

# America

100th  
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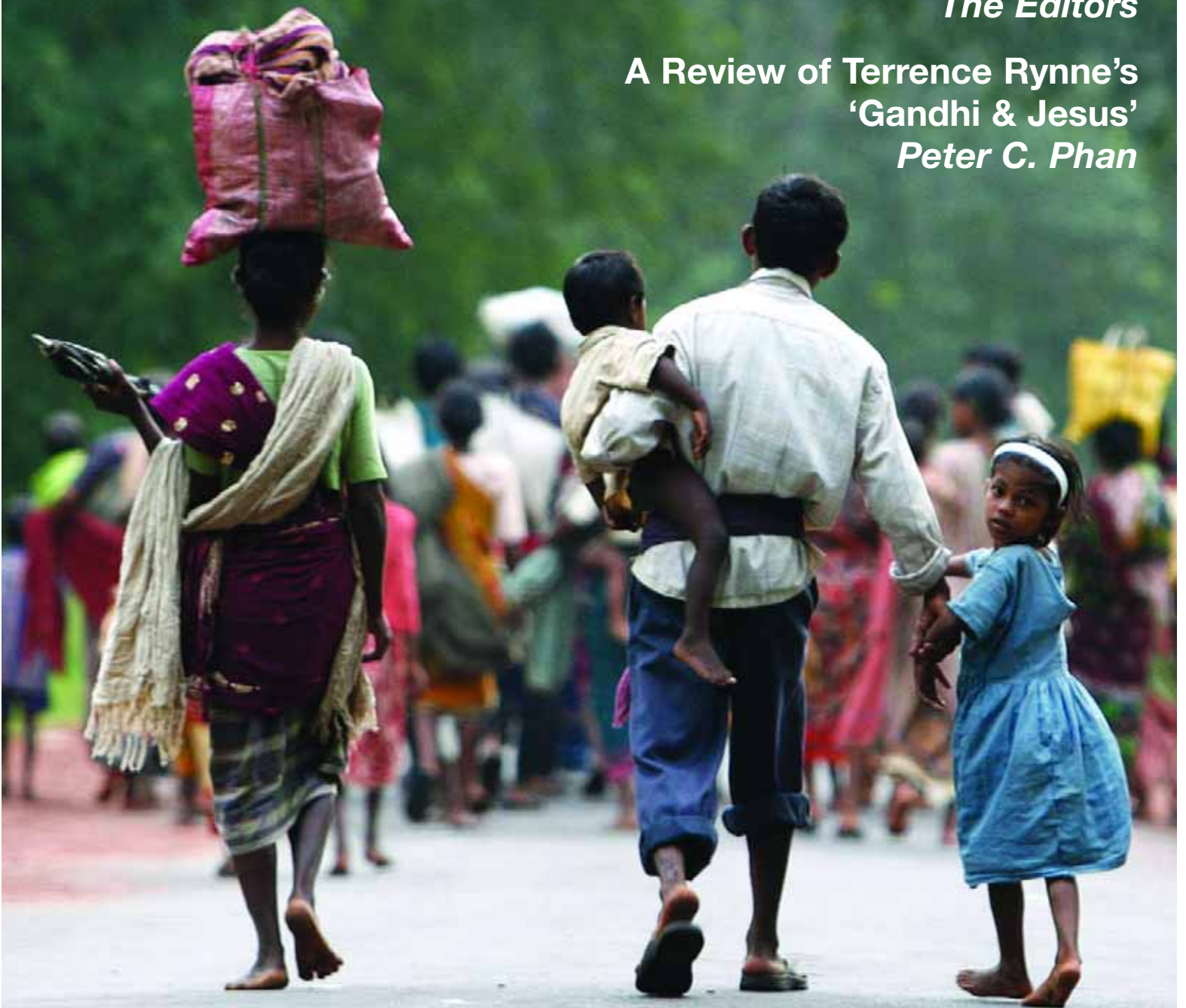
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## Is Gandhi's Dream Imperiled?

Persecution in Orissa  
*The Editors*

A Review of Terrence Rynne's  
'Gandhi & Jesus'  
*Peter C. Phan*



**T**HE ART OF TEACHING, especially for the rookie, is counterintuitive. Of course, any neophyte can envision the goal: a handful of students in a circle of desks discussing, for instance, the significance of the walls, dividers and screens in Hawthorne's "Bartleby the Scrivener." On the other hand, bringing about this perfect scenario in which suddenly the wallflower holds forth with confidence as the class clown tilts his head to listen and the teacher nods in approval presents a formidable challenge. When I began teaching three years ago, I could see the goal, but the path was fairly obscure.

Some might say that teaching is a balancing act in which, luckily, the rookie cannot perceive the hazard waiting below. Trying to find my own way, I saw only two extremes: the fascist, who takes the advice not to smile before Christmas, and the friend, who smiles his way through. I was not sure how either would create the kind of class environment that I saw through the small windows of classroom doors where veterans held forth before smiling, relaxed students.

The summer before my first year, the seniors had read Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Sharer*, in which a newly appointed ship's captain with a crew of strangers faces a long voyage home to England from the Gulf of Siam. His ship at anchor, the captain, on his first night as captain, decides to cut his crew a break and takes the tedious overnight anchor watch by himself. Having served as an officer on a ship in the U.S. Navy, I know this watch, and I also know that a captain would never do this. But I understand his desire to win the approval of the crew as quickly as possible. For a ship to function properly, the crew must trust the captain and vice versa. Cutting them a break would be the quickest way toward earning respect upon which to build trust.

One school of thought says that new teachers have exactly seven seconds to make an impression that will shape the tone of the class for the next nine months. So on my first day I greeted each senior with a convivial handshake and an invitation to take any seat in the room. Soon a logjam formed, and students in the back of the line became rambunc-

tious. I asked for silence but got none. Then I nearly screamed, "Enough! Shut up!" so that I could warmly greet the startled kid who stood in front of me. The positive energy that I had felt build as they had entered and taken their seats scooted out the door, and 40 eyes rolled at once.

As soon as the class ended I began to reflect on what had happened. I had lost control, not of the class, but of myself. I would never get back those sacred seven seconds. I had ruined their year and my chance at having the perfect class. Who knows; had I followed through with the belabored icebreaker, maybe we would have had a fascinating discussion about Conrad's unreliable narrator and its impact on narrative expression in all of art. But I had blown it, because kids want to know that they have someone in control, not of them, but of himself. They want a captain. So much for my Robin Williams moment, when the class would chant, "O Captain, my Captain."

All this occurred to me in the immediate aftermath.

## Of Many Things

But from the distance of three years, I learn a different lesson. Much of the theory is true: students do want a teacher with self-control; they need to be able to trust; those first few moments are important for establishing a winning classroom ethos; and no, the end is not a good place to start.

Hollywood classrooms like those of "The Dead Poets Society" can happen, but they take much hard work on the part of both teacher and students. The magic of the classroom comes about over time, not in a moment, and certainly not in seven seconds. The magic happens because most kids are willing to forgive a teacher who wanders off-script, and most teachers are willing to forgive students who aren't firing on all cylinders every day. The classroom magic comes about as a result of the same thing that fuels the richness of life itself: loving relationships with real people. Love is patient; it takes its time. Often it has an awkward beginning, and there are no shortcuts. In the end Conrad is taught, mutual respect is earned, and the classroom community takes one step closer toward learning to love one another.

*Jeff Johnson, S.J.*

# America

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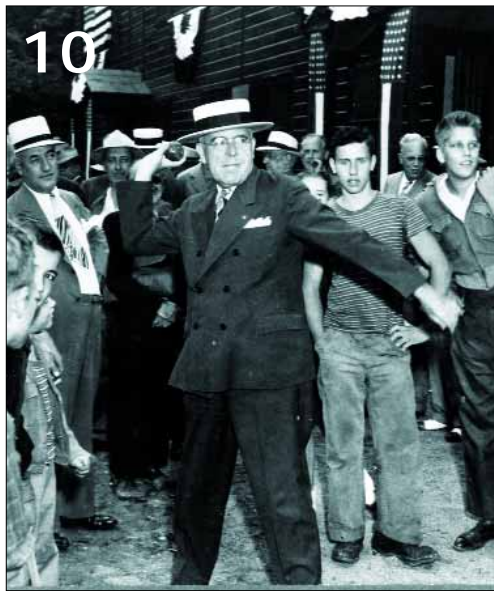
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*Cover photo:* Christians return for shelter after spending days in hiding in the eastern Indian state of Orissa. Reuters/Parth Sanyai.



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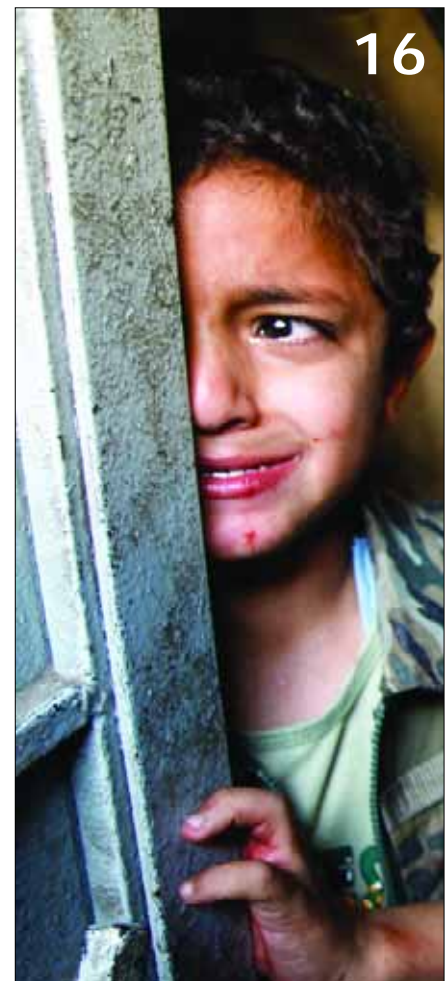
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This week @  
**America Connects**

Douglas W. Kmiec responds to John F. Kavanaugh's open letter to Barack Obama. Plus, an audio interview with Mark Stricherz and, from the archives, Andrew M. Greeley on Bruce Springsteen. All at [americamagazine.org](http://americamagazine.org).

### Honor Killings in Pakistan

Five women from a remote Pakistani village were buried alive in July, according to a recent report by the Hong-Kong-based Asian Human Rights Commission. The murders took place 300 kilometers from the provincial capital of Baluchistan. Three of the five, all teenagers, wanted to marry men of their own choice, but tribal elders refused permission. The women then sought permission at a civil court. Allegedly behind the deaths was the brother of a provincial minister. The Pakistani government has opened an inquiry, and several people have been arrested.

The A.H.R.C. said that the Baluchistan minister's brother and six accomplices abducted the five women. In an isolated spot they forced the three younger women from the vehicle, beat and shot them and then threw them, still alive, into a ditch and covered them with earth. Two female relatives tried to intervene, but they too were buried alive. The minister denied his or his brother's involvement, acknowledging only that three women had been killed by unknown assailants.

According to the A.H.R.C., hundreds of Pakistani women die yearly in often unreported honor killings, and it reports that honor killings have increased "parallel to the rise in the awareness of [women's] rights." Even when prosecuted, perpetrators are frequently guaranteed impunity. The U.N. Population Fund estimates the number of honor killings at 5,000 annually. The murders of the five women in Pakistan may be only the tip of the global iceberg.

### The Real Crooks

When Homeland Security agents raided a slaughterhouse run by Agriprocessors Inc. in Iowa last May, authorities arrested 389 suspected illegal immigrants. The dramatic raid included hundreds of agents, and over 300 detainees were held for hours in a cattle exhibition hall before being charged. Worker's rights advocates also pointed out that while arrests of undocumented workers in the United States have risen 1,000 percent in the past six years, to almost 5,000, few company owners have been arrested for hiring undocumented workers.

Agriprocessors, the nation's largest producer of kosher beef, was in the news again recently. Employees at a small Agriprocessors plant in Brooklyn, N.Y., have been trying for three years to unionize, with Agriprocessors fighting them every step of the way, claiming that because the employees were illegal immigrants, the company was not obligated to recognize them as workers under the National Labor Relations Act. Agriprocessors has petitioned the

U.S. Supreme Court to revisit a 1984 decision that recognized the right of illegal immigrants to join unions by declaring that such workers "plainly come within the broad statutory definition of 'employee'."

A new low in the sorry national tale of the exploitation of illegal immigrants, the case does offer some hope: the sheer hypocrisy of employers hiring illegally but then denying basic rights to their workers is now becoming a matter of public record. Perhaps the next federal raid might result in the arrest of a few unscrupulous owners.

### Downward Spiral in Zimbabwe

"For all practical purposes, every sector of daily Zimbabwean life—employment, education, the culture and economy, transportation, healthcare, farming, business, nutrition, availability of basic goods, services (power and water), and cash, and the spirit of the people—continues in severe decline. Most people toil on to adjust and to make do; unfortunately, though, some also are falling by the wayside and, often hidden from view, are not surviving." Thus writes an **America** correspondent from Harare.

Many Zimbabweans are said to be slowly resigning themselves to the prospect of another five years under President Robert Mugabe's rule as power-sharing talks that began on July 21 between the ruling ZANU-PF and the opposition continue on and off. A preliminary agreement was that Mr. Mugabe would remain president, and opposition leader Mr. Tsvangirai would be prime minister. Talks broke down, however, over issues of who controls what, who appoints whom and how power would be shared. In the words of Mr. Tsvangirai, "No deal is better than a bad deal."

The African Union, relying upon the feeble mediating efforts of President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, seems to be turning its back on the failed state of Zimbabwe. Cries from the United Nations are ignored. The message of the Catholic bishops of Zimbabwe in mid-August remains unheeded.

All of this plays into the hands and pockets of President Mugabe as he continues in power. He convened parliament, a decision that went against the agreement of the two parties, and he threatened to appoint cabinet ministers if no settlement was reached.

The option of a people's revolution seems remote, with President Mugabe and the military still in control. Unless African leaders step up pressure on Mugabe, he will continue as president; and the voice of the opposition, the voice of the majority of the people, will again be silenced.

# Persecution in Orissa

SIXTY YEARS AFTER THE ASSASSINATION of Mahatma Gandhi at the hands of Hindu extremists, the nation that celebrates him as its founding father is faced with a dire threat to one of Gandhi's most treasured dreams: religious amity among all of India's many faith traditions. During several days of horrifying violence in the states of Orissa and Madhya Pradesh, sparked by the unsolved murder of a Hindu nationalist leader, angry mobs have murdered dozens of Christians and burned thousands more out of their homes.

The national political conventions and natural disasters in the United States have dominated the news cycle in recent weeks and unfortunately have obscured India's troubles from American eyes. Neither the scope nor the ferocity of the violence seems to come across in American newspapers and broadcast reports.

Over 80 churches have been destroyed, as have orphanages, convents and prayer houses throughout the region. Christians have been accused of "forced conversions" and "paid conversions." The violence has unmasked a troubling phenomenon in India: a virulent growth of religious intolerance toward non-Hindus.

While India has been thus far spared the fundamentalist nightmare that has bedeviled some of its neighbors, this crisis presents the world's largest democracy with a great test: can India find a *via media* between the rigid secularism of Western Europe and the religious nationalism that has taken root elsewhere in recent decades?

The threat is not just to India's rural Christians now living in terror, but to India's entire self-identity as a multi-religious, multiethnic nation living in harmony. Ever since the agonies of religious and ethnic strife that followed Partition in 1947, India has stubbornly refused to be identified as a Hindu state, or indeed even a religious one, instead holding fast to the notion that Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Muslims and others can coexist under a single rule of law. Recent events are suddenly calling the durability of that notion into question.

What can be done to help the beleaguered Christians of Orissa and other regions in rural India? Judging by the lassitude of the police in a number of well-documented incidents in Orissa, it is clear that on a basic level Indian authorities are failing to live up to their duty to protect their citizens. If local authorities are unable or unwilling to

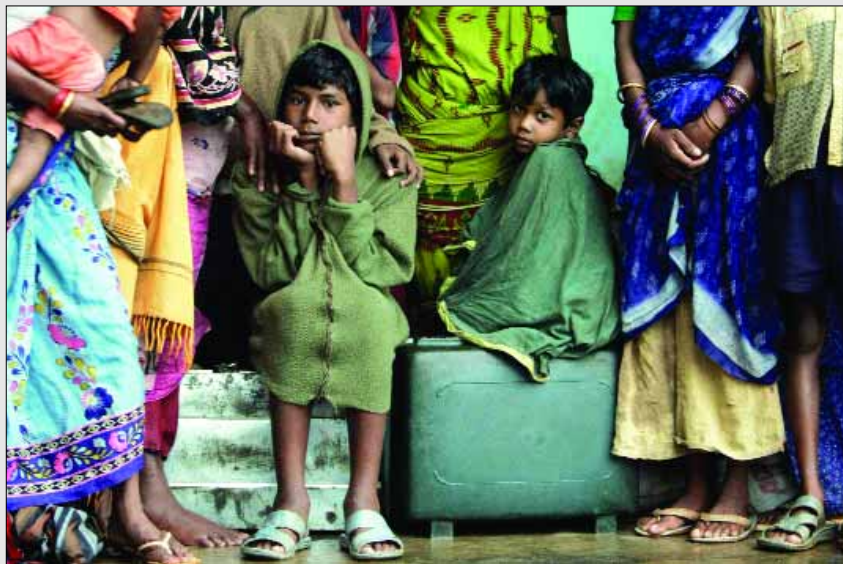
quell mob violence and deter further attacks, the national government should recognize its obligation to send in large numbers of troops to protect minorities and restore trust among victims. Were this violence taking place in Mumbai or New Delhi rather than in marginalized and poverty-stricken Orissa, such drastic steps would likely have long since been ordered.

Second, there must be recognition that while the issue appears on the surface to be a religious dispute, there are also complex economic and social forces driving the mob violence. Orissa has long been a neglected backwater in terms of government investment and interest, with the result that the growing disparity between the economic haves and the have-nots is even more painfully obvious there than in India's other regions. Because Christian missionaries often run schools in which even those at the bottom levels of India's caste system can learn English and acquire marketable skills, resentment against Christians is also a sign of the open frustration of many of Orissa's people that they are falling further behind while other groups in Indian society find prosperity. New attention must be paid by the Indian government to neglected states like Orissa. Otherwise any insistence on religious tolerance that is not accompanied by economic reforms will be pointless.

THE TWO MOST INSIDIOUS DANGERS that face any democracy are unbridled nationalism and widespread economic inequality, both of which are present for all to see in those regions of India that have not participated in India's continuing economic growth. Sincere attempts to address those economic inequalities will surely help check the growth of nationalism, which is more often fueled by economic frustration than by the narcissism of religious or ethnic differences.

Pope Benedict XVI, in an appeal for peace that also condemned the attacks, made reference to India's long and proud tradition of religious tolerance: "I ask religious leaders and civil authorities to work together to reestablish among the members of the various communities the peaceful coexistence and harmony that have always been a hallmark of Indian society." If they do not, it will not be just the Christians of Orissa who suffer, but indeed all Indians, because they will witness the death of Mahatma Gandhi's great dream of Mother India embracing all her children.

### Indian Court Urged to Protect Christians



Christians gather outside a shelter at Raikia village in the eastern Indian state of Orissa Aug. 30.

The Catholic Church in India has petitioned the country's Supreme Court to protect Christian lives and property in Orissa State. Archbishop Raphael Cheenath of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar told the Asian church news agency UCA News Sept. 2 that the church decided to approach the highest court, "as we are not getting sufficient response" from the Orissa government. The archbishop, whose archdiocese is in Orissa, said the church wants the court to order federal authorities to protect Christians

in the eastern state. "We want some clear help and response" from the government, added the archbishop, who has stayed in New Delhi since the violence broke out in Orissa Aug. 24. The church petition seeks the deployment of sufficient riot police in villages where Hindu extremists continue to destroy churches and other Christian buildings. It also demands that the Central Bureau of Investigation, the country's criminal investigative agency, investigate the violence.

### Religious Orders Plan Joint Initiative at Border

It is not uncommon for pregnant women who cross the U.S.-Mexican border illegally to have a miscarriage during their journey. Sister Maria Engracia Robles, a member of the Missionary Sisters of the Eucharist, knows this all too well. She also knows that unaccompanied women are the most vulnerable of all illegal border crossers. "The women who migrate [illegally] need to accept that they will be raped—not once, but many times," Sister Engracia said. For the past year the Missionary Sisters of the Eucharist have been running El Comedor, a migrant care center for deported migrants just a few hundred feet south of the Arizona

border. Many depressed migrants become dependent on services like the sisters' migrant care center, Sister Engracia said. To change this, the Missionary Sisters of the Eucharist will team up with Jesuits of the California Province, Jesuit Refugee Service and the Mexican Province of the Society of Jesus. This binational effort, called the Kino Border Initiative, will work closely with the bishops of the Diocese of Tucson and the Archdiocese of Hermosillo, Mexico, starting in January. The primary social ministry of the initiative, according to the Jesuit's California Province, will be to help staff the sisters' migrant care center.

### Freedom Brings New Challenges to Lithuania

A Lithuanian archbishop said freedom and Western ideas have led to a resistance to Catholic teaching and severe clergy shortages in the former Soviet republic. "Freedom has brought people many possibilities, but most are not capable of using it responsibly, and this is also a test for the church," said Archbishop Sigitas Tamkevicius of Kaunas, president of the Lithuanian bishops' conference. "For decades, we lived in conditions of occupation. We then accepted every idea from the West with exceptional openness as if everything from there was good, which it isn't." He told the Polish Catholic news agency KAI Sept. 1 that the priest shortage makes it difficult to provide clergy for pastoral work in schools and hospitals. Some priests serve three parishes by themselves, and in one parish in his archdiocese two priests minister to 40,000 Catholics. "In the first years of independence, an especially large number of men entered our seminaries, but roughly half didn't last till the end—not all those wanting to be priests had vocations," the archbishop said. Lithuania declared its independence from the Soviet Union in 1990.

### Pelosi Agrees to Meet San Francisco Archbishop

Responding to an invitation to meet with Archbishop George H. Niederauer of San Francisco to discuss church teaching on abortion and other topics, U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Democrat of California, said she would "welcome the opportunity" to meet with him "to go beyond our earlier most cordial exchange about immigration and needs of the poor to church teaching on other significant matters." But the furor that arose after Pelosi said on NBC's "Meet the Press" Aug. 24 that church leaders for centuries had not been able to agree on when life begins received further fuel Sept. 7 when Senator Joseph Biden, the Democratic vice-presidential nominee, responded to a similar question on "Meet the Press." Biden, who like Pelosi is a Catholic, said he accepted Catholic teaching that life

## Signs of the Times

begins at conception but did not believe that he could impose his beliefs in the public arena. Biden's remarks drew an almost immediate response from Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap. and Auxiliary Bishop James D. Conley of Denver, who said in a Sept. 8 statement that the Delaware senator "used a morally exhausted argument that American Catholics have been hearing for 40 years: i.e., that Catholics can't 'impose' their religiously based views on the rest of the country."

### Program Tackling Alaska's Health Care Shortage

A class of eight students will be the first to participate in a doctoral-level occupational therapy program sponsored jointly by Omaha's Jesuit-run Creighton University and the University of Alaska at Anchorage. The pilot

program is meant to address the lack of occupational therapists in Alaska, bringing students to the Anchorage campus for the next four and a half years to earn a doctorate in occupational therapy. "If successful, it could serve as a national model for addressing shortages of health care professionals in Alaska as well as other rural underserved areas in the United States and worldwide," said J. Chris Bradberry, dean of the Creighton School of Pharmacy and Health Professions. Cheryl Easley, dean of the College of Health and Social Welfare at the University of Alaska at Anchorage, said Alaskans pursuing degrees in occupational therapy, physical therapy and pharmacy have to attend out-of-state schools, and many of these students do not come back to their home state to practice—one reason for Alaska's scarcity of health care professionals.

### New General for R.S.C.J.



U.S.-born Sister Kathleen Conan will begin an eight-year term this fall as superior general of the international Society of the Sacred Heart at the order's motherhouse in Rome. Elected during the congregation's general chapter in Lima, Peru, this summer, she succeeds Sister Clare Pratt, also from the United States.

### Iraqi Refugees Hoping for Better Life in U.S.



The Kasshana family, pictured here in Beirut, Lebanon.

Laith Kasshana left Baghdad, Iraq, early in 2007, when his 2-year-old daughter Media was an infant. In Baghdad, Kasshana's life was threatened and his brother was shot. "I felt so afraid," he told Catholic News Service. "Even today, when I talk about Iraq, I feel full of anxiety." But Kasshana, his wife and his two chil-

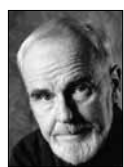
dren—10-month-old Mathew was born in Lebanon—were scheduled to leave Sept. 7 for resettlement in San Diego. "I just want to start from zero again so that I can give my children a better future," said the 34-year-old Kasshana, a Chaldean Catholic. "In the time of Saddam Hussein, we felt secure," he said. "People were afraid of Saddam, so there was respect for all religions.

The slogan of Iraqi law then was 'religion is for God; the country is for everyone.'" All through the family's troubles, Kasshana's 25-year-old wife, Ban, never lost faith that God would do something for her family. "He is my only salvation," she said, "the only one I can depend on. God is my way out. He will light the way."

### Faith Groups Challenge Candidates on Poverty

People of faith are being urged to "move their feet" to elevate poverty as a campaign issue in the final weeks leading to the November election. "We have a lot of work to do," Rabbi Steve Gutow, executive director of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, told representatives of the media and advocates for the poor during a Sept. 9 nationwide conference call that opened "Fighting Poverty: A Week of Action." The effort is sponsored by a coalition of more than 20 religious groups including Catholic Charities USA. "We have to...make it clear that we care about something that a lot of elected officials don't care about," he said. Initially, during the week ending Sept. 16, the emphasis will be on seeking out ways to raise awareness of poverty in communities across the country. Rabbi Gutow reported that programs in 100 communities in 36 states were planned for the week. Follow-up actions will find advocates for poor and marginalized people seeking out candidates and asking for a commitment on how they will address poverty during the first 100 days they will be in office in 2009.

From CNS and other sources. CNS photos.



# Dear Senator McCain

## ‘In the 21st century, nations don’t invade other nations.’

—John McCain

**I**N MY LAST COLUMN I wrote an open letter to Senator Barack Obama. It seemed to serve as a Rorschach test for readers—ranging from people who thought I was promoting Obama to those who thought I was fixated on abortion. Among readers who sympathized with my quandary, one correspondent recommended that I write such a letter to you. Here it is.

“A lot of Democrats will vote for McCain.” So goes an advertisement on your behalf featuring a disillusioned Hillary Clinton voter. But there are also many other Democrats who would like to vote for you but are still on the fence—not because they were for Senator Clinton, but because they have other worries.

As I noted in my letter to Obama, Catholics are not a lock-step army of voters. Some are die-hard Democrats, some die-hard Republicans. Others, like me, grew up in families committed to one party but have also voted for both Republican and Democratic presidential nominees or have voted independent or by write-in. Many of us who are committed to the intrinsic value of human life have profound problems with Obama’s position on abortion, but also have profound problems with one of your positions. It is not an abortion problem—although you may want to rethink your conflicting statements that human rights begin “at conception,” and that embryonic stem cell research should be approved and funded.

Your problem is a war problem. One may hold the position that there are just wars, but this must be evidenced and argued. You still maintain that the invasion of Iraq was right and just and have

intimated that you would invade Iran. You may say it was humor, when in April of 2007, you sang, “Bomb, bomb, bomb; bomb bomb Iran” to the tune of “Barbara Ann.” You may tell us to “lighten up.” But war is nothing to lighten up about. This is especially true at a time when *The Jerusalem Post’s* online edition of Sept. 1 runs the headline, “U.S. to Strike Iran in Coming Weeks,” based on Dutch intelligence calling off its infiltration and sabotage operations in Iran.

How can we “lighten up,” when we consider the Iraq invasion and what it has brought about: the death of more than 4,000 American combatants, with the accompanying devastation to their families, parents and children; 30,000 wounded, many of them fated to a lifetime of rehabilitation, the countless thousands with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder; the 150,000 Iraqis who are now refugees; the 43,000 to one million Iraqi lives lost. (The range of the death estimate is so wide and wild because we do not know how to count or catalogue them, whether we consult the Iraqi Health Ministry report to the United Nations, the Opinion Research Business poll or the *Lancet* Study of June 2006. Even the Iraq Body Count figure of 80,000 civilian deaths due to coalition or insurgency military action, sectarian violence and criminal acts warns us that “many deaths will likely go unreported.”) The war brought all this on.

Pope John Paul II was prophetic when in his January 2003 address to Vatican diplomats, he called the war a “defeat for humanity,” especially in light of the “consequences for the civilian population both during and after the military operations.”

Was the war one of “last resort” or

one of “choice”? Was the war justified by solid evidence or by cooked intelligence? Was there disproportionate suffering inflicted on the innocent? Can you answer these questions? And are you able to refute Russia’s appeal to our invasion of Iraq as a justification for their invasion of Georgia? Your scolding words “In the 21st century, nations do not invade nations” are belied by the Iraq invasion. And now you are ready to bomb Iran?

There are many Catholics who have these questions, despite their admiration for you as a man of honor, your courage as a prisoner of war, your sense of decency and your admission of failure. Moreover, they appreciate your compassionate stance on illegal immigrants, your once high moral stand on torture, your willingness to collaborate with the opposing party—some of the very reasons many Republicans opposed your nomination.

Seven months ago, I wrote that I could vote for either you or Obama; and it is still that way. The situation is unchanged, except for the fact that you both are now the nominees of the major parties. Just as I would vote for Obama if he showed any curiosity and questioning of his abortion policies, so I would vote for you if you showed any reservations about your willingness to fight wars of choice.

In the matters of human life and death, you and your opponent have the shared opportunity to pose a profound question for yourselves and for the nation you would lead. It is a question that could rise from our shared humanity, but Christians might put it this way: How are we to treat the least of our brothers and sisters, whether they are unborn, undocumented or citizens of a country we are set to invade? A Roman Catholic bishop has strikingly stated that Catholics who vote for abortion-rights politicians will have to explain themselves to aborted fetuses in the afterlife. He also reportedly applied the image to the victims of war and torture. Will we be able to face the refugee, the imprisoned, the maimed, and the dead of war and say, “Yes, it was worth it. I willed and wanted it”?

*John F. Kavanaugh*

JOHN F. KAVANAUGH, S.J., is a professor of philosophy at St. Louis University in St. Louis, Mo.



Douglas W. Kmiec responds to Father Kavanaugh’s open letter to Barack Obama, at [americamagazine.org](http://americamagazine.org).





PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CARNEGIE LIBRARY OF PITTSBURGH

David L. Lawrence tossing a ball on a Pittsburgh street, circa 1950.

Barack Obama's debt to a Catholic boss

# King David's Legacy

— BY MARK STRICHERZ —

**I**N HIS NATIVE western Pennsylvania, he is still remembered in the homes of the silent and greatest generations. The mention of his name provokes a slight nod of the head, a dart of the eyes and a faint smile. When Pittsburgh officials named the city's new convention center in his honor several years ago, they had in mind fond remembrances like these.

He was known in the region as Mr. Democrat (or, to his detractors, King David or David the King.) Outside of it, he went by other names, including "kingmaker" and "maker of presidents." In August 1964, *The New York Times* called him "a convention pro," while a *Harper's* cover story called him "the man to watch at the Democratic convention," describing his roles in choosing the last four Democratic presidential nominees.

Yet after his death in November 1966, his name was reduced to a historical footnote, one confused with another David Lawrence of mid-century American public life, a conservative columnist and writer for U.S. News & World Report. The national reputation of David Leo Lawrence fell into eclipse. No statues or monuments were built to him; no portraits or paintings of him adorned the halls of Congress or the White House; no academic papers or seminars were devoted to his political legacy. His accomplishments were reduced to his official public titles: mayor of Pittsburgh (1945-58) and governor of Pennsylvania (1959-63).

Lawrence's obscurity is understandable in some ways. He was not born into wealth—his father was a manual laborer and ward politician and his mother a homemaker—and he died with only \$110,000 to his name. His looks were not memorable; he wore a dark Beau Brummel-style suit at work and rimless glasses. His children did not carry on his political legacy; two of his young sons were killed in a car accident and another son became a businessman. And his political type, the big-city and state boss, is remembered as crude and corrupt, not moral and pragmatic.

Yet a lack of appreciation for Lawrence's legacy says more about us than him. This Irish-Catholic political boss laid the electoral and legislative groundwork for Barack Obama's nomination. As the longtime leader of the Pennsylvania delegation and as a Democratic national committeeman, he played a major role in keeping African-Americans in the Democratic coalition and extending civil rights protections to them. To forget Lawrence is to forget the political and public virtues he embodied.

### Lawrence's Legacy

David L. Lawrence faced two great challenges in keeping African-Americans in the Democratic coalition. His first challenge took place in 1948. At the Democratic convention that year, the delegates had approved a strong civil rights plank, which called on the national party to support efforts to outlaw lynching and the poll tax, abolish segregation in the military and create a permanent commission to eliminate discrimination in hiring. The vote required Lawrence and other northern bosses to undertake a unique political jug-

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**MARK STRICHERZ**, a former assistant to the literary editor at **America**, is the author of *Why the Democrats Are Blue: Secular Liberalism and the Decline of the People's Party* (Encounter Books), on which this article is based.

gling act: to win the votes of three key Democratic constituencies—African-Americans, white Southerners and citizen-intellectuals.

The future of the Roosevelt coalition was in jeopardy. As Senator Hubert H. Humphrey, the co-author of the plank, said, the measure "might tear the party apart." If the plank were rejected, many African-Americans might bolt from the party and join the Republican Party, which at its convention in June had approved a similar civil rights plank; and many activist-intellectuals threatened to flock to Henry Wallace, who was mounting an alternative bid on the Progressive ticket. If the plank were adopted, Southern governors Strom Thurmond of South Carolina and Ben Laney of Arkansas threatened to bolt from the convention and form a Dixiecrat party.

Lawrence's second great challenge took place in 1964. Three months before that year's Democratic convention, African-American Mississippi Democrats had formed the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. The M.F.D.P. drew up a petition to the Democratic National Committee in which they demanded that their 68 delegates be seated at the national convention in Atlantic City. Like the vote over the strong civil rights plank, the petition required the northern bosses to broker a deal among three main forces—the M.F.D.P., the all-white regular Mississippi delegation and President Lyndon B. Johnson.

The future of civil rights legislation was in doubt. The all-white Mississippi delegation threatened to walk out if the M.F.D.P. were seated. Johnson believed that his efforts to pass his civil rights and Great Society legislation by majority-proof margins in Congress would be doomed if it walked out. If the M.F.D.P. were not seated, the party's liberals would have enough support to bring the issue up for a vote before the whole convention, which would bring embarrassing media attention.

### A Change of Heart

David L. Lawrence was not always a supporter of civil rights for African-Americans. In the 1930s, he opposed an African-American man for a top state position on the grounds that white voters would resent the appointment. His change of heart on the issue was likely due to moral and political considerations. Lawrence's beloved mother once said that she raised her four children not only to continue their Catholic faith and learn a trade, but also to be moral. After befriending an African-American Pittsburgh political official, Lawrence broadened his definition of morality to

include civil rights for African-Americans. Ten days before the 1948 Democratic convention opened, an ad appeared in *The New York Times* that listed 50 prominent Democrats who had signed a moral declaration on behalf of the strong civil rights plank. Among the names listed was Lawrence's. In the early 1960s, Lawrence addressed an annual conference of the National Urban League: "In civil rights, the government of this country has an immediate duty, one which will affect not only our material might but our moral right as well. No nation as committed to freedom, democracy, and liberty as we are, can long fight its enemies without first living what it is protecting."

Lawrence also recognized that as millions of Southern African-Americans began migrating northward in the early 1940s, African-Americans were an increasingly powerful constituency in the northern cities. As Pennsylvania Sen. Francis Myers, a Lawrence confidant, was informed in a confidential May 1948 memo, "In Philadelphia alone, according to the latest registration, there are 156 thousand Negro registered voters. This sum is growing yearly."

What made Lawrence a great advocate for African-Americans was not only his moral and political motivations, but also his skills as a negotiator. Take his accomplishments in 1946: Lawrence mediated a 115-day Westinghouse strike, a 53-day hotel strike, a 27-day lights-out power strike, a 26-day steel strike and a jurisdictional dispute over local breweries between the Teamsters and the local C.I.O.

His skills endeared him to Democratic leaders. As President Johnson told assistant attorney general Burke Marshall, who considered appointing Lawrence as the head of a commission to examine the deaths of three civil rights workers in Mississippi in 1964, "The South *likes* David Lawrence. They *respect* him. *Every* one of them: the Dick Russells, the Lyndon Johnsons—everybody that he was against. He's never been for us. I mean, he was strong for Jack Kennedy against Lyndon Johnson. But he does it in such a way that you *respect* him, you *like* him."

### At the 1948 Convention

To win approval for the strong civil rights plank at the 1948 convention, Lawrence did two things. First, he refused to antagonize opponents of the plank. The opponents included Senator Myers, the co-chairman of the platform committee that had rejected the plank. Around midnight on the second day of the convention, Lawrence, the 59-year-old mayor of Pittsburgh, convened a meeting of the Pennsylvania delegation. Faced with a divided and grumpy delegation, he played it safe. Rather than ask for a roll call or head count, he discussed the importance of showing up at Philadelphia's Convention Hall at 11 a.m. Many planks will be important "to us in Pennsylvania," Lawrence told the delegates. "Such as what the platform says about civil

rights, the Taft-Hartley Labor law and Palestine. The Palestine question will be particularly important in our large centers where there is a big Jewish vote. And some Southerner," he added, alluding to the strong civil rights

**W**hat made Lawrence a great advocate was his moral and political motivations, and his skills as a negotiator.

plank, "might want to poll the delegation, so you'd better be there to answer." The delegates applauded.

The second thing Lawrence did was to lobby behind closed doors. According to Frank N. Matthews, a longtime political reporter for the *Pittsburgh Gazette*, Lawrence and other state party leaders convinced Senator Myers to drop his opposition to the strong civil rights plank. If anything, Matthews's account understates Lawrence's role. In the words of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Lawrence was the "dominant factor" in the state delegation.

Whatever his role, the Pennsylvania delegation provided the crucial support for the civil rights plank. Delegations from the Plains, rural New England, mid-Atlantic, Mountain West and Southern-state parties had opposed the plank almost unanimously. When it came time for Pennsylvania to vote, the resolution was trailing. "Pennsylvania casts 74 votes aye!" shouted one delegation member. The plank was ahead, and it never trailed again. The final vote for the resolution was 651½ to 581½. Had Senator Myers succeeded in peeling off only 36 of the delegation's 74 votes, the plank would have failed.

### The 1964 Dispute

To help settle the dispute over the seating of the Mississippi delegation at the 1964 convention, Lawrence, it seems likely, came up with an ingenious idea: the Democratic Party would create a national commission to ensure that African-American voters were not discriminated against in choosing the party's presidential delegates. Unlike the case 16 years earlier, Lawrence's power did not derive from his status as the boss of the Pennsylvania delegation. Rather, it came from his chairmanship of the credentials committee, the 110-member panel that either could reject the M.F.D.P.'s bid or require the whole convention to vote on whether the African-American delegation should be seated.

On the convention's second morning, Lawrence went to

a ninth-floor suite in the Shelburne Hotel, where Minnesota's Senator Hubert H. Humphrey, the labor leader Walter Reuther, Senator Walter Mondale and other leading Democrats were working on the settlement. Over breakfast, one of the men made a suggestion: create a national commission to ensure that state parties did not discriminate against African-Americans in the future. When Humphrey and Reuther called Johnson at 2:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Johnson asked for Lawrence's view of the proposal. "He's 100 percent!" Humphrey told Johnson. Reuther added, "We had breakfast this morning where we worked out this proposition, and he's enthusiastic for it."

The likely author of this proposal was Lawrence. After his tenure as governor ended in 1963, he was appointed by President Kennedy to head the Commission on Equal Opportunity in Housing; the panel examined claims that African-Americans had been discriminated against in government-subsidized housing. Lawrence thought the national party should take a stronger stand against Southern-state parties.

If it was his proposal, Lawrence played a key role in settling the Mississippi dispute. According to Godfrey Sperling of *The Christian Science Monitor*, the commission proposal was decisive in bridging the settlement: "[T]his was a 'sweetening' that satisfied enough liberals on both the credentials committee and among the delegates to make it impossible for the Freedom Party to get

the numerical support needed to put forward a minority report on the floor."

### The Role of Party Bosses

David L. Lawrence's accomplishments in the field of civil rights should not be overstated. African-Americans would have emerged as an important political constituency regardless of whether they allied with the Democrats or the Republicans. Also, Lawrence was not the only northern Catholic boss who whacked his delegation into line for the strong civil rights plank in 1948. John Bailey convinced all 20 of his Connecticut delegates to back the plank; Frank Hague of Jersey City successfully lobbied all 36 of his New Jersey delegates; Edward Flynn's New York delegation cast all 98 of its votes for the plank. Yet the accomplishments of these northern Catholic bosses have been ignored by historians and scholars. John T. McGreevy's otherwise first-rate *Parish Boundaries: The Catholic Encounter with Race in the Twentieth-Century Urban North*, for example, does not mention the role these Democratic bosses played.

Politicians who worked with them knew better. In his 1976 autobiography *The Education of a Public Man*, Hubert H. Humphrey wrote: "As I came to know the party bosses better, I found that they agreed with the spirit, the principle, the rightness of our plank. They reflected, and our victory reflected, a deep current running in the party and in the country that would make the next quarter century one filled

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## In Memoriam



# Robert Giroux 1914-2008

Distinguished Publisher  
Recipient, 1988 Edmund Campion  
Award for lifetime contribution to  
Christian Letters

The Editors and Staff of **America**

with turmoil and triumph.” Humphrey got that right.

The passage of the strong civil rights plank at the 1948 convention altered the balance of power within the Roosevelt coalition. The “solid South” began to dissolve. In the four elections before 1948, roughly three-quarters of white Southerners voted for the Democratic presidential candidate; in the five elections from 1948 to 1964, only about half did. The party needed to look for other sources of support, and it found them in the votes of Northern African-Americans.

The settlement at the 1964 convention was, as Lawrence said at the time, a “turning point in the history of the Democratic Party” in two ways. First, President Johnson passed his civil rights and Great Society legislation with significant support from white Southern Democrats. Second, the Democratic Party had committed itself to a new goal: its presidential nominating system in the South would be democratized. Lawrence was named chairman of the 18-member commission, which became known as the Lawrence Commission. This prototypical postwar boss helped to destroy the boss system. Today it is not possible to imagine the presidential nomination of Sen. Barack Obama, an African-American politician from Illinois, without those developments having taken place. **A**



Listen to an interview with Mark Stricherz at [americamagazine.org/podcast](http://americamagazine.org/podcast).

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# Gaza's Children

*The innocent victims of wartime violence*

BY DONALD J. MOORE

**E**LEVEN YEARS AGO a Palestinian suicide bomber killed the daughter of Rami Elhanan, an Israeli. In his grief he came to see that the violence that plagues the region is driving both parties to mutual destruction. Together with Palestinian members of the Bereaved Families Forum, a group that promotes reconciliation between Palestinians and Israelis, Elhanan now spends much of his time and energy explaining to people that it is both possible and necessary to break the seemingly endless cycle of bloodshed. He is convinced that “by virtue of our shared grief people will listen to us,” see the need for dialogue and work to prevent more tragedies and more bereaved families. This is a task to which the people must rededicate themselves: “We have lost our children,” he argues, “not our reason.”

## Behind the Fragile Cease-Fire

As of June 2008, a fragile cease-fire exists between the Israeli government and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. No matter what motivated each side to accept the *tabadiya* (calm), every day that it holds means lives are spared. For this we all must be grateful, especially when we consider what was happening before the cease-fire.

During the preceding weeks and month, attacks and killings took place almost daily. Few of them were covered by the Western press. In most such instances, responsibility was placed on an “other”: Hamas insisted it must resist “the Zionist entity” that has seized its land; Israel pointed an accusing finger at “Hamas terrorists.”

In late April a mother and four children of the Palestinian Abu Maatak family were killed in the Beit Hanoun area of northern Gaza. Israelis and Palestinians promptly traded accusations. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel expressed “great remorse” for any citizen who is hurt, Palestinian or Israeli, but charged Hamas with making Gazan civilians an “inseparable part of the war.” Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak was more blunt: “We see Hamas as responsible for everything that happens there, for all injuries.” The Israeli Arab Ahmed Tibi, a member of the Knesset, countered that Barak bore direct responsibility for the Gazan deaths and dismissed Olmert’s

remorse as “meaningless” and as a “typical Israeli response.” Each side was adamant in blaming the other. Hamas pledged revenge, and rockets were fired into Sderot and Ashkelon; Israel vowed to defend its security, and the violence continued.

Beit Hanoun is an area frequently used by Hamas for launching their mortars and Qassams, simple steel rockets filled with explosives, into Israel. As a result it has been the target of frequent Israeli incursions with tanks, armored vehicles and precision bombings. The Israeli defense forces attacked Beit Hanoun during what it called Operation Warm Winter in the closing days of February 2008. Within the space of a few days, Israeli forces killed more than 100 Palestinians, more than 40 of whom were children, and injured over 300 others. Israeli losses were two soldiers killed and seven injured; one civilian was also killed.

Even if the extent of the violence were limited to these numbers plus the physical destruction, it would be appalling. But the real cost of the conflict is far more pervasive, and its primary victims are children. The effects of the violence upon children are devastating, whether the children are in Gaza or in the West Bank or in Jerusalem’s Mercaz Harav School. And half of the 1.4 million inhabitants of the Gaza Strip are 15 years of age or younger.

## Trauma at a Nursery School

Two weeks after the suspension of Operation Warm Winter, I visited a nursery school in Beit Hanoun as part of a continuing effort organized by the Daughters of Charity to assist the needy of Gaza. Classes had been canceled during the conflict and for several days afterward; when I visited classes had been back in session for only a week. At the nursery school, which cares for 130 young children, I met Khalid Dahlan, M.D., a psychiatrist from the Gaza Community Mental Health Program. He told the group I was traveling with that many of the children suffer from symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Fear permeates their lives. During his home visits some children would cower in the corner of a room, afraid to speak to him or anyone else. The week the children returned to class, little learning took place, for the teachers could only play games designed to alleviate some of the stress.

Dr. Aish Samour, director of the psychiatric hospital in Gaza, later confirmed Dr. Dahlan’s reports. In an interview

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DONALD J. MOORE, S.J., is director of interfaith relations at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Jerusalem.

Palestinian children watch a funeral in Gaza, May 20, 2008.



with Al-Ahram Weekly, Samour pointed out that because of deep-seated, pathological fear, 30 percent of the Gazan children under age 10 suffer from involuntary urination and other nervous problems such as nail biting, nightmares, sudden outbursts of crying and introversion. “The children of Gaza are not children who live normal lives,” Samour said, explaining that the almost daily scenes of death, destruction, racing ambulances, exploding missiles and bulldozers uprooting trees inflict enormous psychological suffering. (Something similar could certainly be said of the children of Sderot and other Israeli towns close to the Gaza Strip.)

“A child exposed to this much violence becomes violent in his interactions with peers and siblings; his condition lowers his educational level and weakens his ability to concentrate,” Dr. Samour noted. Surveys taken by the Gaza Community Mental Health Program indicate that more than 80 percent of Gaza’s children suffer from moderate to severe post-traumatic stress disorders. Also, the Israeli blockade of Gaza means that child malnutrition is widespread, which further impairs their physical and mental health.

Dr. Eyad al-Sarraj, director of G.C.M.H.P., reminds us that Gazan children have lost the two basic pillars of childhood: a sense of security and a sense of joy and happiness. Almost half of the children studied had seen their fathers

beaten and humiliated by Israeli forces. This impresses on a child’s mind that his father is “impotent and incapable of providing security,” and almost immediately the child feels “estranged,” according to Dr. al-Sarraj, who adds that the insecurity, violence and repression push children to extreme acts to express their pain and frustration. A recent G.C.M.H.P. survey pointed to an ominous statistic: 36 percent of the male children between the ages of 8 and 12, and 17 percent of the females, expressed a desire to die as martyrs in attacks on the Israeli forces.

### **The Only Way Forward**

Most of the professionals involved in helping Gaza’s children argue that the only way to begin the healing is to end the violence. What can be done? Surely mutual accusations accomplish nothing. The Israeli siege of Gaza—which resulted in shortages of food, gas, electricity and medical supplies—has produced a humanitarian crisis of mammoth proportions. While the international community can be justly proud of its efforts to bring aid and assistance to the survivors of natural disasters in Myanmar and China, the situation is different in Gaza, where the catastrophe is wrought by deliberate human action. Most other nations watch from afar, some even with approval, the slow strangulation of a whole society,

PHOTO: REUTERS/MOHAMMED SALEM

deaf to the cries of its victims, half of whom are children.

The anger, frustration and resentment of the people are directed at Israel and much of the international community. This is fertile ground for extremists seeking to recruit others to their cause. The siege of Gaza by Israel has strengthened the position of the very people it was meant to weaken.

The world's attention and support must be directed to those groups and individuals who seek to break the cycle of violence. Hundreds of Israelis and Palestinians at the height of Gaza's "warm winter" issued a statement protesting the escalation of violence on both sides. "The pain of living in daily fear, of being wounded and mutilated for life, of grieving for the loss of loved ones, is the same pain, whether one's country be oppressed or oppressor, occupied or occupier," the statement read, while also noting that this is not a contest between two equal forces. The most powerful military in the Middle East, with the full backing of the United States, had been using tanks, fighter planes and gunships against crudely armed militants in an impoverished and densely populated area, driving the people further and further to extremism. The launching of Hamas's mortars and missiles into Israel in response only brought "additional justification" for further Israeli actions. The supporters of the petition insisted that the only clear and obvious alternative to this bloody escalation was for Israel to open a dialogue with

Hamas. Two-thirds of Israelis support cease-fire talks with Hamas, and Hamas has expressed a willingness to dialogue.

Gush Shalom, the Israeli peace organization, expressed it well in an advertisement in Haaretz: "We must talk with Hamas about a cease-fire! No Qassams, no targeted assassinations, no mortar shells, no incursions, no blockade!" Now that a fragile cease-fire is in effect, some indirect talks are taking place.

### Facing the Future

Combatants for Peace, a group of some 300 former Israeli Defense Force combat soldiers and Palestinian militants, took shape two years ago. All its members had contributed to the cycle of violence between their peoples, but now they have laid their weapons aside to engage in a joint nonviolent struggle for peace between the two peoples. As Avichay Sharon has put it: "We don't want to look at each other through weapon sights. We want to see each other as human."

Bassam Aramin, a co-founder of Combatants for Peace and a Palestinian whose daughter was killed by Israeli forces in February 2007, admits that it is easy to hate and to seek revenge. Indeed, at one point in his life he was about to do just that. That was before he served a seven-year jail sentence for planning an armed attack against the Israeli Defense Forces. In prison Aramin learned about the Jewish people's history and about the Holocaust, and came to a new understanding: "On both sides we have been made instruments of war. On both sides there is pain, grieving and endless loss. And the only way to stop it is to stop it ourselves," he says. Members of Combatants for Peace are men who once fought, bombed and killed, thinking this was the best way to serve their people. Now they are convinced that to truly serve the people, they must "fight not each other, but the hatred between us. Only then will the mourning end."

Bradley Burston, an Israeli journalist, uses stronger terms. When responding to the killings in the Abu Maatak family, he wrote: "It is time for us to stop 'understanding' why we kill so many Palestinian civilians. It is time for us to stop explaining away the deaths we excuse as the unfortunate and incidental byproduct of a terrible war. The same crime has been committed time and again, under the same circumstances, for the same reasons, with the same indefensible result.... No more!"

The United States, Israel's greatest ally, must also say "no more." Yet in the United States, until fairly recently the principal presidential candidates maintained what former Congressman Paul Findley called "the same empty-headed silence." Meanwhile, each side continues to blame the other for violations of the cease-fire. Soon Palestinian extremists may well resume their senseless shelling. The death toll will mount. And the children of Gaza will continue to be the innocent victims. **A**

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# The Apostolate of the Pen

BY JACQUES MARITAIN

I am expected, I was told, to say a few words about the “Apostolate of the Pen.” Let me confess that I would prefer not to do so, for I am afraid of big words.

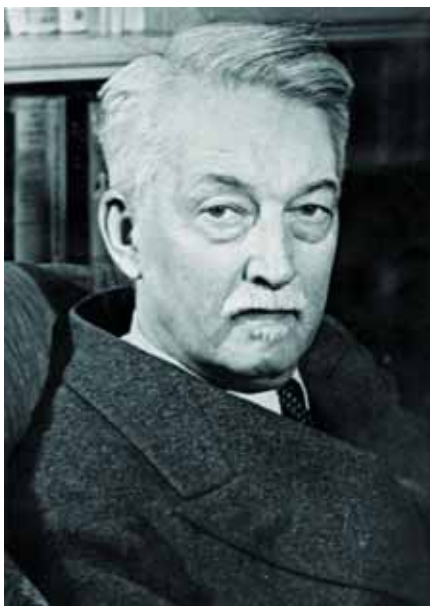
Moreover, any expression intended to designate some human activity should be used by those it concerns to mean the kind of task they are doing. Now, if you ask a writer what he is doing, he will probably answer: “I am a novelist”—or a poet, or a philosopher, or a playwright. But I hardly imagine that he will answer: “Me? I am an apostle of the pen.” Supposing he did answer in this way, I would have little confidence in his apostolic virtues.

The Christian apostolate is intended to convey to men the good tidings of the Gospels and to lead souls to faith in revealed truth. It has its proper ways and means. For a writer to make a novel or a metaphysical treatise an instrument adapted to this purpose, or to any other purpose extraneous to the proper exigencies of his work, would involve some risk for the very quality of the work...

...What is to be hoped for with respect to a Catholic writer is that he may be an artist fully dedicated to the requirements of his art and the beauty of his work, or a thinker fully dedicated to the requirements of knowledge and the progress of the intellect in truth. He should be inspired in his task by something of the feeling that prompted Léon Bloy to say, “My secret for writing books which please you is to be ready to give my life for the unknown reader who will someday read them.”

JACQUES MARITAIN (1882–1973) was a French philosopher and political thinker, and one of the most influential interpreters of Thomas Aquinas in the 20th century. The following reflection is based on his address of May 10, 1952, to the Gallery of Living Catholic Authors. It first appeared in the May 24, 1952, issue of *America*.

Then he will have a good chance of being an apostle of the pen, but without having any desire to inscribe his name in



Jacques Maritain

Who's Who under this heading, or to subordinate the search for truth or beauty to practical success or facility in acting on the souls of his contemporaries...

...Catholic means universal. To the extent to which he is true to the type, a Catholic writer speaks to all men. As a result, a Catholic writer should endeavor to offer his thoughts in a vocabulary apt to touch not only his fellow Catholics but every man. I do not say that he will succeed in doing so; I say that he should try to. I do not mean that what he says should be of a nature to please everybody; I mean that the manner in which he says it should be such as to appeal either to the reason or the esthetic feeling of any man who has the needed intellectual preparation. This very effort to universalize the expression, to keep from using a too domestic Catholic vocabulary, helps a Catholic writer to be more profoundly faithful to the exacting puri-

ty of Catholic truth...

...It is not easy to be a Catholic, and it is not easy to be a writer. To be a Catholic writer is doubly difficult. There is, on the one hand, the danger of yielding to the spell of art or human knowledge so as to fail in the requirements of the supreme truth. And there is, on the other, the danger of using divine truth to which we and our fellow believers adhere in common to compensate for possible failures in our fidelity to the requirements of art or human knowledge. I do not believe there is any other means to overcome these risks than a good deal of humility and some kind of appreciation of, or yearning for, the ways of the spiritual life.

We are confronted now with energies of error—to use St. Paul's expression—which claim to transform man and the world for the sake of a materialistic ideal. Our struggle against these energies of error can be victorious only if we confront them with the integrity of the intellectual and spiritual power embodied in our Christian heritage.

It is an urgent need of the world today that Christians firmly attached to their faith dedicate themselves to the labor of intelligence in all fields of human knowledge and creative activity, while realizing that the keys provided by a sound philosophy and theology are intended to open doors, not to close them. We must realize, too, that spiritual experience born in charity is the most profound and fecund inspiration to creative work. Each one works in his own special field and according to the requirements of this field, but his work should be animated from within by a motion that comes from a higher source, which is able to reach the souls of men as no human dexterity can do.

And this is, I am afraid—in actual fact and in its true sense—that “Apostolate of the Pen” of which I did not want to speak. **A**

# The Future of A Multicultural Church

## Allan Figueroa Deck on ethnic ministry

BY GEORGE M. ANDERSON

**A**S HEAD OF THE Secretariat of Cultural Diversity at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Allan Figueroa Deck, S.J., shared his views on this newly created entity during an interview with **America** in March. Father Deck, who is three-quarters Hispanic (“My mother was born in Mexico and my father in Arizona, but he was half-Mexican,” said Deck), is well qualified by virtue of his own background to work in the differing ethnic and cultural milieus of the U.S. church.

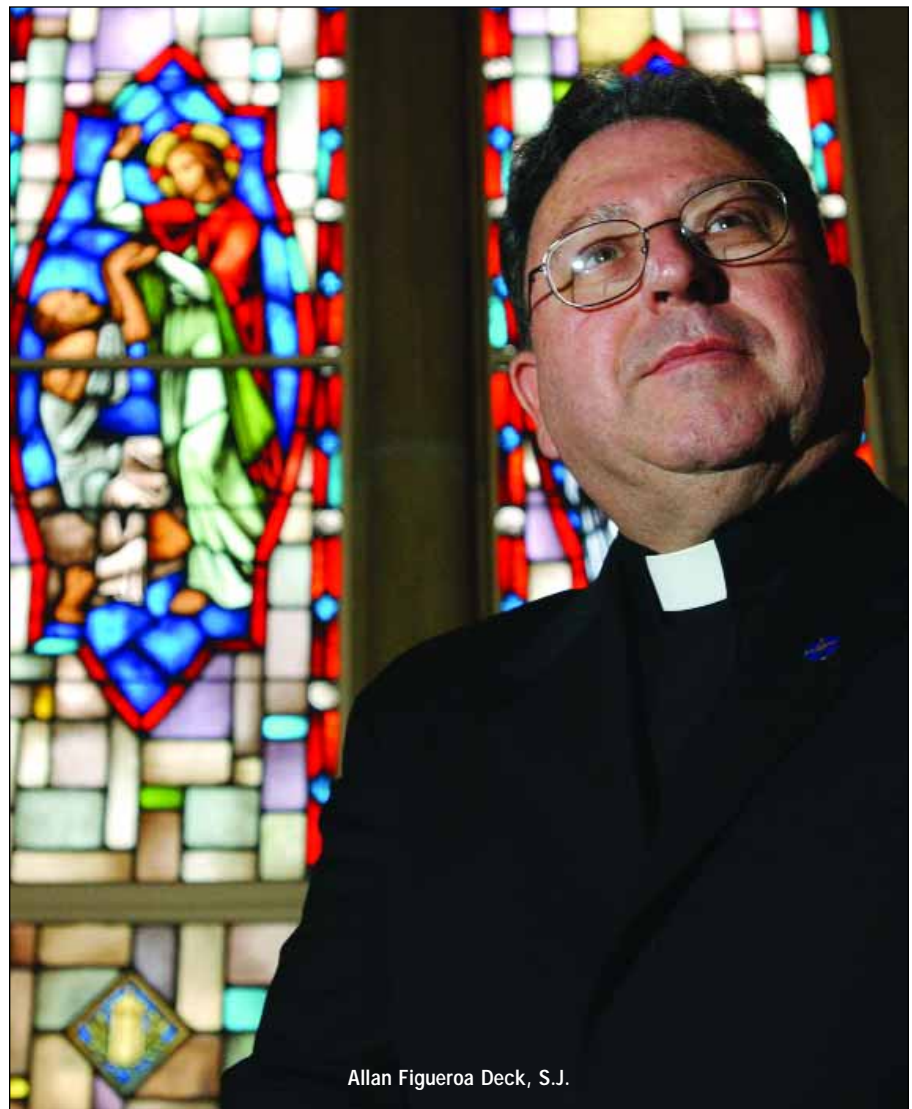
The Second Vatican Council deeply influenced Deck’s Jesuit and priestly vocation. “I graduated from high school the year the council began its first session, so my whole life’s context has been around Vatican II,” he said. “Now the church has entered a period of transition. New and emergent groups, such as Hispanics, Asian Pacific Islanders and...various migrant groups and refugees, as well as African-Americans, constitute the majority of the American Catholic Church. They are beginning to assume more responsibility and leadership than in the past.”

Father Deck emphasized the church’s ability to relate to diverse groups and to virtually all cultures as one of its primary strengths. “Paul VI reminded us in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, and John Paul II in *Ecclesia in America*,” Deck noted, “that the church must be an expert in cultures, because that is how it will be effective in preaching the word of God.” He pointed out that in a January 2008 address to seminarians in Rome, Archbishop Wilton Gregory said, “To speak of a multicultural church is...a redundancy. Is there any other kind of church in our Catholic tradition?”

Diversity may also have a downside. Robert Putnam, a professor of public pol-

icy at Harvard’s John F. Kennedy School of Government, has suggested that in a country diversifying as rapidly as ours is, many Americans are “hunkering down” and sticking with those who have a similar cultural background, rather than readily accepting newcomers. But, Father Deck explained, “Catholic parishes and a number of the so-called [Protestant] megachurches have shown considerable

creativity in creating spaces in which that negative effect is overcome.” Deck thinks that diversity can eventually become a positive factor: “For us Catholics diversity is a key issue, in that the encounter between the word of God and the particularity of different cultures is pivotal for the church’s mission; it’s exactly there that the word has to be rooted if the mission is to be fulfilled.” The church, Deck argues,



Allan Figueroa Deck, S.J.

PHOTO: CNS/SANG H. PARK

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GEORGE M. ANDERSON, S.J., is an associate editor of **America**.


must pay close attention to the ways in which people live out their values and transform those values in the light of Jesus' message.

Ethnic ministry has become the main ministry of our time. "The demographics demonstrate this clearly," said Father Deck. He alluded to the February 2008 Pew Forum survey of religion in America, which shows that the church is growing mostly through immigration. "Immigration has always been at the heart of the American experience," Deck said. The church has responded to the needs of the different people who arrive here, in ways that respect their particularity while remaining faithful to the church's own traditions and identity.

Immigration looms large at this point in the nation's history, especially since the defeat of last summer's immigration reform effort. The bishops have consistently supported reform and opposed the increasingly punitive approach of the Department of Homeland Security. They have also objected to the department's practice of raiding workplaces and incarcerating immigrants prior to deportation.

The current political climate has heightened tensions around immigration. "Those who have studied American history and the public's response to immigration," said Father Deck, "know that it tends to go in cycles and that it has always been a love-hate relationship." He referred to the waves of immigrants in the 19th, 20th and now the 21st century. Yet he thinks the conversation about immigration will eventually move toward moderation. The U.S. bishops have helped, by proclaiming the church's teaching on the human rights of those most affected by immigration policy.

According to Father Deck, the church's desire to relate to all cultures has been at work for several decades, as the U.S. church has become an amalgam of cultures: Latin American, Asian, African-American, Asian Pacific Islanders and others. The bishops are concerned that a distinct Catholic identity be maintained, that there be a true dialogue among the various cultures and that the church find ways of making a home for all. To this end, it is Father Deck's hope that the new secretariat will "clearly articulate the catholicity and the universality of the Gospel message and the mission of the church." 



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# The Coming Crisis

## How will priests fund their retirement?

BY J. DANIEL DYMSKI

**F**EW PEOPLE begin planning for retirement early enough, and in this respect diocesan priests are no exception. In the United States, the church is now facing the impending retirement of nearly 40 percent of its 27,614 diocesan priests.

Diocesan priests take no vow of poverty and are expected to support themselves when they retire. As ministers, however, their salaries have tended to be low, which has given them limited opportunity to save much. Very low lifetime earnings also mean very low Social Security benefits. Diocesan priests receive about half the monthly Social Security benefit of the average layperson, according to an article in *The Tidings*, the newspaper of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Priests who were ordained in the 1960s were allowed to opt out of Social Security altogether; some were even told there would be no funds left in the program when they retired. As a result, many priests did not contribute to the plan; those who opted out and would now be eligible for benefits receive neither a monthly Social Security check nor Medicare coverage.

The bishops of the United States are not unaware of the financial issues facing diocesan priests as

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they retire. The bishops also view the problem in its larger context, as priests of the baby boom generation reach retirement age without enough young vocations ready to replace them. For the past

increase, especially if they can no longer reside at a local parish and have no family home to move into. If a priest chooses to live outside the diocese, he might not be given authorization to minister when he requests it in his new home, depriving him of the ability to celebrate Mass and hear confessions.

For priests with limited means and for those who need household assistance, some dioceses operate retirement homes. Such homes provide a safety net and are a welcome relief when necessary, but most are expensive relative to a typical priest's retirement income. And some of them can be isolated—far from a priest's parish, family and friends. Or the style of living may represent a substantial departure from what a diocesan priest had been accustomed to: daily interaction with a great variety of people of all ages. Like other retirees, priests typically will not choose to live in a retirement home unless they have no better choice.

The retirement problem is somewhat new for priests in this country. It is related to the shortage of priestly vocations, the closing and merging of parishes and the

selling of church property and facilities. The 1983 revision of the Code of Canon Law mentions priests' retirement only once, in Canon 538, Paragraph 3, which refers only to pastors, not to parochial vicars (associate pastors). So it is not surprising that diocesan policies are widely divergent and may be inadequate to meet the needs of retired priests today.

Some dioceses have begun taking up



20 years, the bishops have taken up a national collection to supplement the retirement needs of members of religious communities, most of whom are women, but that money does not include diocesan priests. Few Catholics in the pews have understood the distinction.

Diocesan priests face not only a substantial reduction in income when they retire, but their living expenses tend to

ART BY SEAN QUIRK

an annual collection for their own diocesan priests' retirement. According to The Tidings, the Archdiocese of Los Angeles has collected roughly \$10 million since 2001 for its Retirement Fund for Archdiocesan Priests. The Diocese of Providence is engaged currently in its second year of collecting for priests' retirement. Some dioceses, like the Archdiocese of Denver, have set up a standing committee to administer a diocesan pension plan for priests. Across the nation, though, retirement arrangements for diocesan priests still need to be established and maintained.

The bishops and their advisors must raise awareness among lay Catholics about the financial needs of retired diocesan priests, an effort that involves communications, media and the development of education and advocacy materials. The hope is that Catholics will give their support once they understand the magnitude of the problem.

Long-term planning also requires that the church marshal data about diocesan priests' retirement needs. According to the last major study of priests, conducted in 1999 for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops through the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, the average age of priests was 60, and 25 percent of priests were 75 or older. The study also predicted that the number who are 75 or older will increase to 40 percent of priests by the year 2010.

The church needs more current data, a new survey to help planners assess the situation and identify practice models that could be used in all the dioceses. Such a research survey could report priests' attitudes (retired priests and those approaching retirement), locate the gaps in salary, savings, coverage and care, build on previous surveys and identify ways of solving the problems facing retired diocesan priests. The information would add significantly to the information on diocesan retirement practices now being collected every three years and published by the National Federation of Priests' Councils.

Two years ago a group of laypeople in Florida, in consultation with active and retired priests (including myself) and bish-

ops began meeting to examine the critical issues facing retired diocesan priests and to support retirement planning. The group, Laity in Support of Retired Priests Inc., has organized itself as a 501(c)(3) not for profit public charity. As one of the founding members, I continue to serve as

## Diocesan priests not only face a substantial reduction in income when they retire; their living expenses tend to increase.

a consultant. Early on, the organization contacted the Third Age Center at Fordham University in New York and the National Federation of Priests' Councils to see what information was available and what still needs doing. Thomas W. Hoban, the president of L.S.R.P. Inc., is a former C.E.O. of the Hennepin Medical Society (now West Metro Medical Society), a large physicians' organization. He explains L.S.R.P.'s threefold goal: (1) to develop a minimum pension and benefit plan to present to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, (2) to create awareness among the laity regarding the plight of many retired diocesan priests and (3) to develop a national association of retired priests and bishops, which will provide a forum for them to discuss individual concerns. The association will enable priests and bishops to speak with a collaborative voice.

Already L.S.R.P. has raised more than \$30,000 and has engaged the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate to conduct a new comprehensive study, which is currently underway. CARA is surveying a national random sample of active and retired diocesan priests about issues related to retirement for diocesan priests. L.S.R.P. plans to share the findings with the U.S.C.C.B. and is in conversation with the appropriate committee there, the Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life, and Vocations. The research will provide bishops with specific data to help them improve the quality of life of retired priests, especially those who

require assisted or skilled care. (For more information about the group and for news about the CARA survey, see [www.lsr-pinc.org](http://www.lsr-pinc.org).)

While the retirement concerns of diocesan priests require an organizational response, the story of each priest is unique. I myself was ordained 48 years ago and retired from active priestly ministry three years ago, on the advice of my doctors and with the permission of my bishop. After just one year of retirement, I developed neuropathy, which makes it difficult for me to walk without a cane. Since I carefully saved enough for my retirement years, my financial needs are being met, but others are not so fortunate. One diocesan priest

I met from another state lived on the cusp of poverty. I felt very sorry for him and thanked God that his parishioners had set up an annuity fund to help him out.

In the last few decades, priests' salaries and benefits have increased slightly. The overall situation is improving, but much more needs to be done to improve the quality of retirement for diocesan priests. **A**



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# Forgiving God

## Can we make sense of suffering?

BY WILLIAM J. O'MALLEY

**G**OD IS FAITHFUL, no matter what. But what of the obverse, rarely broached? How long are we to cleave to a God who ambushes us with tragedy, often just as we have improvised some shaky equanimity from the last surprise? How do we assess a God who invented both breathtaking sunsets and emphysema? As Robert Frost quipped: "Forgive, O Lord, my little jokes on Thee, and I'll forgive Thy great big joke on me."

In the broadest sense, "suffering" means losing anything we love or even just presume to love. In that sense, getting out of bed is suffering, leaving the serenity of sleep to face the day's surprises. Suffering is a given. But can any insight make the forfeitures worth it? Every thinker since Buddha began with that primal unfairness, the *lachrymae rerum*. That search feeds our dreams with paradisiacal islands where no one must work or be watchful. Most stories, however, suggest that suffering is the path to growth as a human being, that purpose comes from surpassing challenges.

In the cold light of reason, once one grants a Creator who intends humans freely to cultivate their souls, some suffering makes sense. On one hand, natural retribution is etched into the natures of things. Violate those ingrained natures, and you discover that. Like hearing the tilt buzzer in pinball, intelligent people sense a "wrongness" in defying limits too often. If you act the S.O.B., you become an

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S.O.B., and few will dare tell you. On the other hand, if Whoever Made the Rules invites free evolution beyond animal nature by scaling predictable obstacles, each crisis in physical growth is a natural invitation to broader and deeper participation in being human, independent of parents. In that perspective, such inequities as adolescence are certainly unpleasant but legitimate and more readily acceptable.

On the contrary, unmerited suffering is unpredictable, affliction for which no victim was responsible: my parents split up, my house burned, my friend betrayed my confidence, my mother is alcoholic, I got hit by necrotic fasciitis—none of them my fault, but either I live with them or go

mad trying to make the truth untrue.

Another way to study our common burden is to subdivide unmerited suffering into the physical and the moral. Physical suffering/evil (hurricanes, cancer, death) results from living in this world. No human is responsible, only whoever set up this environment with those pitfalls. Moral evil or "man's inhumanity" (war, murder, rape) results from human will, freely degrading oneself and others. Although this places the rebel human as the immediate cause, it does not absolve the kindly creator. If God is the ultimate cause, he/she freely gave wits and freedom to inadequately evolved apes. Some thinking people find that so contradictory they

ART BY STEFANIE AUGUSTINE

deny such a feckless Cause can exist.

Each of us, merely by being born (for which none of us was responsible), is by that fact condemned to death. Beckett makes that absurdity clear: "Astride of a grave and a difficult birth. Down in the hole, lingeringly, the grave-digger puts on the forceps." In a godless universe, the greatest curses are intelligence and hope: hungers, by our very nature, for answers and survival, where neither exists.

Who can justify a God who allows cancer to devour a saint? (Or permits his only Son to be insulted, scourged and executed?) This question underlies the Book of Job: the mystery of suffering for which the victim is not culpable. God allows subjection of "the perfect and upright man" to one physical and moral evil after another. Natural disasters and marauders destroy his children, animals and crops. His skin erupts in boils. His wife deserts him. Yet despite his friends' insistence that God makes only the guilty suffer, Job knows unarguably he did nothing wicked enough to justify suffering such as his.

### Between Creature and Creator

Whether one suffers innocently from the vagaries of the environment (physical evil) or from others' callous use of freedom (moral evil), God's answer is the same. It comes at the end of the Book of Job, and near the end of each Gospel, but it is neither fair nor just. Nor is it, in any strict

## God seems to have no problem with our using the wits he gave us to challenge him.

sense, an answer. In the first place, when God finally arrives to respond to Job's accusations of mistreatment, God turns up in a hurricane, which is not quite fair. But that is God's whole point: Job's situation is not a question of justice but a matter of trust, as was Abraham's. In the second place, the answer is not rational, but rather a person-to-Person experiential encounter between a creature and his creator.

"Brace yourself like a man," says the imperious voice from the windstorm. "Where were you when I laid the founda-

tions of the earth? Tell me, if you understand" (Jb 38:3-4). In effect, God is saying: "Have you forgotten who I AM and who you are? Is there some ground on which you presume I should check my plans with you? Is it just possible I have reasons your space- and time-bound mind is incapable of fathoming?"

If the patience of Job means fidelity despite boundless doubt, then Job was truly a patient, trusting man. But if patience means silent acquiescence, he was anything but. For 37 chapters Job relentlessly challenges his friends, who insist he must be guilty. Since Scripture is the word of God, and Job is rewarded in the end for his perseverance, God seems to have no problem with our using the wits he gave us to challenge him. (A wonderful Jewish belief says, when we use our God-given wits to dispute with him, God dances for joy!) God finds no objection to our railing at him, wrestling with him (his angel) as Jacob did, even bawling him out for a fare-thee-well like Jeremiah did, using every curse in our arsenal as we would with any lifelong friend—provided, when we calm down, we forgive God, thanking him for the good times. For good times have far outnumbered and outweighed the bad.

Often in classes of all boys, I find fierce resistance. If you argue the manifest differences between human and animal sex, for instance, you know instantly who the sexually active are, because they defend a vested interest with no pretense at fair exchange. At those times, I say, "Look, don't be mad at me because I know more than you do, because I have read more, because I have given these questions more thought."

That is at least remotely like our crying "Unfair!" to the very Person who gave us the means to see inequity and the skills to voice our objections. Therefore, if forgiveness is the hardest loving, perhaps the way in which we love God most profoundly is forgiving God for being God, for having reasons and a perspective we

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Suffering, accepted as challenge, redeems us from our misplaced feeling of uselessness, of meaninglessness, of being dismissible as human beings. In that sense, the experience of suffering is essential. Who would exult in good health, had one never been sick? Who would appreciate living without a felt realization of death? Who would feel grateful unless all happiness were precarious? "Shall we take good from God and not trouble?" (Jb 2:10).

### Jesus' Passion

Personally, I find an iron wall between the Father revealed by Jesus in the parable of the prodigal son and the image of God that theologians have argued for centuries, who required Jesus' sufferings as atonement for sins. I have a contrarian resistance to accepting Jesus as a "ransom" for us to an offended and unbending God. Isn't ransom paid only to a hostile power?

The God revealed in Jesus' unvarying treatment of sinners—the woman who wept over his feet, the adulterous woman, the woman at the well, cowardly Peter, the kindly thief crucified with him—offers simple, uncritical acceptance. Never a need to crawl, to list species and number, no compensatory penance. How does one square that kindly Father with a vindictive God who demands blood in recompense for two simpletons (to whom he himself gave the freedom) eating one piece of fruit? Could the God who asks us to forgive 70 times seven times hold a grudge so long?

Note well: I do not deny the centuries-old teaching on atonement. I just no longer pretend I understand it. Not even a fool could deny the effects of original sin. But I balk at the economic metaphor—an almost irreparable debt to explain what caused human inconstancy.

If the degradation God endured for us has not been deadened by repetition, I wonder if we could find a depth beyond atonement. In his forthright confrontation

with evil and suffering, Christ did indeed free us—from fear: fear that our sins might defy forgiveness, fear that our sufferings have no meaning, fear that only a few loved ones truly care. To my mind, our liberation comes not from God's acceptance of an infinite, bloody propitiation, but in the very nature of a God who is Love, who dotes on us neither despite our faults nor because of our good deeds but because we are his. Such love eludes any science, even theology.

The scandal of the cross is the baffling anomaly of an omnipotent God, by nature inaccessible to anything remotely negative, much less helpless agony, willingly yielding to such degradation. It defies rational explanation. To those not dulled by familiarity, the cross staggers the mind. What could motivate such abasement? The only response is no rational answer: love freely given, prompted by nothing more than a Father's deathless infatuation. The Passion declares: "Here! Look! Is this enough to prove how important you are to me?"

Bewildering as that love is, it is more comprehensible—and more congruous with the God embodied in Jesus—than a God placated by blood sacrifice, as was accepted in a barbarian world. It allows of a God who goes beyond even conventional morality, group loyalty and law-and-order quid pro quo, the just balance, the human in us. It provides a model of post-conventional motivation: unbridled altruism that is neither rational nor irrational but beyond logic. Difficult as it might be for those whose scope is at those lower levels, this

is the God in whose image we are fashioned—invited beyond the self-centered animal, even beyond the self-governed human, into the freewheeling love-life of the Trinity. Into holiness.

Look at a crucifix. Reflect on whom that corpse embodies: the architect of the universe, compacted into that bleeding mass. Can I honestly say, and accept in the depths of myself: "Yes. It is inescapable. God believes I am worth that. Who am I even to have second thoughts about that evaluation?" For that, I think I can forgive God's unfathomable intentions. **A**

## La Migra

With sleep in her eyes she parts the curtain,  
sees the black van and three strange men.

Standing on tiptoe in woolen pajamas  
she raps at the window, sees him drive off  
with three strange men.

They've come to the farm in a dusty van,  
found him at work on the fence out back,  
sat him between them and drove the lane  
scattering stones and dirt.

In blue pajamas with padded feet  
she runs to the phone and tells the "O"  
Papá's been taken away in a van  
from where she lives with the broken chair  
and chicks in the yard and he fell down  
running away from three strange men.

All alone in a quiet house she holds  
on tight to a blanket end  
to keep her safe from the raging wind  
and the angry shouts of three strange men.

*Michael McMahon*

**MICHAEL McMAHON** is presently teaching at Fresno Pacific University. His poems have appeared in *Seneca Review*, *Notre Dame Review* and *Poetry East*.



# Blessings

BY ANNE STRACHAN

ONE PERSON TOUCHES another, and the consequences are far-reaching. Arriving at church an hour early, I enter the building. Despite reserved seating and rapidly filling pews, there is a space to the side and near the front with a good view, and I settle in.

The ordination of a new bishop coincides with a surprise visit from a traveling 20-year-old Australian cousin, and I had decided to make the three-hour journey from my small village to the bustle of the city to welcome, in different contexts, both of these people.

I sit among a gathering of the faithful in the church, along with a sizeable group of high-ranking church officials. Miters are lifted off and placed on heads at various points in the proceedings. I take note of the comforting presence of one monsignor, a dear friend better known as Father Charlie, as well as a bishop I once met on retreat at a monastery who now serves a vast northern diocese. These friendly faces beneath the miters and above the vestments help me to connect on a human level with this group.

## The Face of Poverty

*My cousin James and I encounter the kid wearing the black hooded sweatshirt when he taps on the car window, as we're about to pull away from our parking spot close to the hostel. He wants a ride to Safeway, a distance of several blocks. My first reaction is to mumble to James, "I don't really want him in the back-seat of my car." James responds, "Oh, you don't?" Suddenly I feel ungenerous in my fear of this stranger. Grudgingly I allow the teenager to enter the enclave of the warm car.*

*His face appears angular and pale to my sideways vision, and there is a scar or birth-*

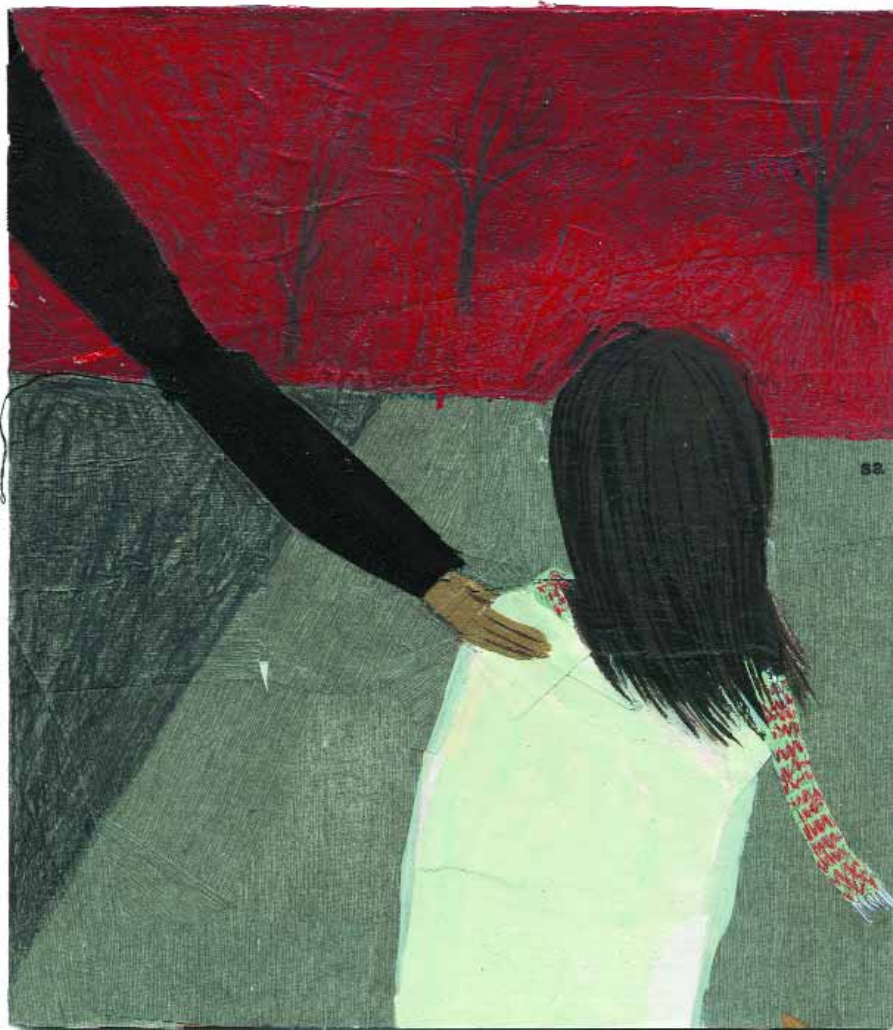
*mark. Afterward, I remember his thin sweat-shirt, suitable for a much warmer day. I realize how cold I am in spite of my wool scarf, thick coat and heavy hood. In contrast, he is ill-equipped to ward off the wind sweeping in from the icy lake.*

A number of pews are reserved for diocesan priests, and I see familiar faces as well as guests of the bishop-elect. One pew is reserved for nuns, their number noticeably small. A couple of them wear traditional habits, but most do not. They greet each other warmly and seem to inhabit a small island in the sea of hierar-

chy. Other pews are reserved for schoolchildren and special guests. An air of anticipation fills the church.

*In the car headed to Safeway, I say, "It's cold." The kid says, "Yeah, I wouldn't want to sleep outside," as though he often bunkers down in the street. His expression is inscrutable. For all I know, he bummed this ride to meet with his drug dealer. Or perhaps he is a drug dealer. I give my head a shake to dispel that scary thought.*

*We pull up to the intersection beside Safeway, and he says, "It's another couple of blocks." I decide he's lucky I allowed him in the*



ART BY STEFANIE AUGUSTINE

ANNE STRACHAN lives in Nakusp, B.C., Canada. She publishes regularly in the journal Spirituality.

car at all. I feel pushed to the edge of my comfort zone, and I will not go further. Employing my best mother-of-teenager's voice, I firmly suggest he hop out, now.

It's time for the new bishop to be blessed. One by one, his confreres approach their brother, their colleague, and each places hands upon the head of this man presenting himself humbly for ordination. The apostolic nuncio, an archbishop or two and one bishop after another steps forward. Each touch conveys a mixture of reverence and affection. I'm moved by an authentic sense of humility emanating from within the outward spectacle.

Then, unable to be contained within this group of honored men, it's as if a generative, crucial essence within the ritual surges outward. I'm seized by a fierce desire to leap up from my anonymous place in the pew. I imagine racing up the stairs two at a time, to join with these shepherds of the church, to place my hands on the head of Brother John Corriveau in blessing. Does anyone else feel this undeniable summons?

*As the young stranger opens the car door and gets one leg out, I blurt, "I'm sorry if I seem suspicious. I don't know you at all..." The excuse peters out and sounds feeble to my ears. I feel frustrated and embarrassed, at an impossible distance from this nameless, unknown person. I feel helpless, and about as Christian as the imagined drug dealer.*

### A Gesture That Counts

*Suddenly, the kid turns back. He swiftly leans in. He grips my shoulder for one intense moment. Then he's gone.*

*I suppose it isn't for me to question a stranger's motives, although clearly he wasn't planning to buy groceries. In the face of my reluctant, half-hearted, blundering Christianity, this stranger touched—no, gripped—my shoulder. In that deliberate gesture, he assured me that I'm not so bad. He understood my fear and forgave me for it. This marginal stranger forgave me. He blessed me.*

As a laywoman in the crowd gathered for the bishop's ordination, I feel like Moses approaching the burning bush. Initial curiosity shifts to awe in the revelation of God's certain presence in this place. It's almost as astounding as feeling God's unequivocal tenderness in the deliberate touch of a frightening stranger. **A**

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# 'Life Right Now!'

## Bruce Springsteen in concert

BY JOSEPH GERICS

**W**HAT'S BETTER on a warm summer night in New Jersey than spending a few hours with some close friends? For many vacationers, that would mean a weekend party at the Jersey shore. But for more than 150,000 concertgoers over three nights in the last week of July, it meant time with "The Boss."

As his international "Magic" tour wound down with three shows at Giants Stadium, Bruce Springsteen took his fans down memory lane, featuring infrequently performed songs, along with songs from earlier albums chosen in tribute to the recently departed Danny Federici of the E Street Band.

At this stage in his career, some things have changed for Springsteen. With his face a little craggier and lined and his hairline a bit higher, he is still a commanding stage presence. He no longer bounds into the air during guitar solos, yet he managed a rock star leap of sorts with his daughter, who joined him on stage at one performance for a closing cover of "Twist and Shout." And he still slides across half the stage on his knees. Also, while his four-hour marathon concerts may be in the past, Springsteen remains the only performer who can play for more than three hours and leave his audience wanting more.

Things have changed for his audience, which is now intergenerational. The "pit" in front of the stage was largely populated by 20- and 30-somethings, but there were also many older people, as well as their grandchildren. Even with occasionally rowdy calls for "Bruuuuce," the atmosphere was sedate and mellow rather than

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transgressive. Preconcert tailgate parties featured plenty of beer but few whiffs of any illegal substances.

Fans always leave a Springsteen show



tired but exuberant. This time they were even more exuberant than usual. Many song selections were buoyant, like "Mary's Place," "Sherry Darling" and "Waiting on a Sunny Day," and few hinted at the darkness that always seems about to overtake Springsteen's protagonists. At the July 28 show, one of the few songs with dark overtones was the rarely performed "Hungry Heart." But the Boss took the edge off, first by treating it as a sing along, and then by turning the microphone over to two small children in the audience to lead the refrain. Having an eight-year-old sing about marital angst was a rare miscalculation.

In some ways the show was a family affair. Springsteen encouraged the crowd in its weak version of "Happy Birthday" for his wife, E Street Band member Patti Scialfa. He left the stage to embrace his daughter during the wistful "Girls in Their Summer Clothes." And Max Weinberg's son came onstage to play the drums during "Born to Run."

Most of the band members had a chance to shine individually. Appropriately, Scialfa took center stage for "Tunnel of Love"; Springsteen and Little Steven Van Zandt shared vocals on several numbers; Nils Lofgren was more animated than usual—even doing a flip

during one of his solos; and Clarence "Big Man" Clemons had his usual elaborate introduction.

Still there is never any doubt about the real star. Springsteen spent more time on the apron of the stage playing to the audience in the pit and touching outstretched hands than he generally does. No other band member even ventured onto the apron except during the ovations at the end of the main set and the encore.

For the most part, the polarities of Springsteen's pervasive themes—the search for authenticity and community that is more a dream than a reality; hope always on the verge of being crushed; pas-

PHOTO: REUTERS/ALLEN FREDERICKSON

sion ever falling short of fulfillment—were swept away by the show's good-time atmosphere.

His haunted protagonists on albums until "The River" are shadowed by doubt, uncertainty and threat, themes he later confronts more explicitly on "The Ghost of Tom Joad," "The Rising," "Devils and Dust" and "Magic." But the angry young man of "Badlands" is now singing to a grayer, paunchier choir—the "old, bald fans" he acknowledged at Thursday's show. At least for one night, the audience put aside its compromises and sang out, "No retreat, baby, no surrender."

The darker elements of Springsteen's oeuvre were relegated to the background on this summer evening. His contemporaries, who haven't been carded in decades and who are more likely to be the ones hiring and firing than the ones being hired and fired, sang along with "Promised Land" without irony. Skeptics might find hearing 50-somethings roar, "Mister, I ain't a boy, no, I'm a man" akin to the Republican appropriation of "Born in the USA" as a campaign song back in the 1980s. But the Boss's fans—true believers all—know that middle age does not end the search for authenticity and community.

The different character of this concert was evident throughout the show. Politics took a back seat in Springsteen's patter. While he did refer to rendition and the suspension of civil rights—"When I was a kid, these were the kinds of things that only happened someplace else, not here"—his tone was matter-of-fact, almost resigned. During this show, the only time he claimed the mantle of prophecy was jokingly, in reference to a song he wrote about gas prices after the energy crisis of the late 70s, "Held up Without a Gun."

In one of the set pieces on the "Devils and Dust" tour, Springsteen adopted the persona of an evangelist promising to take his congregation "down to the river...to resuscitate, to rejuvenate, to re-vivify, to liberate, to re-educate, to re-sexualate [you]"—every "R" word, it seems, except "resurrect"—"[with] the power, the promise, the majesty, the mystery, the ministry of rock and roll!.... Unlike my

competitors, I don't promise you life everlasting—but life right now!"

Springsteen often employs, and sometimes plays with, theological language. At the closing show at Giants Stadium, he sprinkled the crowd enduring the stifling heat with what he called a "Jersey baptism...in the name of the father, the son and Elvis." At all three shows he reprised the role of the evangelist. This time he wants to "go down to the river of life, and build me a house, and make me some love," "to the river of faith...and make me some faith, and "to the river of hope...and make me some hope."

Yet his version of the theological virtues stands against a purely human horizon. More characteristic of the show is "Detroit Medley," which replaced most of his songs of outrage; he didn't play "Born in the USA" in any of the three shows. Once he smuggled in his critique of the social order with two plaintive songs, "The Last to Die for a Mistake" and "Livin' in the Future." Otherwise, a rollicking cover of "Summertime Blues" was the closest thing to a protest song.

Springsteen's optimism and idealism were always the horizon of songs like "Badlands" and "Promised Land." The language of faith and hope became more explicit in "The Rising," and religious imagery emerged in "Devils and Dust." These themes were less prominent on this tour, but Springsteen's vision of social justice is implicit in "This American Land."

Returning home after a long tour, Springsteen had chosen songs of passion and good times, built on a foundation of hope and optimism, of joy and maybe even faith. For three summer nights in New Jersey, Springsteen delivered on his promise of "life right now!" His homecoming party was about as good as one can expect.

At the end of the day, though, many of us hope for more than that; we yearn for transcendence. Bruce Springsteen delivers on the yearning and touches the edges of religious language and imagery. His vision of love has already evolved. Will he ever address the themes of redemption and resurrection? We can only hope. **A**



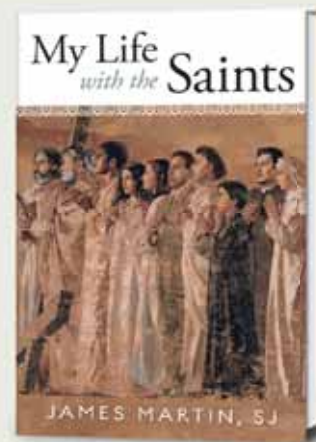
From the archives, Andrew M. Greeley on "The Catholic Imagination of Bruce Springsteen," at [americamagazine.org/pages](http://americamagazine.org/pages).

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## Book Reviews

# The Wisdom the World Needs

## Gandhi and Jesus

### The Saving Power of Nonviolence

By Terrence J. Rynne  
*Orbis Books. 228p \$20*  
ISBN 9781570757662

Rarely are books on religion both timely and of enduring value. By and large, if they respond to the pressing needs of the moment and even earn a coveted spot on The New York Times bestseller list, they will be soon be remembered once the ephemeral interest has waned. Or if they achieve the status of a classic by unveiling perennial albeit unpopular truths about the human condition, they may not appeal to the wider public and will gather dust on the bookshelf. This work by Terrence Rynne is an exception. It is timely, responding to the immediate needs of our time; at the same time, its ideas, expounded with passion and compassion, will, if put into practice, permanently change our world. As Rynne puts it simply: “Imagine the impact on secular society if the entire body of Christians rejected the exclusive identification of justice with retribution, turned to the concept of restorative justice, and embraced, modeled, and lived the way of nonviolence.”

At the heart of *Gandhi and Jesus*, then, is nonviolence—not as a military tactic and a political strategy for conflict resolution, but as a way of life or Christian spirituality. To flesh out this concept of nonviolence, Rynne turns to the life and teaching of Mohandas Gandhi (1869-1948). He begins with a brief account of Gandhi’s childhood in India, adult years in England and South Africa and political activities in India. He goes on to show how Gandhi, though deeply rooted in Hinduism, especially as embodied in the *Bhagavad Gita*, modified his understanding of Hindu teachings through his encounters with the teachings of Jesus and Leo Tolstoy.

Nowhere is this transformation more evident and socially relevant than in the concepts of *moksha* (release, liberation), *ahimsa* (non-injury) and *tapasya* (suffering).

This means that for Christians it is necessary to reformulate the notion of salvation itself. What is the root metaphor to understand being saved by God: violent sacrifice or nonviolent power?

To answer this question, Rynne (who founded the Marquette University Center for Peacemaking) examines at length Gandhi’s notion of *satyagraha*. This term, coined by Gandhi because of his dissatisfaction with expressions such as “passive resistance” and “civil disobedience” to describe his method of nonviolence, literally means to firmly hold (*agraha*) the truth (*satya*) or “truth force.” Rynne points out that central to Gandhi’s understanding and practice of nonviolence is his conception of *sat* (reality or truth), which he takes to be the moral law governing the universe and which he identifies with God. Such reality and truth can be grasped and realized not through the intellect but only through action.

According to Gandhi, however, a person’s grasp of reality or truth, which is absolute, is always partial and relative, and therefore should not be forced on others through violence. Associated with *satyagraha* are the other concepts that Gandhi makes essential to the practice of nonviolence—namely, *ahimsa* (non-injury), which is nonviolent force in situations of conflict, and *tapasya* (suffering), which is the willingness and readiness to accept personal suffering for the sake of justice and reconciliation.

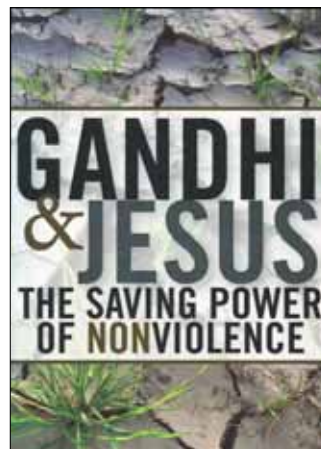
Has Gandhi’s notion of *satyagraha* found any echo in Christian theology? Rynne turns to the works of four theologians: Charles Freer Andrews, an Anglican priest and a close friend of Gandhi’s; John Howard Yoder, a Mennonite theologian; Bernard Häring, a Roman Catholic moral theologian; and Walter Wink, professor of biblical interpretation at Auburn Theological Seminary. Common to these four theologians is a consistent effort to understand Christian salvation in the light of Jesus’ life, ministry, death and resurrection, highlighting nonviolence as the central feature of his preaching and practice. This insight leads Rynne to offer an exten-

sive critique of Anselm’s satisfaction theory of redemption, which in his eyes is predicated on a faulty understanding of God, lacks a biblical basis, ignores Jesus’ unique mode of ministry and glorifies human suffering.

At the heart of Rynne’s theology, then, lies a new soteriology, one that is rooted in Jesus’ way of nonviolent resistance to evil powers and is thus connected with Gandhi’s *satyagraha*. Rynne develops a theology of salvation that emphasizes human responsibility for history, is rooted in Jesus’ nonviolent life, ministry, death and resurrection, conceives salvation as requiring the rejection of the “domination system” that uses violence as a means to resolve conflicts, accords priority to praxis, and presents the church as a community of disciples enacting Jesus’ nonviolent way of life.

This soteriology has implications for understanding the Eucharist. Rynne reveals how it has changed his own understanding of the Mass from “sacrifice” to a call to “discipleship”: Jesus’ injunction “Do this in memory of me” now means “Do this way of acting that I have shown you. Do this way of resisting evil and returning good for evil that I lived and taught. Do it even if it is hard and stirs up resistance. Do it filled with love, because you know that you are loved.”

In retrieving the teaching of Jesus on nonviolent resistance and in formulating a



## The Reviewers

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soteriology based not on the notion of satisfaction and sacrifice but on God's nonviolent power in correlation to Gandhi's understanding and practice of *satyagraha*, Rynne's work will join the ranks of classics on Christian nonviolent resistance. It also fosters an ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, now more necessary than ever, through his studies of Protestant theologians and Gandhi.

At the same time, it is appropriate for our times. In this season of presidential elections, it is a must-read for Christians—Democrat and Republican alike. When the nominees of both parties still invoke violence and war as a means to combat terrorism for fear of appearing “weak,” and when both nominees make a show of their “Christian” faith to get votes, Rynne's book serves as a prophetic wake-up call to Christians to rethink their discipleship to Jesus as the nonviolent one.

I recall the discomfort I felt at seeing a banner spread across a Mennonite church on my way to work in the face of chauvinistic patriotism in the aftermath of Sept. 11, 2001. It cited Rom 12:21: “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” I am now haunted by Rynne's inconvenient question about what would happen “if the entire body of Christians rejected the exclusive identification of justice with retribution, turned to the concept of restorative justice, and embraced, modeled, and lived the way of nonviolence.”

After reading this book, we should ponder the possibility of American soldiers, the majority of whom are Christian, laying down their arms in the name of their faith in Jesus (and not for political reasons!) and vowing to struggle against terrorism by every means available except violence. Would this be any less effective in the long run than “preventive war” to achieve peace and national security? What would happen to the witness of the church as a community of disciples to Jesus? To Christianity's relation to Islam? To the American military complex and politics? To the survival of our planet? Hard questions indeed, but asked they must be, for Jesus' sake. And our thanks to Rynne for raising them, not as theoretical questions but as incentives for action.

**Peter C. Phan**

## For the Common Good?

### Public Pulpits

#### Methodists and Mainline Churches in the Moral Argument of Public Life

By Steven M. Tipton  
*Univ. of Chicago Press. 496p \$35*  
*ISBN 9780226804743*

In many respects, this book represents a breakthrough. First, it is the fruit of 15 years of research on the lobbying and moral-political activity of the mainline Protestant churches. It combines a treasure trove of rich interview and case study material on lobbying activities in Washington, D.C., by the United Methodist Church (through its General Board of Church and Society), the United Church of Christ, the Friends Committee on National Legislation and the National Council of Churches. In a field rife with studies about the role of the Christian right, the book represents welcome nuanced attention to mainline Protestant efforts at public moral advocacy.

Steven M. Tipton, a professor of sociology and religion at Emory University, the author of *Getting Saved From the Sixties* and co-author with Robert Bellah of *Habits of the Heart* and *The Good Society*, views the churches as representing the institutions that provide the single

most democratic counterweight to an increasingly class-based American divide on economic, cultural and political questions. Churches are likely to intone a communal pitch (concern for the common good) to the prevalent American moral song of procedural rules, self-interest and individualism. But denominations run the serious risk of becoming internally riven into what Tipton calls “caucus churches.”

At the level of national and local congregations, opinions are divided over whether the churches should stress

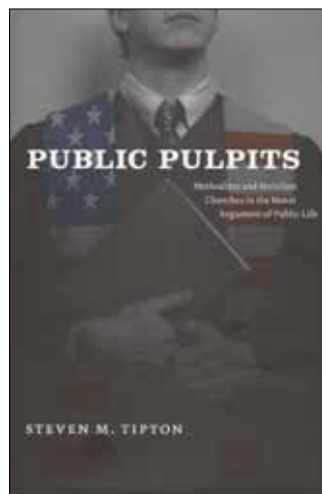
prophetic witness over becoming primarily “good Samaritans,” dispensing faith-based charity to the victims of economic dislocation, a church as primarily concerned with justice or charity. Should churches engage mainly in moral advocacy or get down and dirty in mobilizing voters for broad electoral causes? Should they put their chief efforts into teaching their social creeds to local congregations? Should they resist increasing isomorphic pressures to become more like para-church institutions engaged as religious lobbies?

*Public Pulpits* thoughtfully considers these dilemmas. Tipton presents case studies of the General Board of Church and Society of the Methodists (the third largest religious denomination in America and one that mirrors better than other mainline churches the American class divisions); Good News, a Methodist conservative renewal group that also helped spawn the notorious—some would say nefarious—Institute on Religion and Democracy, which has spent much time and money undermining the moral authority of mainline Protestant national organs; the Inter-Faith Impact for Justice and Peace (a group that risks the danger of flattening out theological differences to make possible closer coordination among mainline Protestant bodies); the Inter-Faith Alliance (a mainline Protestant effort to counteract the religious right); and the efforts of the National Council of Churches to lobby for

health care reform. Along the way, Tipton probes the sometimes dubious funding sources for mainline Protestant moral advocacy—some quite neoconservative; some very liberal.

I came away from this book with a new and more healthy wariness about para-church groups. Tipton writes of such groups:

Free-standing, member based single issue religious groups more closely resemble their non-religious counterparts than they



resemble churches, political parties or government itself. They are more prone to fuse absolute moral principle and particular legislative provisions. They are likelier to mobilize members to vote for or against candidates given their stance on single issues and to rise or fall on their ability to win issue-specific fights.

Again, Tipton argues:

Para-church groups across the political spectrum threaten both religious awareness and public civility when they forego the demanding integrity of religious practice and community in their strategic efforts to manage public opinion, mobilize partisan constituencies and lobby the state along the morally instrumental lines of interest-group politics.

Tipton's case studies shed light on the continuing push for religious groups to converge toward the organizational forms of free-standing lobbies, ideological think tanks or membership-based political action committees. These, however, already crowd the American public square when what is needed, as an important corrective and counter-weight, are groups that raise up the common good and care for issues of society as a whole.

As a critic of narrow interest-balancing politics and a champion of a more vigorous sense of deliberative democracy, Tipton, in the end, plumps for an institutional model for civic life, and a public stance by churches that is more like a forum and a collegial assembly—that is, more like healthy inner church dynamics—than like a marketplace, a bureaucracy or, as he notes, “a bully pulpit.”

*Public Pulpits* should be read by all those in the churches, at whatever level, who are engaged in social teaching and moral advocacy. For those less interested in churches, it illuminates the kind of moral argument in public life that will best

enhance our communal purposes.

John A. Coleman

## The Dangers of Exceptionalism

### The Empire of Lies

#### The Truth About China in the Twenty-First Century

By Guy Sorman

Encounter Books. 325p. \$25.95  
ISBN 9781594032165

The French writer Guy Sorman has taught economics, served in public office, traveled widely and authored numerous books on contemporary affairs. But he is first and foremost a devout democrat. His firm belief in the universality of democracy shines through in *The Empire of Lies*, a book that challenges a prevailing view of China as an emerging economic superpower, inhabited by a people uniquely immune to democratic desires.

Contrary to the prediction of some Western observers, China will not own the future, argues Sorman. China's economic “miracle,” although significant, is not as substantial as it appears. While 200 million Chinese are reaping the benefits of working in an expanding market, one billion remain among the poorest and most exploited people in

the world, and they are “simmering in discontent,” he writes.

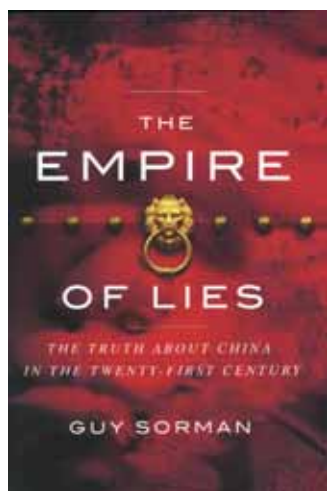
According to Sorman, the West's tendency to misread China dates back to the 17th century, when French and Italian Jesuits traveling through the country described its people, in contrast to Europeans, as irreligious, indifferent to freedom and therefore naturally drawn toward enlightened despots, as represented by the philosopher-king. The stereotype has persisted, says Sorman. It misinformed pro-Maoist European intellectuals of the 1960s and deludes today's business elites, who naïvely accept the Communist Party's claim that free speech and democ-

racy are contrary to the Chinese ethos.

Eager to “give voice” to China's voiceless, Sorman spent all of 2005, the Year of the Rooster, traveling throughout China, visiting teeming cities and remote villages. In his approach, he emulated the methodology of the French political writer Alexis de Tocqueville, whose 19th-century classic on U.S. political life, *Democracy in America*, is based on his seven-month tour of the country. Like de Tocqueville, Sorman interviews Chinese of varying viewpoints. Dissidents, peasant activists, the country's first sexologist, an attorney fighting press censorship, a Jewish woman under house arrest, the mother of a Tiananmen Square victim, and even party technocrats are among the many “voices” included in his book. From these conversations, Sorman derives generalizations about China's political and social life. What emerges is a damning critique of the Chinese Communist Party and its economic policies and a vigorous affirmation of the democratic aspirations of the Chinese people. Extremely informative, occasionally didactic, *The Empire of Lies* asks us to regard China not as an exotic or market phenomenon but as a country capable of freedom like any other.

The book's range of Chinese perspectives is far-reaching. Sorman has visited China regularly for the past 40 years, which enables him to contextualize his interviews. His chapter “The Mystics” provides a useful overview of some of the country's major religions and their relationship to the state. There are gods and faith aplenty in China, he concludes. A tireless traveler, he persists in his pursuit of an interview. He evades police surveillance to meet Liu Di, a Beijing student and cyberspace activist, who posts on the Internet translated texts by dissidents from former Communist Europe. He waits months to talk to Ding Zilin, the mother of a Tiananmen Square victim, who is painstakingly collecting the names of all those killed on June 4, 1989. Sixteen years after the fact, the massacre remains unacknowledged in China. Most families have yet to recover the bodies of their loved ones or verify the cause of their death.

Like so many Sorman interviewees, Di and Zilin are hardly revolutionaries. They want freedom of speech and a government that is accountable to its people. For their efforts they are harassed, placed



under police surveillance and briefly imprisoned. To Sorman, their circumstances and campaigns represent the “savagery” of the Chinese state and the resilience of activists who, against great odds, are pushing the limits of a rigid regime.

Those who predict that China’s economic liberalization will produce greater political freedoms, Sorman asserts, are naïve. Although the government may be making the right noises about democracy, the old arrangements of power remain fundamentally unchanged. Much of the country’s rural population still lives in abject poverty. Many migrate to the city where factory work is plentiful. But a discriminatory identification system denies them access to hospitals, schools and public housing, thereby reducing them to second-class citizens. During Mao’s rule and afterward “the peasants were never more than the proletariat of the industrial project. They still are,” Sorman writes. China’s commercial success is built upon this exploitation, and the party membership, he notes, benefits greatly from the status quo.

Sorman is equally fierce in his assessment of the Chinese economy. He describes China’s current hyper-growth as skewed and unsustainable. Water is already a rare commodity. The country’s banks, “ticking time bombs,” are poorly managed; loans are issued for political and personal rather than economic reasons. As in the past, the government is prioritizing the development of heavy industry and weaponry at the expense of investing in the country’s infrastructure.

Although Sorman calls for a critical re-evaluation of the West’s relationship with China, he does not advocate disengagement. Free trade has benefited China, and a boycott would only alienate and isolate the country’s progressives. Instead he calls for making alliances with China’s pro-democracy activists, just as we once supported Soviet dissidents. His appeal is wise and timely.

Precise in his denunciation of political repression, Sorman seems cavalier about the consequences of trade relations with China for Western workers. Yes, outsourcing has caused unemployment but “doesn’t creative destruction help drive the free market?” he asks. Sorman’s passion for correcting Western misconcep-

tions about China is obvious. What prevents *The Empire of Lies* from devolving into a one-man screed is his depth of knowledge and his democratic commitment to pass the microphone to many, even those who declare democracy is too foreign for China. The plethora of views presented is his best testament to the political and religious vitality of the Chinese people.

Claire Schaeffer-Duffy

## An Alternative Theology

### Flesh Made Word Saints’ Stories and the Western Imagination

By Aviad Kleinberg  
*Belknap/Harvard Univ. Press. 352p \$29.95*  
ISBN 9780674026476

Aviad Kleinberg, a professor of history at Tel Aviv University, belongs to that not inconsiderable number of contemporary historians who have taken seriously the cult of the saints in the history of Christianity. That interest in the saints has been especially energized by Peter Brown’s *The Cult of the Saints*, published nearly three decades ago, as well as subsequent studies by Brown and those influenced by him. Historical research on the saints, of course, goes back at least as far as the pioneering work of the Jesuit Jean Bolland (d. 1665), whose research center exists to this day in Brussels. As Kleinberg’s ample notes testify, historical research on the saints is a growth industry.

*Flesh Made Word* follows two trajectories. The first comprises a series of chapters on the rise of the cult of the saints from the matrix of, first, the martyrs and then their successors. Subsequent chapters treat the ascetics, followed by a rather quick leap to the Middle Ages, where Kleinberg finds a new shift in the construction of hagiographies from roughly the 12th century on. He

ends his historical trajectory with a fine chapter on that most popular of medieval books: *The Golden Legend*, compiled by the industrious Dominican bishop James of Voragine (d. 1298). Kleinberg alternates more general considerations on a given topic with detailed examinations on a given saint. Thus, for example, a chapter on martyrdom is followed by one on the *Passion of Perpetua and Felicity* and another on ascetics with a subsequent one on Athanasius’ *Life of Antony* and the contrasting (and fictive) *Life of Paul* by the redoubtable Jerome.

Later he contrasts the development of the legend of St. Francis of Assisi with a late story of Fra Ginepro (Juniper) from the *Fioretti*. That work, often praised for its simplicity, is, in fact, a highly polemical collection reflecting the thinking of the more conservative contemplative friars from the Italian Marches.

One of the more interesting aspects of this book is Kleinberg’s occasional reference to the Jewish tradition about martyrs. I wish he had made more of this theme, since most historical studies very rarely turn to that tradition beyond the well-known observation that the account of the Maccabean martyrs may have served as a literary model for early martyrdom *passiones* in the Christian tradition. How interesting it would have been had he used, as a model, some features of Hasidism (e.g., the Bratislavers), with its emphasis on visiting the tombs of the rebbes, their miraculous interventions, and the like.

This first trajectory—investigating some early examples of hagiography—overlaps with another one, an argument drawn from the author’s historical narrative already described. That argument in its baldest form can be stated as follows: the hagiographical tradition reflected a popular religion of the masses in contrast to the high culture of the institutional church of the elites. Thus, Kleinberg makes a radical distinction between elite religion reflected in texts, creeds, liturgy and clerical life and the religion of the masses centered on the





cult of the saints. His thesis is not very original; it was expressed in a polemical but unsystematic manner by Erasmus of Rotterdam in *The Praise of Folly* on the eve of the Reformation. In Kleinberg's book, however, this separation between popular religion embedded in the cult of the saints at a polar distance from the religion of the elites is a recurring leitmotif. In his concluding reflections Kleinberg insists that this separation is radical and broad.

What are we to make of this thesis?

That Catholicism has a tradition of popular religion is not only well known but has for more than a generation been given a sympathetic reading, mostly by liberation theologians. Also, there has always been in the Catholic tradition a link between popular and "official" religion in the cult of the saints through the liturgy with its interwoven temporal and sanctoral cycles. Finally, while it is true that the magisterial theological tradition reflected only incidentally on the meaning and significance of saints within theology as a whole, there is a theological reflection on the role of the saints that has a very long history, from the patristic period down to the present day. In fact, John Henry Newman wrestled with the problem of the cult of the saints in the development of Christian doctrine in his 1845 work on doctrinal development. That interest continues into our own times.

As noted at the outset, two threads weave through this work: the first, a study of hagiography in the patristic and medieval period; the second, an attempt to explain the cult of the saints. The first is interesting, well researched and generally reliable in its observations. The author's treatment of the second, however, is overly simplistic and reductionist with none of the sophistication one finds, say, in the exemplary work of Peter Brown, Caroline Walker Bynum and other historians who have turned their scholarly attention to the complex world of hagiography. At times, to be sure, popular religion operated somewhat at a distance from the "official" faith tradition of the church, while at other times the two intersected even dramatically. After all, Ignatius of Loyola was converted by reading a Spanish version of *The Golden Legend*, but his subsequent history was hardly "popular" religion independent of the "official" faith of the elites.

**Lawrence S. Cunningham**

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## Letters: Faith and Darwin in the Classroom

### And God Saw That It Was Good

As both a scientist and a Christian, I appreciated "Teaching Evolution," by Paul Cottle (9/15). But there are several important theological aspects of the debate that he and other Christian apologists for evolution seem to ignore.

First, a basic tenet of evolution is that individual species (and life itself) came into being through purely natural processes without any supernatural intervention. If this is so, what foundation does God have for a relationship with humans—or any other living thing?

Second, if God is not the creator of humanity, then what is the basis for the coming of Christ to save humanity from sins that are the consequence of natural selection, as opposed to sins against the Creator's law? And if God is not the creator of humanity, what is the basis for Christians (or any faith group) to give God praise, loyalty or obedience?

David A. Johnson  
Pittsburgh, Pa.

### Out of Chaos

Thanks to Paul Cottle for his efforts to work with both sides on the issue of evolution. The Catholic Church has spoken in favor of evolution, but it has not explained the theory adequately from the church's position. It would be a help if the church explained evolution in a way that could be accepted by non-Catholics, non-Christians and even nonbelievers.

The church could explain that evolution does not account for how the material universe began. It addresses only speciation—the individuation of species of living organisms.

Order is found throughout the material universe at every level, from subatomic particles to galaxies, from inanimate objects to living creatures. It is an order that is biased toward belief, and it is anything but random and chaotic.

As a former atheist, I was astounded when I read the first chapter of Genesis,

because the order of creation it describes so closely parallels what science has found. How could people 3,000 years ago have had such intuitive insight?

Daisy Swadesh  
Farmington, N.M.

### Strange Bedfellows

Re "Teaching Evolution," by Paul Cottle (9/15): I teach adults and help train catechists through my parish's adult initiation program. It is always a shock to the adults in the program to learn that the Catholic Church does not oppose the teaching of evolution. This is just one example of how, by dividing the country into "believers" and "nonbelievers" through an "us versus them" ideology, the evangelical movement has forced its beliefs onto the culture of "believers."

The church in the United States is in great need of adult education in the faith, and Catholics need to reinvest in

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## Letters

Catholic education—and not just for those who can afford it. Otherwise church teachings will continue to be eroded, not just by humanists, but by other Christians.

*Harriet Villalpando  
Elsa, Tex.*

### Artificial Creation

Paul Cottle makes a powerful and well-reasoned argument in “Teaching Evolution.” I have a firm belief in God and his mighty hand in my life, but I see no conflict between faith in God and evolution.

Similar debates raged hundreds of years ago, when Galileo proposed a heliocentric view of the world. Then also the religious establishment felt threatened, because the proposal seemed at odds with literal interpretations of some isolated parts of Scripture. I am very proud of the Catholic Church for having learned from that debate and for now taking the enlightened stance that there is no conflict between evolution, its own teachings and faith in general.

God gave us the ability to reason. So

where is the conflict? It is just an artificial creation by insecure people.

*Gerry Meisels  
Tampa, Fla.*

### Source of Scandal

While I applaud Paul Cottle’s efforts on behalf of the teaching of evolutionary theory, I am sympathetic to many of those who oppose this practice. I am reminded of my first seminary Scripture class back in 1966, when my classmates and I were scandalized by the professor’s assertion that many of the biblical events we had come to understand as historical facts were actually “myths” and “metaphors.” While most of us made the necessary emotional adjustments as we progressed in our studies, some never did recover from the impact of modern biblical criticism.

While popes may wish to dismiss any problem with the acceptance of the broad brush strokes of Darwin’s theory, they cannot possibly speak for rank-and-file Catholics who hear the following when evolutionary theory is espoused: God did not create every-

thing out of nothing, and human beings are not soul-filled creatures who descended from our first parents, but are just another species of the apes from which we evolved.

I believe that faith can be reconciled with natural selection, but most every believer with half a mind knows that many people—including scientists—have used Darwin’s theory as a justification for dismissing God as neither a designer nor a creator.

*(Rev.) Jack Feehily  
Moore, Okla.*

### On the Other Hand...

I support nearly all of what Paul Cottle writes in “Teaching Evolution.” As a fellow member of the Florida Standards Committee, I can verify the facts Cottle presents regarding the development of the new science standards. One matter of opinion on which we might disagree is the assertion that faith and science need not be antithetical. As a Catholic believer, Cottle supports that assertion, while as a “freethinker” I see a problem where children are concerned.

In much religious teaching (some might say indoctrination), children are taught to believe rather than question the doctrine handed to them. Unlike science, where an inquiring attitude or habit of mind is encouraged, most religious teaching fails to encourage inquiry, and in some cases it is considered a sin to question the word of God or his helpers.

It is in this sense that I disagree with the assertion that faith and science need not be antithetical. One of the difficulties in discussions concerning religion is the wide variety of definitions of religion and God. Given Albert Einstein’s definition of God as the beauty of nature, including nature’s law, the assertion that science and religion need not be antithetical is far less of a problem. But few believers want such a limited, impersonal God.

I agree, however, that overall, Cottle’s position as outlined in “Teaching Evolution” is a pragmatic one that is more likely to be supported by most citizens than my own position.

*Ron Good  
Tallahassee, Fla.*



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## The Word

# It's Never Too Late

Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A), Sept. 28, 2008

Readings: Ez 18:25-28; Ps 25:4-9; Phil 2:1-11; Mt 21:28-32

*"Which of the two did his father's will?" (Mt 21:31)*

**A**RE YOU EVER discouraged with yourself or a loved one? Do you ever feel trapped in a situation? Do you ever think that change is impossible? Today's Scripture readings remind us that with God's help there is always hope, that it is never too late and that God never gives up on us.

The reading from Ezekiel 18 reflects the situation of ancient Israel's political and religious leaders in exile in Babylon in the early sixth century B.C. In that community there was much reflection and discussion about the reason for Judah's defeat and exile and about Israel's apparently dismal future as a people. Most felt trapped in a fate that they were powerless to change.

In that context the prophet Ezekiel challenged his fellow exiles to recognize that each of them still had the power to choose between right and wrong, between wisdom and folly, between righteousness and wickedness. While acknowledging that this freedom allowed apparently good persons to fall into evil ways, the prophet was especially concerned to hold out the possibility that even a terrible sinner might turn away from wickedness, embrace the way of righteousness and live in accord with God's will. In effect, Ezekiel was holding out hope to people who felt discouraged and trapped. He was saying to them, "With God it's never too late."

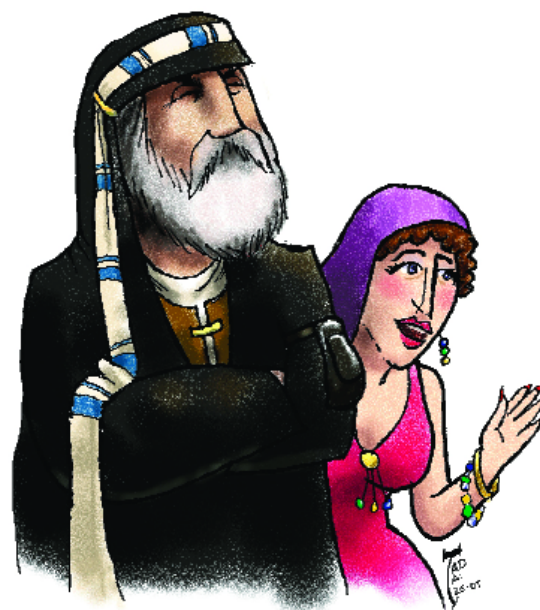
The parable of the two sons in Matthew 21 illustrates Ezekiel's point with reference to the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus. Both John and Jesus had their greatest success not with the religious elites, like the scribes and Pharisees but with such marginal figures as tax collectors and sinners. In some circles tax collectors were suspected of dishonesty (cheating people) and treason because of

their service to the Roman occupiers and their collaborators. Sinners (prostitutes, for example) were those who because of their occupation or lifestyle failed to observe the precepts of the Jewish Law. From the viewpoint of the religious elites, these people looked like hopeless and incorrigible sinners.

Nevertheless, these religiously marginal persons were precisely those who had come to hear and act upon the invitation to God's kingdom proclaimed by John and Jesus. Like the first son in the parable, these people, while slow to do so at first, were at last turning their lives around in response to the preaching of God's kingdom by John and Jesus. Like the second son in the parable, the scribes and Pharisees were listening to but not acting on the message. With the parable of the two sons, Jesus was defending his ministry and reminding us that some unlikely persons can and do find new hope and direction through him and his message. In effect, Jesus (like Ezekiel) was saying that with God it is never too late, because God does not give up on us.

The ground of this hope is not only human freedom and will power. Rather, as today's responsorial psalm (Psalm 25) insists, the real ground of hope is the person and promise of God. This psalm appeals to God's compassion and mercy. It asks God to show us the way of wisdom and truth, begs God to wipe away our sins and extend mercy to us, and expresses confidence that God will show sinners the way of truth and guide the humble to justice. There is always hope because God is kind and merciful. The refrain ("Remember your mercies, O Lord") challenges God to live up to God's reputation as the merciful one.

For Christians, the greatest display of God's mercy took place in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. That display of



mercy is celebrated in the early Christian hymn included in today's reading from Philippians 2: "who, though he was in the form of God...." It celebrates Christ as the Servant of God who humbled himself by becoming one of us (incarnation), suffered death on the cross, was exalted in his resurrection and is celebrated as "Lord" by all creation. This hymn provides a remarkable glimpse into what early Christians believed about Jesus. It also shows how Paul thought that Christ's example can and should shape the life of every Christian and how sharing in the right relationship with God brought about through Christ (justification) should express itself in the union of minds and hearts and in the humble service of others.

By quoting this early hymn to recall God's greatest act of mercy in the paschal mystery, Paul reminds us why it is never too late with God. For those who may feel discouraged and even trapped, today's readings offer words of hope.

**Daniel J. Harrington**

## Praying With Scripture

- Is there something in your life that makes you feel discouraged and trapped? What are you going to do about it?
- What message does Jesus' parable about the two sons convey to you?
- To what extent is your hope grounded in God? Does that help you to change when and if change is needed?