

TRAVEL & PILGRIMAGE

America

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A Historic Departure

THE EDITORS
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Plus: Q&A on the
Papal Transition



OF MANY THINGS

Pope Benedict XVI's announcement on Feb. 11 that he will "renounce the ministry of Bishop of Rome" stunned the church and set the media scrambling. **America** was no exception; we were equally surprised and just as frenzied. In the 48 hours after the news broke, our editors gave more than two-dozen interviews to the secular press.

Providing commentary and assistance to the media in times such as these is an important part of **America's** mission to interpret the church for the world and the world for the church. **America's** editor at large, James Martin, S.J., made several media appearances, including one on "The Colbert Report," the satirical news program on Comedy Central hosted by Stephen Colbert, the actor and comedian who plays a dangerously dimwitted, reactionary version of himself on the weekly program.

Also appearing on the show that night was Garry Wills, a onetime Jesuit and protégé of William F. Buckley Jr., who has moved steadily leftward over the course of his Pulitzer prize-winning career. Mr. Wills has just published a new book, the thesis of which is easily gleaned from its title, *Why Priests? A Failed Tradition*.

Mr. Colbert asked the author why the priesthood is a failed tradition. Mr. Wills responded: "Well, they continue to pretend to turn bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus, which doesn't happen." When Mr. Colbert mentioned that the Eucharist is "a mystery," Mr. Wills responded: "No, it's a fake." A very awkward three-second pause ensued.

Some longtime watchers of the show noticed that a shocked Mr. Colbert, a devout Catholic in real life, nearly broke character. But Mr. Wills wasn't finished: In the remaining two minutes of the interview, he went on to say that the priesthood and the papacy should be abolished and that the sacrament of the sick is "an invented sacrament."

Now it should be obvious to even

the most casual Roman Catholic that Mr. Wills's views are definitely heterodox and probably heretical. I don't use that last term in a desultory fashion. In fact, the word *heresy* is too casually invoked in popular ecclesiastical discourse. I am personally loath to say that any person—liberal, conservative, whatever—is or is not a Christian solely because of his or her theological beliefs.

But it is not really Mr. Wills's unorthodox views that give us cause to question his Christian commitment; it is his manifest lack of charity. What Mr. Wills said on "The Colbert Report" was insensitive; frankly, it was insulting, not just to me and not just to priests but to millions of sincere, faithful Catholics. The fact that Mr. Wills is a Catholic is not relevant here; his baptismal certificate is not a license for incivility. We would not tolerate this kind of behavior in a non-Catholic. Why do we tolerate it in Mr. Wills?

Every day, in almost every conceivable language, millions of Catholics take part in eucharistic liturgies, in prayers before the Blessed Sacrament, in processions and eucharistic devotions, all manifestations of a deeply held, millennia-old belief that in the Eucharist mere bread and wine do indeed become the body and blood of Christ. This is our faith; this is the faith for which we live and for which many of our forebears died.

Mr. Wills may disagree with how the eucharistic mystery has been traditionally expressed in philosophical or theological terminology; he may even dissent from the substance of that teaching or from any Catholic teaching, for that matter; that is his prerogative. He is not entitled, however, to wantonly insult us with claims that our sacraments are "invented," that our priests are merely "pretending" or that our most cherished gift is somehow "a fake." Mr. Wills does not necessarily owe us an account of his unorthodox views. He does, however, owe us an apology.

MATT MALONE, S.J.

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Cover: Pope Benedict XVI attends a Feb. 11 meeting with cardinals at the Vatican announcing he will resign at the end of the month. CNS photo/L'Osservatore Romano via Reuters

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ON THE WEB

Continuing coverage of the **papal transition**, including **video reports** from Catholic News Service and a podcast with **John W. O'Malley, S.J.** Plus, a slideshow of photos from the **Ignatian camino** in Spain. All at americamagazine.org.



Revelations in Los Angeles

The recent revelations contained in the court-ordered release of documents relating to the sexual abuse of minors by clergy in Los Angeles might, at first glance, seem to be a case of “nothing new.” Sadly, for many Americans, the sexual abuse of minors by some priests is no longer a surprise. But the release of these records marks one of the few times that reams of documents are available for public viewing—in this case, on the archdiocesan Web site. The files, which Archbishop José Gomez said make for “brutal and painful reading,” should be read by every concerned priest, sister, brother and Catholic lay worker, not to mention bishops and archbishops. They detail decades of outrage by parents, as well as efforts by well-intentioned priests and others to remove abusive priests from ministry. The records also appear to show attempts to shield abusers from the proper law enforcement agencies. This is a rare opportunity to trace from its earliest days the way that such horrific crimes affect an individual, a family, a community.

Also new is Archbishop Gomez’s decision to limit Cardinal Roger Mahony’s “administrative and public” duties. While Cardinal Mahony is still a priest in good standing, he will no longer preside at confirmations, a typical function of retired bishops. Archbishop Gomez also accepted the resignation of Bishop Thomas Curry, the auxiliary bishop of Santa Barbara. Typically, bishops defend their predecessors; in this case Archbishop Gomez felt it necessary to hold these leaders accountable, thinking this is more in line with what Catholics expect. The example of Cardinal Bernard Law serving for many years as archpriest of a high-profile church in Rome following his resignation seemed unjust to many. Those who commit crimes of abuse should face the law; those in authority who fail to respond adequately should similarly be held accountable.

My Kingdom for a Hearse

The recovery of King Richard III’s body, which had lain under a parking lot in Leicester, England, for over five centuries, is a gentle reminder that legendary locations often have some basis in fact. Richard’s body was thought to have been located near a church not far from Bosworth Field, the site of his death during a battle against Henry Tudor, and there it was. Many visitors to the Holy Land, Rome and other holy sites know this phenomenon. They are often reminded by guidebooks that legendary sites may be more historically sound than one suspects. Until the 19th century, for instance, many scholars believed that the pool of Bethesda, where Jesus healed a paralyzed man, was

a fanciful place. The pool’s five porticoes mentioned in John’s Gospel were often considered mere symbols of the five books of Moses. But excavations later uncovered a pool in Jerusalem featuring five porticoes. St. Peter’s tomb in Rome is another “reputed” location that ended up being precisely where legend had placed it.

Of course many legendary sites have absolutely no basis in fact. But legendary sites deserve the benefit of the doubt for several reasons. First, people in antiquity (and in the Middle Ages) did not move around as much as we moderns, and so when pilgrims arrived, it was easy for locals to point out where something had happened. Second, the more extraordinary the event the more likely it would be recalled. (The brother of the woman with the hemorrhage would have remembered where his sister was healed.) We may underestimate the accuracy of oral traditions and the intelligence of our ancestors. The next time someone sniffs at a legendary holy site, don’t sniff back.

Impunity on Trial

“The guerrilla is the fish. The people are the sea. If you cannot catch the fish, you have to drain the sea.” That was the memorable, inhuman policy of Efraín Ríos Montt during his bloody tenure as political overseer of Guatemala’s brutal civil war in 1982. That conflict officially ended in 1996. More than 200,000 were killed over decades of bloodshed, which, it must be noted, was aided and abetted by the policies of successive administrations in the United States.

Guatemala’s Law of National Reconciliation helped preserve the peace in 1996 and offered amnesty for “political crimes” committed during the war; but it excluded genocide, torture and other offenses not subject to statutes of limitation under international law. It was still a bit of shock on Jan. 26, however, when a Guatemalan judge ruled that Mr. Ríos Montt could finally be brought to trial. At the age of 86, he will be forced to account for ordering the killing of more than 1,700 Mayan villagers during his 18-month reign.

The trial will be notable for a number of reasons. The first is that it is happening at all. It represents the first domestic prosecution of a one-time head of state on charges of genocide, suggesting that international tribunals are not the only avenues for justice. Mr. Ríos Montt’s postwar career is a perfect example of why it is so difficult to pursue such cases when the victims are co-nationalists of the offenders. The general avoided arrest for years by taking advantage of congressional immunity, Guatemala’s weak judiciary, the nation’s reluctance to confront its past and, frankly, fear.

The general’s impunity has finally come to an end.

Point of Departure

In the middle of the 12th century, Pope Eugenius III, overwhelmed by the pressures of his office, sought the counsel of Bernard of Clairvaux, a fellow Cistercian and future doctor of the church. Bernard's advice to Eugenius took the form of a short treatise, which he called the "Book of Consideration." The work became a spiritual classic and has been esteemed for centuries by Eugenius's successors, including Pope Benedict XVI. The current supreme pontiff has called Bernard's work "required reading for every pope." Benedict has also said that one passage in particular enjoys a special meaning for him: "Let emperors and others who have not been afraid to be worshipped as divine enjoy that opinion," Bernard writes to his pope. "As for yourself, consider that you bear the title of 'supreme' not absolutely, but relatively." Pope Benedict takes this passage to mean that a pope should remember that he "is not the successor of Emperor Constantine but rather the successor of a fisherman."

As pope, Benedict has never forgotten that he is the successor of Peter, the weak, sometimes even foolhardy Galilean fisherman who denied the Lord, repented and then, astonishingly, became the rock upon which Jesus built his church. The Gospels attest to the intrinsic connection between Peter's human weakness and the charge he receives from the Lord to strengthen the brethren. It is especially poignant, then, that the current successor of Peter should feel compelled to resign his office in the face of his own physical weakness and diminishment. In recent months there was growing speculation about the pope's ability to carry out his duties; foreign trips have been curtailed on occasion; and even his appearances at Saint Peter's Basilica have required careful planning and much support. As Pope John Paul II's health declined, many people wondered whether he would resign. John Paul, as we know, opted to go on. Many people believe that the late pope's choice made him a powerful witness to the redemptive qualities of suffering.

Pope Benedict, however, sees things in a different way. On Feb. 11 the pope explicitly pointed to his declining health as the reason for his resignation. "I have come to the certainty that my strengths, due to an advanced age, are no longer suited to an adequate exercise of the Petrine ministry," the pope said. "In today's world, subject to so many rapid changes and shaken by questions of deep relevance for the life of faith, in order to govern the barque of Saint Peter and proclaim the Gospel, both strength of mind and body

are necessary." Thus Pope Benedict XVI and Pope John Paul II answered the same question differently: Should an ailing pope resign? We should avoid the temptation to pronounce judgment on the choice of either man, especially as his choice relates to the other's. Prayerful discernment is a deeply personal exercise. Two people can reach very different conclusions in outwardly similar circumstances; God speaks in each human heart in an utterly unique way.

Pope Benedict spoke from his heart on Feb. 11. The statement was characteristically humble. The pope is naturally introverted; the shoes of the fisherman have not always fit him comfortably. To be sure, he suffers in comparison to his charismatic predecessor. But there is something more: Five years old when the Nazis came to power in his native Germany, the pope witnessed first hand the destructive power of a cult of personality. One can easily see why, given this experience, the pope can become visibly uncomfortable when the crowds chant his name. We must distinguish, he says, between the man and the office, between contact with the person of the pope and "being physically in touch with this office, with the representative of the Holy One, with the mystery that there is a successor to Peter." Pope Benedict knows full well the truth of what Bernard wrote to Eugenius: You are Peter, not Jesus.

Pope Benedict may have had Bernard and Eugenius in mind at the time of his surprise announcement. Yet the pope's decision owes as much to the history of the last five decades as it does to the previous six centuries. Benedict's final act is rightly seen as one in a series of reforms and adaptations, some daring, some mundane, through which the postconciliar popes have gradually shed the trappings of an earthly court. That is as it should be. The pope is not an absolute monarch in command of a militant church; he is a singular minister of unity at the service of the church universal. Monarchs die in office; servants merely decrease so that their masters may increase. In gratitude for Joseph Ratzinger's many years of faithful service as priest, bishop and successor of Peter, the church throughout the world now joins her prayer with his: "Lord, now you let your servant go in peace; your word has been fulfilled; my own eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared in the sight of every people."



SIGNS OF THE TIMES

VATICAN

We Have Papabili!

Irish bookmakers have ranked Cardinal Angelo Scola of Italy, Cardinal Peter Turkson of Ghana and Cardinal Marc Ouellet of Canada as favorites among the *papabili* (literally “pope-ables”). Has Cardinal Turkson already blown his chances by saying that he would be happy to take the job? Is New York’s Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan out of the running because he is, well, an American? Such are the speculations of “*papabili* watching” as the conclave that will elect the new pope approaches in March.

If you would prefer to let your reason, rather than an Irish bookie, be your guide, here are some short bios of the leading candidates for the job.

Cardinal Angelo Scola (Italian, born Nov. 7, 1941). Archbishop of Milan since 2011, Cardinal Scola, a respected theologian, was patriarch of Venice, where he earned a reputation as an energetic pastor, raising the church’s profile in the civil arena. He was created a cardinal in 2003. In 2004 he started Oasis, an international foundation that serves as a forum for dialogue and a bridge of support for Catholics in the Middle East.

The son of a socialist truck driver, Cardinal Scola took to his assignment in Venice with relish, visiting local communities in an effort to help restore the parish as a spiritual and social meeting ground. Cardinal Scola has argued that if the church wants to reach people where they live, it has to move out of the sacristy and into all sectors of civil society. “As Christians,” he said, “that means we must have the courage to show our face, to say what freedom really is...and to propose to civil society an ideal of the good life.”

Cardinal Odilo Pedro Scherer (Brazilian, born Sept. 21, 1949). Archbishop of São Paulo since 2007, Cardinal Scherer

was born of German ancestry in São Francisco, Cerro Longo, Brazil. He studied philosophy and theology at Rome’s Pontifical Brazilian College and the Pontifical Gregorian University and worked as an official for the Vatican’s Congregation for Bishops from 1994 to 2001. Ordained in 1976, he served as pastor in the Diocese of Toledo in Brazil. He taught and served as rector at a number of seminaries and religious institutes in southern Brazil. Cardinal Scherer has expressed concern about a “silent flight of the faithful” because of a lack of religious formation and instruction about the church.

Cardinal Peter Turkson (Ghanaian, born Oct. 11, 1948). Cardinal Turkson was born in Western Ghana to a Methodist mother and a Catholic father who worked as a carpenter, the fourth child among 10 children. He attended a seminary in New York State and was ordained in 1975. In 1992 Turkson was appointed archbishop of Cape Coast by Pope John Paul II and served as president of the Ghana Catholic Bishops’ Conference from 1997 to 2005. He was created a cardi-

nal, Ghana’s first, at John Paul II’s last consistory in October 2003. In 2009 Pope Benedict XVI appointed him president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. That position has afforded him prominence but also led him into some controversy.

In a council document released in October 2011, Cardinal Turkson called for solidarity between rich and poor nations, a global authority to govern international finance and for the taxation of global transactions that could produce revenue to help alleviate poverty. He has called on Wall Street financiers to “do business differently...because this is not leading to our welfare and our good.” An accomplished polyglot, Turkson speaks English, Fante, French, Italian, German and Hebrew, in addition to understanding Latin and Greek.

Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, O.P. (Austrian, born Jan. 22, 1945). Archbishop of Vienna, Cardinal Schönborn studied at Regensburg, Germany, under then Father Joseph Ratzinger after joining the Dominican order in 1963. Cardinal Schönborn



Angelo Scola



Odilo Pedro Scherer



Peter Turkson



Christoph Schönborn



Marc Ouellet



Luis Antonio Tagle

succeeded Cardinal Hans Herman Groer in September 1995 after Groer's resignation amid allegations of sexual abuse. Born the second of four children in a noble family, Cardinal Schönborn has not shied away from controversy. In 1996 he said in an interview on Austrian television that a person with AIDS might use a condom as a "lesser evil," and in 2009 he criticized the pope's lifting of an excommunication order on Bishop Richard Williamson, a Holocaust denier, of the traditionalist Society of St. Pius X. In March 2010 his spokesman had to issue a clarification after Cardinal Schönborn called for priestly celibacy to be re-examined in the light of recent abuse scandals. In 2011 he grappled with an Austrian priests' initiative that urged women clergy, "priestless eucharistic liturgies" and Communion for non-Catholics and remarried divorcees.

Cardinal Marc Ouellet, S.S.P. (Canadian, born June 8, 1944). The former archbishop of Quebec, Cardinal Ouellet has headed the Congregation for Bishops, the powerful Vatican office that oversees the appointment of the

world's bishops, since June 2010. Cardinal Ouellet is a disciple of Pope Benedict's theological views and is considered a top advisor to the pope. Most recently he was called to help out in the wake of the "VatiLeaks" scandal related to the release of documents that detailed corruption and incompetence in the running of the Roman Curia. He once said becoming pope "would be a nightmare." In June 2012, representing the pope, Cardinal Ouellet met with Irish survivors of clerical sexual abuse; and in February of that year, he led a solemn penitential service with 10 other bishops in which they asked forgiveness for failing to protect children and for serving instead as an "instrument of evil against them."

Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle (Filipino, born June 21, 1957). If elected, Cardinal Tagle, now archbishop of Manila, would be the youngest pope in centuries. He impressed many of his fellow bishops during the 2012 Synod on the New Evangelization in Rome when he called for a more humble church that put more effort into listening to its flock. Cardinal Tagle has also

taken a strong approach to the sexual abuse crisis, warning his fellow bishops from Asia that they must not dismiss it as a Western phenomenon. At a conference in Rome in 2012 on the crisis, he advised fellow bishops, "We do not need to wait for a bomb to explode. Preventing it from exploding is the best response."

Other *papabili* include: Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi of Italy, president of the Pontifical Council for Culture; Cardinal Leonardo Sandri of Argentina, head of the Congregation for Eastern Churches; Cardinal João Braz de Aviz of Brazil, prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life; Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of the United States, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops; Cardinal Oscar Andrés Rodríguez Maradiaga, S.D.B., of Guatemala, the archbishop of Tegucigalpa and head of Caritas Internationalis; and Cardinal Francis Arinze of Nigeria, prefect emeritus of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments.

WASHINGTON

'State of the Union' Outlines Social Policy

President Obama set out an agenda in his State of the Union address on Feb. 12 that includes many of the social policy items on the wish-list of faith-based organizations. Among them are an increase in the federal minimum wage, comprehensive immigration reform, gun control and protection from budget cuts for Social Security, Medicare and education programs; job-creation initiatives; and development of sustainable energy alternatives.

Obama's proposal to increase the federal minimum wage from the current \$7.25 an hour to \$9 and to tie the wage to the inflation rate has long been sought by advocates for the poor. The federal minimum wage was last increased in July 2009, and the purchasing power of the minimum wage has declined 30 percent since its peak value in 1968.

On other economic issues Obama touched on, a December 2012 statement from the coalition of Christian leaders organized under the Circle of Protection banner listed five values the group was asking Congress and the president to adhere to: protecting poor and vulnerable people as deficits are reduced; raising new tax revenue in a manner proportional to the capacity of the people to contribute; protecting tax policies like the earned income and child tax credits that help reduce poverty; slowing the growth of health care costs; and finding bipartisan solutions for the common good.

The Rev. Jim Wallis, president and chief executive officer of Sojourners and one of the organizers of the Circle of Protection—which includes repre-

NEWS BRIEFS

The United Nations reports that the number of **Syrian refugees in Lebanon** has exceeded 265,000 and that it expects 1.1 million Syrian refugees overall in surrounding nations by June.

• Human rights groups are concerned by reports that the **Zimbabwean prison service**, where 74 men and 2 women are believed to reside on death row, has hired a hangman, replacing one who retired in 2005.

• In a message on Feb. 13 to the International Fund for Agricultural Development, Pope Benedict XVI "recognized" **bio-diversity** "as a precious good that the Creator has placed at the disposal of the entire human family." • Giving new life to closed churches in the Archdiocese of Chicago, St. Raphael the Archangel Church in Old Mill Creek, Ill., **uses the "recycled" facade** of Chicago's demolished St. John of God Church and eventually will include the interior of the closed St. Peter Canisius Church. • Guatemala's President Otto Pérez Molina has joined other regional leaders advocating the **legalization of cocaine** and other narcotics in order to quell crime related to drug trafficking. • Pastor Saeed Abedini of the United States was **sentenced to eight years** in Iran's notorious Evin prison on Jan. 27 because of his efforts with that country's house churches.



A Syrian refugee in Jordan on Jan. 25

sentatives from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic Charities USA—commented on the address. "It's time," he said, "for the ideological politics of the left and the right to yield to the politics of the common good." He said citizens "in social movements of conscience" cannot take leaders at their "best words," but must hold them accountable.

Obama's address also included goals that have their critics in the faith community, such as his promise to provide equal benefits for same-sex partners of members of the military. In the official Republican Party response to the address, U.S. Senator Marco Rubio of Florida criticized Obama as believing that the "free enterprise economy...is the cause of our problems." He said the president's solution to every problem "is for Washington to tax more, borrow

more and spend more."

On one topic, Obama's call for comprehensive immigration reform, the House chamber resonated with sustained bipartisan applause. A bipartisan panel of senators, including Rubio, is working on the details of immigration reform legislation. Both the House and the Senate have begun hearings on immigration.

The president framed immigration reform as an economic measure. "Our economy is stronger when we harness the talents and ingenuity of striving, hopeful immigrants," he said. "And right now, leaders from the business, labor, law enforcement, faith communities—they all agree that the time has come to pass comprehensive immigration reform."

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Portrait of a Lady

My mother was a great fan of Henry James. She kept his novels and essays in her bookcase along with books about the author and Leon Edel's masterly five-volume biography, which she read end to end. I've always liked James too, though unlike true devotees I don't adore his late work. In August a stroke of last-minute luck seated me next to a well-known writer, the guest of honor at a luncheon sponsored by the local university, who told me James was her favorite novelist. I asked which of his novels she preferred. "Oh, the later ones," she said in a tone of voice that made clear there could be no other choice.

I had read *The Wings of the Dove* and *The Golden Bowl* years ago, but found the last, in particular, a hard slog. James's sentences unfurled sinuously, one subordinate clause after another. A single sentence stretched to a long paragraph or a page. One looked in vain for a period; one was submerged in a thought, marked by commas and semicolons, that spread like fine lace over the paper. Everything was so delicate, so nuanced, so complex. Abashed, I acknowledged that *Portrait of a Lady* was my favorite book by Henry James. It is, in fact, an exquisite novel and, though not so precisely wrought as *The Wings of the Dove* and *The Golden Bowl*, highlights in heartbreaking fashion the interplay between James's idealistic American heroine, Isabel Archer, and the guileful Europeans who manipulate her to their advantage.

MARGOT PATTERSON is a writer who lives in Kansas City, Mo.

The words used for the title of that novel have come to mind often of late. My mother died over the summer, and my sisters and I were just about to put her apartment on the market when a month ago I broke my hip, causing me to relocate to her apartment rather than climb several times a day the narrow, circular stairs in my house. Surrounded by my mother's furniture, books, pictures and possessions, I can't help but reflect more about the woman she was.

I think about the other women she lived with as well. A 17th-century painting of an unknown woman hangs across from the armchair where I usually sit, and when my eye catches it, I wonder about her and what she was like. Nearby is another portrait of a lady, this one from a Tibetan thangka showing the demons of hell below her and the apparitions of heaven above her. The seated, graceful figure is oversize to the other figures in the textile, which seems true to life: We are always the central figure in the drama we live.

That seems particularly true of parents, who are invariably cast in a supporting role. It is often only after they die that they become people rather than parents in the eyes of their children. The end of the story makes you think more about the story: the arc of it, the characters in it, the themes and motifs. The finished story compels your attention in a way a work in progress does not.

My mother's apartment reflects her

interests and taste so perfectly that I will be sad when it is sold and her possessions dispersed. She loved beautiful things, and her home is full of them. She was a heroine from a Henry James novel, I think: intelligent, passionate, discriminating. She did not make Isabel Archer's tragic mistake, but she was not so unlike her. She was both strong-willed and timid and sometimes one when she should have been the other. Like many of her generation, she was frustrated by the life women of her era were expected to lead. She had talents she didn't use, talents she often deprecated.

I can't
help but
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about the
woman my
mother was.

When I read the book long ago, I remember thinking the characters in *The Golden Bowl* more subtle than people actually are in real life. Was that true, or the perception of youth? I would think that as James grew older the full stop of death would insert itself more in his prose. A sense of finality would intrude, putting an end to those endless series of clauses, commas and semicolons. But perhaps what those long, intricate sentences in his later novels reflect is how as we grow older, our sense of the world enlarges, grows more complicated, so that even endings become a beginning in which we reassess what we know about ourselves and those closest to us. The portrait does not change, yet we do who look at it. We realize that what we perceived in the past was only a little of all that was there.

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Pope Benedict XVI at the Vatican on Feb. 11.



REFLECTIONS ON
BENEDICT XVI'S SURPRISE
DECISION

A Historic Departure

On Feb. 11 Pope Benedict XVI employed an ancient language to announce a decision that will have far-reaching implications for the modern church. The pope declared in Latin his resignation from the See of Saint Peter, catching the world by surprise and moving many to reflect not only on what is to come, but on the complicated legacy he leaves behind. We asked four contributors to weigh in.

A Humble Christian, a Complicated Papacy BY DREW CHRISTIANSEN

The news of Pope Benedict XVI's resignation came as a surprise, but it did not shock me. For Pope Benedict has shown devotion to Celestine V, the sainted pope, who voluntarily resigned and was later murdered in 1296. Celestine was defamed by Dante—in the *Inferno* Dante called it “the Great Refusal”—because the pope's abdication opened the way to civil war in Italy. After the earthquake in Aquila, Italy, in 2009, Benedict made a pilgrimage to Celestine's tomb. By some reckonings, it was his third visit there. It could have been just devotion to the memory of “a humble Christian,” as the Italian writer Ignazio Silone called Celestine. Now, it may be seen in a different light as a prayerful step toward resignation.

Especially on the Catholic left and in the United States, where theologians like Elizabeth Johnson, C.S.J., and Margaret Farley, R.S.M., were censured and the Leadership

Conference of Religious Women came under investigation, Benedict's papacy has been regarded warily. Major reforms in the liturgy, like the new English translation and the extraordinary (Latin) form of the Mass, were imposed on skeptical English-speaking celebrants, and reconciliation with the Society of St. Pius X (the Lefebvrists) was pursued beyond all reason. Pope Benedict never seemed to appreciate the depth of the desire that bishops be held accountable in the sex abuse scandal. These issues will remain neuralgic for some time to come. But Benedict also made many positive contributions that should not be ignored.

His encyclical "Caritas in Veritate," with its affirmation of structural reform as "political charity" and his call for a global authority to regulate the financial sector, may be the most radical since Pope John XXIII's "Pacem in Terris" 50 years ago. Though not a diplomat himself, he conducted extraordinary visits to Turkey, Britain and the Holy Land. His address to the British leadership in Westminster Hall was both a diplomatic and personal triumph.

Following adverse Muslim reaction to his address at the University of Regensburg in 2006, he showed courage in going to Turkey and there succeeded in rebuilding relations with the Islamic world. In the United States and Britain, his apologies to victims of clerical sex abuse, though necessary, greatly eased relations in the host countries and their Catholic populations.

At times, there seems to have been a disconnect between his formal decisions and his pastoral sensitivities. He condemned "the dictatorship of relativism" but genuinely appreciated the spiritual yearnings of unchurched young people and asked them to prod the church into authenticity. While the establishment of the special ordinariate for Anglicans who wanted to come over to Roman Catholicism offended many, including members of the Roman Curia, he soon resumed cordial relations with Rowan Williams, then archbishop of Canterbury.

Benedict's pastoral gifts were seen in his Angelus talks on the lives of saints of the day. He showed knowledge and appreciation of the saints, but also a singular ability to uncover their relevance for believers today. His meetings with local priests during vacations in early years of the pontificate showed surprising awareness of the realities of everyday pastoral ministry. Similarly, some of the early *ad limina* addresses to visiting bishops' conferences showed a fresh, independent sense of personal care for the universal

church, refusing to hand along the truisms handed him by the Curia.

Whatever the shortcomings of this papacy, in his resignation he has demonstrated the humility of "a simple Christian." As "Papa Ratzinger" retires, we ought to be thankful for the many good things he has done and pray that his remaining days will be filled with peace.

DREW CHRISTIANSEN, S.J., is the former editor in chief of *America*.

A Man of His Words

BY JAMES MARTIN

Pope Benedict XVI's resignation is a selfless and noble act done for the good of the church that he has loved and served for decades. It also shows his great spiritual freedom; rare indeed is the person who can, and will, relinquish such immense power voluntarily.

Pope Benedict likely will be remembered as a pope who, in his relatively short pontificate, sought primarily to strengthen the orthodoxy of the church by a variety of means, who authored several important encyclicals notable for their theological depth and appeal and who continued an active schedule of public appearances. He also, despite his full calendar, published three well-received books on the life of Jesus. Never the media superstar that his predecessor was, Pope Benedict, a lifelong scholar, exuded his own brand of charisma, which came from his profound theological acumen and his personal relationship with Jesus. Perhaps his

Benedict's pastoral gifts were seen in his Angelus talks on the lives of saints. He showed a singular ability to uncover their relevance for believers today.

most often neglected contribution to the church was his series of superb Angelus messages, delivered regularly during his public appearances in St. Peter's Square.

His most lasting legacy, I would suggest, may not be in the various "newsworthy" acts of his papacy that were highlighted in the media so often (his long negotiations with the breakaway Society of St. Pius X; his strong disciplinary actions against the powerful founder of the Legion of Christ, who had fathered children and committed sexual abuse; the oversight of women's religious orders in the United States, the revised English translation of the Mass; his meetings with victims of sexual abuse; his response to scandals in the Curia; or the controversy over the comments about Islam that angered many, and so on) but something far more personal: his books on Jesus. Far more people will

most likely read those moving testaments to the person whose vicar he was—Jesus of Nazareth—than may read all of his encyclicals combined. Others may disagree about my emphasis on this aspect of his pontificate, but in these books, the pope brought to bear decades of scholarship and prayer to the most important question that a Christian can ask: Who is Jesus? This is the pope's primary job—to preach the Gospel and to introduce people to Jesus—and Pope Benedict did that exceedingly well.

JAMES MARTIN, S.J., is the editor at large of *America*.

The Humanity of the Papacy

BY VINCENT J. MILLER

Pope Benedict XVI's statement announcing his resignation is every bit as striking as the resignation itself. His decision to resign is not simply a retirement from the hectic pace of public office. It is an act of magisterial teaching in its own right that resonates with an important and often-unremarked strand of his pontificate. In his statement, Benedict emphasizes the humanity of the papacy and the demands of history. He humbly admits that he no longer possesses the mental and physical strength to lead the church as it faces "rapid changes" and is "shaken" by deep questions concerning the "life of faith."

From the beginning of his papacy, in the shadow of Blessed Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict has struck a lower profile. Of course he lacked his predecessor's charisma, but his gestures were often intentional. At his first World Youth Day, he turned from an adoring crowd chanting "Ben-ned-et-to" in silence to face the Eucharist in benediction.

His resignation continues this strand of his papacy—a reduction of the office in a way, subordinating it to tradition. His encyclicals were noteworthy for subordinating his own voice to the broad witnesses of the tradition. He continued to write his own theology. He published his Christology with a secular press, however, scrupulously avoiding assigning magisterial authority to his personal theology.

Benedict's resignation breaks with the modern papacy since Pius IX, but especially with John Paul II, whose sacral understanding of the office was most evident in his final years, when the increasingly infirm pontiff occupied the office as a martyr of sorts, a witness to fidelity even in the face of profound physical and mental infirmity. Some applauded this as a witness to the dignity of aging. But many people witness to this dignity without holding a demanding office that they can no longer properly dispatch. Benedict will continue to serve the church "through a life dedicated to prayer." Having ascended the Chair of Peter, he will now step down. The power of that humble act should

not go unremarked. This could be the most important symbolic change to the papacy since Pius IX described himself as a "prisoner of the Vatican," surrounded by hostile secular forces. Benedict, a firm believer in the theological importance of the papacy, has with his resignation confidently and profoundly transformed it, leaving behind the monarchical trappings of holding office until death.

I recall a conversation with a European scholar who criticized Benedict for making the papacy "small." In some ways, that may be his intent. It is certain that Benedict is carefully refining the definition of the papacy even as he leaves it.

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A Man of Conscience

BY SIDNEY CALLAHAN

Pope Benedict XVI's resignation can be viewed as a positive development for Catholics seeking church reform. Even those who disagree with many of Pope Benedict's theological views and actions readily recognize and praise his essential goodness as a virtuous person. Benedict has served Christ long and faithfully with years of hard and difficult work. He deserves his accolades.

Pope Benedict's unprecedented announcement is in itself an edifying teaching act that will leave its mark in history. The pope stresses the primacy of conscience in determining his decision. Prayer guided his exercise of prudence. Pope Benedict's authentic humility is revealed when he asks "pardon for his defects" and gives thanks to his brothers for their "love and work." He shows an ecumenical spirit when he refers to "the Petrine ministry" as a "spiritual work" serving the supreme pastor, Jesus Christ. The pope must truly serve and never cling to power and status.

It is also a progressive moment when Benedict states that his service in the papal office can be usefully evaluated in its effectiveness. Evangelical criticism of leaders is validated. Moreover, in the act of resigning, unprecedented in our age, the pope accepts that his term of office should have a limit. Term limits and the election of leaders are key requirements for collegial participation and church reform. Would that women and the laity would be taking part in the coming election. Yet reformers inspired by the Second Vatican Council can take heart. The pope's act of conscience reminds us once again that God is a God of surprises.

SIDNEY CALLAHAN is an author, lecturer, college professor and licensed psychologist. Her most recent book is *Created for Joy: A Christian View of Suffering*.

What Now?

Experts respond to common questions on the papal transition.

BY THOMAS J. REESE AND KENNETH E. UNTENER

What is the precedent for a pope to resign?
TR: The number of popes who may have resigned has been estimated as high as 10, but the historical evidence is limited. Most recently, during the Council of Constance in the 15th century, Pope Gregory XII resigned to bring about the end of the Western Schism, and a new pope was elected in 1417. Pope Celestine V's resignation in 1294 is the most famous because his decision was made freely, and Dante placed him in hell for it.

Most modern popes have felt that resignation is unacceptable. As Pope Paul VI said, paternity cannot be resigned. In addition, Paul feared setting a precedent that would encourage factions in the church to pressure future popes to resign for reasons other than health. Nevertheless, the code of canon law in 1917 provided for the resignation of a pope as do the regulations established by Paul VI in 1975 and John Paul II in 1996. However, a resignation induced through fear or fraud would be invalid. In addition, canonists argue that a person resigning from an office must be of sound mind.

In 1989 and in 1994, Pope John Paul II secretly prepared letters offering the College of Cardinals his resignation in case of an incurable disease or other condition that would prevent him from fulfilling his ministry, according to Msgr. Sławomir Oder, postulator of the late pope's cause. In his 1994 letter the pope said he had spent years wondering whether a pope should resign at age 75, the normal retirement age for bishops. However, John Paul also wrote, "I feel a serious obligation of conscience to continue to fulfill the task to which Christ the Lord has called me as long as, in the mysterious plan of his providence, he desires."

Why did Pope Benedict resign?

TR: In *Light of the World*, by Peter Seewald, published in

Responses by **THOMAS J. REESE, S.J.**, author of *Inside the Vatican* (Harvard, 1996) and former editor in chief of *America* (1998–2005), are edited selections from a longer Q&A at americamagazine.org.
Responses by **MOST REV. KENNETH E. UNTENER** (1937–2004), the late bishop of Saginaw, Mich., are edited selections from "If a Pope Resigns...", first published in *America* on March 25, 2000.

2010, Pope Benedict responded unambiguously to a question about whether a pope could resign: "Yes. If a Pope clearly realizes that he is no longer physically, psychologically, and spiritually capable of handling the duties of his office, then he has a right and, under some circumstances, also an obligation to resign."

On the other hand, he did not favor resignation simply because the burden of the papacy is great. "When the danger is great one must not run away," he explained.

"For that reason, now is certainly not the time to resign. Precisely at a time like this one must stand fast and endure the situation. That is my view. One can resign at a peaceful moment or when one simply cannot go on. But one must not run away from danger and say someone else should do it."

On Feb. 11 Pope Benedict announced that he would resign on Feb. 28. He explained: "After having repeatedly examined my conscience before God, I have come to the certainty that my strengths, due to an advanced age, are no longer suited to an adequate exercise of the Petrine ministry." He added: "[I]n order to govern the bark of Saint Peter and proclaim the gospel, both strength of mind and body are necessary, strength which in the last few months has deteriorated in me to the extent that I have had to recognize my incapacity to adequately fulfill the ministry entrusted to me."

If a pope resigns and another is elected, are there in effect two popes at the same time?

KU: No, there are not. A person is not ordained pope as though this were a fourth category in the sacrament of orders: deacon, priest, bishop, pope. Rather, he is elected bishop of Rome. (If the person elected by the cardinals were not a bishop, he would be ordained one so that he could be the bishop of Rome.) A person is pope because he has a particular office—bishop of Rome. When he is no longer bishop of Rome, he no longer is pope.

If a pope resigns from being pope, then what is he?

KU: We have to sort out what is attached to the person and



The consistory of Feb. 11, 2013

what is attached to the office. We can parallel it to any bishop who resigns as head of a diocese. If a pope resigns as bishop of Rome, all the responsibilities and powers linked with that office are no longer his. He is therefore no longer: vicar of Peter, head of the college of bishops, patriarch of the West, primate (chief bishop) of the bishops of Italy, metropolitan of the dioceses surrounding Rome or head of Vatican City State. But he would remain a bishop and a cardinal.

Would a retired pope still be infallible?

KU: Infallibility is a gift given to the church as a whole. It is exercised by the pope when he defines a doctrine to be believed by all the faithful, but it is not a gift given to the pope as a personal quality. The bishop of Rome, because of his office, can give expression to the faith of the church and exercise the infallibility with which the church is endowed. If he resigns from that office, he can no longer act in this way.

If a pope retires, what would he be called?

KU: The title “Pope” (from the Greek *pappas*, “father”) was a term of affection used of bishops from early times. By the 12th century, it had come to be understood as particularly appropriate for the bishop of Rome, because his diocese was the center of ecclesial unity. (Hence also the title “Holy Father.”)

There are no guidelines on what we would call a retired pope. It would seem appropriate to give him an honorary title. We attach “emeritus” to a title we give someone who has the honor but not the power of a previous position. He might appropriately be called Pope Emeritus.

Where would a pope live after resigning?

KU: The bishop of Rome is a member of the Conference of Italian Bishops. If he resigns, he continues as a member of that episcopal conference. He may want to stay among them. However, he is free, as any retired bishop is free, to live wherever he wishes.

[Benedict, once retired, plans to live in a monastery that had been used as the Vatican gardener's house but was later established as a cloistered convent by Pope John Paul II in 1994. Different orders of cloistered nuns have lived in the monastery, each for a fixed term of three to five years. The monastery is currently being remodeled. Until the work is completed, a date not yet determined, the retired pope will live at the papal villa in Castel Gandolfo.]

Who governs the church before the new pope is elected?

TR: The interregnum and election of a new pope are governed by the rules established in the 1996 constitution "Universi Domini Gregis" ("Of the Lord's Whole Flock") of John Paul II, as modified by Benedict in 2007.

When a pope resigns or dies, all the cardinals and archbishops in charge of departments in the Roman Curia, including the secretary of state, lose their jobs. The ordinary faculties of these offices, which are run by their secretaries during the interregnum, do not cease, but serious and controversial matters are to await the election of a new pope.

If a matter cannot be postponed, the College of Cardinals can entrust it to the prefect or president who was in charge of the office when the pope died (or to other cardinals who were members of that congregation or council). Any decision made is provisional until confirmed by the new pope.

Three major officials do not lose their jobs: the vicar of the diocese of Rome, the major penitentiary and the camerlengo. The vicar for Rome provides for the pastoral needs of the diocese of Rome and continues to have all the powers he had under the resigned or deceased pope. The major penitentiary deals with confessional matters reserved to the Holy See, and he is allowed to continue functioning because the door to forgiveness should never be closed.

The camerlengo (Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone) is the most important official during the interregnum. While a pope is in office, he has the authority to act for the pope in certain areas when the pope is away from Rome. On the resignation or death of a pope, the camerlengo takes charge of and administers the property and money of the Holy See. During the interregnum he reports to the College of Cardinals, which governs the church until a pope is elected. He also organizes the conclave. By appointing the cardinal secretary of state as the camerlen-

go, Benedict simplified the organizational structure and made sure that his secretary of state had an important role during the interregnum.

Although the government of the church is in the hands of the College of Cardinals until a new pope is elected, the powers of the college are limited. It cannot change the rules governing papal elections, appoint cardinals or make any decisions binding on the next pope. The cardinals meet daily in a general congregation, presided over by the dean of the college (Cardinal Angelo Sodano), until the conclave

begins. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was dean prior to the last conclave, and his speech as dean to the cardinals prior to the conclave received great attention from the cardinals and the media.

Is there campaigning prior to the conclave?

TR: Any discussion, let alone campaigning, prior to the death of a pope is

strictly forbidden. The prohibition against discussing papal succession while the pope is still in office dates back to Felix IV (526-30), who instructed the clergy and the Roman Senate to elect his archdeacon, Boniface, as his successor. The senate objected and passed an edict forbidding any discussion of a pope's successor during his lifetime.

Discussions prior to the conclave do occur privately among cardinals, but public campaigning, even after the pope's death, is frowned upon and would probably be counterproductive. Normally the discussion of candidates is done privately by cardinals over dinner or in small groups.

Cardinals who travel a great deal are sometimes suspected of doing this in order to meet and become known to other cardinals prior to the conclave. The cardinals have also gotten to know each other at synods of bishops, extraordinary consistories and other meetings where they see each other in action. But the best known cardinals tend to be those working in Rome where they meet prelates when they visit Rome. Curial cardinals are also better known by the Vatican press corps, which covers the conclave.

When and where is the conclave held?

Unless circumstances prevent it, the conclave takes place inside Vatican City and begins 15 days after the resignation or death of the pope. For serious reasons, the cardinals can defer the beginning of the conclave, but it must begin within 20 days of the pope's resignation or death. The exact date and time are set by the College of Cardinals.

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The election takes place in the Sistine Chapel, with the cardinals living in the five-story Domus Sanctae Marthae, a Vatican residence with 105 two-room suites and 26 single rooms built in 1996, which is vacated by its usual residents during a conclave. The rooms are assigned by lot. A number of elections in the 19th century were held in the Quirinal Palace, which was one of the pope's palaces until the fall of the Papal States in 1870. The last election to take place outside Rome was in Venice in 1800.

Where does the word "conclave" come from?

TR: In the 13th century the papacy was vacant for a year and a half before the election of Pope Innocent IV and for three and a half years before the installation of Pope Gregory X. In the first case the election was finally forced by the senate and people of Rome, who locked up the cardinals until a pope was chosen in 1243. In the second case, the people of Viterbo in 1271 not only locked the cardinals in, but tore off the roof of the building and put the cardinals on a diet of bread and water. The word "conclave" comes from the Latin, "with a key," as in locked with a key.

Today the cardinals are locked in to ensure secrecy and to protect them from outside influence. Before the conclave begins, all telephones, cell phones, radios, televisions and Internet connections are removed. No letters or newspapers are permitted. All the rooms are swept for electronic bugs by trained technicians. Whether this will be sufficient to prevent more sophisticated eavesdropping remains to be seen.

Who is permitted in the conclave?

T.R.: All cardinals under 80 years of age when a pope resigns or dies have the right to vote for the next pope, unless they have been canonically deposed or, with the permission of the pope, have renounced the cardinalate. Even an excommunicated cardinal can attend. However, a cardinal who had resigned and joined Napoleon Bonaparte attempted to enter the conclave in 1800 but was turned away. Once inside the conclave, an elector may not leave except because of illness or other grave reasons acknowledged by a majority of the cardinals.

Also permitted in the conclave are nurses for infirmed cardinals, two medical doctors, religious priests who can hear confessions in various languages, the secretary of the College of Cardinals, the master of papal liturgical celebrations with two masters of ceremonies and two religious attached to the papal sacristy, and an assistant chosen by the cardinal dean. Also permitted are a suitable number of persons for preparing and serving meals and for house-keeping. They must swear absolute and perpetual secrecy concerning anything they learn concerning the election of the pope.

Who are the cardinal electors?

TR: All cardinals under 80 years of age when the pope dies or resigns have the right to vote for the next pope. As of Feb. 11, 2013, there are 118 cardinal electors, of whom 67 were appointed by Benedict and the rest by John Paul II. The average age of the electors is 72. About 52 percent are from Europe (24 percent from Italy). Latin America has 16 percent; Asia 9.3 percent; Africa 9.3 percent. The United States has 9.3 percent, second only to Italy; Canada 2.5 percent. Curial cardinals make up about 35 percent of the electors, with an additional 10 percent being former Vatican officials who now head dioceses.

The maximum number of cardinals was set at 70 by Sixtus V in 1586. John XXIII ignored this limit, and the college grew to over 80 cardinals. In 1970 Paul VI reformed the College of Cardinals by increasing the number of electors to 120, not counting those 80 years of age and over who were excluded as electors. John Paul II exceeded this limit by two in 1998 and by 15 in 2001 and 2003. Benedict XVI returned to the legal limit of 120 until February 2012 when he raised it to 124. In November 2012, he returned to 120.

How has Benedict XVI changed the makeup of the College of Cardinals?

T.R.: Popes tend to make only minor adjustments in the geographical distribution of cardinals, but since the total number of cardinals is small, a couple of cardinals here or there make a difference. John Paul increased the number of Eastern European cardinals and decreased the number of Italian cardinals. Benedict has increased the percentage of Italian cardinals in the conclave and reduced the percentage of cardinals from the third world.

Has the pope always been elected by the cardinals?

TR: Although the College of Cardinals elects the pope today, this was not the rule until the 11th century. Some early popes (including perhaps St. Peter) appointed their successors. Although appointing one's successor was provided for by the Roman Synod of 499, this method fell out of favor when Felix IV (526-530) and Boniface II (530-532) tried to impose controversial candidates as their successors.

In the early church, popes were usually chosen by the clergy and people of Rome in the same way that bishops in other dioceses were elected. This democratic process worked well when the church was small and united. But disagreements led to factions who fought over the papacy. Nobles, emperors and kings interfered in papal elections as the church became rich and powerful.

The papal electors were limited to the clergy of the Diocese of Rome by the Roman synod of 499. No bishop was elected pope until 891 (Formosus). Since 1179, only

cardinals have voted for the pope except for the election in 1417 that ended the Western Schism.

What happens on the first day of the conclave?

TR: On the morning the conclave begins, the cardinal electors celebrate Mass in St. Peter's Basilica. In the afternoon they gather in the Pauline Chapel in the Apostolic Palace and solemnly process to the Sistine Chapel. The cardinals take an oath to observe the rules laid down in "Universi Dominici Gregis," especially those enjoining secrecy.

They also swear not to support interference in the election by any secular authorities or "any group of people or individuals who might wish to intervene in the election of the Roman pontiff." Finally, the electors swear that whoever is elected will carry out the "munus Petrinum of pastor of the universal church" and will "affirm and defend strenuously the spiritual and temporal rights and liberty of the Holy See." The constitution also says that the new pope is not bound by any oaths or promises made prior to his election. After the oath is taken, everyone not connected with the conclave is ordered out with the Latin words *Extra omnes*, "Everybody out!"

The Sistine Chapel and the Domus Sanctae Marthae are then closed to unauthorized persons by the camerlengo. Outside the conclave, the camerlengo is assisted by the sostituto of the Secretariat of State, who directs Vatican personnel to protect the integrity and security of the conclave.

After everyone else leaves, an ecclesiastic chosen earlier by the College of Cardinals gives a meditation "concerning the grave duty incumbent on them and thus on the need to act with right intention for the good of the universal church, *solum Deum prae oculis habentes* [having only God before your eyes]." When he finishes, he leaves the Sistine Chapel with the master of papal liturgical ceremony so that only the cardinal electors remain. The time in the chapel is for prayer and voting in silence, not campaign speeches. Negotiations and arguments are to take place outside the chapel. If they wish, the cardinals

can immediately begin the election process.

How does the balloting take place?

TR: The regulations for balloting are very detailed to eliminate any suspicion of electoral fraud—no hanging chads here.

Three "scrutineers" (vote counters) are chosen by lot from the electors, with the least senior cardinal deacon drawing the names. He draws three additional names of cardinals (called *infirmarii*) who will collect the ballots of any cardinals in the conclave who are too sick to come to the Sistine Chapel. A final three names are drawn by lot to act as revisers, who

review the work done by the scrutineers. Each morning and afternoon, new scrutineers, *infirmarii* and revisers are chosen by lot.

The electors use rectangular cards as ballots with the words *Eligo in summum pontificem* ("I elect as supreme pontiff") printed at the top. Each cardinal, in secret, prints or writes the name of his choice on the ballot in a way that disguises his handwriting. One at a time, in order of precedence, the cardinals approach the altar with their folded ballot held up so that it can be seen. After

kneeling in prayer for a short time, the cardinal rises and swears, "I call as my witness Christ the Lord who will be my judge, that my vote is given to the one who before God I think should be elected." He then places the ballot in a silver and gilded bronze urn shaped like a wok with a lid.

The first scrutineer shakes the egg-shaped urn to mix the ballots. The last scrutineer counts the ballots before they are unfolded. If the number of ballots does not correspond to the number of electors, the ballots are burned without being counted and another vote is immediately taken. If the number of ballots does match the number of electors, the scrutineers, who are sitting at a table in front of the altar, begin counting the votes.

The first scrutineer unfolds each ballot, notes the name on a piece of paper and passes the ballot to the second scrutineer. He notes the name and passes the ballot to the third scrutineer, who reads it aloud for all the cardinals to hear. If there are two names on a single ballot, the ballot is not counted. The last scrutineer pierces each ballot with a threaded needle through the word "Eligo" and places it on the thread. After all the ballots have been read, the ends of the thread are tied together and the ballots thus joined are placed in a third urn. The scrutineers then add up the totals for each candidate. Finally, the three revisers check both the ballots and the notes of the scrutineers to make sure that they performed their task faithfully and exactly.

The ballots and notes (including those made by any cardi-



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nal) are then burned unless another vote is to take place immediately; in that case, the ballots of two votes are burned together. Special chemicals are added to make the smoke white or black. Since 1903, white smoke has signaled the election of a pope; black smoke signals an inconclusive vote. The only written record of the voting is given to the new pope and then placed in the archives in a sealed envelope that may be opened by no one unless the pope gives permission.

How long can the conclave last?

TR: The conclave lasts until a new pope is elected. To be elected, two thirds of the votes are required, calculated on the basis of the total number of electors present. If no one is elected on the afternoon of the first day, the cardinals meet again the next morning. If they are again unsuccessful, they immediately vote again. From then on, there can be two votes in the morning and two in the afternoon.

The last conclave to go more than five days was in 1831: It lasted 54 days. In the 13th century the papacy was vacant for a year and a half before the election of Innocent IV and for three and a half years before the installation of Gregory X. Since then 29 conclaves have lasted a month or more. Often wars or civil disturbances in Rome caused these lengthy interregnums. Sometimes delays were caused by the cardinals themselves, who enjoyed the power and financial rewards of running the papacy without a pope. These abuses led to rules governing an interregnum and requiring the speedy calling of a conclave.

In 2007 Pope Benedict instructed that if the cardinals are deadlocked after 33 or 34 votes (depending on whether there was a vote the first day), which would take 13 days, runoff ballots between the two leading candidates will be held. This procedure is problematic because if neither of the candidates is able to get a two-thirds vote, the conclave will be deadlocked with no possibility of choosing a third candidate as a compromise. The two leading cardinals cannot vote in the runoff ballots, though they remain in the Sistine Chapel, where conclaves are held. Nor do Benedict's new rules say what to do if two candidates are tied for second place.

Who can be elected?

TR: In theory, any man can be elected who is willing to be baptized and ordained a priest and bishop. He does not have to be at the conclave. The last non-cardinal elected was Urban VI (1378). The last cardinal to be elected pope who was a priest but not a bishop was Gregory XVI (1831). Callixtus III (1455) was the last person to be elected who was not a priest. Most likely a cardinal elector will be elected, all of whom today are bishops.

What happens after the election?

TR: The cardinal dean asks the elected man, "Do you accept

your canonical election as supreme pontiff?" Rarely does anyone say no. When offered the papacy at the conclave in Viterbo in 1271, St. Philip Benizi fled and hid until another candidate was chosen. Likewise St. Charles Borromeo, one of the few cardinals to be canonized, turned down the papacy. When Cardinal Giovanni Colombo, the 76-year-old archbishop of Milan, began receiving votes during the conclave in October 1978, he made it clear that he would refuse the papacy if elected. If the man says yes, then he becomes pope immediately if he is already a bishop. If he is not already a bishop, he is to be ordained one immediately and becomes pope.

He is then asked by what name he wants to be called. The first pope to change his name was John II in 533. His given name, Mercury, was considered inappropriate since it was the name of a pagan god. The custom of changing one's name became common around the year 1009. The last pope to keep his own name was Marcellus II, elected in 1555.

The cardinals then approach the new pope and make an act of homage and obedience. A prayer of thanksgiving is then said, and the senior cardinal deacon informs the people in St. Peter's Square that the election has taken place and announces the name of the new pope. The pope then may speak to the crowd and grant his first solemn blessing *urbi et orbi*, to the city and the world. **A**

To the Ends of the Earth

Faith at work around the world

BY CHRIS HERLINGER

The Haitian aid workers arrived with several truckloads of relief supplies—tents, blankets and the like—at an isolated area outside the capital of Port-au-Prince, which, more than a week after the January 2010 earthquake there, still had not received any assistance.

The workers for the Lutheran World Federation had done their best to make sure the distribution went smoothly. But on the day of the distribution, any sense of order collapsed when a group of young men who were not on the list of recipients demanded some of the items and began disrupting the event. Police were called in, and although the young Haitian aid workers held their ground, the situation

quickly deteriorated. People rushed the distribution center. A policewoman fired several shots; another person brandished a shotgun and people scrambled. Luckily, no one was seriously injured or hurt.

At a later debriefing, some of the Haitians wondered if the distribution should have stopped the moment it was clear there might be problems; others said that would not have been fair to those who were rightly in line and had waited patiently. Privately, some of the foreign workers wondered if the young Haitians had not been sufficiently careful or had not laid the groundwork well enough. Some suggested that the aid should have been distributed to whoever needed it.

Some of the things hinted at by the foreign workers—inexperience, a perceived lack of professionalism—are accusations sometimes leveled at those who work for faith-based humanitarian agencies. The real pros, it is sometimes assumed, are those who work for secular groups like the

CHRIS HERLINGER, a writer for Church World Service, is a New York-based freelance journalist who writes frequently on humanitarian issues for *The National Catholic Reporter* and *Catholic News Service*. He is the co-author, most recently, of *Rubble Nation: Haiti's Pain, Haiti's Promise*.



EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT: U.N. troops work to control a crowd seeking emergency supplies in Leogane, Haiti.

CNS PHOTO/PAUL JEFFREY

Red Cross and Doctors Without Borders. In Haiti, at least, those groups are seen at the top of a humanitarian hierarchy, followed by the large faith-based groups and alliances like World Vision, Catholic Relief Services and Caritas, in turn followed by smaller church-based groups like Church World Service, and then, finally the smaller mom-and-pop operations, many of them evangelical Protestant.

These organizations are just a few of the hundreds of faith-based humanitarian groups out there today. In the listing of about 80 agencies that responded in Haiti and belong to a U.S.-based alliance of humanitarian groups called InterAction, about a quarter are expressly faith-based or have religious roots, and there are dozens of other smaller faith-based groups working in Haiti that do not belong to InterAction.

Christians United

I can only speak as someone who reports for Church World Service, which has ties to a wide network of other agencies—Protestant, Anglican and Orthodox—but it often seems that some of the more common accusations against faith-based groups cut both ways. In my travels, I have met dozens of workers for faith-based groups who are committed, talented and deeply, deeply professional. And I have met young, inexperienced staff members working for secular groups in tough, demanding places too.

In the end, most of these humanitarian organizations, faith-based or secular, have more that unites us than divides us. And the more prominent faith-based groups I have worked with—like C.W.S., L.W.F. and C.R.S.—are united even more closely. But our bond is not forged over the occasional need to defend ourselves from accusations or a desire to separate ourselves from secular aid groups. Rather, we are united in our shared desire to support very basic humanitarian principles, including refraining from proselytizing, and in the fact that we treat all of those affected by disasters without discrimination or favor. Greatest need is, and should be, the priority for all of us who do humanitarian work, not factors like religious affiliation, political beliefs or ethnicity. Christian commitment undergirds what we do; and while these groups seek to touch hearts, conversion is not part of our agenda.

Yet other faith-based aid groups make no secret that they are also religious-oriented bodies that claim the right of proselytizing, or conversion, to Christianity when they do humanitarian work. This is a key difference among the

Christian aid groups, and it is proof that Christianity is an enormous tent. I would not call this so much a squabble as just a very essential and different outlook on how branches of Christianity approach humanitarian work. In fact, in disaster situations like Haiti there is not a lot of interchange between humanitarian agencies of different stripes. Many nongovernmental organizations I have worked with

believe that the act of proselytizing is a violation of humanitarian principles. In the other corner, one evangelical I know once told me that while she was impressed by C.W.S.'s work, she felt it was too bad we did not "take the next step" of trying to convert Muslims to

Christianity. I strenuously disagreed.

An essential factor that ties all of us together—and why I still choose to work for this kind of church-based organization—is what I can only describe as something marvelously stubborn: It is the sheer durability of the Christian church. Here I am speaking of its deep roots in much of the world and its web of relationships—from parish to town, from congregation to countryside, from hospitals to feeding centers. The Christian church has existed in the past; it is present today; and it will be present tomorrow. The Haitian workers I described worked in Haiti well before the earthquake and are still there now, doing good work three years after the disaster.

Such work is most meaningful when it is done freely and tied to the inherent dignity of our brothers and sisters rather than to the religious claims of one group or another. When I visited northern Pakistan in 2010, the work of my C.W.S. colleagues there (both Muslim and Christian) was appreciated simply for what it was.

I well remember the afternoon I spent with 72-year-old farm laborer Noor Paras, who lived in a village along the Indus River that had been damaged by floods. A quiet and dignified man, Paras knew that the Eid holiday that year was going to be a curtailed, pinched affair with little outward celebration. Yet he appreciated the food packages C.W.S. had provided, calling them "a gift from God." It did not matter to Paras where the food came from—in emergencies there is no Islamic food or Christian food, but merely survival food.

Here is another example. In late 2011, I visited Kenya and Ethiopia on a freelance assignment for The National Catholic Reporter. While there, I interviewed women religious, priests and humanitarian workers, all trying to ameliorate the effects of a terrible drought and drawn-out

An essential factor that ties all of us together is the sheer durability of the Christian church.



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humanitarian crisis that had elicited little concern or attention in the United States.

One of my C.W.S. colleagues, Sammy Mutua, told me of an increasingly prominent phenomenon: food crises in urban areas, like Nairobi, where one-time farming families had been forced to leave their land and now found themselves scrambling to find food. This scramble had become part of a trying, difficult life in which people lost the social support they had once had, and cherished, back home.

In the midst of this kind of environment are people like the Rev. Paulino Mondo of Holy Trinity Parish in the Nairobi slum of Kariobangi and Ruth Wanjiru Mbugua, a social worker who works with the Holy Trinity community. Both were doing their best to simultaneously help feed their community (with the help of groups like C.R.S.) and do battle against such long-standing social woes as gun violence. Outside the urban areas, the Rev. Pius Kyule, a priest in the Machakos district, a rural area southeast of Nairobi, was working with C.R.S. to implement a feeding program in an area that was feeling real pressure. Many people struggled just to keep a very basic diet of about one kilo of beans for six people on the table. This crisis of rising food prices and accompanying pressures on increasingly denuded land due to climate change were all taking a significant toll. "It's getting worse every year, and people are suffering," Kyule told me.

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The Unseen End

I am asked sometimes, not surprisingly, how a loving God can allow such suffering. The question arises everywhere, not only in the Horn of Africa but in other places where I have worked—Sudan, Indonesia, Afghanistan, Central America and the war-torn Balkans, to name just a few.

To be honest, the question has never meant as much to me as has the privilege of seeing so many people like my Kenyan brothers and sisters simply doing their jobs, often unheralded, as they work to alleviate that suffering. Kenya was far from the worst situation I have seen, but it was serious enough, and through years of travel guided by such inspirational figures, my own sense of faith has deepened because I know they, as the church's representatives and workers, are struggling in the vineyards, are present and will continue to be present when others have left Kenya and other places. That is where God is, I tell people. And if these humanitarian efforts are part of a web of relationships undergirded by 2,000 years of tradition and history, all the better.

Often this work is incremental, partial and imperfect—like the aid delivery in Haiti that went awry. Aid groups need to work to minimize such failures, of course. But as someone who with age has become less open to “grand


schemes” and is more fully aware of life's limits and snares, I believe we should not be afraid of partial or imperfect efforts, even as we strive always to do our best, our most excellent work.

We have guideposts for this. Among my colleagues at C.W.S., there is a popular prayer that is often attributed to one of my clerical heroes, the martyred Archbishop Oscar Romero, though it was in fact composed by Bishop Kenneth Untener of Saginaw, Mich. It speaks about the ways in which our works are always incomplete and that “the kingdom always lies beyond us”:

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest. We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own.

Workers, indeed, imperfect as the institutions we work for. But we are present, doing our best and, we hope, doing some good in the world, however partial. **A**

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Ignatius' Way

A new path for pilgrims, trekkers and cyclists

BY CHRIS LOWNY

The monastery of Montserrat, tucked into jagged, mile-high rock formations, is an hour's drive from downtown Barcelona but was a world away to 30 pilgrims who huddled there one recent Saturday morning.

Some had passed the entire night in prayerful vigil beside "La Moreneta," the Black Madonna of Montserrat, the same icon before which Ignatius of Loyola had passed an all-night vigil, 490 years before, after surrendering his sword as an offering symbolizing his turn to a new way of life.

Others had kept vigil from 10 p.m. to 1 a.m., then retreated to a hostel for a few hours' sleep before the full group reconvened for our Saturday venture: a 14-mile hike from Montserrat to Manresa, recreating the same trek Ignatius himself made after his vigil. Having eaten a light breakfast, we groggy pilgrims looked out over a cloud-covered valley. The overcast enshrouded suburban roadways and other traces of modernity and created a vista not unlike what Ignatius himself might have scanned.

We started downhill just as the first tourist busses from Barcelona began belching their way into Montserrat's parking lots. Our motley crew included a few Jesuits, homemakers, teachers, medical doctors, lawyers and a former judge. Most were Catalans from

the region surrounding Barcelona; a handful were Basques, like Ignatius himself; the Americas were represented by a doctor from Uruguay and myself, a former investment banker from the United States. Like all prudent trekkers, we carried water bottles, trail mix and sun screen. But we also carried something that distinguished this trek: a bottle of orange paint. Every once in a while one of us would ceremoniously paint a bright orange arrow on the pavement or a utility pole. We were sending signals to future generations: "Keep going, fellow pilgrim. You're on the right path! Follow these arrows and you will soon reach Manresa."

For we were not only commemorating Ignatius' journey of 500 years before; we were inaugurating a practice we hope will continue five centuries hence: the Camino Ignaciano—the Ignatian Way, a new walking and cycling trail from Loyola to Montserrat and Manresa.

Following Ignatius

The historical backdrop to the new pilgrim trail will be well known to Jesuits and their friends. Ignatius the soldier-courtier suffered a battle injury in Pamplona in 1521 and underwent a profound conversion while recuperating at home in

Loyola. He resolved to travel to the Holy Land as a pilgrim and set off in early 1522. As his first objective he journeyed some 400 miles to Montserrat, where he conducted his all-night vigil. He then detoured to the nearby town of Manresa and spent the better part of a year there, eventually enjoying profound mystical illuminations and conceiving the rudiments of his Spiritual Exercises. Published in hundreds of editions in dozens of languages, the Exercises remain the well-spring of Jesuit spirituality.

Ignatius' pilgrimage, then, was a walk that changed history, his own and

Along the trail in Alda, Spain



CHRIS LOWNY, part of the *Camino Ignaciano* project team, is author of *Heroic Leadership: Best Practices from a 450-Year-Old Company That Changed the World*.



Near the Arantzazu Sanctuary

that of the church and of humanity. Although the story of his pilgrimage may be well-known, the route he trekked has languished in obscurity. “Ignatian pilgrimages” sometimes visit highlights along the route by bus. But virtually no one attempts to trace Ignatius’ complete route.

Why should anyone bother? After all, though the route passes historical and natural wonders like the Basque country’s verdant mountains and Zaragoza’s striking blend of Roman, Islamic and medieval Christian culture, it also demands wearying climbs to the mountain sanctuaries of Zumarraga and Arantzazu, not to mention a passage through Los Monegros, Europe’s most desert-like landscape. Is the journey worth the effort?

The best person to answer that question is someone who actually did it, like Terry Howard, an Irish Jesuit who works in Ulster, who summed up his trek this way: “No amount of information, data or reading can sub-

stitute for the sheer experience of following in Ignatius’ footsteps, alone and on foot. It fulfilled a lifelong desire.” Not that it was all pleasant. Terry covered the route in about a month during two separate treks, got lost more than once, was once mistaken for a vagrant and lost 15 kilograms along the way. But the weight lost was well worth what he found: “I developed a better sense of Ignatius. I actually felt I was walking with Ignatius, seeing the sights and views he saw along the same route he took, able to explain to him how things looked today, as if I were his eyes on a memory from his past, knowing he’d connect directly.”

A New Camino

With the 500th anniversary of Ignatius’ famous walk exactly one decade away, a small core team committed themselves to developing the Camino Ignaciano as a vibrant pilgrimage route. Over a period of months, three Spanish Jesuits and I

independently cycled, walked, drove and Google-mapped Ignatius’ likely route. We were excited to discover that we could stitch together most of an Ignatian Camino using already-existing walking trails from branches of the venerable Camino Santiago.

With the endorsement of the superiors of the Jesuit provinces of Spain, the team has logged significant progress. José Luis Iriberri, a Catalan Jesuit, led the overall effort with dedication and creative flair. Over a period of months, the team mapped the full route and divided it into 27 daily walking segments, catalogued hostels and services along the way and uploaded the information in five languages to a Web site. A guidebook will be published in 2013.

The Camino Web site includes daily reflections based on the Spiritual Exercises, so pilgrims can draw on this resource as they journey. As Father Iriberri put it: “On the one hand, we’re creatively reaching out to increasingly

secularized developed world people who are 'seeking' something but need a fresh, new invitation to spirituality. And, at the same time, the camino is completely faithful to our Jesuit tradition and will appeal to devoutly practicing Catholics."

Juan José Etxeberria, S.J., superior of the Loyola Province, spoke of the new camino as an attempt to offer a "transformational experience to modern men and women" by sharing with them "the very best that the Society of Jesus has to offer: Ignatian spirituality."

Early signs are promising. During

events that led up to Spain's 2011 World Youth Day, Michael Pastor, S.J., accompanied an international group on a trial-run pilgrimage from Loyola to Navarrete, roughly the first quarter of the Ignatian Camino. "Language differences divided the group," said Pastor, "but they bonded through the sheer physical effort and through Ignatian spirituality. When we reached the end of our short pilgrimage, they wished they could have gone farther together."

Jaime Badiola, S.J., a member of the core team, anticipates many such opportunities with high school or uni-

versity students: "The camino can be a fantastic opportunity for student groups: they will grow in solidarity while traveling with each other, confront their own resistance or weakness, be exposed in a fresh way to the life and spirituality of founder Ignatius, and, not least, have fun along the way!" He imagines that the global Jesuit family might take advantage of this new resource.

Still, the team members are also quick to stress that the Ignatian Camino, as Father Etxeberria put it, is a "*camino de todos and para todos*"—"everyone's camino." The devoutly spiritual are welcome, but so are long-distance hikers looking for physical challenge or automobile tourists who want a fascinating, weeklong cultural vacation, visiting places they heard about in their Jesuit school or parish and following a route that encapsulates much of Spain's remarkable history, from pre-Roman through Islamic and modern times.

The project team, of which I am a member, hopes that by 2022, the anniversary of Ignatius' pilgrimage, the Camino Ignaciano will be a widespread, vibrant tradition. But we are not distracted by these prospects or by the enthusiastic early response. With the route still in its infancy, much work remains. The world outside Spain has not yet heard of the camino, so marketing is a priority. And even as we have welcomed the initial burst of requests for information, the members, all volunteers, wonder how to find the time and money for follow-up.

Some tasks will only be accomplished one step at a time: Father Iriberri has painstakingly plotted GPS coordinates during a recent trek, creating an easy-to-follow electronic trail for pilgrims with smartphones. Other volunteers are marking the camino the old-fashioned way, with a paint brush in one hand and orange paint in the other, completing a trail of arrows along this 400-mile walk that changed history. **A**

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The Godfather

Would my new role involve too much responsibility?

BY BRIAN HARPER

There are a few sure things in the life of an international volunteer. One is routinely experiencing the death of preconceived notions about “normalcy.” For instance, I occasionally get the feeling some of the teachers at the high school where I work find it strange that I never wear exercise pants to school. Another is the frequency of disease. I will say I have not experienced so little control over what comes out of my body and when it chooses to do so since I was a toddler.

And you can definitely count on delusions of grandeur. Though unfailingly well-intentioned, we volunteers seem to operate under the notion that our communities need nothing more than the fresh-water well or activity center only we can provide.

One of the true blessings in my first year of service in the Peruvian Andes is that the Jesuit Volunteer Corps tries to rid us of such fantasies. Time and again, J.V.C. trainers have reiterated that our goal is to accompany the people of our host culture, allowing them to change our lives rather than assuming we know what needs to change in theirs.

As clear as this lesson has been made, it is one that bears relearning. My instinct is to measure success by how many projects I steer to completion or how many students I teach to say, “My name is Gustavo; I am 12.”

BRIAN HARPER graduated from Marquette University in 2011 and now works with the Jesuit Volunteer Corps in Andahuaylillas, Peru. He blogs about his travels at www.brianharperu.wordpress.com.

This overemphasis on the action part of my volunteer experience has even manifested itself in relationships. Not long ago, my Peruvian friends Nelson and Yhasmina had their first child, a beautiful boy named Nicholas.



About a month earlier, they asked me to be godfather at their baby shower.

I already knew Peruvians have godparents for a variety of purposes: baptisms, of course, but also other, more mundane rites of passage. My fellow volunteers and I once served as “hair-cut godparents,” which entailed snipping a few locks off a toddler’s head before he received his first real trim. That there could be such a thing as a baby shower godfather, then, was not surprising. But I had a hunch it would involve more than sending \$10 bills on birthdays.

Nervous about my task, I pulled Nelson aside a day or two before the party to ask what I was supposed to do. Having attended a number of Peruvian fiestas, I had nightmares of blowing my entire J.V.C. stipend on

beer for all the guests.

“Nothing,” replied Nelson. “We just want you to accompany us.”

Unsure whether Nelson’s “nothing” actually meant nothing or was code for, “You should actually do some-

thing, but it would be impolite to ask,” I baked a dessert and decided to look assiduously for any opportunity to assist on the big day.

All my Peruvian friends approach their parties with the detail-awareness of an architect and the eye of a poet, so logistically and thematically, there was very little for me to help with. Besides buying a few bottles of soda and squeezing limes to make pisco sours, Peru’s unofficial national alcoholic beverage, I felt redundant.

My only important moment came during the opening of the gifts. After Nelson and Yhasmina thanked their friends and family for coming, I spoke about how grateful I was for the honor of serving in my role. Then Nelson and Yhasmina took a present each and, before ripping off the wrapping

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/CHRIS CURTIS



Trent
What Happened at the Council

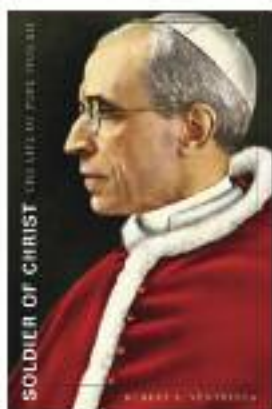
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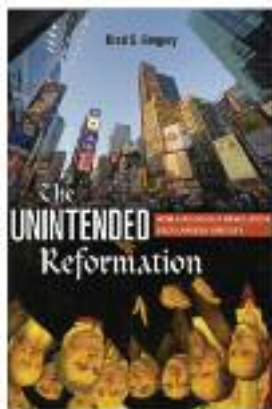


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paper, speculated about what the gift was. If they guessed incorrectly, I had to drink pisco sours from a giant baby bottle.

Nelson and Yhasmina proved to have prophetic deductive powers, so eventually the guests decided they should also estimate the color and quantity of each product. Once these changes in the rules were implemented, I drank a lot.

Overall, the party was a hit. Nelson and Yhasmina received enough diapers to delay toilet training for a while, and I staged a dance-off with Yhasmina's 6-year-old nephew. Moreover, I realized Nelson had been sincere when he said the only thing he expected was my presence. All my anxiety about what I should contribute or whether I could afford to be a proper godfather had been for naught. Nelson clearly understood the spirit of accompaniment better than I did.

A North American Jesuit who works in Peru touched on this theme during a recent retreat I made. "The only thing you'll leave with these people," he said, "is the quality of person you are."

Coming from an accomplishment-oriented U.S. culture, it is natural for me to look for concrete outcomes in work and relationships. "What do you do?" is one of the first questions someone from the United States asks when meeting a new person. It makes sense that I want to respond by talking about tangible achievements like starting a guitar class and teaching English.

But if any of the people I know in Peru remember me 20 years from now, it will not be because I organized a used-clothing sale or taught them how to say "orange." Rather, it will be a reflection of the kind of person I was. Similarly, more than any work goals I realize during my two years in Peru, I will leave having learned from Nelson and other friends that who you are is far more important than what you do. **A**

IDEAS | JAY PARINI

LISTENING FOR GOD IN UNUSUAL PLACES

The unorthodox faith of Robert Frost

Thirty years ago, I met Robert Frost's close friend, Rabbi Victor Reichert, who lived only a mile down the hill from the poet in Ripton, Vt. Reichert told me about the time Frost came to his synagogue in Cincinnati. There Frost delivered a passionate sermon, explaining to the crowd that he had no time for "irreligion." He considered Scripture a live, ongoing revelation, and he considered himself a mouthpiece for the word. In describing this, Reichert seized my wrist, squeezed it and said: "I hear the voice of God in his poems. He was deeply spiritual. He was listening to God."

Fifty years after Frost's death, it is still hard to say exactly what sort of divine power Frost was listening to. The poet cannot easily be placed on the religious spectrum, nor can his lifelong quarrels with God be easily categorized. But any reader of Frost's poems or observer of his public statements will know that he thought deeply about theological matters, and he wondered aloud about the relations between human beings and God. In 1947 he described himself in a letter to an old friend, G. R. Elliott, as "an orthodox Old Testament, original Christian," but he claimed that his

approach to the New Testament "is rather through Jerusalem than through Rome or Canterbury."

The word lived in Frost, as a poet and teacher. But he shifted through many different views of what this word meant and how it should be expressed by him throughout his ongoing struggle to come to terms with the meaning of God. The struggle moved through



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his reading, which involved the Bible, Augustine, Aquinas, Pascal and Einstein. In his late poem “Kitty Hawk,” he claimed that his ultimate goal as a poet was “to say spirit in terms of matter and matter in terms of spirit,” a point of view that confirms his incarnational aesthetic.

Frost’s mother, Isabelle Moody Frost, was a Scot, and she was a devout follower of Emanuel Swedenborg. Swedenborg was a Christian mystic who began life as a scientist and, on Easter Day 1774, began to experience visions. One of his most important

ideas was that of correspondence. That is, he believed that a relation existed between the material and spiritual worlds. Every aspect of nature revealed some aspect of divine providence. He preached the union of faith and charity in a Christian’s life, arguing that both were necessary for salvation. Mrs. Frost took her young son to a church founded

on Swedenborg’s principles, and he absorbed a mystical sense of the world, an understanding of the universe that

was founded on the idea that everything we see is a foretaste of things to come and that one must listen for the voice of God in unusual places, such as the wind in the trees or the ripples of lake water against the shore.

It should be noted that Frost’s father, William Prescott Frost, was a severe skeptic and a Harvard-educated journalist who worked on a newspaper in San Francisco, where Frost was born. William Frost had no time for religion, and young Robert would have had his father’s voice in his head long after the elder Frost’s death, when his son was only 11. One certainly hears a wry note of skepticism in Frost’s poetry. It is there in his wonderful sonnet, “Design,” which is a meditation on St. Thomas Aquinas, who argued that the design of the universe was itself an argument for God’s existence. “What but design of darkness to appall,” Frost wrote, noting that everywhere in nature one found aberrations, dif-

ficulties, harsh things. The sonnet is very dark indeed, and it remains the centerpiece in a bleak array of poems that reflect the poet in a somber mood. Reading poems like “Desert Places,” “Acquainted With the Night” or “The

Most of It,” one can hardly doubt that Frost plumbed the deepest levels of depression.

I suspect that he was a manic-depressive, although that is hardly a professional diagnosis. He would sometimes walk for hours, chattering madly to anyone who walked alongside. He sometimes went to bed for days on end, keeping his shades drawn. He could spend weeks alone in his cabin in Ripton, hesitant to see anyone. Rabbi Reichert and several close friends of Frost told me that the poet was always mercurial, drawn either to intense socializing or austere solitude, with very little middle ground. He defined poetry as “a momentary stay against confusion,” suggesting that it was only in the clarity of the poem itself that he found solace, clarity and grounding.

Frost spent a lot of time reading Ralph Waldo Emerson, the great American essayist, who remains for me a core religious writer. Like Swedenborg, whom he read closely throughout his life, Emerson believed in deep correspondence between the natural world and the spiritual world. “Nature is the symbol of spirit,” he wrote in his essay “Nature,” one of the central texts of American religious thinking. Frost never lost interest in Emerson, and he returned to his essays throughout his life, rereading them, allowing Emerson’s philosophy of life to seep into his poetry.

Speaking to his friend Lawrance Thompson in 1948, Frost commented on his poetry in relation to God: “It might be an expression of the hope I have that my offering of verse on the altar may be acceptable in His sight

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MARY OF SORROWS

We do not in our country
 niche you at corners,
 crossroads, highway shrines.

But in Karen’s face as she talks of her son
 whose pain will not redeem the world;
 as Marguerita, whose eldest will not
 survive her; in Sylvie, whose child
 learned all his letters in his second year
 and by age four had been condemned
 to mute incomprehension,
 you appear.

Son-bearer,
 mother of mothers,
 we know we cannot be spared;
 help us bear our sorrows
 and the sorrows of our children.
 Help us bear.

DIANE VREULS

DIANE VREULS has published a book of poems, a novel, a collection of short stories and a children’s picture book. She lives in Oberlin, Ohio.

Whoever He is. Tell them I Am, Jehovah said." There was, indeed, a sacramental aura in his work from beginning to end, and one cannot read a poem like "Directive," his last great poem, without noting his allusion to St. Mark near the end. In it, the poet wanders into the woods to seek revelation—a typical scenario in a Frost poem. In this instance, he happens upon the ruins of an old farmhouse, with a stream—"Too lofty and original to rage"—running nearby. There he finds a children's playhouse, with a little goblet that reminds him of the Holy Grail. Frost describes the goblet as like one "Under a spell so the wrong ones can't find it,/ So can't get saved, as Saint Mark says they mustn't./ Here are your waters and your watering place./ Drink and be whole again beyond confusion."

St. Mark was commenting on the fact that Jesus spoke in parables, which had the effect of keeping out those, in some instances, who had yet to believe. Faith, in other words, was essential for understanding. One believes in order to understand, as Augustine (and Anselm) suggested, not the other way around.

Frost's own poetry was "too lofty and original to rage." Readers are baptized in the Jordan River of his poetry, where they drink and feel "whole again beyond confusion." This is, in my view, sacramental poetry of a high order. It is beautiful and true, but it is also complicated, even thorny. The faith of Robert Frost was nothing straightforward. He was not a simple Christian, but his faith was real, it was profound, and pointed readers in directions where they might find solace as well as understanding, where they would find their beliefs challenged, where they find answers as well as questions.

JAY PARINI, a poet and novelist, is the author of *Robert Frost: A Life* (Henry Holt) and *Jesus: The Human Face of God* (Houghton Mifflin, forthcoming in December 2013).



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MARY ANN DONOVAN

US AGAINST THEM

THE MYTH OF PERSECUTION How Early Christians Invented a Story of Martyrdom

By Candida Moss
HarperOne. 320p \$25.99

Martyrdom means giving one's life for adherence to a cause, most especially for adherence to one's religious faith. Historically it has not uncommonly been a consequence of religious persecution. Christians did indeed suffer periods of severe persecution in the first three centuries, and many gave their lives. But contrary to what Candida Moss terms "the martyrdom myth," this persecution was neither constant nor everywhere during this period (pace Justin, Tertullian and Eusebius of Caesarea). In fact, in the latter part of the third century, Christians enjoyed over 40 years of peace. Remarking about their situation in this period, Moss writes:

They may have been disliked, but they were again able to climb the social ladder, accumulate wealth, build churches, and assemble in full view of everyone. Once again, Christians weren't hiding in catacombs; they were out in the open.

But it also remains true, as she states, that "the dislike of Christians was fairly widespread, and some Christians were in fact put to death by Romans merely for being Christians."

Moss addresses the underlying

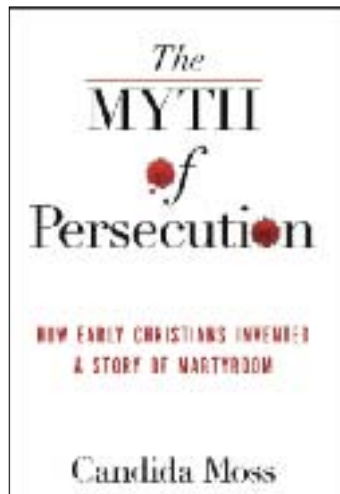
question, "Why did the Romans dislike Christians?" She points to the connection between persecution of Christians and the need of the empire for political and environmental stability. The society presumed "an intimate connection between the gods, the success of the Roman Empire, and the social order." Christian refusal to participate in the imperial cult was seen as subversive. Moss notes: "Even though

religion was everywhere, there was an understanding that what we would now call religious sensibilities should not interfere with political duties or social order."

If in fact the first three centuries of this era did not constitute a period of unrelenting persecution, it is necessary to consider the roots of this common

portrayal of it. Not surprisingly, Moss turns to the works of Eusebius of Caesarea. She writes: "Eusebius uses the history of the martyrs as a means of drawing battle lines for the established church orthodoxy against heresy." In so doing, Eusebius "lays the groundwork for a dangerous idea: that those who disagree with us are the same as those who persecute us and that even in periods of peace the church is always under attack."

A problem with the Eusebius approach is that it paints an "us and them" picture: the party of God versus the party of Satan. Moss points out that as heirs to the early church, some Christians today "continue to use the claimed experience of persecution to justify our attacks on others and legitimize our opinions." Those who are attacked need to defend themselves.



This positions Christians as fighters. Our author identifies this stance as “the dangerous legacy of the martyrdom complex.” In an excellent summary paragraph she writes:

This, then, is the problem with defining oneself as part of a persecuted group. Persecution is not about dialogue. The response to being “under attack” and “persecuted” is to fight and resist. You cannot collaborate with someone who is persecuting you for any logical reason. You have to defend yourself. When modern political and religious debates morph into rhetorical holy war, the same thing happens: we have to fight those who disagree with us. There can be no compromise and no common ground. It is because persecution is, by definition, unjust. It is not about disagreement; it is about an irrational and unjustified hatred. Why would you even try to reason with those who are persecuting you?

What then is her suggestion? The Christian ought ask: “How would the church look different if we put aside the idea that we are, by definition, persecuted?” Moss points out that in the political and religious areas, doing so would enable us to move from polarized positions to common ground. Martyrs like Justin and Tertullian demonstrate how to seek such common ground with their attackers. Abandoning polemic may “force us to empathize with the economic, political, and social realities that engender real violence against Christians.” The point is to embrace the martyrs’ virtues and not the false history in which so many of their stories are couched.

MARY ANN DONOVAN, S.C., is professor emeritus of church history and spirituality at the Jesuit School of Theology, Berkeley, Calif.

The Catholic Imagination
Practical Theology for the Liturgical Year
 by SKYA ABBATE

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LETTERS

Clarify 'Entitlement'

"Getting to Work," by Patricia Ranft (2/18), does a good job puncturing the hoary myth that labor is punishment for expulsion from biblical paradise—the wages of sin. Professor Ranft is convincing in laying out "the theology of work" but less so in applying it to public policy. Legislated programs for the poor do not necessarily equate to "an entitlement society," any more than "the 47 percent" all sponge on the rest of us or, more pointedly, the upper 1 or 2 percent.

Professor Ranft is not at all clear as to what programs constitute her "entitlement society," although she seems to suggest that social security is a prime example. Varieties of work preclude any hard and fast conclusions about when to leave one's vocation. Fiscal palliatives tend to shift societal costs without eliminating them—facts obscured

in ordinary political discourse. But retirees who have paid into the Social Security system throughout their working lives are, indeed, "entitled" to a return on that investment. Demographics dictate adjustments over time. Insurance costs for unemployment forestall other societal costs.

"Material support alone does not bring happiness," writes Professor Ranft. No argument. But let's be clear about the actions of government that separate "workforce participation from material support." "Entitlement" is a loaded word in politics and should be examined for its accuracy before being used. It can be employed to skip over questions like who pays, who paid and what other costs are avoided.

EDWARD GREANEY

Kailua, Hawaii

Teachers Wanted

Having spent a lengthy career in the

field of teacher education, I was immediately interested in "All Hands on Desks," by Thomas J. Healey, John Eriksen and B. J. Cassin (2/4), about the serious problems in the management of Catholic schools today. In proposing improvements, including school financing, we do not want to lose sight of the invaluable service to the church that Catholic schools have provided historically and even today.

Absent the contributed services of many consecrated religious, which were available in the past, teacher salaries are responsible for a significant segment of the financial plight of Catholic schools today. I visualize a program, suggested in part by Teach for America and the Alliance for Catholic Education program at Notre Dame, designed to provide teachers for schools in depressed locations. What about annually recruiting a cadre of high-achieving Catholic grad-

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uates of private and public colleges with state teacher certification to teach for two years in Catholic schools at a significantly reduced salary?

While some Catholic college graduates are going abroad today as short-term lay missionaries, some newly minted Catholic teachers could make an important contribution to the church in the United States, reviving a tradition of service to Catholic schools while personally gaining valuable experience for their continuing careers in teaching.

ELIZABETH STELTENPOHL
New York, N.Y.

Ecumenical Experience

"By the Book," by Ronald D. Witherup, S.S. (2/4), correctly emphasizes how important Bible study is, or should be, for Catholics. But some attention should also be given to the ecumenical dimensions of the subject.

In the retirement community where I live, I have been attending a weekly Bible study led by the pastor of a nearby Presbyterian church. As a participant, I jokingly refer to myself as the "token papist" in the group. The materials provided are Protestant, but I of course use my own Bible.

There have been some conflicts over doctrine, especially the role of the Virgin Mary in the mystery of salvation, but I welcome the opportunity to explain such an important part of my faith. Further discussions have led to greater mutual understanding of central teachings, like the consequences of original sin.

Studying the Bible with non-Catholics requires prudence and patience as well as fidelity to Catholic principles of exegesis. But I have not

felt "enticed" into a spiritually dangerous experience. Quite the contrary. The "Decree on Ecumenism" of Vatican II calls for unity among Christians and advises us to try to understand the outlook of those who are not Catholic. Studying the Bible together furthers those objectives.

CORNELIUS F. MURPHY JR.
Valencia, Pa.

Church and Climate

Re "Hot Air," by Kyle Kramer (1/21): *The Carbon Crunch*, by Dieter Helm, does not address solutions for global climate change but merely reinforces the false options put before us by the coal, oil and gas industries. Mr. Helm blames climate change primarily on the burning of coal in Asia, which he sees as inescapable. He advocates coal's replacement with hydrofracked methane gas. He sees no hope that renewable sources of electricity can meet energy demands. He criticizes international attempts to reduce carbon usage and to develop efficiency in energy use.

I am surprised that Mr. Kramer fails to mention how the Catholic

teaching of Pope Benedict XVI and the U.S. bishops on climate change, energy and international cooperation contradicts the statements by Mr. Helm. Warning of the effects of climate change upon future generations and the poor, the church has called upon industrialized nations to develop renewable energy and sustainable economies. The church highlights our moral duty to pursue this course and urges the involvement of international organizations to attain this goal.

Even Mr. Helm's solution to climate change—a carbon tax—has been supported by ExxonMobil. This is because if only carbon is counted, methane emissions from hydrofracking can continue uncontrolled. In the meantime, the coal industry will maintain its profits by shipping its product to Asia. The fossil fuel companies will then make massive profits at the expense of God's earth.

I hope that **America** will soon review a book on how renewable energy and sustainable communities dovetail with the church's social teachings.

ROBERT M. CIESIELSKI
Cheektowaga, N.Y.

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WITHOUT GUILE



"But isn't it more important to learn how to be a decent human being?"

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CARTOON BY HARLEY SCHWADRON

Lost and Found

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT (C), MARCH 10, 2013

Readings: Jos 5:9-12; Ps 34:2-7; 2 Cor 5:17-21; Lk 15:1-32

"Whoever is in Christ is a new creation" (2 Cor 5:17)

Is it necessary to be brought low in order to grasp the love that God is always offering to us? No; it is not necessary that we hit rock bottom in worldly terms, but it is necessary to have grasped the spiritual reality that only with God is life the celebration of joy that was intended for us.

The parable of the two sons suggests that there is more than one way to wander away from God. In one of these ways the shock of God's absence comes like a revelatory bolt in the midst of suffering and loneliness. In the other the nearness of God is used to shield the distance and separation we have created from God's will for us. However we recognize the need to return to God, at the heart of our initiation into the church is the recognition that there is nothing we need more than the love of God, who gave his son, and "for our sake...made him to be sin who did not know sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him."

There is a false sophistication, manifested as ironic detachment or plain old cynicism, that sees human life as misery and unrelenting pain. But why is suffering more real than the love of God, which Jesus describes in the parable? Paul "implores us" to be "reconciled to Christ," to be a "new creation."

This simple description that Paul uses to describe the Christian life,

"new creation," explodes from the page. The way of being in the world changes when new creation emerges, even if the world seems to be the same. Those in love understand Paul's formulation intimately: When in love, the world changes through the lover's transformation. When you are in love with Christ, there is a new creation.

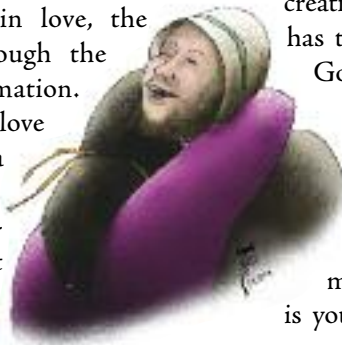
It is not perspective alone that changes, however; it is the person who changes in light of God's love. It is true that one can wander from God's love, seek one's own path, see the world from the other side, and the entire time feel that one is still walking at God's side. This is the conundrum at the heart of Jesus' parable of the two sons. The one son, the younger, wanders far from the father, determined to assert his independence and do what he chooses with his inheritance. The other, the older son, stays close to his father, though infuriated by his own seeming subservience and, as it turns out, envious of his brother.

The one who wandered far off is brought low by his choices and finds himself humiliated by his circumstances. He vows to return home to serve as a servant in his father's home. But before he can even see his father, "while he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion."

The party was soon to begin when

the older son, who had stayed home, heard about it. This son "became angry," and his father pleaded with him to no avail. The older son had already created a scenario in which his brother had "swallowed up your property with prostitutes" and now is being given a celebration.

For the person who is consciously drawing near to God for the first time, there can be a jolt of recognition on hearing this story. God has always been present, waiting for me. New creation is home. For the one who has turned from God, by taking God's presence and grace for granted, there must be an awakening, an acceptance that new creation is for all, both near and far: "My son, you are here with me always; everything I have is yours. But now we must cele-



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- How do I live out my new creation?
- How am I near to God or far from God?
- How do I rejoice in the presence of God?

brate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found."

The church calls out to those both near and far on behalf of a God whose compassion knows no bounds, as "ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." Come home, for the first time, or the thousandth time, because at the core of human existence is not cynicism but love, which stakes its claim on the son who reached out for all of us from the cross.

JOHN W. MARTENS

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

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Morning Keynote - English - Dr. Robert Wicks

STREAMS OF CONTENTMENT - Enjoying and Sharing an Even Richer Compassionate Life

With his signature mix of storytelling, spirituality and psychological wisdom, author Dr. Robert Wicks offers information that can be immediately integrated into how you approach your own life and share it with others. Dr. Wicks is a professor at Loyola University, Md., and has published over 40 books for the professional and general public.



Afternoon Keynote - English - Lee Nagel

RIVERS OF ENGAGEMENT - Creating a Legacy by Living our Beliefs through Actions

Believing that "we are God's people," Lee Nagel, a theater enthusiast, seems to act out his message that the "Lord is good and His love endures forever" rather than just speak it. Nagel currently serves as the Executive Director of the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership in Washington, D.C.



Spanish Keynote - Rev. Bruce Nield, C.S.P.

THE LATINO COMMUNITY: PROVIDENTIAL INSTRUMENT FOR THE NEW EVANGELIZATION

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