
America
THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC WEEKLY
MAY 7, 2012 $3.50
Our Throwaway Society
GREGORY M. KENNEDY
Healthy Housing
JIM GUNSHINAN

OF MANY THINGS

Even for a mature married couple, candid, heartfelt communication over divisive issues is hard to pull off. If authentic dialogue were easy, couples would engage in it often, and their marriages would thrive. Instead, many couples downplay their differences to avoid conflict. As a result they fail to explore the common ground that could support their relationship in times of fear, doubt, loss and deep disagreement—times that threaten to divide them. However hard to stake out, common ground is holy ground, fertile soil in which trust can grow, solid ground on which much can be built.

Now ask yourself what it would take to foster frank, heartfelt communication on issues that divide the contemporary Catholic Church, which is composed of conservatives and liberals; pro-life and pro-choice proponents; independents, Republicans and Democrats; young, middle-aged and old.

For several years, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin of Chicago and a committee of laypeople and clerics pondered that question. The fruit of their dialogue was the creation in 1996 of the Catholic Common Ground Initiative, based originally at the National Pastoral Life Center in New York and since 2009 at the Bernardin Center of the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. The Initiative invites Catholic leaders in the church, academy and society "to engage in prayerful dialogue for the sake of building up the communion of the church." The mission is to promote communication that can heal a church "torn by dissension." Over the years discussions have covered such topics as religion and politics, immigration policy and, most recently, crossing the church's own generational divides.

Dissension is typical of human communities. It was apparent in the Upper Room and among the quarreling disciples before and after the resurrection. Still, Christians are commanded to love one another, despite disagreements.

The Initiative gathers people on various sides of a vexing issue dividing the church; shares principles for respectful dialogue; builds in ice breakers, social time, meals and worship; employs a skilled facilitator to guide discussion; then asks the group to delineate areas of common ground and to design action steps that build on it. The point is not to agree on some bottom line. Rather, it is to discern the shared assumptions, principles, points, methods, experiences and goals.

Key to the Initiative's success is the creation of a "safe spot," however temporary, where participants can express any comment or question and expect a hearing, as well as respectful challenges. A safe spot fosters candor and trust.

No one expects to solve intransigent problems in a weekend. But for hand-picked participants (usually 40 or so), a Common Ground weekend achieves many modest goals. It affords an opportunity to get to know one's critics, for example, and to experience them as brothers and sisters in Christ. This puts differences in perspective without eliminating them. The varied activities help to humanize ideological opponents. Who knew that a writer of scathing critiques sings beautifully at Mass, or is shy off podium or has a child with a serious illness? None of this affects the logic of a person's argument, yet the experience can remove barriers. Small-group interaction and one-on-one meetings are powerful tools.

At the March conference on reaching across the intergenerational divide in the church, the youngest participants (millennials) were surprised to hear the stories of their elders. It became apparent that there are too few opportunities in parish life for the generations of Catholics to get to know each other. The weekend uncovered a hunger among the generations to meet and a raft of ideas to help parishes and dioceses foster those encounters.

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ON THE WEB

Tom Landy of the College of the Holy Cross discusses *The Other America* by **Michael Harrington,** right, on our podcast. Plus, a selection of articles in **Spanish** and resources for **teachers**. All at americamagazine.org.

Googling a Masterpiece

The Google Art Project may eventually prove as beneficial and as popular as Google Maps or as controversial as Google Books. For Google's undertakings tend to be global in scope and threaten existing copyright laws, among other concerns. Now in its second year of development, the Art Project contains an online collection of 32,000 works of art submitted by 151 museums from 40 countries, with text in 18 languages. Not every great museum has shared works (neither the Louvre nor the Vatican museums, for example, are participating), but that could change. The art now on view includes paintings, sculpture, drawings, photographs, manuscripts and artifacts. Most images are high-resolution, which allows users to explore and magnify them inch by inch—something a museumgoer cannot do.

The potential of Google Art is staggering. All users, not only art specialists, can consult the same resource, where art is available in a single place, searchable at high speed. With Internet access, a child in some remote corner of the earth, who may never set foot in any art museum or have occasion to peruse an expensive art book, can examine masterpieces from around the world amassed over centuries. An education section full of self-tests and projects allows users to curate their own exhibition. Other features include a partial tour of the White House with Michelle Obama and professional videos on YouTube.com /googleartproject. Online technology makes possible the democratization of knowledge, and Google has proved itself to be a cultural leader in this important respect.

Stolen Childhoods

On April 16, the World Day Against Child Slavery, most Americans were probably more preoccupied with escaping the clutches of the I.R.S. than with helping children escape from slavery That is unfortunate because as U.S. and European consumers directly contribute to the problem, they could contribute to its resolution.

The Spanish Confederation of Religious reports that slavery is part of the daily lives of most consumers in the affluent world, who are unwitting collaborators in the theft of 400 million childhoods. The bananas consumers eat, the coffee they drink "might have been produced by the sweat of Latin American and African children," according to the confederation, and "the carpets on which [they] walk have been woven by little Pakistani slaves." Hundreds of other consumer goods are similarly produced by the illegal and compelled labor of children.

The problem crosses all continents and borders. In India and Afghanistan, children work in construction; in Myanmar, in sugar cane fields. In China they prepare explosives and fireworks; and in the Democratic Republic of Congo, thousands extract minerals used for computers, mobile phones and many other of the developed world's commonplace gadgets.

The choice of April 16 as the date for this annual commemoration is not random. Iqbal Masih had worked as a slave in Pakistan's textile industry since the age of 4, but managed to escape at 10 to become a global voice for the liberation of children. He was murdered on April 16, 1995, at the age of 12 by agents of Pakistan's textile mafia. This little boy's voice was silenced by death. The silence of consumers has been had much more cheaply.

Requiem for the 8-Hour Day?

May Day is celebrated in 80 nations around the world as International Workers' Day, an expression of the day's historical connection to the long struggle for the eight-hour day (and, not coincidentally, a memorial for St. Joseph the Worker). May Day offers an annual reminder that working conditions most people now take for granted were earned at often mortal cost by previous generations of workers.

Today a combination of historical amnesia, declining union power, technological innovation and high rates of unemployment collude to threaten the eight-hour standard. The ascendancy of the "independent contractor" in place of wage or salaried employees and the remarkable capacity of mobile gadgets lift limits on working hours. Lunch hour is conducted between mouthfuls over a computer, and "flex time" structures can mean the clock is never punched as modern workers "manage work flow" after hours and over the weekend.

Surveying labor history this May Day suggests too much—sick time, overtime compensation, humane work schedules and safety nets for the unemployed—has been taken for granted, and too many hard-won victories have been surrendered without a fight by contemporary laborers. In May 1891 "Rerum Novarum," in an attempt to address the rising social unrest expressed by the eight-hour day movement, acknowledged the dignity and importance of work and demanded minimum standards of rights and responsibilities for both workers and employers. It is "neither just nor human" to "grind [working people] down with excessive labor" (No. 42), Pope Leo XIII wrote. In an era of both high productivity and high unemployment, with compensation flat for decades and working people greatly enfeebled as a social force, the pope's admonition remains worth attending to.

True Brotherhood

The scandal of deaths and injuries resulting from college and university fraternity hazing—like debates over guns or the corruption of college sports—resurfaces again. Each new horror slaps the public in the face, and people ask why. Responsible institutions take steps toward reform; others balk. Though most schools have not seen a fraternity pledge die, recent reports on hazing at two Ivy League schools offer wake-up calls to schools that may have allowed a crisis to develop and an admonition to those that tolerate hazing in any form.

What follows is not about all fraternities, but about those fraternities that have violated both the law and morality and labeled it "brotherhood" or "friendship."

In Rolling Stone on April 12, Janet Reitman profiled Andrew Lohse, a jazz musician from New Jersey, who idolized his grandfather, the personification of the ideal Dartmouth "true bro." The grandfather was preppy-looking, excellent at cocktail parties, athletic, intelligent and rich. The wealth comes to the fraternity brothers when they graduate and move into the corporate culture, particularly to Goldman Sachs, where the "corporate culture mirrors the fraternity culture." Mr. Lohse joined Sigma Alpha Epsilon in October 2009 and wallowed in booze, sex and drugs for over two years. Then he asked, "Why do supposed 'brothers' do these things to one another?"

In January 2012 he published an exposé in the Dartmouth student paper. ΣAE, he wrote, "made its pledges swim in a kiddie pool of vomit, urine, fecal matter, semen and rotten food; chug cups of vinegar, which in one case made a pledge vomit blood." Ms. Reitman's confidential interviews confirmed Mr. Lohse's account, but the Greek system invoked its "culture of silence" toward the authorities.

In response to Mr. Lohse's article, 104 faculty members condemned hazing as "moral thuggery." A 1967 Dartmouth alumnus told Ms. Reitman, "No one has physically died at Dartmouth yet...the system destroys the souls of hundreds of students every year."

When Marie Andre, mother of the Cornell University student George Deshumes, saw her son's corpse on the hospital gurney, wrote Michael Winerip in The New York Times, "She let out a horrible wail." He had joined the ΣAE fraternity because "they would help him get a job." In a hazing game, pledges were told to kidnap two sophomores, blindfold them, tie their hands and feet, and deliver them to a town house where they were force-fed vodkas until they vomited. When Deshumes passed out, they brought him back to the fraternity house and left him on the library couch. He was found dead in the morning.

All refused to talk to authorities; but four will go on trial this month.

Hank Nuwer, a journalism professor at Franklin College, Ind., has counted 104 hazing deaths on U.S. college campuses since 1970. Alcohol, says Mr. Winerip, is the ingredient that turns pledging into hazing. Eighty percent of hazing deaths have involved alcohol. Two national fraternities, Phi Kappa Sigma and Phi Delta Theta, have made their houses alcohol free. Binghamton University has terminated pledging. In 2010 an ΣAE alumnus proposed making their houses dry by 2014, but last July's national convention said no.

Many universities are proud of the constructive role their fraternities play. This is particularly justified when the school itself, inspired by its religious identity and mission, appeals to the students' better instincts and joins morality and the mission. In 2001 Santa Clara University, concerned with Greek exclusivity and misconduct, terminated support for the Greek system, which later established itself off campus. But fraternity members are still subject to civil law and, as students, to the university's code of conduct. The frats have continued to thrive under this reduced school supervision.

Whatever the formal relationship between an institution and its students, if a school believes in moral education, it should set idealistic goals and support those values. This goes for teams, the student press and theater, as well as social fraternities and sororities. This means clear university and fraternity statutes that distinguish between rules and so-called traditions, like hazing; membership open to all; complete removal of alcohol from pledging rituals; and social projects that require not just an occasional visit to a soup kitchen but a sustained commitment that benefits the poor.

Finally, Catholic colleges, with or without fraternities, should teach young men and women the full meaning of words like *brother, sister* and *friend*. When Jesus called his apostles friends, he did not mean that they were fun to be with or that they should "network" to sell more fish. He meant they should love and serve one another to the point of sacrifice.

SUDAN

Bishops Fear New War Is Imminent After Border Clashes


Anger rises in South Sudan after an air attack on a market leaves three dead and many wounded on April 23.

Church leaders in South Sudan fear that a new war will break out in the region soon unless the United Nations and African Union intervene. Tension between Sudan and South Sudan spiked after the temporary occupation of the oil-field town of Heglig by military from South Sudan. Other disputed territory includes Abyei, an area rich in oil on the border of the two states. On April 21 a Catholic church in Khartoum's Al-Jiraif district was destroyed by a Muslim mob, and a Sudanese air force attack on the South Sudan city of Bentiu on April 23 killed three people, including a child, and wounded at least 10 others.

South Sudanese troops overran the Sudanese army in Heglig on April 9, claiming the area under a 1956 agreement that the South believes set the border north of the town. Heglig had been used as a staging ground for military assaults by Sudan on South Sudan, particularly on the nearby city of Abyei, since May 2011. South Sudanese forces agreed to withdraw on April 20, but forces on both sides of the border appear to be preparing for more conflict. South Sudan seceded from Sudan after a referendum in January 2011 and officially became an independent nation on July 9.

Auxiliary Bishop Daniel Adwok Kur of Khartoum, Sudan, said that tensions between Sudan and South Sudan, the world's newest nation, could be defused if the United Nations and the African Union determined the proper border between the two coun-

WOMEN RELIGIOUS

Vatican Seeks Reform of L.C.W.R. After Doctrinal Assessment

A response from the three-member presidency of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious to a call for institutional reform may be weeks away, said the L.C.W.R. communications director, Sister Anne Marie Sanders. L.C.W.R.'s leadership was still in Rome, Sister Sanders reported on April 20, but upon its return would consult with its members to formulate a response to a critical "doctrinal assessment" released by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Sister Sanders said the conference's leadership had been in Rome on a routine visit and were surprised to receive the C.D.F. assessment and stunned by its contents.

Citing "serious doctrinal problems which affect many in consecrated life," the Vatican announced a major reform of the conference on April 18 aimed at ensuring the fidelity of women religious to Catholic teaching. In addition, the Vatican announced that Archbishop J. Peter Sartain of Seattle will provide "review, guidance and approval, where necessary, of the work" of the L.C.W.R.

"While there has been a great deal of work on the part of L.C.W.R. promoting issues of social justice in harmony with the church's social doctrine, it is silent on the right to life from conception to natural death, a question that is part of the lively public debate about abortion and euthanasia in the United States," the doctrinal congregation said. "Further, issues of crucial importance in the life of the church and society, such as the church's biblical view of family life and human sexuality, are not part of the L.C.W.R. agenda in a way that promotes church teaching."

The Vatican also found that "public statements by the L.C.W.R. that disagree with or challenge positions taken by the bishops, who are the church's authentic teachers of faith and morals, are not compatible with its purpose." According to the Vatican, such deviations from Catholic teaching have provoked a crisis "characterized by a diminution of the fundamental

tries. Bishop Adwok, who is from the south, said civilians in the disputed area around Heglig, a small town in southern Kordofan State on the edge of rich oil fields, are being victimized by attacks from both sides.

Dan Griffin, Sudan adviser for the U.S. bishops' Catholic Relief Services, said on April 17 that disaster is "looming" and that the current border conflict could give rise to a new war. "We've got to get the message out to prevent Africa's longest-running war from returning," he said a day before he was to travel to South Sudan to assess the situation and to check on C.R.S. programs in the region.

He called for negotiations mediated by the United Nations and the African Union to end the conflict and to review the 1956 documents establishing borders among various tribes in the region. Griffin said repeated shelling and aerial bombardments on Abyei by Sudanese forces must also be investigated.

A church source in the south said there appears to be strong popular support for the decision to confront Khartoum in Heglig, although "one must keep in mind that South Sudan [is] an authoritarian regime, so if someone were to openly oppose the government policy, they would have some risks." The source added, "The regime of Khartoum is no less oppressive and has mobilized the population in view of an open conflict with the South." With governments in Khartoum and Juba, capitals of the the north and south respectively, tilting toward conflict, "only a decisive intervention of the international community can stop the war."

On Easter, Archbishop Paolino Loro Lukudo of Juba, South Sudan, called for an end to the fighting, saying violence does not meld with God's intention of peace for all people as promised by Christ's resurrection. He also said clashes among rival groups in neighboring Jonglei State must cease.

Christological center and focus of religious consecration."

The L.C.W.R., a Maryland-based umbrella group that claims about 1,500 leaders of U.S. women's communities as members, represents about 80 percent of the country's 57,000 women religious. In a statement on April 19, the presidency of the L.C.W.R. described itself "stunned by the conclusions of the doctrinal assessment.... Because the leadership of L.C.W.R. has the custom of meeting annually with the staff of C.D.F. in Rome and because the conference follows canonically approved statutes, we were taken by surprise.

"This is a moment of great import for religious life and the wider church. We ask your prayers as we meet with the L.C.W.R. National Board within the coming month to review the mandate and prepare a response," the statement said.

The C.D.F. assessment was based on an investigation that began on behalf of the Vatican in April 2008. The C.D.F. concluded in January 2011 that "the current doctrinal and pastoral situation of L.C.W.R. is...a matter of serious concern." One issue unexpectedly cited by the C.D.F. was the conference's collaboration with a Catholic social justice lobby in Washington called Network.

"We are deeply puzzled by the findings in the Assessment," Network responded. "Despite its references to Network, we were never asked to provide any information about our mission or activities. Since our founding by 47 Catholic Sisters, Network's mission of lobbying, organizing and educating for social and economic justice has been rooted in the Gospel and Catholic Social Teaching.... We are grateful for our close relationship with L.C.W.R. throughout our history."

Women religious and others attend a 40th anniversary event for Network on April 14 at Trinity University in Washington, D.C.

In Haiti, Cholera Crisis

An upswing in cholera in Haiti has prompted health care workers and aid agencies to step up efforts to prevent the water-borne disease from spreading as the rainy season begins. Those most at risk are the 500,000 people who remain in often shabby settlements where thousands took shelter after a January 2010 earthquake devastated Haiti. Catholic Relief Services was among the aid agencies that boosted the distribution of soap, water purification tablets and hygiene information within 24 hours of the initial spike in early April following a period of heavy rain. C.R.S. reported reaching 22,000 families within days; in Port-au-Prince, agency workers installed or repaired sanitation stations in 12 settlements. There was no cholera in Haiti until the arrival of U.N. troops after the earthquake. Investigators traced the outbreak to faulty equipment at a camp of Nepalese soldiers. More than 7,050 people have died, and more than 532,000 people have contracted the disease.

New Bishop in China

Bishop Joseph Chen Gong'ao was ordained on April 19 as the bishop of Nanchong in China's Sichuan Province. The 47-year-old prelate was approved by Pope Benedict XVI and is recognized by the Chinese government. This is the second mutually approved ordination in recent months and has been widely interpreted as a positive development in Sino-Vatican relations. Bishop Chen said that his priority is to enhance the quality of priests, seminarians and nuns so that "the diocese's evangelistic work would be developed in a more systematic manner." Bishop Chen added that he would organize more training for laypeople, especially catechists, and hopes to build a new cathedral to replace the Sacred Heart of Jesus Cathedral, which was damaged by an earthquake in 2008 and is, he said, too small to accommodate large-scale activities.

House Budget 'Fails'

In letters to congressional leaders, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops urged a "circle of protection" around programs that serve "the least among us." The letters, from Bishop Stephen E. Blaire of Stockton, Calif., chairman of the Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, and Bishop Richard E. Pates of Des Moines, Iowa, chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace, were sent after the House of Representatives adopted a $3.5 trillion budget resolution on March 27 written by Rep. Paul Ryan, Republican of Wisconsin. The plan calls for spending cuts in nonmilitary programs, turning Medicaid into a block grant program administered by the states, reshaping Medicare over the next decade and simplifying the tax code by closing loopholes and lowering individual and corporate tax rates. The bishops called for a budget that reflects a "shared sacrifice by all, including raising adequate revenues," the elimination of unnecessary military spending and fairly addressing long-term costs associated with health insurance and retirement costs. Bishop Blaire said the House-passed budget "fails to meet these moral criteria."

From CNS and other sources.

NEWS BRIEFS

Edwin Gariguez

On April 16 the Rev. **Edwin Gariguez** of the Philippines was awarded the Goldman Environmental Prize for his "fearless" leadership in protecting the environment and the indigenous community on the island of Mindoro. ✦ The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops on April 17 appealed a ruling by a federal court in Massachusetts that the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services violated the First Amendment in a contract to provide services to **victims of human trafficking** with the conference. ✦ Ireland's parliament rejected legislation on April 19 that would have allowed a controversial 1992 Supreme Court **ruling permitting abortion** in limited circumstances to take effect. ✦ The Catholic bishops of Guinea-Bissau in West Africa on April 17 repudiated a **military coup** and called for the respect of democratic rule and for prayer to resolve the conflict peacefully. ✦ Bishop Richard G. Lennon of Cleveland on April 17 said he would not appeal a Vatican ruling but would **reopen 12 parishes** to promote "peace and unity" in the diocese. ✦ **Cecil Chaudhry**, a Catholic who fought for human rights for religious minorities in Pakistan, died on April 13 in Lahore at the age of 72.

KYLE T. KRAMER

Ark-itechture

Is it just me, or is life becoming more chaotic lately? Modern chaos theory posits the fundamental unpredictability of complex systems, and recent history seems to bear out this theory in spades: global financial instability, climate change and even the Arab Spring are unfolding in ways no one can foresee. How do we live and thrive within such chaos, when traditional Christian assurances of God's steady hand on the tiller of history often seem quaint and trite?

The psalmist may have lifted his eyes toward the hills for help, but I have found guidance by looking down: at the floor of the Archabbey Church of Our Lady of Einsiedeln, the anchor of monastic prayer at the Benedictine monastery where I work. Built in the late 19th century, the massive Romanesque church was thoroughly renovated a century later. The new floor has an intricate, captivating design: a series of six multicolored Sierpinski triangles that stretch along the church's nave, intertwined with a serpentine band of white marble tile. The floor recalls the Cosmati tilework of medieval Italy but also has deep connections to modern chaos theory.

The regular, ordered (indeed, fractal) geometry of the triangles contrasts strongly with the floor's lovely but patternless, chaotic background of rose-hued terrazzo and cream-colored broken marble. I see the floor as an important symbol of Benedictine life. The Benedictine order arose amid the political turmoil of the crumbling Roman Empire, when all bets were off for the future of Western Europe. For centuries, Benedictine communities cultivated an organized, stable way of life amid the surrounding chaos: patiently helping rebuild Europe's shattered agriculture and economy, preserving its intellectual heritage and serving as islands of relative calm and sanity for monks, nearby villagers and all to whom they opened their doors in hospitality. In some sense, the Benedictines built arks, in which they rode out the storm of the Dark Ages.

Given the rapid pace, large scale and chaotic nature of change in the modern world, I wonder if ark-building may be in order for our time as well. Like the arks of Noah and the early Benedictines, modern arks can help preserve what is vital and beautiful but threatened.

My family and I see our farm as an ark, where we cultivate the out-of-fashion arts of self-sufficiency and try to keep verdant one small patch of the natural world. Perhaps families and parish communities can be arks, holding on to essential relationships and virtues amid a culture that fails to understand or support them. Maybe the small local hardware store and grocery are arks, struggling against encroaching big-box chains, or the beleaguered nonprofit enterprise, doggedly battling against inner-city blight and rampant crime.

Just as modern arks will take forms different from Noah's pitch-covered boat, faithful ark-building must also follow one very different rule: Noah's solitary ark was sealed off from the surrounding world. But we, even as we draw necessary boundaries around what we hold dear, must not wall ourselves off from others: from their need, their suffering or simply their differing beliefs.

Today's arks must not have fear-battened hatches, but open windows and doors, in a spirit of generous hospitality that recognizes Christ in the needs and gifts of the stranger. Likewise, no single ark can survive on its own; we must find ways to link ark to ark to ark through local neighborliness or global communication networks or both.

No one gets through the voyage without the risk of being swept overboard.

Floating as arks do on the rough sea of chaos and radical uncertainty that is the post-modern era, their open hatches will take on some water and their crews will be lashed by breaking waves. No one gets through the voyage without a dousing and without the risk of being swept overboard.

But with sturdy vessels, upheld by prayer, perhaps we may come to see chaos not simply as a fearsome threat. From the decks of our arks, perhaps we may come to see—as chaos theory also speculates—a larger, stranger, more dynamic, even beautiful sort of order and creativity within what appears to be disorder and disarray. Could it be that in some mysterious way, the Creator of both order and chaos still guides the arks, but on courses far less straight and sure than we once thought?

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

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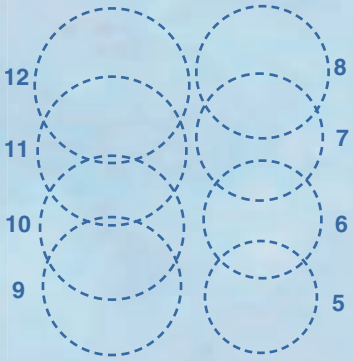

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An egret searches for food among the estimated 150 tons of trash accumulated in the Los Angeles River in 2006.

PHOTO: REUTERS/COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS/BOB RIHA, JR.

A Christian response to our throwaway society

Trash Talk

BY GREGORY M. KENNEDY

Every morning my colleague's desktop captured my passing eye. Nestled beneath the computer screen between a cup full of pens and a stapler, she kept her midmorning snack. Sometimes it was two chocolates in gold foil or a pair of sugar biscuits bound together in cellophane, sometimes rose-colored paper enveloping a candy from the Philippines, and always fruit. One day it was an apple, another an orange, a third day a banana. Regardless of the variety, the fruit was invariably as meticulously wrapped as its companion foodstuffs.

Now plastic wrap around an apple struck me as redundant. Plastic wrap around a banana snug within its peel struck me as downright ridiculous. I could not help staring incredulously each morning at these doubly preserved specimens, but I never gathered the gumption to challenge my colleague's packaging philosophy.

Why, I wondered, would a person spend so much time, energy and money to shroud a banana in plastic wrap, which would later require more time, energy and money to get rid of? After all, the good Creator already outfitted the banana with a protective cover. What purpose did that extra layer of petrochemical veneer serve?

By no means would my colleague stand alone in the dock before such questions. Retailers and consumers apparently believe that a licit commercial transaction cannot occur unless it terminates in a bag or a box, a bottle or a blister pack doomed to a final appointment with a garbage pail.

GREGORY M. KENNEDY, S.J., *is a student of theology at Regis College, Toronto, Canada. He is the author of* An Ontology of Trash *(SUNY Press, 2007).*

The Artificial Peel

In *Gone Tomorrow: The Hidden Life of Garbage,* Heather Rogers estimates that 80 percent of U.S. products, like this plastic wrap, are discarded after a single use. Of course, it takes a special kind of person to use a banana more than once. Food, the quintessential consumer good, has become a Grade-A disposable in our overstocked markets. A supersized portion of comestible goods in this country does not receive even the fleeting honor of a single use. The average American household wastes a quarter of all the food it presumably worked hard to bring home. Add to that the other wastage that occurs along the entire length of the production and distribution line—from the farm to the supermarket—and the total percentage of food wasted before tasted approaches a shocking and shaming 40 percent.

But except in very rare instances, like pie-throwing contests, food is not intentionally created in order to be tossed out. The same does not hold for food's protective accessorizing. Of all municipal solid waste, the single largest share, 30 percent, goes to containers and packaging: polystyrene "clamshells," tin cans, plastic this, that and the other thing. Nary a bit of food comes to our lips that has not recently emerged from an artificial peel.

At first glance, it may seem that the plastic cling wrap and the organic banana peel differ only chemically, since they share the same function. Since Aristotle, philosophers have looked to an object's putative purpose in seeking to define its essence. But only the consumer regards the banana peel as packaging. From the standpoint of the banana tree, the peel plays a vital part in procreation. To the soil, the peel means future nutrients and increased fertility.

Irreducible to a single purpose, natural things exist as waste only temporarily and conditionally. When out with me one evening picking Saskatoon berries, a friend expressed anxiety about the coming nightfall. "If we don't pick these bushes clean, all their berries will go to waste." I conceded a limited truth to this statement. As far as our stomachs were concerned, the berries would not fulfill their function if they never reached our mouths.

Had we consulted the bush and berries, however, we might have slowed our hurried harvest. With respect to reproduction, the berries existed as ingeniously designed aerial seed-distribution units. In boyishly biological terms: birds eat the berries, fly a bit and eject the seeds as they pass over the various kinds of soils one hears about in parables. We, the civilized consumers, on the other hand, would, by eating the seeds, destine them to destruction in a sewage treatment plant. So where exactly was the waste, on the bush or in our plumbing?

Plastic wrap does not enjoy this multiplicity of purpose nor the redemptive ambiguity of natural "waste." Its design is much less intelligent. Once the wrap fulfills its single function, it is good for nothing. Or it is about as good as nothing because it has no more to achieve. If function and essence do go together in human-made objects, then a consumer item deprived of function will also be devoid of essence. It becomes waste unconditionally and forever, since it no longer serves any possible end.

Here we have an object that always existed as waste. Such

Bottles, Bottles Everywhere

Of all overpackaging, the most egregious offender is the disposable plastic water bottle. Bottled water consistently ranks below tap water in terms of bacteria count and even, in blind taste tests, flavor. In North America the typical bottled water consumer voluntarily pays a price inflated about 6,000 times for this inferior product. Some would call this stupid. I call it uncivilized.

In *The Myth of the Machine*, the historian Lewis Mumford points out that were it not for watertight containers capable of storing and transporting liquids, the construction of higher civilization could never have begun. Water bottles form the basis of all modern societies. To trash them thoughtlessly after just one fill is a modern act of barbarity.

After two decades of such atavistic practices, North American water drinkers are again striving to be civilized. Some college campuses and municipalities have banned bottled water. In Canada, much of the initial impetus for getting off the bottle came from the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace (www.devp.org). This lay-led organization, established by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, has mounted campaigns for intelligent hydration. Its goal was to have all Catholics sign the following pledge (It's not too late to add your name): "I commit to working to create bottled-water free zones in my home and in the public places where I spend my time. These include my university, school, parish, workplace and community. I will also support efforts to have bottled water replaced by tap water in all municipal, provincial [or state] and federal spaces where safe water is available."

absolute waste, waste considered from all possible angles, waste built right into the conception of an object, I philosophically classify as "trash."

The Single-Use Lifestyle

The genius of modern technology lies in its unprecedented ability to split a product from its production. Consumers desire commodities, like tasty food, amusing entertainment, easy transportation. Devices deliver these desirables. Their delivery advances toward perfection the closer they come to providing in-demand products without demanding anything themselves. The perfect device remains completely hidden behind the convenience of the consumable commodity.

Convenience, the rock on which we have built the church of consumption, relies absolutely on the division between commodity and device. Digging one's own potatoes is not terribly convenient, especially when compared with diving into a 7-Eleven for a sealed-fresh bag of salt-and-vinegar chips. A complex, technological and mostly invisible industrial food system is the globalized device that feeds our hunger for fast food. As an essential part of this "device," the sole function of packaging is to deliver the food commodity in the most convenient and trustworthy manner possible. Its single function necessitates its single use.

If the consumer had to fold the plastic wrap and bring it home for tomorrow's snack or had to wash and dry the take-away cup in preparation for the next injection of java or had to return the aluminum can to the cola company for a refill then these devices would be delivering their goods inconveniently. The whole point of the device is to disappear.

So the banana peel and the plastic wrap differ much more than just chemically. The peel is multivalent, it exists and functions within an integrated web of relationships. Each relationship lets it be in a unique way.

The plastic wrap, on the other hand, is expressly designed to deliver just one value: the protection of goods from air, dirt and germs. Once the food is gone, so goes the plastic's raison d'etre. Materially, the object has the same qualities it had when first spooled off the roll. But ontologically, it has become irredeemable waste. How many of us would entrust another sandwich to it? No, it must be trashed. It has no place in our consumer world.

Garbage Collectors

We all know that the disposables we discard do not really disappear. Yet as consumers we have precious little to do with the trash we generate. Our elaborate system of garbage collection, incineration, disposal and recycling is a sophisticated device that delivers to most urban consumers the commodities of sanitation, cleanliness and obliviousness.

Hiding our trash within the technological division of

commodity and device allows us to consume without concerning ourselves about consequences. Christians ought to look warily on deeply divided houses; we have been told they are fated to fall. In fact, the collapse has long since begun. In spite of all our environmental consciousness and the dematerialization of the digital age, the quantity of trash compounds. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Americans generated 2.68 pounds of municipal solid waste per person per day in 1960. By 2010 that total had bloated to 4.43 pounds. The fatter the wedge we drive between the commodity and its device, the more trash we stuff into the gap.

We Catholics consider ourselves people of the book, but we are equally people of the body. Our belief in the incarnation and physical resurrection of Christ requires us to take matter very seriously. We are living in a material world sanctified by these twin mysteries. A real feel for this place allows us to join Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's praise to the "Glorious Lord Christ: the divine influence secretly diffused and active in the depths of matter, and the dazzling centre where all the innumerable fibers of the manifold meet."

As both inheritors and inhabitants of these mysteries, we are called to concern ourselves with the material of our world. Raw convenience, as far as I recall, did not figure in the Beatitudes. Contemporary, consumer culture is not merely a culture of death. It is a culture of nullity, built out of the "antimatter" of disposable objects. Trash is the technological outcome of reducing a richly interrelated organ of creation to a single self-destructive function. Should it not trouble us that our entire system of production is a device that is efficient at transmuting "the divine influence secretly diffused and active in the depths of matter" into landfill? Shouldn't we, as partakers of the Eucharist, where Christ reconfirms his real presence in matter, cultivate a distaste for disposables—objects that, made to be good for nothing, already are as good as nothing?

ON THE WEB
Remembering Michael Harrington's *The Other America.*
americamagazine.org/podcast

Some years after World War II, French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre said, "We were never more free than during German occupation." Sartre was an atheist, but Catholics can appreciate his flair for paradox. Under occupation, every act took on significance; every act, no matter how prosaic, held out the chance for bravery and nonconformity. In a throwaway society, analogous opportunities offer themselves. Every shopping bag you refuse, every coffee cup you re-use, every piece of plastic you eschew, takes you another step toward "the dazzling centre where all the innumerable fibers of the manifold meet." A

Power Surge

How faith helps answer our energy challenges

BY JIM GUNSHINAN

Since the beginning of the 20th century, oil has played the role of cheap labor in the U.S. economy and in economies around the world. Traditionally, we have been interested in the horsepower of our car engines, but what if we measured the energy we use in terms of human labor? To power a typical American home would require a small village of people riding bicycles powering electric generators 24 hours a day. Even after the oil shocks of the 1970s, we still expect the earth to provide an abundance of oil and other fossil fuels for our use. And we do not want to pay the real price, which includes the costs of the degradation of our environment and the moral and military costs of maintaining a steady and cheap supply of oil from the Middle East, the Gulf of Mexico, Nigeria and other troubled regions.

I edit a magazine called Home Energy, which covers energy-efficient, healthy and affordable home building and renovation for an audience of energy-efficiency experts, energy auditors and home performance contractors. And I have found home performance contractors to be like doctors on a house call: they go into homes, diagnose problems—like high energy bills, unhealthy indoor air, mold and plain, old discomfort—and offer solutions. For most houses that means sealing up leaks in the building envelope and the duct systems, increasing insulation levels in the attics and walls and making sure the home has a controlled supply of fresh air.

Counter to the prevailing wisdom of some in the green building movement, efficient and healthy housing usually does not require new windows, ground source heat pumps, photovoltaic cells on the roof, complicated lighting control systems and other high-tech gizmos. Compared with the real costs of fossil fuels, energy efficient and healthy homes are a bargain. And since buildings consume almost half the energy we use, what is good for houses is good for the environment. Unfortunately, though, insulation and air sealing are less appealing topics than P.V. panels and touch-screen, whole-house monitoring systems.

At a green building conference, I talked with a builder about one of his clients, a single man living in a 5,000-square-foot home in the Oakland Hills, who had about $1 million worth of P.V. panels installed on the roof of his mansion. He wanted a "net zero energy house"—that is, one that produces as much energy as it consumes over the course of a year. I see that house looming over the landscape whenever I drive east on Highway 24 just before the Caldecott Tunnel, which separates my office in Berkeley from the cities of Orinda, Lafayette and Walnut Creek, where I live in a small home that uses less energy than the average U.S. home. By world standards, however, that is

JIM GUNSHINAN *is editor of Home Energy, a magazine based in Berkeley, Calif.*

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/SERGEJ KHAKIMULLIN

nothing to brag about. Consider: $1 million dollars could have retrofitted 500 homes in the poor and crime-ridden areas of West Oakland. Over time, the investment in energy efficiency would have paid for itself and more.

For the poor and working poor, housing is an economic challenge and a health challenge. A study of low-income housing in Boston found that making a home or apartment more efficient, with healthier indoor air, increases the health and well-being of the occupants. After homes were retrofitted, the occupants were given some basic information about energy efficient and healthy living—keeping harsh chemicals out of the living areas, only using nontoxic pest control methods, using an exhaust fan in the bathroom and kitchen. The children in these homes had fewer visits to the emergency room with asthma attacks and spent less time away from school because of sickness than they did before the retrofitting, and in comparison with children who lived in unhealthy homes (see the studies in "Battling Childhood Asthma," by Kimberly Vermeer, in Home Energy, 2006). Making a home more energy efficient also makes it healthier, and vice versa. You do not have to sacrifice the one for the other.

The Department of Energy's Weatherization Assistance Program received more than $6 billion through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, also known as President Obama's stimulus bill. With that money, nonprofit and for-profit weatherization agencies around the country made more than 600,000 low-income homes healthier and more affordable to live in. That is a lot of money, but it is money well spent.

It is not just the poor who need help. We recently received in our office a letter from a couple in rural Ohio, both schoolteachers, with two young children. They live in an old farmhouse that has been with their family for more than 100 years. But their combined salaries leave many of the needed repairs on their home—new siding, insulation in the walls and attic, a new, more efficient furnace—out of reach financially. Without help, they may lose their home. Right now, they cannot afford to live in a house with high energy bills either. Nor can they allow their children, who are prone to asthma attacks, to reside in a drafty house that collects extra moisture in the wintertime, which can lead to mold problems. We connected that family with some programs in Ohio that serve rural areas by offering financing for home-energy retrofitting to low- and moderate-income families.

There are about 50-million homes in the United States, plus millions more apartment units that house poor, working poor, middle class and upper-income families; most of the houses are in need of some kind of energy retrofit.

All About Behavior

Buildings scientists have come to realize that making a home more efficient is not the same thing as saving energy. Compared with homes in the 1950s, current U.S. homes are about twice as big, house half the number of people and use twice the energy. We have made great gains in heating and cooling efficiency and appliance efficiency in the last 50 years or so, but this has been more than offset by our hunger for bigger houses and more electronic devices—all those gadgets around the house that use energy even when they are considered to be off. Among these are cellphone chargers, DVD players, home theater systems and other electronic devices nicknamed "vampires." These creatures of the night consume up to 10 percent of the energy used in homes. So technology sometimes helps and sometimes hinders our ability to use natural resources wisely. There are now regular national gatherings, like the Behavior, Energy and Climate Change Conference, that convene experts in technology, sociology, economics and psychology to discuss how we can motivate people to conserve energy.

We have made great gains in heating and cooling efficiency in the last 50 years, but this has been more than offset by our hunger for bigger houses and more electronic devices.

At one conference in 2009, I heard a speaker describe a study that looked at people's attitudes toward the things they buy. As one example, he described a middle-aged man he interviewed. They talked about cars. The man had an old, beat-up Honda Accord when he was in high school and college, which he loved, because driving it gave him a feeling of independence and self-reliance. When he got married and started working for a bank, he was told by his superiors that he needed to drive a car more fitting to his profession. He bought a BMW. Then when he and his wife began raising kids, they felt insecure on the road with all the big S.U.V.'s and pick-up trucks on the highways, so they bought their own big S.U.V. Later, when the kids were grown and living on their own, they bought a hybrid car—not a Prius but a six-cylinder Honda Accord hybrid, which got a little

better mileage than a regular Accord. It allowed them to feel they were being good to the environment without sacrificing the feeling of power and security on the road. When asked which car he liked best, he said it was the beat-up Honda Accord he had when he was a teenager. He was not completely conscious of it at the time, but driving the old, beat-up car fit the narrative he lived by, that of an independent and self-reliant teenager. After that, he was following someone else's narrative—his boss's, the banking industry's and that of a society insecure after the terrorist attacks on our country in 2001.

A Change in the Narrative

Our faith traditions provide an answer to our energy challenges. The overriding narrative of our consumer culture says that success means having a big, expensive car and a huge house with lots of electronic gizmos, heated towel racks and complicated rooflines that are hard to air-seal. The dominant religious ethos says that we are rugged individuals and that monetary success implies a blessing by God. With that narrative in the minds of homeowners everywhere, it is no wonder we have energy problems.

I learned in a college Christian ethics class that Catholics support a "thick theory of human rights." The rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are a "thin" form of human rights. The right to form unions and bargain collectively and the rights to food, shelter, clothing, education, health care and a living wage are the thick version. That is what centuries of Catholic social teaching have promoted.

We find the same wisdom in other traditions and among scientists. John Muir, the great environmentalist and one of the fathers of the national parks, said, "When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe." Good science shows us that we are all connected. So does good religion. When we all recognize that a society where everyone has a decent place to live is a healthy and prosperous society, and when we look at the earth as a precious life partner to whom we are all intimately connected, then we will be able to take major steps toward a sustainable way of life on the planet.

Good building science, technology and the efforts of women and men willing to crawl in buggy crawlspaces and hot, spider-infested attics to make homes more efficient and healthy have taken us a long way. Yet all of us energy-users need a change of attitude to complete the journey. We need to accept a different narrative, one that is truer to our human nature. That narrative values independence but also cooperation, a sense that we can create a better life and a realization that we live in a limited world, where the things we use every day are a precious gift that we have to preserve for the use of future generations. In other words, we have to learn to live with hope that we can build a better future. A

THEATER | MICHAEL V. TUETH

‘NEWSIES’ STRIKES BACK

A cult film comes to life

‘Extra! Extra! Read all about it! Hollywood Flop Becomes Broadway Sensation!” That headline is what the producers hoped for as **Newsies: The Musical** arrived in April to “occupy Broadway.”

The play is based on a working-class rebellion in 1899 during which thousands of newsboys went on strike against the media titans of their day, William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer. Now, as high unemployment persists and workers’ wages and benefits are cut, the labor theme is especially timely. Audiences will also relate to the power of media moguls to squeeze from the lowliest workers an extra penny of profit.

The Broadway production is a revised version of the 1992 Disney film, “Newsies.” Even though the film featured the future Academy Award winner Christian Bale, with music by Alan Menken, who would also go on to win numerous Oscars, it was a box-office failure. It appeared between two other Disney blockbuster films, both animated musicals, “Beauty and the Beast” (1991) and “The Lion King” (1994), but the live-action musical found no comparable audience. Over the last 20 years, however, “Newsies” became a cult favorite in its VHS and DVD versions, which emboldened Disney to try the story again, this time on stage.

Disney Theatrical Productions has reason to hope the show will succeed on Broadway. “The Lion King” continues to play to full houses after 15 years. “Beauty and the Beast” ran for 13 years; “Mary Poppins” is now in its seventh year. But Disney has also had its share of theatrical failures. Neither “The Little Mermaid” nor “Tarzan” transferred well from screen to stage. So what are the chances for “Newsies?”

It has a lot going for it. Menken has added several new songs to those he wrote for the film. Harvey Fierstein, with four Tony Awards to his credit, has written the book, and another multi-award winner, Jeff Calhoun, is directing. And the play’s incarnation last autumn at the Paper Mill Playhouse in New Jersey was a hit, prompting The Wall Street Journal to call the Broadway production “one of the most anticipated musicals of the season.”

Jack Kelley (Jeremy Jordan, center) and the newsies.

PHOTO: T. CHARLES ERICKSON, COURTESY OF PAPER MILL PLAYHOUSE

The Rise of Jeremy Jordan

Then there is the acting. In the role of Jack Kelly, the charismatic strike-leader, the show spotlights a genuine Broadway star-in-the-making, Jeremy Jordan. Therein lies a story. After the run of "Newsies" at Paper Mill, Jordan landed the lead role in the ill-fated musical version of "Bonnie and Clyde." But as the gods of the theater would have it, that show closed within weeks, and Jordan was able to return to his role in "Newsies" for its Broadway run. Combining the looks of a young Brando and Gene Kelly, Jordan is the real deal. He owns the stage as the sensitive tough guy (Jack has hidden artistic talents) with a "Noo Yawk" mouth on him; he challenges the newspaper bigwigs, especially Pulitzer, and charms Katherine (Kara Lindsay), the bright young lady reporting on their strike.

Jordan is accompanied by a chorus of newsboys, who bring the same braggadocio and high-energy dancing the Jets and the Sharks brought to "West Side Story" years ago. The dancing, choreographed by Christopher Gattelli, is an exciting display with the gymnastics of forward and backward somersaults, balletic leaps and extended pirouettes. There is also a knockout tap performance to the liveliest song in the show, "King of New York."

Many of the other musical numbers—perhaps inevitably—are anthems of unity or protest to accompany the newsboys' struggle for decent wages. For these ragamuffins an additional penny in the price they must pay for every newspaper they sell is burden enough to drive them to go on strike.

"Carrying the Banner" is followed by "The World Will Know," "Once and for All," "Brooklyn's Here" and "Seize the Day," which is reprised twice. Even Katherine's solo, "Watch What Happens," gets an anthemic reprise when she sings it with Jack and some of the other newsboys. Fortunately, the songs are accompanied by more of the amazing dancing.

One might expect, however, a bit more variety in a score by Mencken, the composer behind "Little Shop of Horrors," "Beauty and the Beast," "Aladdin," "The Hunchback of Notre Dame" and other popular Disney films. The same might be said for Harvey Fierstein. Lacking the wit and creativity of his award-winning plays "Torch Song Trilogy" and "La Cage aux Folles," Fierstein's dialogue ought to have presented the newsboys as more smart-alecky, the newspaper magnates as more cynical and the proto-feminist Katherine as feistier.

Ost's Striking Set

One of the most successful elements of the production is Tobin Ost's omnipresent metal scaffolding, which fills the entire back of the stage and serves as a set of fire-escapes, a rooftop, the newsboys' dormitory and even the Brooklyn Bridge. Meanwhile, film projections behind the platforms

contrast the New York skyline with the open desert sky of Santa Fe, where Jack dreams of going if he ever escapes his hardscrabble life in the cruel city. The projections also create the settings of the Newsboys Home, the deli that becomes their strike headquarters and the office of Pulitzer's Evening World. And they display the magnified front pages of the newspapers covering the strike. The techno look and mobility of the scaffolding, along with the use of projections instead of scenery, fit the living and working conditions of the newsboys.

While the musical is "based on" real events, it takes considerable liberties with the facts. The newsboys never met with Joseph Pulitzer (John Dossett), there was no romance between the strike leader and a reporter, and Gov. Theodore Roosevelt (Kevin Carolan) did not intervene on their behalf. But who cares, when this new Broadway star and his gang are dancing their hearts out.

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

BOOKS | THOMAS MAIER

PUSHING AGAINST THE ROCK

RENDER UNTO ROME
The Secret Life of Money In the Catholic Church

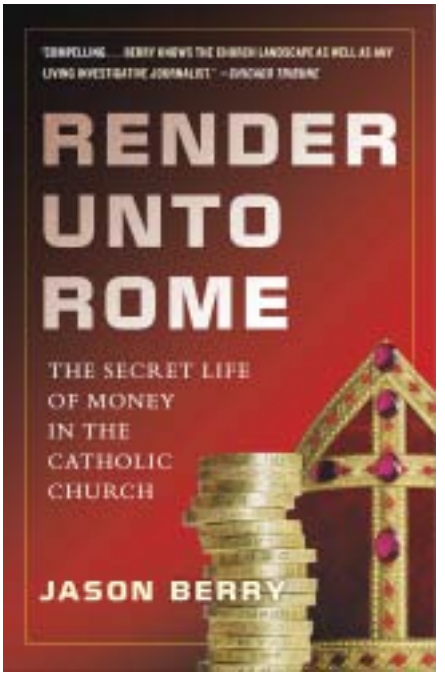
By Jason Berry
Crown. 432p $25

One of the most jarring moments in the New Testament, repeated in all four Gospels, is the story of Jesus driving out the money-changers from the temple. It is one of the few times we see the Lamb of God genuinely angry, simply outraged at what is going on. Notably, the Bible also tells us how the chief priests and scribes were indignant at Jesus' cleansing action, stirring a hatred by those in power that eventually led to his crucifixion.

Jason Berry's excellent new investigative book *Render Unto Rome: The Secret Life of Money in the Catholic Church*—the conclusion of a trilogy begun in 1992 dealing with the current crisis inside the world's largest religion—might well prompt a reader to ask, 'What would Jesus do?"

Even by mere mortal standards, the financial and moral mess is staggering, rooted deeply in the church's contradictory attitudes toward sex. Between 1950 and 2002, 4,392 priests sexually abused children in the United States, taking advantage of school-age children in their care. Since then the church in the United States has paid well over $1 billion in expenses related to the scandal, while patterns of similar sexual abuse by clerics have been exposed in several other nations.

With extraordinary fortitude, Jason



Berry has been the premier American journalist covering this wide-spread scandal, exposing serious cases of clerical sexual abuse more than a decade before the Boston Globe's 2003 Pulitzer Prize-winning series turned it into an international crisis that rocked the Vatican. His groundbreaking 1992 book exposed various cases of sexual abuse by priests in the United States, while his second in 2004 described in detail the church's attempts at cover-up and questioned Pope John Paul II's handling of the crisis.

In his new book, Berry underlines the severe financial consequences of the sexual abuse scandal—particularly the closing of local parishes to help pay for legal costs to victims and other expenses—and shows how millions collected from faithful Catholics are lost, stolen and similarly mishandled by the church bureaucracy. He reports that in 2010 alone some $90 million in church donations was embezzled from the church.

Overall, Berry reminds us that sex and money are often intermingled in church corruption, whether it concerns Peter's Pence from the collection plate or the molestation of children. Although his story is told with great compassion and considerable writing skill, Berry's list of allegations seems almost like an indictment against a criminal racketeering enterprise. His style is doggedly investigative, in the best watchdog style of Ida M. Tarbell, who exposed the sins of that early 20th century behemoth, John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil.

"The Catholic Church's great problem is structural mendacity, institutionalized lying," says Berry, who writes as a practicing Catholic rather than a nonbelieving critic. "As long as the people ask no questions about their money, the bishop can ban reformers from church grounds."

Perhaps the most revealing case involves the Marcial Maciel, L.C., the late founder of the powerful Legion of

Christ, now a sort of rump order within the church with hundreds of priest members. During his heyday in the 1980s and 90s, Maciel became the darling of church conservatives and was praised by Pope John Paul II. As Berry shows, Maciel showered money on top church officials to get his way, while covering up evidence of his own sexual abuse of young seminarians. Pope Benedict XVI removed Maciel from the order in 2006 and later called his actions "immoral."

Berry also casts light on the shadowy Vatican Bank, which in recent years has been investigated by Italian authorities for money-laundering. He also examines how church funds are used as a personal piggy-bank by some prelates who are loathe to agree to any open accounting of their finances, especially to the parishioners who donate the money.

We are reminded that huge sums, some from U.S. taxpayers, are funneled into church-related organizations, making it one of the nation's largest single providers of education, health care and social services. Catholic Charities is justifiably lauded for carrying out Christ's mandate to ease the suffering of the sick and poor. But Berry also shows how Peter's Pence—the traditional collection for the downtrodden—was apparently rerouted in part to pay for the budgetary deficits caused by the sexual abuse scandal or simply not accounted for at all.

ON THE WEB
This month's
Catholic Book Club selection.
americamagazine.org/cbc

As an important historian of the modern U.S. church, Berry underlines how sex became an obsession in recent years, especially when it concerned the role of women. Although the church condemns homosexual activity, Berry contends there is "a vast gay subculture" among priests. Because of the celibacy requirements, many other priests during and since the late 1960s left to get married. In a scramble to keep more parish priests from leaving, the hierarchy looked the other way, even when presented clear evidence of sexual abuse by its most troubled clergy members. And the church has restated its ban on women's ordination.

Today, Berry argues, the hierarchy's tortuous reasoning has led to some calamitous results, including a sharp decline in church attendance and clerical vocations. Rather than focus on Jesus' concerns that memorable day in the temple, Berry says that too many top church figures have been acting like the biblical money-changers who defiled his father's house.

In the search for divine guidance to rescue the church from these sins, some of the best narrative parts of Berry's book tell of those brave souls who are attempting to reform the church from within. We meet Peter Borré, the Boston businessman opposed to the closing of parishes in his diocese, who works with some in the hierarchy to bring about greater financial responsibility. Another compelling figure in this tale is Christine Schenk, C.S.J., a religious sister with the audacity to suggest women should have an equal place in the body of Christ, the communion of souls that make up the church. Her words offer the best hope out of this morass, even if no one at the top seems to be listening.

"Jesus stood against unjust authority," Sister Schenk explained to Berry. "We push against the rock of injustice in our own church. Evil does not have the final word."

THOMAS MAIER *is an award-winning investigative reporter for Newsday and the author of four books, the most recent of which, about Masters and Johnson, is being developed into a television series for Showtime.*

GREGORY WALDROP

IMPRESSARIO SUPREME

THE LIFE OF GIAN LORENZO BERNINI

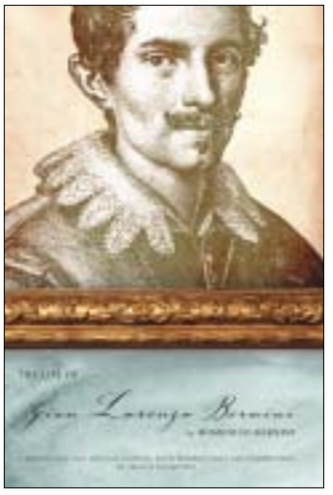
By Domenico Bernini
A Translation and Critical Edition,
With Introduction and Commentary
by Franco Mormando
Pennsylvania State Univ. Press. 500p
$29.95 (Paperback)

BERNINI

His Life and His Rome

By Franco Mormando
Univ. of Chicago Press. 456p $35

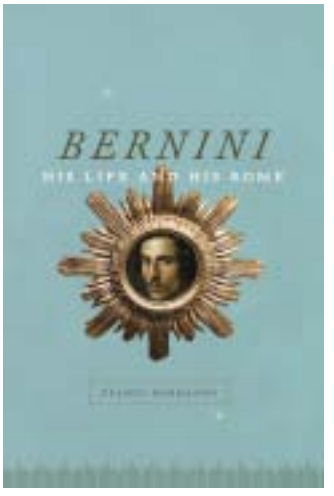
These days when it comes to Baroque art, Caravaggio is all the rage, maybe as fascinating for his transgressive lifestyle—documented in a seemingly endless stream of modern films, books and exhibitions—as for his luminous canvases. Yet for all the bad-boy painter's fame enjoyed by Caravaggio then and now, no artist enjoyed more esteem in 17th-century Rome, and thus in all of Europe, wielded greater cultural clout or provoked such bitter jealousy and resentment than Gian Lorenzo Bernini.



Florentine by heritage, Neapolitan by birth, Bernini is virtually synonymous with the Eternal City. He flourished mainly there for all but five of his 82 years and was loath to leave it even for a weekend. Woody Allen's love of New York looks like fleeting infatuation compared to Bernini's devotion to Rome. And we can hardly conjure the city in our mind's eye today without picturing some of his most iconic works: the astonishingly carnal "Ecstasy of St. Theresa of Avila," the gravity-defying "Four Rivers Fountain" in the Piazza Navona, a parade of nine-foot angels on the Ponte Sant'Angelo, the outstretched arms of the great colonnade fronting St. Peter's Basilica and the gigantic bronze baldacchino soaring above that basilica's high altar. As Pope Urban VIII, one of Bernini's most avid and free-spending patrons, reportedly remarked: "Bernini was made for Rome and Rome for Bernini."

But what do we really know about this dazzling genius? A celebrity sculptor by age 20 and a papal knight by 22, he was named architect of St. Peter's at 29. He was also a prolific if underappreciated painter, a designer of stage sets and festival ephemera, an amateur playwright and the go-to image-shaper for a succession of pontiffs, princes and kings. But what of the man behind the C.V.? His earliest biographers tell us little more than that Bernini worked hard, married late, went to church daily and glided serenely through the shark tank that was the papal court. If Caravaggio's rowdy life is an open book, until recently Bernini's read more like *Butler's Lives of the Saints*—or a publicist's press release.

Now, nearly 350 years after Bernini's death, a modern scholar has finally given the artist—or rather, the man—his due. In fact, two new books by Franco Mormando could be said to give it to Bernini good.



The Life of Gian Lorenzo Bernini by Domenico Bernini is Mormando's translation—the first-ever into English—of the fulsome biography Bernini's own son published of his father in 1713. This new critical edition, the product of 10 years of research, effectively puts the lie to much of Domenico's hyperbolic tale of genius, virtue and piety. Crucially, Mormando, a professor of Italian at Boston College, also puts that earlier work into context and with impressive finesse explains the literary conventions and family circumstances underlying Domenico's filial tribute. Equipped with 183 pages of footnotes—36 pages more than Domenico's full text—and an extensive bibliography of recent scholarship, this book will be of special interest to Bernini scholars. Yet serious art aficionados will also find it accessible, thanks less to Domenico's florid prose (Mormando calls it "obfuscatingly ornate and dense") than to Mormando's helpful introductory essays and vivid commentary.

But Mormando's second book, his own attempt at artistic biography, should enjoy even wider appeal. *Bernini: His Life and His Rome* is pitched to the kind of informed general audience that in recent years has devoured reliable but popularizing tales of famous artists, like Ross King's *Brunelleschi's Dome* or Jake Morrissey's *The Genius in the Design*, itself a colorful rendering of the architectural rivalry between Bernini and his equally brilliant but socially challenged nemesis Federico Borromini.

As good as those books are, however, Mormando's is better. Repackaging his scholarly material from the critical edition and adopting a more conversa-

tional tone, Mormando unveils an intelligent, if also supremely skeptical portrait of Bernini and his beloved Rome. Along with ravishing works of art, whores, catamites and clerical cupidity abound. Even the author compares all the book's scandal, intrigue and "interpersonal drama" to a television soap opera. Cutting through the exagerration of 300-year old official biographies, Mormando wants to reveal "Bernini himself, the uncensored, flesh-and-blood human being."

That is tricky, of course; and like all historians, Mormando has to interpret the facts as he finds them. And the facts of Bernini's private life are frequently damning. Though traditionally lauded as a devoted family man, for example, Bernini once beat his brother nearly to death when he discovered him sleeping with his mistress. He then had a servant slash the woman's face with a razor for her infidelity. He could be almost as cruel in the studio. Paranoid about potential rivals, Bernini exploited his many brilliant assistants but schemed to deny them public recognition. Borromini loathed him, Innocent X essentially sacked him, and the fickle Roman people careened easily and often between accolades and acidic critiques.

We are grateful that Mormando is an entertaining storyteller. Otherwise, even the facts could begin to sound like an updated version of Baroque character assassination. And he always gives Bernini credit for his genuinely virtuoso accomplishments.

He also dispenses a fair amount of armchair psychology, and his narrative sometimes fits uncomfortably within the book's roughly chronological structure. It is in the area of religion, though, that Mormando's biography takes on a censorious edge. His churchmen are nearly all cynical, the populace largely indifferent and Bernini's own vaunted religiosity perhaps little more than habit for most of his life. The problem is less that Mormando—hyper-alert to hypocrisy—finds so little spiritual fervor in a period and town supposedly oozing with it. Rather, his strangely narrow take on what constitutes sincere religious feeling makes it hard to imagine how it could exist anywhere or at all.

None of that, however, takes away from the genuine contribution Mormando makes to Bernini studies, certainly in the critical edition of Domenico's biography, but also in this vivacious retelling of the Bernini saga. Fun but still serious, *Bernini: His Life and His Rome* is heavy on sex and hard on religion. It may therefore tell us a great deal not only about Bernini and his times but also about the conventions of artistic biography in our own.

GREGORY WALDROP, S.J., *is a professor of art history at Fordham University and the executive director of university art collections.*

JOSÉ M. SÁNCHEZ

A POPE IN WARTIME

HITLER, MUSSOLINI AND THE VATICAN

Pope Pius XI and the Speech That Was Never Made

By Emma Fattorini
Transl. by Carl Ipsen
Polity Press. 220p $25

The title of this book, translated from the Italian, is misleading. The book is in fact a political biography of Pope Pius XI and does not cover events beyond his death in 1939. It does, however, provide great insight into Pius XI's pontificate and contributes to our understanding of the troubled question of Pope Pius XII and the Holocaust.

The Roman historian Emma Fattorini is the premier scholar working in the recently opened Vatican archives of the pontificate of Pius XI, including the papers of the Secretariat of State headed by Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli, Pius XI's successor as Pius XII. Simply put, this is the most thorough and best documented study yet to appear on Pius XI.

While Pacelli, as Pius XII, has gained most of the attention in what are called "the Pius wars" over his role in the Holocaust, it is important to note that Pius XI, whose pontificate stretched from 1922 to 1939, faced many more problems than the awful single problem of World War II faced by his successor. Pius XI had to deal with the rise to power of both Hitler and Mussolini, the horrendous anti-clerical fury of the Spanish Civil War that killed thousands of clerics and laypeople, the violence against the church in Mexico, the solidification of Communist power in the Soviet Union and the resultant growth of the Communist Party in France, the anti-Semitic persecutions spreading from Germany into Italy and, finally, the mounting crises in the late 1930s that led to the outbreak of war. No pope in modern times has faced so many widespread problems. The story of how he dealt with those problems is the essence of this book; and for the most part, Pius comes off well indeed.

Pius was a short-tempered autocrat; that we already knew (I recall years ago running across a document

describing his picking up a chair and smashing it against the floor in a fit of anger at one of Franco's diplomats), and this book confirms that feature of his character beyond a doubt. His subordinates in the Vatican feared his "nearly unmanageable personality," and when he died there was palpable relief in Rome. But that same character trait led to his outspoken criticism of the Nazi and Fascist dictators.

It was not always that way. In the early years of Pius XI's pontificate, he viewed Hitler and Mussolini as bulwarks against the Bolshevik penetration of Europe. Nor was Pius a democrat; he believed that authoritarian governments were those best suited to deal with problems. But as the dictators consolidated power, he began to see that their totalitarian policies threatened the church as well, and then by the late 1930s threatened humanity with their despotic actions.

Pius was an intensely spiritual person. He was devoted to St. Thérèse of Lisieux (whom he canonized), and he held her up as a spiritual guide to everyone with whom he came in contact. He viewed politics in spiritual terms, saw the church as a totalitarian institution and therefore opposed the totalitarian political ideologies as competitors for the souls of humanity.

There are interesting insights in this well-documented book. One has to do with the intense infighting within the Vatican and the opposition to Pius's policies from within. It is an eye-opener for anyone who thinks that popes have complete authority in the Vatican. There were strong anti-Semitic currents both within the papal Curia and from Wlodimir Ledóchowski, the Jesuit general superior, as well as pro-Nazi elements among the clergy, so strong that there was no protest against Jewish persecution in Germany in 1933 because this was considered to be "internal meddling" in the affairs of another state and hence would violate the terms of the Reichskoncordat. Furthermore, Pius's famous statement in 1938 to a group of Belgian pilgrims that "spiritually we are all Semites" was not published in the Vatican newspaper L'Osservatore Romano nor in the Jesuit-controlled Civiltà Cattolica.

The question of the persecution of the Jews in Germany, and by 1938 in Italy, shows the Vatican mindset in its convoluted approaches to dealing with the problem, particularly the attempt to distinguish between anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism. Pius was not always on the side of the Jews, and it was not until the persecutions increased in Germany, and most especially in Italy when Mussolini decreed legislation closing the universities to Jews and forbidding Jews to marry non-Jewish Italians in 1938, that he risked breaking relations with the Italian state and began stronger criticism of Nazi Germany.

Putting the brake on Pius was Cardinal Pacelli, who as secretary of state was the moderating influence on the pope. The author claims the two complemented each other, Pius the temperamental hothead, Pacelli the prudent moderate. Thus, whenever Pius suggested a strong action, Pacelli generally prevailed in tempering the pope's statements. This facet of Pacelli's nature carried through to his own pontificate after he was elected as Pius XII in 1939, and it characterized his response to the Holocaust. The documents confirm Pacelli's cautious behavior (the author notes that Pacelli made daily notes of his meetings with Pius and other officials but destroyed them all when he became pope).

The "speech that was never made," alluded to in the title, refers to a speech Pius XI composed and scheduled for delivery in early February 1939 strongly critical of Mussolini, particularly of the Duce's anti-Semitism and the Fascist regime's denial of Jewish persecution in Germany. Pius died two days before he was scheduled to give this speech, and Pacelli saw to it that the document was never released. This suppression of a papal document is similar to that taken by the Jesuit general Ledóchowski, who deliberately kept from the pope the "hidden encyclical" against racism that John LaFarge, S.J., had written at the pope's request in late 1938.

The author concludes by arguing that the documents tell us that if Pius XI had lived another five years, there is little doubt that he would have made the strong condemnation of Hitler and the Nazis that Pacelli as Pius XII is criticized for not making. We do not know what effect that condemnation would have made or whether Hitler would have paid any attention to it, but it would certainly have enhanced the moral prestige of the papacy.

JOSÉ M. SÁNCHEZ *is emeritus professor of history at St. Louis University in St. Louis, Mo.*

LETTERS

Cosmic Conversation

Adam D. Hincks is certainly correct to say that modern cosmology gives no new theological insight into questions of origins and bigness ("Wonders of the Universe," 4/16). But it does raise two intriguing theological questions. The first is easy: With whom might we speak of Jesus?

Suppose a 20-year-old man wanted to electronically send the entire Bible to some habitable planet, and suppose the recipients wanted to thank him. Assuming he has no more than 70 years of life left and that the conversation is constrained by the speed of light, no one in his position could converse with anyone beyond 35 light years away—35 years for the Bible to reach them and another 35 for their return acknowledgement.

But our galaxy is 100,000 light years in diameter. Compared with a football field, our "sphere of conversation" would be 1.26 inches. The more difficult question is, "Might God's eternal Word have more than one incarnation?"

TAD DUNNE
Royal Oak, Mich.

Commandant's Conversion

The Of Many Things column on April 9 about Walter Ciszek, S.J., by James Martin, S.J., reminded me of a story I heard:

> He came up behind Father Walter and put a large knife to his throat. "You give me Communion!" he demanded. The threat of the blade was not an idle one, for the camp commander had personally sent many a man to the afterlife. Father had been walking back to his barracks that evening after a long day logging in the bitter cold and then ladling soup to other prisoners at the camp mess hall. He had been saying Mass and ministering to them in the far forest, and somehow the word had gotten around—there is a priest in the camp.

So there it was—a challenge to give Communion to a cold-blooded killer. With the blade at his throat, Father Ciszek turned his head and told the commander, "You go back to your room, get on your knees and pray to God to forgive you for all you have done. Then come back to me tomorrow and I will give you Communion." The camp commander did come back the next day, and Father did give him Communion.

Father Walter told this story at our home one evening after lecturing to my cadet classes at West Point. It was a memorable time for the cadets and my wife, who is related to him.

HANK KENNY
McLean, Va.

Pre-emptive Violence

Amen to your editorial "Stand Your Ground" (4/16) about the shooting of Trayvon Martin in Florida and gun control. But the problem goes beyond gun control. "If I think you might do me harm, I have the right to kill you!" Who said that? George Zimmerman? Stand Your Ground laws? President George W. Bush with his pre-emptive war of 2003? Landowners and gunfighters in the old wild West? All of the above, of course.

Stand Your Ground is the spiritual descendant of pre-emptive war. Because he was the leader, George W. Bush stirred up that spirit in the country. Many gave him an "atta boy" and then went him one better with Stand Your Ground laws. Now we need to cast out that spirit. We need to rediscover in our national soul a special horror at pre-emptive war on the national level. Then perhaps we can walk back the great mistake of Stand Your Ground on the individual level. Obviously, the N.R.A. is an enabler of our violence. But the substance of it is in our hearts and spirits.

JAMES CRAFTON
Kettering, Ohio

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Active Eternity

The thoughts of Gerald O'Collins, S.J., in "Our Risen Selves" (4/9) about our resurrected bodies and eternity are fascinating. Still, we want to know more. Unfortunately the dismal portrait of eternity that science fiction is promoting has been the prevailing standard. Eternity is described as a state where there is no time, no movement, no change and perhaps no space and no matter. Catholic theologians and writers need to contest these prophets of gloom with visions of an active and joyful eternal life that God has prepared for those who love him.

GEORGE KOENIG
St. Francis, Wis.

My Child in War

Children trapped in war are a tragic consequence of war. "In Harm's Way," by Mary Meehan (1/16), points this out all too graphically, by describing, for example, a baby killed by shrapnel from an American drone strike. My son, Joe, was an American soldier in Iraq in 2004. Joe told my other son that he was involved in a firefight where a 12-year-old boy was killed. Joe's story was that it was kill or be killed.

Mary Meehan fails to point out that children in war also include American soldiers. My son, Joe, was one of them. He was killed near Fallujah, Iraq, on Nov. 18, 2004. Joe was my child.

JOSEPH P. NOLAN
Waterbury, Conn.

No Exceptions

Re "Too Long a Sacrifice" (Current Comment, 4/2): I also think we need to bring back a draft, but one with no exceptions. Draft the sons and daughters of presidents, congressmen, corporate executives and labor union leaders, the wealthy as well as the poor. It doesn't have to be for military service; it could be something similar to the Peace Corps or Americorps—anything that would involve more than 1 percent of American citizens. It might help us to avoid wars and rebuild our own country.

EILEEN M. FORD
Rockport, Mass.

Overheated and Overblown

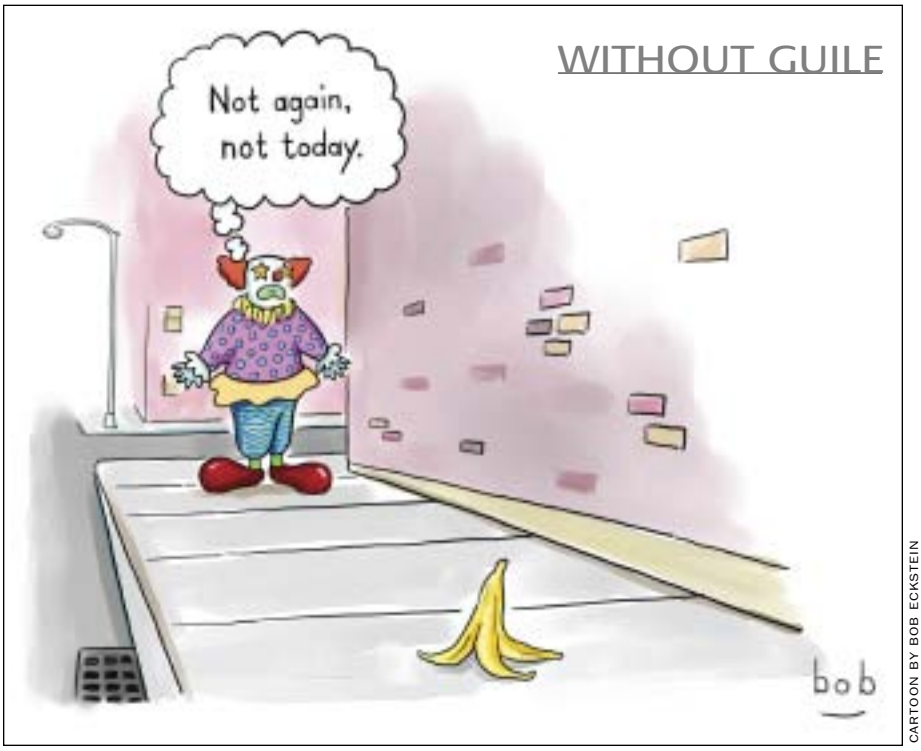
I agree with Thomas Massaro, S.J. ("Time to Cool Down," 3/26). It is time to ratchet down the rhetoric, way down. The mandate of the Department of Health and Human Services on contraception was not the opening salvo of a war on religious freedom. The reaction by both sides, left and right, was overheated and overblown, but that is the style of the day. The 24-hour news cycle and the likes of Rush Limbaugh and Bill O'Reilly seem to have condemned us to a series of violent raves and rants that turn a matter of private morality into a cosmic battle between the forces of God and Satan. I only wish the reaction against street violence and about war in Afghanistan and revolution in Syria would reach the level that it reached in this instance.

JOHN D. FITZMORRIS
New Orleans, La.

Righteous Anger

Re "Time to Cool Down": Political positions involving oppression of the innocent (like abortion or slavery) are calculated to incite righteous anger in a man or woman of justice. Jesus himself often spoke harshly to the Pharisees on account of their lack of justice. The contraception mandate involves the state threatening to punish members of the church for acting in accordance with church teaching. This is another position calculated to drive faithful Catholics to righteous anger. The mandate "compromise" is of course no more than a cynical attempt to dupe less intelligent members of the church. No insurer provides medicines for free out of the goodness of its heart. Those of us gifted with greater insight owe it to our fellow Catholics to expose this for what it is.

STEVE GETHIN
Perth, Western Australia



CARTOON BY BOB ECKSTEIN

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Who Is Holy?

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER (B), MAY 13, 2012

Readings: Acts 10:25-48; Ps 98:1-4; 1 Jn 4:7-10; Jn 15:9-17

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God (1 Jn 4:7)

The word in the Hebrew Old Testament for holiness is *qodesh*; its New Testament Greek equivalent is *hagiasmos*. Both mean literally "separation." Holiness reflects a separation of the pure from the impure. Ultimately, the term reflects God, who is profoundly other: "Who is like you among the gods, O Lord?" (Ex 15:11). While God is singularly holy, Israel could participate in God's holiness by living the Torah or law. Israel understood herself as separated from the rest of the nations as a priestly people (Ex 19:6). And God commanded, "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy" (Lv 19:2).

The distinction between pure and impure is a running theme in the Gospels and Acts. This issue assuredly reflects the Judaism of Jesus' day and the struggle the early church had with non-Jewish converts. A person was deemed too profane to engage in temple worship or even join temple assemblies if he or she did not keep all the purity laws, or was a leper, a Samaritan, a tax collector, in some way mutilated, a Gentile or someone suspected of having an impure spirit. Jesus was famous for his compassion for those deemed impure, because he healed the maladies that made them so. But he also challenged the categories that labelled people as impure, like the Samaritans. And when purity laws became meaningless or the object of obsessive attention, he simply ignored them.

The Holy Spirit, gift of the risen Christ, blew apart the biggest category of those who were considered impure, the Gentiles. In the first reading, we hear the story of Peter being sent to the house of the Gentile Cornelius. Part of Peter's speech reads, "In truth, I see that God shows no partiality. Rather, in every nation whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him." While Peter was speaking, the Holy Spirit anointed the Gentiles of that house, and Peter's companions "were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit should have been poured out on the Gentiles also."

Clearly the old categories are vanquished. But was the very idea of holiness a casualty of the shift? The readings today retain the deep imperative to be holy, but they redefine that. Peter gives us a start. He recognizes Cornelius and his household as devout souls. Acts tells us that it was Cornelius's piety to which God responded (10:4). The message from the second reading is all the more pertinent: "Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God. Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love."

This then is the new purity law, the new way of distinguishing whether one is holy or unholy, pure or impure: Do you love? This kind of love is the opposite of selfish or greedy acquisitiveness. The love the Scriptures have in mind is divine love. God must be the source, and when we love out of this source we mediate the divine. Jesus' long speech in the reading from John's Gospel is filled with the imperative to love. "As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love." Jesus tells us that we remain in his love if we keep his commandments, which boil down to just one: "This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you."

There is a kind of sacred circularity here. We are loved first by God, and this enables us to be holy and to love as God loves. We remain in that divine intimacy insofar as we love, and loving is the sole criterion that determines our holiness. Once you receive the gift and live the gift, you become the gift—that is, you become a divinely loving soul, and you become a gift to those you love as well.

Holiness as love is both gift from God and God's very being offered to all. We see that in the example of Cornelius and indeed today in the witness of profound souls, some inside our institution and some outside. As Peter says, "God shows no partiality."

PETER FELDMEIER

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- Consider three gifts in your life.
- Hold up each one in gratitude to God.
- Spend 20 minutes silently loving God.

ART: TAD DUNNE

PETER FELDMEIER *is the Murray/Bacik Chair of Catholic Studies at the University of Toledo.*

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Howard Gray, S.J., Ph.D., is presently the Assistant to the President for Special Projects at Georgetown University. Prior to this position, he served in a number of leadership positions within the Jesuit community, including Provincial Superior, Formation Director, Tertian Director and Rector of university and formation houses. He has lectured nationally and internationally on Ignatian spirituality. He has written extensively on Ignatian spirituality, ministry and the apostolic mission of Jesuit high schools and universities. He is a well-known director of Ignatian retreats in the USA, East Africa and East Asia. He earned a bachelor's degree in English and classics, a licentiate in philosophy and a licentiate in sacred theology from Loyola University of Chicago, and a doctorate in English from the University of Wisconsin. Fr. Gray has received five honorary degrees, the Georgetown Bi-Centennial Medal, the Jesuit Volunteer Corps Award and the Xavier University's Leadership Medallion. He served as the Vice President of the Major Superiors of Men from 1985-1988 and on the Papal Visitation of Seminaries in the U.S. from 1981-1987.

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