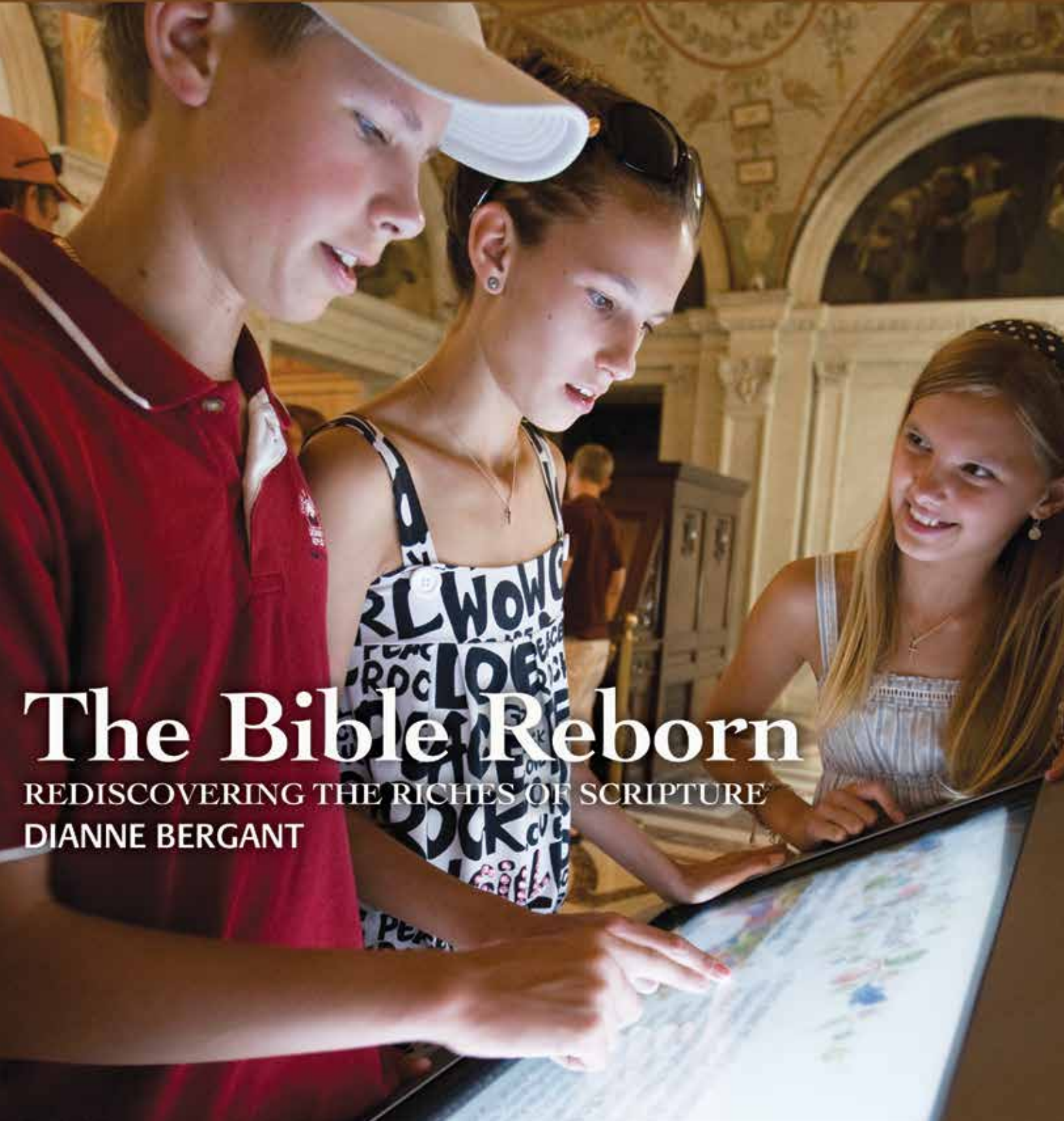


America

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The Bible Reborn

REDISCOVERING THE RICHES OF SCRIPTURE

DIANNE BERGANT

Kristin Richmond and Kirsten Tobey were tired of watching their kids eat fish sticks and Tater Tots, those ubiquitous yet nutritionless staples of the American school lunch, so in 2006 the two moms from Oakland, Calif., decided to found Revolution Foods “to transform the way America eats by providing access to healthy, affordable meals to schools.” They started out serving 300 healthy lunches a day to students in Oakland; today, they serve more than 200,000 meals daily to students nationwide and employ more than 1,000 people.

The company was listed second on last year’s Inner City 100, an annual ranking of high-achieving, for-profit companies published by Fortune magazine and the Initiative for a Competitive Inner City, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to leverage market forces in order to break cyclical patterns of poverty in America’s urban areas. From 1999 to 2012, Inner City 100 firms operated in 146 cities and generated more than 76,000 new jobs and \$2 billion in annual sales.

All of this is to say that Pope Francis probably didn’t have the Inner City 100 in mind when he spoke recently about the unjust, even nefarious dimensions of market capitalism. Indeed, the pope pointed out in one interview that “the only specific quote I used [in the apostolic exhortation “*Evangelii Gaudium*”] was the one regarding the ‘trickle-down theories,’ which assume that economic growth, encouraged by a free market, will *inevitably* succeed in bringing about greater justice and social inclusiveness in the world” (emphasis added).

I doubt that the pope’s *ex post facto* qualification will soothe the anxieties of Rush Limbaugh and some of his more dogmatic Republican brethren. Nor should it, really. Pope Francis offers a generally accurate—if trenchant—critique of the perils of capitalism, one that also appears in black and white for all to see in the social doctrine of

the church. Those on the secular left, however, should take little comfort in that fact. While the church’s teaching on economics is not popular at conservative policy salons, it is not synonymous with the Democratic Party platform either. Pope Francis has also been critical of Marxism, especially when it takes the form of theology. “The Marxist ideology is wrong,” he said flat-out in December.

So where does that leave us? First, we need to recall that the church’s teaching on economics is a moral teaching; it is not a technical prescription. We believe that human beings have a duty to care for one another, especially for the least among us; this requires social and political structures that promote moral responsibility, equality of opportunity, an equitable distribution of resources and a strong social safety net.

But apart from a thoroughly justifiable suspicion of utterly this-worldly -isms, whether they originate with the left or the right, the church is—if you’ll pardon the expression—largely agnostic when it comes to the technical means of building a more just society. The question, in other words, is simply “what works?” What is the best, just way of building a more just and prosperous world? If it’s more start-up ventures like Revolution Foods, then so be it. If it means a generous government benefit, then so be it. If it’s somehow both, then even better.

If the left feels only affirmed by what the pope has said, then they have missed the point. If the right feels only threatened, then they too have missed the point. “Today we also have to say ‘Thou shalt not’ to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills,” Francis has said. A brief survey of the 20th century—from London’s degraded East End to the killing fields of Cambodia—reminds us that the left and the right are both capable of creating murderous economies. As with Revolution Foods, the proof of the pudding is in the eating.

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Cover: Visitors to the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., browse the pages of the Giant Bible of Mainz in the library’s Great Hall. CNS photo/Nancy Wiechec.

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ON THE WEB

Kerry Weber, right, talks about her forthcoming book, *Mercy in the City*, on our podcast. Plus, reviews of the films "**American Hustle**" and "**August: Osage County**" and more on information on "**The Living Word**" project. All at americamagazine.org.



A.C.L.U. v. U.S.C.C.B.

A recent lawsuit filed by the American Civil Liberties Union against the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops should challenge any complacency about the future of Catholic health care in the United States. The suit alleges that a young mother received improper treatment at a Catholic health facility in Muskegon, Mich., as a miscarriage dangerously progressed. But the A.C.L.U. has elected to build its suit not on any purported malpractice at the health center (Mercy Health Muskegon has yet to describe its side of the story), but on a novel accounting of negligence.

According to the A.C.L.U., it is not the attending physicians who may be at fault for any alleged lapses, but the U.S. bishops because of their promulgation of the church's "Ethical and Religious Directives," a longstanding guideline for treatment at Catholic health institutions. The directives prohibit direct abortion. The A.C.L.U. argues that the prohibition contributes to substandard care for women experiencing crisis pregnancies. The lawsuit is an obvious threat to religious freedom. It is also incoherent, for it presupposes an alarming indifference on the part of medical licensing and accreditation boards nationwide that should have long ago intervened, had the bishops' directives truly put patients in Catholic hospitals at risk.

The A.C.L.U. misunderstands several things about the church and how authentic expressions of faith are "lived" in society—how the directives actually work in the field, for one. Catholic bishops are not making decisions about care. The difficult calls are left in the hands of doctors and, when required, hospital ethics review boards, which are allowed broad latitude in any difficult, high-risk judgments. The suit also ignores the existence of Directive 47, which allows treatment in crisis situations even when it might result in the indirect termination of a pregnancy.

It appears that for the A.C.L.U. religious expression is a personal experience best confined to worship within a church building. But it was authentic religious expression and a deep respect for the value and dignity of all human life that built these institutions of care and service in the first place, and it is authentic—and free—religious expression, properly engaged with the world, that must be allowed to guide them still.

Sharing Power for Peace

Even as the Philippines began the long road to recovery after the deadliest typhoon in its history, negotiations to resolve a man-made tragedy plodded on. The national government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, the largest rebel group in the Autonomous Region of Muslim

Mindanao, took a significant step toward peace with the signing of a power-sharing agreement in early December. For over four decades, Muslim separatists in the south have fought for independence from what they view as an oppressive and exploitative Christian-dominated government. The insurgency has left 200,000 dead and impeded regional development.

Under the deal Manila would control the defense, fiscal and monetary policy of Bangsamoro, the political entity poised to replace Mindanao. The new autonomous government would be granted broad powers over internal matters like trade, tourism and education.

This progress, however, remains fragile. In September, Moro rebels left out of the latest round of peace talks laid siege to the predominantly Catholic Zamboanga City, sparking a weeks-long standoff with the military in which 200 were killed and many more displaced. A group of Catholic and Protestant bishops and ulema (Muslim religious leaders) condemned the violence as "inhumane, non-Christian, non-Islamic and contrary to the teachings of our respective faiths." Sustaining such interfaith solidarity in the months ahead will be indispensable to translating signed agreements into lasting peace on the ground.

Sacred Lands Restored

Recently, the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe purchased 96,307 acres of forestland and streams northwest of Tacoma, Wash. The Muckleshoots will manage the land for "long-term sustainable timber harvest, while preserving natural values including fish and wildlife habitat." This single event might not be noteworthy if it were not part of a much wider pattern emerging in Indian country.

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of Montana became the first in the nation, in 1979, to set aside tribal land—92,000 acres of the Flathead Reservation's mountains and meadows—as wilderness. The Assiniboine and Sioux tribes in northeastern Montana are bringing back bison on the Fort Peck Reservation. In Minnesota, the Chippewa, or Ojibwa, have restored a ravaged walleye population at Red Lake.

Often enough the tribes are major partners with their neighbors in successful efforts to restore fish and wildlife. These efforts are not surprising when one understands a core value of Native American spirituality: the intimate relationship between human beings and the land. Christian reverence for God and creation has too often been marred by greed and domination. All people would benefit from an encounter and dialogue with native communities and their respect and care for the land.

Dignity of the Disabled

Two of the most stirring images of the papacy of Pope Francis center on a person with a disability. In the first, featured on the cover of *America* (4/29/13), the pope embraces young Dominic Gondreau, a boy with cerebral palsy. In the second Pope Francis is shown kissing a man disfigured by severe tumors. Pope Francis' outreach to these two individuals impressed observers as both heartwarming and just. With simple gestures of compassion, he extended to them the love they deserve as human beings made in God's image and likeness.

As is often true with Pope Francis, his actions demand a response from us. How do we minister to people with disabilities in our own lives, whether the person is a wheelchair-bound relative or a homeless veteran with a missing limb? On a societal level, how do we treat people with disabilities? Do we provide them with the tools and services they need to live a healthy and productive life? Or are they left, as they have been for so much of human history, on the margins of society, isolated at home or forced to beg for money on the street? These questions are especially important for Catholics in the United States as we recommit ourselves to the defense of life this month at the annual March for Life. They are also pressing questions for leaders in Washington, who have thus far failed to ratify the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities.

The U.N. convention is an international treaty that seeks to ensure a basic level of human rights for disabled persons throughout the world. It is part of a welcome campaign to shine a light on the plight of the disabled in countries that fail to provide them with the infrastructure and social services they need to thrive. When the United Nations set out to address global poverty through the Millennium Development Goals, persons with disabilities were not mentioned. The United Nations is now seeking to address that gap by including disability rights in all its discussions on poverty.

People with disabilities constitute a disproportionately large number of the world's poor. The United Nations estimates that two billion people worldwide suffer from some sort of physical or mental disability. In developing countries, 90 percent of disabled children do not attend school, and as many as one of every three street children is disabled. Persons with disabilities also face high levels of unemployment. Simple innovations we have come to take for granted in the United States, like elevators, ramps and

designated parking spaces, can radically improve the prospects of the disabled in the developing world.

Here is where the moral leadership of the United States can do much good. Like Britain and other countries in the West, the United States has codified protections for people with disabilities. But the campaign for the basic human rights of the disabled did not end with the adoption of the Americans With Disabilities Act in 1990. By declining to ratify the U.N. convention, Congress has declined to support the extension of disability rights to individuals worldwide. Legislators should rectify that wrong by bringing up the matter again for a vote.

The challenges facing the disabled merit special attention during the March for Life. In some industrialized countries, including the United States, prenatal screening leads to the abortion of an estimated 60 percent to 90 percent of children with Down syndrome or other genetic anomalies. Sadly, this aspect of disability rights is not mentioned in the U.N. literature. The rights of the disabled must be defended from the very first moment of existence. A natural extension of pro-life advocacy would include the promotion of services for individuals with disabilities and their families.

Church communities should also undergo a process of self-examination. Too many Catholic schools and churches do not have adequate resources for people with disabilities. Elevators, song books in Braille, better sound systems for the hearing impaired, sign language interpreters—developments like these would send a strong signal that all are welcome in our church communities. These are not inexpensive measures, to be sure, but a commitment to the flourishing of every individual will require some financial sacrifice. The National Catholic Partnership on Disability is an excellent resource for groups looking to offer these services in a sustainable way.

By reaching out to people with disabilities, Pope Francis follows in the footsteps of Jesus, who was a special friend to the blind, the lame and the deaf. The disabled, like the poor, have always been with us. The disability rights movement of the last 50 years has been a journey of liberation, one that began in the West but must continue in the developing world. For millennia individuals with disabilities lived in the shadows. As Pope Francis reminds us, it is our responsibility to welcome them into the light.



REPLY ALL

A Head Start

"Saving the Humanities," by Raymond A. Schroth, S.J. (12/23), addresses a most important topic. Many of the reports cited expand the discussion to secondary education, and one report discusses the whole educational continuum. To even start to develop oneself into a fully educated person, one must be a reader, and to progress along that developmental path, one probably needs to be an avid reader; one must enjoy it and actually thirst for it.

The origin of this thirst, in terms of age and environment, is elementary school and home ("home" meaning, if not actual house or apartment, then at least a home-like environment, like a neighborhood library, center or parish). To enjoy it, it ought to combine some element of actual fun with some element of self-satisfaction over an accomplishment.

Perhaps we are trying to burden the college years with more responsibility for this kind of development than they can bear.

CHARLES ERLINGER
Online comment

Require Public Exposure

One surefire way to get students to read is to require them to publish something about what they have read. This could be in a formal campus journal or an online journal open to the university at large. Exposing students' written thoughts to the "vulgar gaze of the crowd" would compel them to come to grips with the limitations of their own learning more effectively than any formal grading process.

PAUL LOATMAN JR.
Online comment

The Conservative Arts

Given that the word *liberal* has become such a political insult, many consider a degree in humanities or liberal arts as "worthless"—in more than just an economic sense. In light of this, maybe

it would be better for colleges to start promoting a "conservative arts degree."

Yes, indeed: "Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!" Thanks to Raymond A. Schroth, S.J., for an article that illustrates the enviable quality of an education in the humanities.

PAUL FERRIS
Online comment

An Author Responds

Re "Novak's Travels" (12/9): I am grateful that *Writing From Left to Right* was assigned for review to a longtime friend, who has never spoken to me less than cordially. And I am grateful that David O'Brien laid out his many disagreements with me over the last 30 years.

I am even glad he put into print a moral judgment on my intellectual efforts of these last 30 years—not at all one I would want to show to my mother. In my experience, my friends on the left do not easily brook radical disagreement, so it is useful to get that passionate dimension out front, too.

Finally, I would have thought certain that my earlier works, and this new one, had already laid out arguments in reply to the same criticisms I have been hearing for so many years. But I expect the argument between my many good critics and me will continue on and on.

MICHAEL NOVAK
Ave Maria, Fla.

To Talk or Not?

Re "The Ordination Question" (Reply All, 12/9): Mickey Matesich Edwards claims that the pronouncement prohibiting women's ordination does not meet the required criteria for an "infallible" teaching. Unfortunately, even if true, that argument goes nowhere. What does matter is that the hierarchy is treating it as if it were an infallible teaching, giving them the right to silence all discussion to the contrary.

Problems and questions don't disappear merely because of gag orders against voicing alternative views. The "definitive" statement on women's ordination only ended the discussion in the media controlled in some manner by the church hierarchy. The independent Catholic press outlets continue to explore the question in the finest tradition of good journalism.

JOSEPH KEENAN
Netcong, N.J.

Subsidiarity in Education

"Left Behind," by Joseph J. Dunn (12/2), offers just one view of the complex web of factors that trap many in multigenerational poverty. The article is accurate in describing a serious moral issue in many modern societies, but it is persistently single-minded in stating only information consistent with a preconceived conclusion. Mr. Dunn writes about the "correlation" between literacy skills and various economic outcomes, but correlation does not imply causation.

Mr. Dunn advocates more programs, more spending, more assignment of educational responsibility to the teaching profession. There is an alternative solution, one more consistent with the philosophical notion of subsidiarity that underpins much of Catholic theology. Parents bear primary responsibility for all aspects of raising a child. Among those responsibilities, education probably ranks below physical and emotional nurturing, but this does not mean it ought to be abdicated to teachers. In moral terms, teachers support the parents, not vice versa.

Until education bureaucracies accept the principle of subsidiarity and, correspondingly, parents accept their primary responsibility, our education process cannot provide an effective solution to breaking the cycle of poverty.

L. MICHAEL BRAIG
Kirkwood, Mo.

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“Let us try also to be a church that finds new roads, that is able to step outside itself.”

—Pope Francis



A BIG HEART OPEN TO GOD

A Conversation with Pope Francis

Interview by Antonio Spadaro, SJ

Spiritual Reflection by **JAMES MARTIN, SJ**

Foreword by Matt Malone, SJ

Presenting the entire exclusive interview with Pope Francis that became a global sensation. The new book features an introduction by *America* magazine editor in chief, Matt Malone, SJ, spiritual reflections by James Martin, SJ, and responses by a dozen major Catholic voices, including Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan and Karen Sue Smith. Besides serving as an invaluable devotional resource, this book will be a memorable keepsake of a transformational papacy.

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America

VATICAN

Pope Francis Rings in New Year With New Pastoral Guidance

The Gospel cannot be proclaimed “with inquisitorial beatings of condemnation. No, the Gospel is preached gently, with fraternity and love,” with an open heart “always longing” for God, like that of St. Peter Faber, Pope Francis told 350 fellow Jesuits at the Church of the Gesù in Rome. The pope had joined his order on Jan. 3 for a Mass to celebrate both the feast of the Most Holy Name of Jesus, the titular feast of the Society of Jesus, and the canonization of Peter Faber, a founding member of the Society of Jesus and the first of the Jesuits to be ordained a priest.

That was not the only guidance Pope Francis had to offer as the new year began. In an effort to discourage careerism, Pope Francis has abolished the conferral of the pontifical title of “Monsignor” on secular priests who are under the age of 65. Pope Francis also ordered a revision of what he called outdated Vatican norms on the relations between religious orders and local bishops in order to promote greater appreciation of the orders’ distinctive missions. That move was revealed on Jan. 3 in the Italian Jesuit magazine *La Civiltà Cattolica*, which published a detailed report on the pope’s closed-door meeting with 120 superiors generals of religious orders from around the world that took place on Nov. 29.

During that meeting, Pope Francis referred to “*Mutuae Relationes*,” a set of directives issued jointly by the Congregation for Bishops and the Congregation for Religious in 1978, which say that the “right to autonomy” of religious orders should never be considered as independence from the local church. “That document was useful at the time but is now outdated,” the pope said. “The charisms of the various institutes need to be respected and fostered because they are needed in dioceses.”

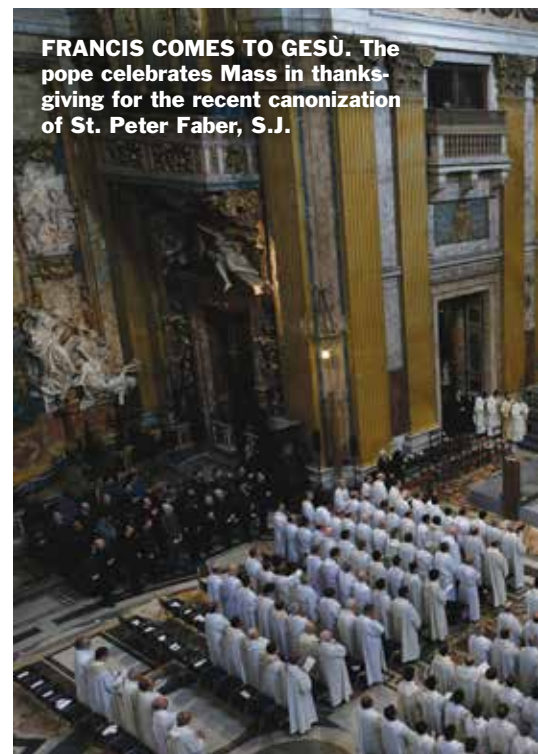
The pope, who until his election in March 2013 served as archbishop of Buenos Aires, Argentina, and formerly served as superior of the Jesuits’ Argentine Province, said he knew “by experience the problems that can arise between a bishop and religious communities.... The involvement of religious communities in dioceses is important,” the pope said. “Dialogue between the bishop and religious must be rescued so that, due to a lack of understanding of their charisms, bishops do not view reli-

gious simply as useful instruments.”

Noting the growth of religious orders in Africa and Asia, the pope acknowledged challenges to evangelization there, including correct adaptation of Catholic teaching to local cultures, as well as a temptation to exploit poorer societies as sources of vocations. Pope Francis said that sensitivity is needed not only when crossing geographical boundaries, but social and cultural frontiers as well.

“The situation in which we live now provides us with new challenges which sometimes are difficult for us to understand,” he said, noting that Catholic teachers must be prepared to “welcome children in an educational context, little boys and girls, young adults who live in complex situations, especially family ones.”

The pope added that seminary directors too must be sensitive to the needs of those in the formation process of religious orders, encouraging them to engage in sincere and fearless dialogue



FRANCIS COMES TO GESÙ. The pope celebrates Mass in thanksgiving for the recent canonization of St. Peter Faber, S.J.

with their instructors. “Formation is a work of art, not a police action,” Pope Francis said. “We must form their hearts. Otherwise we are creating little monsters. And then these little monsters mold the People of God. This really gives me goose bumps.

“Just think of religious who have hearts that are as sour as vinegar: They are not made for the people,” the pope said. “In the end we must not form administrators, managers, but fathers, brothers, traveling companions.”

AFRICA

Violence Engulfs South Sudan and Central Africa

United Nations peacekeepers and officials struggled to contain two ongoing crises in Africa as the New Year began. Hastily



arranged peace talks to end the sudden conflict in South Sudan began in Ethiopia as the world's newest nation sank deeper into a de facto civil war. Meanwhile, in the neighboring Central African Republic, tension continued to rise between majority Christians and minority Muslims.

In South Sudan, at least 1,000 people have died and 200,000 people have been displaced as a result of weeks of often intense fighting between political supporters of President Salva Kiir and South Sudan's ousted vice president, Riek Machar. The violence, which flared out of a political struggle between the two leaders within the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, has ignited ethnic tensions between the supporters of both men. President Kiir is a member of South Sudan's Dinka tribe and Machar is a member of the Nuer tribe. President Kiir has declared a state of emergency for

the areas that have fallen under rebel control, including the central city, Bor.

As the violence in South Sudan escalates and tens of thousands of civilians take refuge in U.N. compounds around the country, children are in grave danger, according to a report from Unicef. "We are especially worried about those in and around Bor, in Jonglei State, where the fighting has recently been heaviest," Unicef's representative in South Sudan, Iyorlumun Uhaa, said. "There are desperate shortages of food and clean water at the U.N. compound there and the lack of sanitation facilities poses a high risk of disease. Children, always among the most vulnerable in conflict, are spending their days without shelter in the intense heat and sun and sleeping in the open during the cold nights."

The United Nations was also busy attempting to restore peace in the Central African Republic. Despite the intervention of French and African troops, the situation remains precarious. "The Central African Republic remains on the verge of a war with religious aspects," warned Dieudonné Nzapalainga, archbishop of Bangui, and Omar Kobine Layama, imam of the Central African capital, in a joint appeal.

"Nearly half the population desperately need aid, and about 40,000 people have taken refuge at Bangui airport where they are living without shelter or toilet facilities," the two religious leaders said. They called on the United Nations to deploy a peacekeeping force "with the utmost urgency."

Persistent violence in C.A.R. between Christian militias and

the mainly Muslim Seleka rebel group that overthrew President François Bozizé in March has forced one-fifth of the population to flee their homes. According to the most recent U.N. estimates, the number of internally displaced people in Bangui alone has risen since Dec. 5 to some 513,000 people—half the capital city's residents.

Unicef reports that in the ongoing conflict that has gripped Bangui attacks against children reached a new extreme, with at least two children beheaded and one of them mutilated. "We are witnessing unprecedented levels of violence against children. More and more children are being recruited into armed groups, and they are also being directly targeted in atrocious revenge attacks," said Souleymane Diabate, Unicef Representative in C.A.R.

"The situation is very chaotic and worsening all the time," said Bishop Cyriaque Gbate Doumalo, secretary-general of the country's Catholic bishops' conference. "All our churches and parishes are inundated with displaced people," he said. "Whole districts of Bangui are deserted, while even those in the relative safety of Catholic centers are living in total fear," he said.



PEACE OFFENSIVE. Archbishop Dieudonné Nzapalainga and Imam Omar Kobine Layama tour a church on the outskirts of Bangui in mid-December in an effort to promote tolerance and reconciliation.

PHOTO: SAM PHELPS FOR C.F.S./CARITAS INTERNATIONALIS

22 Pastoral Workers Killed in 2013

Fides, the Information service of the Pontifical Mission Societies, reports that 22 pastoral care workers were killed worldwide in 2013, almost double the number who were killed the year before. For the fifth consecutive year, Latin America had the highest number of such deaths. In 2013, 19 priests, one religious sister and two lay persons were killed. Of these, in the Americas 15 priests were killed (seven in Colombia; four in Mexico; one each in Brazil, Venezuela, Panama and Haiti). In Africa one priest was killed in Tanzania, and one religious sister and one lay pastoral care worker were killed in Madagascar and Nigeria respectively. In Asia one priest in India and one in Syria were killed, and in the Philippines one lay pastoral worker was killed. In Europe a priest was killed in Italy. Most of the pastoral care workers in 2013 were killed during robbery attempts. The status of a number of others is still undetermined. In Syria, the fates of Orthodox nuns abducted from the monastery of Santa Tecla, the Italian Jesuit Paul Dall'Oglio and the two metropolitan Bishops of Aleppo—the Greek Orthodox Boulos al-Yazigi and the Syrian Orthodox Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim—remain unknown.

Budget Busters?

The U.S. public shows little appetite for making the spending cuts often discussed as part of a “grand bargain” on the federal budget, according to a national survey by the Pew Research Center conducted in December 2013. The survey found that majorities say it is more important to maintain spending on Social Security and Medicare (69 percent) and programs to help the poor (59 percent) than to take steps

NEWS BRIEFS

In the first nine-and-a-half months of Pope Francis’ pontificate, more than **6.6 million people** participated in papal events at the Vatican—three times the number who visited during all of 2012. • Antonios Aziz Mina, the Coptic Catholic bishop of Giza, Egypt, said **terrorist attacks** were taking a toll on the country’s civilians but would not put off a constitutional referendum on Jan. 14. • **Robert Nugent**, a Salvadorian priest active for 29 years in ministry to gay and lesbian Catholics and co-founder of New Ways Ministry, died in Milwaukee, Wis., on Jan. 1. • Police opened fire on **striking garment workers**, killing three, on Jan. 3, near Cambodia’s capital, Phnom Penh, as protesters continued demanding that the national minimum wage be doubled to \$160 a month. • The former British prime minister, Tony Blair, and the former Egyptian vice president, Mohamed ElBaradei, are among the political figures invited by the Vatican for a meeting on Jan. 13 to discuss a **cease-fire in Syria**, a unified, transitional government and the protection of Syrian Christians. • On Dec. 19 the New Jersey Catholic Conference praised state officials for adopting a law that allows **undocumented immigrants** to pay in-state tuition at the state’s public colleges and universities.



Vatican tourism boom

to reduce the deficit. About half of Americans (51 percent) say reducing the deficit is more important than keeping military spending at current levels. Pew reports that views of tradeoffs between government spending and deficit reduction are divided along partisan lines with 84 percent of Democrats prioritizing spending on programs that aid the poor and needy over deficit reduction and 55 percent of Republicans prioritizing deficit reduction.

Iraq Death Toll Worse Since Conflict in 2008

Just a few days before news emerged that the city of Falluja in Iraq’s Anbar Province had fallen into Al Qaeda hands on Jan. 3, the Web site Iraqbodycount.com released its re-

port on the annual death toll in Iraq. Its researchers found that 9,500 civilians died in violence in Iraq in 2013, the worst toll since 2008 and double the number who were killed in Iraq because of violence arising out of sectarian conflict and acts of terrorism in 2012. According to the report, 2013 started with protests and rising discontent as Iraq’s Sunnis demanded political reform and power sharing, while the government of Nouri al-Maliki abandoned efforts to be cross sectarian, targeting Sunni politicians, arresting and interrogating them and forcing others into exile. After Iraqi security forces killed 49 Sunni protestors on April 23, retaliation strikes resulted in a tripling of the number of civilian deaths over the next 6 months.

From CNS and other sources.



Daring Peace

On Dec. 10, 2013, the eyes, ears and hearts of the world were focused on Soweto, South Africa, on the occasion of a memorial service to remember the life and legacy of Nelson Mandela. Mandela will be remembered for a great many things, including his commitment to peacemaking and nonviolence in his later years. But in a way unlike Martin Luther King Jr. or Mahatma Gandhi, with whom Mandela will be remembered as a great world leader of liberation, Mandela's relationship to nonviolence and peacemaking was especially complex.

As a Los Angeles Times article by Robyn Dixon, titled "Nelson Mandela's Legacy: As a Leader, He Was Willing to Use Violence" (12/6), reminds us, Mandela once "embraced armed struggle to end the racist system of apartheid." In the 1950s and '60s, Mandela was convinced that the nonviolent efforts the African National Congress had adopted to fight the white supremacist regime were ineffectual. He and others trained for military action and established Umkhonto we Sizwe, the armed branch of the A.N.C., which was willing to use violence to reach its goals. Yet Mandela would not always maintain this stance.

Dixon reminds us: "Umkhonto we Sizwe abandoned its policy of violence in 1990 as negotiations on the dismantling of apartheid and the setting up of free elections continued. After his release, and on be-

coming South Africa's chief executive in 1994, Mandela adhered to the commitment to peace, tolerance and equality that became the hallmark of his presidency."

Nelson Mandela's story is not about embracing radical nonviolence from the outset. It is about conversion to nonviolence. His is a story that offers hope for those who believe that they cannot let go of the necessity of violence in our world. His is a story that encourages us, especially those who bear the name of Christ, to give nonviolence a chance.

Nonviolence is often viewed as impossible, an unrealistic dream of the naïve and foolish, particularly in an age marked by drones, nuclear weapons and diffuse terrorist networks. This sort of logic is what led the young Mandela to endorse taking up arms. It was this sort of logic that led U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry last September to write off his own suggestion that President Bashar al-Assad of Syria could avoid violent intervention from the international community by "[turning] over every single bit of his chemical weapons to the international community in the next week." Kerry expressed his incredulity: "But he isn't about to do it."

However, there are prophets who continue to cry out in the wilderness of our 21st-century world on behalf of nonviolence. Pope Francis, for example, called both Christians and people of good will alike to join him in a prayer vigil for peace in Syria

on Sept. 7, 2013. During that day of prayer and fasting, Pope Francis spoke in St. Peter's Square: "We have perfected our weapons, our conscience has fallen asleep, and we have sharpened our ideas to justify ourselves as if it were normal we continue to sow destruction, pain, death. Violence and war lead only to death."

Pope Francis, who has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize by the government of Argentina for this nonviolent witness and its result, challenges the world to follow in the spirit of Mandela's own lifelong conversion toward peace and nonviolence. What seems impossible and illogical might just be our own unwillingness to take seriously the Gospel imperative of peace.

Pope Francis asked during the peace vigil: "Can we get out of this spiral of sorrow and death? Can we learn once again to walk and live in the ways of peace?" And he offered a Gospel response: "I say yes, it is possible for everyone. From every corner of the world tonight, I would like to hear us cry out: Yes, it is possible for everyone!"

Pope Francis' challenge to us is to return to the Gospel and embrace nonviolence as the way to be peacemakers and reconcilers. Nelson Mandela's life story illustrates the possibility of this conversion. The logic of violence has had its reign for long enough. Can we too give nonviolence a chance?

Nelson
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story
is about
conversion
to
nonviolence.

The Bible Reborn

Rediscovering the riches of Scripture

BY DIANNE BERGANT

A revolution has taken place in the Roman Catholic Church's understanding of the Bible. As a result, the life and mission of the church have been transformed. Biblical stories and themes formerly unknown have become familiar. This is a relatively recent phenomenon. While the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century championed biblically based preaching and teaching (*sola scriptura*), the Roman Church focused on traditional doctrine and insisted that its leaders alone were authorized to interpret the Bible. It was not until Pius XII's encyclical "Divino Afflante Spiritu" ("On Promoting the Study of Sacred Scripture," 1943) that a dramatic change in church teaching on the Bible was launched. Considered the Magna Carta of the biblical movement, this document inaugurated a new era in Catholic life.

The Second Vatican Council spearheaded a marvelous revitalizing of the Bible in the church. Many of the council participants frequently attended private lectures given by prominent biblical scholars. The Book of the Gospels was solemnly enthroned at the beginning of many general sessions. In 1965, "Dei Verbum" ("The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation") opened the door to critical approaches to biblical interpretation. It was almost as if the Bible had been rediscovered, and those engaged in Bible study found new meaning in their religious tradition. The study of the Bible became exciting, and this excitement responded to a profound hunger in the people of God for the word of God. In a matter of decades, the hundreds of years of unfamiliarity with the Bible were quickly spanned and many Roman Catholics became as biblically astute as their Protestant sisters and brothers.

While the first five chapters of "Dei Verbum" were theological in character (see "The Gift of the Word," Richard J.

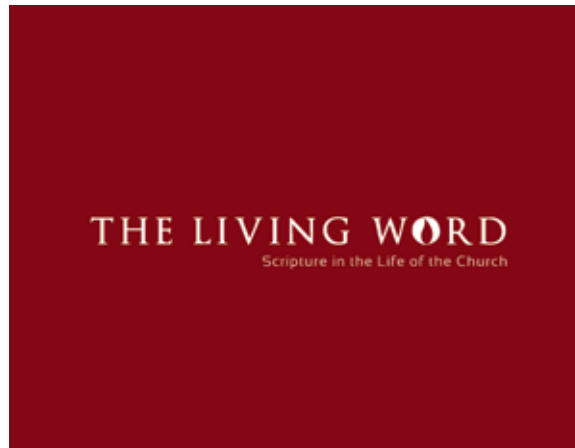
Clifford, S.J., *Am.* 11/11), the final chapter was pastoral in focus. It sought to release the Bible from the shadows in which it had been confined and to place it firmly in the hands of the Christian faithful (No. 22). The Bible was now to be considered the very soul of theology (No. 24). Priests, deacons and catechists were to receive solid biblical training, because preaching, catechetics and all forms of instruction were to be rooted in the word of Scripture (No. 25). Individual study, which for centuries had been forbidden, was now strongly encouraged (No. 25). A revolution was taking place, not only in the hallowed halls of theological institutes, but in the pews of neighborhood churches and in the lives of ordinary Christians.

This biblical revolution became apparent in various ways. Women and men in the stories of the Bible were no longer regarded as merely eccentric figures from a bygone age who made compelling characters for Hollywood movies. They were now appreciated as people called to be faithful to God in their own lives, and thus could be considered as plausible

models for contemporary believers. For example: Moses was heralded as a leader who was willing to relinquish his own future rather than see his people perish (Ex 32:30-32), and the wise woman of Tekoa was praised for placing herself in jeopardy when she surreptitiously led King David to see the error of his ways (2 Sam 14:1-20).

Another important theme was covenant, with its sense of personal commitment of both God and human beings.

Associated with this theme are the technical yet tender words: "I will be your God and you will be my people" (Ex 6:7; Jer 31:1), words that continued to describe believers' own relationship with God. The communal dimension of covenant called people to responsibilities they had for each other. Care for the needy was recognized as an act of justice required of all believers rather than charity performed out of the largesse of some. The spirit of biblical theology began to take root in the lives of many people.



DIANNE BERGANT, C.S.A., is the Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., Distinguished Professor of Old Testament studies at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. This article is part of *America's* new series, "The Living Word: Scripture in the Life of the Church," co-sponsored by the American Bible Society.



A Biblical Exhortation

In 2008 Pope Benedict XVI convened a synod of the bishops of the world to discover how effective “*Dei Verbum*” had been in the life and mission of the church. The preparatory document acknowledged that “many positive things have clearly taken place in the People of God.” It further stated “[s]ome things, however, pose *problems* or still remain an *open question*” (italics in original). Two issues surfaced of great concern: 1) the large percentage of Catholics who still know very little about the Bible and 2) the allure of various forms of relativism. This preparatory document urged all believers to pursue greater understanding of the church’s teaching concerning Scripture and knowledge of appropriate interpretive methods.

Two years after the close of the synod, on Sept. 30, 2010, the feast of St. Jerome, the patron of biblical studies, Benedict XVI issued his post-synodal apostolic exhortation, “*Verbum Domini*” (“The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church”). In it he states that the synod was convened “to review the implementation of the council’s directives, and to confront the new challenges which the present time sets before Christian believers.”

ON THE WEB

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The exhortation has three parts. The first part simply lays out contemporary understanding of biblical revelation, our response to that revelation and methods of interpretation. The other two parts treat the word of God in the church and in the world, respectively. Since liturgy is considered the privileged setting for encountering the word of God, great care is taken in developing this perspective. The urgent need to prepare ministers of the word in order to fulfill this responsibility is also considered. The third part of the document discusses the church’s mission to proclaim the word of God to the world. It sketches this mission as encompassing, in particular, young people, migrants, the poor, those who suffer in any way, the protection of creation and interreligious dialogue. It is clear from “*Verbum Domini*” that the word of God resides at the heart of the church’s life and mission.

The effectiveness of the word of God in the life and mission of the church is in great measure dependent on those involved in biblical ministry. Scholars, preachers and teachers are charged with the task of uncovering the meaning of the Scriptures and bringing that message to life in contem-

porary situations. The exhortation insists that they must be properly prepared for this.

Return to the Old Testament

One issue that is developed at great length in “*Verbum Domini*” is the role of the Old Testament in the lives of contemporary believers. For many people the Old Testament is still unfamiliar, even uninviting literature. For them, some of the stories appear to be implausible, and the way God is portrayed is often troubling. This signals the need for theologians and pastoral ministers to make known the riches found in the Old Testament. This need has been clouded by the practice of some who refer to the First Testament as the Hebrew Scriptures, distinguishing it from the Second Testament or Christian Scriptures. This distinction is erroneous, because the Christian Scriptures include both the Old and the New Testaments. Furthermore, the Catholic Church chose the Septuagint, or Greek version of the Old Testament, which includes certain books and passages preserved in the Greek but not in the Masoretic text or Hebrew version.

Despite statements found in both “*Dei Verbum*” and “*Verbum Domini*,” many Catholics still believe that the religious teaching found in the Old Testament has been superseded or replaced by New Testament theology. In other words, they maintain that the Old Testament has little or no religious value for Christians. “*Verbum Domini*” counters this thinking when it insists that “we must not forget that the Old Testament retains its own inherent value as revelation, as our Lord himself reaffirmed (cf. Mk 12:29-31).” The church has always officially resisted supersessionist thinking. This false opinion was condemned in the second century, when a bishop named Marcion first advanced it. Contrary to any form of Marcionism, “*Verbum Domini*” discusses the relationship between the testaments (Nos. 39 and 40) and then presents aspects of Old Testament theology that continue to hold importance in the lives of Christian believers (No. 41).

Much Old Testament teaching has become part of the church’s teaching. This is clear from a brief look at three themes from the Old Testament: the spirituality found in the psalms, justice as proclaimed by the prophets and the tenderness of God toward his people.

Spirituality of the psalms. Even people who identify themselves as nonreligious know and are often moved by some of the profound sentiments expressed in the psalms. The

words “The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I lack.... Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me” (Ps 23:1, 4) have given comfort to many who are crushed at the death of a loved one. In times of trial, people pray, “Deliver me, Lord, from the wicked; preserve me from the violent” (Ps 140:2). Who has not cried “Hallelujah” at times of great joy and triumph, even without realizing that this word, which begins and ends each of the last five psalms in the Psalter, means “Praise YHWH”? These few examples demonstrate how the psalms, the prayers that originated with the ancient Israelites, continue to be the prayers of Christians today. The psalms are a major component of the Liturgy of the Hours, the official public prayer of the church. They

express the aspirations and feelings of the human heart, not simply the religious teaching of one people. The more one immerses oneself in these prayers, the more one comes to know the people from whom they originated, for the major theology of ancient Israel is found in the psalms. Finally, we should not forget that the psalms were Jesus’ prayers as well.

Justice in the Prophets. The teachings of the prophets frequently stem from the concept of covenant, the legal form of agreement that came to describe the binding relationship between God and the Israelites. The people’s failure to heed their social responsibilities was met with condemnation from a prophet and a demand for some form of redress. The prophets do not condemn money in itself, but rather the exploitation of the powerless. Amos (2:6-7) denounces the people of the north:

*[T]hey hand over the just for silver,
And the poor for a pair of sandals;
They trample the heads of the destitute
Into the dust of the earth,
and force the lowly out of the way.*


In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus inaugurates his public ministry with a reference to Isaiah in which the prophet addresses the needs of the dispossessed: “to bring glad tidings to the poor...let the oppressed go free” (Lk 4:18-19; see Is 61:1-3). Contemporary forms of liberation theology that champion gender, racial, ethnic, political or economic rights ground their demands for justice, as did Jesus, in the teachings of these prophets. The fundamental tenets of Old Testament religion are thought, by some, to be found in this simple yet profound statement of the prophet Micah (6:8):

*What the Lord requires of you:
Only to do justice and to love goodness,
And to walk humbly with your God.*

Tenderness of God. The Old Testament contains many rich images of God. Among them are creator (Eccl 12:1), warrior (Ex 15:3), rock (Ps 18:3), judge (Ez 18:30), eagle (Dt 32:11) and fortress (Ps 59:17). Some of these characterizations seem harsh and demanding; others are gentle and caring. Unfortunately, many people are familiar only with the harsh images. Still, in several places God is described as profoundly and compassionately loving. Hosea draws on family relationships to describe this divine love: “When Israel was a child I loved him” (11:1). And God’s love, as Isaiah describes it (49:15), surpasses even the devotedness of a mother for her child:

*Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness
for the child of her womb? Even should she forget,
I will never forget you.*

Perhaps the most startling statement is a simple declaration of love: “I have loved you with an everlasting love” (Jer 31:3). The divine passion expressed in these few words is mind-boggling. However, it was not unknown to Jesus who, in the story of “The Prodigal Son” (Lk 15:11-32), describes such loving sentiments in his portrayal of the compassionate father.

“*Dei Verbum*” launched a new age for Catholic believers, and “*Verbum Domini*” followed the direction it had set. Pope Francis has embraced many of the matters found in these statements in his recent apostolic exhortation “*Evangelii Gaudium*” (“On the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World”). We have yet to plumb the depths of this latest teaching and to discover the role to be played by the biblical tradition in this new pastoral initiative. But it is already clear that by opening the treasures of the Scriptures for the entire Catholic community, the church’s revolutionary teachings on the Bible have revitalized its life and mission and continue to do so. They make it possible for Catholics to become acquainted with the deep and challenging religious message found in both testaments of the Bible and to have their lives transformed by it. 



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Making Room

Learning to love my neighbor in New York

BY KERRY WEBER

One cold winter night I bought a tuna sandwich for dinner at a pharmacy. I was hungry and late for a meeting and was feeling sorry for myself for having to eat dinner at a place that also sells stockings and cold medicine. I passed a man curled up under some blankets on the street. “Got anything to eat?” he asked, clearly seeing that I did. I took out half of the sandwich and gave it to him. But as I walked away, doubts filled my head: *Should I have given him the whole sandwich? Should*



I have bought another one just for him? Was he even hungry?

It’s not easy to determine the best ways to act with kindness and mercy. Of course St. Basil the Great, of the fourth century, put it quite simply:

The bread which you do not use is the bread of the hungry; the garment hanging in your wardrobe is the garment of him who is naked.... The acts of charity that you do not perform are so many injustices that you commit.

That’s a challenging statement. My

KERRY WEBER is managing editor at *America*. This essay is adapted from her forthcoming book *Mercy in the City: How to Feed the Hungry, Give Drink to the Thirsty, Visit the Imprisoned, and Keep Your Day Job* (Loyola Press, February 2014).

lack of action can be, in itself, an injustice. But how do we know when and how to act? It seems like too much, sometimes, to feel for every person you see and to give to people in need not knowing what they’ll do with the money. It is difficult to see everyone as an individual.

An Expanding Heart

In the summer before that cold winter night, I had been threatened by a man who had locked himself in the wheelchair-accessible bathroom at church. I’d knocked on the door, and the man had emerged, a flurry of baggy, ragged clothes and unkempt hair. Angry, screaming and delusional, he believed his feet had been burned by acid and that I’d been continually bothering him. His arm was raised and his fist clenched tightly as he started at me. All

I can remember about that moment is thinking, *I’m about to get punched in the face*, although I made no attempt to move. Sensing this, my then-boyfriend stepped in to mediate, and the man punched him in the face instead. It was a long day.

Since then I’d been a bit more wary of than worried about many of the homeless people I passed on the street, yet I tried to strike a balance between vigilance and mercy. Mercy, as described by Venerable

Catherine McAuley, founder of the Sisters of Mercy, is “the principal path pointed out by Jesus Christ to those who are desirous of following Him.” It sounds simple enough. And yet I often feel that this path can be a difficult one to travel, and that keeping pace with Jesus, our guide on this path, is a challenge.

The thing is, it’s easy to imagine yourself doing great works of mercy. It’s easy to have good intentions. What’s difficult is the follow-through, because God didn’t challenge us to commit to the corporal works of mercy for a few days. God challenges us to commit to a lifestyle—and a lifetime—of mercy. And that’s not easy, because maybe in the end, the corporal works of mercy—feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, sheltering the homeless and others—aren’t things that can be

completed the way one can finish playing a board game or painting a picture. Each act is not an isolated incident, but a part of a process, akin to sweeping the floor. You have to do it regularly or things begin to get messy. They must become habits without becoming mindless. Ultimately, the works of mercy point us toward ways in which we can build God's reign on earth.

And yet action must be rooted in relationship. In one of the most powerful passages in Dorothy Day's autobiography, *The Long Loneliness*, she speaks of the wonderful evolution of the Catholic Worker movement and writes about how many surprising, God-filled moments came about while "we were just sitting there talking." She writes of people moving in and out of the house and says, "Somehow the walls expanded." I can't help but think that here she writes not only of the willingness of the community to take on and take in guests, but also of the walls of the heart growing in kind. Because that is

how our hearts are meant to work: just when you think your heart is full to the point of breaking, it adapts and grows and learns to love more than you ever thought you could.

A Sheltered Life

In an effort to delve more deeply into these works of mercy, I decided to stay as an overnight volunteer at a homeless shelter at a nearby church. I would spend the night in a church basement with more than a dozen men I'd never met, and I had no idea what to expect.

When I arrive, the shelter feels strangely similar, like the kind of place in which I would have attended a Brownie sleepover as a child, but with rough, folded cots instead of thin, Minnie Mouse-themed sleeping bags on the floor. The walls of the shelter are white, and the room is long and sparse. The cots are folded and lined up near the walls; each already has blankets on it. Near each bed are hooks on the walls upon which hang random personal items, presumably owned by the men: a few jackets, a suit coat on one hook; a plastic, gold-colored centurion helmet on another.

When the men arrive, a young man smiles broadly at me and introduces himself as Angelo. He holds out his hand to shake mine. "Don't worry, they're clean," he says. I am not worried about germs, just shocked that he is so young. He couldn't be older than his early 20s. Next, Greg comes over. He is wearing a blue-grey sweatshirt and has several tattoos. We begin chatting, and the subjects range from our favorite kinds of chicken to the fact that he's been to Western Massachusetts, where I grew up.

Greg tells me he has been all over New England and the Midwest. His dad was in the Navy. When he finds out I work for a Jesuit magazine, he says he knew a guy who went to a Jesuit high

school. As he talks, he spreads peanut butter on a toasted heel of bread and then rolls it up.

"Are the Jesuits like the brothers up by St. Francis? Is there a rivalry, like gangs?" he asks, laughing.

"Like the Sharks and the Jets," I say. "Lots of finger snapping."

Johnny, who has been sitting nearby, gets up and walks away and then comes back with a card that reads *St. Padre*

Pio House. He says it's at 155th Street in the South Bronx. "He was a priest who bled from his hands and feet," he

says with a sweet pride at being able to connect my world to his. "Yeah, that's the stigmata," I say. Johnny nods.

A man named Louis asks if I brought earplugs. I tell him no. "I hope you're a good sleeper," he replies. One of the men tells me a joke and I laugh in approval. Greg chimes in, "You have to let her think we're high-quality homeless people," he says and laughs, as well. And in that moment I realized that, deep in conversation, I'd forgotten about that label for a while. I hadn't tried to categorize the men as crazy or Christ-like. I'd just let them be. And I'd allowed myself to be present.

The lights go out at 10:30 p.m., and I have a difficult time falling asleep. Around 11 p.m., a cellphone rings. The snoring is at all volume levels and intervals, so at times it sounds almost like one continuous rumble. I understand now why Louis asked me about the earplugs. A man starts coughing with gusto. Someone brushes off his sheets. And yet somehow, after talking with many of the men that evening, all the noise doesn't really bother me. I'm grateful that they've welcomed me. Throughout the evening, that small space seemed to expand, as the men made sandwiches or watched movies or just sat there talking. I feel surprisingly at home. **A**

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Kerry Weber talks about her book, *Mercy in the City*.
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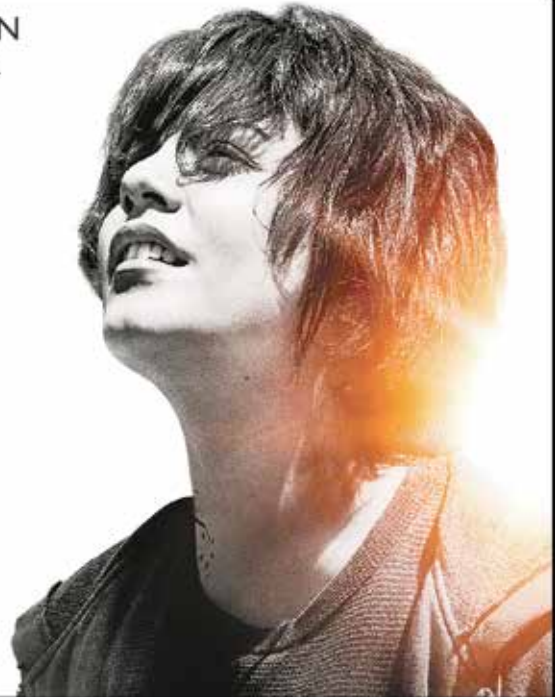


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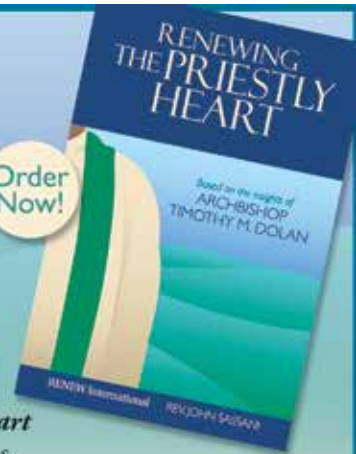
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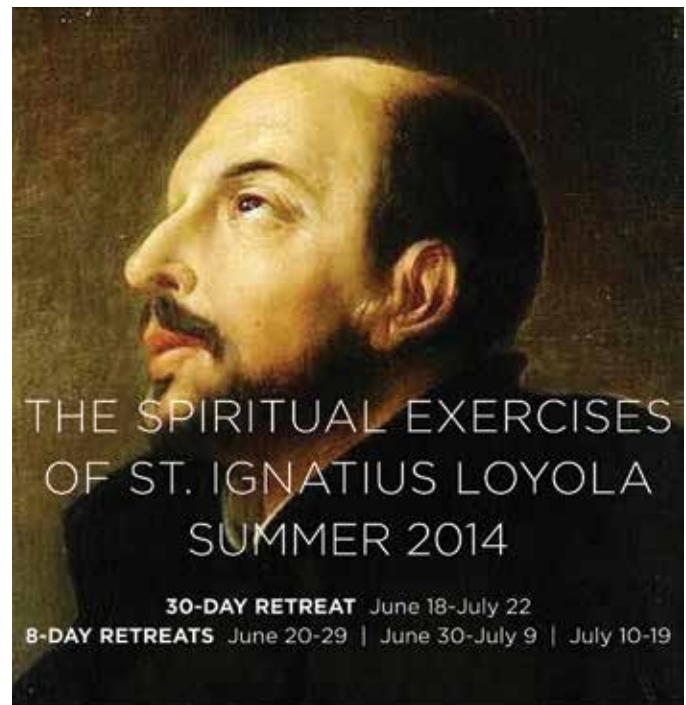
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THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY

Reviving Tennessee Williams

Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie* first appeared on Broadway in 1945, beginning what would be a wave of great American plays about troubled families. Arthur Miller's "All My Sons" and "Death of a Salesman," William Inge's "Picnic," Eugene O'Neill's "Long Day's Journey into Night" and Williams's own "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof"—all treated their audiences to portrayals of the family homes as prisons, the parents as monsters and the young people desperately longing to escape. There were many more of these attacks on the mythology of the

family, but these particular plays have become classics of American theater, with numerous revivals on Broadway and other stages around the world.

"The Glass Menagerie" might be the most lyrical of them all, with the poignant reflections and extravagant language of classical tragedy. The play presents a grim view of the Wingfield family. The mother, Amanda, whose husband left her and the children, is almost manic in her efforts to achieve "success and happiness" for her children and save the family from financial and emotional ruin. Her restless son, Tom, is the breadwinner of the family,

working at a shoe factory that he hates and desperate to escape the situation. Her daughter, Laura, is abnormally shy and unable to function in the outside world. The play's action revolves around Tom's and Amanda's arrangements to bring a young man from the factory for a dinner and an introduction to Laura. The story is heavily autobiographical, based on Tennessee's life in St. Louis with his domineering mother and his sister, Rose, who was emotionally quite troubled. (He omits the facts that, at the time the play is set, his father was still living with the family and there was a younger brother, Dakin.)

So why revive "The Glass Menagerie" once again? Could it be that the producers realized they had found the perfect actors to match each of the four characters? The charismatic Cherry Jones embodies Amanda

FAMILY TROUBLES. Zachary Quinto as Tom, Cherry Jones as Amanda Wingfield and Celia Keenan-Bolger as Laura in "The Glass Menagerie."



Wingfield, who, as she herself admits, is “bewildered by life.” Zachary Quinto creates a darker version of Tom and the ways he deals with his mother’s rants. He does this with a mix of morbid humor, anger and frustration, while also feeling incapable of helping his sister, whom he loves very much. Celia Keenan-Bolger plays Laura as a gentle but also playful young lady who is deeply self-conscious of the brace on her disabled leg and has retreated into a world of her glass animal collection. And Brian J. Smith offers a cheerful and self-confident version of Jim O’Connor, “The Gentleman Caller” Tom describes as “an emissary from the world of reality” and a symbol of “the long-delayed but always expected something that we live for.” His presence throughout most of the second act brightens the onstage atmosphere with his optimism and his kindness towards Laura. He does not sense the irony of the situation when he expresses to Laura his belief that “the future will be in America, even more wonderful than the present time is!”

Cherry Jones is a marvelous Amanda with her energy and relentless but unrealistic optimism, sometimes daring to bring a comic touch to many of her speeches, especially when she appears in her elaborate cotillion gown from her much-younger days to greet The Gentleman Caller. During most of the play Amanda is a nervous, domineering mother. But when she recalls her days as a “restless and giddy” Southern belle sashaying around the room at the Governor’s Ball and going on “long, long rides” in a world of dogwood and jonquils in bloom, Jones’s face glows so brightly and her voice becomes so melodic that we realize, if her stories are true, how sad her life has become.

All of this benefits from the direction of John Tiffany, the Tony Award-winning director for “Once” (Best Musical, 2012), who seems to have recruited some of that production’s other Tony Award winners, Bob Crowley for

scenic design and Natasha Katz for lighting. So why should we be surprised?”

The staging of the production emphasizes that this is what Williams called a memory play. The shabby living-room couch and the small dining table of the Wingfield’s apartment are the only furniture on stage, seeming to be suspended in the darkness that surrounds them. At stage left, however, is a looming fire escape, which Williams’s directions for Scene One describe as “a structure whose name is a touch of accidental poetic truth” because these apartment buildings in their neighborhood “are always burning with the slow and implacable fires of human desperation.” At the front and center of the stage stands a short table on which sits a glass unicorn, brightly lit throughout the play. The pools of light that surround each of the characters enhance the feeling that this is a nightmarish memory that still haunts Tom years later. The background music throughout the play is a melancholy, softly tinkling piano. And between several scenes Laura is shown alone in the apartment, walking rather aimlessly through the living room while Tom, as the play’s narrator, looks on. Thus one of his last remarks rings so true: “Oh Laura, Laura, I tried to leave you behind me, but I am more faithful than I intended to be.”

When Amanda wonders why Tom goes to movies until the wee hours every night (which is probably a disguise for his sexual activities), Tom says that he goes to the movies so often to see the actors having adventures, but he wants to have an adventurous life of his own. So Tom uses the money Amanda has given him to pay their electric bill to sign up for the merchant marine. As a result, the lights in the apartment go out in the middle of the dinner with The Gentleman Caller.

But the darkness and the candles

that they light create a delicate and even romantic mood as The Gentleman Caller goes into the living room to visit with Laura, who has been emotionally unable to sit at the dinner table. We can see Laura coming out of her shell as Jim recalls their conversations in high school, where he was the golden boy as the school’s star athlete, president of the class and the leading man in the school’s musical productions—worshiped from afar by his classmate Laura. With his words of encouragement and affectionate memories, she opens up enough to share with him her collection of glass animals. He gets her to dance and finally kisses her. But things do not go well after that, and the rest of the play is heartbreaking.

The one false note, in my opinion, is the Southern accent, almost a drawl,

in Jim O’Connor’s voice, which I can attest, as a native St. Louisan myself, is not typical of the city’s residents. But it does enhance his charm and perhaps is meant to reflect not Laura’s ideal but Amanda’s memories of the “seventeen gentlemen callers” who she says visited her in one day in her debutante time of long ago and pretty far away. I also wish that they would have included the picture of the smiling handsome father, the “telephone man who fell in love with long distance” and left the family many years ago, which Williams’s stage directions suggest should be hanging on the wall and occasionally highlighted.

At one point in the play Amanda says to Tom, “life’s not easy, it calls for—Spartan endurance.” She also says that “there’s so many things in my heart that I cannot describe to you.” With these excellent performances, especially that of Cherry Jones, we completely believe both of those statements.

ON THE WEB

Reviews of “American Hustle”
and “August: Osage County.”
americamagazine.org/film

MICHAEL V. TUETH, S.J., is associate professor of communications and media studies at Fordham University in New York.

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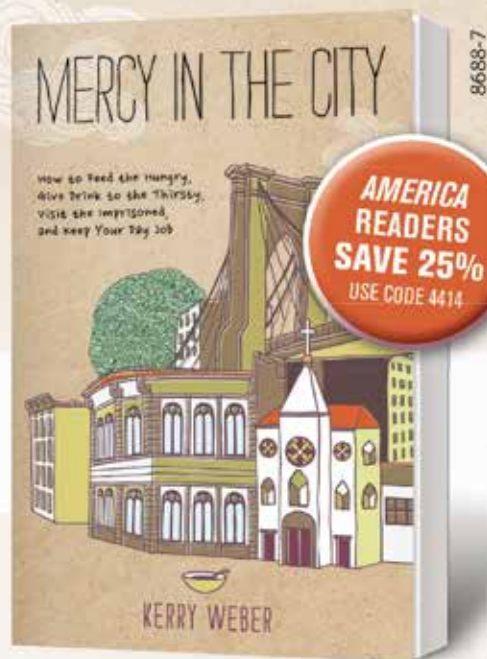
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Aimee Meredith Cox, Department of African and African American Studies, Fordham University

Other panelists to be announced.

Image courtesy of the American Anthropological Association

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GOODBYE TO THE CATHOLIC WRITER?

A little over a year ago, the writer and editor Paul Elie dropped a literary bomb.

In an article in *The New York Times*, “Has Fiction Lost its Faith?” Elie claimed that the era of Flannery O’Connor and Walker Percy, when Catholic novels exploring deep questions of faith flourished as mainstream literature, is dead. Fiction writers no longer create worlds in which, to paraphrase O’Connor, “belief is believable.” In current American fiction, Elie concludes, readers see “belief as upbringing, belief as social fact, belief as a species of American weirdness: our literary fiction has all of these things. All that is missing is the believer.”

Like most bombs, this one was answered with others. Writers, editors and readers have engaged in a mini-war over the state of contemporary Catholic writing for the past 12 months. Many disagree with Elie and list Catholic writers who provide exactly what he claims is lacking—only their books are not published by big presses like Farrar, Straus & Giroux (O’Connor’s publisher and the press where Elie worked for 20 years). Writing in an era in which faith traditions are many, each as viable as the next, and secularism is the religion of choice, most fiction writers who depict struggles of faith in Catholic terms have been swept to the margins.

These arguments make sense to me. Some years ago, I was in a reading group with some friends, all from various religious backgrounds. When I suggested we read Ron Hansen’s new novel, *Mariette in Ecstasy*, a book

about a young nun at the turn of the 20th century who receives the stigmata, my friends rebelled. They did not share Mariette’s belief and would have found it difficult to enter into the imaginative world of the novel—where belief is palpable, the condition of the lives of the characters and, to my mind, eminently believable. As the only Catholic in the group, my ability to sympathize with Mariette was regarded as a function of my narrowness. It did not help matters that my friends harbored a profound distrust of the church—knowing its long history of persecuting Jews and Protestants—so what might have looked like a form of anti-Catholicism was rooted in the church’s own excesses and abuses. What could I do but respect their wishes and suggest another book?

A recent contribution to this conversation is Dana Gioia’s ambitious article in the December issue of *First Things*, “The Catholic Writer Today.” Among his many observations, Gioia acknowledges the anti-Catholicism that lies at the root of the problem Elie identifies. Writing in a Protestant nation, American Catholic writers have always existed on the margins and endured prejudice against their work—but this is truer now than ever before. Gioia quotes the British novelist (and former Catholic) Hilary Mantel: “Nowadays the Catholic Church is not an institution for respectable people.” As Mantel demonstrates, some of the most stri-

dent criticism of the church comes from within its own ranks. For various reasons, many Catholic writers have distanced themselves from their tradition. Those who do claim their faith find themselves in a difficult circumstance. Forced to work in isolation from mainstream literary culture, they enjoy a limited readership and participate in a small Catholic subculture that has little impact on literary life.

Perhaps the successful Catholic writer is one who depicts belief by stealth.



There are, however, exceptions to this rule—Alice McDermott comes to mind. Why are her very Catholic novels read widely and praised in the mainstream media? McDermott’s stories are set in the past, the mid-20th century mostly, when faith was still considered a respectable option. Most secular-minded readers regard her characters’ Catholicism as a historical condition that no longer holds, even as Catholic read-

ers recognize that the faith she depicts is very much alive.

This dual perception is instructive. Perhaps the successful Catholic writer is the writer who depicts belief by stealth, flying under the radar to avoid detection. I’m reminded of England during the Reformation, or the English colonies that would one day become the United States, where Catholics practiced their religion covertly while outwardly conforming to the expectations of their culture. Like her comrades of old, the successful Catholic writer has not disappeared—she’s just hiding in plain sight.

ANGELA ALAIMO O'DONNELL is a Catholic writer, professor of English and associate director of the Curran Center for American Catholic Studies at Fordham University in New York City.

rites of resistance

CROSSING THE LINE Nonviolent Resisters Speak Out for Peace

By Rosalie G. Riegler
Wipf & Stock. 402p \$44

DOING TIME FOR PEACE Resistance, Family, and Community

By Rosalie G. Riegler
Vanderbilt University Press. 408p
\$29.95

Mary Oliver, in her poem “The Morning Paper,” wants to know “What keeps us from falling down, our faces to the ground; ashamed, ashamed?” after we read through countless news stories of “disasters, the unbelievable yet approved decisions.” One way of both grounding ourselves and doing right by the world is to read through Rosalie G. Riegler’s rather stunning collection of resistance stories and then to take action. Though I was familiar with a good number of the people interviewed and their actions, I had no idea that nonviolent resistance to war ran so constantly and deeply in our country and beyond its borders. Even more, I was profoundly moved by the creativity, imagination, courage and sacrifice of those willing to put all on the line, even to the point of risking their lives, for the work of peace. These are the kinds of stories that must be known by a larger audience. Riegler, the steward of such noble stories, has done a work of great service.

The 10 chapters of *Crossing the*

Line: Nonviolent Resisters Speak Out for Peace wend their way from the stories of conscientious objectors during World War II to present day tax resisters. Nestled within these chapters are three interludes, essentially three meditations on the theme of imprisonment. Those who tell their extraordinary stories are ordinary folks. They are primarily lay persons though religious are a notable presence. Most of the “peace people” are inspired to do acts of “divine obedience” by their faith traditions, though a secular grounding for acts of civil disobedience is also offered. The narratives in the text run the gamut

from preparation and rationale for the action, the act itself and then to jail or prison time, where the stories told are not simply those of the resisters but also a sampling of the invisible millions who populate our nation’s penitentiaries. Those who tell their stories are primarily white middle class Americans, a point that Riegler acknowledges in the introduc-

tion but that is later critically analyzed by several activists.

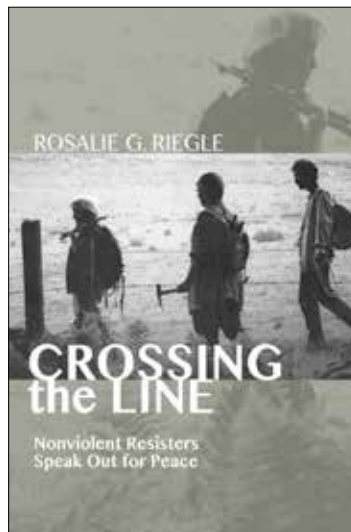
The text is both challenging and inviting. Its reader may well be aware of the “demonic suction cup” of warfare, as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. so well described it, but may not be will-

ing to risk jail time in order to stop it. Enter Ralph DiGia, who by the time he died at the age of 94 had devoted just about his entire life to the work of resistance and peacemaking. The “hidden saint,” a name given to him by a Muslim friend with whom he worked in Bosnia, believes that “anybody can do what I did, going step by step as far as they can, to make this a better world and make nonviolence a way of life.” We often need look no farther than our neighbor to see the unjust suffering of the world; the time is now to take this first step into a life of nonviolence. The constant clarion call of these resistance stories brings to mind the counsel of

the late Dean Brackley, S.J., who often told those who came to join his work with the impoverished of war-torn El Salvador: “Life is short! Be here 100 percent.”

Ciaran O’Reilly, a veteran Plowshares activist, underscores DiGia’s call to action on what really matters to us: “To be serious about waging peace, we have to take some of the risks of those who wage war.” There is a collective understanding among the resisters that the United States is a war-making state, a nation engulfed in militarism, and one whose culture is permeated by violence. As Meredith Daniels, a conscientious objector interviewed by Riegler puts it, “It seems we almost have a national policy of violence. Our terrifying foreign policy and atomic arsenal is all part of it and I think it gives people a sense of helplessness.”

If there was ever to be a moment of collective and individual paralysis in light of looming political, economic and environmental disasters, that mo-



ment is now. While our nation spends over \$730 billion each year to sustain its military might and trillions to wage its wars, its people are being made poor in record numbers. While we marvel at our military technology, including the development of the drone, we lose sight of the real human beings we are killing on the ground. While we are fixated on maintaining supremacy and might, we are blind to our irreversible destruction of the earth and of the multitudes of creatures that inhabit it.

Those who share their stories in Riegle's book are not immune to fear for our world, but they are not paralyzed by it either. By "crossing the line" the way that they do, they actively engage in what School of the America's resister Rebecca Kanner spoke to during her court appearance: to take seriously "*tikkun olam*, which is Hebrew for 'repair of the world.'"

In *Doing Time for Peace: Resistance, Family, and Community*, the reader has


a chance, in its seven chapters, to become immersed in the stories and lives of peacemakers and of their families and communities. To have this opportunity is a delight and a gift. As Daniel Berrigan, S.J., the poet and peace activist, often says, "We know the bad news well enough; tell me, what is the Good News?" The "Good News" is here, in this book, and in the lives and actions of the resisters and peacemakers. Though this book contains much of the thematic content of *Crossing the Line*, there is an additional emphasis upon the sustenance of community life that is needed to support resistance work as well as upon the real possibility of strains upon family life that resistance may incur. The tales that the resisters have to tell are human stories rather than hagiographic memoirs, and thank goodness for that. After all, who would

ever take the recommended step toward a life of peacemaking and nonviolence if those who do so are beyond the pale of humanity? The reader of these fine books may well resonate, then, with the words and actions of Genevieve (Mickey) Allen, who was first arrested when she was 65 years old: "That first time I was scared to death. Scared to death!... But I just knew I was doing the right thing."

In both books, Riegle allows the resisters to address the intersections of race, class, gender and resistance work. In addition, family and community members speak to the multiple ways they too work for peace by supporting the resister. The deconstruction of the "peace movement" as one of primarily white, male and middle class privilege is a necessary moment in these texts, for it lays bare previously unexamined cultural assumptions about the "higher worth" of particular forms of actions and material realities that may exclude others from taking part in this particular form of resistance. A focus on civil disobedience alone may also ignore the many fine contributions that other individuals and communities have made for the sake of justice and peace. Further, it is well understood and articulated that an individual life of resistance is not possible without the invaluable but often unheralded work of communal and familial support. On this point, Father Berrigan goes as far as to say, "We don't need heroes. We need communities." This internal reflection and critique strengthens the texts, for now we may look forward to the further development of communal, multicultural and multi-action forms of resistance and peacemaking in these days of darkness but also of great hope.

ON THE WEB

The Catholic Book Club discusses Flannery O'Connor's *Prayer Journal*.
americamagazine.org/cbc



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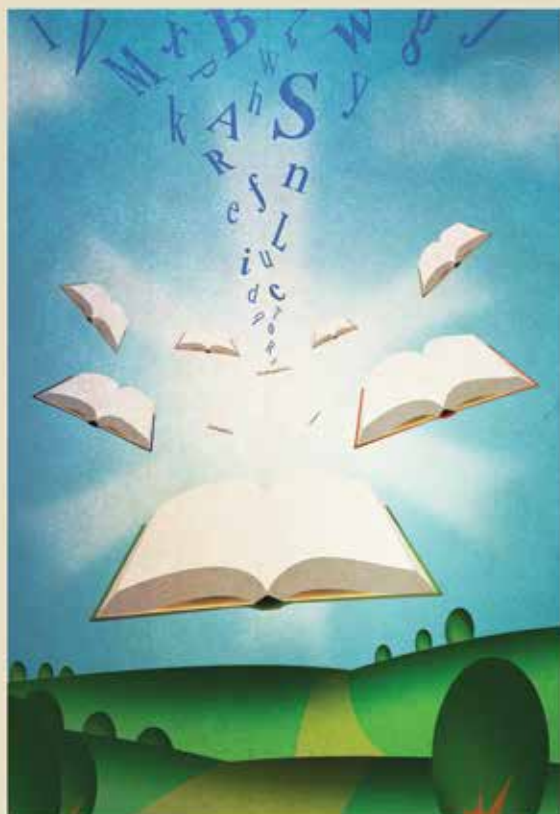
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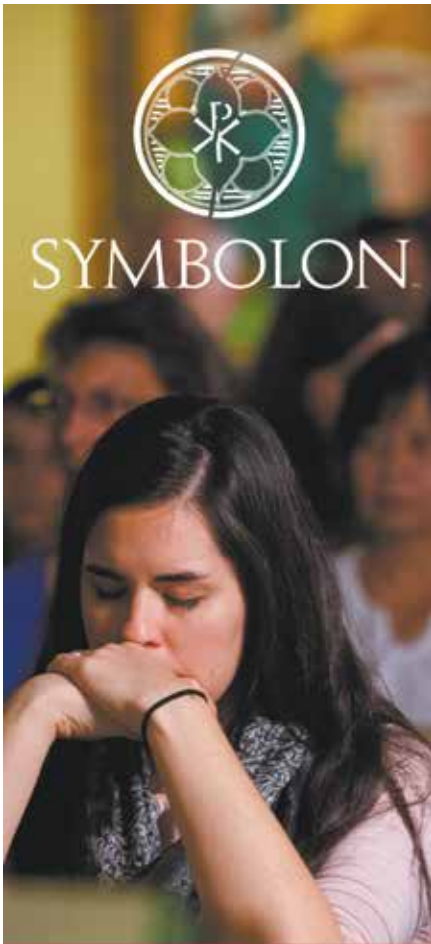
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Retreats

LATE WINTER RETREAT with Ron Rolheiser, O.M.I.: "Spirituality and the Season of Our Lives," Feb. 9–13, 2014. Oblate Renewal Center, San Antonio, TX 78216. Information: Brenda at (210) 341-1366 ext 212. Limited space.

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Leaving Home

THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (A), JAN. 26, 2014

Readings: Is 8:23–9:3; Ps 27:1–14; 1 Cor 1:10–17; Mt 4:12–23

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light” (Is 9:1)

The Gospel of Matthew sets the beginning of Jesus’ ministry in a particular historical context: Jesus began his mission only after the arrest of John the Baptist. It was time. But in moving from his home in Nazareth to Capernaum, in the ancient territory of Naphtali, Matthew also sets Jesus’ ministry in the geographic and prophetic context of the prophet Isaiah.

Zebulun and Naphtali, tribes located in northern Galilee, had been conquered by the Assyrians in the time of the prophet Isaiah. Prophecy in ancient Israel tended to be written in the first place for the readers or hearers who had experienced or were experiencing the events of which the prophet spoke. Isaiah wrote for Isaiah’s time. Yet there is no doubt that a part of the purpose of ancient Israelite prophecy was to speak of what was to come when God’s kingdom would be established.

The eschatological dimension that permeates so much of Isaiah speaks of a time when the lost tribes would be brought back to restoration. While “in the former time,” Isaiah says, God “brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,” “in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.” Galilee of the nations is not just a geographic designation; it is a prophetic hope and promise. To the first hearers, Isaiah’s

prophecy spoke of the ingathering of the exiled tribes of Israel, but in the phrase “Galilee of the nations” is seen a broader prophetic hope and a universal promise that the Messiah would fulfill.

Isaiah speaks of “Galilee of the nations,” Matthew of “Galilee of the Gentiles.” Both Isaiah’s Hebrew word, *goyim*, and Matthew’s Greek word, *ethne*, were used to identify those who were not a part of the kingdom of Israel. This is why Jesus’ move to Capernaum, into Naphtali in the region of the Gentiles, is laden with meaning. Jesus’ ministry, summarized in the simple proclamation, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near,” is offering a new understanding of kingdom, available to all nations. Isaiah imagined that Zebulun and Naphtali would see a great light, but this is reimagined in Matthew’s understanding to indicate that all were now welcome in God’s kingdom.

Still, the first invitations were issued to fishermen of the former region of Naphtali. Simon and Andrew, James and John were not biblical scholars, nor were they from Jerusalem of Judea, let alone a great center of learning like Rome, Alexandria or Ephesus. They were chosen from a geographically backwater town. They were ordinary men who left their work and families when called and followed Jesus. It was from this small town and with these working men that Jesus began to form

the church and to shine the great light of God’s kingdom.

Jesus’ ministry began with him travelling “throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.” In doing so, Jesus began to establish the kingdom of heaven, for these few men became many more men and women,



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Reflect on the humble beginnings of the church. How can we make Christ’s great light shine in our own corner of the world?

who town by town and region by region carried with them the light of the Gospel. After Jesus’ resurrection and ascension, the church recognized that the task of bringing light to the nations rested with the response of men and women to the Gospel.

God’s kingdom is not simply Isaiah’s ancient prophecy or the glorious future kingdom of heaven, but the mission of the present church. The church is ordinary men and women who hear Jesus’ call to follow, who participate in the building of God’s kingdom now. It is about recognizing the great light that shines on in every person who moves from the darkness to follow Jesus’ call.

JOHN W. MARTENS is an associate professor of theology at the University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minn.

A Light for All

PRESENTATION OF THE LORD (A), FEB. 2, 2014

Readings: Mal 3:1-4; Ps 24:7-10; Heb 2:14-18; Lk 2:22-40

“For my eyes have seen your salvation” (Lk 2:30)

The Presentation of the Lord places us in the midst of the Law of Moses that governed the sacrifices due for the purification of a mother following the birth of a male child (Lv 12:1-8) and the regulations concerning the consecration of a first-born male child (Ex 13:1-2, 13, 15). There are in fact no Old Testament rules that insist upon the presentation of the child in the Temple. Rather, the presentation of Jesus in the Temple marks the public recognition and reception of Jesus Christ.

Mary's purification is fulfilled according to the Old Testament laws about when a woman who has given birth to a male child should make her sacrificial offering. According to Leviticus 12, this would be after 40 days, which is why the church's celebration takes place on Feb. 2, 40 days after the date marked as the nativity of Jesus. By narrating Mary's rite of purification, Luke's account demonstrates Joseph's and Mary's fidelity to God's law. The salvation that accompanies the Messiah does not disregard the Law of Moses but walks in obedience to it.

Jesus' presentation in the Temple, however, is not an essential component of the Old Testament laws governing the consecration of the firstborn; that is accomplished with the payment of a redemption price of five shekels (Nm 18:15-16), which Luke does not explicitly mention, though there may be an allusion to it in Lk 2:27. Luke instead focuses on the Christological implications of the presentation of Jesus

in the Temple in Jerusalem, his father's house, the place in which the people of Israel, signified by Simeon and Anna, recognize the Messiah. The Temple and Jerusalem are fulcrums to which God's promises lead and from which the Messiah's fulfillment will progress.

There are certainly allusions in the passage to the prophet Samuel, as there are throughout Luke's infancy narrative, especially his dedication to the Temple by his mother Hannah (1 Sm 1), which evoke parallels to Mary's presentation of Jesus. Malachi 3:1-4 has also been understood by Christians to announce the arrival of the Messiah as it says, "The Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple" and "purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the Lord in righteousness." Finally, Heb 2:14-18 explains Christ's incarnation as essential, for "he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people."

The Temple, destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70, with only the ruins of the retaining walls marking its former splendor, remains central to Christian understanding of Jesus and his role. The Messiah and the salvation he brings would go forth from the Jerusalem Temple for all the nations. Simeon, Luke says, was a righteous

man who had received a revelation through the Holy Spirit that "he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah." When he saw Jesus, he took him in his arms and uttered a prayer known from the Latin as the *Nunc Dimittis*: "Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." In the heart of the Temple, as the Law of Moses is being fulfilled, prophetic words are spoken that speak not just to the salvation of Israel but to the entire world. Jesus' light not only illuminates Jewish hopes but will also shine on the nations.

But there was still more. The aged prophet Anna, Luke says, "never left the temple but worshiped there with

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Place yourself with Mary, Joseph and Jesus at the Temple in Jerusalem. Meditate on the words of Simeon and Anna regarding God's plan for Jesus.

fasting and prayer night and day." When she saw Jesus, she "began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem." In this prophetic reception of Jesus, Anna also points to the child's mission. In the presentation in the Temple, it is revealed that in Jesus the hopes of the Temple, Law and Prophets would not be cast aside but would be re-presented to all the nations by the one who was priest, prophet and king.

JOHN W. MARTENS

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