

TOM DEIGNAN ON READING THE IRISH

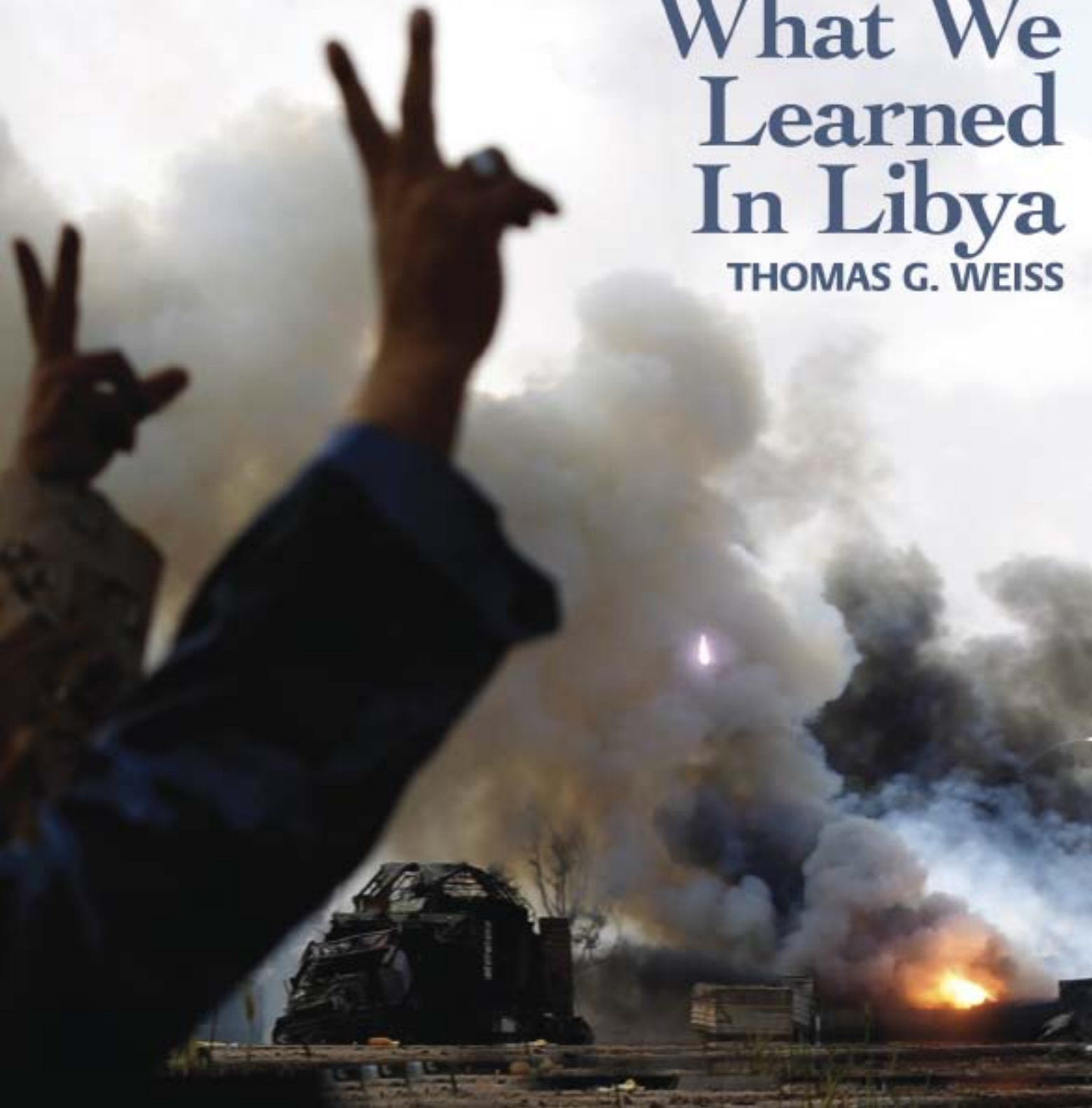
# America

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## What We Learned In Libya

THOMAS G. WEISS



# OF MANY THINGS

**A**cross the years I have thought of myself as a settler, not a pioneer. While I inhabited challenging positions in Jesuit higher education, the anchor never swayed far from the bank. I love international travel, always to come back to the security of my Midwestern roots and zip code. I have traveled and studied on six continents and have come to believe Martin Buber's observation, "All journeys have secret destinations of which the traveler is unaware." My recent migration to Midtown Manhattan is no exception.

This is not meant to be a "travels with Johnnie" piece but rather validation that opening new doors and doing new things keeps us curious and that curiosity keeps leading us down new paths.

One such experience was the December holiday season of Christmas and Hanukkah. It is a very festive time in New York City, when Christmas trees and menorahs vie for attention and sometimes in very interesting combinations and juxtapositions—like a menorah on top of a Christmas tree or little trees replacing candles in the menorah. I saw it all! I shared this season with thousands of tourists, who moved along Fifth Avenue like schools of salmon navigating locks.

The night they lighted the Rockefeller Center Christmas tree amid tens of thousands of cheering onlookers, I walked home with great peacefulness, having discovered a new sense of belonging; that great tree was for everyone regardless of state or status. Back in my room, I spotted my menorah, a gift from generous Jewish friends. I lit a candle. And as I watched the flame dance across the window, casting shadows on the walls, friendships across the years embraced me. The season took on a dimension I did not plan or expect, a clear proof that God hides things by putting them all around us.

Then there is my parish experience. You all know Jesuits like to have a bully pulpit on the weekends. So I went in

search of such a space. I found a home at a small, neo-Georgian church with a long-standing music program and a reputation for being a church of "singers." They happen to sponsor a concert series of "music before 1800," so I knew Corpus Christi Parish was home!

My first service was an extraordinary experience for me. The congregation was so diverse: Haitian, African-American, Caribbean, Italian and Irish, neighbors, Columbia University students and faculty. It was a treasure chest of life and livelihood. And could they sing, and, indeed, did they sing! Such a rich gathering of color and complexion I have not witnessed since my San Francisco days. It was a pronounced sign of the church universal, a gathering that spoke, or rather sang loudly of Eucharist. That morning on the train home, I felt a deep sense of gratitude for my priesthood and those who welcomed it. Again, God hides things by putting them all around us.

Another place God hides things is in the density of cities. My previous digs had an expansive view of the Missouri River and an Iowa horizon. My present room has five windows, all with the same view: brick walls—of various shades, of course. An occasional shard of sunshine invades my russet canyon, much to the delight of my philodendron. Having never experienced such an inscape, my curiosity does engage my imagination. Who lives behind those red drapes; why is that television set on 24/7; and what is with having Christmas lights in March? What do they think looking my way? What do they make of the dim light that marks my morning prayer time? As I glance at shadowed bricks and casements, I recall that the history of the Christian tradition is inexorably linked to urban society. St. Ignatius loved the great cities of Europe. I suspect he knew what I am discovering, that God hides things all around us. **JOHN P. SCHLEGEL, S.J.**

# America

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*Cover:* Rebel fighters gesture in front of burning vehicles belonging to forces of the Libyan leader Muammar el-Qaddafi after an airstrike by coalition forces near Benghazi, Libya, in March 2011. CNS photo/Goran Tomasevic, Reuters.

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A video pilgrimage to the **Basilica of St. Patrick's Old Cathedral** in New York. Plus, Thomas G. Weiss discusses the **responsibility to protect** doctrine on our podcast. All at [americamagazine.org](http://americamagazine.org).



### Minutes to Midnight

The famous doomsday clock of the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists moved ahead last January to five minutes before midnight. With the news on Feb. 28 that the Israelis are ready to attack Iran, in defiance of the United States, in order to dissuade it from developing a nuclear weapon, there is reason to move the minute hand even closer to midnight. The farthest the clock has been from midnight was 17 minutes in 1991, after the signing of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty between the United States and the Soviet Union. The closest was two minutes before midnight in 1953, when both powers tested thermonuclear weapons.

Both Iran and Israel bear responsibility for the current crisis. The Iranian regime deserves considerable blame for its refusal to collaborate with the International Atomic Energy Agency and for its overt anti-Semitism. But the Obama administration is well advised to counsel the Israelis that a preventive attack would be no more than a short-term solution and that the unpredictable consequences of a bombing campaign could be disastrous. Israelis and Jews everywhere will be vulnerable to retaliation, as well as Americans. Oil prices, already high, would climb further, resulting in a severe shock to the world economy. A nuclear arms race could also take off in the Middle East. Finally, an attack would also open an opportunity for the black market in nuclear technology to reappear. Israel and Iran both need to step back from the brink.

The best hope for Israel and for the world is vigorous renewal of efforts at nonproliferation, including a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East. Israel, an undeclared nuclear power, will not like that. But an Israel-Iran conflict has the makings of a Samson-like scenario, in which the wrathful giant brings the roof down on all. The Iran-Israel crisis constitutes “an existential threat” not just for Israel but for much of the world.

### Afghanistan Burning

United States involvement in Afghanistan is at an end. Even if troop withdrawal continues as planned and joint operations between international and Afghan forces still take place, the thoughtless burning of Korans at Bagram Air Force Base and the ensuing rioting and killing of Americans reveal that the protracted U.S. stay in Afghanistan has been a failure. U.S. forces have failed to appreciate Afghans’ Muslim sensibilities, and the Afghans are past the point of tolerating offenses as the deeds of a

well-meaning but awkward friend. What’s more, the security institutions we tried to build have been penetrated by the Taliban and other Afghans who are now alienated from us. Like the British and the Russians before us, we will inevitably leave Afghanistan to sort out its own problems.

Post-mortems will have to be written by those closer to the scene than we are. But they will need to be probing, because continued disorder in Southwest and Central Asia will be a problem for the world. Some deterrent and discreet military options will have to be devised to prevent Afghanistan from becoming a harbor for global terrorism. But Afghanistan and its neighbors, India, China and Pakistan, will need to muddle through to the future with minimum involvement from the United States. In the meantime, the United States must consider whether the military is a suitable tool for dealing with such problems, or if in the years ahead it needs to invest more seriously in soft power.

### A Masterpiece of Translation

Before 2011 fades into the distance, it is worth noting the 400th anniversary of what many consider the finest single volume of writing in the English language: the King James Bible. Published in 1611 by a group of scholars charged by King James I to oversee the translation, the King James is the source of some of the best known and facund biblical passages. Thanks to the king’s men, we sing with the Psalmist, “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want” (Ps 23:1) and feel the sting of Cain’s query to God, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Gn 4:9). And is there a more elegant summation of the muddle of this mortal life than St. Paul’s phrase, “We see through a glass, darkly” (1 Cor 13:12)?

The King James Bible is often referred to as the only masterpiece written by a committee. What is less often noted is that it drew on several existing translations, including the Geneva Bible and the work of William Tyndale, who was burned at the stake because he dared to translate God’s word. Rather than begin the translation process anew, the king’s committee strove “to make a good [translation] better, or out of many good ones, one principal good one.” They chose text that was both poetic and compact and in many cases revealed new layers of meaning. Key to their success was a sense of humility: they did not privilege their abilities above those who came before them. Through their judicious editing and dedication to the larger good, they produced a prayerful work of translation that endures to this day. Theirs truly was “a labor of love” (1 Thes 1:3).

# N.Y.P.D. Blues

Achieving a proper balance between security and liberty has never been more important, or more of a challenge, than in the years following the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. Understanding the trade-offs and risks of these competing public interests requires a robust and informed public debate. Unfortunately, the U.S. public continues to operate in the dark about liberty's losses and security's gains as domestic intelligence gathering has accelerated over the last decade.

The latest evidence of the nation's unhealthy lack of discussion has come courtesy of a commendable Associated Press investigation into the surprising reach of the antiterrorism efforts of the New York Police Department. The city's "local" police department has branched out across the country and the world and within the walls of Islamic houses of worship and Muslim student groups in a vast terrorism interdiction program. It has been assisted in its antiterrorism fight with guidance and training by the Central Intelligence Agency. This collaboration may not be technically illegal—it comes close—but it clearly mocks legal restraints on domestic intelligence gathering by the agency.

In an attempt to establish an early warning network aimed at intercepting another 9/11-style attack, the police have deployed surveillance teams in nearly all the city's bordering states and even overseas. It must be acknowledged that the city's police are in an unenviable situation. It is not likely that concerns about the sanctity of privacy and the First Amendment will matter much if homegrown or international terrorists stage another attack on New York. All the same, the complete lack of public scrutiny of the N.Y.P.D. program and a shocking lack of oversight from any controlling state or federal or judicial authority is troubling.

The N.Y.P.D. has dispatched undercover officers into "suspect" neighborhoods as part of a "human mapping" program, monitoring daily life in bookstores, bars, cafes and nightclubs. The program's operating rules prohibit police from basing investigations on religion, but in practice it is hard to see how such a guideline has been or even can be respected. During a cultural moment when presumed threats to religious liberty have been frequently cited, these indisputable intrusions have persisted with little comment, as New York police dispatch informants into mosques to monitor the sermons of religious leaders across the Northeast.

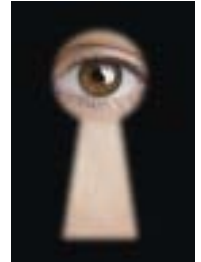
Informants and undercover officers have similarly

infiltrated Islamic student groups; police trawl Web sites and blogs, eavesdrop on private conversations in hookah bars and cafes and maintain a database recording where Muslims live and work, where they pray and how often, even where they watch sports. In this world of meta-surveillance, investigators seek to filter out small threat indicators that can lead in turn to more targeted surveillance. This paradigm completely inverts evidence-based police work, converting all members of a targeted community, bookstore, coffee shop or mosque into possible criminals and employing secret-police style practices.

In the past, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the C.I.A. and metropolitan police Red Squads infiltrated and harassed political targets—U.S. socialists, Black Panthers and antiwar activists—in the course of intrusions on civil liberties that were eventually turned back by court decrees and Congressional investigations. The current N.Y.P.D. effort could not have been undertaken, in fact, without the relaxation in 2003 of elements of the Handschu agreement. That 1985 court decree prohibited police investigation of political expression in the absence of evidence of a crime. Legislative or judicial review of the current intelligence-gathering program—and others like it that may be running silently around the country—appears warranted. Targets for such a review should include parallel efforts by the F.B.I. and the domestic consulting and intelligence franchising undertaken by the C.I.A.

Challenged last month by Columbia University students who wondered if they were still under police surveillance, Police Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly would say only, "We're going to continue to do what we have to do to protect the city." Defending the police department's efforts, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg repeated that the department's monitoring of Muslims is "legal," "appropriate" and "constitutional."

Mayor Bloomberg seems to presume that the public should simply take him at his word, and Police Commissioner Kelly offers up a rationalization that does not appear to preclude, well, anything. This is unacceptable. The U.S. public has a right to understand what is being done in the name of its security. It needs to have a voice in establishing an equilibrium between public safety and constitutional privileges clearly taken for granted for too long.



# SIGNS OF THE TIMES

## HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

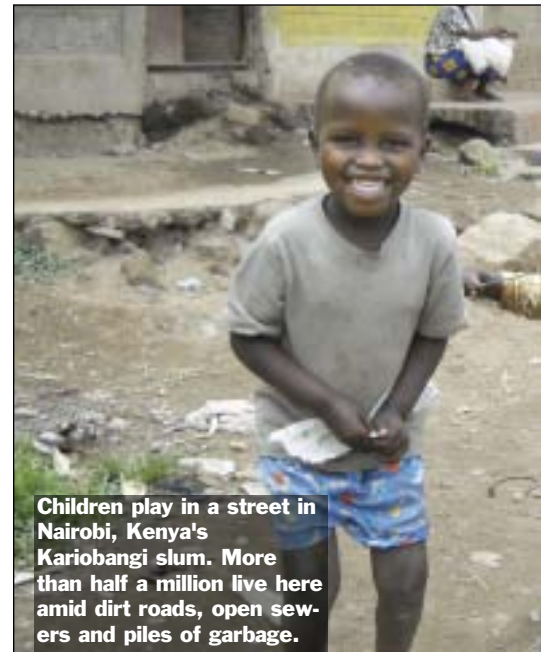
### Are We Winning the Fight Against Global Poverty?

A World Bank report offers rare good news on global poverty. According to World Bank estimates released on Feb. 29, in every region of the developing world the percentage of extreme poverty, people living on less than \$1.25 a day, and the total number of global poor declined between 2005 and 2008. World Bank researchers add that despite the recent global economic crisis and associated spikes in commodity and food costs since 2008, recent analysis reveals that global poverty overall kept falling through 2010.

In fact, preliminary estimates for 2010 indicate that the \$1.25-a-day poverty rate had fallen to under half of its 1990 value by 2010. This would mean that the first U.N. Millennium Development Goal of halving extreme poverty from its 1990 level has been achieved before the 2015 deadline. An estimated 1.29 billion people in 2008 lived below \$1.25 a day, equivalent to 22 percent of the population of the developing world. By contrast, 1.94 billion people were living in extreme poverty in 1981.

So are the improving poverty figures cause for universal celebration? Not so fast, say some global development analysts. Paul Miller, a foreign aid advisor for Catholic Relief

Services, said the numbers overall offered good news, but the problem of poverty “hasn’t improved enough that the commitments made for the devel-



Children play in a street in Nairobi, Kenya's Kariobangi slum. More than half a million live here amid dirt roads, open sewers and piles of garbage.

oping world should let up.

“Some of these ‘victories,’” he said, “are quite tentative.” And Miller is skeptical that the World Bank’s post-

## PEACEMAKING

### Progress in North Korea and Burma

While war drums continued to beat toward a possible confrontation with Iran, progress was unexpectedly made in January and February in reducing tensions with another charter member of the “axis of evil” and one “outpost of tyranny.” On Feb. 29, after a third round of direct talks with the United States, North Korea pivoted abruptly and agreed to suspend nuclear weapon and long-range missile tests, to terminate uranium enrichment efforts at its Yongbyon nuclear facility and to allow international nuclear inspectors back in after a three-year absence.

In return, the United States is offering a modest allotment of food aid and

“reaffirms that it does not have hostile intent toward” North Korea. According to David Cortright, director of policy studies at the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame, from the North Korean perspective the aid was far less significant than the establishment of direct contact with the Obama administration. “They’re not getting a lot” out of the new deal, he said. “What they are getting is a one-on-one relationship with the United States.

“What do [the North Koreans] want? They want to survive,” said Cortright, “and they want to be recognized as a normal state and have nor-

mal relations with the United States.” Initiating direct talks was a crucial, if risky, decision by the administration, one which appears to have paid off so far. But, Cortright said, after so many false starts and broken commitments, success for the administration’s initiative cannot be declared until inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency are back on the ground. And the deal is still vulnerable, he added, to the domestic shenanigans of a U.S. election cycle. “As with Iran,” he said, “no one in Congress loses politically by being tough on the bad guys.” Between now and November, he said, “there is plenty of time for Congress to work some mischief” that may torpedo ongoing talks.

According to Cortright, the reversal in Pyongyang was somewhat unexpected. The intentions of the nation’s



2008 numbers can be trusted. He said the recent cost spikes in basic commodities like rice, wheat, corn and sugar have been devastating to the

world's poorest people. He suspects a more accurate depiction of global poverty since the Great Recession awaits a more comprehensive analysis.

Still, Miller believes it is important to note progress on poverty when that is possible. Citing the positive outcomes of antimalaria campaigns and their impact on poverty reduction, he said, "There is increasing evidence that some of these targeted interventions do make a difference." Miller argues that global donors need to be confident that their antipoverty disbursements are not "going down a rat hole."

"If you made none of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, and certainly a lot of them won't be met, that would lead a lot of people to question our approaches" to fighting poverty—particularly, he worries, the efficacy of foreign aid.

Aldo Caliari, director of the Rethinking Bretton Woods project for

the Center of Concern in Washington, is worried that cheerleading reports on poverty reduction merely provide cover for first world donors to "declare victory and go home." That outcome is especially tempting as industrialized powers this year confront the kind of debt crisis better known to the developing world.

Gross poverty measures mask isolated crises, Caliari said, and vast income and wealth disparities. He adds that donor nations may focus on the report's overall positives without questioning if the world could have done more to reduce poverty. Caliari points out that during the time frame of the study, global wealth increased dramatically, but a proportional impact on poverty was not realized. That suggests, he said, that "the policies we are implementing are not necessarily the best ones because we could have done a lot better."

new leader, Kim Jong-un, were and remain unclear. But his leadership could prove more geopolitically productive than the frustrating and mercurial regime of his father, Kim Jong-il, who died in December.

Likewise, progress with Burma's military-based oligarchs was unexpected, said Cortright. The much-denounced junta appeared stronger than ever, enjoying an improving economy and normalizing relations with its Southeast Asian neighbors.

But the new Burmese leadership, perhaps with an eye to the Arab Spring, abruptly favored greater openness toward democratic expression—releasing political prisoners, renewing efforts to find peace with ethnic rebel forces and allowing the Nobel Peace Prize winner Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to participate in elections planned for

April. The Burmese moves have been matched by gestures from the U.S. State Department that could culminate in the complete restoration and normalization of relations.

Many challenges remain. For example, ethnic conflict in Kachin State has actually grown worse since Burma's President Thein Sein initiated greater acceptance of democratic processes. Still, relations seem finally to be headed in the right direction, according to Cortright. And even though Thein Sein's new policies "are not by a long shot going to bring a completely free and independent parliament," said Cortright, "they are the beginning of a process." He added that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, as with the North Koreans, has taken judicious risks for progress in Burma in reaching out to Thein Sein as his actions dictated. The

success of such diplomatic talking cures, Cortright adds, may be a good model for the United States as it seeks to avoid a confrontation with Iran.



**U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton at Shwedegon Pagoda in Yangon**

## Containing Arms Sales

The unregulated sale and transfer of weapons harms the poor and threatens peace and security around the world. That is what Archbishop Francis A. Chullikatt, the Holy See's permanent observer at the United Nations, said to a committee preparing for the July U.N. Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty on Feb. 13. Archbishop Chullikatt said the Vatican believes the aims of the arms treaty should not be only regulating the sale of conventional weapons, but also "the disarming of the international illicit market." The treaty should include small arms and light weapons, which are easy to access on the black market and harm hundreds of thousands of people each year. It should spell out the threats to human rights, humanitarian law and development posed by illegal weapons sales; reinforce international cooperation and assistance; include provisions for assisting victims of the illegal weapons trade; and be flexible enough to cover emerging weapons technologies.

## Tone Down War Talk

In a letter dated March 2 to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Bishop Richard E. Pates of Des Moines, Iowa, chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on International Justice and Peace, said there has been "an alarming escalation in rhetoric and tensions" regarding Iran's nuclear capacities. He expressed particular concern about talk of a pre-emptive strike by Israel on Iranian nuclear facilities. "Discussing or promoting military options at this time is unwise and may be counterproductive," he said. "Actual or threatened military strikes are likely to strengthen the regime in power in Iran and would

## NEWS BRIEFS

The Mayan human rights activist Rosalina Tuyuc Velásquez of Guatemala is the winner of Japan's **Niwano Peace Prize** and will receive a medal and the equivalent of \$250,000 during a ceremony in Tokyo in May. + Churches and human rights groups in Zimbabwe have issued an urgent appeal seeking information about **Paul Chizuze**, a human rights activist missing since Feb. 8. + A **suicide bomber** from the Islamist militant group Boko Haram drove a car into the headquarters of the Church of Christ in Jos, Nigeria, on Feb. 26, killing four people and injuring 37 and provoking reprisal attacks that led to five more deaths, including that of a church member mistaken for the bomber's accomplice. + Britain's Journal of Medical Ethics generated international outrage after publishing online on Feb. 23 an article calling for the **acceptance of infanticide** for social and medical reasons. + A church used since 1972 by a small group of **Christians in Laos's Savannakhet Province** was confiscated on Feb. 22 by Communist authorities bent on halting the "tricks of the enemy" and "operations of the Christians." + Catholic Charities USA continues to work with its local agencies in Southern and Midwestern states after three waves of late February and early March storms produced **scores of tornadoes** and left 39 dead in more than 10 states.



**Rosalina Tuyuc Velásquez, right, with Mayan widows of Comalapa, Guatemala**

further marginalize those in Iran who want to abide by international norms." Before military options are considered, Bishop Pates said, "all alternatives, including effective and targeted sanctions and incentives for Iran to engage in diplomacy and cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency, need to be exhausted."

## Afghanistan Burning

"Respect for religious feelings is the key to win the hearts of Afghans," said Stanley Fernandes, S.J., director of the Jesuit Refugee Service of South Asia, commenting on the mass protests that followed the news of the burning of

Korans by U.S. soldiers. As many as 30 people have been killed in violence related to the Koran burnings. Father Fernandes, after a recent trip to Kabul, called the situation critical. An official apology from President Obama has been issued, but, he said, "I think it will take time before the situation returns to calm." Father Fernandes said, "I do not think one risks a religious war against the West, but incidents like this...do not help build confidence and a peaceful atmosphere. In these cases, then, the instinct of the crowd prevails, opening the floodgates to violence."

From CNS and other sources.





# Montessori Ministry

As the director of a graduate program in lay ministry formation, I often serve as informal counselor or cheerleader for students who face inevitable and often crushing struggles in their ministry. Recently I found myself in such a conversation with a student I will call Hannah. In her midlife, Hannah gave up a long and distinguished career as a Montessori school teacher and principal because she felt strongly called to a full-time lay ministry position at a parish. I watched her come alive with excitement about her ministry and her theological education.

She called me recently, however, and tearfully related a story all too similar to others I have heard from other ministry students: how her parish work had fallen apart when a new priest took over her parish. Though she spoke of him with charity, it became clear that the newly assigned priest was an incompetent administrator who had become a wrecking ball among the heretofore well-functioning parish staff. He had quickly undone much good work from the previous pastor and had strained relationships among both staff and parishioners.

Long experienced with human resource and leadership issues from her career in school administration, Hannah attempted to approach the new pastor about the problems. When she and others on the parish staff got nowhere, she turned to the diocese. Diocesan personnel made it clear that unless this priest committed sexual or financial malfeasance, the severe clergy

shortage in the diocese made him “untouchable.” Ultimately, Hannah saw no other option but to resign; several other parish staff members followed suit.

We spoke only a few days after she left. I have known Hannah to be a strong, contagiously enthusiastic woman, but the depth of her grief and sadness was heartbreaking. She doubted her church and wondered aloud whether she had deluded herself in thinking that the church truly had room for the gifts that she and others like her (especially women) so longed to offer in its service.

Hannah’s Montessori background has given me a way to reflect on her experience of parish ministry gone awry. The fundamental premise of Montessori education is that children have an innate capacity to learn, and that if given an environment of freedom, trust and appropriate structure, they will thrive and develop in their own unique ways. The Catholic Church has affirmed the Montessori approach to learning, even adapting it for religious education under the title Catechesis of the Good Shepherd.

Might the church also embody Montessori principles to create healthy work environments for its lay and ordained ministers? How might ministers be given the freedom and responsibility to live in fulfillment of their baptismal call and offer their distinctive ministry talents for the blossoming of the church?

To create such ministry-nurturing environments in current ecclesial and

cultural circumstances is a daunting challenge. Many bishops and diocesan personnel already squeeze blood from stones simply to keep parishes open and staffed amid a serious shortfall of capital and clergy. Should it be any surprise that some adopt a mindset of scarcity and defensive retrenchment, which would keep incapable ministers in their prescribed roles simply because no other options seem possible?

Give  
lay ministers  
the freedom  
to live  
their  
baptismal  
call.

Other options are possible. How might things have played out differently in Hannah’s case, for example, if her priest had been given mainly sacramental duties, while the pastoral and administrative tasks to which he was ill-suited were taken up by qualified lay ecclesial ministers or permanent

deacons? The church can look to a number of parishes, domestically and globally, where creative, nontraditional staffing configurations work magnificently.

Embracing new and inchoate forms of ministry requires a great deal of trust that the Holy Spirit still abides in the church and animates it. It requires trust that ministry can be vibrant and effective even when it does not conform to models we have known in the past.

Fear and fortress-building seem to be the default approach of human nature, especially in our present age of uncertainty and change. Trust, on the other hand, is always a leap of faith and a divine gift. In allowing human history to unfold freely, God has placed a tremendous amount of trust in us. Perhaps it is time to return the favor.

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

Smoke rises after NATO airstrikes in Tripoli, Libya, on June 7.



THE CASE FOR A UNITED FRONT ON  
CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

# Lessons From Libya

BY THOMAS G. WEISS

**R**ebels captured and executed Muammar el-Qaddafi in late October 2011. This tarnished the human rights advance of the year: the international decision to protect Libyans from their 69-year-old dictator's murderous ways. A less authoritarian form of government is hardly guaranteed in Libya, and blowback seems almost inevitable. But the positive outcomes that have so far resulted from this successful and robust military action in Libya suggest that it is not quixotic to utter "never again"—no more Holocausts, Cambodias and Rwandas—and occasionally mean it.

With the exception of Raphael Lemkin's efforts to define genocide and the resulting 1948 Genocide Convention, no idea has moved faster in the international arena than "the responsibility to protect" (R2P), the title of a report published in 2001 by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty. Friends and foes recognize the commission's contribution to stopping mass atrocities, which it defined as a three-pronged responsibility—to prevent, to react and to rebuild.

Prevention and peace-building were not afterthoughts, but the commission's primary motivation was to break new ground in reacting to mass atrocities. Unlike other blue-ribbon groups, its focus was narrow. After divisive and inconsistent "military humanitarianism" in the tumultuous 1990s in places like Somalia and Iraq, states sought guidance about intervening to protect war victims.

R2P's central tenet is that state sovereignty is contingent rather than absolute; it entails duties, not simply rights. Sovereignty no longer offers license for mass murder. Every state has a responsibility to protect its own citizens from mass killings and other egregious violations of their

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CNS PHOTO/STRINGER VIA REUTERS

rights. If any state, however, is manifestly unable or unwilling to exercise that responsibility, or is the perpetrator of mass atrocities, its sovereignty is abrogated. The “responsibility to protect” devolves to the international community of states, ideally acting through the U.N. Security Council.

This dual framework—internal and external—was embraced by over 150 heads of state and government at the U.N.’s 60th anniversary. The 2005 World Summit agreed to implement a norm that embodied what the world organization had been mandated to do since its creation, ensure “freedom from fear.” Deploying military force is an option after alternatives have been considered and failed. In this respect R2P reflects just war doctrine.

## The Military Option

Depending on one’s perspective, 2011 was either an *annus mirabilis* or an *annus horribilis* for the R2P concept. Libya’s people were protected from the murderous harm that Col. Qaddafi threatened in March 2011 when he promised to crush the “cockroaches” and “rats” who opposed him (the same terms used in 1994 by Rwanda’s murderous government). But multilateral success in Libya was matched by a familiar impotence in Ivory Coast. The installation of Alassane Ouattara and the surrender of former president Laurent Gbagbo followed a half-year of dawdling as Ivory Coast’s unspeakable disaster unfolded. Three times in March 2011, the Security Council menaced the loser of the November 2010 elections and repeated its authorization to “use all necessary means to carry out its mandate to protect civilians.” But the U.N. soldiers on the ground did little until April’s robust action by the French Operation Unicorn. Until then, Mr. Gbagbo’s intransigence and the United Nations’ unwillingness to apply significant armed force facilitated a slow-moving humanitarian and political train wreck in Côte d’Ivoire. The delayed intervention made possible war crimes and crimes against humanity; it produced a million refugees and a ravaged economy.

Military intervention to protect the vulnerable remains a controversial option. In the summit’s language, the use of force in R2P is restricted to “genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.” Using force *in extremis* resulted from observing international inaction in 1994 in Rwanda—doing too little too late—and action in 1999 in Kosovo—according to some, doing too much too soon.

The original I.C.I.S.S. formulation sandwiched military force between prevention and post-conflict rebuilding. These popular causes made military intervention for human protection purposes more palatable, especially to third world critics. Nonetheless, to most state actors sovereignty remained paramount, the deployment of military force objectionable and R2P thus a contested norm.

## A New Standard for State Legitimacy

In addition to the usual attributes of a sovereign state commonly identified in courses in international relations and law—people, authority, territory and independence—R2P proposes one more: a modicum of respect for human rights. The interpretation of privileges for sovereigns has made room for modest responsibilities. When a state is unable or manifestly unwilling to protect the rights of its population—and especially when perpetrating abuse itself—it loses its sovereignty. The principle of noninterference in the internal affairs of other countries evaporates, or should, in the face of mass atrocities.

Given R2P’s goal of making mass atrocities a distant memory, how long can a norm be “emerging” before it “has emerged”? The responsibility to protect has shaped international diplomatic, military and academic conversations about responding to conscience-shocking disasters, but it has not always shaped actual international responses—for example, ill-conceived or ineffective efforts in Sudan, Zimbabwe, the Congo and Syria.

Two specific challenges remain. First, R2P cannot become a synonym for everything that the United Nations does. In addition to reacting urgently when civilians are at risk, R2P’s value-added consists of requiring immediate preventive measures before crimes against humanity become widespread; also it offers proximate peace-building to help mend societies and avoid beginning anew a cycle of settling accounts with additional atrocities.

But the responsibility to protect is not about the protection of everyone from everything. As bureaucrats seek justifications for pet projects, there is the risk of an ever-expanding R2P agenda. It is emotionally tempting to claim a responsibility to protect people from H.I.V./AIDS and small arms or the Inuit from global warming. If R2P means everything, however, it means nothing.

Second, the responsibility to protect should not be viewed too narrowly. It is not only about the use of military force. That became clear after Washington and London’s 2003 rhetoric disingenuously morphed into a vague “humanitarian” justification for the Iraq war; thereafter, any humanitarian justification for military force became suspicious.

In record time, R2P has moved from the passionate prose of an eminent commission to become a mainstay of international public policy. It has the potential to evolve further in customary international law and contribute to ongoing conversations about the qualities of states as legitimate, rather than rogue, sovereigns.

Military force is a blunt and bloody tool; its use is no cause for celebration. Deploying force for human protection, however, had largely been dismissed from the international agenda after NATO’s 1999 intervention in Kosovo until the timely and successful military action against Libya.

Mustering the cross-cultural political will to protect civilians is never going to be easy, but Libya may prove a pivotal experience. The central challenge to R2P now is not too little consensus, but a willingness to act.

The Security Council set precedents for R2P against Libya. Resolution 1970 had unanimous support for a substantial package of measures (arms embargo, asset freezes, travel bans and referral of the situation to the International Criminal Court). No country voted against resolution 1973, which imposed a no-fly zone. In addition, the Human Rights Council referred to R2P for the first time in resolution S-15/1, which led the General Assembly to suspend Libya's rights of membership in the U.N. Human Rights Council. Security Council decisions about Côte d'Ivoire evoked the spirit of the responsibility to protect. Critically, some 11 council decisions have involved the R2P norm, and six of those took place in 2011 after Libya—for South Sudan, Yemen and Syria.

In short, decisions and actions have helped dispel myths and reaffirmed R2P's validity as a universal norm. Its legitimacy is now approaching a tipping point. Although consensus is widening and deepening across the North and South, grousing has not disappeared. Indeed, it began anew after Libya. "The threat to Benghazi was exaggerated" or "regime change was not authorized." Buyer's remorse in the third world resembles earlier versions that menaced the September 2005 commitment. The Nicaraguan and former Maryknoll priest who was president of the U.N. General Assembly in 2008-9, Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, suggested "a more accurate name for R2P would be...redecorated colonialism."

Spoilers were disappointed in 2005, however, and will be again, because of the discernible shift from antipathy to wider public acceptance of R2P and its institutionalization at various levels. The United Nations has established a joint office on the responsibility to protect, and a number of countries have established "R2P focal points." Perhaps most important is the establishment by President Obama of the Atrocity Prevention Board—an interagency mechanism to facilitate a rapid reaction across the U.S. government to prevent mass atrocities.

### Closer to 'Never Again'?

As the situations in Tripoli and elsewhere across the Middle East unfold, acute dilemmas will remain for humanitarians and policymakers. If the transition goes well, the R2P norm will be strengthened. If it goes poorly, the norm's future implementation may be problematic.

A possible collateral benefit of the evolution of R2P is that the nonviolent and democratic revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt may have greater traction. Qaddafi's autocratic "model" no longer seems inevitable. And, as American participation in Libya is one success of the Obama administra-

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tion's foreign policy, the policy is likely to continue to receive the president's endorsement. Speaking in Brazil after imposing the no-fly zone, Obama saw no contradiction with the views that brought him the Nobel Peace Prize—one can favor peace, but still authorize force to halt the “butchering” of civilians. The president's decision prevented massacres that would have “stained the conscience of the world.” The scorned strategy of “leading from behind” led to new strategies of complementing U.S. military assets with those from NATO partners backed by regional diplomatic support from the Arab League, Gulf Cooperation Council and African Union.

### Violence in Syria

Despite all that progress, the international actions (or inactions) aimed at protecting noncombatants in Syria indicate that a robust R2P response certainly is not automatic. The U.N. estimates that some 7,500 people have been killed in the last year as Syrian security forces deployed tanks, warships and heavy weapons against civilians—clearly crimes against humanity. The international response has been stymied by the intransigence of the Security Council members Russia and China, who have their own reasons to resist the U.N.'s robust international interest in a sovereign state's internal affairs. But the lack of action on the Syrian crisis so far does not mean that the R2P concept has been without effect.

A deafening silence followed the 1982 massacre by Hafez al-Assad of some 40,000 people in an artillery barrage of the rebellious city of Hama. This time, however, his son's brutal machinations have provoked hostile reactions from a host of actors: the U.N.'s Joint Office on the Prevention of Genocide and R2P called for a halt to crimes against humanity; the Human Rights Council condemned the crimes by a crushing vote and has published a report detailing extensive crimes; the United States, the European Union and other states have imposed sanctions; the Arab League has condemned the Assad regime, formulated a peace plan and sent human rights monitors. The U.N. General Assembly condemned the violence and supported the peace plan with a two-thirds majority and by an even greater margin later condemned Bashar al-Assad's crackdown and specifically called for his resignation.

Despite a strong condemnation from the president of the Security Council, a decision on further intervention in Syria has not yet proved possible, because China and Russia threaten to veto or actually veto even the most watered-down resolutions. But the R2P principle remains intact in Syria, even if international action is less fulsome there than it was in Libya.

“Never again” is not yet a reality in world affairs, but with U.S. leadership it has become a realistic aspiration. **A**

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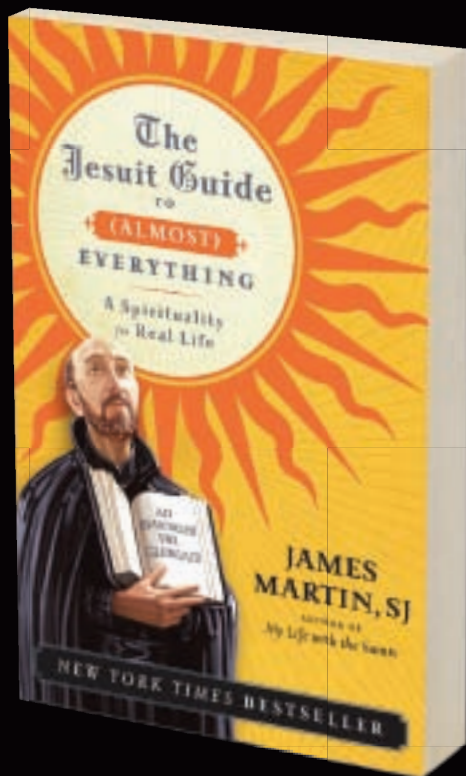
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# My Sister's Demons

BY JAN MONAGHAN

**W**e were the bookends of the family: I the oldest by nine years, she the youngest, my sister Maureen.

As I stood by her bed in the hospice, stroking her arm and whispering what I hoped were comforting words, I looked into our family trademark-blue eyes and saw her as a child once again. I remembered the chubby 1-year-old rolling around in her playpen on the family front porch; the little girl with blonde finger curls asking Big Sister for help with spelling homework; the teenager, lively and laughing, the best dancer in a family of good dancers.

Marriage number one came at a too-young age, along with a new family member, another sweet little girl who loved baby Jesus and animals. Marriage number two brought sons—a light-hearted towhead like his mother and a second whose brown hair covered a head bursting with brains. All the while mom tried to hold her little family together with the cement of deep motherly love.

Darkness descended when Maureen's sons were completing grade school. After the death of her former spouse, my sister retreated into the hazy world of addiction. Was it guilt, I

wondered, since she had insisted that her first husband leave because of his drug addiction? Or was life simply too hard and heroin a too easy escape? Or



was it the chronic depression and social anxiety she lived with throughout her adult life? Whatever the reasons, the results were catastrophic. Drugs rob a person of everything. Maureen lost her car, her house, her good job and, worst of all, her self-respect. Several stints in rehab raised the family's hopes, but a relapse inevitably came.

Throughout it all, Maureen never lost her faith. Getting up for Mass while stoned was unthinkable, but she continued to pray and read the Bible. One passage in particular took on profound significance: "When an unclean spirit goes out of someone, it roams through arid regions searching for rest but, finding none, it says, 'I shall return to my home from which I came.' But upon returning, it finds it swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and brings back seven other spirits more wicked than itself who move in and

dwell there" (Lk 11: 24-26).

Why this strange passage, I wondered at first. I would never have been drawn to it. Indeed, it struck me as perhaps the most hopeless thing Jesus ever said. What do these seven unclean spirits, these demons, mean to her? But it gradually became clear: addiction was her demon. She swept and tidied her house by going to 12-step meetings, entering rehab and finding sponsors. None of it worked for long. The seven demons, stronger than the first, always returned to dwell in the house of her soul.

I will always regret not exploring that Scripture passage with her more. Had I looked at its context, I would have seen that in the next verse Jesus says emphatically: "Blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it." There is no place for hopelessness in the kingdom of God—the invitation is listen, turn to God and do our best to live our lives in the light.

And there was light: the light of Maureen's holding her first grandchild, an adorable little boy; the light of watching her children mature into adulthood; the light of spousal love with Bill, who understood her, protected her and, best of all, loved her unconditionally.

Now, as I reflect on my sister's life and death, I realize that the demons were not confined to her. They reached out, as demons will, to harm others, especially those who loved Maureen. My first demon was despair

JAN MONAGHAN is a pseudonym. Names have been changed to preserve anonymity.

ART: DAREN AUCK



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as I watched her life fall apart, helpless to do much about it. Another was anger: anger that she was throwing her life away, anger about the effect on her children, anger that she ignored the wise counsel I thought I was imparting. A third demon was obsessive worry, the difficulty of falling asleep for most of my adult life as I pondered how to help her.

Then came the grace. A friend invited me to Al-Anon meetings. After a time, I grew to appreciate the wisdom of the 12 steps: I can control only my own life, not anyone else's; addiction is a family disease; and it is utterly useless to worry about things I could not change.

Now this. She had lain in a coma for five weeks, not induced by drugs but by a rare virus that medical science knew nothing about, certainly not how to treat it.

As I stood by her deathbed, we had a few precious moments alone. "Maureen," I whispered, "I understand now. I understand what the Scripture story about the seven demons means to you. You did try, probably harder than any of us realized. We just didn't understand how strong the chains of addiction really are." At that, a slight flicker of her eyelids told me that she heard.

I continued, "Maureen, it's O.K. It's O.K. to let go. Dad is there waiting for you." I certainly did not mean at that precise moment, but my sister took me at my word. The hospice nurse looked at her and said quietly, "This is her time." Her youngest son knelt by the bed, and she opened her eyes to hear him say, "I love you, Mom." Then the rattle of death rumbled low in her throat as her soul returned to God.

Her husband, her children and I sobbed and held hands around her bed. As we prayed her favorite prayer, the Memorare, I looked down at her beautiful face, now serene. Was it my imagination, or were the demons leaving, defeated, as her soul slipped into the eternal light of God? **A**

ART | EMILY HAGE

## MAKING THE MODERN DIVINE

*The images of Henry Ossawa Tanner*

**H**enry Ossawa Tanner (1859-1937) is celebrated for his intimate paintings of African-American domestic life and biblical narratives. The artist wanted to appeal to viewers' sense of shared humanity in his works—as he puts it, quoting

Shakespeare, to “give the human touch ‘which makes the whole world kin’ and which ever remains the same.”

The son of a former slave and an African Methodist Episcopal bishop, Tanner was raised in post-Civil War Philadelphia as a member of an edu-

cated African-American elite. One of the first African-Americans to attend the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, he worked with the realist painter Thomas Eakins, who greatly admired his student and even painted his portrait. After a failed attempt to run a photography studio in Atlanta, Ga., Tanner moved to Paris, where he studied painting and exhibited at the prestigious salons. He remained in the French capital for most of his life and in 1896 began to focus on religious



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“The Holy Family,” 1909–10, by Henry Ossawa Tanner

subject matter. In 1897 he took his first trip to the Near East to examine the architecture, dress and people there in order to render biblical scenes more convincingly. His landscapes and cityscapes from this time offer a fascinating glimpse into the region's built and natural environment.

### Religion and Tanner

The religious paintings by Tanner provide empathetic, naturalistic interpretations of the Old and New Testaments. One of his earliest, and

represented as a suspended pillar of light made up of multiple layers of thickly applied yellow and orange paint. Tanner depicts the heavenly messenger in a manner that conveys an unmistakable presence without introducing an overtly celestial figure into Mary's rustic abode. The artist achieves a powerful evocation of the divine as something beyond what can be given figurative form. Tanner also shows the profound transformation of Mary's identity in a manner that brings together the earthly and the divine.

light takes on a life of its own and seems almost supernatural, rendered in startlingly bright colors that create a sense of otherworldliness. Mary kneels solemnly before a fireplace, her child lying swaddled at her feet, as Joseph stands in shadow. Set against the dark tones of the interior, her bright blue veil, the same color as the baby's head shroud, seems to radiate light rather than simply reflect the blaze. Tanner's imaginative rendering of this invented scenario highlights the subjectivity of the figures, particularly Mary. At the same time, as in most of his works, the artist invites viewers to interpret the image from a personal perspective and to gain deeper insight into the painting and the story.

The domesticity of many of Tanner's scenes makes them accessible to viewers. As Marcus Bruce writes in his essay in the exhibition catalogue, such settings allowed Tanner to "symbolically construct forms of kinship that were both familiar and yet strange to viewers," while subverting "the limitations of the racial and religious discourses of his time." Tanner used his works to communicate and teach. Throughout his career, the artist's sensitive, psychologically probing compositions of biblical figures manifest his faith and call on viewers to examine their own beliefs.

Tanner's genre paintings subvert the racist stereotypes of his times. Works like "The Banjo Lesson" (1893), a sympathetic depiction of an African-American man teaching his grandson to play the banjo, is a direct response to the common characterization of African-Americans as comic musical entertainers. Tanner wrote that in his paintings he wanted to show "the serious, and pathetic side of life" among African-Americans.

Tanner had many reasons for painting religious subjects. Certainly his upbringing and abiding spirituality motivated him. His biblical images evoke experiences common to every-



**"The Annunciation," 1898, by Henry Ossawa Tanner**

today most famous, religious paintings is "The Annunciation," from 1898. Mary sits on the edge of her bed, hands clasped, staring with a look of attentive, concerned awe at Gabriel, who is portrayed as a glowing presence that illuminates the room and has kicked up the rug at her bare feet.

Often this story is interpreted with a winged angel, cherubs and a demure, haloed Mary surrounded by symbols of her purity. Tanner, however, paints it as a realist. The arched walls, stone floor and screen behind Mary reflect the artist's research in Palestine. Gabriel is

Light as symbolic of God's presence pervades Tanner's work; it offered him a way to show biblical scenes without compromising his commitment to naturalism. A shaft of light, for example, falling on Daniel in the lion's den tells us that he will survive, and the subtle but unmistakable illumination of Jesus' face conveys his divinity as he speaks with Nicodemus.

In later paintings Tanner moved away from realism toward an increasingly expressive, subjective and intense visualization of sacred experiences. In works like "The Holy Family" (pg. 19),

one and have been interpreted as symbolizing hope for African-Americans. On a practical level, religious subjects allowed him to broaden the scope of his work beyond African-American genre scenes and appeal to a wider audience.

Tanner's focus on spiritual themes has earned him a unique—and problematic—place in the history of art. Although religious themes were popular in the United States and France in the late 19th century, modernism increasingly emphasized the formal characteristics of art—color, light, line and composition—and largely dismissed narratives, including biblical ones. This shift led to a general dismissal of religious art as conservative and unsophisticated, as Sally Promey, a professor of religion and visual culture at Yale, has pointed out. Many still celebrate Tanner as a religious painter, however, while others concentrate on his African-American identity. Ironically, both approaches marginalize his work.

### The Traveling Exhibit

“Henry Ossawa Tanner: Modern Spirit,” currently on view at the Pennsylvania Academy, aims to correct this marginalization. The show describes Tanner as a highly acclaimed, international modern artist who reinvigorated genre paintings and religious art through innovative artistic techniques—loose brushwork, evocative colors and a distinctive mastery of light. The exhibition takes the visitor on a journey through Tanner's life, from his earliest days in Philadelphia to the Salon in Paris and finally his depictions of Palestine and Egypt. It presents over 100 works, including “Resurrection of Lazarus” (1896), which has never been seen in the United States before; Eakins's portrait of Tanner; as well as drawings,

photographs, sculptures, studies and a copy of Ladies' Home Journal, that features one of the many drawings he made for the magazine. A stunning sketch for “The Annunciation” hints at figuration in the Gabriel depiction that the artist ultimately rejected. Exhibited together, these various

**ON THE WEB**  
Victor Stepien reviews Oscar-winner “The Artist.”  
[americamagazine.org/culture](http://americamagazine.org/culture)

media provide a thorough account of Tanner's work and life, reinforced by helpful wall texts and an audio guide that interweaves the insights of eight individuals, including Tanner, the artist Faith Ringgold and Tanner's great-nephew, Lewis Tanner Moore. (The show will be on view in Philadelphia until April 15. Then it will travel to the Cincinnati Art Museum and the Houston Museum of Fine Arts.)

The exhibition catalogue includes 14 essays that explore Tanner's work in the context of other African-American artists; Paris in the late 19th and early 20th centuries; religion, popular culture, modern art and technology. By analyzing Tanner's paintings in the context of Paul Gauguin, Maurice Denis and the American photogra-

pher Alfred Stieglitz, the catalogue paints a portrait of Tanner as fully immersed in the artistic currents that surrounded him—symbolism, Orientalism, pictorialism. Tanner's interest in light may be linked to developments in lighting technologies, specifically the work of the inventor Nikola Tesla, who revolutionized commercial electricity in that era, as well as that of the dancer Loie Fuller, who designed an “underlighting device” for her performances. The catalogue features an unprecedented scientific analysis of Tanner's materials and techniques, explaining how he layered oils, resins and tempera in complex ways to create the desired effect.

David Morgan, a religion scholar, has explained the “sacred gaze” as what takes place when we look at a religious image and project our beliefs onto the piece. Tanner was mindful of the important role of paintings. His works invite us to affirm, question or dismiss our perceptions of biblical stories and thus to renew our own understanding of ourselves as viewers and as participants in the revelation of the divine.

*EMILY HAGE is assistant professor of art history at St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia.*


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# READING THE IRISH

In Amy Waldman's celebrated recent novel *The Submission* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux), controversy ensues when a Muslim-American named Mohammad Khan is selected to design a memorial at ground zero to victims of the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001.

One of Khan's opponents is Sean Gallagher, whose brother, Patrick, was a firefighter killed that awful day.

Sean has found meaning in his crusade against Kahn—a non-observant architect who goes by the Americanized name “Mo”—and a not-so-subtle Islamophobia extends to Sean's Irish-American family in Brooklyn. “It's not enough to kill us,” one of Sean's relatives says bitterly, “they have to humiliate us, too.”

Waldman deserves immense credit for the overall sensitivity of her portrait. But a simple fact cannot be ignored: such unsophisticated, even reactionary, Irish-American characters are remarkably prominent in American history and literature.

There are the violent mobs of the New York City draft riots and the violent mobs of the South Boston bussing riots; there's Father Coughlin and Joe McCarthy; there's Studs Lonigan and the “ferocious Irishmen” who assault Augie March's pal in Saul Bellow's classic and the oppressive Dunn family from the book (and film) *Looking for Mr. Goodbar*.

But wait: Aren't the Irish also the freedom-fighting folks so closely associated with labor unions and the Democratic Party and anticolonialism?

And didn't Irish Catholics endure severe privation and bigotry from the era of the Great Hunger all the way up to the 1910s and 20s, when the U.S. government spied on and imprisoned Irish nationalists and Al Smith faced burning crosses on the campaign trail?

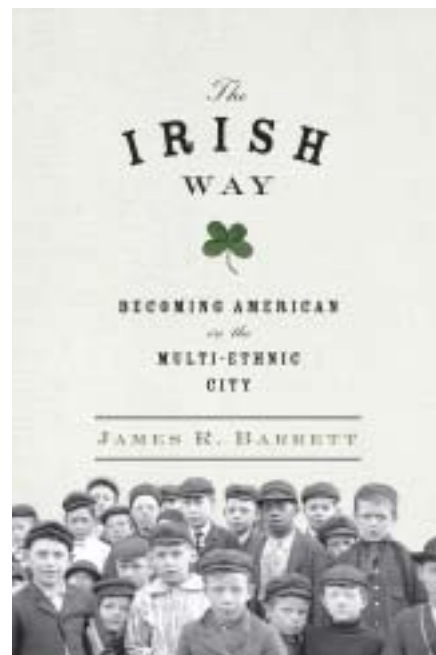
Ken Burns's latest documentary, “Prohibition,” as well as two recent books—*One Hundred Percent American: The Rebirth and Decline of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s* by Thomas R. Pegram and *The Gospel According to the Klan: The KKK's Appeal to Protestant America, 1915-1930* by Kelly J. Baker—attest to the pervasive anti-Irish, anti-Catholicism of the early 20th century.

So, were the Irish part of a dominant or of a disempowered culture? Were they the oppressors or the oppressed?

These and other thorny contradictions are tackled by James R. Barrett in his important new book *The Irish Way: Becoming American in the Multi-Ethnic City* (Penguin Press). Barrett argues that “nativist hostility toward the Irish created a defensiveness in their relations with later waves of migrant peoples.” He adds, “Excluded from much of the city's public life, the Irish immigrants fell back upon their own communities and institutions,” including the church and the Democratic Party.

This (along with the ability to speak at least some English) helped a desperate people obtain some power in a hostile land, power that subsequent newcomers to urban centers—Jews, Italians, blacks, Poles—would find difficult to wrest from the Irish.

“Their most common impulse was to exclude,” Barrett writes, “to bar more recent immigrants, women, and people of color from jobs and unions, to discriminate against women and minorities, and to fight more radical groups in the labor movement.”



No less a radical than Daniel O'Connell, known as the Liberator, proclaimed that the Irish were a people naturally inclined to sympathize with the downtrodden—until they came to the United States, where they “learned to hate and despise the colored people,” as O'Connell put it.

They also, as Barrett adds, “often embraced a hyperbolic brand of American patriotism, as if wrapping themselves in the flag might bring them acceptance.”

Which, to a great degree, it did.

And yet, Barrett—who teaches history and African-American studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign—well knows that this is only half of the Irish-American story.

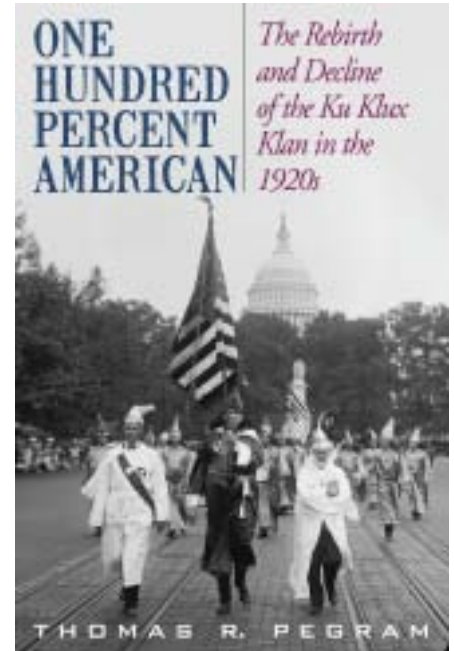
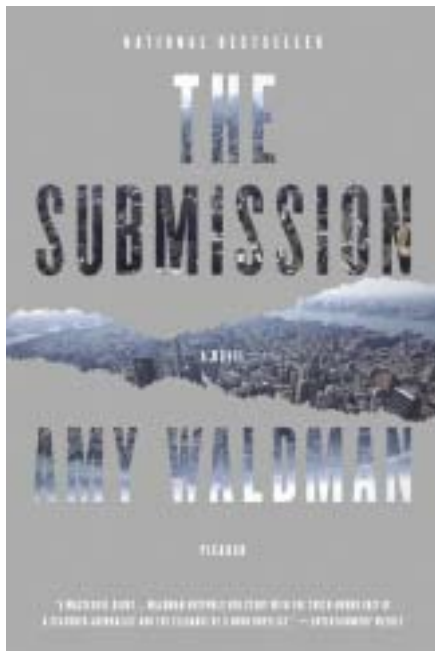
For there are many instances of Irish American radicals and anticolonialists and labor leaders who embraced blacks and women

and more recent immigrants.

Such tensions, in fact, have long been present within the Irish-American community and are evident in numerous other books released just in time for St. Patrick's Day this year.

## ON THE WEB

A pilgrimage to Basilica of St. Patrick's Old Cathedral in New York.  
[americamagazine.org/video](http://americamagazine.org/video)



In Peter Troy's Famine-era novel **May the Road Rise to Meet You** (Doubleday), Sean McOwen is a Tammany Hall loyalist. Tammany—and most Irish—were not merely loyal Democrats. They viewed Lincoln and the Republicans as elitist, anti-Catholic scoundrels. And yet Sean's ambitious, free-thinking brother Ethan is star-struck when he sees Honest Abe after his famous Cooper Union speech in 1860.

"You have my full support," Ethan tells the future president, words that literally could have gotten him thumped in the nearby Five Points.

Meanwhile, in Kevin Fox's thriller **Until the Next Time** (Algonquin), an F.B.I. agent flees the racial strife of 1970s America for Ireland after a shootout with a member of the Black Panthers. Hoping to find solace among family, the agent instead is dismissed as a bigot no better than Nixon or the Brits by some I.R.A. men he falls in with.

Finally, Gerard O'Neill's **Rogues and Redeemers: When Politics Was King in Irish Boston** (Crown) vividly recalls when Irish Americans like Judge Arthur Garrity and Ted Kennedy had to be physically protect-

ed from angry, anti-bussing forces in traditionally Irish enclaves.

Is there any way to resolve these seeming contradictions? Professor Barrett's **The Irish Way** attempts to do just that. The book is broken up into six chapters, with titles like "The Street," "The Parish" and "The Machine." Having argued that the Irish exhibited great "tension between inclusiveness and exclusiveness, between cosmopolitanism and parochialism," Barrett sets out to focus roughly on the years 1880 to 1920, when the children of the Famine were assimilating, when more Irish were still pouring into the United States and when immigrants from other nations began settling in heavily Irish cities.

"By carving the city into distinct ethnic turfs and relentlessly defending their own, Irish gangs developed a strong sense of territoriality that they transmitted to later immigrants," Barrett writes, a process he terms "coercive Americanization."

To use language popularized by David Roediger, a scholar Barrett quotes and with whom he has collaborated, once the Irish "became white," they encouraged later immigrants to do the same—at the expense of more marginalized newcomers to the city.

Barrett takes a particularly interesting look at tensions among different 19th-century Catholic ethnic groups. (One Polish-American dubbed Protestants and the Irish as "two

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prongs of the same nativist fork.”)

But Barrett stresses that Catholicism also “taught social justice and especially racial and ethnic tolerance.”

The political machine, vaudeville stage and union hall could be similarly schizophrenic. Which raises the question: If you look at any group of people, wouldn't you find both progressive and conservative elements? Is it merely the fact that the Irish came in such great numbers that explains their intellectual and political inconsistency? And is this even inconsistency? Or merely diversity?

Barrett's observations about Irish interaction with other immigrants are keen, and his focus on the tenuously assimilated second generation is valuable. But one group that is generally absent from Barrett's analysis is what, these days, we call “the one percent,” the power elite, who were all too happy to look on as America's ethnics went at each other's throats in the wards and



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alleyways, battling over small slivers of the social pie.

It should be added that Barrett is hardly the first to express understandable frustration with the ways Irish America flexed its hard-earned muscle. Consider Daniel Patrick Moynihan's famous assessment from *Beyond the Melting Pot*: "The very parochialism and bureaucracy that enabled [the Irish] to succeed in local politics prevented them from doing much else.... In a sense, the Irish didn't know what to do with power once they got it.... They never thought of politics as an instrument of social change."

The trouble is, when you've faced starvation, disease and death, survival very much counts as a kind of social change.

Whether they did it as reactionaries or progressives, no one can deny that the Irish survived. Perhaps they could have done more or done it differently. But given their starting point, survival is an understandable aspiration.

St. Patrick's Day 2012 finds a Kenyan-American president in the White House, whose maternal roots just happen to go back to Moneygall, County Offaly, to which the president made a triumphant visit last summer. Two of the leading figures in New York City's 2013 mayoral race are named Kelly and Quinn, and if they win they will have to do battle with union leaders named Lynch, Cassidy and Mulgrew, in a diocese that just sent its 10th consecutive Irish American archbishop since 1842 to Rome as a cardinal.

On the other hand, the virulently anti-Irish, anti-Catholic cartoonist Thomas Nast was recently honored as a candidate for The New Jersey State Hall of Fame. And there was no public outcry whatsoever when a witness discussed the problem of "Irishmen who are drunks and...get into bar fights" during recent hearings aimed at (wait for it!) diversity in the New York City Fire Department.

And so it goes....

In the end, the Irish survived by any means necessary. It was not always pretty. But the Irish did not only complicate things for those below them. Their very presence also compelled those higher up the social ladder to accept some social change, albeit grudgingly. Otherwise, things might actually have been much worse for later immigrants and others.

Imagine if more children of Erin followed the bitter, fatherly dictate

offered in the ballad "Paddy's Lament": "Here's to you boys, now take my advice./ To America I'll have ye's not be going." Whatever else they did, the Irish—to paraphrase Langston Hughes—forced "America to be America." Or at least to try.

---

*The author of Coming to America: Irish Americans, TOM DEIGNAN is a columnist for The Irish Voice newspaper and Irish America magazine. He is currently working on a novel about a New York City high school.*

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[www.uscatholicpriests.org](http://www.uscatholicpriests.org) or by contacting Evelyn Morisset, [evelynmorisset@stleou.edu](mailto:evelynmorisset@stleou.edu). Information about membership in the AUSCP can be found at the same AUSCP website.

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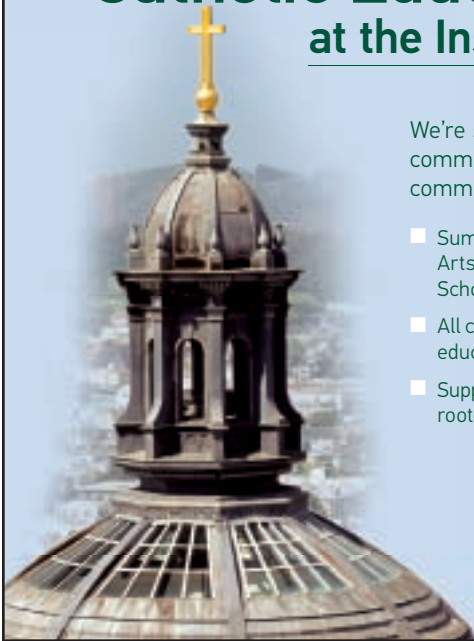
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# LETTERS

## Religious Liberty Chair Responds

The March 5th *America* editorial (“Policy, Not Liberty”) takes the United States bishops to task for entering too deeply into the finer points of health care policy as they ponder what the slightly revised Obama administration mandate might mean for the Catholic Church in the United States. These details, we are told, do not impinge on religious liberty. We are also told that our recent forthright language borders on incivility.

What details are we talking about? For one thing, a government mandate to insure, one way or another, for an abortifacient drug called Ella. Here the “details” would seem to be fertilized ova, small defenseless human beings, who will likely suffer abortion within the purview of a church-run health insurance program.

What other details are at issue? Some may think that the government’s forcing the church to provide insurance coverage for direct surgical sterilizations such as tubal ligations is a matter of policy. Such force, though, feels an awful lot like an infringement on religious liberty.

Still another detail is ordinary contraception. Never mind that the dire societal ills which Pope Paul predicted would ensue with the widespread practice of artificial contraception have more than come true. The government makes the rules and the rules are the rules. So, the bishops should regard providing (and paying for) contraception as, well, a policy detail. After all, it’s not like the federal government is asking bishops to deny the divinity of Christ. It’s just a detail in a moral theology—life and love, or something such as that. And why worry about other ways the government may soon require the church to violate its teachings as a matter of policy?

More details come to mind. Many if

not most church entities are self-insured. Thus, Catholic social service agencies, schools, and hospitals could end up paying for abortifacients, sterilizations, and contraception. If the editorial is to be believed, bishops should regard it not as a matter of religious liberty but merely policy that as providers they teach one thing but as employers they are made to teach something else. In other words, we are forced to be a countersign to church teaching and to give people plenty of reason not to follow it. The detail in question here is called “scandal.”

Then there is the detail of religious insurers and companies that are not owned by the church but which exist solely to serve the church’s mission. The new “accommodation” leaves them out in the cold. And if I really wanted to get into the weeds I’d mention the conscience rights of individual employers.

Have I forgotten any other details we bishops shouldn’t be attending to? Well, I guess we’re policy wonks for wondering if the government has a compelling interest in forcing the church to insure for proscribed services when contraception is covered in 90 percent of health care plans, is free in Title X programs, and is available from Walmart (generic) for about \$10

a month. Pardon me also for wondering whether the most basic of freedoms, religious liberty, isn’t being compromised, not by a right to health care, but by a claim to “services” which regard pregnancy and fertility as diseases.

And didn’t President Obama promise adequate conscience protection in the reform of health care? But maybe it’s inappropriate for pastors of souls to ask why the entirely adequate accommodation of religious rights in health care matters that has existed in federal law since 1973 is now being changed.

Oh, and as Detective Colombo used to say: “Just one more thing.” It’s the comment in the editorial about when we bishops are at our best. Evidently, it’s when we speak generalities softly and go along to get along, even though for the first time in history the federal government is forcing church entities to provide for things that contradict church teaching. Maybe Moses wasn’t at his best when he confronted Pharaoh. Maybe the Good Shepherd was a bit off his game when he confronted the rulers of his day.

But those are just details.  
MOST REVEREND WILLIAM E. LORI  
Bishop of Bridgeport  
Chairman, Ad Hoc Committee  
on Religious Liberty

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## Social Democrats Unite!

Re "Doubt at Davos" (Current Comment, 2/20): Given that the effect of neoliberal economics as practiced from the Reagan-Thatcher years onward has been to exacerbate income inequality greatly in the United States (and globally, in many cases), not to mention continuing the environmentally damaging "endless growth" model, it is indeed time for a re-examination of capitalism. Perhaps, as Marx suggested, its time in history has indeed passed.

Our church study-advocacy group has become ever more shocked as we look at the net effects of a soulless, "profit as a god," economic system now in operation here. It is time for us to redesign that system and its effects upon Congress, so that it becomes, to the degree possible, devoted to the

national and global common well-being and to ecological sustainability. If capitalism cannot be turned to serve only those goals (instead of ever more wealth concentration among the relative few at the top), then it is time to upend our system and to adopt any of a variety of other "social democracy" models forwarded by a variety of very bright authors/economists. For one proven example of such a system, check out the experience to date of the giant Mondragon Cooperative in the Basque region of Spain.

BOB RILEY  
Albuquerque, N.M.

## Drawn to Contradiction

Margaret Silf's "Draw Near" (2/20) was such a wise reflection. We are drawn and attracted to the light, but we are also eager to draw lines and

make fine, even trivial distinctions. What a perverse lot we are: drawn to light, love and peace and ready for a fight.

WINIFRED HOLLOWAY  
Saratoga Springs, N.Y.

## Credit Check

Thanks to Drew Christiansen, S.J., for his insightful, Roman and ecumenical reflections ("Of Many Things," 2/20). He did justly refer to the tremendous contributions of Bishop Filipe Ximenes Belo in East Timor and of the late Angelo D'Agostino, S.J., in East Africa.

Bishop Belo is a Salesian of Don Bosco, a member of the largest male religious congregation in the Catholic Church today, with more than 3,000 schools and youth centers in 131 countries today. We Salesians are very

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proud of Bishop Belo, winner of the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize with José Ramos-Horta. As Father Angelo D'Agostino was justly identified by Father Christiansen as a Jesuit, I wish Bishop Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo, S.D.B., had also been similarly identified as a Salesian of Don Bosco.

LARRY N. LORENZONI, S.D.B.  
*San Francisco, Calif.*

### Timely, Unfortunately

Thank you for "Athletes Dying Young" (2/20), a timely editorial. We have had two high school students paralyzed during hockey games in Minnesota this year. There does seem to be some movement here toward making the game more humane—a direct result of Jacob Jablonski being paralyzed from the neck down after being checked by two players at once.

JEANNE DOYLE  
*St. Paul, Minn.*

### Social Disaster Alert

Re "Taking Liberties" (Editorial, 2/13): This discussion continues to generate more heat than light. Of course the First Amendment covers more than worship; otherwise there would not be *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, which was a home-schooling decision. One might also argue that the protection from court inquiry given the seal of confession is another example, unless one wanted to construe this confidentiality as essential to freedom to worship. The constitutional principles, as I understand them, are that religious practice must be constrained by a need to maintain public order and that practices essential to a religion are protected. Lay Catholic behavior notwithstanding, a church's sexual ethics seem to be essential, and, yes, even those are not exempt from legislation (no polygamy). I do not see how the public order is threatened by the bishops' stand; rather I perceive a clever maneuver on the part of the federal government and a social disaster

in the making.

There are simply too many Catholic hospitals, social agencies and universities to dismiss the harmful effect on the country as a whole that may result from H.H.S.'s insistence on its newly made rule. In law-making, consequences count. The rule was made because of what H.H.S. thought the effect would be on women's and hence public health. I am not so sure it made a good calculation.

JERRY VIGNA  
*Cherry Hill, N.J.*

### Faith Travels

As a priest who has visited, studied and lived in 45 countries, I found Tim Padgett's recent article, "The Ethical Traveler," (1/30) right on the mark in many ways. But his comment that he leaves his religion out of the *cantinas* and homes he visits, as well as his trepidation over "mixing charity and evangelization," disappointed me greatly. Talking about the faith with people around the world is the very best part of wandering about—one can plant

seeds everywhere for God to reap in his own time. How can we say we really love the places and people we visit and yet remain silent about Jesus Christ?

(REV.) FRANCIS M. DE ROSA  
*Colonial Beach, Va.*

### A Worthwhile War

I wholeheartedly endorse "A War Worth Fighting" (Editorial, 2/27). The political climate in the United States today and in recent decades, however, has militated against any strong efforts to combat poverty in America. Instead of fighting poverty more strongly, our Republican politicians have been dedicated to helping the rich get richer. And our Democratic politicians have made little headway in opposing the Republicans, their deregulation and their social Darwinism.

THOMAS FARRELL  
*Duluth, Minn.*

### No Fence-Sitting Allowed

I enjoyed "A War Worth Fighting" (2/27). We do our communities a disservice when we lump addiction, mental illness and all the other causes of




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poverty together. Our children are the innocent victims. As a society we have allowed and rewarded bad behavior, such as single parent families and all of the other hot button issues of today that encourage the destruction of the family unit. When we do not promote family values, we help create poverty.

I pray that we all look for things that cause poverty and do our best to get involved and eliminate the causes. Do not sit on the fence when society pushes something you know is destructive to the family unit in the name of political correctness. Remember the family unit is the building block of society. We can be firm in our convictions and still be compassionate and kind to others who do not share our values.

VALENTINE R. O'CONNOR  
Pine Beach, N.J.

### Not a One-Issue Church

I want to support Ronnie D. Rubit for his excellent article “Peer Pressure” (2/27). Catholics should not be one-issue people. I have encountered such Catholics also. I remember a very nice lady who, I am sure, was close to God but could not get beyond this one issue. She would spend long hours listening to radio talk show hosts, who would rant about right-wing causes, including abortion. The effect was conservative politics mixed with a one-issue religious matter. That is not what the Catholic Church is about.

CHARLES P. LEYES  
San Francisco, Calif.

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A Conference and Retreat for Women, Men, Preachers, Hearers and Doers of the Word  
June 11 - 15, 2012



**Preaching with the Mind, Eyes and Heart of a Woman**  
Barbara Reid, OP - Catholic Theological Union  
*Mon-Fri, 9-noon.* Exploring global realities of women's lives, the importance of women's insights on Scripture, and ways for women and men to bring feminist perspectives to preaching.

**Misunderstanding Judaism Means Misunderstanding Jesus**  
Amy-Jill Levine, PhD - Vanderbilt University and Divinity School  
A Jewish scholar locates Jesus in his Jewish context.



**Entrusted with the Word**  
Mary Catherine Hilbert, OP - University of Notre Dame.  
Baptized for mission, gifted and authorized by the Holy Spirit.

**Afternoon Workshops - Mon-Thurs.** Designed to engage participants in art forms as a means of creatively deepening their ability to reflect on Scripture. (Movement, Photography, Storytelling, Creative Writing, Icons, Art, Music and Nature.)

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# Covenants and Costs

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT (B), MARCH 25, 2012

Readings: Jer 31:31-34; Ps 51:3-15; Heb 5:7-9; Jn 12:20-33

*“Whoever serves me must follow me” (Jn 12:26)*

Covenants are not contracts. A contract is a legally binding set of duties and expectations. If the deal is fair, it is a win-win situation. But these agreements are hardly personal. I have signed contracts for car loans without ever meeting the bank representatives. And I have signed many apartment rental contracts and never met the actual property owners. Who cares? Covenants, in contrast, are personal. They define relationships, or at least they ought to.

When God made a covenant with Israel on Sinai, it was intended to be quite personal. In fact, Moses took half the blood of the sacrifice that ratified the covenant and sprinkled it on the people so they would be stained, literally, with the blood of the covenant. As we know, some Israelites understood this, and the law formed their life with God (see Ps 119). A brief tour through the First and Second Book of Kings, however, shows that as the generations passed, many in Israel and its leadership never made the covenant part of them. It never bonded them deeply with God.

This is the context for today’s first reading. Jeremiah predicts a new covenant between God and Israel: “It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers the day I took them by the hand to lead them forth from the land of Egypt; for they broke my covenant and I had to show myself

their master, says the Lord.” This new covenant will be different. “I will place my law within them, and will write it on their hearts.... All from the least to the greatest shall know me, says the Lord.”

The new covenant will become something interior, indeed part of their hearts. And the people will know him. Ezekiel (16:59 ff; 36:25 ff) and Isaiah (55:3; 59:21; 61:8) also look toward a new covenant, one of communion where the spirit of God would radiate from within.

Both Paul (2 Cor 3-5) and Hebrews (8:8 ff) see Jesus as the direct fulfillment of this prophecy. Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount reflects this inner transformation. And when Jesus explicitly announces the new covenant at the Last Supper, we see its depth. It took a long time for the prophecies to come to realization, but they did so in a way more glorious than anyone could have imagined.

For us Christians the new covenant both inspires and challenges. Jesus and his new covenant represent God’s final word and absolute salvation. The covenant challenge is that it has to be part of us, written on our hearts and souls. I am reminded of the crucial conversation between the characters Sister Helen Prejean and the convict on death row, Matthew Poncelet, in the movie “Dead Man Walking.”

Poncelet is an unrepentant, angry, arrogant man. He also thinks of himself as a Christian and tells Sister Helen that he is not afraid of dying. He says: “Me and God, we got all things squared away. I know Jesus died on the cross for us. And he’s gonna be there when I appear before God on judgment day.” Helen responds: “Matt, redemption isn’t some kind of free admission ticket that you get because Jesus paid the price. You’ve got to participate in your own redemption. You’ve got some work to do.”

That insight brings us to the Gospel reading. Jesus, referring to the cross and the nature of discipleship says: “Amen, amen, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground



## PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- Meditate on the cross as a meeting place.
- Ask Christ where you produce fruit for the kingdom.
- Give thanks for your own self-offering.

and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces great fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will preserve it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me.”

For the new covenant to be fully part of us, it must be fully personal. And for Christians that means we follow him to the cross; this so we can produce “great fruit” both in the present life and the next. Here is a paradox: the new covenant is given absolutely freely as gift, and it costs us nothing less than everything we are.

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