

America

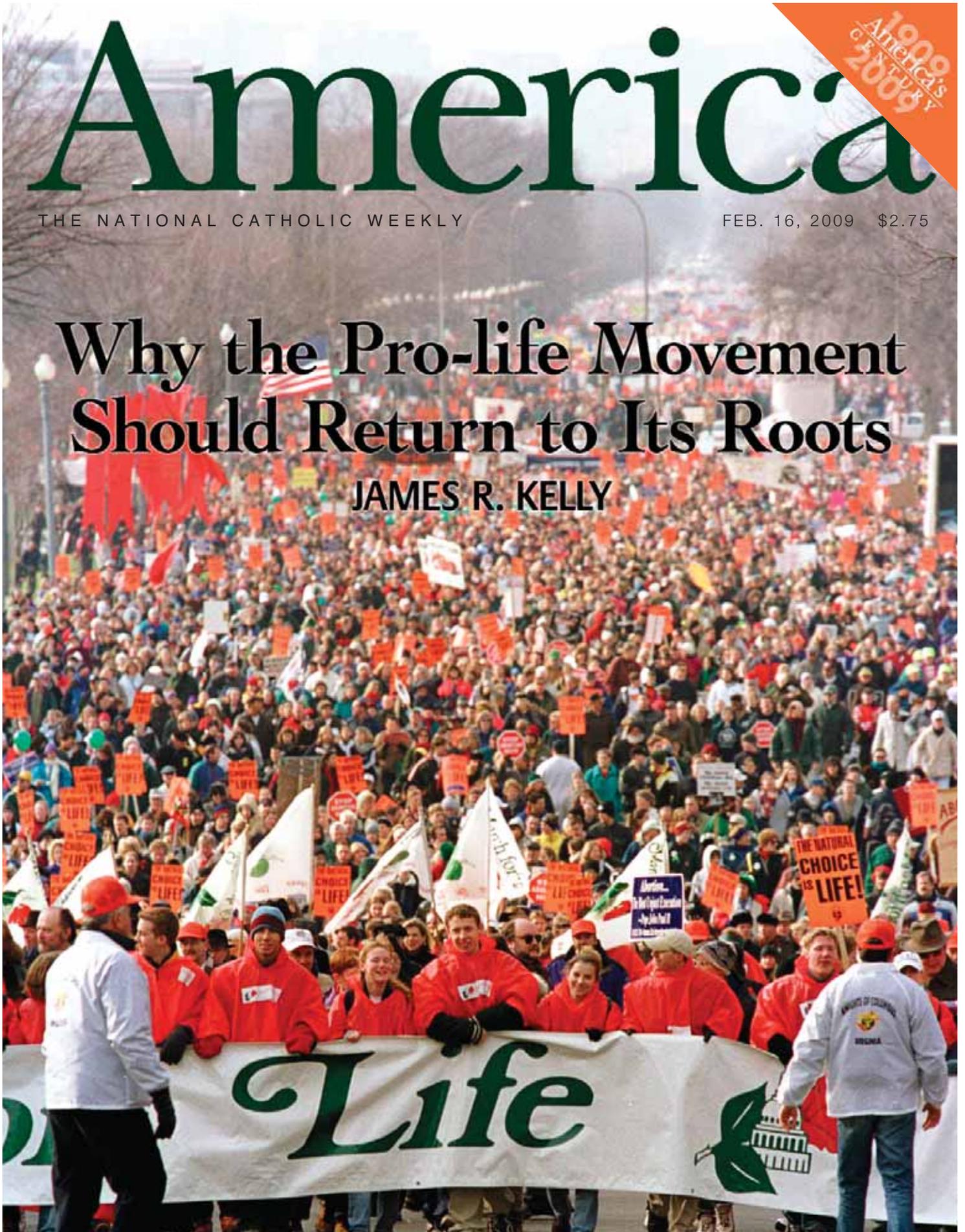
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Why the Pro-life Movement Should Return to Its Roots

JAMES R. KELLY



OF MANY THINGS

Two decades ago this week, the literary world was abuzz with the news of history's Least Funny Valentine: on Feb. 14, 1989, Iran's supreme religious leader, the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, issued a *fatwa* calling for the death of the author Salman Rushdie. In the judgment of Khomeini and his religious cohort, Rushdie had in his novel *The Satanic Verses* blasphemed against Muhammad the Prophet, and Allah besides.

It was a different time, of course, and the Anglo-American world did not yet see militant Islam as its primary enemy. Our *bête noire* in those days was the dreaded, though crumbling, "evil empire"—the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, portents of the future were present: months after the publication of *The Satanic Verses*, which opened with the destruction by terrorists of an airliner over Britain, Pan Am Flight 103 was destroyed over Scotland by Libyan intelligence agents, with a loss of 270 lives. Earlier that year, a U.S. warship had shot down an Iranian airliner over the Persian Gulf, killing 290 people; the crew mistook it for one of the American-made F-14 warplanes sold to Iran in the days of the Shah. Among our unofficial allies in those days were Saddam Hussein, Iran's implacable enemy, and Osama bin Laden, who was waging jihad against Soviet aggression in Afghanistan with American military aid.

Rushdie rightly took the threat against his life seriously and went into hiding; over the next few years, numerous people associated with the publication of his novel were attacked. Iran's theocrats and their contemporary heirs have never truly renounced the *fatwa*. To this day Rushdie remains under threat of assassination.

The tragic story is not without its ironies—Rushdie is hardly an example of Western imperialism. *The Satanic Verses* is in fact an attempt to express the discontent of citizens of former

British colonies against that imperial culture. A second irony is that Khomeini's *fatwa* probably gave the novel far greater prominence than it deserved. It would never have received so much attention—almost like that given *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie's masterpiece novel—without the ensuing media coverage.

Of course, as Ingrid D. Rowland's new book on the trial and execution of the 16th-century Italian philosopher Giordano Bruno (*Giordano Bruno: Philosopher/Heretic*, reviewed in these pages on Jan. 19) reminds us, the marriage of theologians and secular authority has not always been a felicitous one in Western history, either. After Bruno was found guilty of obstinate heresy in Rome, his books were ordered burned on the steps of St. Peter's in 1600. Bruno himself was burned at the stake on Feb. 17 that same year. It was Ash Wednesday. Among Bruno's inquisitors was St. Robert Bellarmine, S.J. Rowland notes that Bruno's execution haunted Bellarmine for the rest of his life, and as a result Bellarmine took a radically different approach to the confrontation with Galileo Galilei, trying repeatedly to avoid a situation that might lead to a similar fate for Galileo.

In 2000, almost exactly a month after the 400th anniversary of Bruno's execution, Pope John Paul II issued a historic apology for "the errors of Christians in every age," including "methods of coercion employed in the Inquisition."

One hopes Salman Rushdie will not have to wait four centuries for an apology for the threat against his life and livelihood. May we also hope that all faiths can forever put behind them the use of censorship or violence against writers in the defense of religion. We do more to honor the strength of our faith when we resist such methods.

JAMES T. KEANE, S.J.

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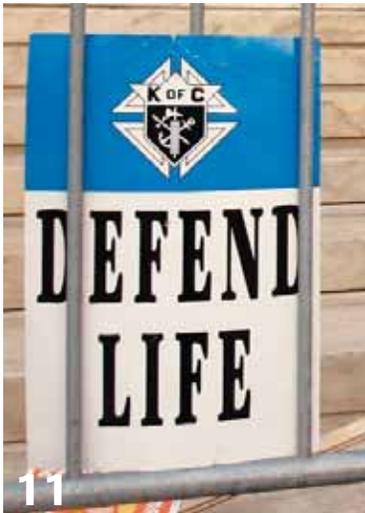
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Cover photo: Protesters attend the March for Life rally in Washington, D.C.

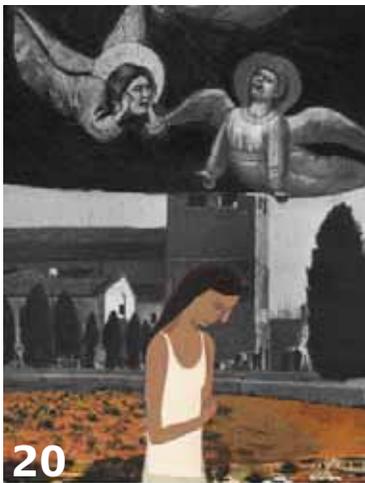
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ON THE WEB

Dave Nantais introduces recordings of his favorite Motown songs and, from the archives, John Updike reflects on faith and fiction. Plus, a symposium on abortion politics, and James R. Kelly analyzes the roots of the prolife movement on our podcast. All at americamagazine.org.



New Efforts on R2P

The human rights doctrine known as “the responsibility to protect,” sometimes referred to as R2P, received formal approval at the 2005 United Nations World Summit. All member states pledged to hold themselves accountable to populations at risk of mass killings, genocide and ethnic cleansing in the wake of horrific scenes of slaughter like those in Rwanda. Tragically, not all states have lived up to their commitments. Implementation of the doctrine received a boost in late January, however, with the launch of the Global Civil Society Coalition on the Responsibility to Protect. The coalition will reach out to governments and civil society groups in an effort to ensure that member states reaffirm their support for the principle.

Mass killings and large-scale human rights violations have led to the destruction of vulnerable populations in Cambodia, Bosnia, Kosovo, Darfur and now in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo. The principle rests on a state’s responsibility to shield its population from human-created catastrophes. When states fail in this obligation, responsibility shifts to the international community, which should employ diplomatic and other peaceful measures to meet the crisis. Should these fail, coercive intervention is a final possibility. U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon will soon release a report on the responsibility to protect for the General Assembly to debate. Member states must live up to their obligations: There is no place in a civilized world for the atrocious crimes that occur when sovereign states refuse to act or, even worse, are themselves the perpetrators.

Vitamin Water: Buyer Beware

The Coca-Cola Company is facing a lawsuit filed by the nonprofit Center for Science in the Public Interest. The center contends that the company’s Vitamin Water product line is not, as the Coca-Cola Company claims, a healthy alternative to soda. The company makes a wide range of unsupported assertions—for example, that Vitamin Water reduces the risk of chronic disease and promotes healthy joints. In fact, nutritionists at the center have found that the 33 grams of sugar in each bottle do more to promote obesity, diabetes and other health problems than the vitamins in the drinks do to promote the alleged benefits described on the bottles’ labels. Product names include healthy sounding phrases like “endurance peach mango” and “focus kiwi strawberry.”

According to the suit, though, despite these and similar health buzz words, Vitamin Water contains between zero and 1 percent juice. As C.S.P.I.’s litigation director, Steve Gardner, put it, “Vitamin Water is Coke’s attempt to dress up soda in a physician’s white coat.” Beneath the white coat, he added, “it’s still sugar water.” Nor is this the first time that C.S.P.I. has locked horns with Coke. In 2007 it sued Coke and its partner Nestlé over an artificially sweetened green tea-based drink called Enviga. The two companies claimed that Enviga burns more calories than it contains, and therefore helps weight loss. But C.S.P.I. says that studies of Enviga do not support this claim. *Caveat emptor* remains a useful caution in supermarket aisles.

Super Bowl Sunday 2009

Super Bowl Sunday has become over the years a national holiday on a par with Presidents’ Day and the Fourth of July. One index of the prevailing mood of the citizenry in any given year is the tone of the television advertisements that punctuate the afternoon leading up to the start of the game and continue throughout all four quarters and halftime as well. After months of bad economic news and gloomy forecasts for the year ahead, bright and bouncy commercials would have seemed inconsistent with the mood of the moment, and the creative people at the advertising agencies seem to have taken that into account.

Advertising revenue for Super Bowl 2009 was down in comparison with previous years, a predictable outcome, and there were few flashes of creative imagination. The ad makers were content to repeat well-worn patterns and strategies familiar to the viewing audience. Could anyone, after all, resent the Budweiser Clydesdale, this year linked romantically with a circus horse? Janet Jackson was absent from this year’s festivities, so there were no wardrobe malfunctions or other unexpected interruptions of this year’s hymn to consumerism.

As a bonus for the viewing public, the game itself was well played and exciting, with two lead changes in the final two minutes. While many viewers may have rooted for 37-year-old Kurt Warner, the much-traveled Arizona quarterback, the Pittsburgh Steelers ultimately prevailed. In the end, Super Bowl Sunday XLIII provided a surprising but satisfying result. For a few short hours the game on the field outshone the hoopla and the commercials.

COMMENTARY

Updike at Rest

The passing of John Updike in late January brought no shortage of commentary on his literary accomplishments, but his most perceptive critic was always Updike himself. He once summed up his writing in this way: “I have from the start been wary of the fake, the automatic. I tried not to force my sense of life as many-layered and ambiguous, while keeping in mind some sense of transaction, of a bargain struck between me and the ideal reader.”

Over the course of his career, Updike published more than 50 books, among them more than 25 novels, a number of short story collections (containing some of the finest stories of the 20th century), prose collections of his essays and literary reviews, books for children and personal memoirs. His cultural criticism also appeared regularly in the nation’s most prestigious journals and newspapers.

When *America* honored Updike in 1997 with the Champion Award, given to a “distinguished Christian person of letters,” I noted in these pages that he was the most stunning of many omissions from the ranks of English-language authors who had won the Nobel Prize, because he was not only the finest writer in this nation but also the foremost English-speaking “Man of Letters.”

At the Champion Award ceremony, Updike offered a brief reflection on faith and the fiction writer, which we later published (“A Disconcerting Thing,” 10/4/97). He noted that “St. Augustine was not the first Christian writer nor the last to give us the human soul with its shadows, its Rembrandtesque blacks and whites, its chiaroscuro; this sense of ourselves, as creatures caught in the light, whose decisions and recognitions have a majestic significance, remains to haunt non-Christians as well, and to form, as far as I can see, the *raison d’être* of fiction.”

Updike’s attempt to express that chiaroscuro at the heart of the human endeavor was a central motif not only in his art but in his life. In an autumn 2007 note to him, I mentioned that I had just received a copy of his recently published *Due Considerations*, a hefty collection of his most recent essays, extended lectures and reviews of fiction and art. He wrote back shortly after and, to my surprise, alerted me to a longish essay within it, entitled “The Future of Faith,” especially to its closing paragraphs.

On reading that essay, I discovered that at age 75

GEORGE W. HUNT, S.J., a former editor in chief of *America* is the author of *John Updike and the Three Great Secret Things: Sex, Religion, and Art* (1980).

Updike had recorded a period of intense spiritual disquiet, almost of cosmic despondency, only to have experienced a sudden intrusion of consolation, a grace-filled Christian epiphany that he wished to share with the rest of us.



So the setting: Updike is sleeping beside his beloved wife in Florence, and he suddenly awakes and feels “fearful and adrift, nearing my life’s end, a wide-awake mote in an alien, sleeping city.” The crucial paragraph follows:

But then, getting up to go to the bathroom, I became aware of noise, a rustling all around me, and then thunder’s blanketing boom, repeated. I went to the window. The room had a diagonal view of the Duomo—Brunelleschi’s engineering miracle, the hub of Florence, the crown of Santa Maria del Fiore, the fourth-largest church in Christendom. While I watched, the rain intensified, rattling on tile roofs near and far; it looked like rods of metal in the floodlight that illumined part of the great—the world’s greatest, pre-steel—red-tiled dome. Lightning. Hectic gusts. The rain was furious. I was not alone in the universe. The rippling rods of rain drove down upon the vertical beam of light at the base of the Duomo as if to demolish it; but the pillar of light burned on, and the hulking old church crouched like a stoic mute dragon, and the thick tiles and gurgling gutters around me withstood the soaking, the thunder, the shuddering flashes. I was filled with a glad sense of exterior activity. My burden of being was being shared. God was at work—at ease, even, in this nocturnal Florentine commotion, this heavenly wrath and architectural defiance, this Jacobean wrestle. My wife woke up, admired the solemn tempest with me, and went back to bed. I lay down beside her and fell asleep amid the comforting, busy, self-careless drumming. All this felt like a transaction, a rescue, an answered prayer.

May you sleep in peace, John Updike, and now may all your prayers be answered. **GEORGE W. HUNT**

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

IMMIGRATION

New Relief Effort on U.S./Mexico Border

When Leoba Marcos crossed the Sonoran desert in northern Mexico earlier this year, she did not know what to expect. She made her way in early January with a group of about 20 people, including her husband, 13-year-old son and 3-year-old daughter. It was the second time Marcos had attempted to enter the United States. This time the migrants, led by a smuggler, had walked about six hours before U.S. Border Patrol agents apprehended them near Lukeville, Ariz.

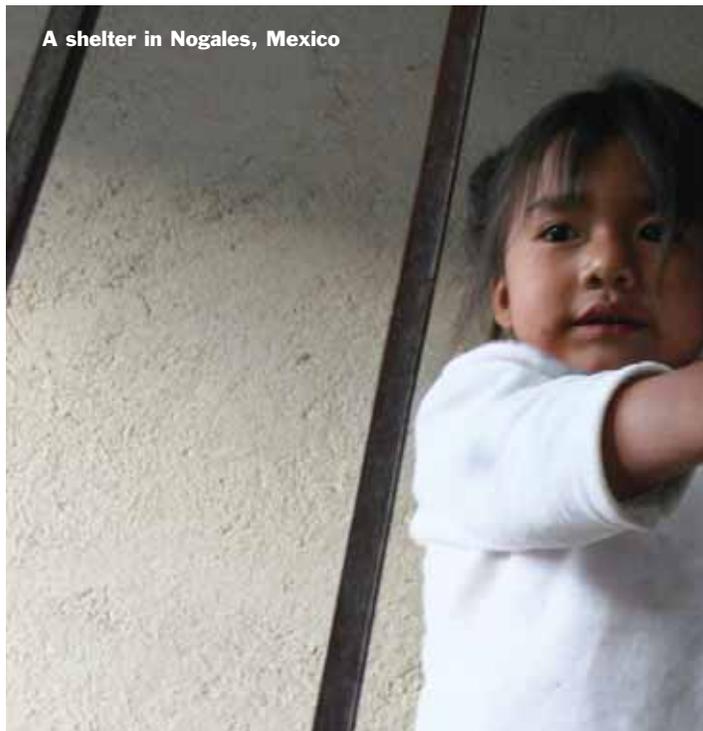
"We didn't say anything and we didn't run," Marcos said, shaking her head, "They just took us to a detention center." Marcos and her children were deported to Nogales, Mexico, but her husband was deported to Mexicali—more than a five-hour drive away. While she waited for her husband to reach them, Marcos and her children found refuge in a shelter for deported women and children run by the Missionary Sisters of the Eucharist.

"The women who have come to stay here have been abandoned; they're hungry and thirsty and they have blisters on their feet," said Araceli Wedington, a

former immigrant and guest of the shelter. "When the women arrive, they don't know what to do. They don't have any money; they don't have any food

and our families don't know what's become of us."

The sisters who manage the shelter are part of the Kino Border Initiative,



A shelter in Nogales, Mexico

VATICAN CITY

Rome Responds to St. Pius X Uproar

The Vatican has said that a traditionalist bishop who minimized the full extent of the Holocaust must disavow his positions before he will be accepted into full communion with the church. The Vatican statement also said that Pope Benedict XVI did not know about the controversial statements by British-born Bishop Richard Williamson when he lifted the excommunications of him and three other traditionalist bishops who were ordained illicitly in 1988 and are members of the traditionalist Society of St. Pius X.

"The positions of Bishop Williamson on the Holocaust are absolutely unacceptable and are strongly rejected by the Holy Father," the statement said. In order to function as a bishop, Bishop Williamson must distance himself from his previous statements in "an absolutely unequivocal and public manner," the Vatican said.

The Feb. 4 statement was meant to deflect an increasingly vociferous public outcry over the papal decree lifting the excommunication, which included rare public statements of concern from secular leaders and church officials

alike. German Chancellor Angela Merkel said on Feb. 3 that the pope and the Vatican needed to make clear there could be no denial of the Holocaust. At a news conference in Berlin, Merkel said she normally did not comment on church matters, "but we are talking about fundamental questions."

Meanwhile, in Rome on Feb. 2, Cardinal Walter Kasper, who coordinates the Vatican's dialogue with the Jews, said the controversy was fueled in part by a lack of communication within the Vatican and by "management errors in the Curia." He said that in lifting the excommunications the pope "wanted to open the discussion because he wanted unity inside and outside" the church. But "up to now



a binational effort that began on Jan. 18, spearheaded by a coalition of religious orders, Catholic dioceses and social service organizations.

“A lot of people are suffering,” said Sean Carroll, S.J., executive director of the initiative. He noted an increased number of deportees finding their way to a care center where deported migrants can get a hot meal and help with medical needs. “We’re serving a lot of people,” he said. “We want to respond to them and relieve that suffering, and through that we hope to also be transformed.”

In the coming months, the initiative will begin staffing a care center for deported migrants, serve as a contact point for humanitarian organizations working on the border and begin efforts to educate the broader community on immigration issues. “The Kino Border Initiative is an important step in responding to the deportation of those who have been asked to leave the country—to make sure that their departure is safe, that they are cared for,” said Bishop Gerald F. Kicanas of Tucson, Ariz., during a press conference on Jan. 18 that launched the program. The initiative will work closely

with the Diocese of Tucson and Mexico’s Archdiocese of Hermosillo, as well as with the Jesuit Refugee Service. John McGarry, S.J., head of the California Province of the Jesuits, one of the initiative’s principal sponsors, said the effort takes on the spirit of the man for whom it is named, Father Eusebio Francisco Kino, a 17th-century Jesuit missionary who served in the Sonoran desert.

“Jesuits are committed to the poor, the immigrant, the disenfranchised,” Father McGarry said. “The beginning of this new ministry and service to the church and to people in need is a concrete sign of that commitment.” The initiative will also bring academic resources to bear on the immigration debate by studying movements on the border and documenting migrants’ stories—from their journey to the border to their capture by the Border Patrol. “The complex issue of immigration is first and foremost about people—God’s people and their lives, their dignity and their livelihood,” McGarry said.

people in the Vatican have spoken too little with each other and have not checked where problems might arise.... Explaining something after the fact is always much more difficult than if one did it right away,” Kasper said.

On Jan. 21, the same day the pope lifted the excommunication, a Swedish television station aired a November interview with Bishop Williamson in which he repeated his position that the Holocaust had been exaggerated. The papal decree lifting the excommunication was made public Jan. 24, and Jewish groups—especially in Germany, the United States and Israel—expressed shock that the Vatican would lift the excommunication against Bishop Williamson even

after his comments had been televised.

The Vatican also emphasized on Feb. 4 that even after the removal of the excommunications, remaining problems need to be resolved before full communion can be established. The Society of St. Pius X has not accepted the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council nor its concepts of religious freedom and ecumenism. The statement from the secretariat of state said the society would have to recognize the teachings of Vatican II and of postconciliar popes to be in full

communion, and it stressed that the four bishops do not now have a canonical function in the church and “do not licitly exercise a ministry in the church.”



Benedict XVI leaves his weekly audience on Feb. 4.

Sri Lankan Officials Plead for Truce

Catholic officials in the Diocese of Jaffna appealed to the Sri Lankan government and Tamil rebels Feb. 3 to stop attacks on civilians and churches and appealed to the international community for assistance. The Rev. Christopher George Jayakumar, local director of Caritas Internationalis, said the Jan. 29 attack on his center southeast of Jaffna had destroyed \$526,000 worth of relief items and that 60 church workers who were distributing aid narrowly avoided injury. Church sources estimate that 490,000 people are trapped and unable to move in or out of the country and that hundreds of civilians have been killed or injured by the fighting between government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. The Tamil rebels launched their armed struggle in 1983 to create an independent state for minority Tamils. The conflict has claimed 80,000 lives.

Spanish Court Rules on School Controversy

The Spanish Supreme Court has rejected the right of parents to keep their children out of a public school civics course that includes lessons on gender and sexuality. José Ignacio Munilla Aguirre, bishop of Palencia, said the Jan. 28 court ruling showed that “the principle of conscientious objection can be acknowledged or rejected depending on whether or not the material in question is politically correct. If parents are denied this discernment, their right to conscientious objection is not truly respected.” The four-year mandatory curriculum for students ages 12 to 16, called Education for Citizenship, covers human and citizens’ rights, gender

NEWS BRIEFS

The number of **undernourished people** in the world rose to 963 million in 2008 (more than the combined populations of the United States, Canada and the European Union), up 40 million from 2007, according to the United Nations. + Archbishop Raphael Cheenath of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar, India, has said that thousands of Christians still live in refugee camps, afraid of returning to their homes in the **Indian state of Orissa** for fear of death. + Nairobi’s Cardinal John Njue expressed concern over the whereabouts of two Italian nuns who were seized by armed men Nov. 10 in **northeastern Kenya**. + About a third of Americans back President Obama’s decision to allow funding for overseas **family planning groups** that provide abortions, according to a new poll by USA Today/Gallup. + Anglican Archbishop Rowan Williams has awarded Msgr. Donald Bolen, a Canadian, the Cross of St. Augustine in recognition of his work in the field of **Anglican-Catholic relations**. + The Vatican Library and National Library of Israel have published a detailed descriptive catalogue of more than **800 Hebrew manuscripts** and books held in the Vatican Library, a project that has taken more than 10 years.



Raphael Cheenath

equality and political systems. It also includes lessons about homosexuality, discrimination and family issues. More than 50,000 objections to the course have been filed in court.

N.P.L.C. at 25

The National Pastoral Life Center will celebrate its 25th anniversary March 26 in New York City with a Mass, gala dinner and symposium featuring Cardinal Oscar Andrés Rodríguez Maradiaga of Honduras, president of Caritas Internationalis. Cardinal Rodríguez’s address will focus on St. Paul’s legacy of inculturation and its challenge to be attentive to the signs of the times. Other participants include the Rev. Robert Schreiter, professor of theology at the

Catholic Theological Union in Chicago; Margaret O’Brien Steinfelds, founding co-director of the Fordham University Center on Religion and Culture; and Thomas T. Beaudoin, associate professor of practical theology at Fordham University. Archbishop Edwin F. O’Brien of Baltimore will be the homilist at the celebratory Mass. N.P.L.C. offers continuing education for pastors, parish life coordinators and parish teams, with a focus on collaborative ministry and sharing best practices for vibrant parishes at a time when the number of active priests is declining. The center, founded in 1983 by the late Msgr. Philip Murnion, also publishes Church magazine.

From CNS and other sources. CNS photos.



The Common Ground

Catholics never have easy work in U.S. politics. Neither political party espouses the full range of Catholic views, so we are always left with the harder task of pursuing common ground where we find it, working to expand it and speaking prophetic truths to power when our paths diverge.

So it is with the new administration. A panel met recently at the Life Cycle Institute of Catholic University to consider "The Obama Administration and the Catholic Social Agenda." One team of experts had the harder tasks, discussing the new administration's directions in domestic policy. While there is much common ground on areas like poverty relief, health care and the environment, President Obama has said he will work to reduce but not ban abortions. Catholics must also reduce abortions, while continuing to defend the lives of the unborn. This has been our work in the 36 years since *Roe v. Wade*, under both Democratic and Republican leadership, and it continues.

There is much to be hopeful about in foreign policy, so another pair of experts had easier work. "We reject as false the choice between our safety and our ideals." These words were President Obama's, but they could just as easily have come from a statement of the U.S. Catholic bishops or the Vatican. In its first week, the new administration dramatically reversed U.S. foreign policy on the war on terror, torture, Iraq, diplomacy, climate

change and the Middle East, bringing U.S. positions into close alignment with the moral concerns raised by the Catholic Church.

On torture, Bishop Howard J. Hubbard, chair of the U.S. Catholic Bishops Committee on International Justice and Peace, in collaboration with other religious leaders in the National Religious Campaign Against Torture, asked the new administration to issue an executive order renouncing torture, reaffirming U.S. compliance with the Geneva Conventions and treaties against torture, and requiring all U.S. government agencies to abide by the U.S. Army field manual interrogation techniques. President Obama fully complied. On Iraq, the Vatican and the U.S. Catholic Bishops, along with Obama, were among the first voices to decry the U.S. invasion of Iraq, noting that the optional war did not meet the strict criteria for a just war.

Today the Obama administration echoes the bishops' call for a responsible transition in Iraq, bringing U.S. troops home in a manner ensuring the greatest safety and stability for all. President Obama is prioritizing arms control and nonproliferation, diplomacy, climate change and brokering peace in the Middle East, in conjunction with the suggestions of the church. These are vast areas of common ground that, in the words of Bishop Hubbard, "will help the United States to regain the moral high ground and restore our credibility within the international community at this critical time."

There will be struggles ahead as well. Many Americans, and many in the peace community, will be surprised to learn that the new administration intends to nearly double U.S. forces in Afghanistan to over 60,000 troops, with the endgame still uncertain. The administration has revoked the "Mexico City" language that barred groups that counsel or practice abortion from receiving U.S. funds for overseas family planning programs.

Perhaps the visions of Benedict and Obama can coincide.

As the world economy crumbles, church and state can most powerfully collaborate in protecting the poor caught in the jaws of the current financial crisis. In this manner, perhaps the visions of Benedict and Obama can coincide, to "become ministers of hope" for our communities and future generations. This may provide the most fruitful common ground between Benedict's church and Obama's state. Pope Benedict's second encyclical, *Saved by Hope* (*Spe Salvi*, 2007), is titled after the words of St. Paul, that hope in Christ, hope in things unseen saves us both individually and as community. Obama's memoir, *The Audacity of Hope* (2006), is titled after a homily reflecting on these words of Paul. Benedict and Obama reach many of the same conclusions, preaching against hope in false sources, hope in a narrow, individualistic sense alone and hope in political ideologies, and instead pointing to hope as that which mobilizes community action in service of God and others. We must till this common ground.

MARYANN CUSIMANO LOVE, *professor of international relations at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., serves as a consultant to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.*

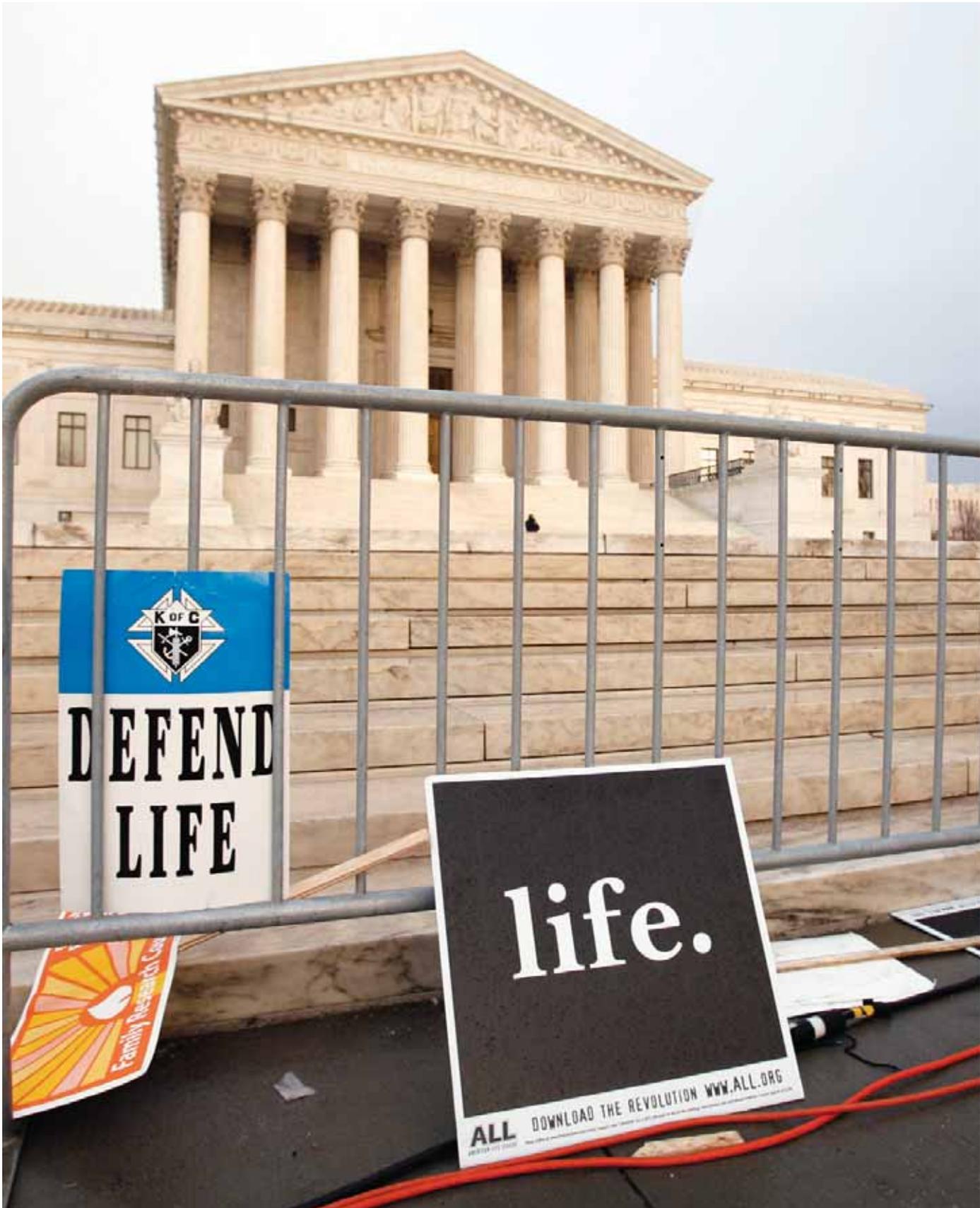


PHOTO: REUTERS/KEVIN LAMARQUE

WHY THE PRO-LIFE MOVEMENT SHOULD
RETURN TO ITS ROOTS

Finding Renewal

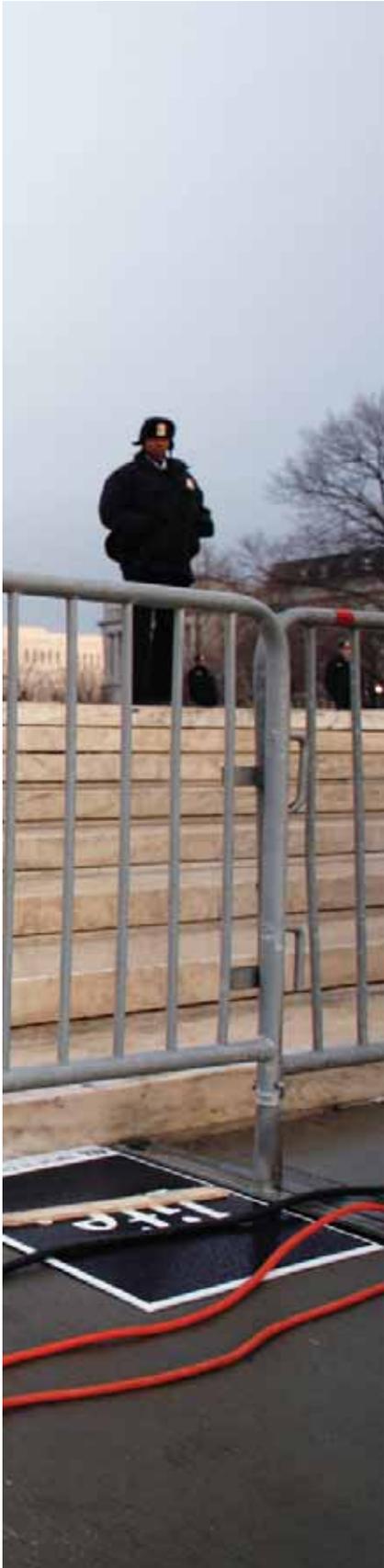
BY JAMES R. KELLY

The catalyst for the following reflections was an Internet exchange during the Obama-McCain presidential election campaign with a long-term activist member of University Faculty for Life. He was disappointed that priests in their Sunday homilies rarely spoke about abortion but frequently preached about other issues of public policy like war, immigration and poverty. I responded by asking, “Won’t our children, our grandchildren and historians want to know what the pro-life movement said about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and nuclear disarmament?” His response: “Like other civil rights movements, I think they will.... Of course, all this is predicated on our having a pro-life movement to write about.”

His answer prompted me to consider a larger problem: What kind of movement is the pro-life movement? Is the campaign against abortion more like the movement for civil rights or the movement for nonviolence? This question transcends the 2008 election and the elections that will follow. It is much more than a conceptual question of definition. The answer will have very practical consequences. How we understand the nature of the pro-life movement will determine not only strategy, tactics and voting decisions, but also how pro-life advocates view the inevitable setbacks and defeats as well as the long-term, eschatological significance of their efforts.

To persevere in an enduring pro-life campaign, we must retrieve the contemporary origin of the movement opposing abortion and regain its initiating charism. The movement can do this by explicitly recognizing its three-part history: (1) the radical beginnings of some of the opposition to abortion; (2) the tactical and temporary political cooption of moral conservatives by fiscal conservatives, a linkage probably

JAMES R. KELLY is professor emeritus of sociology at Fordham University in New York City and a member of University Faculty for Life.



definitively eroded by the last election; and (3) the retrieval of the movement's core radicalism, which located opposition to abortion within the nonviolence movement, itself the principled core of the peace movement. In other words, we must grasp why the movement always found unfair the name "anti-abortion" (much less "anti-choice"), why it merely accepted the term "right-to-life" but always instinctively chose to define itself as "pro-life."

Rooted in Nonviolence

The fundamental insight, that objections to abortion and objections to war are rooted in the same moral principles, was present at the very beginning of the modern anti-abortion movement. In 1964, almost a decade before *Roe v. Wade*, Tom Cornell, one of the founders of the Catholic Peace Fellowship, said that it was pacifism that brought him to protest both the Vietnam War and abortion. "Catholic pacifists," he explained, "are opposed to war because it is the planned, mass taking of human life for political purposes... [and] we are opposed to abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, and economically enforced starvation also, on the same basis."

Two years before *Roe v. Wade*, Gordon Zahn, one of the founders of Pax Christi, an international Catholic peace organization formed after World War II, linked opposing abortion and opposing war: "It is not just a mat-

ter of consistency; in a very real sense it is the choice between integrity and hypocrisy. No one who publicly mourns the senseless burning of a napalmed child should be indifferent to the intentional killing of a living fetus in the womb..."

In 1973, the year the Supreme Court, by its 7-to-2 decision in *Roe v. Wade*, struck down all state laws prohibiting or restricting abortion, the first college organization was formed in the abortion controversy: the National Youth Pro-Life Coalition at the University of Minnesota. It linked opposition to abortion and opposition to the Vietnam War. "The Coalition is deeply concerned that our contemporary society is not consistent in its respect for human life," a student founder, Susan Hilgers, said in an interview, and challenged those who were "antiabortion, pro-war and pro-capital punishment" to greater moral consistency, because "true conservatism should involve a willingness to 'conserve' all human life."

Six years later, Juli Loesch organized Pro-lifers for Survival, which also linked opposition to war and opposition to abortion. In 1980 *Sojourners*, an evangelical Christian journal, explicitly connected opposition to abortion to its longstanding opposition to the arms race and to capital punishment. The editors explained that from the start, moral consistency had required their opposition to abortion, and that their earlier failure to oppose abortion

publicly was prompted by their distaste for some of the tactics of the anti-abortion movement. They added, "The truth is that many poor women do not regard abortion as a real solution but as a brutal substitute for social justice and even as white society's way of controlling the population of racial minorities."

Consistent Ethic of Life

While the notion of "a consistent ethic of life" had originally emerged among groups of religiously committed pacifists, who intuitively saw a connection between their moral abhorrence of war and abortion, the phrase entered more mainstream discourse in the aftermath of the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin's Gannon lecture at Fordham University on Dec. 6, 1983, entitled "A Consistent Ethic of Life: An American Catholic Dialogue." Cardinal Bernardin had been invited to speak on the U.S. bishops' recently published pastoral letter on the morality of nuclear weapons, *The Challenge of Peace*. The letter had

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received considerable attention in the broader American community, provoking a variety of responses.

His audience and the journalists present expected the cardinal to address the letter's criticism of the Reagan administration's expansionist military policies and its doctrine of mutually assured destruction as a defense against nuclear war. But Cardinal Bernardin surprised his audience by announcing that his talk would be about abortion in the context of the church's evolving teaching about war and peace. For three reasons the surprise that greeted his announcement revealed how far the protest movement against abortion had strayed from its original moral intuitions and how it had become associated with political conservatism. The surprise of the audience and the journalists present was itself surprising, given the history of the antiabortion movement.

First, the Second Vatican Council in its "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World" (1964) included abortion not as a single issue but as the third item in a list of 16 examples of violence against human life.

Second, when in accord with Vatican II the U.S. bishops inaugurated their Respect Life program in the year before *Roe v. Wade*, they invited Catholics and others to focus on the "sanctity of life and the many threats to life in the modern world, including violence, hunger and poverty."

Third, just seven months before the cardinal's lecture at Fordham, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in their pastoral letter *The Challenge of Peace* taught that the same moral principle governed both the traditional just war prohibition against the direct targeting of civilians and the traditional prohibition against abortion. "Nothing," the bishops taught, "can justify a direct attack on innocent human life, in or out of warfare. Abortion is precisely such an attack." The bishops acknowledged that the consistency they found in the Catholic moral tradition linking war and abortion was not widely known and accepted, even by Catholics.

In his Fordham address Cardinal Bernardin confirmed this traditional and contemporary moral teaching that abortion and military violence directed at civilians were immoral for the same reason. Following the orientation of the Second Vatican Council, he situated opposition to abortion in the context of helping the vulnerable: "If one contends, as we do, that the right of every fetus to be born should be protected by civil law and supported by civil consensus, then our moral, political and economic respon-

sibilities do not stop at the moment of birth. Those who defend the right to life of the weakest among us must be equally visible in support of the quality of life of the powerless among us: the old and the young, the hungry and the homeless, the undocumented immigrant and the unemployed worker. Such a quality of life posture translates into specific political and economic positions on tax policy, employment generation, welfare policy, nutrition and feeding programs and health care. Consistency means we cannot have it both ways. We cannot urge a compassionate society and vigorous public policy to protect the rights of the unborn and then argue that compassion and significant public programs on behalf of the needy undermine the moral fiber of the society or are beyond the proper scope of governmental responsibility."

As had the National Conference of Catholic Bishops before him, Cardinal Bernardin ac-

knowledged: "We should begin with the honest recognition that the shaping of a consensus among Catholics on the spectrum of life issues is far from finished and that we face the challenge of stating our case, which is shaped in terms of our faith and our religious convictions, in nonreligious terms which others of different faith convictions might find morally persuasive."

Adhering to Principle

Despite a lack of public notice, by the mid-1980s there existed a wide and dense network of groups committed to nonviolence; these groups applied the traditional moral principle underlying their rejection of modern warfare to abortion. At the last gathering of Pro-lifers for Survival in March 1987, a Seamless Garment Network was formed. Its mission statement reads: "We the undersigned are committed to the protection of life, which is threatened in today's world by war, abortion, poverty, racism, the arms race, the death penalty and euthanasia. We believe that these issues are linked under a consistent ethic of life. We challenge those working on all or some of these issues to maintain a cooperative spirit of peace, reconciliation, and respect in protecting the unprotected."

By 2003 the network had over 120 member organizations, most of them with religious identities, such as Catholic Worker groups and diocesan peace and justice committees, Pax Christi, Evangelicals for Social Action, Sojourners and the Buddhist Vihara Society. Because the seamless-garment metaphor required constant explication in a secular society, the network now identifies itself

To persevere in an enduring pro-life campaign, we must retrieve the contemporary origin of the movement opposing abortion.

as Consistent Life—an international network for peace, justice and life. In efforts to overcome media stereotypes of abortion opponents, Consistent Life has taken out advertisements in publications explaining the consistent ethic of life. Signers have included such prominent peace activists as Daniel Berrigan, S.J., Elizabeth McAlister and the late Philip Berrigan, Jim and Shelly Douglass, Joan Chittister, O.S.B., the late Eileen Egan, Jean Goss and Hildegard Goss-Mayr of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation; Bishops Thomas Gumbleton, Walter F. Sullivan and Raymond J. Hunthausen; the Nobel prize recipients Mairead Corrigan Maguire and Adolfo Pérez Esquivel; and the high-profile theologians Harvey Cox and Stanley Hauerwas.

The Consistent Life network is mostly invisible to popular opinion, because the principle of nonviolence itself is neither recognized nor appreciated in American popular culture. Instances of particular protest against particular wars will receive attention in the media, but not the fundamental principle of pacifism—namely, the commitment to nonviolence. Indeed, no term and no principle is more alien to the nation state, especially in its foreign affairs, than nonviolence. Groups committed to nonviolence must mute and marginalize their radical principles in order to gain entry to

the world of public opinion and commentary. Even in the churches, the early and strong biblical traditions showing that Christ taught nonviolence and his followers accepted it have been mostly marginalized.

Strategies for the Future

To unlink opposition to abortion from the center of the Republican Party establishment would mean, among other

things, that the pro-life movement would become freer to renew its original moral intuition. In doing so, the movement would become more widely recognized and morally respected as promoting a consistent ethic of life. Such an

ethic, based on the biblical values of nonviolence and equality, challenges all major and minor streams of American politics.

The *telos*—the underlying principle, the driving force and ultimate goal—of the movement opposing abortion is a commitment to life and a renewal of the commitment to nonviolence that characterized the first Christian disciples and many others after them. The 2008 election and its aftermath could prove to be the occasion for a pro-life return to its deepest moral insight: that a resort to violence in any dimension is a negation of the human good. A

ON THE WEB

James R. Kelly analyzes the radical roots of the abortion movement. americamagazine.org/podcast



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Real Americans, Real Catholics

Race, religion and the 2008 election
BY VINCENT D. ROUGEAU

It has never been easy being African-American and Catholic in the United States. Though many of us, along with our Latino brothers and sisters, trace our Catholic roots to traditions that have been present in the Americas for centuries, we have often been made to understand that we are invisible to many of our fellow U.S. Catholics. How else would one explain the relative insignificance of the political and cultural concerns of African-Americans and Latinos in the rhetoric of some American bishops and other Catholics who heaped vitriol on those of us who supported Barack Obama in the recent presidential election?

Although this hostility was typically directed in that election toward any Catholic who failed to share the view that abortion was the only issue that mattered in selecting a candidate, the message to Catholics of color was particularly stark: Not only were we not “real” Americans in the coded language of Sarah Palin and the Republican Party base; we were not “real” Catholics either.

Being invisible to the Republican Party is something African-Americans have learned to live with. It is one important reason why many of us rarely vote for Republican candidates. Hispanics were perhaps a bit more relevant to the Republicans in past election cycles, but the “real” American response to immigration reform that was championed by Republicans in the House of Representatives has put an end to any meaningful outreach to Hispanics by the Republican Party for the foreseeable future. Yet despite explicit appeals to nativism by some Republicans throughout the campaign, several Catholic bishops—apparently blind to the irony of an immigrant church supporting nativist politics—alluded to Barack Obama’s candidacy in ways that made it clear that the only issue in the presidential race worth discussing, as far as they were concerned, was the criminalization of abortion. This made the invisibility of people of color to

certain Catholic bishops even more apparent, and that invisibility was much harder to deal with.

An End to the Status Quo

Given the gravity of the circumstances in which the nation now finds itself, and the undeniable responsibility many in the Republican Party bear for those circumstances due to their adherence to agendas steeped in neoconservatism, libertarianism and free-market liberalism, one would think our fellow Catholics would at least allow a bit of goodwill toward those of us who could no longer abide the political status quo. Might Latinos in particular have assessed, quite reasonably, that John McCain would never be able to get comprehensive immigration reform past members of his own party, were he ever to propose it? And who better than Colin Powell could articulate so eloquently what many African-Americans have long felt about the Republican Party, as if the condescending and dismissive treatment he received from the neoconservatives in the Bush administration was not enough to send a rather convincing message about who really counted?

Still, we were told that no good Catholic could vote for Obama. Or, to make the point affirmatively, good Catholics must vote Republican.

I suppose Catholics of color were expected to shut up and toe this political line no matter how devastating a Republican administration might be to our efforts to announce our presence in this society as something more than afterthoughts, tokens or entertainers; and perhaps it is time to make something perfectly clear. We will not be ignored and treated as if our experiences, our lives and our views are marginal, insignificant and less than central to the American experience. We will not be condescended to, threatened and bullied as if we are somehow too stupid to weigh the serious difficulties that attend one’s political choices when permissive access to abortion is a legal right. Support for human dignity and the common good cannot be reduced to self-congratulatory voting for a “pro-life” candidate. Other things also matter. It was encouraging to see Cardinal Francis George remind his brother bishops at their recent meeting that racial and eco-

VINCENT D. ROUGEAU, an associate professor at Notre Dame Law School, is the author of *Christians in the American Empire: Faith and Citizenship in the New World Order* (Oxford Univ. Press).

conomic justice are central pillars of Catholic social teaching. Indeed, without them, human dignity becomes a rather empty concept.

Abortion Realities

The conservative commentator David Frum has noted recently that growing economic inequality has become a huge threat to the common good, as middle-class incomes have stagnated and more and more Americans have fallen into poverty. Many recent low-skilled Latino immigrants,



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/ROCKCREATIONS

drawn to the United States largely by free-market policies championed by the political right, have also become mired in poverty. Low rates of high school completion and high rates of births to single mothers in these communities make this poverty more intractable, as does the marginalization of those with undocumented immigration status. Yet in the minds of many pro-Republican Catholics, it was absolutely impossible for Barack Obama to be honest about his support for increased social spending as a strategy of abortion reduction. Increased social spending attacks the economic inequality that even conservatives like Frum believe is destructive to the nation's social fabric, fueling the circumstances that lead

so many American women to seek abortions.

Let us consider for a moment the reality of abortion in the United States. Abortion rates (which, by the way, have been in a steady decline for some time) are highest in communities that are disproportionately poor. This means African-American and Hispanic communities, which have poverty rates three to four times those of white communities. What does an all-or-nothing strategy toward criminalization of abortion say to women in these communities, women who are also routinely vilified for having too many babies? Rather than being offered hope through support for the creation of a society in which poor mothers could envision futures of solidarity and participation for their children, they are told that more of them need to be prosecuted as criminals.

Barack Obama's simple presence in the Oval Office will probably do more to reduce abortions than any possible further restriction of the abortion laws that might have occurred during a McCain-Palin administration. For the first time in American history, women of color can look at their children, particularly their sons, and say with conviction that American society sees them as full, dignified members of the community for whom anything might be possible. Why isn't that something worth voting for?

Reconciliation and Solidarity

Many Catholics of color feel deeply wounded and betrayed after this election, and although we are used to such feelings, they still hurt. Our experiences in this society have something to teach our fellow Catholics about the limits of the law, the realities of racism and exclusion and the real possibilities for change offered by a meaningful commitment to the values of solidarity and participation that form a fundamental part of Catholic social thought. As Pope John Paul II stated so eloquently in his encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*: "Solidarity seeks to go beyond itself, to take on the specifically Christian dimension of total gratuity, forgiveness, and reconciliation. One's neighbor is not only a human being with his or her own rights and a fundamental equality with everyone else, but becomes the living image of God the Father."

We hear much talk about Latin America, Africa and Asia being the future of the church. If this is going to be more than just a platitude, more American Catholics need to take seriously the concerns of people of color at home. President Obama has already begun to demonstrate through his appointments that he is not going to govern this country as a liberal ideologue, and he has spent an extraor-

dinary amount of time listening to the voices of people from a broad cross-section of views within the Democratic Party—including pro-life Democrats—and beyond. Indeed, his political appointments thus far have demonstrated a remarkable sense of balance, pragmatism and concern for the good of all Americans, a far cry from the ideological steam-rolling we were subjected to under two Republican administrations.

Catholics on the political right might benefit from Obama's example by spending a few moments listening to the concerns of their brothers and sisters in faith who may have experienced the world in a different way and who, if engaged from a position of respect, might be able to communicate experiences of suffering, love and transcendence that could transform both the church and the nation for the better. If the preferential option for the poor is truly meaningful in the life of our church, we should be spending a lot more time considering the abortion issue from the perspective of those who are most likely to resort to the procedure because of feelings of exclusion and desperation. Do these women have any reason to believe that if abortion were recriminalized, authorities would take the difficulties of their lives seriously and temper justice for the unborn with mercy for their suffering mothers? One did not sense this in

the rhetoric of the Republican presidential campaign. The longstanding tendency of our legal system to punish the poor and minorities excessively and disproportionately in comparison to those with means is indisputable.

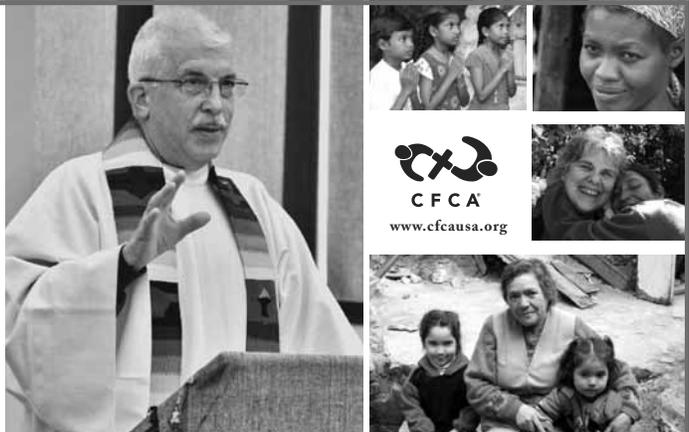
Real reconciliation begins with real listening. Have Catholics been listening to one another with a commitment to hearing what others have to say? Eight years of Republican leadership have failed this nation. President Obama gives many of us hope that the United States can once again be something more than a trading floor for monied elites so shameless in their greed that, having fought tooth and nail for decades to prevent meaningful regulation of their financial activities, they now seek to cover their outrageous losses with public funds.

Why is it acceptable to assume the worst of Barack Obama when he has only just begun to govern? Where is the Christian charity in that? What will it take for those of us who have been invisible for so long finally to have a face? We are ready to join hands with our fellow Americans and begin in solidarity the long walk toward a political life in this nation in which all people matter. We may disagree on some of the paths to take, but we agree on the destination. Will you join us? The world exists in more than black and white. **A**

ON THE WEB
A symposium on abortion politics.
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A Tragic Inheritance

A personal perspective on the abortion debate

BY STEVEN C. MOORE

On the wall of my office in the parish of which I am pastor, there hangs a photograph taken around 1905. It shows five young girls between the ages of 4 and 15 sitting on the back of a horse: my grandmother and her sisters, all showing off their new shoes. Despite a penchant for thrift, their father had bought each of the girls a new pair of shoes, apparently enough of an occasion to be memorialized in a photograph.

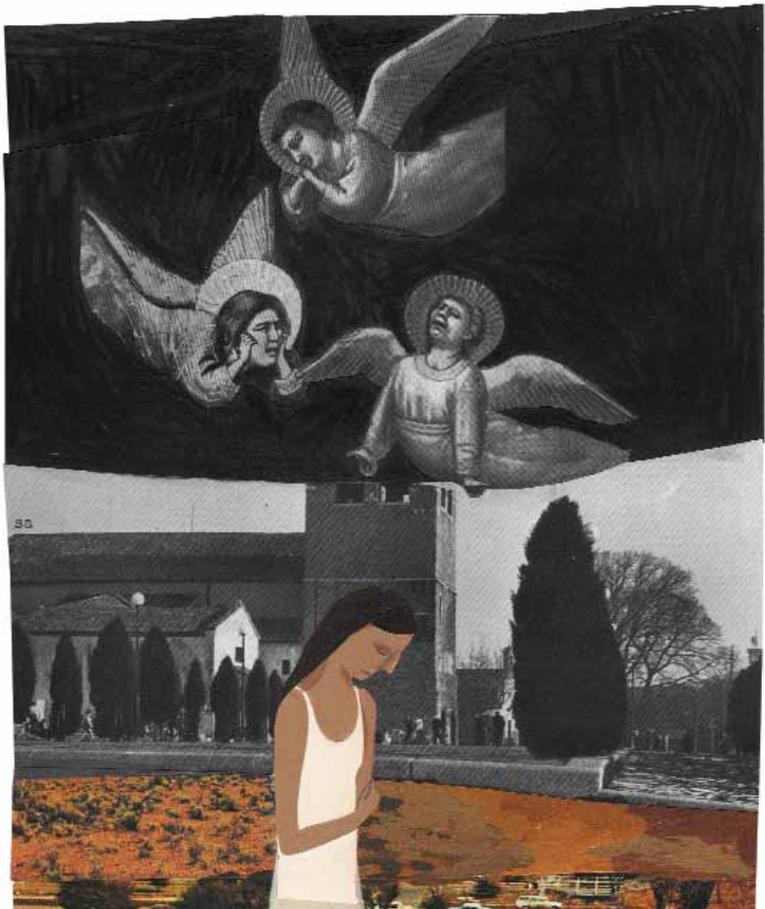
The woman that I knew as my grandmother is the oldest in the picture, though my true grandmother is one of the younger girls. My father never knew his biological mother, because she died of a botched abortion when he was 18 months old and she was in her 20s. The abortion was forced upon her by my great-grandfather and performed by her two oldest sisters. My grandfather (her husband) was an alcoholic who was charming while drunk but kept a job and supported his family only with great difficulty. For my great-grandfather, an abortion was the solution to the problem of another mouth to feed.

After the abortion, my grandfather was coerced by my great-grandfather into marrying another of his daughters, one of the two sisters who had performed the abortion. My great-grandfather did not think my grandfather could provide properly for his family (which by all accounts was probably true); but as the *paterfamilias*, my great-grandfather could threaten to take my grandfather's children away if he did not do his bidding. My great-grandfather was a powerful figure in his rural Western county, and likely no one would have stopped him. When my grandfather's second wife became pregnant, she too was forced by her father to have an abortion; in her father's opinion, my grandfather was still unable to provide properly for a larger family.

Unspoken Wounds

In the early 1970s, my father was visiting a residence for

REV. STEVEN C. MOORE is pastor of St. Benedict's parish in Anchorage, Alaska.



senior citizens and ran into his pediatrician, then in his 90s. This doctor had also tended to my grandmother as she died. In that visit, my father learned most of what had happened all those years ago. Difficult conversations with his stepmother filled in the rest. The doctor knew on the night my grandmother was brought in what had happened, but it was never written on any chart or ever reported. In a poor country area full of sad situations, for an overworked doctor she was just one more.

The tragedy hung like a dark, unmentionable cloud over my father's childhood, warping and wounding him and his older sister in deep ways. Being forced to marry one of the women responsible for the death of the wife he loved wrapped my grandfather and his family in a web of

ART: STEFANIE AUGUSTINE

unspeakable guilt, darkness and depression. The sins of one generation truly were visited upon the next—and the next. Those events of nearly 90 years ago became a part of childhood for me and my siblings as well. My father was a good dad, but he bore the wounds of growing up in a household headed by a father and stepmother acting out their own guilt, resentments and rage against each other and their family. As those wounds shaped him in so many ways, they also shaped the manner in which he raised his own children.

Rhetoric and Reality

As I look at that picture on my wall, I take away two things. The first is a conviction that many women have no real choice in the decision to abort. As a priest, I have been approached by young pregnant teens who need assistance in fleeing their home because one or both of their parents have insisted they have an abortion. I have also counseled women who were under intense pressure from boyfriends, family members and even husbands to abort. I have seen women abandoned with no economic resources and nowhere to turn who see abortion as their only option. The rhetoric of choice rings very hollow to me, because it masks the real anguish and desperation of the women I have known in this situation.

The second thing I take away is a realization that abortion has always been a reality in a society made up of sinful, myopic, selfish human beings. Abortion was a crime when and where my grandmother and step-grandmother were forced to abort, but criminality was no deterrent for the people involved.

I hate abortion. It is a personal and societal evil. Its devastating consequences never leave the lives of those who endure it. I do not want to be an apologist for those who promote it or who treat it as a trifling matter of no consequence, and I do not have much use for politicians (and others) who engage in endless arguments of the “how many angels can dance on the head of a pin?” type about when life begins. I also consider the argument that one is “personally opposed to abortion” but would never impose the belief on others to be a dodge, particularly when legislators (and others) are all quite willing to impose their beliefs in any number of other areas.

But I struggle, as I question the recriminalization of abortion, with what we as a society should do. The law is a blunt and deeply flawed instrument for dealing with the

hardest realities of human life and is quite unsuited to the task. Yet inevitably the law is the first resource we turn to when faced with difficult societal questions. Many have adopted a strategy that the only morally acceptable answer to abortion is a legal one that would involve—at some future date—overturning *Roe v. Wade*. But that is just the beginning. If *Roe* were overturned, each of the 50 state legislatures would have to craft laws on abortion. This would involve another series of lengthy battles on the state level to recriminalize abortion and would put off to some far distant day any law that could be enforced. The defeat last November of a complete abortion ban in North Dakota—a state more likely than most to restrict abortion—underscores the limits of recriminalization as a strategy.

Reducing Abortions Today

Ultimately, I think there are three questions that anyone who pursues only recriminalization as a primary strategy must ask. As of today, how many abortions have been prevented as a result of this strategy? At what point will pursuing this strategy significantly lower the abortion rate? And if abortion is recriminalized without significantly changing the realities that lead women to abort, what will recriminalization accomplish?

Studies suggest that the majority of abortions (somewhere between 50 percent and 70 percent) occur for economic reasons. If you add abortions that occur as a result of pressure from others (boyfriends, parents and husbands), there are certainly a significant number of abortions that could be avoided today, not at some future date.

We can accomplish such a reduction by working to change the current economic realities (unemployment, underemployment and lack of health care) that significantly contribute to abortion rates. We can work to change the attitudes and circumstances that rob women of power over their own lives and make them particularly vulnerable to the power others may have over them in making this most dreadful decision.

Would such efforts be a perfect or complete solution to the abortion question? Obviously not. But these we can work on today. The moral obligation to stand against abortion cannot rest solely on some possible future event. We have an obligation to reduce the abortion rate now. For myself, I owe at least that to those five girls—my grandmother and great-aunts—who posed for a picture on horseback more than a century ago. **A**

If abortion is recriminalized without significantly changing the realities that lead women to abort, what will recriminalization accomplish?

BOOKS & CULTURE



Diana Ross, the “Queen of Motown,” performs in 2008.

MUSIC | DAVID E. NANTAIS

THAT MOTOWN SOUND

Berry Gordy Jr. and the African-American experience

Throughout 2009 Motown Records is celebrating its 50th anniversary with a series of special events and performances that kicked off on Jan. 12. Motown’s extraordinary accomplishments include an unprecedented 63 number-one hit songs from 1961 to 1971 by artists that make up a Mount Rushmore of pop music: Smokey Robinson, Marvin Gaye,

The Supremes, The Temptations, Martha and the Vandellas and The Four Tops, among many others.

The music Motown created, which symbolizes coming-of-age and celebration, is timeless and still important to many. Motown placed African-Americans firmly in the pop music pantheon and created a new sound that appealed to people of all races.

Hitsville, U.S.A.

In 1959 Berry Gordy Jr. started Motown Records in Detroit with an \$800 loan from his family. Four years after *Brown v. Board of Education* cleared the way for racial integration and four years before Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech, Gordy, an African-American, initiated a pop music revolution in the United States. He modeled Motown Records on the automobile assembly line he had worked on earlier in his life. He aimed to turn out hit songs, create top-of-the-line artists and present a polished image that could be marketed to a general audience. Gordy recruited

PHOTO: REUTERS/VINTS KALININS

several songwriters to churn out records. The most famous team was Holland-Dozier-Holland, who penned dozens of popular songs for Motown, including "Please Mr. Postman," "Where Did Our Love Go?" and "How Sweet It Is (to Be Loved by You)." Gordy's model succeeded and Motown became the country's first "hit factory."

Motown was more than a music studio, however. It was also a school for the singer-performers, many of whom were local teenagers from less than privileged backgrounds. Diana Ross, for example, lived in Detroit's Brewster-Douglass projects before getting her big break with Motown. Gordy employed instructors to help his performers choreograph their acts and to teach them proper poise and etiquette. The record company drew heavy criticism, however, for what some believed was a disgraceful practice of making black singers palatable to a white audience. During the 1967 Detroit riots, Motown Records received a number of threatening phone calls.

Ready for a Brand-New Beat?

The success of Motown came largely from what is referred to as the "Motown sound," which flowed from three sources. First, the Funk Brothers, the Motown house band, made a major contribution to this unique sound. These musicians performed on most of the Motown hits from 1959 to the early 1970s, but, unjustly, were seldom credited on the album covers. The Funk Brothers were responsible for the consistency and groove of the Motown sound.

Second, the Motown sound used a primitive but effective method of generating a "reverb" that helped make some songs sound as if they were recorded live on stage. The music and vocals were broadcast from Motown's famous Studio A to the attic of the building (known as the echo chamber)

through a hole cut in the ceiling. The sound bounced around in the vacant space, was picked up by a microphone and recorded. Years before synthesizers and computerized recording, this was an ingenious method of creating a unique sound.

Third, the performers also made liberal use of the tambourine. Black church gospel choirs often played a tambourine to keep a dynamic rhythm steady and excite a congregation. Motown borrowed this idea for a number of its hit records. The tambourine was simple to play, easy to record in the studio and, as it turned out, more pleasing to the ear when the music was played on small transistor radios, which were popular during Motown's peak years.

Make Me Wanna Holler

Motown Records served an important

role in the civil rights struggles of the 1960s. Their "Spoken Word" series held the exclusive right to record the speeches of Martin Luther King Jr. In June 1963, two months before the March on Washington, Motown recorded King's "I Have a Dream" speech as he delivered it in Detroit.

The company was also an active participant in the improvement of the city of Detroit, and it hired local African-Americans for prominent jobs. As the leader of the largest black-owned business in the country, Berry Gordy himself was a role model for young African-Americans, which was no small thing at the time.

In addition to its fun, bouncy hits, Motown also produced socially conscious pop music. Marvin Gaye's classic 1971 album "What's Going On," one of the last Motown albums recorded in Detroit before the company moved to



Poetry Contest

Poems are being accepted
for the 2009 Foley Poetry Award

Each entrant is asked to submit only one typed, unpublished poem of 30 lines or fewer that is not under consideration elsewhere. Include contact information on the same page as the poem. Poems will not be returned. Please do not submit poems by e-mail or fax.

Submissions must be post-marked between Jan. 1 and March 31.

Poems received outside the designated period will be treated as regular poetry submissions, and are not eligible for the prize.

The winning poem will be published in the June 8-15 issue of America. Three runner-up poems will be published in subsequent issues.

Cash prize: \$1,000.

Send poems to: Foley Poetry Contest
America, 106 West 56th Street, New York, NY 10019

Los Angeles, is a perfect example of music that shines a light on justice issues like inner-city poverty, racism, war, environmentalism and drug abuse.

While Berry Gordy initially opposed Gaye's desire to record this album because of the serious nature of the lyrics, Gordy eventually conceded. It became one of the biggest selling Motown albums of all time. The title

song also paved the way for later artists to highlight social concerns. Contemporary rock, soul and R&B artists of all races still cite "What's Going On" as a major influence.

While the music of Motown did not change race relations either quickly or singlehandedly, of course, it was the first popular music in the United States

marketed to people of many races. Ironically, many today note the joy and innocence associated with the music, but the back story is that during a disgraceful time in U.S. history, when blacks were being beaten on the streets of urban America, Motown stars were

performing to the delight of white audiences, slowly chipping away at racist attitudes. In this anniversary year,

fans are celebrating the music of Motown—and more than that. For its fans, Motown also became a symbol of hope.

DAVID E. NANTAIS is an adjunct instructor of philosophy and religious studies at the University of Detroit Mercy. His favorite Motown song is "I Can't Get Next to You," by The Temptations.

ON THE WEB
Dave Nantais introduces recordings of his favorite Motown songs.
americamagazine.org/connects

BOOKS | PETER HEINEGG

BRAHMIN ISOLATO

THE WORLD IS WHAT IT IS

The Authorized Biography of V. S. Naipaul

By Patrick French
Knopf. 576p \$30
ISBN 9781400044054

"They were nearly all Islanders on the Pequod," Herman Melville famously wrote, "Isolatoos too, I call such, not acknowledging the common continent of men, but each Isolato living on a separate continent of his own." But whereas Melville's multicultural whalers were "federated along one keel," the sensationally gifted Trinidadian Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul (b. 1932), who has criss-crossed the oceans as much as all of the Pequod's crew put together, never seems to have bonded with anyone in any enterprise—neither nation, ethnicity, religion (or irreligion) nor party affiliation, not

family, love or art. At once inimitable, indispensable and insufferable, the man stands alone, loyal only to himself and to the English language, one of whose grand masters he has been for half a century.

All this emerges in riveting, cringe-inducing detail from Patrick French's powerful biography, which was indeed authorized: Naipaul gave French access to all his personal papers, including his first wife Pat's massive diaries, which are all the more damning because she herself was so self-effacing; and he exercised no editorial control whatsoever over the final product. Even Paul Theroux, Naipaul's long-time acquaintance (he claims to have no friends), has said, "I didn't know half the horrors."

Born into a shabby-genteel Indian extended family near a little town called Chaguanas, Naipaul was steered early on to study and writing (his

father Seepersad was a journalist and aspiring novelist). At 17 he won a scholarship to Oxford, and from then on made England his base. He knew more Latin, French and Spanish than he did Hindi; and the family's ties to Hinduism, despite their Brahmin caste, were faint. At Oxford the shy but arrogant Vido met the shy but insecure Patricia Hale; and despite family resistance, entrenched on her side, mild on his, they married in 1955. They were both 22, and it was a disastrous decision.

For the next 41 years, until she died of breast cancer, Pat was Naipaul's helper, adviser, nurse and slave. Much to her distress, she was unable to have children; so she devoted all her considerable intelligence, energy and literary tact to her husband, who published *The Mystic Masseur* in 1957 and within four years wrote his first masterpiece, *A House for Mr. Biswas*. They were poor, so she worked as a teacher while taking care of him in every way conceivable: cooking, cleaning, answering mail, assuring his peace and quiet, in exchange for treatment that would range over the years from blandly frigid to downright cruel.

They were sexually incompatible; but whereas Pat suffered in silence and blamed herself, Naipaul sought relief, first in prostitutes, and then, from 1972 onwards, in a 24-year affair with a lively Anglo-Argentinian woman named Margaret Gooding (without quite dedicating it to her, French inscribes his book "MG"). Naipaul concealed the prostitutes from Pat, who was crushed to learn about them from *The New Yorker* when she was on her deathbed; but there was no hiding the ménage with Margaret, with whom he lived and traveled openly. "I was liberated," Naipaul wrote, "She was destroyed. It was inevitable."

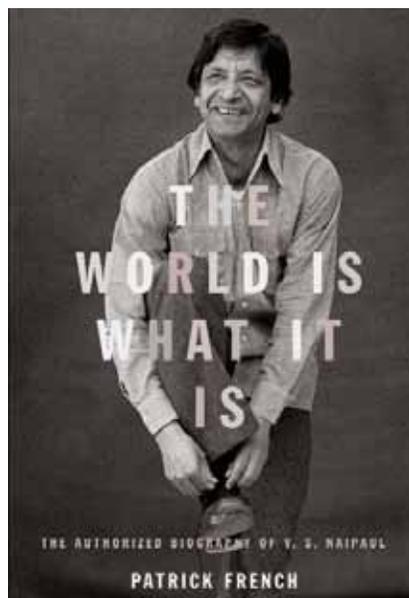
Margaret satisfied his long-deprived libido, and she adored him;

but he gave her more misery than satisfaction. Unlike the barren Pat, she already had three children—she eventually left them and her husband for him. But though Naipaul toyed with the idea of having children, in the end the only lasting result of their frenetic, often violent love-making was three abortions. Naipaul felt free to employ Margaret as his girl Friday and gofer, only to dismiss her and return to Pat at their country home in Wiltshire when it suited him. Pat would take him back without a reproachful word. Alternately, he might send Pat off to London so he could install Margaret in the house. With time Margaret's charms faded, Pat's cancer returned; and Naipaul was swept away by a regal, stylish 42-year-old divorced Pakistani journalist, Nadira Khannum Alvi, whom he married shortly after Pat's cremation in April 1996.

Amid the marital turmoil and misery of those 40 years, Naipaul published a stunning series of novels, most notably *In a Free State* (1971) and *A Bend in the River* (1979), along with brilliant reportages about India, the Muslim world, Africa, Argentina and of course the West Indies. He garnered a bushel of accolades, including knighthood and the Nobel Prize (2001).

Naipaul also made a host of enemies, among both the usual p.c. suspects like Edward Said (a certain H. B. Synge labeled Vidia “a despicable lackey of neo-colonialism and imperialism”) and fellow West Indians like Derek Walcott and C. L. R. James. And no wonder: Naipaul is as rude, unsparing and combative in his accounts of the postcolonial world as he is in his personal life. A phenomenally quick and accurate observer, with a Truman Capote-like ability to recall conversations more or less verbatim, Naipaul has often treated the cultures and characters of the third world as at best foolish and as worst monstrous. As a dark-skinned person who faced

the undisguised racism of post-war Britain, he has real sympathy for the underdog. He considers slavery the supreme human evil, and he grieves



particularly for the genocide of Amerindians like the Caribs, who gave their name to a vast region but have more or less disappeared.

Yet, as seen in his 2002 anthology, *The Writer and the World*, none of that has deterred him from sticking to the formula voiced by his alter-persona,

Ralph Singh, in *The Mimic Men* (1967): “Hate oppression, fear the oppressed.” If nothing else, Naipaul has proved consistently prescient. A glance at today's headlines, with the ongoing nightmares in Darfur, Congo, Zimbabwe, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq (no one forces the Sunnis and Shias to slaughter one another), the terrorist attacks in London, Madrid, Bali, Mumbai and so on appears to validate his harsh vision.

Often compared to Joseph Conrad for his brooding irony, Naipaul might be more logically linked with Jonathan Swift for his bitter pessimism, his misanthropic outrageousness and his deceptively clear and simple style, with “proper words in proper places,” as Jonathan Swift (another angry, though more sociable, islander) liked to say. No gaudy magic realism, no dodgy postmodernism, no tender lyricism. As his opening sentence in *A Bend in the River* puts it, “The world is what it is.”

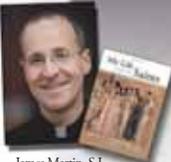
Patrick French, it must be said, has done a heroic job, combining exhaustive, meticulous research with unflinching judgment, describing Naipaul at one point, for example, as Pat's “increasingly cranky and infan-

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James Martin, SJ.

tilized husband.” Possibly because he has to trudge through so many miles of publication minutiae, reviewers’ responses and literary gossip, he every now and then indulges in showy double and triple-axels, speaking of Naipaul as “an accidental occidental Indian,” who habitually became enraged “when guests were eminent and imminent,” and who had “a fateful, hateful, fatal sense that he did not want her [Margaret] in his life any more.” Why not? French deserves a little time in the spotlight.

Still, he probably exaggerates when he suggests that his book might be “the last literary biography to be written from a complete paper archive.” There must be a few distinguished writers out there too old or unregenerate to

have given in to e-mail and text-messaging. On the other hand, who could, or would want to, match Naipaul’s mental toughness (or disdain for the public) in releasing so much scandalous material during his lifetime? Naipaul’s biography establishes that he is, apart from previously mentioned vices, a waspish backstabber, a mean-spirited miser, and—surprise!—a complete egotist. Hilaire Belloc jokingly imagined people saying of him after his death, “His sins were scarlet, but his books were read.”

V. S. Naipaul can rest assured that readers all around the world are saying words to that effect right now.

PETER HEINEGG is a professor of English at Union College, Schenectady, N.Y.

DANIEL J. HARRINGTON

SUPPRESSING ALL JEWISHNESS

THE ARYAN JESUS

Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany

By Susannah Heschel
Princeton Univ. Press. 384p \$29.95
ISBN 9780691125312

Founded in 1939 against the background of Nazi dominance by a group of German Protestant theologians, pastors and churchgoers, the Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on German Church Life sought to redefine Christianity as a Germanic religion whose founder, Jesus, was not a Jew but rather an opponent of Judaism who fought valiantly to destroy Judaism but fell victim in that struggle.

This volume presents the history of that institute: how it came into being and won approval and financing from church leaders, the nature of the “dejudaeized” New Testament and hymnal that it published, the many conferences and lectures that it organized,

and those who joined and became active members especially from the academic world and in particular its academic director, Walter Grundmann (1906-74).

Susannah Heschel, professor of Jewish studies at Dartmouth College, is the daughter of the famous Jewish scholar and religious activist, Abraham Heschel. She grew up hearing from her father and his friends about the German academic scene in the 1920s and 1930s. Her interest in Grundmann’s institute was piqued in the late 1980s, and she has worked on this project for many years, especially since the pertinent archives became accessible. She has an interesting and important story to tell about the political corruption of academic Christian

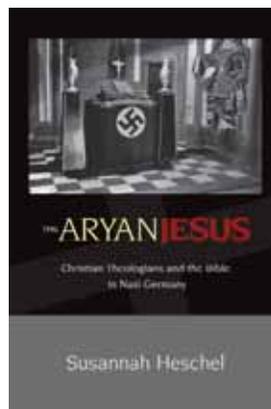
theological scholarship, and she tells it very well. She offers abundant quotations from the publications and correspondence of the major figures. Just when the reader feels the need for more background information about a particular person or topic, Heschel supplies it. She retains the objectivity appropriate to a historian without glossing over the horror of her topic and the scoundrels who perpetrated it.

One of the institute’s preoccupations was to dejudaeize Jesus. Along with some other distinguished German biblical scholars of the time, Grundmann and his colleagues contended that Jesus descended from the non-Jewish population of Galilee, that he struggled heroically against Judaism, and finally fell into the hands of the Judean officials who had him put to death. For Germans in the 1930s and early 1940s who were struggling against what they were told was an international Jewish conspiracy, the “Aryan Jesus” was proposed as a symbol of their own struggle. Their task was to complete successfully the

struggle that the Aryan Jesus had begun. As a means toward that end, some “German Christians” saw the need to divest Christianity of its Jewish elements and to produce a purified Christianity fit for the future thousand-year Reich.

The impetus for this project came first of all from the long German tradition of theological anti-Judaism.

Added to that tradition were the “race” theories that had emerged more recently and the rise to political power of Hitler and the Nazi party. Moreover, there had developed within German Protestantism a split between the “German Christians” and the “Confessing Church.” The “German Christians” took more eagerly to the task of ridding Christianity of its



Jewish elements and developing a new kind of Christianity supposedly more consistent with the Nazi ideology that they saw coming to power before their eyes. One of the strongholds of the German Christian movement was the region of Thuringia, and the institute dedicated to eradication of Jewish influence on the German church had its home in Jena. While not officially sponsored by the University of Jena, Grundmann and several of his co-workers were faculty members there.

Grundmann became the institute's academic director and driving force. In his mid-30s he had been lecturing and writing about "Jesus the Galilean" and drawing parallels between Jesus' alleged struggle against Judaism and the contemporary German situation. He was a popular teacher and lecturer, and had many contacts in the German academic world. His own teachers included Adolf Schlatter and Gerhard Kittel, very distinguished scholars whose writings were often tinged with anti-Judaism. In his work for the institute Grundmann organized conferences that attracted other scholars, and so widened the institute's influence. Even when paper was scarce, Grundmann managed to get published his own writings and those of scholars sympathetic to the institute's goals.

One of the institute's first projects was the production of a deJudaized translation of the New Testament. This involved purging the Synoptic Gospels of positive references to Judaism, eliminating the biographical and autobiographical notices about Paul's Jewishness and highlighting the negative comments about "the Jews" in John's Gospel. Another project was a deJudaized hymnbook, in which Jewish language and concepts were eliminated and replaced by songs about war and the "fatherland." A deJudaized catechism presented Jesus as a Galilean whose message and conduct stood in opposition to Judaism.

These publications were widely circulated and had great influence.

Two issues central to the Christian Bible presented problems for Grundmann and his colleagues: the Old Testament and Paul. While many in the German Christian movement wanted to jettison the Old Testament, some (mainly professors of Old Testament) wanted to retain it as evidence of Jewish perfidy and degeneracy, often using the ancient Israelite prophets' denunciations against the Jewish people of the present. Since Paul had been the theological hero in Luther's Protestant Reformation, he could not be so easily purged. The solution was to use Paul's general ideas and play down or omit what seemed too "Jewish" about his person and theology.

The Nazis' reception of Grundmann's institute was mixed. Some officials welcomed the support of the German Christians and of the institute in particular. However, other highly placed Nazis did not want to encourage a renewed German Christianity that might rival their own plans for a Nordic paganism entirely without Christian elements. For members of the Confessing Church and the Catholic Church (despite their own forms of anti-Judaism), the goals and projects of the institute and the

German Christians seemed too radical. While this mixed reception was a great disappointment to Grundmann and his colleagues, it became their salvation after the defeat of the Nazis.

In the superficial "denazification" process after the war, Grundmann and his colleagues portrayed themselves as scholars of Judaism, vic-

tims of Nazi persecution and heroes responsible for the church's survival. They wrote recommendations for one another, attested to one another's integrity and took up former or new positions in the church and the university. Grundmann continued to publish books and articles without apology, and even turned up as an informant for the East German secret police, the Stasi.

Heschel has a remarkable story to tell. Her reliance on primary sources and her objectivity are impressive. One comes away from her account wondering how such apparently intelligent and learned Christian scholars could have been so foolish and craven. While there were several causes, Heschel's narrative demonstrates once more the noxious power of Christian theological anti-Judaism, especially among those who should have known better.

DANIEL J. HARRINGTON, S.J., is professor of New Testament at the Boston College School of Theology and Ministry and editor of *New Testament Abstracts*.

ON THE WEB

From the archives, John Updike reflects on faith and fiction. americamagazine.org/pages.

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Adults and *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*. Candidates must be in full communion with the church and have a solid commitment to and praxis in the Roman Catholic doctrinal tradition. Candidates must hold an M.A. in theology, ministry, religious education or pastoral studies, with five years' experience, in parish and/or diocesan catechetical and initiation ministries that includes a significant background in adult catechesis, the catechumenate and lay ecclesial ministry. Excellent leadership, management, communication and budgeting skills/experience; and the ability to travel throughout the state are required as well. For a complete role description, see our Web site: www.portlanddiocese.org. Send cover letter and résumé to elizabeth.allen@portlanddiocese.org.

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Retreats

BETHANY SPIRITUALITY CENTER, Highland Mills, N.Y., announces the following spring and summer '09 retreats: "From Calvary to Emmaus and Renewed Hope," with Ann Billard, O.L.M., April 19-23; "From Religion Back to Faith: A Journey of the Heart," with Barbara Fiand, S.N.D., June 5-12; "God in Transition," with Margaret Silf, June 22-28; and directed retreats, July 1-9, 12-20 and 23-31. Please visit www.bethanyspiritualitycenter.org, for other offerings.

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LETTERS

Wheat That Springeth Green

Bob Peace ("The Food on Our Tables," 1/19) has the right to say what he wants about farm subsidies and working conditions for farm laborers in the United States, but there is injustice in every phase of business, in every phase of society and in every phase of human life. American farmers are a great benefit to the lives of agricultural workers and by and large treat their workers fairly.

I am a winter wheat farmer in Colorado. Without government subsidies, Middle America's grain production would disappear; subsidies allow grain farmers to make a profit. Further, the United States is not the only country in the world that gives subsidies to farmers.

Mexico is the second-leading supplier of oil to the United States, but the many hundreds of millions paid for that oil does not reach Mexico's citizens. The main problem of the Mexican people is not the American farmer, and it is certainly not farm subsidies; the main problem is the Mexican government.

ROBERT KOCH
Bennett, Colo.

Level Playing Field

"Abortion Absolutists," by John F. Kavanaugh, S.J. (12/15), was magnificent. Why can our leaders in the church not grasp what Kavanaugh does? If one is unable to make the simple distinction at the heart of Kavanaugh's column (that there is a difference between the political and the moral), logic demands one should conclude that Catholics must withdraw from public life.

All I would like is a politically level playing field to teach the morality that is our authentic tradition.

(REV.) T. L. HERLONG
Lake Charles, La.

Limits to Infallibility

In Paul Lakeland's review of Jerome P. Baggett's book, *Sense of the Faithful* ("Community Narratives," 2/2), he explains the term *sensus fidelium* from the Second Vatican Council as meaning "that body of beliefs that all share and which partakes of Spirit-guaranteed infallibility." But, in fact, the council attributed such infallibility only to the universal consensus of the faithful in matters of faith and morals, making it clear that here the term "the faithful" refers to the whole body of believers, including the bishops as well as the laity.

FRANCIS A. SULLIVAN, S.J.
Chestnut Hill, Mass.

Revolution, not Renewal

In "Making a Mark" (1/5), Richard G. Malloy, S.J., asks what we can do to "foster in the imagination of young adults the possibility that they could be priests or religious," and offers six suggestions that have mostly to do with some shortcomings in the pool of candidates. But what we should really

reflect on are the shortcomings within religious orders and their inability to adapt to new realities.

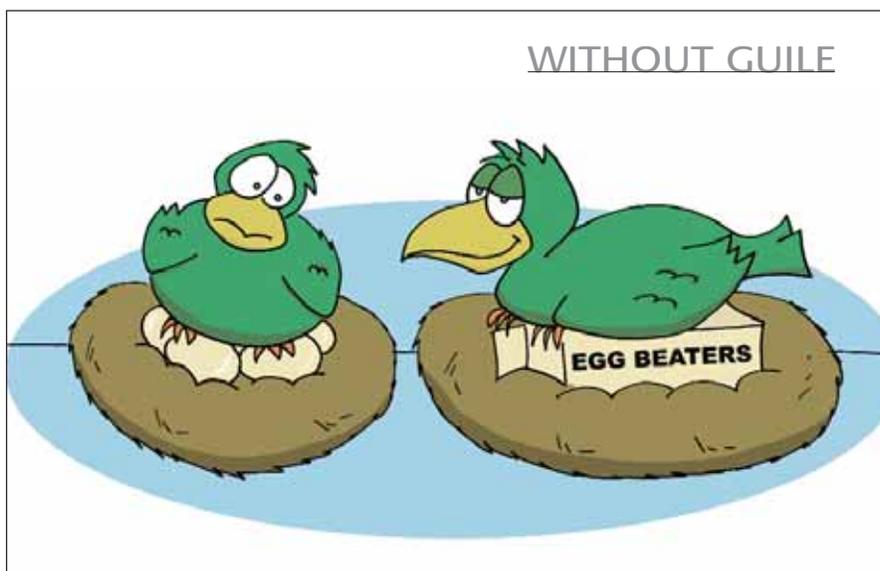
After 57 years as a vowed religious, I am haunted by the fact that we religious are a dying breed, particularly in developed countries. We are unable to recruit new members even to replacement levels, let alone recruit for growth, and unable to make the radical changes that will attract good candidates.

For over 40 years we have been in a process of renewal concerned with externals like dress, daily schedule, living situations and more without making a critical analysis of religious life itself using new theories of human behavior that today are accepted as essential to living a fully human life. We have renewed but not revolutionized religious life.

In order to survive, religious communities must address new understandings of the notion of the self while being vowed religious in this world.

PHILIP AARON, S.M.
Dayton, Ohio

To send a letter to the editor we recommend using the link that appears below articles on America's Web site, www.americamagazine.org. This allows us to consider your letter for publication in both print and online versions of the magazine. Letters may also be sent to America's editorial office (address on page 2) or by e-mail to: letters@americamagazine.org. They should be brief and include the writer's name, postal address and daytime phone number. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.



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The Glass Ceiling

"Making a Mark" (Richard G. Malloy, S.J., 1/5) was very good in discussing head-on some of the difficult issues in religious life. But women's issues were not fully discussed. If a young woman considers religious life, she has to take into account the fact that she will be limiting her opportunities to be a leader and power player in the church because she is a woman. In secular life, her chance of reaching her highest potential is much greater.

This was made clear to me at the election of Pope Benedict XVI. I remember looking at the College of Cardinals and wondering, "Where are all the women's voices?" With so many great women doing wonderful work in the church, why are they not part of the leadership?

ANN HOENIGMAN
Mayfield, Ohio

Brother, Where Art Thou?

"The Harvest Is Great: Vocations in a Modern Church" (1/5) offered three good presentations on a vitally important topic by a Jesuit priest and two women religious. But there was one big omission. Where was the article about religious brothers? We are the "other sons" of Holy Mother Church. Our numbers are small, but our history is considerable. We count for something, too.

The term "priesthood and religious life" means little if anything to the people in the pews, because when they hear it, they think only of priests and nuns. Next time, think of the "bros."

JOHN PAUL McMAHON, T.O.R.
Steubenville, Ohio

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Agents of Forgiveness

SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (B), FEB. 22, 2009

Readings: Is 43:18-19, 21-25; Ps 41:2--5, 13-14; 2 Cor 1:18-22; Mk 2:1-12

ASH WEDNESDAY, FEB. 25, 2009

Readings: Jl 2:12-18; 2 Cor 5:20--6:2; Mt 6:1-6, 16-18

“Remember not the events of the past” (Is 43:18)

How can you ever forget the past, when it has been hurtful? Maybe there is something I have done for which I cannot forgive myself or some hurt another has inflicted on me that I cannot let go. “Remember not the events of the past”—that is what God says to Israel at the end of the exile in Babylon. It is not that the Holy One is asking the people to pretend the exile never happened. They could never forget the utter upheaval of their lives: being torn from their homes and forced into exile in a foreign place, where they had to try to piece back together the shreds of their lives where nothing was their own. Such a thing could only have occurred as a punishment for their sin, they reasoned.

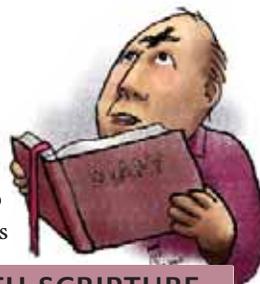
The prophet Isaiah says otherwise. God complains, “You burdened me with your sins, and wearied me with your crimes” (Is 43:24). Focusing on their own sinfulness as they call out to God, they do not perceive that God is doing something new. Israel forgets it is God’s own beloved people, formed in the divine image so as to announce God’s praise. God no longer remembers their sins; nor should they. Like them, we are to dwell not on our dismal failures but rather on the boundless graciousness of God (Jl 2:13), who heals our memories and frees us for love in each new moment.

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This Sunday’s Gospel highlights how very difficult it can be to give and receive forgiveness. A man who was paralyzed in body and spirit needs the help of four friends to bring him to a place of forgiveness. Sometimes, when we are so tied up by our unforgiveness, we need others to help move us toward the source of healing.

Obstacles may seem insurmountable, but the faith of others can carry us at such times. As the man and his friends break through the roof, the first thing Jesus does is to remind the person with paralysis that he is a beloved child (*teknon*) of God. The word *teknon* does not necessarily connote a young person, but can mean a cherished son or daughter of any age. Jesus then declares, “Your sins are forgiven.” Using the passive voice is a way of saying that it is God who does the forgiving. Controversy then swirls around Jesus. Who can claim to be an agent of divine forgiveness?

In our day, those who have studied the dynamics of conflict transformation have shown that it is the injured party who has the power to begin a process of reconciliation by offering forgiveness to the perpetrator of the hurt. In an ideal



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- When you remember the past, do you tend to nurse old hurts; or do you glory in the gifts of grace and forgiveness you have been given?
- Pray with thanks for the times friends have helped you overcome great obstacles to reach Jesus for forgiveness and healing.
- Ask Jesus to show you how best to help another who needs to be carried toward forgiveness.

exchange, such a gracious act brings the one who inflicted the harm to repent of his or her wrongdoing and attempt restitution. The two parties then commit themselves to create a new, reconciled future. This is an enormously difficult process. It is, as Sunday’s Gospel points out,

very hard to embark on a journey of forgiveness and reconciliation; it is easier to raise up a person who cannot walk than to let go of a paralyzing lack of forgiveness toward self and others (Mk 2:9).

Forgiveness is not something that we can conjure up by the strength of our will. Rather, it is God’s endless mercy at work through Jesus that enables us to receive this divine gift, which then impels us to extend it to others. It is a glorious thing when we are so freed by love—like a resurrection and like learning to walk anew. We can open ourselves to this gift by practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving, as the Gospel for Ash Wednesday reminds us. These are not ways to parade our piety. Instead they help us to acknowledge our sins, then let God’s healing power transform us into ambassadors of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:20).

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