk and St. Shrew." The poem describes the inter-related God-given roles of the two: the predator hawk and its prey, the shrew. The three-line inter-rhymed stanzas end with a challenging vision of the interweaving of evil and good, weakness and strength, and art itself:

*St. Shrew's the hard and lesser part,  
though dying gladly takes more art.  
St. Lucifer and Christ watch and weep.*

O'Donnell experiments with rhyme schemes in many of the volume's poems, and in a sense the book's overarching theme is poetry itself. The long, six-part poem "The Conversation," perhaps my favorite in the book for its brilliant play in the service of a profound vision of life and art, imagines the final meeting between the great poet Czeslaw Milosz and the monk-mystic-poet Thomas Merton. O'Donnell's poem

incorporates not only many of their own words but also lines from other poets, all in a grand conversation cele-



brating the glory of loving this world and of loving poetry. But is poetry of God or of the devil? Pondering the question without finally answering it, the poem lets its speakers characterize a poet on the one hand as speaking "the language of angels," and on the other as "A houseful of demons speaking in many tongues."

The volume's final poem, also its final heresy, continues the conversation about whether poetry has a divine or demonic—or merely human—source. This "Poet's Heresy" has an unnamed female poet uttering her desire to feed us with language's lusciousness:

*I want to feed you  
bread and wine, fruit and feast,  
blessed and broken words  
to chew, chew, chew.*

*I want you to eat them  
...*

*to put your lips around p,  
crack k's with your crowns,  
roll l's across your taste-budded  
tongue.*

Poetry, she goes on, "is lies & truth, death & life/ .../ what you have always/ and have never known." Finally, the poem closes by making explicit its vision of poetry as eucharistic:

*It is my body & my blood.  
Here. Take. Eat.*

Is this heresy, to claim poetry as sacrament? I think not. Language is as incarnational as Christ himself, the Word made flesh: O'Donnell's whole volume suggests this. She wants in this collection to help us rethink our concepts of holiness, of incarnation, of divinity and humanity intermixed, even of heresy. So she offers for our consideration—indeed as food for thought—a range of representations of all these concepts. Like any fine poet, she will not give answers. Rather, she invites: "Here. Take. Eat."

PEGGY ROSENTHAL's books include *The Poets' Jesus* (Oxford Univ. Press) and *Praying Through Poetry: Hope for Violent Times* (St. Anthony Messenger Press).

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# RITUAL AND MYTH

## RELIGION IN HUMAN EVOLUTION

### From the Paleolithic To the Axial Age

By Robert N. Bellah  
Belknap/Harvard Univ. Press. 784p  
\$39.95

During his long and distinguished academic career, Robert Bellah, emeritus professor of sociology at Berkeley, introduced concepts that have shaped the way in which we think of the roles of religion in modern society. His analyses of American civil religion in *Varieties of Civil Religion* (1970) and *The Broken Covenant* (1975) and of cultural shifts in social cohesion *Habits of the Heart* (1985) have become familiar classics. In addition, Bellah has contributed important studies detailing the complex religious landscape of pre-industrial Japan in *Tokugawa Religion* (1957) and modern times, *Imagining Japan* (2003). This new volume, some 13 years in the writing, departs from sociological analysis of modern or well-documented societies to engage questions concerning religious activities and perceptions from the origins of human societies to a watershed period in the second half of the first millennium B.C.E.

Given the broad sweep of human history and culture that Bellah explores, he cannot embrace a single definition of “religion” that might be traced from one example to the next. He embraces multiple insights into the social functioning of religious symbolism from classical sociology of religion, contemporary anthropology, psychology of religion, child psychology and even theories of play among primates and humans. Three distinctive stages in psychological development recur in various guises throughout the book: (a) bodily acting out of religious mean-

ing (mimesis); (b) symbolic use of visual icons and narratives (myth) and (c) cognitive, conceptual analysis (theory). The primacy of mimetic actions associates ritual behavior in primate and pre-linguistic human societies. Anthropological studies of ritual in primitive tribes from the central Brazilian Kalapalo and the Walbiri aborigines in Australia to the Navajo in the American Southwest demonstrate the stability of ritual as well as its social necessity.

The first major social reconfiguration saw humans shifting from small tribal groups, in which there were minimal distinctions of power and status, to states ruled by powerful kings, which incorporate distinctions between nobility and commoners. Bellah begins with Polynesia (Hawaii) before shifting to the emergence of empires in the Near East (Mesopotamia and Egypt) and China (Shang and western Zhou). The latter set up the case for Bellah’s primary focus, the axial age transitions represented by religious developments in ancient Israel, Greece, China and India. Bellah refers to these societies that have managed to unite tribes or small city states in larger territorial units as archaic.

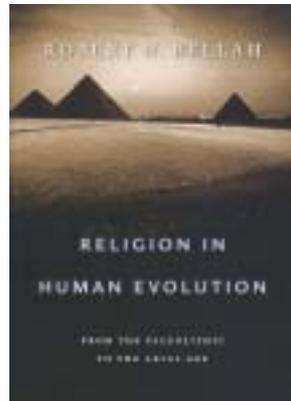
Treatments of the axial age in Israel, Greece, China and India occupy over half of the book. The term axial, adopted from philosophers like Karl Jaspers rather than social scientists or historians, assumes that a critical “break” or transition in human consciousness occurred at approximately the same time in these diverse societies. Though Bellah insists that

attending to the social and historical particulars in each of the four examples avoids the pitfalls of metatheory, he employs a set of criteria to distinguish axial breakthroughs from comparable developments. The critical distance from the political and cultural world that such insights foster takes a variety of forms. Bellah’s construction of the development of Israel’s religion highlights the covenant theology of the Deuteronomic authors of the fifth century B.C.E. The older royal ideology is subordinated to the requirement that all Israelites are united in God’s covenant love and are obedient to the Torah. The Jewish expressions of the theoretic breakthrough may lack the elements of abstract, scientific reflection on the nature of things one finds in other examples, but it comes closest to a realized utopia.

When Bellah shifts to ancient Greece—or more appropriately for the axial breakthrough one should say ancient Athens—his categories become more puzzling. Somewhat dated accounts of religious practices, civic sacrifices and

Dionysus mysteries are mentioned. But the cultural story is carried by tragedians and philosophers. A forced march through the pre-Socratics and Sophists brings readers to Socrates and Plato, whose artistry unites the worlds of literary art (drama) and philosophy. As revolutionary as the political project in Plato’s *Republic* is, the cultural audacity of claiming to unseat the Homeric hegemony is even greater. The social carrier for this breakthrough is the school, not the city-state.

The examples of China and India prove equally complex and will be more difficult to follow for readers unfamiliar with the history and culture of those countries. Bellah provides longer quotations from the writings to which he refers as an aid to



readers who cannot pull Confucian, Daoist, Buddhist and other texts off the shelf. To preserve the chronological case for the axial age in India, Bellah must reject the possibility that the Upanishads (philosophic texts) count. Despite a theoretic turn in thought, society remains archaic. Buddhism provides the theoretic breakthrough of a cosmic law taught to all, coupled with a social alternative in the Sangha.

Professor Bellah has digested massive amounts of scholarly literature on

every topic that he discusses. Consequently, the reader has the feeling of sitting through a series of graduate seminars. One might best see this work as an attempt to do for the 21st century what the great sociologist of religion Max Weber did for the 20th in treating Judaism, China and India. Its success will be measured by the extent to which this volume finds its way into the academic discussion.

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**PHEME PERKINS** is a professor of New Testament at Boston College.

JIM CONLON

## THE SCIENTIFIC MYSTERIES

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### THE EMERGENT CHRIST

By Ilia Delio

Orbis Books. 208p \$22

Do you find yourself fascinated by the findings and insights of science? Are you puzzled and intrigued by quantum theory and evolution and their implications for how you see the world? Do you have an intuition that these insights of science hold out the promise of a deeper, more grounded and holistic spiritual journey? Are you one who appreciates the ultimate and awesome mystery that resides at the heart of the universe?

If you answer these questions in the affirmative, you are one of a growing number who are living, in the words of Thomas Berry, "in between stories." In some way, you are aware of a mystery and of the fascination of a new story cascading into human consciousness. It is a story of the origins of things that began some 14 billion years ago; a story of the formation of planets, including planet Earth some 4.5 billion years ago; and a story of life emerging from the sea, flowing onto the land and giving birth to humanity and the consciousness that today we, as humans, have come to understand.

If you are aware of these amazing events and are a Catholic Christian, then Ilia Delio's *The Emergent Christ* may be just the companion you have been waiting for as you search for a fresh and dynamic integration between your inherited Catholic tradition and the amazing insights of science. It can heal the growing chasm between your inherited Catholicism and the insights of science. Each chapter provides a new and expanded view to heal the fragmentation within, as you discover your place in this amazing process.

Diarmuid O'Murchu, a social psychologist and author, told me recently that his work is dedicated to integrating the insights of science and the adult faith experience. Science and the Catholic tradition have not always shared the same landscape. From the days of Galileo and Copernicus, and more recently the work of Jesuit paleontologist and theologian Teilhard de Chardin, the Catholic Church has often resisted the revelations of empirical observation. Today, however, the

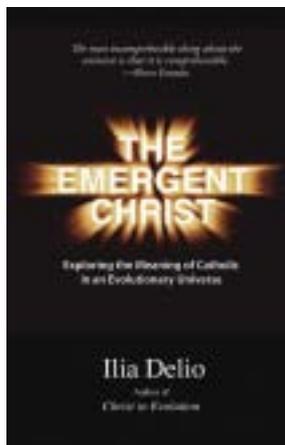
divisions are being healed; the result is a more vital faith experience flowing from the integration of science and theology. As we gain fresh insights from evolutionary science, we discover that the God of the cosmos is present in every molecule of existence; the whole world is sacred and soaked in the divine presence.

Beginning with the themes that address the new creation story and the renewed notion of God, Jesus, the paschal mystery and more, Ilia Delio—a senior fellow at Woodstock Theological Center at Georgetown University—presents a fresh and authentic vision of today's Catholicism. Readers will discover in these pages moments of peace and wholeness, as the fragmentation within and without begins to heal. The book is an invitation to come home to the universe and home to your own Catholic faith. It is an invitation to engage in a work that focuses on oneness, healing and hope, being born in every fabric of the world moment by moment.

If your experience in reading *The Emergent Christ* is similar to mine, you'll be left refreshed and curious, asking that the author and her colleague at

Woodstock, John Haught, and many others continue to nourish us with incarnational spirituality. That way we can celebrate the insights of science without turning our backs on our Catholic heritage, and find in our theological reflection a deeper understanding of what it means to be Catholic in an evolutionary universe. Only then can we come home to a new

wholeness in which science and theology become partners in this great evolutionary journey.



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**JIM CONLON** is the director of the Sophia Center in Culture and Spirituality, at Holy Names University, in Oakland, Calif.

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plete position description and to submit an application, visit: <http://jobs.udayton.edu/applicants/Central?quickFind=52444>. A complete application for the position consists of a letter of intent, C.V. and the names of three references. Review of applications will begin on Nov. 1, 2011, and continue until the position is filled. Address inquiries to: Prof. Vincent Miller, Chair, Religious Studies Search Committee, University of Dayton, Dayton, OH 45469-1530; or [Vincent.Miller@notes.udayton.edu](mailto:Vincent.Miller@notes.udayton.edu).

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## LETTERS

### Let It Rock!

Thank you for Kerry Weber's article on Christian Rock, "Show a Little Faith" (9/26).

Last August I was celebrating Mass at an out-of-town church. I was ambivalent about its Christian Rock choir. I understood its roots in the folk Masses of the 1970s, amped up with added keyboards in the 1980s. But as a person with a performing arts, liturgical singer background, mostly I shared your sentiment. Some notable gems are "product more than poetry" or songs that sounded like "what adults thought teens wanted to hear."

During my training, I noticed that in theology school discussing music was hard to do. I, for one, find God more in U2, Tom Waits, Elvis Costello, Joni Mitchell, Roseanne Cash, Shawn Colvin ("Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas") or Ella Fitzgerald singing "Mack the Knife" than I do diving into Christian Rock hoping I might meet Jesus on the road to Emmaus.

JAY CUASAY  
Sterling, Va.

### Don't Judge Malcolm

When Malcolm X was dying—like Moses viewing the Promised Land as he died, and like Martin Luther King Jr.—"His eyes were undimmed, and his vigor unabated." In the review of Manning Marable's biography of Malcolm X, by Raymond A. Schroth, S.J. (9/26), why should sadness eclipse admiration when we discover more demons wrestling with a man's fabric and fighting for his soul?

Unforeseen circumstances can save

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us from a disastrous choice just as they can propel us to the Herculean deed. Another hero, Sergeant York, was on the road to murder when he was thrown down, like St. Paul, and then set on a new course on his journey.

A United States that would have intervened with young Malcolm Little and prepared him for a productive role in society would have been an America that did not need an incensed, radical, dynamic and evolving Malcolm X. It is a fact of life that greatness, eminence and high achievement (especially for men) often come at a high cost to personal and social relationships.

NORMAN COSTA  
Poughkeepsie, N.Y.

### Potty Questions

Michael V. Tueth, S.J., who reviewed "The Help" ("The Song of Aibileen", 9/12), is neither a woman nor an

African-American from the period reflected in the film and novel.

While I acknowledge the reviewer's credentials, the stress in the review on the movie's "bathroom matters" shows a lack of understanding of the role of women and servants of that era. Talk about "injustice": It is the women who "potty train" children and minority women who clean the toilets. Recognize a metaphor, please. The novel and film are about women with the strength and character to "risk."

The final comment, "One wonders how much will change for these characters," is nonsensical for any viewer of the film who knows history. Where is the "black maid" today or the mother devoid of contact with her children? But now I'm showing my gender and my age.

COLLEEN ROCKERS  
Clayton, Mo.

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## Not John Wayne, But Compassionate

Re “An Unnatural Disaster” (Current Comment, 9/26): It will be hard for President Obama, himself an African-American, to do something for the African-American community. It will look as if he is favoring his own. I can hear Fox News already accusing him of racial favoritism.

The crisis in the United States will not be solved until the people vote intelligent and civic-minded people into office. The last election saw the emergence of the Tea Party. Do you see any black people at those events?

President Obama has some fine qualities that are not appreciated. He is not John Wayne, nor is he Franklin D. Roosevelt. I wish he were being praised for his positions, because they are sensible and rational. They show compassion and justice, the best qualities of all.

VIRGINIA EDMAN  
Toronto, Ont., Canada.

## SNAP's Last Gasp?

Judging by the report on the attempt by The Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests to sue the Vatican in the International Criminal Court in the Hague (Signs of the Times, 9/26), it looks as if SNAP is riding the last lap to defeat. The case will go nowhere; they cannot do any more to attack the walls of the Vatican. They have long exhausted their moral capital by showing that revenge, not justice, is their goal.

(REV.) FRANCIS O'BEACHAIN  
Lifford, Co. Donegal, Ireland

## Now Split Up Into Groups

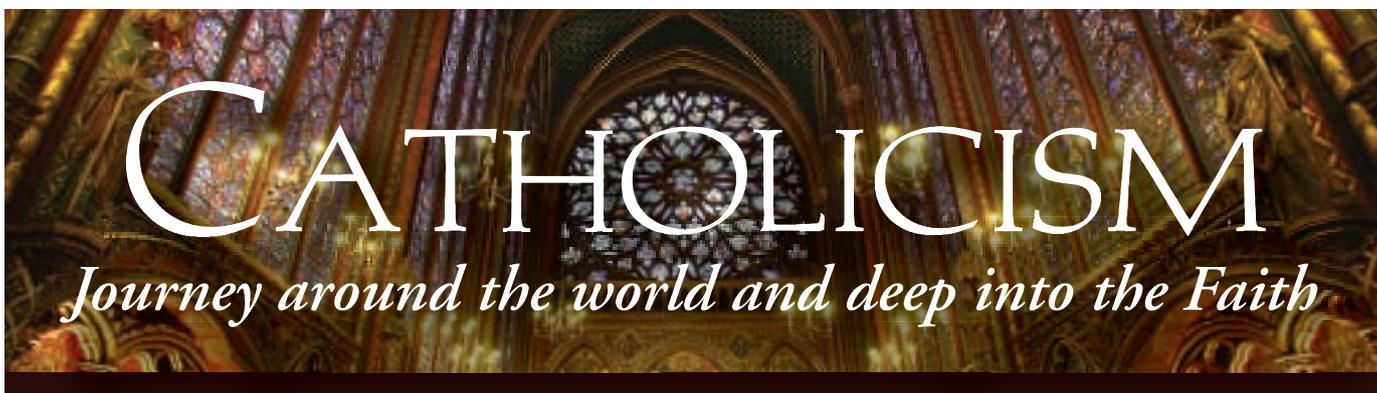
The evangelization in Cardinal Wuerl's “A New Relationship” (9/26) requires a lot more than a new relationship between bishops and theologians. Evangelization is much broader than teaching and requires thinking outside the box.

First we need to face the reality that most Catholics do not and will not attend Catholic universities. Other

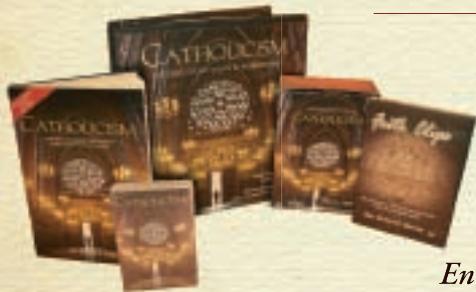
structures are needed to close the serious gap between educated and less than well-educated Catholics, between those who have the Gospel preached to them and those who don't. Adult religious formation needs to be expanded to parents and young adults whose evangelization has run out at the end of C.C.D. and confirmation class, perhaps in age groups of 20 to 25 and up, when adult commitment is more likely.

Small is good when it comes to ecclesial community, the unit of evangelization. The Spirit is also moving in lay ministry of all sorts: Bible studies, support groups, prayer groups, small church communities, visitors to jails and nursing homes, Newman Clubs, soup kitchens and outreach to the homeless. What did Jesus do? He reached out to sinners and tax collectors in the more intimate setting of dinner. When he fed the 5,000, he first split them into groups of 50.

RICHARD P. KANE  
Stewartsville, N.J.



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# Love Says It All

THIRTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (A), OCT. 23, 2011

Readings: Ez 22:20-26; Ps 18:2-4, 47, 51; 1 Thes 1:5c-10; Mt 22:34-40

*“Which commandment in the law is the greatest?” (Mt 22:36)*

When my students are working on a paper, I always ask if they can summarize their thesis in one sentence. Similarly, when students are preparing a homily, I ask if they can say in one phrase what they are trying to convey. If they cannot do this, they still have much work to do to clarify what they are thinking and what it is they want people to take away from their paper or their preaching.

In today’s Gospel, the Pharisees ask Jesus which commandment in the law is the greatest. This episode is the third in a string of four controversy stories in Matthew 22, in which the religious leaders are trying to trap Jesus. This is different from the accounts in Mk 12:28-34 and Lk 10:25-28, where the questioner is sincere and receives affirmation from Jesus.

In Matthew’s account, the Pharisees’ question tests Jesus in two ways. First, all the commandments are important and all must be kept. If Jesus were to say that some could be disregarded, they would have caught him. More likely, the Pharisees were trying to see if Jesus could match other famous teachers of the time who could summarize the law. Rabbi Hillel, for example, summed up the command-

ments thus: “What is hateful to you do not do to your neighbor” (b. Sabb. 31a). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus made a similar statement: “In everything do to others as you would have them do to you, for this is the law and the prophets” (Mt 7:12). Now Jesus elaborates on that statement to bring into view the other side of the same coin: love of God.

The commandment to love God with one’s whole heart, soul and strength is found in Dt 6:4-9, the Shema, recited twice a day by Jews. The whole self is involved: the heart, considered the seat of emotions, the soul, the center of vitality and consciousness and strength or power. The command to love the neighbor is from the Holiness Code (Lv 19:18), which asserts that the way love of God is manifest is in love toward the neighbor. These are not really two separate commandments, then, but rather two faces of the same love.

What is not explicit in this text but appears in many other places in Scripture, is that God’s love is prior. Before one is able to demonstrate love of God and love of neighbor, God has taken the initiative in loving. When one has become open to God’s free, unmerited, unbounded love and has let the love sink deeply into one’s being, then one has the capacity to give love in return. When divine love overwhelms us, we are prone to ask with the

Psalmist, “How can I repay the Holy One for all the good done for me?” (Ps 116:12). The response is one simple word: love. It has two objects, which are inseparable: God and neighbor.

Today, with our rise in eco-justice consciousness, we would include all creation within our notion of the “neighbor” to be loved. We would also include love of self, though this notion would have been foreign to people of the biblical world. They did not understand themselves in



## PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- Take some time apart to be with God and open yourself to the divine love that fills you.
- Ask Jesus to show you how to love God and neighbor most fully today.
- When at prayer, breathe in the power of the Spirit to enable you to do what love asks.

individualistic terms but rather as enmeshed in a particular family, clan and religious group and dependent on others for their sense of self-identity.

When the greatest commandment is to love, it becomes very difficult to spell out how to keep it. St. Augustine advised, “Love and do what you will” (*Sermon 7* on the First Epistle of John). When tested on his knowledge and fulfillment of the commandments, Jesus passes with an answer that cannot be bested, but it can be repeated.

**BARBARA E. REID**

**BARBARA E. REID, O.P.**, a member of the Dominican Sisters of Grand Rapids, Mich., is a professor of New Testament studies at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, Ill., where she is vice president and academic dean. Her latest book, *Abiding Word: Sunday Reflections for Year B* (Liturgical Press), is a compilation and expansion of articles that first appeared in *America*.

ART: TAD DUNNE

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