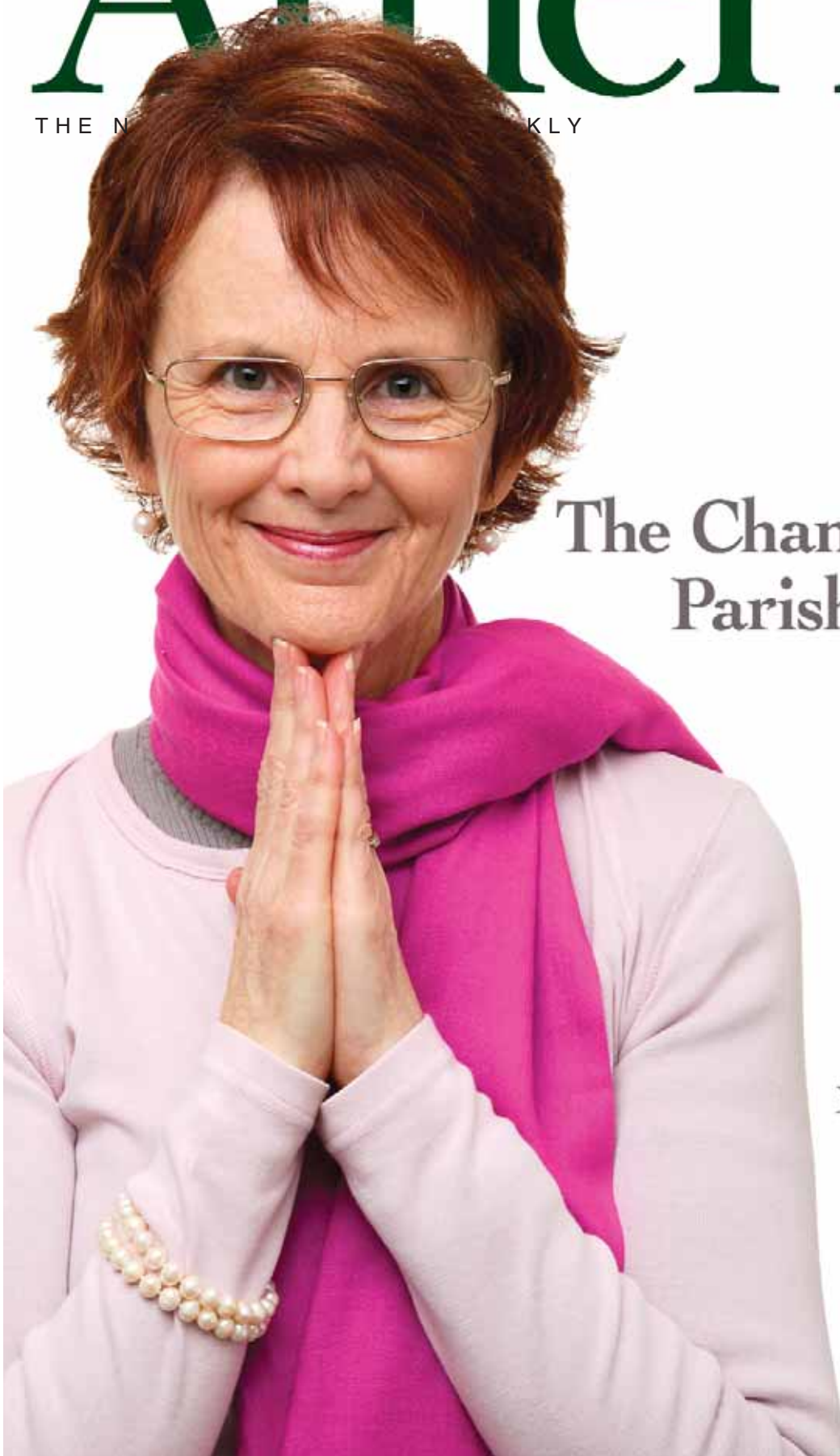


# America

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## The Changing Face of Parish Leadership

MARY M. FOLEY

New Books on St. Paul  
DANIEL J. HARRINGTON

# OF MANY THINGS

**O**n Ash Wednesday, as they have been doing for over 150 years, penitents sat scattered among the polished pews of St. Patrick's Cathedral, each managing to have a private moment in one of the world's most public places. As they waited for the red indicator lights to point the way to an open confessional, they were presumably engaged in what catechisms refer to as an "examination of conscience," an unfortunately sterile moniker that makes the process sound like something akin to an MRI test. Nevertheless, the catechisms and the penitents are right. If one is serious about engaging in a good spiritual stocktaking, then one's conscience is the best place to start.

That is because human experience confirms a fact that few, including the nonbelievers among us, would seriously wish to dispute: within every human heart there is a voice exhorting us to avoid evil and to choose what is right, what is good. As the late philosopher W. Norris Clarke, S.J., wrote, we hear this voice "as an absolute, unconditional moral imperative: 'You ought to do this good. You ought to avoid this evil.'" In other words, it is a general, categorical, even primordial command.

But while most would agree that all of us have something like this voice within us, there is much disagreement about precisely where it comes from. St. Thomas Aquinas thought there were only three possibilities. The first is that this command is somehow my own creation. Thomas dispenses with this argument fairly quickly, however, arguing that I cannot be the source of this moral imperative because if I were, I could revoke it at any time. That arbitrariness just does not jibe with Thomas, because I experience this moral imperative as an abiding command, not as some moral standard I consciously chose one day. In other words, rather than being the product of my consciousness, it seems to

impinge upon it, suggesting that it originates apart from me.

The second possible source for this moral command is corporate—it comes to me from my parents or from society. This is a view held by many moderns, who claim that much of morality is simply a social construct.

But if this were true, we could easily dismiss the command of conscience as soon as we discover its source: a flawed, possibly mistaken human authority. Yet human experience tells us that it just cannot be dismissed that easily. That is why people frequently refer to their conscience as "nagging."

Thomas concludes that if the voice does not originate with me and is not the voice of the community, then it must be the voice of God. "Either moral obligation is an illusion," Clarke writes, agreeing with Thomas, "foisted on me by the sheer power or persuasion of human society; or the ultimate source must be an absolute unconditional Law-giver." This line of reasoning constitutes what is popularly known as the argument for the existence of God from the imperative of conscience.

Now if all this seems a little dry and too philosophical, then consider this: embedded within the argument, indeed within our consciences, is a pathway to a deeply intimate, personal spirituality, not one through which we simply discover the rules by which we are to live (frankly, they are generally known to us already) but also one through which we discover the relationship through which we are to live. The imperative of conscience is God's daring and generous offer to live among us in the most privileged and private parts of our lives. For in our consciences we discover who we are through a uniquely personal encounter with God's spirit. We learn once again that God will not be outdone in generosity and that the penitents in the pews at St. Patrick's that day were the luckiest people on Fifth Avenue. **MATT MALONE, S.J.**

# America

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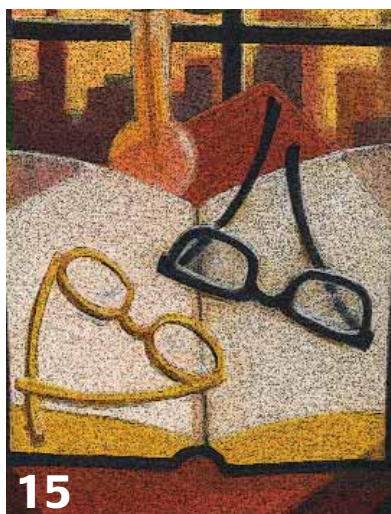
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Mary M. Foley (right) talks about leading a parish on our podcast. Plus, more images from the National Gallery of Art's exhibit of Neapolitan treasures, and a selection of archive articles on *lectio divina*. All at [americamagazine.org](http://americamagazine.org).



## CURRENT COMMENT

### Stopping Cluster Bombs

“Civilian” is the key word in the title of an important new bill before Congress, the Cluster Munitions Civilian Protection Act. Introduced on Feb. 11 by Senators Patrick Leahy (Democrat of Vermont) and Diane Feinstein (Democrat of California), with companion legislation in the House, it prohibits all use of cluster munitions in areas where civilians would likely be present. Commenting on the bill, Senator Feinstein noted that “cluster bombs have been used around the world: Vietnam, Cambodia, Kosovo, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Middle East.... These indiscriminate weapons of war continue to endanger the lives and limbs of innocent men, women and children long after conflict has ended.... A disproportionate number of its victims have been civilians, not armed combatants.” For his part, Senator Leahy said that the bill ensures that “when cluster munitions are used or sold, they are subject to strict controls so they do not pose unacceptable risks to civilians.”

Many bomblets fail to detonate on impact and become miniature land mines, maiming mostly farmers as they cultivate their fields and curious children who pick them up. Last December in Oslo, Norway, 95 nations signed the Convention on Cluster Munitions. The United States did not (see *America* 12/1/08). Though as a senator, President Obama voted for restrictions on the use and export of cluster bombs, he has not yet taken a position on whether the United States should finally become a signatory. We hope he does. In the meantime, his backing of the Leahy-Feinstein bill would be a move toward that goal.

### Communion Politics

The threat by prelates to deny Communion to Catholic public servants who vote for legislation that seems inconsistent with the pro-life legislation favored by the bishops is a heavy-handed gesture that risks compromising the ability of the bishops to influence public policy. Moral doctrine permits legislators to choose other means of restricting abortion where stringent measures are not feasible.

Church authorities should recognize that legislators’ decisions are not made in a context of utopian clarity. As the bishops have counseled in other areas, men and women of good will can often differ in the conclusions they reach about what will more effectively promote the public good.

Individual bishops have the right and responsibility to participate in this public debate, but the style of their participation will inevitably condition their actual influence. At a time when the credibility of the Catholic bishops and of the U.S. bishops’ conference as an organization is being challenged on several fronts, ill-considered actions by individual bishops can be an embarrassment to the conference and compromise its ability to shape more effectively public opinion and public policy.

### A Recession Index

2009 stimulus package: \$787 billion

Oprah Winfrey’s income, 2007: \$350 million

Years it would take Oprah to pay for 2009 stimulus package: 2,249

Centuries it would take a median-income household to pay for stimulus: 157

Failed U.S. banks in 2008: 25

Failed U.S. banks so far in 2009: 9

Total number of U.S. banks: 8,400

Number of banks that have applied for TARP money: 415

Amount they have received: \$263.6 billion

Amount received by the top six: \$160 billion

Amount received by the bottom six: \$4.2 million

U.S. jobs lost over the last 3 months: 1.8 million

...since the economic collapse began: 3.6 million

...at General Motors in the last month: 47,000

Total number of troops assigned to Afghanistan: 45,000

“Toxic assets”: overvalued financial instruments that poison the asset pool

“Vulture investors”: investors who prey on stocks whose value is crashing

“Zombie banks”: half-dead banks allowed to continue existing and infecting others

“Financial Götterdämmerung”: growing likelihood of Eastern European countries defaulting on their debt

Venture capital raised for Twitter in the last year: \$55 million

Venture capital raised for Twitter in the last month: \$35 million

Employees of Twitter: 34

Current revenue of Twitter: \$0

# Prison Nation

Extreme overcrowding in California's prison system, the nation's largest, led a panel of three federal judges in early February to call for reducing the state's prison population by a third. The prison system holds twice the number it was designed for, with tiered bunks filling gyms and classrooms. The judges were especially alarmed by the effects of the crowding, which has led to deterioration in mental and physical health care, preventable deaths and suicides at the rate of one a month—a situation so dire they called it a violation of the Eighth Amendment's prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment. A primary cause of the crowding is mandatory minimum sentencing policies, which essentially tie judges' hands in meting out sentences, especially regarding drug offenses, which are common. California has made extensive use of such sentences and also the so-called "three strikes laws," which require sentences of 25 years to life for third-time felony offenders, no matter what the third offense is.

California's incarceration problems, however, are simply outsized reflections of what is happening around the country. The Bureau of Justice Statistics reported in December that the nation's prison population continues to rise, with almost 2.5 million people behind bars. Many prisons are managed privately by groups like the Corrections Corporation of America. In the United States the overall cost of incarceration exceeds \$60 billion a year.

Sentencing practices in Europe, by contrast, tend to be far more conducive to rehabilitation. In Norway, for example, few prisoners serve more than 14 years, even for such a serious crime as murder. In many cases prisoners receive weekend parole after they have served seven years. This allows them to maintain contact with their families, which has long been recognized as a key factor in lowering recidivism rates. In Italy, after serving 10 years a prisoner may be permitted to work in the community during the day.

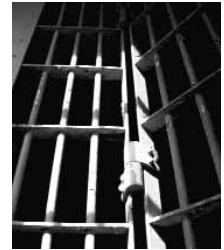
The situation of some children in correctional facilities in the United States also cries out for change. Prosecuted as adults, many children as young as 13 are serving life sentences in adult facilities, where abuse is common. A related issue concerns an increase in the number of incarcerated parents. According to the nonprofit Sentencing Project, 1.7 million children have a parent in prison, an increase of over 80 percent since 1981. Most such parents live in prisons that are more than 100 miles from their

homes, and as a consequence half never receive visits from their children. That situation is counterproductive, since strong family and community relationships increase the chances of a successful transition back into the community. (When those with felony drug convictions are eventually paroled, their transition is made still more difficult because they are banned specifically from receiving welfare and food stamps.)

The judges in California suggest sensible steps to reduce prison crowding without endangering public safety. One is to improve the parole procedures that currently contribute to the high rates of recidivism. In California and other states, one in three prisoners released on parole is incarcerated again within three years because of inadequate supportive planning. Also, sentences should be shortened for nonviolent offenders. And more offenders ought to be enrolled in local programs, like addiction-control programs, that would keep them close to their communities. Steps like these could remove from the United States its embarrassing title as world leader in the percentage of its population behind bars.

A few states have already taken steps in the right direction. A bipartisan group of legislators in Virginia, for instance, has suggested releasing early some nonviolent offenders, including those convicted of drug possession, who would be sent to mandatory treatment programs early in their sentences rather than toward the end. Lawmakers in Washington State allow early release for up to half of all nonviolent offenders.

Although it might be tempting in a time of rising unemployment for states to build more prisons, such an approach is no remedy. Ryan King, a policy analyst at the Sentencing Project, told *America* that the problems at the root of the overcrowding—hasty parole revocations, mandatory sentence laws and lack of re-entry planning—would remain in an expanded prison system, with the same nonviolent offenders cycling through and filling the prisons. What is needed is a humane and cost-effective restructuring of key aspects of the criminal justice system, like those suggested by the California judges. State legislators can and should make structural changes that would reduce the severe overcrowding in prison facilities around the country. Addressing draconian sentencing policies would be a good place to start.



# SIGNS OF THE TIMES

THE ECONOMY

## Aid to Poor Gets Boost in Stimulus

Small towns, large cities, social service agencies and even the manufacturers of digital converters for television sets all expect to benefit from a piece of the \$787 billion stimulus measure signed by President Barack Obama on Feb. 17. But amid all the mega-million-dollar transportation projects and infusions of federal cash for industries on the brink of insolvency, there are plenty of tax breaks and new funding for programs that directly aid poor people.

Some of the more dramatic elements of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, as the stimulus is formally known, include changes to the federal tax code that provide \$288 billion worth of tax credits and deductions to aid the poorest Americans. For example, a single parent of two earning minimum wage will be eligible for up to a \$1,750 child tax credit, nearly double the 2008 limit.

The law also expands the Earned Income Tax Credit for low-income families with three children or more and provides for about \$116 billion in tax credits, \$400 per worker in 2009 and 2010, in the form of reduced payroll deductions that will begin this summer. Even many of those who do not earn enough to pay federal income taxes will be eligible for a stimulus check under this provision. Also, families with incomes as low as \$45,000 will be eligible to pay a lower, alternative minimum tax that was not previously available to them.

Some of the direct spending in the law includes a one-time payment of \$250 to recipients of Social Security and Supplemental Security Income for the poor and to veterans who receive pensions and disability payments. The stimulus bill also extends unemployment benefits through the end of 2009 and raises the payments by \$25 a week.

Lawmakers have also provided increased funding for basic necessities, including food and health care. Most four-person households that use food stamps will receive about \$80 more per month starting in April under a program now known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP. The law also expands funding for the Women, Infants and Children nutrition pro-

gram by \$500 million and the Emergency Food Assistance Program by \$150 million. Unemployed people who pay for their own health care insurance under the Cobra program will receive \$24.7 billion to subsidize 65 percent of their premiums. Another \$86.6 billion will go to states to help cover shortfalls in Medicaid coverage and \$1 billion is designated for prevention and wellness programs.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops pushed hard for the child tax credits, the nutrition assistance programs, the support for Medicaid and the expansion of unemployment benefits. It also backed the provisions that will fund programs to prevent homelessness, to weatherize public housing and to stabilize neighborhoods by pur-

chasing some foreclosed homes.

A provision that the U.S.C.C.B. worked successfully to keep out of the final bill would have required employers to use a much-criticized program to verify that all employees have legal permission to work in the United States.

Finally, the law also permits religious schools, colleges and universities to apply for funding to renovate institutions of higher education in order to make them more environmentally sustainable. Longstanding restrictions prohibit federal funds from being used for work on facilities used for sectarian instruction or religious worship, but other types of buildings at schools operated by religious organizations are eligible for funding.



Moments after signing the stimulus bill on Feb. 17



VATICAN CITY

## Pope, British Prime Minister Discuss Global Economy

**H**ard work, solidarity and other ethical values must be part of the world's response to the global economic crisis, said Pope Benedict XVI and British Prime Minister Gordon Brown.

The pope and prime minister met Feb. 19 at the Vatican, and their 35-minute conversation focused on the economic crisis and "the duty to pursue initiatives benefiting the less developed countries," a Vatican statement said.

"Large numbers of people have been thrust into poverty as a result of the banking crisis and I think that we, together with the faith groups, must have uppermost in our minds...what we can do immediately to help those in difficulty," Mr. Brown said following the meeting. "The reality of what has happened has got to lead to us taking action to create safety nets for people in countries where they are most vulnerable to the downturn. Perhaps one of the things the world will be able to take out of this difficult crisis," he said, is a realization that safety nets must be in place to help individuals at risk.

Mr. Brown also said that he and the pope spoke about "the importance of what we might call 'the simple virtues' being at the center not just of family life in our societies and communities, but also at the center of our economic life. The only successful economic life in the future will be one that values hard work and effort and responsibility and enterprise, but chooses not to reward irresponsible risk-taking and excess."

The prime minister was in Rome to assist with preparations for the Group of 20 summit, which he will host in London in April. The summit will bring together leaders of the world's richest nations as well as the key leaders of emerging economies. In an article published in the Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, on the eve of his Roman visit, Mr. Brown wrote that the Group of 20 meeting must find ways to ensure that the poorest

countries receive a portion of the cash infusions that wealthier countries are committing to stimulate their economies.

Brown also outlined his priorities for fighting the economic downturn and reversing global poverty, which include new resources dedicated to health and education in the developing world; reform of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank to give a greater voice to developing nations; and the use of new world trade agreements to open markets to products from developing economies. The world has a "collective responsibility to ensure that the needs of the poorest countries will not be an afterthought, tagged on due to moral obligation or guilt," Mr. Brown wrote.

The pope and the prime minister also agreed that efforts must be made "to foster cooperation on projects of human promotion, respect for the environment and sustainable development," according to the Vatican statement. Mr. Brown told reporters after the meeting that he had invited Pope Benedict to visit the United Kingdom. While the pope appeared pleased with the invitation, he made no firm commitment, Brown said.



## Wage Theft Significant Problem in U.S.

Wage theft robs workers of pay but also robs the government of about \$18 billion a year in revenue according to Kim Bobo, executive director of the Interfaith Worker Justice organization. Speaking at a labor luncheon on Feb. 21 in Washington, D.C., Bobo cited several examples. A Vietnamese restaurant chain in New York City was found to have paid its workers, on average, \$540 a month. "That's less than \$2 an hour," Bobo said. That was before their bosses levied \$20 fines against them for such infractions as typing too slowly or slamming a door too loudly.

Bobo also said that there are an estimated 30 million workers who are wrongly classified as independent contractors, allowing employers to avoid paying taxes on their wages. "That's not only stealing from the workers, but stealing from the public coffers," she added while calling for passage of the Employee Free Choice Act, which would establish an easier system to enable employees to form or join labor unions.

## Officials Express Concern Over Shariah

Church workers in Pakistan are concerned over the government's decision to allow militants to enforce Islamic law in the pro-Taliban controlled North-West Frontier province. The government, in an attempt to bring about peace and order, agreed on Feb. 16 to allow Taliban leaders to enforce Shariah, or Islamic law. Soon after the deal, media reported that radical groups shut down all schools for girls and banned women from the marketplace and from traveling outside their homes without a male family mem-

## NEWS BRIEFS

President Barack Obama called **Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan** to congratulate the Milwaukee archbishop on his appointment as head of the New York Archdiocese. Pope Benedict named Dolan as successor to Cardinal Edward Egan on Feb. 23. + With parliamentary elections scheduled for April 22, **South Africa faces threats**, including "blind loyalty to a party" and "corruption that delays service delivery and disillusion many people," Archbishop Buti Tlhagale of Johannesburg, has said. + British-born **Bishop Richard Williamson** of the Pius X Society, who caused scandal with his remarks denying the Holocaust, arrived in London on Feb. 25 after the government of Argentina told him to leave or be expelled. + The losses incurred by **Catholic institutions in the stock market** since last autumn are roughly the same as the hits taken by other investors, according to experts, mostly in the range of 20 percent to 30 percent. + Joan Rosenhauer of the U.S. bishops' Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development, received the **Harry A. Fagan Award** on Feb. 21 in recognition of her contributions to the Catholic vision of social justice.



Timothy M. Dolan

ber as an escort. They also announced prohibitions on music, dancing and working for nongovernmental organizations. According to media reports, the militants in the past few years have bombed 201 schools, most of them for girls. The Public High School for Girls, run by Carmelite nuns, was badly damaged by bomb blasts last year. A Catholic priest working in the area, speaking on condition of anonymity, said "it can be dangerous. We cannot even openly organize church-sponsored seminars."

## Vatican Protests Israeli TV Satire

The Vatican has labeled "blasphemous" a satire of Christianity on an

Israeli television network that included joking suggestions that Mary was impregnated by a school friend at the age of 15 and that Jesus died at a young age because he was fat. A Vatican statement on Feb. 20 said the program had "ridiculed the Lord Jesus and the Blessed Virgin Mary." It expressed support for Christians and Catholic leaders in the Holy Land who had denounced the broadcast.

The Vatican said its nuncio in Jerusalem, Archbishop Antonio Franco, had received assurances from the Israeli government that it would take steps to prevent such programs in the future and would try to obtain a public apology from the television network.

From CNS and other sources.



THOMAS MASSARO



# More Perfect Unions

**I**t took more effort and resulted in more “blood on the floor” than pundits predicted, but our lawmakers have at last settled upon an economic stimulus package. With that must-do measure in the rearview mirror, Congress and the Obama administration are turning their sights elsewhere. Bills regarding health care, immigration and other pressing items are being introduced daily.

I wish I could report brighter prospects for harmonious resolution of any of these weighty matters. But realistically, when legislators answer the bell for the second round of the bout called Politics 2009, we may expect just as little true bipartisanship and just as much acrimony as we saw in the opening weeks of the Obama presidency.

One important item I recommend tracking through Congress is the Employee Free Choice Act, or EFCA. A reform of federal labor law is hardly riveting to most people, but a great deal is at stake in getting this particular issue right. The way workers are treated is above all an ethical question, involving notions like equity and human rights, not merely a technical legal question involving bureaucratic procedures. Since many observers see no need to change the rules regulating the process of union organizing and collective bargaining, this act is sure to spark a lively exchange of blows on Capitol Hill.

The core of the proposed legislation affects how unions are certified in a given workplace. Most importantly,

EFCA re-establishes the principle of “majority sign-up,” a requirement that an employer recognize a union if a majority of the employees sign authorization cards. Majority sign-up would provide workers an alternative to the “secret ballot” elections supervised by the National Labor Relations Board, a process established by the Taft-Hartley Act in 1947 and which most employers favor. The bill would also beef up penalties against firms that harass or coerce employees seeking to organize. Finally, the act would require parties that fail to reach a collective bargaining agreement within 120 days to go to an arbitrator to resolve their disputes.

The facts regarding most of the relevant claims are hotly contested, as a scan of recent editorials and Web sites maintained by affected parties indicates. Organized labor characterizes EFCA as a common-sense reform that levels the playing field, after decades of corporate intimidation against employees attempting in good faith to exercise their right to organize. In the face of fierce union-busting campaigns, the democratic-sounding procedure of secret ballot elections is less likely than ever to yield results that truly reflect worker sentiment. Opponents counter that current union election procedures, which include conventional secret ballot elections, already protect against all likely abuses.

Obviously, Congress will have to deliberate at great length in order to sort out these claims and counterclaims. That is what public hearings

are for, and no brief article can aspire to weigh all the relevant facts and reach a clear verdict. Suffice it to say that there is enough evidence readily available in the public record to support many of the arguments of those advocating change in the way our nation defines and applies its labor laws. The prevalence of union-busting efforts and systematic violations of workers’ rights cannot go unchallenged.

**Violations of workers’ rights cannot go unchallenged.**

What is the religious angle on this issue? Most denominations in the United States eagerly affirm labor rights and express enthusiasm for the principle of free and fair collective bargaining. A review of the 2004

*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* shows that the support of Catholic social teaching for workers’ rights to organize is beyond dispute. From Pope Leo XIII to John Paul II, the right to form unions has been regarded as an indispensable element of economic justice.

Tricky questions may arise, however, when individual Catholics seek to discern whether a given legal measure is necessary to ensure the right of workers to form unions. My judgment is that EFCA is indeed necessary to protect the right of workers to unionize, a right that has been under sharp attack in recent decades. I urge all people of good will to check out the facts, consult their consciences and form a prudential judgment on this important issue.

It may not grab many headlines, but EFCA is emerging as one of the major moral issues of 2009.

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THOMAS MASSARO, S.J., teaches social ethics at the Boston College School of Theology and Ministry, Chestnut Hill, Mass.

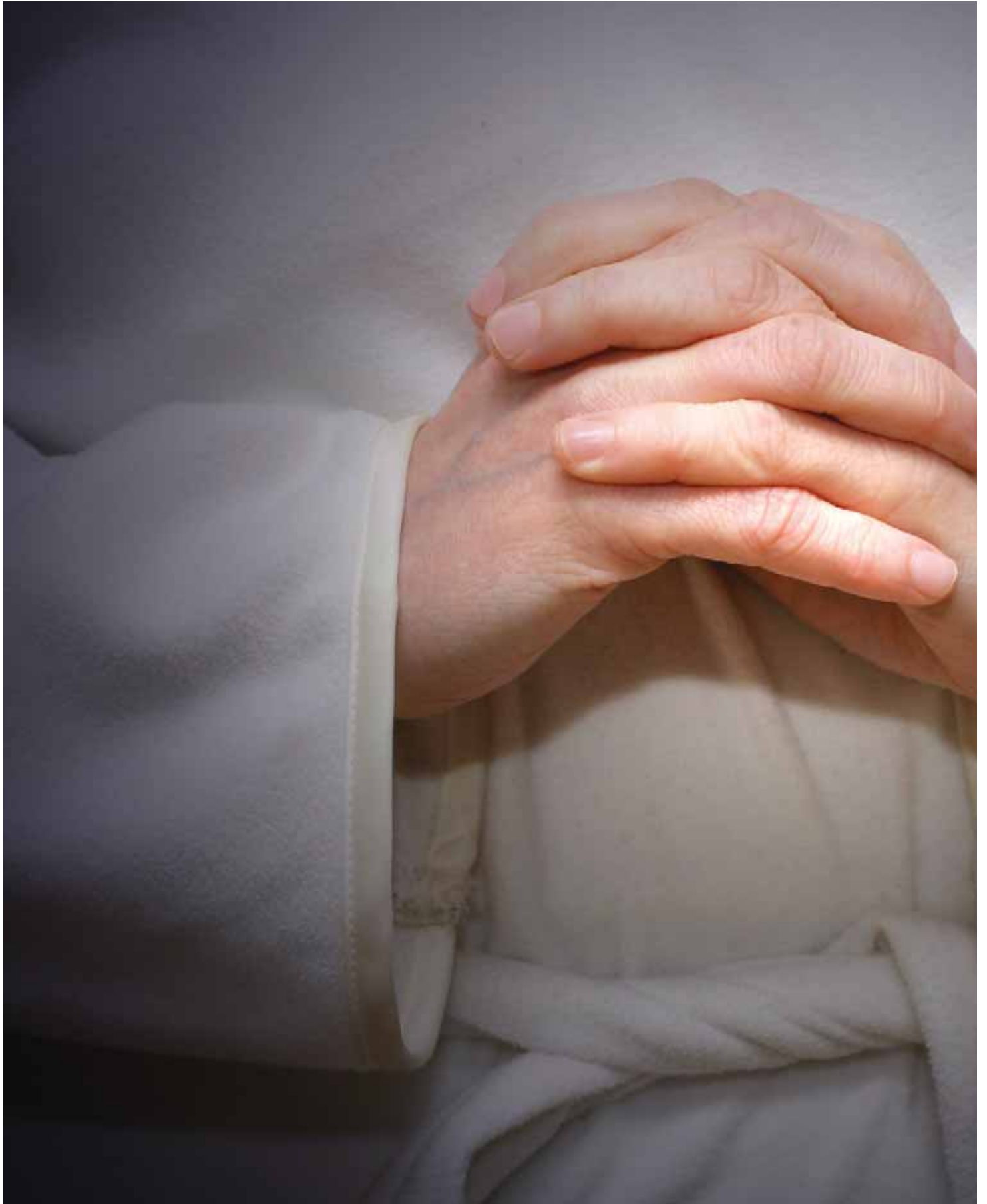


PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/REULF GRONNEVIK



## WOMEN IN PARISH LEADERSHIP

# Exceptional Pastoring

BY MARY M. FOLEY

I am one of the few people I know who have been able to do what they most wanted to do in life. For the last four years, I have had the rare, joyful and privileged opportunity to pastor a Catholic parish as a laywoman. This ministry is rare; fewer than 500 men and women currently serve as pastoral leaders of parishes that do not have a resident priest pastor, according to the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate. Those who serve have titles like parish/pastoral life coordinator, parish director or pastoral administrator. My service in this ministry ended when a new bishop decided to appoint only resident priest pastors in parishes. I am not sure how he will be able to maintain this practice over time, but the action is certainly within his rights as bishop. I look back on recent events with sadness and great disappointment, but with no animosity and with my bishop's letter of recommendation in hand.

With all my heart I hope to serve once again in this ministry for our church. Looking for a new placement has given me some time to write and reflect. A couple of midwestern dioceses invited me to begin the application process, but it is lengthy and there are no concrete opportunities on the horizon yet. I interviewed in two dioceses in California. Neither diocese currently appoints anyone but priests to pastor parishes, but both dioceses talked with me about possibilities for ministry. I had a great time. We talked about the "parish life coordinator" model of ministry, as well as different configurations for parish pastoral teams. We discussed the church's challenges today in terms of parish leadership, especially given the shortage of priests. Reflecting on these meetings, I realize that not only do I love parish ministry; I love talking about it. It is valuable to converse with different people around the

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MARY M. FOLEY has served in a variety of parish ministries for more than 20 years, most recently as pastoral life coordinator for a suburban parish of 935 families. She lives in the Midwest.

country because our ideas and our imaginations can grow as a result.

I decided to put some thoughts to paper while I remain temporarily free of responsibilities and episcopal oversight. In saying the latter, I intend no slight toward any bishop I have ever worked with, for they have all been good men and I have loved them all. I wish only to acknowledge that I now feel freer than usual to speak publicly. As a woman serving in a very unusual ministry in the church, I am accustomed to being watched as though under a microscope, especially by people who would write to the bishop (or even the apostolic nuncio to the United States) if they thought anything I did was suspicious. At least for now, I do not have to worry about anyone sending letters of complaint to my supervising bishop.

My last assignment in ministry was especially challenging, because I was the only person serving in such a role within four dioceses in the state, and people were generally unprepared for such a change. In spite of the challenges, this was a ministry full of joy and one in which I felt most fully alive. In a word, it is a ministry for which I was made. Pastoring is my vocation. I deeply love my church, and I am thankful for every ministry opportunity I have had; but I am especially grateful for having had the opportunity to serve the church as a pastoral life coordinator.

## What Is a Parish Life Coordinator?

For now, talking about the ministry may be a form of service to the church. What does it mean for the church to have women (or deacons or laymen) pastoring parishes? Note that I use “pastor” and “pastoring” as a verb. According to canon law, the title “pastor” always belongs to a priest. Yet canon law includes a special provision that allows a diocesan bishop to appoint a qualified person other than a priest to share in the pastoral care of a parish when there is a shortage of priests (Canon 517.2). In this case, a priest is named canonical pastor. This

canonical pastor, or priest moderator, as the position is often called, is responsible for general oversight of the parish, but he is most often not involved in the daily pastoral care of parishioners or in parish administration. These responsibilities are entrusted to the one who is appointed parish life coordinator. The bishop also assigns a sacramental minister (a second priest), who comes into the parish for Sunday Mass and other sacramental celebrations.

The parish life coordinator is appointed to be the pastoral leader of the parish and the one responsible for its administration. While pastoring is ordinarily associated only with priesthood, it is good that this provision exists in canon law, because at this time in U.S. history, we do not have enough priests who can become pastors, and we will have more parishes in need of pastoring. I also know that God has entrusted gifts for pastoring to others like myself.

I do not know what the future holds for ecclesial structures and roles in ministry. I believe that the power of death cannot prevail against the church (Mt 16:18), and I trust that God will always make a way for people to receive the sacraments. The richness of the tradition of the Catholic Church is beyond comparison, yet I fear that fear itself will prevent us from adequately passing on this tradition from generation to generation. This is not something sentimental; it concerns the salvation of people and our mission as church.

## Overcoming Fears

I have served in a ministry that is feared by some, who see it as devaluing priesthood. The only need we have, they would say, is to promote vocations to priesthood and religious life. Some fear that by encouraging lay ecclesial ministry, especially when it comes to leadership of parishes, we discourage these other vocations. This I do not believe. Religious vocations are God-given, and it is the task of anyone pastoring within the church (bishop, priest or parish life coordinator) to recognize, affirm, encourage, nurture and support all the gifts God has given to the community of faith. To me, this is an essential part of what it means to pastor. In the last four years, in a parish of 935 families, I encouraged two young men who may have vocations to priesthood, and I helped another man

### ON THE WEB

An interview with Mary M. Foley.  
[americamagazine.org/podcast](http://americamagazine.org/podcast)

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enter formation for the permanent diaconate. I gave vocation talks in our religious education classes and spoke about bishops, priests, deacons, brothers and monks, sisters and nuns and lay ecclesial ministers. I encouraged each child who thought that God may be calling him or her to one of these ministries and wrote letters to their parents, asking them to give encouragement as well. I also invited four laypeople to begin formation in a diocesan lay ministry program.

We are not the givers of religious vocations, nor can we choose what gifts will be given. Our proper task is to recognize all the gifts God has given to the church, especially in these challenging times. If we need vocations to the priesthood, and we do, then we must have pastors in parishes who will encourage them, whoever is doing the pastoring.

In the ministry of pastoring, I have also discovered that another concern compounds the fears of some: female leadership of parishes. When I was originally appointed, the bishop let me know that he expected me to attend cluster meetings with the priests. When the priests found out, some staged a minor revolt and protest to the presbyteral council. I avoided meetings until the matter was finally resolved. Then, over time, collegial relationships developed with some of the same priests who had originally objected to my presence.

At the parish level, I was informed by someone when I arrived that my coming was disruptive to the psyche of some of the people: "You have to understand that we have had this

tradition for 2,000 years. Now, not only do we not have a priest pastor, but we have a woman on top of it!" Should such challenges prevent the consideration of women as leaders of parishes? In truth, I was never fully accepted by some people. Most, however, came around in their thinking. Our parish grew from 750 to 935 families, and our religious education enrollment of 535 students reflected a 25 percent increase over a few years. Many people said that I was able to minister with them in ways that some priests never could. Does this comment devalue priesthood? On the contrary, effective ministry does not diminish anyone. Rather, it helps our entire church.

The important task at hand for all pastors is to recognize the gifts that God has freely given for the benefit of the church. Then we must also educate the lay faithful about the state of the priest shortage in our country. Denial is another form of fear. Alternate models of ministry may be needed in particular times and places. We should help people understand the situation by providing them thorough orientation on new forms of ministry. Laypeople love the church, and they can learn, adapt and flourish under various models of pastoral leadership. God will provide priests for the church in the future, and God will provide what we need so that viable parishes can remain active communities of faith and local centers for evangelization. Consider starting a conversation about these things in your parish or diocese. Be not afraid. **A**

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# The Word Between Us

*Lectio divina* and deepening marital intimacy

BY PATRICK J. McDONALD AND CLAUDETTE McDONALD

**W**e enjoy the benefits of a good marriage, which is still maturing after 34 years together. While we image our marriage as contemporary in style, focus and vision, we find that its deeper dimensions are driven by an ancient practice: *lectio divina*.

We are also professional marital therapists who spend most of our days assisting other couples in their search for healthier marriages. Frequently we point them toward the benefits that flow from cultivating the practice of *lectio divina*. A solid spirituality in marriage, we have learned, brings with it a renewed love of God as well as a deepened intimacy. We sometimes feel like anachronisms, frozen in time and in sparse company in our allegiance to *lectio divina*. The recent attention given to it at the Synod of the Word in Rome, however, invites us to take heart and make a case for its place in marriage.

*Lectio divina* is an encounter with God through the reverent and thoughtful reading aloud of the Scriptures. Typically, the passage is short; the speaker pauses after reading, allowing the hearers to absorb the spirit and content of God's Word. The reading can be repeated as many times as the listeners wish, after which time the participants are invited to share their reactions. Sometimes spontaneous prayers flow, sometimes not.

*Lectio* unfolds as a meditation on the Word and what the Word offers to the listener. Every exchange rises and falls under the guidance of God's Spirit, as listeners recount surprising insights and powerful intuitions about the place of God in their personal development.

## The Human Side of Marriage

Since marriage is a product of the human need for belonging, all marriages are flawed by a couple's dependency needs, fears, desires to control and a variety of other human motivations. As a result, marriages are filled with opportu-

nities for complicated emotional entanglements and deep misunderstandings. The routine of life, the constant stresses that a couple encounters, the shifting efforts to find meaning as a marital history deepens—all point to a need for renewal.

Couples often confess to us that they feel bound by the



ART: JULIE LONNEMAN

human side of marriage and seek a way to transcend their personal faults and limitations. *Lectio* invites them to begin a search for the deeper ground of love, one that can enhance and support their efforts to develop a genuine intimacy. The Word of God nudges them to break out of the narrow constraints of marital behaviors and open up a fresh vision of what their lives might hold.

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PATRICK J. McDONALD and CLAUDETTE McDONALD are marital and family therapists from Des Moines, Iowa, and authors of *Marital Spirituality: The Search for the Hidden Ground of Love* (Paulist Press).

*Lectio divina* fosters an awareness that marriage is bigger than just the two marital partners. God becomes the deep foundation of all interaction between them. Through reading, hearing, dialogue and prayer, God's presence becomes more real. Similarly, partners become more authentic to each other as God invites them to ground themselves in sacred truths. Respect for one another deepens, and over time a renewed intimacy begins to flourish. A shared spirituality develops. Husband and wife recover a sense of the integrity of the other and grow less focused on nagging interpersonal issues.

There are no hard and fast rules for the practice of *lectio divina*. Here we share what works for us and suggest a few simple steps for those interested in cultivating this practice.

### Four Steps

*Find a quiet space.* Since quiet space is essential to all forms of serious reflection, couples should begin by creating such a space for themselves. Get away from the phone. Find a time when the children are resting and quiet. Turn off the television set or radio.

The early morning is the best time for us, before the demands of our lives become all-consuming. We usually settle into a quiet corner of an upstairs den or a family room, where the early morning sun reminds us that it is time to begin a new day with an awareness of who we are and the central place of God in our lives.

*Breathe in the presence of God.* Just as the right physical setting can foster an inward calm, so can a few moments of slow breathing. The mind begins to clear as the body slows down and the breathing moves us to a sacred inward space. You can imagine breathing in the presence of God as you continue to slow down and prepare yourselves for God's visitation. When we feel the calming of our everyday restlessness, one of us invites God's Holy Spirit to be with us for the next 20 minutes. It is now time to listen to God's Word.

*Focus on a short text.* We take a short section of Scripture and one of us reads to the other, slowly and with reverence. The next step is simply to remain open to the power of God's word. We listen while God does the teaching. The word clears our heads and opens our hearts. Our experiences can range from intoxicating to sobering, even boring and routine. Nevertheless, God's Spirit never fails to touch us in some way.

A simple passage from John's Gospel offers a typical example. One of us reads: "If you love me, you will keep my word and my Father will love you and we will come to you and make our dwelling place with you" (Jn 14:23). As we quiet ourselves down and listen to God's promise to dwell with us, the silence brings our thoughts and feelings to life. Our memories come to life as well, with both of us gaining

nourishment from memories of how loyal God has been to us during our long history together.

We also become aware that God's dwelling with us has been experienced in ways that we never anticipated: during difficult times, when we did not understand each other, or when we were searching for a deeper grounding in the wake of disturbing events.

Sometimes we trade off reading the passage. The differences in our voices and pacing provoke small awakenings in each of us; then we become quiet once again. We may not be aware of all the implications of the reading, but we know we are being changed in some way deep down inside, at the level where God's Spirit works. When one of us is changed, even in small ways, our marriage changes. We realize that God's work on our behalf is subtle and gentle, and the way we relate to one another reflects a similar gentleness.

*Do not fear sharing.* Sharing of genuine sentiments can create anxiety. Talking about deep experiences calls upon a couple to become more vulnerable, and this is often met with uncertainty. Couples should try to share as honestly as they can during these redeeming moments. The presence of God is always there to support and guide them. Prayer from the heart represents the ultimate vulnerability, and the reluctance to share vulnerability at this level is understandable. The couples with whom we have worked tell us such honesty triggers a continued learning and maturing process. They soon discover what we often describe as the ultimate form of marital intimacy: soul to soul.

In the end, *lectio divina* offers precisely what the words imply: a profound learning experience, a lesson. Over time, couples learn to breathe, live and interact with an awareness that God really is the hidden ground of their love. Their style of interaction and the way they care for one another begin to reflect the elements of unconditional love: forgiveness, openness, thoughtfulness, sensitivity, constancy and flexibility.

After our morning prayer, we become open to approach each other differently: with respect and kindness. A resolution takes shape to become more patient, grounded in a new appreciation that God is always patient with us. For the rest of the day, through a thousand interactions, we are reminded of how sacred marriage is. We know this awareness is the work of God's Spirit dwelling with us. Respect begins to outweigh criticism; peacefulness begins to outweigh restlessness. Patience becomes more consistent.

Couples we have worked with also report that *lectio divina* helps them discover a new foundation for intimacy. No longer do they feel totally reliant on their own resources; they now appreciate a partnership with God that fosters a new creativity for their shared life. At times the practice of *lectio* seems almost too simple. Yet when we allow God to be the hidden ground of our love, marriage becomes a gradual awakening to the challenges and fulfillment of that love. **A**

## LENTEN REFLECTION

# Charity as Cure

The third in a series for Lent

BY GEORGE M. ANDERSON

Charity and greed are opposites. Given today's global economic picture, it is easy to recognize in these opposites the widening gap between rich and poor that causes much of the world's preventable suffering. Commuting to and from work in New York City, I see homeless men and women asleep in doorways and on subway platforms just steps from the homes of some of the richest people in the nation.

For me, the word charity assumes meaning not only in what I daily observe but also in Scripture and in the lives of the saints—unofficial and official. At the very least, charity assumes a sharing of resources. One powerful scriptural example of such sharing occurs in Luke's description of an early Christian community: "The company of those who believed were of one heart and mind, and no one said that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common.... There was not a needy person among them" (Acts 4:32-34). How wonderful to think of the human family without a needy person among us! But the gulf between charity and greed extends beyond the distribution of human resources, because the seeds of both charity and greed reside in the human heart. It is the difference between a "this is mine" viewpoint and a "whatever is mine is to be shared" approach to life. The first letter of John provides an illustration: "The one who has the goods of the world

and sees a brother [or sister] in need and closes his heart, how does the love of God abide in him?" (1 Jn 3:17).

Our transformation into a people guided by true charity is arduous. Even Dorothy Day, co-founder with Peter Maurin of the Catholic Worker, felt the burden of attitudes that held her back from true charity. In her diary, published under the title *The Duty of Delight*, she speaks of her own struggle with ongoing resentments "that muddied the heart." "I'll need a long time in purgatory," she adds. Even in the matter of welcoming the poor to the Catholic Worker, Day saw herself as falling short. "To see Jesus in the poor, and to welcome, to be hospitable, to love. This is my need. I fail every day." She also writes there of "Peter Maurin's saying: 'to give and not to take—that is what makes man human.'" Through her adherence to Gospel nonviolence, Day saw clearly how the gap between rich and poor is related to the vast sums spent worldwide on armaments.

Another saint of charity dedicated to Gospel nonviolence was Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador. Shot dead at the altar as he celebrated Mass, Romero defended the poor of his country and in doing so showed the deepest form of charity, not least because he put his life at risk before a military establishment and an

oligarchy bent on silencing him. He distinguished between the goal of amassing personal wealth and the goal of providing for the common good. In a homily, Romero said, "the absolute desire of having more encourages the selfishness that destroys a communal bond among the children of God."

Initially a shy person who felt at ease only with upper-middle class and wealthy people on first becoming a bishop, Romero exemplifies the remarkable transformation that can take place in those who witness closeup the suffering of poor and defenseless popula-

tions. For him, the transformation began when as a new archbishop he visited rural communities besieged by an increasingly violent military and the oligarchy that would rejoice in his death.

Recognizing ourselves not just as individuals but as instruments in God's hands could help us to grow in charity in its widest sense. This image of being an instrument of God appears in St. Ignatius' *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* (No. 813). Both Dorothy Day and Oscar Romero let themselves be shaped by God's loving hands into instruments that showed the way toward a new world ruled by sharing and peace, instead of a world ruled by greed and violence. **A**



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

ART: JULIE LONNEMAN



# BOOKS & CULTURE

ART | LEO J. O'DONOVAN

## UNBURIED TREASURES

*'Pompeii and the Roman Villa'*

The accidental rediscovery in the mid-18th century of the towns of Pompeii and Herculaneum, on the southern shore of the Bay of Naples, and their excavation caused a cultural sensation throughout Europe at the time. Not only were the two formerly prosperous towns structurally reborn, but a great number of antiquities also were recovered.

The discoveries fed a neoclassical wave that was growing in art, architecture and literature. Artists flocked to Naples, which was, after Paris, the largest city on the continent, to reproduce the new treasures. Pompeian style—a burning, dusty orange-red, architectural fantasies, filigreed borders and floating maenads in geometrically refined frames—spread through the grand houses of Europe and eventually flourished again in Constantino Brumidi's mid-19th-century murals for the U.S. Capitol.

Even today astonishing discoveries are still being made, as we learn from an opulent exhibition currently at the National Gallery of Art in Washington (through March 22) that will later travel to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (May 3–Oct. 4). The show also has cautionary overtones for another empire of indulgence facing a cataclysm, not of nature's doing but its own.

Before the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in A.D. 79, Pompeii was among several prosperous towns around the Bay of Naples that traded in wine, olive oil, seafood and the agricultural products that thrived in the region's volcanic soil. Farther up

the coast were the luxurious villas built by Julius Caesar, the Emperor Augustus and other Romans who made the coast of Campania their resort of choice from the first century B.C. through the first century A.D. Bust sculptures in the exhibition's first galleries represent such patrons: a lean and vigorous Julius Caesar, an idealized, blandly handsome Augustus, his wife, Livia, with a startlingly modern look. An endearing portrait of a boy, who could have been a relative of one of Desiderio da

Settignano's subjects in 15th-century Florence, contrasts with the unfortunate Emperor Gaius, called Caligula ("Little Boots") by the army troops among whom he grew up, and the dull, flat-faced Nero, who like Gaius vacationed at the resort town of Baiae and was equally short-lived.

As frescoes from the period show, the maritime villas had long, colonnaded walkways opening to the sea. In Pompeii and Herculaneum blank walls faced the busy streets. Villas and townhouses were entered through an atrium, a large hall open to the sky for light; rainwater was caught by a central basin in the floor. Visitors next came to the *tablinum*, a sort of office and reception room for the master of the house. Frescoes of various sizes deco-



Pompeii, Villa of T. Siminius Stephanus Plato's Academy, 1st century B.C.

SOPRINTENDENZA SPECIALE PER I BENI ARCHEOLOGICI DI NAPOLI E POMPEI, MUSEO ARCHEOLOGICO NAZIONALE DI NAPOLI  
PHOTOGRAPHY © LUCIANO PEDICINI

rated the walls, depicting aspects of business conducted in the *tablinum*, local seafood and wildlife, women in the guise of Aphrodite, even a female painter portraying the fertility god Priapus. Actors with masks and other theater scenes were also popular. (The larger of the two theaters in Pompeii accommodated 5,000 spectators, the theater at Herculaneum 2,500.)

While the seaside villas boasted interior gardens with colonnaded courtyards opening to the bay, the gardens at Pompeii were typically at the back of the houses.

After Octavian (later, Emperor Augustus) built an aqueduct to assure a supply of running water, garden fountains became more popular than ever, often surrounded by statues of Dionysius, the god of nature and wine, with his reveling band of satyrs and maenads. The garden décor was eclectic: sculpture portraits of Greek thinkers and writers mingled with images of Olympic athletes, a fierce satyr struggling to subdue a hermaphrodite or any number of wild animals. Frescoes with birds, flowers and fountains expanded actual gardens, adding an idyllic calm, as in an enchanting scene from the so-called House of the Golden Bracelet in Pompeii, in which seven species of birds, trees and flowers are identifiable. (The house was first excavated between 1978 and 1983.) The gardens were meant to be places of learning and reflection, similar to libraries, of which the only surviving example from antiquity is at the Villa of the Papyri in Herculaneum, after which the J. Paul Getty Villa in Pacific Palisades, in southern California, was modeled.

One of the show's high points, found by chance in 1959 and further excavated in 1999 and 2000, is a dining room with its original frescoes from the town of Moregine, south of Pompeii. (Since several other dining rooms were found in the building at

Moregine, it may have been a large inn or business headquarters.) Called a *triclinium*, since guests reclined on three couches while dining, such rooms were generally at the back of a house, often overlooking the garden. Here the three well-preserved sides of the room are frescoed with images of Apollo, god of learning and the arts, surrounded by the muses, against a background of Pompeian red—a décor meant to promote intellectual exchange, the ideal of any Roman banquet.

Plato's *Symposium* was the archetype for such gatherings. The legacy of Greece runs through the exhibition as its major key. By the eighth century B.C., the Greeks had colonized the area; they founded Neapolis (modern Naples) some two centuries later. Though most of Greece fell to Rome in 146 B.C., it still provided a golden age for Roman reverence and emulation. "Captive Greece," wrote Horace, "took captive her savage conqueror and brought civilization to the rustic Latins." This sentiment appears clearly in the small Pompeian mosaic of "Plato's Academy," with the master of dialogue surrounded by his students and the Acropolis in the background.

Perhaps the finest sculpture in the show, on loan from the British Museum, portrays the furrowed brow and searching expression of the blind Homer. "Our sense of longing," wrote Pliny the Elder, who later perished at the eruption of Vesuvius, "gives birth to faces that have not been recorded, as happens to be the case with Homer." The Romans also loved the comedies of Menander; a marble bust from the Museum of Fine Art in Boston imag-

ines the fourth-century B.C. playwright with a noble, aquiline nose above full, sensuous lips.

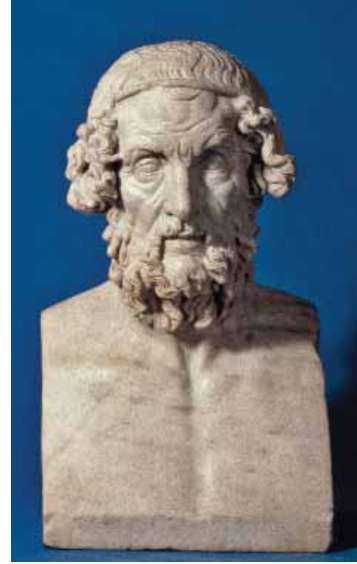
"There have been many disasters in this world," wrote Goethe in his *Italian Journey*, on touring the ruins of Pompeii during his travels (1786-88),

"but few have given so much delight to posterity." (He may also have coined the famous adage, "See Naples and die.") The fascination with the great event was all but feverish, as evident in Joseph Wright's painting in the exhibition, "Vesuvius from Portici" (c. 1774-76). Even today, copies of antiquities from the National Archeological Museum of Naples are assiduously produced, and tourists

return from Campania with jewelry made of lava.

This lavish exhibition offers the reconstruction of a whole culture, one that existed before the disaster and made a lasting mark on Western art, literature and architecture. A stunning *coup de théâtre* in the last gallery proves the point, with Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema's painting "A Sculpture Gallery" (1874). It portrays the painter and his family as ancient Romans being shown works of art for purchase, while six of the very works depicted are on view in the gallery. It may not be a great painting, and it may be jarring to viewers in a time of economic distress and belt-tightening, but it presents a culture that all but worshiped order, harmony and proportion—with a Dionysian flair—to a degree we today can scarcely imagine.

LEO J. O'DONOVAN, S.J., is emeritus president of Georgetown University.



Homer, 1st century B.C.

## THE MAN FROM TARUSUS

*Some new books on St. Paul*

Pope Benedict XVI's designation of 2008-9 as the Pauline Year has inspired the publication of many fine books on Paul and his writings. The volumes included in this survey may help to reinvigorate interest in Paul during the few months that remain and beyond.

A good entry point to the reading of Paul's letters (and Scripture in general) is the collection of short essays by Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, S.J., entitled *The Gospel According to St. Paul* (The Word Among Us). The first three essays consider Paul's conversion and call to be an apostle, his sufferings for the sake of the Gospel and his personal transformation in the service of the Gospel. The remaining six chapters illustrate the method of *lectio divina* with reference to themes and specific passages in the Pauline letters: the mystery of the church, love for the community, suffering and consolation, the mystery of evil, the word of the cross (1 Cor 1:18) and the ministry of reconciliation. What emerges especially from these essays is Martini's love and respect for Scripture and his humility before the word of God.

Drawing primarily on Luke's account of Paul's life in Acts, Lawrence Boadt, C.S.P., emeritus professor of Sacred Scripture at the Washington Theological Union and president and publisher of Paulist Press, provides in *The Life of St. Paul* (Paulist Press) relevant historical and geographical

information along with a lively retelling of the biblical narrative and treatment of Paul's letters in their context in Paul's apostolic career. Boadt has distinguished himself especially as an Old Testament scholar but is also quite conversant with current New



Testament scholarship. The topics treated in the book's 30 short chapters include Paul's conversion, the Council of Jerusalem, Paul's stay in Athens, Paul's letters, his arrest in Jerusalem and his arrival in Rome. Also included are a prologue on why we should know Paul, an epilogue on later traditions about Paul, a chronology of his life and maps of his journeys. For each chapter there is an "icon-like" painting by Linda Schapper that seeks to capture the essence of the scene. This intro-

duction to Paul's life and times can be used profitably by all kinds of readers, including children.

### Entering His World

Because of its location and prestige, Ephesus (a port city on the western coast of present-day Turkey) offered Paul and his co-workers an excellent center for their apostolic activities. In *St. Paul's Ephesus: Texts and Archaeology* (Liturgical Press), Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, O.P., who has taught for more than 40 years at the École Biblique de Jérusalem, provides materials for entering the world in which Paul worked and wrote. In the first and longest part, he presents a catalogue of what ancient historians, poets and novelists wrote about Ephesus. In most cases there are references to the Temple of Artemis, thus offering background for the "riot of the silversmiths" in Acts 19:23-41. Then on the basis of almost a century of archaeological research, he gives a reconstruction of what Ephesus looked like when Paul arrived there. Finally he develops a lively (if somewhat imaginative) narrative about Paul's stay in Ephesus and the various

crises to which he responded by letters and visits. This volume is the twin to Murphy-O'Connor's *St. Paul's Corinth: Texts and Archaeology* (Liturgical Press, 2002). His extraordinary knowledge of the ancient world, his sense of Paul's place within it and his ability to tell a story effectively make him one of the best representatives of the great tradition of Dominican biblical scholarship based in Jerusalem.

Paul has often been portrayed as the individual who by himself brought

"SAINT PAUL" BY RAPHAEL, VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON/ART RESOURCE, NY

Christianity out of Palestine into the wider Mediterranean world. However, from his letters it is clear that Paul was very much a “team player,” who developed a network of co-workers and who provides a model for collaborative ministry today. One of those co-workers was a man named Epaphras (see Philemon 23 and Col 1:7; 4:13). In a series devoted to various figures in Paul’s social network, Michael Trainor, who teaches at Adelaide College of Divinity in the School of Theology at Flinders University in South Australia, seeks to show in *Epaphras: Paul’s Educator at Colossae* (Liturgical Press) that Epaphras was a central figure in the growth of Jesus movement groups in the Lycus Valley in the Roman province of Asia (in present-day Turkey). He develops his portrait of Epaphras not only on the basis of literary, geographical and archaeological evidence but also with the help of social network analysis. Trainor concludes that Epaphras was a cardinal figure or symbolic hinge who ensured the liberating and authentic transition of Paul’s Gospel of God from one generation to the next at a time of potential crisis brought about by Paul’s death and in the face of the unsettling teaching of other Jesus followers who were influenced by astrology, mystical practice and folk philosophies of Israelite bent.

In writing his letters, Paul uses images from many different areas of life: kinship, the body, the senses, life-cycles, walking and stumbling and so on. In *The Power of Images in Paul* (Liturgical Press), Raymond F. Collins, emeritus professor of New Testament at The Catholic University of America, describes Paul as a master of metaphors and shows how he drew images from his own experience, his Jewish background and his Greco-Roman culture. These images allowed him to connect with his first readers, to shape their Christian consciousness and to develop a rich theological

vocabulary. For a full review of this scholarly work that is also accessible to the general public, see *America* 11/10/08.

### Theologian and Preacher

It has often been said that most of the problems and scandals facing the church of our own time can be found treated in some form by Paul in his First Letter to the Corinthians. For those in search of a solid and up-to-date guide to this very important letter, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., is the perfect source. From among his many areas of scholarly interest and expertise, Fitzmyer—emeritus professor of biblical studies at The Catholic University of America—has given special attention over the years to the Pauline writings. Following his earlier contributions to the Anchor Bible on Romans and Philemon (as well as Luke and Acts), this new volume, entitled *First Corinthians: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary* (Yale) offers what the author describes as “a commentary of classic proportions.” He notes that 1 Corinthians reveals Paul at his best, since it shows him coping with problems that arose in a community in Greece that Paul had founded and kept in contact with by letters and reports from co-workers. This volume also reveals Fitzmyer at his best. It is full of reliable philological and historical information, sensitive to the literary conventions of Paul’s letters and concerned with the theological and pastoral implications of Paul’s statements.

Paul’s views on marriage and sexuality have long been controversial. In his classic study *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, now published in a 20th-anniversary paperback edition with a new 47-page introduction (Columbia Univ. Press), Peter Brown describes Paul’s comments in 1 Corinthians 7 as determining “all

Christian thought on marriage for well over a millennium.” Paul is only one of many important figures in Brown’s brilliant survey covering the period from Jesus to Augustine. Despite what Brown characterizes as Paul’s “rear-guard” and even “lopsided” approach, he regards Paul’s role as pivotal in the story that he tells so well. The great merit of Brown’s book is that it places Paul’s views on sexuality, celibacy and related matters in the wider context of the Greco-Roman world and late antiquity. Moreover, he is eager to explore both objectively and sympathetically why Paul and the other ancient authors expressed themselves on these matters as they did, and what were and are the personal and social implications of their attitudes toward the body.

Among the major Pauline epistles, 2 Corinthians is generally recognized as the most “personal.” Michael P. Knowles is an Anglican priest, biblical scholar and professor of preaching at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ontario. In *We Preach Not Ourselves: Paul on Proclamation* (Brazos), he explores Paul’s identity as an apostle and a preacher in 2 Cor 1:1–6:13. He shows how in defending himself and his ministry of reconciliation Paul articulated a Jesus-centered spirituality that can best be described as “cruciform,” that is, a spiritual vision essentially shaped by Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection. Paul was convinced that the Christ-event provides the conceptual framework for interpreting the situation of the believer and all humankind. What Paul was best at was setting forth the real Jesus with power and clarity, and leading others into the presence of the one true Lord. With 2 Corinthians as his guide, Knowles develops a profound and challenging Pauline theology of preaching, based squarely on the paschal mystery.

Paul’s Letter to the Romans is often viewed as a theological treatise about

justification by faith. But Neil Elliott, in *The Arrogance of Nations: Reading Romans in the Shadow of Empire* (Fortress), contends that from its very first lines Paul's letter burns with the incendiary proclamation of God's justice and with a searing critique of those who smother and suppress the truth. He regards the letter as a "Judean" critique of an incipient non-Judean Roman Christianity, in which the pressures of Roman imperial ideology were a decisive factor. Elliott's approach to Romans is historical and political, with frequent applications to the present American "empire" from the perspective of Marxist analysis. Viewing the letter as written in the Roman empire of Nero's reign, he contrasts the reigns of the emperor and of God's Messiah, imperial and divine justice, imperial and divine mercy, the *pietas* of Aeneas/Augustus and the faithfulness of Abraham, and the place of virtue and fortune in the imperial and apocalyptic visions of the future.

His approach of "political" reading of Pauline texts, which has become popular in certain academic circles today, coincides in some respects with liberation theology. He tries to take seriously the social and historical circumstances in which Paul lived, to show how different Paul looks when placed in the context of Roman imperial propaganda and to suggest some of the challenges that Paul poses not only to the Roman Empire but also to the American "empire" today.

### **Apostle and Teacher**

The Pastoral Epistles tend to be among the more neglected parts of the Pauline corpus. In one of the inaugural volumes of the Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture, George T. Montague, S.M., professor of New Testament at St. Mary's University in San Antonio, in *First and Second Timothy, Titus* (Baker Academic) defends their Pauline authorship and interprets them as Paul's directives to

his subordinates (*mandata principis*). He offers a lively, well-informed and accessible exposition of these historically influential and (sometimes) theologically problematic texts. For each passage he provides a running commentary along with a section devoted to reflection and application. Also included are many sidebars (biblical background, quotations from patristic texts and modern church documents), cross-references to biblical texts and to the *Catholic Catechism* and the Lectionary, and occasional photographs illustrating some features in the text. An experienced and well-published biblical scholar, Montague presents a balanced, sympathetic and attractive reading of the Pastorals. His volume, along with Mary Healy's work on Mark's Gospel, gives the series a good start (disclosure: I am a consulting editor). Especially noteworthy as a remarkable development in ecumenism is the fact that this explicitly Catholic project is being published by a traditionally conservative Protestant publisher.

A reliable and readily accessible synthesis of the great themes of Paul's theology is Michael J. Gorman's *Reading Paul* (Cascade Books). Gorman, who is professor of Sacred Scripture and dean of the Ecumenical Institute of Theology at St. Mary's Seminary and University in Baltimore, suggests that we read Paul best when we read him as speaking to us and for God. After three preliminary chapters on Paul, his letters and his Gospel, he considers eight themes that lie in and behind his letters: apocalyptic crossroads; covenant faithfulness and surprising grace; the meaning(s) of Christ's death; Jesus as Son of God and Lord; reconciliation with God through participation in Christ; countercultural and multicultural community in the Spirit; cruciform faith, hope and love; and return, resurrection and renewal. For those who have been working through Paul's letters



## 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 postmarked 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

during the Pauline year, this book would be a fine synthesis. For others who want to renew their acquaintance with Paul and his theological significance, this may be the perfect instrument. Gorman's one-sentence (which covers one page) summary of Paul's theology, his expositions of key texts, many connections with modern life and incisive questions for reflection are among the book's many highlights.

Much in Paul's writings concerns what we today call "ethical" matters. But how to interpret and apply Paul's teachings on these issues remains problematic. Are they rules? Or is love the answer to every ethical dilemma? With particular attention to the Pauline letters, Claire Disbrey, in *Wrestling With Life's Tough Issues: What Should a Christian Do?* (Hendrickson), contends that the insights of virtue ethics and Christian character formation can help us get beyond a state of moral confusion and conflict and move toward a way of seeing the ethical teaching of the New Testament as a coherent and eminently practical whole. After explaining what virtue ethics is and how it can be applied in biblical studies, she discusses case studies (considering a second marriage, contemplating suicide, dealing with unplanned pregnancy, among others) and related biblical themes (righteousness, freedom, wisdom, love, peace and grace) in which the insights of virtue ethics might be applied along with insights from Pauline and other biblical texts. Then she evaluates virtue ethics with regard to its political and ecclesial usefulness. Disbrey concludes that Paul's "ethical" teaching can inspire Christians to see the need for repentance, mercy and grace, and for attentiveness and openness to the work of the Holy Spirit as we grow in the Christian virtues of sensitivity, flexibility, kindness and wisdom.

These are all fine books written by distinguished scholars and accessible

to the general public. The three that I would especially recommend (in ascending order of difficulty) are those by Gorman (a fine synthesis of Pauline theological themes), Collins (how Paul communicates) and Fitzmyer (how a master exegete interprets a Pauline text). Many beginners in biblical study without much exposure to Paul and his writings have also found helpful my own *Meeting St. Paul Today* (Loyola Press). This book provides an

introduction to Paul's life and missionary activity, discussions of each Pauline letter (context, content, major themes), an example of how to interpret a Pauline text (Romans 8:26-27) and a brief reflection on what we can learn from Paul today.

**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*. From 2005 to 2008 he wrote *America's Word* column.

**BOOKS | PAUL MARIANI**

## CLOSE CORRESPONDENTS

### WORDS IN AIR

#### The Complete Correspondence Between Elizabeth Bishop and Robert Lowell

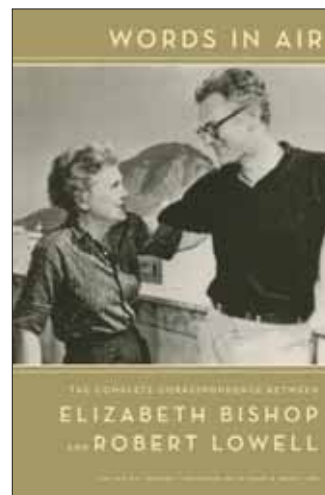
Edited by Thomas Travisano with Saskia Hamilton  
Farrar Straus and Giroux 928p \$45  
ISBN 9780374185435

Though I have written a biography of Robert Lowell and have taught his and Elizabeth Bishop's poetry for over 30 years, I have found myself guiltily lugging this three-pound volume around with me for months now, unwilling to give it up. I would randomly open the book again and again to re-enter Lowell's Boston, Blue Hills, New York and Milgate Park, or Bishop's Key West, Washington, Ouro Preto, Rio de Janeiro, Seattle, Cambridge, North Haven and (finally) Boston, fascinated by the chance it has given me to listen in on their at once shy and witty conversations, insights, *aperçus* and distinctive ways of absorbing and reporting back

on the sights, sounds and names of those around them, or what Lowell called the literary (and political) gossip of the moment.

The correspondence between the two began in May 1947, after they met for a dinner hosted by Randall Jarrell in his New York apartment at the beginning of the new year. Lowell was 29 and separated from his first wife, the novelist Jean Stafford, who by that point was living uptown under psychiatric care. By then his Catholic phase (he had become a Catholic several years earlier) and the extraordinary poetry his new faith had generated and for which he would win the Pulitzer that year, was over. Bishop was 35 and still nine years away from receiving the Pulitzer for her own *North & South—A Cold Spring*. If it

took longer for Bishop to receive the attention her work deserved, what matters here is that Lowell knew a classic when he read one, and indeed confessed to Bishop that she was the



model he wished to follow as he developed the poems that would go into his groundbreaking *Life Studies*, published in 1959.

The great *might have been* for both these poets is the thought that they might have married. It is certainly what Lowell dreamt of, and Bishop is on record as saying that if she ever had anyone's child, she would want that child to be Lowell's. The fact that Lowell suffered from bi-polar disorder, was married three times and often took up with younger women during his manic phases, promising to marry them as well, together with the deterrent of Bishop's own lesbianism, suggests that it was better the two did not marry. Instead, as with Yeats and Maude Gonne, the relationship took a deeply literary turn, which lasted until Lowell's death, continuing even afterwards in Bishop's letter/poem to her dead friend in "North Haven," where she tells him as she looks out into the Atlantic that his visioning and revisioning of his thousands of poems is finally over.

We owe a great debt to both Thomas Travisano and Saskia Hamilton for the staggering amount of editorial work that has gone into

making this extraordinary correspondence available to us. There are thousands of footnotes, as well as a full chronology and a fascinating introduction, which make clear what Lowell or Bishop writes in the familiar shorthand of old friends who knew each other and each other's worlds, including contemporaries like Randall Jarrell and Adrienne Rich as well as such eminences as Pound, Eliot and Williams. And then, of course, there are the great dead whom both evoke, ranging from Aeschylus, Sappho and Cicero through Baudelaire, Emerson, Melville, Hawthorne, Hopkins, Yeats, Dostoyevsky and Turgenev.

I have just opened the book to page 272, and here is Lowell, 50 years ago, as if it were just this morning. He is telling Bishop that the poet Stanley Kunitz, who unlike Lowell would see 100, is now teaching at Brandeis and looks like "a small, sharp, orderly Bohemian little gray man...rather like Kenneth Burke." Having myself met all three, I can say only that each of Lowell's adjectives (and how he loved adjectives) is the precise epithet: bright and sharp and telling. And then comes the next sentence—comic and to the point—about big, bullish Theodore Roethke's "escap-

ing from a sanitarium dressed like a woman—and (believe it?) unrecognized for three days!" And a few sentences later there is his wife, Elizabeth Hardwick, talking in the kitchen of their Boston apartment with Adrienne Rich, pregnant now with her third child and "bursting with benzedrine and emancipation" over her discovery of Simone de Beauvoir.


And here is Bishop, in her own chatty return, writing from the apartment in Rio de Janeiro she shared with her lover and companion of 20 years, Lota de Macedo Soares. She has, Bishop reports, made a new friend while on tour in Brasilia with Aldous Huxley, namely the editor of the city's best newspaper, the *Correio de Manha*, "a real darling, if only he didn't *write*, too," and who keeps sending her books "all autographed in the Brazilian way." And then the breathless mention (so very unlike her poems) of one Kimon Friar, who recently invited her to read his "333,333 line translation" of Nikos Kazantzakis's *The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel*, which takes up, she winks, "where Homer left off. Odysseus goes to Africa and meets Hamlet—and Napoleon, I think," she comically sums up, and then "dies adrift on an ice floe at the South Pole."

And these are simply shards of two paragraphs in a book that reaches nearly a thousand pages. It is a marvelous collection, containing a thousand brilliant insights into so much that made up our world in the three decades between 1947 and 1977. It is a book—a musical instrument, really—for anyone interested in replaying the literature, poetry, history, culture and, yes, life lived in this explosive period in American history (North and South) when Lowell and Bishop created a world for which we are the richer.

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**PAUL MARIANI** is University Professor of English at Boston College and former poetry editor of *America*.

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## LETTERS

### Baptismal Call

The column by Thomas Massaro, S.J. ("Blessed Are the Poor" 1/26), discussing the moral requirements of the current economic downturn, is a wonderful addition to the pages of your magazine in these challenging times. Many of us feel bad about our own losses from these events and forget "the other" in our communities. National, state and local budgets will be stretched to the breaking point over the next few years. We have already seen that those who are most vulnerable and those without a voice will be the first to feel the impact, because those cuts are the easiest to make.

Giving a voice to those in need and reaching out to help is our baptismal call. Please continue to speak out, to challenge, encourage and support the rest of us to work on behalf of all who are less fortunate.

JOHN ARCHER  
*Pleasanton, Calif.*

### Right and Wrong

Re your editorial on the recent controversy over Pope Benedict XVI's decision to rescind the excommunication of four bishops associated with the Society of St. Pius X ("Reaching Right," 2/23): There is a much larger issue at stake than communication within the Vatican or the Vatican's approach to public relations. I have a hard time accepting that Pope Benedict's decision was an expression of desire for unity alone. There are many others in the church who have been silenced or excommunicated for their desire to make the church more loving and inclusive, and yet the open hand of friendship has been extended to those who uphold opinions that are clear rejections of the dignity of the human person.

Why has there been no effort by the Vatican to reach out to those courageous faithful who have tried to make the church and the world more loving and compassionate and open to the dignity of all people? Reaching out to

estranged bishops who maintain hateful ideas that only do further violence to the Jewish people simply does not make sense.

ROBERT CORTEGIANO  
*New York, N.Y.*

### That All May Be One

While the editorial on Pope Benedict's attempt to reconcile the bishops of the Society of St. Pius X to the church ("Reaching Right," 2/23) recognizes the pope's obvious desire to foster unity within the church, his lifting of the excommunications of the four bishops will have unforeseen consequences. Many will be watching to see if there is balance and consistency with regard to the treatment of theologians and others who have been perceived as leaning to the left. Your editorial touched on this toward the end, almost as an afterthought. But if building up the unity of the church is Benedict's vision, no group must be excluded or ignored.

DENIS E. QUINLAN  
*Asheville, N.C.*



### A Rock and a Hard Place

As a journalist for 20 years and a seminarian two years away from ordination, I know that the space between a person who articulates a message and a person who digests that message can be a dangerous one for both parties. This is as true for the space between the writer and his or her reader as it is for the preacher in the pulpit and the parishioner in the pew. And this is the space where Pope Benedict XVI has been spending a good deal of time lately. Why?

As you state in your editorial "Reaching Right" (2/23), the Holy Father is passionate about ecclesial unity, and such unity is the primary reason he struck such a conciliatory chord with the Society of St. Pius X in recent weeks. This is not to say that Benedict or a future pope would not extend a hand to leaders of progressive

groups somewhere down the line.

But where is the laity in all this? I have lay friends on both ends of the spectrum, and they have some basic things in common. Groups at both ends feel marginalized, and both feel they are standing up for core beliefs. How, then, can a pope who is both the primary authority on core Catholic beliefs and a passionate advocate of unity address this situation?

Pope Benedict's answer is to work through the necessary issues to bring the leaders of such groups back into communion with the universal church, thereby guaranteeing both the validity of the sacraments they administer and the peace of mind of their members.

Nobody is completely happy with the situation, but I believe Benedict is doing the right thing. When such groups are securely within the church, the pope can exercise a level of control that he cannot when they are operating outside it. Were the Holy See to state that underlying reason more clearly, perhaps all parties would grant Benedict a little more slack as he traverses some very uneven terrain.

MATT NANNERY  
Yaphank, N.Y.

### Who's in Charge?

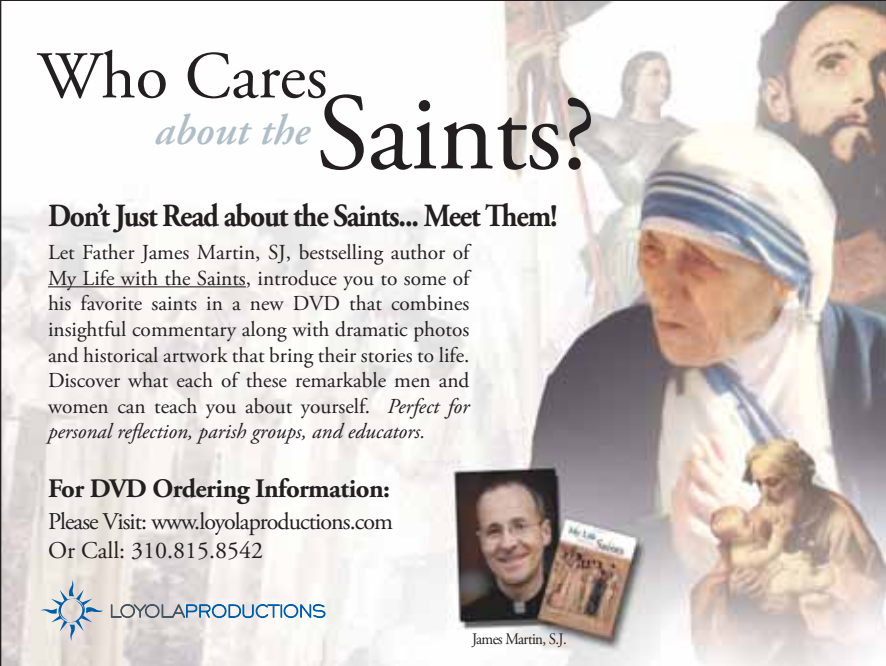
Your report on the controversy over the Society of St. Pius X was helpful, but important issues remain unexplained, primary among them the concept of episcopal authority. Comments about Bishop Richard Williamson "not having a canonical function in the church" and "not licitly exercising a ministry in the church" are opaque to those of us not conversant in the technical jargon of canon law.

The issue of the authority of a bishop within and outside his diocese is a central concern that has not received adequate public discussion.

In the recent presidential election, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a remarkably well-balanced and carefully nuanced document on issues that Catholics should consider when casting their vote; it was then ignored by a number of high-profile U.S. bishops. It would seem in practice that each bishop individually (but apparently not the U.S.C.C.B. collegially) exercises authority within his

own diocese but also often has significant influence well beyond its geographic borders.

It is this question of authority that makes the comments of Bishop Williamson (and the lack of official clarification addressing this aspect of his remarks) so troubling. Not only do Bishop Williamson's egregious statements need to be addressed, but so also does the meaning and authority





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of his role as a Roman Catholic bishop in making them.

ROBERT V. LEVINE  
*Collegeville, Pa.*

**War No More?**

In “Finding Renewal” (2/16), James R. Kelly properly argues for a consistent ethic of life, but his linking of pro-life positions to pacifism raises serious questions. Should the United States withdraw from Afghanistan in the name of nonviolence? Should the United States, like Japan years ago, forever renounce war and abjure the use of force in international affairs? Can any nation defend itself against attack?

A more nuanced approach would call for careful application of just war theory. Such an approach should certainly include, as Kelly states, respect for the sanctity of life of innocent civilians as much as that of the unborn. It should also include strict adherence to rules of engagement that require every effort be made to avoid “collateral damage,” obviously a necessity in Iraq and Afghanistan, not to mention in Gaza.

HENRY J. KENNY  
*McLean, Va.*

**The Catholic Difference**

I believe, with Gerald F. Cavanagh, S.J. (“What’s Good for Business?” 2/9), that Catholic business schools can make a difference. But it would be interesting to know if, in the current financial debacle, anyone has documented that graduates of Catholic institutions made any difference—or if they just went along with the rest of the crowd in producing a self-serving, take-all-you-can-make ethic that has brought us to this present state of disaster.

JOE SCHAEFER  
*Columbia, Md.*

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# Ardent Love

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT (B), MARCH 15, 2009

Readings: Ex 20:1-17; 1 Cor 1:22-25; Jn 2:13-25

*“Zeal for your house will consume me” (Jn 2:17)*

Have you ever puzzled over what to give someone who has everything? We face a similar dilemma when we try to figure out what response we can make to the total, free self-gift of God to us. With friends and family members, it helps if they drop hints about what they would most like. Sometimes they come right out and tell us. So does God in the Decalogue. God has taken the initiative in leading Israel out of slavery in Egypt. How can Israel respond to such a gift of lovingkindness? A two-pronged effort to emulate divine faithfulness is all that God wants: devotion to God and care for other people.

The Decalogue spells out 10 specific ways to be faithful. First and foremost is single-hearted devotion to God. No other being or thing is to be at the center of our attention. Second, the sacred name is to be held in reverence; it is not to be used in false oaths or in profanity, since the name carries the identity and power of the person. Third is observance of the Sabbath. One day a week God wants to spend time with us to relish the joy of being together. The reason for keeping the Sabbath is because at the climax of creation God rested, not to gather up energy to keep working after the Sabbath was over, but so as to delight in all that God had made. Not to observe Sabbath is like falling in

love, but then not carving out any time to spend with the beloved.

The second half of the Decalogue gives examples of how love of God goes hand in hand with loving care of other people. Elderly parents are to be especially cared for. All life is to be revered and it is never to be snuffed out intentionally. Faithfulness in relationships and contentment with what is one's own is to be expressed through devotion to one's own spouse, and honesty in all dealings with others, both in word and deed.

The God who asks this response from us offers ardent love. The Hebrew word *qn'* in Ex 20:5, often translated as “jealous,” can have the connotation of ardor or zeal. The way we choose to respond to God's fervent offer of love carries consequences, and the effects ripple down to subsequent generations. If we act mercifully, then divine mercy trickles down to the 1,000th generation. Wickedness likewise begets generations of hatred. It is not so much that God threatens punishment if we do not follow the divine commands, as that rejected love leads to unhappy consequences.

In addition to keeping the commandments, faithfulness to God was expressed through temple worship. All four Gospels tell of an incident when

Jesus performed a protest action in the temple. It is difficult to know the intent of the historical Jesus, and each Evangelist gives a slightly different theological interpretation. In the Gospel of John, Jesus quotes the prophet Zechariah, who spoke of an ideal day when there would no longer be traders in the house of God (Zec 14:21). It may be that Jesus is challenging the attitudes of economic exchange that underlie sacrificial thinking: if we offer up this sacrifice to God, then God will forgive our sins or bestow blessings.

Repeatedly the Scriptures counter this tit-for-tat notion, telling how God's love and gifts are offered unconditionally. The Fourth Evangelist emphasizes that it is Jesus' very person that embodies God's ardent love. It is not in any building, but



## PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- How have you responded to God's ardent love this week?
- How is your Beloved inviting you to “waste time” together on the Sabbath?
- Talk with Jesus about letting go of images of God as commanding and punishing.

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in the person of Jesus that we encounter God.

When Jesus' disciples recall Ps 69:9 (“Zeal for your house will consume me”), there is a double meaning. “House” can refer both to the temple and to God's “household.” The zealous love that Jesus enfleshes for members of God's household not only fills him but literally consumes, or destroys, his life. No sacrifice can be offered in exchange for this gift. The only response is to believe and act toward others with consummate love.

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