

America



THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC WEEKLY

MAY 25-JUNE 1, 2009 \$2.75

Elements of Liturgy

EDWARD FOLEY • CHRIS CHATTERIS • JIM McDERMOTT

OF MANY THINGS

In August 1946, some 70 young Jesuits gathered for summer school in a rambling wooden building that straddled a ridge on the border between western Maryland and Pennsylvania. They were members of the Maryland and New York provinces who before beginning the theological studies leading to ordination were teaching for a few years in one or other Jesuit high school.

Aug. 15, the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, was always the occasion for a festive dinner. On that day in 1946 there was something special to talk about. The *New York Times* reported that on the previous day, Avery Dulles, then almost 28 years old, had entered St. Andrew-on-Hudson, the Jesuit novitiate in Hyde Park, N.Y. He was the son of John Foster Dulles, a Wall Street lawyer and leading Presbyterian layman who in 1953 would become President Eisenhower's secretary of state.

Avery Dulles had graduated from Harvard in 1940 and became a Catholic a year later. While serving in the U.S. Navy from 1942 to 1946 he used his free time to write *A Testimonial to Grace*, an account of his conversion that has become a classic of its genre.

Jesuit novices in 1946 were given the title "Brother," so during that Assumption Day dinner, one of the scholastics, in a burst of merriment, lifted a glass and cried, "A toast to Brother Dulles!"

When Avery Dulles, S.J., died on Dec. 12 last year, *The Times* of London called him "the most important American Catholic theologian of the 20th century." He had been ordained in 1956; and in 1960, after graduate studies in Rome, he joined the faculty of Woodstock College, a Jesuit house of studies in Maryland. Most of his 25 books and 800 articles

were written during the next 48 years. If the various translations of these works are also counted, the Dulles bibliography contains more than 2,000 entries. In recognition of his distinction as a theologian, Father Dulles was made a cardinal on Feb. 21, 2001.

In 1988 Avery Dulles became the first occupant of Fordham University's McGinley Chair in Religion and Society, a position he filled for the next 20 years.

During his naval service he had contracted polio. Although he recovered, by 2007 he was experiencing the effects of post-polio syndrome. This produced muscular atrophy that eventually made it impossible for him to walk, talk or swallow. In February 2008, therefore, he moved from the Fordham Jesuit community to Murray-Weigel Hall, the Jesuit infirmary next door to the Fordham campus in the Bronx.

Neither age nor infirmity, however, halted his intellectual apostolate. With the aid of Anne-Marie Kirmse, O.P., his research assistant since 1988, Cardinal Dulles put together during the last months of his life a selection of his writings that has just become available from Paulist Press under the title *Evangelization for the Third Millennium*.

The image of Avery Dulles nourished by a feeding tube but still at work is an emblem of Gospel ideals. After his death, someone talking to the physician who had overseen the cardinal's medical care in his final months remarked that although famous fathers rarely have famous sons, Avery Dulles had in his own way been as great a man as John Foster Dulles. The doctor, not himself a Catholic, made a correction. "Greater," he said.

The son who venerated his father would probably have demurred, but history may not. In any case, "A toast to Cardinal Dulles!"

JOHN W. DONOHUE, S.J.

America

PUBLISHED BY JESUITS OF THE UNITED STATES

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Customer Service: 1-800-627-9533

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Cover: Deacon Sydney Martin gives a homily in Arizona. Photo: CNS/
Nancy Wiechec

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Douglas W. Kmiec argues for an empathetic Supreme Court justice, and Philip Allen Lacovara analyzes the church-state clash in Connecticut. Plus Richard Leonard, S.J., reviews "Angels and Demons," Jaime Lara discusses trends in church architecture and a video report from a jazz Mass. All at americamagazine.org.



He Would Not Go Gently

Last week former Chicago Alderman Leon Despres died at age 101. If you are not from Chicago, you may never have heard of him. Many of the resolutions he sponsored from 1955 to 1975 on the Chicago City Council were ignored, if not condemned, and his fellow aldermen largely dismissed him.

But during that time, when the Chicago Democratic machine rolled over all opposition with what *The New York Times* once called its “militia of patronage workers,” Despres was often the lone voice speaking up for the needs of those ignored by the city, particularly African-Americans. In the 1960s, when the city proposed the widespread high-rise tenements that would become a blight on the African-American community in Chicago, Despres was the only one to speak out against the plan, calling instead for low-rise, scattered-site housing (the very idea now being enacted 40 years later in the city).

Though he was a white man, Despres was called “the lone Negro on the City Council,” because the six black aldermen regularly stood with Mayor Richard A. Daley Sr., even on issues regarding race. At times his black colleagues attacked him for claiming to know the needs of their people.

The columnist Mike Royko wrote in 1972, “Despres has been told to shut up—in one form or another—more than any grown man in Chicago.” And yet, in the face of the overwhelming strength and bullying of the Daley political machine, he never did. It took decades for the city of Chicago as a whole to recognize his wisdom, but today the city and the country are better for his courageous example.

The Markey Bill

Expressions of the need for justice in cases of sexual abuse of minors by clergy focus on the church’s responsibility to the victims. Legislation currently before the New York State Assembly steering committee, however, raises a different issue: justice for those accused of abuse. Bill A.2596, the “Markey Bill,” will eliminate for one year the seven-year statute of limitations on claims of sexual abuse, allowing allegations about decades-old incidents to be brought forward. Understanding for victims can make creating such a “window” seem to be the proper thing to do, but it can also open a window for injustice, when the passage of time has made it impossible to gather proof of innocence.

Statutes of limitations exist in both civil and criminal law to provide defendants some measure of justice, and are an application of the theory that before the law every per-

son is innocent until proven guilty. In most jurisdictions there are statutes of limitation for almost every unlawful act except murder. Their purpose is to protect individuals from being charged when evidence proving their innocence no longer exists or when memories have become unreliable over time. (In New York State, for example, a student alleging sexual abuse by a school employee is allowed only 90 days after turning 18 to file a claim. This is 1/20th the length of time allowed for other crimes.)

The Markey bill would eliminate that protection for members of religious or volunteer organizations, harming not only individuals who are falsely accused (who are now regularly presumed to be guilty if the allegation is sexual in nature), but also the nonprofit institutions for which they work.

Padre Oprah and A Playboy President

The well-known Miami priest Rev. Alberto Cutié, known as Padre Oprah, was recently forced to resign from his parish because of compromising photos of him with a woman on a beach. In a television interview he admitted to being involved with the woman for several years. He explained that he has been given time to come to a decision about remaining a priest. He believes celibacy is good, but that “maybe it should be optional.” He also does not want to be forced into the role of poster boy for opposition to mandatory celibacy.

A few weeks ago, the president of Paraguay, Fernando Lugo, admitted that he became the father of a child while serving as bishop of San Pedro. Several other women also claim that he fathered their children. Because Lugo was a Catholic bishop when he ran for office, he was thought by those who voted for him to be upright and trustworthy.

Church history includes similar scandals even at the level of the papacy. On the other hand, history also records faithfully married popes, like Pope Hormisdas (d. 523) and Pope Silverius (d. 537), who were father and son—and also saints. The Catholic Church has had married and unmarried popes, bishops and priests who all struggled by the grace of God to be faithful to their promises of celibacy or their marriage vows.

Instances of marital infidelity raise questions about the challenges and difficulties married people face, but they do not destroy the perennial value of the sacrament. Likewise, the abuses by Father Cutié and former Bishop Lugo reveal the fallen nature of human beings but are not an indictment of priestly celibacy.

The Fourth Estate



The Boston Globe's near-death experience earlier this month provided another glimpse of the clear and present danger to American democracy posed by the demise of the nation's newspapers. Shuttering The Globe, which has been hemorrhaging money for years, would have made Boston a one-newspaper town—a scenario hardly conducive to the free flow of information and ideas that democracy requires.

Yet Boston's two-newspaper status is a luxury few towns can afford today. According to researchers, 502 U.S. cities had more than one newspaper in 1923. By midcentury that number had been cut in half, and by 2003 fewer than two dozen cities had any meaningful competition in their print markets. "Every time a newspaper dies," writes the Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Richard Kluger, "the country moves a little closer to authoritarianism." While Mr. Kluger may be overstating the case, it is clear that the substantial downsizing or closure of respected newspapers like The Seattle Post-Intelligencer and The Rocky Mountain News has further impoverished our national discourse.

A newspaper is a business; but it is also a public trust, an indispensable check on abuses of power. Watergate, the Iran-Contra affair, the Pentagon Papers—we only learned about these scandals because newspapers told us about them. And they were able to tell us because they had the resources to conduct the diligent investigative reporting the stories required. The broadcast media, then as now, simply followed the lead of the papers. No one denies that newspapers can also abuse their power, but our outrage at such abuses simply affirms the lofty position newspapers occupy in society.

Concerned citizens are looking for answers. Senator John F. Kerry convened Congressional hearings in April to assess the extent of the crisis. "As a means of conveying news in a timely way, paper and ink have become obsolete, eclipsed by the power, efficiency and technological elegance of the Internet," Mr. Kerry said. That much is certainly true, but there is a more powerful phenomenon at work: Technology has created what Mr. Kerry rightly calls "a completely shifting and churning information landscape."

The survival of newspapers is not simply a question of transferring their print content to an electronic platform, but of coming to terms with a revolution in how information is consumed. The Web has placed an astonishing

amount of human knowledge on our desktops, mainly to our benefit. Yet by providing an information marketplace where our choices are maximized, the Web has transformed demand. In this new world of maximum choice, we decide for ourselves, almost in isolation, what is newsworthy, as if journalism were simply another form of entertainment. This entirely self-directed news consumption is unhealthy, because we are more likely to select stories and opinions to which we are already inclined. In other words, without a common source of information, such as traditional newspapers, the civic conversation is reduced to a series of interactions within smaller and smaller groups of people who already agree with each other. Newspapers will need both to challenge and to accommodate this phenomenon if they are going to survive in any medium.

Yet even if newspapers are successful in that task, their survival is still at risk without a radical change in their business model. The economics of the Internet are incompatible with the traditional economics of newspapers. Consumers not only want news on demand and in digital format; we also do not want to pay for it. In a market where price and value are synonymous, that is a distressing indicator. At a minimum, it means that tomorrow's newspapers, online or not, will be a greater mixture of for-profit and nonprofit ventures. Nonprofit status is perhaps more appropriate for an organization that is a vital public trust. Legislation that would permit newspapers to reorganize as nonprofits should include changes to the I.R.S. code in order to permit newspapers the full freedom to editorialize, one way in which newspapers make an important contribution to the public debate. Other proposals worthy of support include creating endowments for investigative journalism and international reporting, both of which are usually early casualties of cutbacks.

Given a choice between a government without newspapers and newspapers without a government, Thomas Jefferson said he would prefer the latter. The value he assigned to a free press is perhaps even greater in our own time, when the scope and scale of government have far surpassed Jefferson's wildest imaginings. Citizens and consumers must not abandon the mission of newspapers even if we eventually abandon the presses.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

JERUSALEM

Pope Benedict's 'Pilgrimage of Peace'

Pope Benedict XVI arrived in Israel on May 11, the midpoint of his eight-day pilgrimage to the Holy Land, to participate in a series of events promoting peace and reconciliation among Christians, Muslims and Jews and to tend to a rapidly shrinking flock of Christians in the region. The pope had begun his eight-day trip in Jordan, where he walked a pilgrim's path, energizing its minority Christian population and building bridges to the moderate Muslim world.

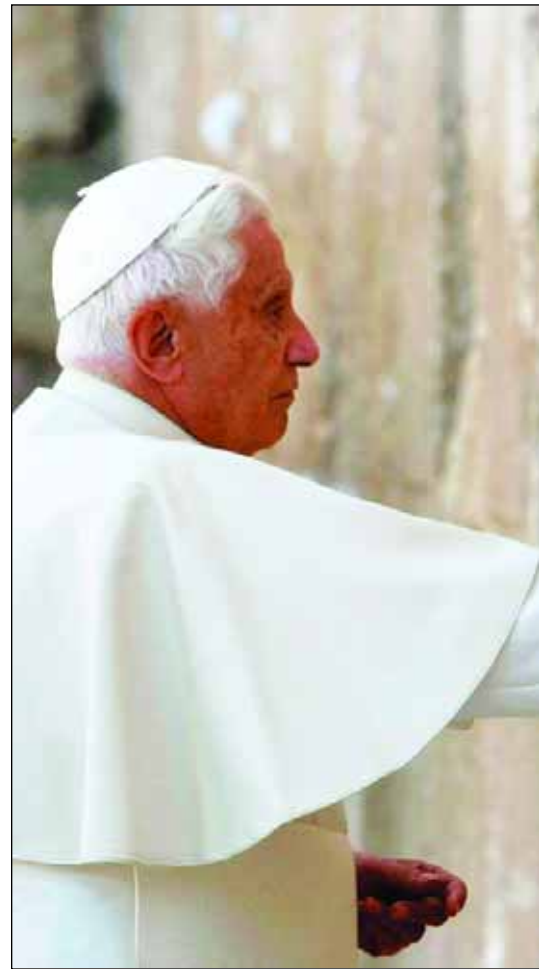
Arrival. The pope's first day in Israel began with a remembrance of Jewish suffering during the Holocaust, accompanied by a strongly worded papal warning about new forms of anti-Semitism. Speaking at a welcoming ceremony in Tel Aviv, the pope said that he had come to Israel to honor the memory of the six million Jewish victims of the Nazi regime and "to pray that humanity will never again witness a crime of such magnitude...." "Sadly, anti-Semitism continues to rear its ugly head in many parts of the world. This is totally unacceptable," the pope said.

As Israel's President Shimon Peres and other Israeli government leaders listened, the pope also urged a negotiated settlement to the decades-long conflict between Israelis and Palestinians—a settlement that would allow each group to "live in peace in a homeland of their own, within secure and internationally recognized borders." This so-called two-state solution to the conflict is currently a matter of vigorous debate among Israelis. Later the same day, meeting with Mr. Peres at the presidential palace in Jerusalem, the pope further explained his understanding of security, arguing that it is inseparable from full justice and peace and that it should not be understood simply as "the absence of a threat."

Yad Vashem. In a visit to the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial, Pope Benedict prayed silently before the eternal flame in the Hall of Remembrance and reiterated that the suffering of Jews during the Holocaust must "never be denied, belittled or forgotten." In a talk that explored the concepts of "name" and "remembrance," the twin themes of the memorial, the pope called the Holocaust an atrocity that disgraced mankind and said the church is committed to working tirelessly "to ensure that hatred will never reign in the hearts of men again." He also met with six

Holocaust survivors.

Yet the pope's "pilgrimage of peace" could not completely avoid the real-world divisions among Christians, Muslims and Jews. After describing the visit as "positive, important, a step forward," Avner Shalev, chairman of the Yad Vashem directorate, echoed the sentiments of some other Jewish leaders by saying that he was disappointed that "the pope did not mention the Nazi German perpetrators" of the Holocaust. Some leaders also expressed regret that the pope did not address what they believe to be the church's own failures during World War II. At an interfaith dialogue event shortly afterward, the pope told the



group that in a world that has in some ways become "deaf to the divine," religions must give common witness to God's rightful place in the world.

The event was interrupted when a Muslim cleric seized a microphone and denounced the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands, prompting some participants to walk out and precipitating an early end to the program.

Western Wall. The pope made a morning visit on May 12 to the Dome of the Rock, revered by Muslims as the place from which Mohammed ascended to heaven. He told Islamic leaders there that Christians, Muslims and Jews have a "grave responsibility" to expand dialogue and to mend divi-

Pope Benedict XVI at the Western Wall



sions. The pope then went to the Western Wall, a site sacred to Jews. Taking a piece of paper on which he had written a prayer, the pope firmly folded it into quarters and placed it in a crevice of the Wall. He then stood in silent prayer for two minutes while facing the massive stones of the Wall, the only remnant of the Jewish Second Temple, destroyed by the Romans in the year 70 A.D.

The text of Benedict's prayer began: "God of all the ages, on my visit to Jerusalem, the 'City of Peace,' spiritual home to Jews, Christians and Muslims alike, I bring before you the joys, the hopes and the aspirations, the trials, the suffering and the pain of all your

people throughout the world." Pope Benedict's prayer asked God to "hear the cry of the afflicted, the fearful, the bereft; send your peace upon this Holy Land, upon the Middle East, upon the entire human family; [and] stir the hearts of all who call upon your name, to walk humbly in the path of justice and compassion." The pope ended his prayer with a quote from the Book of Lamentations: "The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him."

Mount of Olives. Standing below the Mount of Olives, where Scripture records that Jesus wept for Jerusalem, Benedict urged the region's Christians to stay in the Holy Land and work for harmony among its people. Those who love

Jerusalem want to see the city "as a prophecy and promise of that universal reconciliation and peace which God desires for the whole human family," the pope said in his homily during an outdoor Mass there. "Sadly, beneath the walls of this same city, we are also led to consider how far our world is from the complete fulfillment" of the prophecy of Jerusalem as a city of peace, he added. In Jerusalem today, "hope continues to battle despair, frustration and cynicism, while the peace which is God's gift and call continues to be threatened by selfishness, conflict, division and the burden of past wrongs."

Like many of the events, the Mass

was tinged with politics. Welcoming the pope, Latin Patriarch Fouad Twal of Jerusalem said Palestinians dream of a "free and independent" state of their own while the people of Israel dream of living in their state in peace and security. The patriarch said the Catholic community is shrinking, mainly because of emigration due to the "unjust occupation" of Palestinian land by Israel and "all its humiliation." The pope asked the city's Christians to hang on to the hope that comes from Jesus' resurrection and to demonstrate that hope to others by "bearing witness to the power of forgiveness and showing forth the church's deepest nature as the sign and sacrament of a humanity reconciled, renewed and made one in Christ." Israeli police said about 5,000 people attended the Mass.

The pope's pilgrimage to the Holy Land concluded with visits to Bethlehem and Nazareth on May 13 and 14.



Benedict XVI and Shimon Peres

Obama Asked to Back Torture Commission

Catholic social justice organizations, including Pax Christi USA petitioned President Barack Obama on May 6 to support the formation of an independent commission to investigate the use of torture by U.S. interrogators on suspected terrorists. The petition followed the release of declassified Justice Department memoranda that outline the legal justifications for the so-called enhanced interrogation of detainees in the years following the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. The memos set the stage for the use of techniques deemed by human rights activists to be torture, including waterboarding, which causes the sensation of drowning, and exposure to extreme temperatures, sleep deprivation and physical violence. While commending Mr. Obama for his executive order banning torture and his order to close the prison at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, the signatories argued that a commission would help expose “these horrific practices” and allow the nation to move toward reconciliation and healing.

Changes Seen in Immigration Policy

The U.S. Supreme Court’s unanimous decision on May 4, that the federal government was wrong to prosecute illegal immigrants for identity theft in certain types of cases, is the latest of several rulings and policy announcements that are effectively rolling back immigration policies initiated by the George W. Bush administration. In *Flores-Figueroa v. United States*, the court said the federal government was wrong to charge Ignacio Carlos Flores-Figueroa with identity theft when he was found to have used someone else’s Social Security and alien registration

NEWS BRIEFS

In a letter to the president of Zambia, the country’s Catholic bishops called on the government not to ratify an **African Union protocol** that includes articles on separation, divorce and the annulment of marriage and “the protection of reproductive rights of women by authorizing medical abortion.” + In a statement criticizing development policies that they say threaten the future of **Amazonian communities** and the environment, nine Peruvian bishops from the Amazon region urged the government in April to overturn a series of environmental decrees issued in 2008. + President Barack Obama’s proposal to bar future students from entering the District of Columbia’s federally-funded **school voucher program** means a slow death for an initiative that works, said Washington archdiocesan officials. + Norbertine Father **Robert J. Cornell**, one of only three priests ever to serve in the U.S. Congress, died May 10 at St. Norbert Abbey in De Pere, Wis. He was 89. A Democrat, Father Cornell represented Wisconsin’s 8th District from 1975 to 1979.



Robert J. Cornell

numbers in documents for employment. The case could have implications for other immigrants who have faced similar charges under a tough prosecution strategy employed in recent years.

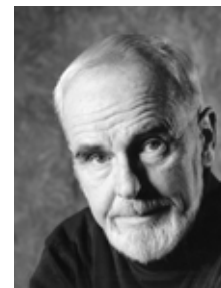
The Supreme Court decision came three days after a federal district court in California ordered the federal government to reopen the cases of dozens of immigrant widows who had married U.S. citizens but whose spouses had died before the widows’ applications for green cards could be processed. In some of those cases, the immigrants with pending applications for legal residency were deported.

New Campaign Against Embryonic Research

As the National Institutes of Health continues to gather comments on the draft guidelines that would permit

federal funding of embryonic stem cell research, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has launched a new campaign urging support for ethical cures and treatments “we can all live with.” The “Oppose Destructive Stem-Cell Research” campaign, hosted by the bishops’ Web site, encourages viewers to contact federal officials to express opposition to the draft guidelines. May 26, 2009, is the N.I.H. deadline for public comment on the draft guidelines, which would allow the use of federal funds for stem cell research on embryos created at in vitro fertilization clinics but not used for that purpose that would otherwise be discarded later. Donald M. Raibovsky, an N.I.H. spokesman, said the agency had received a total of 13,503 comments on the stem cell guidelines as of May 8.

From CNS and other sources.



Conscience Causes

Until recently I thought certain people were being unduly alarmist in their worry that Catholic hospitals may be forced to shut down if they refuse to supply abortions. I still think the threat is remote, but maybe it is closer than I had thought.

What brings this to mind is the political pressure play that some members of the American Philosophical Association are putting on such Christian “covenanted” universities and colleges as Biola, Calvin College, Pepperdine and Wheaton.

Almost 1,500 philosophers have signed a petition calling for censure of these schools by banning them from advertising in the A.P.S.’s “Jobs for Philosophers” listing and giving them some kind of black mark for unjust discrimination.

The signers’ mission is, they say, to “protect homosexual philosophers.” On his blog site, the originator of the petition cites the offense of these schools by quoting from the Wheaton College “Community Covenant”: “We believe that these Christian standards will show themselves in a distinctly Christian way of life.... This lifestyle involves practicing those attitudes and actions the Bible portrays as virtuous and avoiding those the Bible portrays as sinful.... Scripture condemns the following:...homosexual behavior.”

Even from this very selective quotation, it is evident that homosexual philosophers are not in need of protection. They certainly can be hired by the institutions in question. What is sought

by the petition is the insurance that philosophers, whether homosexual or heterosexual, be hired by those schools even if such philosophers want to perform sexual acts that go against the school’s creeds and moral codes. The “Statement of Faith” at the end of Wheaton’s employment application cites Scripture as forbidding “pornography, pre-marital sex, adultery, homosexual behavior and all other sexual relations outside the bounds of marriage between a man and a woman.”

The section on sexual morality is only a tiny part of Wheaton’s impressive credal covenant, some sections of which appear to exclude committed Catholics and surely exclude Jews. Should the American Philosophical Association have filed a discrimination complaint against Wheaton for this prejudice? Or should Calvin College be sanctioned if it requires Catholics or Jews to “affirm the confessions and respect the rich traditions of Reformed believers worldwide, and, in particular, those of the Christian Reformed Church”?

It seems, then, that if the American Philosophical Association censures these explicitly Christian institutions as unjust and discriminatory, it will officially condemn any institution whose members, in conscience and with reasoned defense, want to labor in a community of shared faith and moral commitment.

One may agree that homosexuals have been subject to discrimination and hate crimes, especially in the past, more rarely in our country presently,

and more frequently in certain other countries right now. One may also question the wisdom of colleges and universities that by their covenant would exclude groups, whether Catholics, humanists or unmarried persons in a sexual relationship.

But to censure and threaten such institutions and exclude them from an association of philosophers that presumably affirms diversity and justice is

strange indeed. These schools are not against homosexuals. They merely want, in conscience, to remain communities faithful to the Gospel according to their shared Protestant understanding of it. If the price of approval by the A.P.A. is the betrayal of their conscience, it

Is the price of approval by the A.P.A. the betrayal of their conscience?

is not a stretch to imagine the day when other believers will be candidates for censure and exclusion because they refuse to affirm actions that violate their consciences.

Another group of philosophers, in a new petition by Mark Murphy of Georgetown University, has challenged the wisdom of censoring the institutions in question. In “A Letter to the American Philosophical Association,” available on the Internet, you will find a courageous defense of the Protestant schools—not of their positions but of their right to live out their covenants without penalty from the A.P.A. It strikes me as courageous, because in these times of celebrating diversity and freedom of conscience, some diversities and consciences are not welcome.

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

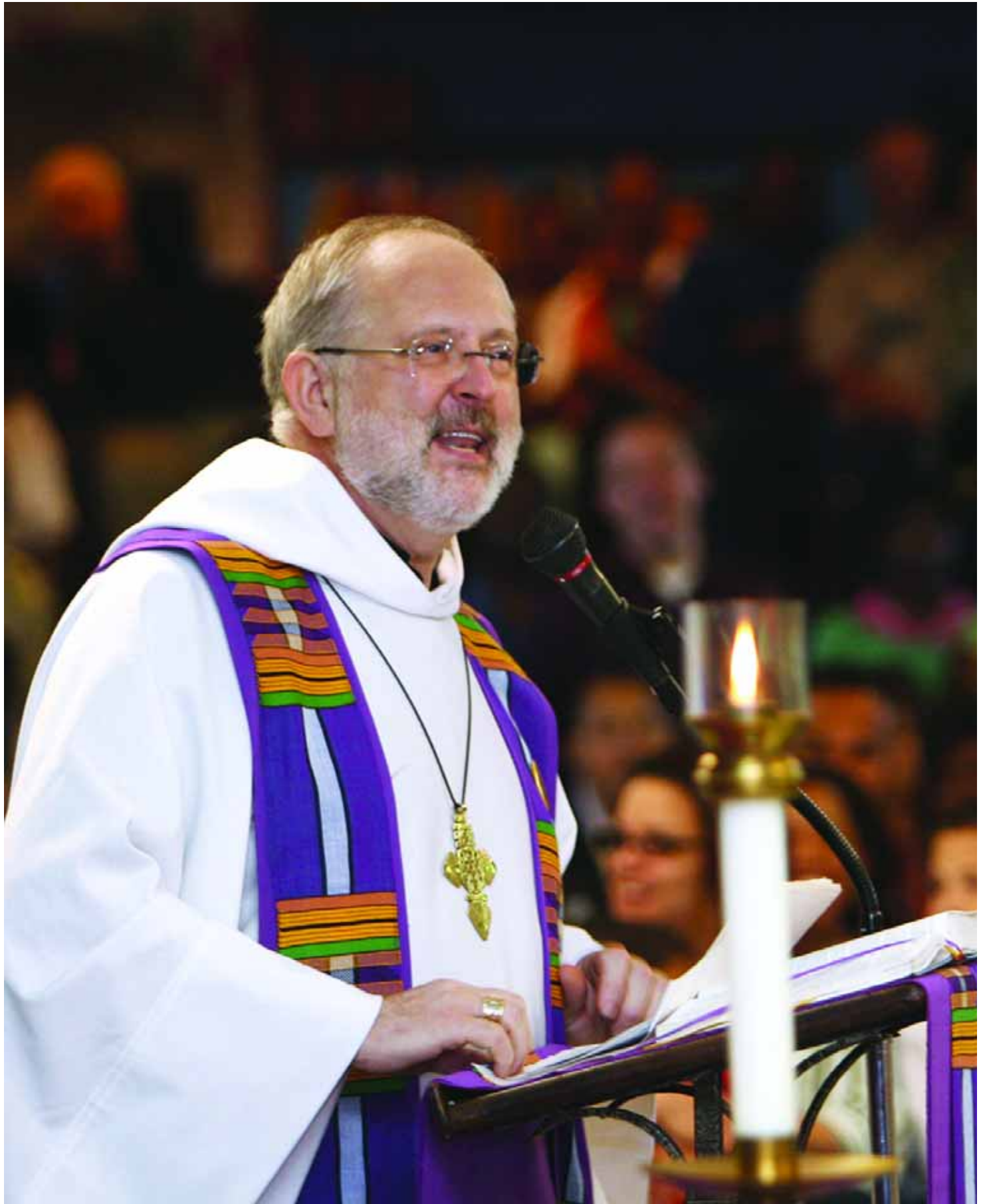


PHOTO: CNS/NANCY WIECHEC



RETHINKING THE HOMILY
AS A LITURGICAL ACT

Scripture Alone?

BY EDWARD FOLEY

The idea of preaching without Scripture may seem preposterous, but I suggest it just the same, as a way of drawing attention to a little known, much less accepted, mainline teaching of the Roman Catholic Church about preaching and Scripture. I offer these comments specifically about the homily at Mass, which is a particular and canonically defined genre of preaching, and which many Roman Catholic priests and deacons think must always be rooted in and focused upon the Scriptures. In fact, it need not always be so.

The Official Teaching

Let's start with the basics. The Second Vatican Council, in its first promulgated document, the "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy," was adamant in its directives about the role of Scripture in the reforms of the Mass. It directed: "The treasures of the Bible are to be opened up more lavishly so that a richer fare may be provided for the faithful at the table of God's Word" (No. 51). This is not only a theme that is sounded on the surface of documents like the "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy" and the subsequent "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation"; it is a concern for the biblical foundations that lie at the heart of virtually every document of Vatican II. Whereas Vatican I was more inclined to cite church teaching in support of some conciliar assertion, Vatican II shifted into a more biblical mode: it persistently cited biblical text after biblical text in support of its dogmatic and pastoral directives. While some of this, unfortunately, was no more than proof-texting, the overriding message of the documents of Vatican II is that scriptural grounding is important, definitive and essential.

At the same time, nowhere do the documents of Vatican II teach or require that one must *always* preach about or from the Scriptures. While

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the “Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation” indicates that preaching must be “nourished” by Scripture (Nos. 21 and 24), that is not the same as saying one must explicitly preach about a particular biblical text. Direction here comes from the “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,” which teaches: “By means of the homily, the mysteries of the faith and the guiding principles of the Christian life are expounded from the sacred text during the course of the liturgical year” (No. 52).

What Is This ‘Sacred Text’?

Many are inclined instinctively to interpret “sacred text” to mean Scripture. But the Holy See, in its definitive interpretations of that phrase, did not come to the same conclusion. Even before the close of Vatican II in 1965, the Vatican began issuing definitive interpretations of the council’s documents. There have been five of these to date. The first (the instruction *Inter Oecumenici*) was issued in Sept. 1964 by the Sacred Congregation of Rites. It offered a definitive interpretation of the phrase “sacred text”: “A homily on the sacred text means an explanation, pertinent to the mystery celebrated and the special needs of the listeners, of some point in either the readings from sacred Scripture or in another text from the Ordinary or Prayer of the day’s Mass” (No. 54). Notice the word “or.” This definitive interpretation of Vatican II makes it clear that authentic liturgical preaching does not require (nor does it exclude) always preaching explicitly from the Scriptures. At the same time, it recognizes that “sacred text” has a broad meaning in the history and theology of Roman Catholic worship.

This basic understanding of the homily as related to the Scriptures or some other liturgical text has been repeated in subsequent, significant documentation. I cite four examples.

- ✦ The 1983 Code of Canon Law relies almost verbatim on this instruction when it notes that the homily “is a part of the liturgy itself...in the homily the mysteries of faith and the norms of Christian living are to be expounded from the sacred text throughout the course of the liturgical year” (Canon 767, 1).

- ✦ The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (2002) explains the homily in this way: “It should develop some point of the readings or of another text from the Ordinary or from the Proper of the Mass of the day, and take into account the mystery being celebrated and the needs proper to the listeners” (No. 65).

- ✦ The Introduction to the Lectionary presents the homily as based on the “sacred text” broadly defined. In particu-

lar, it notes: “Whether the homily explains the biblical word of God proclaimed in the reading or some other texts of the liturgy, it must always lead the community of the faithful to celebrate the Eucharist wholeheartedly” (No. 24).

- ✦ The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops goes further. In its 2003 *Introduction to the Order of Mass*, it not only repeats the instruction that in the homily “the mysteries of faith and the guiding principles of Christian living are expounded most often from the Scriptures proclaimed” but then adds “but also from other texts and rites of the liturgy” (No. 92). It is appropriate to preach not only about the eucharistic prayers and orations, but also about the central ritual actions, like the act of receiving Communion, the setting of the table or the act of being sent at the end of Mass.

Three Risks

From my perspective, one fundamental Roman Catholic principle and two critical pastoral realities are jeopardized whenever we lose sight of the broad invitation to preach the liturgy, not simply to preach the Scripture readings that are integral to the liturgy.

First at stake is an appreciation of a fundamental principle—it is the liturgy that determines the readings, not the readings that set the feast. History teaches us that it was the emergence of feasts and seasons that determined which readings were to be proclaimed at Mass; it was not the other way around. This principle is still with us, which is why the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* indicates that for a serious pastoral reason the readings may be changed (Nos. 359-60).

A telling example of this principle is played out in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. The rite indicates that the Cycle A readings are not only suitable for all three Lectionary cycles for the Sundays of Lent if one has candidates for Easter baptism, but that if the scrutiny rites are celebrated outside of Lent, the readings of Cycle A are still used (No. 146). Thus if a parish is celebrating adult initiation on the feast of Christ the King at the end of November, for example, the readings of Cycle A from Lent are proclaimed on preceding Sundays. This is what the liturgical writer Fritz West calls the “Catholic principle” (*Scripture and Memory*, Liturgical Press, 1997): the season and celebration set the text. This is why at every “occasional service” in the context of a Eucharist, such as a wedding or funeral, the event determines the readings, not the other way around. When texts are employed to determine the season

It is appropriate to preach not only about the eucharistic prayers and orations, but also about the central ritual actions of the liturgy.

or celebration, West deems it the "Protestant Principle."

Second, too narrow a focus on the Scriptures puts at risk a homilist's ability to "preach the moment" for an assembly, deploying the full range of the liturgy's power to take into account what the *General Instruction* calls "needs proper to the listeners." After the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, *America* ran a story reporting that some clergy did not preach about the event because it was not in the Scriptures for the following Sunday (Don Heet, "Preaching From the Sacred Text," 11/26/01). Even more striking was a deacon's letter to the editor in response to the article (2/4/02): "Our training is at least partially responsible for our good and bad performance. It is so ingrained in me to preach from the [scriptural] text and only from the text that I rarely consider the possibility of doing something else!"

When clergy are so tied to a scriptural text, where can they find the grounding to preach about crises confronting the people in the pews? Sometimes it can be found in the Scriptures of the day. In the face of 9/11, for example, Catholics could have prayed and preached on the church's second eucharistic prayer for reconciliation, with very powerful results: "Enemies begin to speak to one another, those who are estranged join hands in friendship, and nations seek the way of peace together. Your Spirit is at work when understanding puts an end to strife, when hatred is quenched by mercy, and vengeance gives way to forgiveness." Preaching in the face of the current financial, housing and unemployment crises could also be enhanced if a homilist digs into the rest of the liturgy as a preaching resource.

Third, at risk from an exclusively scriptural foundation for preaching is the power of the Catholic imagination. If theologians like the Rev. David Tracy and Mary Catherine Hilkert, O.P., and social scientists like the Rev. Andrew Greeley and Robert Bellah are to be believed, Roman Catholics have a particular form of "analogical" or "sacramental" or "liturgical" imagination. Various studies and surveys have documented that the sacraments and sacramentals are a fundamental reason why Catholics stay in the church. These nourish the religious imagination that sustains belief. In his well-documented study of young adults, Dean Hoge found that participants rated the mediation of God's presence in the sacraments as the first essential element in their Catholic identity (*Young Adult Catholics*, Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 2001). This incarnational aspect of the Catholic imagination is so strong that pastoral ministers commonly comment on the number of people who show up when ashes or palms are given.

If such sacramentals are the instinctive center for the Catholic imagination, then it is most appropriately engaged by preaching that proclaims the whole liturgy. To do other-

wise, and especially to preach only on the scriptural texts, is to preach to what Tracy and others would consider a "Protestant" imagination.

According to the "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy," "the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the church is directed; it is also the source from which all its power flows" (No. 10). That statement is consonant with an understanding of Christianity in which the church was born around the Lord's table and the many tables of his followers after his death and resurrection. So Pope John Paul II, relying upon the insight of Henri de Lubac, S.J., could begin his final encyclical, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, by declaring, "The Church draws its life from the Eucharist." Preaching should draw its life from the Eucharist as well. While the eucharistic liturgy is shot through with biblical imagery and language, the Eucharist is a distinctive source of Catholic doctrine, religious faith and sacramental imagination.

Preaching, particularly in the distinctive form of the homily, should both respect and engage the whole of the liturgical resource, including the Scriptures as they are mediated in the Lectionary. Such is authentic Roman Catholic preaching, an informed preaching that Catholics deserve and need. **A**

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Preaching in a Vacuum

Why routine feedback on the Sunday homily is essential

BY CHRIS CHATTERIS

I'm tired of being made to feel like an idiot." That is the reason a woman friend of Clifford Longley, a correspondent for *The London Tablet*, gave for no longer attending Mass. One hears variations of this sentiment with such regularity among thoughtful Catholics that one is tempted to coin a new beatitude: Blessed are those who persevere. Or perhaps it should be: Blessed are those courageous enough to give frank feedback on the preaching at Mass.

I can think of no greater service to the pastoral practice of the church than constructive criticism of preaching. If such a movement were to take hold among the people of God, there would be nowhere to hide for the unprepared, the hollow and the offensive. Preachers who "talk down" to the congregation might suffer the fate of a priest I heard of who gave a scathing critique of a play at a local theater that portrayed a religious brother reminiscing rather bitterly on the vicissitudes of his life in a teaching order. The homilist was just hitting his critical stride when a man in the congregation put up his hand and introduced himself as the actor who played the role of the said brother. He then asked the priest very politely whether he had actually seen the play. The shamefaced but honest reply was that he had only read the reviews.

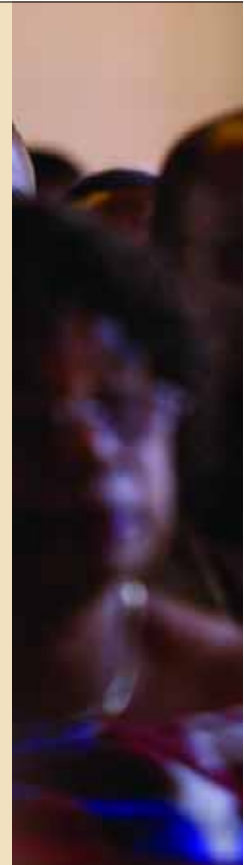
The anecdote (a true story apparently) illustrates the importance of homework, professionalism and respect for the intelligence of the congregation. It also illustrates the effectiveness of straightforward and trenchant feedback, as opposed to the conventional and mostly meaningless, "Nice homily, Father."

Forms of Feedback

Feedback can take as many forms as there are cultures in the church. In some parts of Africa, for example, instantaneous feedback is a cultural feature of public speaking, including preaching. I like the story about the pastor whose sermon was limping along on a bad day when someone shouted, "Help him, Lord! Help him!" Where I live in South Africa, if someone gets up after Mass to make an announcement and goes on for too long, perhaps commenting on the

CHRIS CHATTERIS, S.J., is the deputy director and media liaison officer of the Jesuit Institute in Johannesburg, South Africa.

The one-way street of the monologue homily risks becoming a cultural curiosity or an alien authoritarian symbol.



goings-on in the parish, someone might well break in by leading the congregation in song to signal that it is time to stop talking and sit down. This does not typically happen to the clergy during their homilies, but South Africans must sometimes be sorely tempted.

Of course, audience participation in South African culture is not simply about cutting speakers short; much of it is about encouragement. Just as the parishioner who shouts "Help him, Lord!" is, barring the possibility of a heavy, undermining irony, genuinely trying to encourage the preacher with a reminder of the availability of divine assistance, so it is with another black South African custom. A congregation may sing something rousing as a speaker gets up to speak and composes himself or herself; such singing indicates the basic encouraging stance of the community. Its warm assurance beats the glacial, analytical stillness that a speaker must brave when stepping up to

podium or pulpit before many a Western audience or congregation.

Yet in most Catholic churches worldwide, the homily is one of the last forms of public discourse in which no feedback is expected. This is often true even in some African churches, which, despite allowing a degree of instant feedback, are far less responsive than are the communities of



their non-Catholic neighbors. Catholic missionaries brought a Western style of pulpit communication and a theology of the priesthood that, even if it included some sense of the priesthood of the laity, did not countenance the people's interrupting or punctuating homilies.

I say no feedback is "expected," because feedback does in fact always take place, even in many Western cultures. The question is whether or not the preacher picks it up, since the feedback tends to be subtle. Communication theory has made the point that listening is also a form of communication. When I listen intently to someone, I send important, positive signals to the speaker. On those occasions when a preacher can hear a pin drop during the pauses in a homily because attention is so rapt, the congregation is effectively communicating its considerable level of interest and approval of what is being

said and how. This silence is different from what is called a "stony silence," in which the message is being carefully listened to but with disapproval, perhaps even hostility.

Receiving the Message

Communication has been defined as "the accurate transmission and reception of a message." Preachers sometimes forget that while they are putting a message out, the hearers are simultaneously transmitting a message, perhaps a multiplicity of messages, back. But if homiletical communication is thought to go in only one direction, Catholic preachers can easily forget the returning message or "tune out" what the congregation is saying to them.

There is also a congregational response that has been referred to as the "fidget level." When it is high, no pin would be heard if it dropped during a pause in the discourse because of the shifting of feet, the rustling of clothes and so on. The fidget level can be seen and heard by the preacher. And it is a certain sign that, for whatever reason, one simply does not have the congregation's attention. Even in an age when people have a heightened awareness of the importance of body language, preachers sometimes show a surprising lack of interpretive ability in this respect.

The examples I have given so far are unofficial and anecdotal. By contrast, the late Bishop Kenneth Untener of Saginaw, Mich., used to carry a little notebook and solicit comments from the congregation. Although the bishop's personal style was informal, his status as bishop raised the procedure to a sort of quasi-official level, on which the people at Mass could express their assessments of the preaching of their bishop and priests. Unfortunately, such attempts to make feedback official and routine are the exception.

Another exception is the formation of a preaching committee—a group of parishioners asked to assist the priest, deacon or lay preacher in the preparation, delivery and assessment of the homily. The U.S. Catholic bishops have wisely written: "Only when preachers know what their congregations want to hear will they be able to communicate what they need to hear" (*Fulfilled in Your Hearing*, 1982). A preaching committee can help a preacher to discern a congregation's needs and thus assist in finding helpful themes for homilies. Such a group can also break down the alienating sense of loneliness that can accompany the process of preparing homilies, an awful feeling of flying solo.

Some preachers routinely begin their homilies with a joke in order to wake up a supposedly sleepy congregation. By contrast, Bishop Untener suggested that the moment between the end of the Gospel proclamation and the preacher's first word is inherently a

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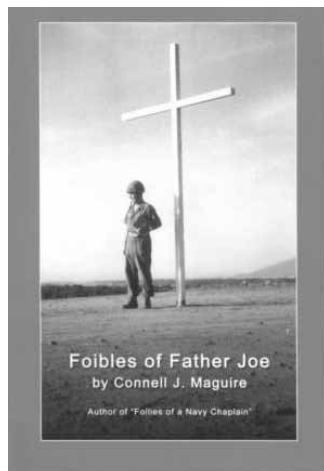
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moment of profound attention. That moment speaks volumes about the congregation's hope, which springs eternal, for a decent homily this Sunday. It also silently articulates a general yearning that congregations have for good preaching. After all, for many people in the pews, the Sunday homily is their primary nourishment in the faith.

We live in a world in which feedback is routine and is built into most forms of communication. Politicians, teachers, journalists and other communicators expect and welcome feedback. Modern church communicators should likewise expect assessors to make helpful comments on their skills. The maintenance and development of professional standards demands such feedback. And in a world of increasingly educated hearers brought up amid democratic discourse, the one-way street of the monologue homily risks becoming a cultural curiosity or an alien, authoritarian symbol. It also seems a far cry from the example of the Word made flesh, who was constantly being asked questions by his hearers and who responded with stories, parables and examples from life.

Today the "simple faithful" are no more; I wonder whether they ever existed. My own experience working with people who have not had the good fortune to obtain an academic degree has helped me realize that lack of book learning does not mean lack of intelligence or wisdom. When we get up to preach, we sometimes experience an almost terrifying sense that the people in the congregation know us; they can tell very quickly whether we are prepared or not and whether we are genuine or not. The *sensus fidelium* homes in, not just on the manner and matter of the preacher's message, but more unnervingly on the preacher's character, prayerfulness and holiness (or lack thereof). These a congregation intuits very quickly. And the people's appreciation of these traits (or their unhappiness with what they see) becomes part of the feedback they quietly transmit. That is true whether the preachers are receiving the messages or not. **A**


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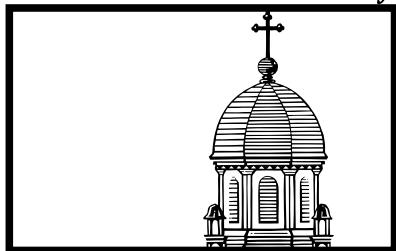
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Hand in Hand

What ever happened to the sign of peace?

BY JIM McDERMOTT

Not long ago I was at week-day Mass in a big church, not very full, all of us congregants spread out as far as we could be from one another. Even so, almost no one was more than a pew or two distant from anyone else. At the sign of peace, most people just gave “the wave.” You know the wave. The person turns in your direction, maybe smiles slightly and places his or her palm face out, somewhere between the gesture you’d find in an icon of Jesus and the Supremes singing “Stop in the Name of Love.” When used at a distance, and with a second of eye contact, it can be a pleasant form of acknowledgement, “Hello from across the room.” But when you’re standing one pew apart, the vibe is often more like, “Please don’t touch me.”

A week later, at Sunday Mass elsewhere, I noticed the same thing: though the pews were crowded, many people would not extend a hand to one another, or they did so only to people directly in front of them. And the ritual lasted only about 10 seconds, before the organist was on to “Lamb of God...” and the priest was breaking the host. It is not like this everywhere. Still, when I encounter it I cannot help but wonder, What ever happened to the sign of peace?

JIM McDERMOTT, S.J., is an associate editor of *America*.

Not the Same As Ever

A little history: In the early days of Christianity, the “kiss of peace” came at the end of petitions or significant rites and served as an acclamation,



much like “Amen.” Tertullian called it the “seal of prayer.” As communities developed their own liturgical traditions, placement of the kiss varied. The Roman Rite placed it where we find it today. Other traditions placed the ritual in the middle, immediately after the petitions or after the presentation of the gifts.

At the millennium, it had been relegated to clergy alone; and by the 16th century it had vanished from the Latin liturgy altogether. Only with the 1970 *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* did the rite officially become a part of Catholic liturgical practice again.

Today liturgical theologians talk about the sign of peace as a moment

that connects worshipers back to the desire for reconciliation they sought at the end of the Our Father: “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us”; it also anticipates the reception of Communion. In offering peace to one another—not thanks, not “Howdy,” but peace, and not only to friends and family but also to strangers and enemies—we express our desire for healing, for communion in our church and in our world; and by the grace of God we experience that communion as a reality. At least, that’s the theology.

Location, Location

One view of the problem with the rite is that it might be in the wrong place in the liturgy. About to receive Communion, having been drawn through the eucharistic prayers into a holy space, some of us might be thinking, “Hey, I’m praying now. Talk to me later.”

Other liturgical positions for the sign of peace have a certain logic, too. The beginning of Mass, for instance, seems a natural place for a rite that draws us together as community. The transition between the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist also makes good theo-

logical sense: before we present our gifts, we reconcile with one another. It makes good human sense, too. Having just listened to readings and a homily,

ON THE WEB

From the archives, Thomas J. Reese, S.J., on the kiss of peace. americamagazine.org/pages

ART: JULIE LONNEMAN

the congregation might need a chance to get up and get the blood moving again before proceeding into the eucharistic prayer. Finally, at the end of Mass it is hard to miss a strong gravitational pull to linger and share community. You find a lot more handshakes and embraces going on when people are leaving church than you find polite waves.

In some places, one finds a different solution. Instead of barreling directly into the rite after the previous acclamation, some presiders stop at that point and invite the community to take a moment to pray for peace. In Australia, where I lived last year, almost every parish I visited used this approach. The change in the congregation after just a few seconds of silence was notable. Having undertaken the liturgical equivalent of a deep breath, congregations (and their priests) entered into the sign of peace with a greater equanimity and presence to the moment. Yet, paradoxically, the total time spent on the rite had not increased.

Breaking and Entering

The sign of peace is not a formality, an exchange of pleasantries or an introduction. It is another opportunity in the liturgy for God to break in and affect us. Some days, as I listen to the familiar prayers and their cadences, it is hard not to get distracted. If I am lucky, it is a good distraction, the offering up of worries, relationships and the like to God in prayer.

More often than not, though, my mind wanders through itineraries, problem solving and the latest episode of "Grey's Anatomy." I can finish the Our Father without even realizing I have said it.

On those days, the sign of peace is my salvation. By forcing me to look up, see the people in front of me and exchange a greeting with them, I am freed, if only momentarily, from my inner hamster wheel, freed sometimes



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from my grudges, too. Living in a small community, you inevitably have to exchange the sign of peace with someone, in your darkest moments, you'd rather see hit by a truck (or at least repeatedly by a toddler with a Wiffle Ball bat). Oh God, I pray on those days, please let him turn the other way, please don't make me face him. It can be very hard. But much to my surprise, I have found offering and receiving the sign of peace from people who bug me or have hurt me (or whom I have hurt) can be tremendously liberating. What has drawn tight or hard inside can unexpectedly be loosened.

In the face of wars and economic crises and family problems, we are all longing for peace, for reconciliation, for freedom of one kind or another. If we take the sign of peace a little more gently and slowly, or perhaps if we experiment with relocating it, we might be able to experience that grace a little more deeply. **A**



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YOUTUBE HERESIES

On today's virtual Areopagus

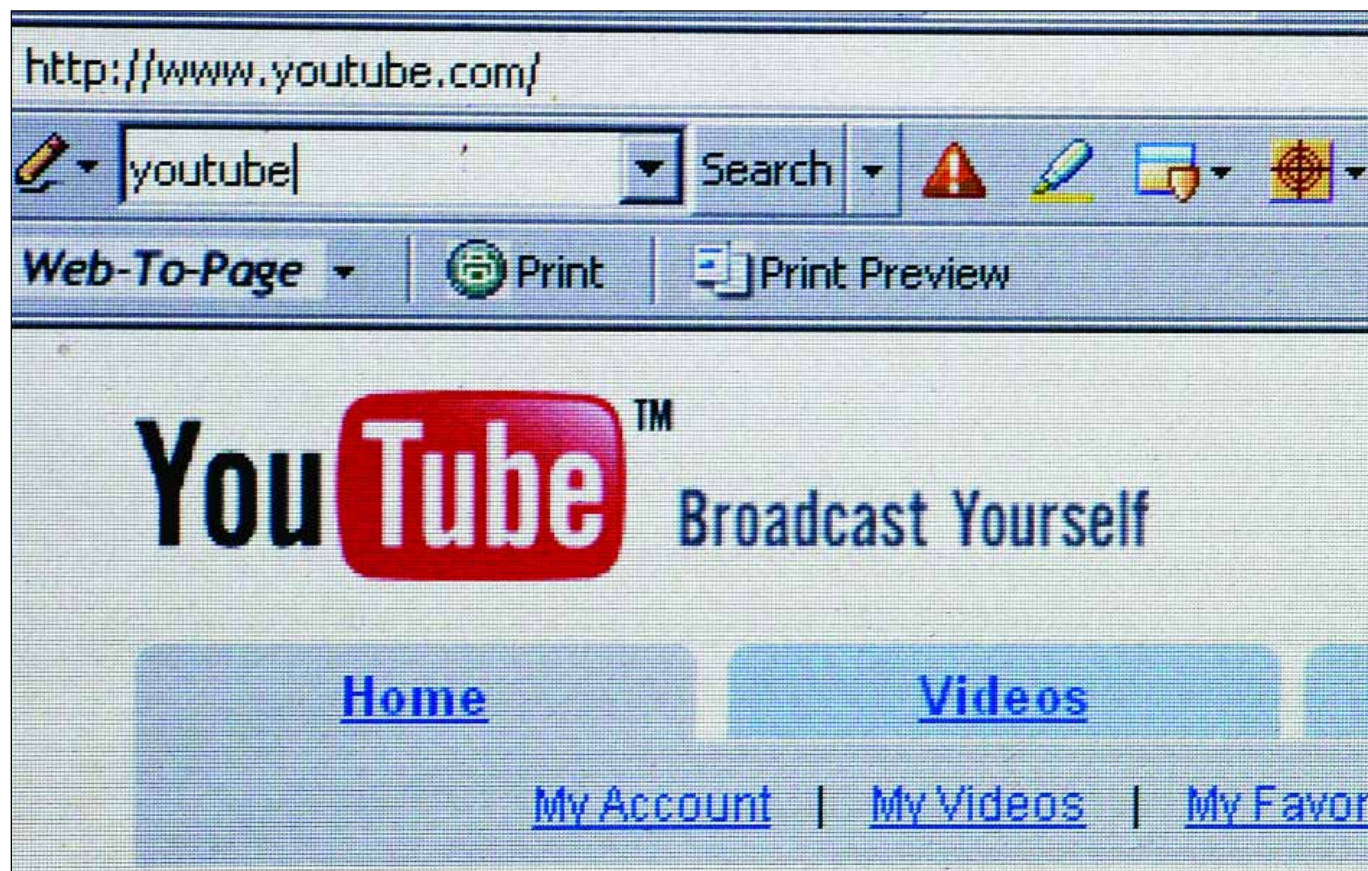
A year ago I began posting brief reflections on movies, music and culture on YouTube, probably the most watched Web site in the world. This exercise has resembled St. Paul's venture onto the Areopagus in Athens, preaching the Gospel amid a jumble of competing ideas. YouTube is a virtual Areopagus, where every viewpoint—from the sublime to the deeply disturbing—is on display. Never as a Catholic teacher or preacher have I addressed less of the "choir." The most numerous responses have come to my pieces on atheism and

belief. I have made a video called "Why It Makes Sense to Believe in God," three others answering Christopher Hitchens and, the most popular, a response to Bill Maher's film "Religulous."

YouTube viewers can post comments; the hundreds I've received have been overwhelmingly negative. Some are emotionally driven and rude, but others are thoughtful and have given rise to serious exchanges. As I debate with these mostly young opponents of religion, and Catholicism in particular, I have discerned four basic patterns of

opposition that block the reception of the faith. In the second century, St. Irenaeus wrote his classic *Adversus Haereses* (*Against the Heresies*); if a contemporary apologist would like to know the heresies of our time, she might consult these YouTube objections. I have identified four: scientism, ecclesial angelism, biblical fundamentalism and Marcionism.

Scientism. In the videos, I have appealed to classical and contemporary arguments for the existence of God, demonstrating that there must be a stable ground for the contingency of the world and an intelligent source for the intelligibility of the world. I am met with some version of the following assertion: Matter, or the universe as a totality, or the big bang, or "energy" is



ART: JEFF J. MITCHELL/GETTY IMAGES

an adequate explanation of all that is. When I counter that the big bang is itself the clearest indication that the entire universe—including matter and energy—is radically contingent and in need of a cause extrinsic to itself, they say that I am speaking nonsense, that science gives no evidence of God's existence. I agree, insisting that the sciences deal with realities and relationships within the world but that the Creator is, by definition, not an ingredient in the world he made.

What I am up against here is not science, but the philosophical position that reality is restricted to what the empirical sciences can measure. When one of my opponents asserted that science alone deals with reality, I informed him that he was involved in an operational self-contradiction, for he was making an unscientific remark in support of his claim. I am struck by how philosophically impoverished my YouTube interlocutors are. Though many can speak rather ably of physics or chemistry or astronomy, they are at a loss when the mode of analysis turns philosophical or metaphysical.

The second heresy I call *ecclesial angelism*. Repeatedly my conversation partners say: "Who are you, a Catholic priest, to be making truth claims, when your church has been guilty of so many moral outrages against the human race: the Crusades, the Inquisition, witch hunts, support of slavery and the clerical sex abuse scandal?" My arguments in favor of religious belief are not so much refuted as ignored, with a "consider the source" wave of the hand.

I respond by insisting that the existence of bad Catholics does not in itself demonstrate that Catholicism is a bad thing. A rare ally on a YouTube forum observed that the use of Einsteinian physics in the production of the nuclear weapons that killed hundreds of thousands of innocents does not amount to an argument against Einstein. As the old dictum

has it, bad practice does not preclude good practice.

I do not deny the major premise of their argument. I've told them I stand with John Paul II, who spent years apologizing for the misbehavior of Catholics over the centuries. But Christians have known always that the church, as Paul put it, "holds a treasure in earthen vessels." In its sacraments, especially the Eucharist, in its essential teachings, in its liturgy and in the lives of its saints, the church participates in the very holiness of God. But in its human dimension, it is fragile. Ecclesial angelism blurs this distinction and allows any fault of church people to undermine the church's claim to speak the truth.

A third heresy is *biblical fundamentalism*. I hear from my YouTube opponents that the Bible is a mishmash of "bronze-age myths" (Christopher Hitchens) and childish nonsense about talking snakes, a 5,000-year-old universe and a man living three days inside of a fish. I observe in reply that the Bible is no so much a book as a library, made up of texts from a wide variety of genres and written at different times for varying audiences. Just as one would not take "the library" literally, one should not interpret the whole Bible with one set of lenses.

My YouTube conversation partners typically fire back that I am proposing a novelty in order to respond to the attacks of modern critics. I try to steer them to Irenaeus (second c.), Origen (third c.) and Augustine (fourth c.), all of whom dealt with the complexity of the Bible through the exercise of a deft hermeneutic. Some of those who appreciate the library analogy wonder how one would decide which kind of text one is dealing with and hence which set of interpretive lenses to wear. I respond that their good ques-

tion proves the legitimacy of the Catholic Church's assumption that the church—that variegated community of interpretation stretching over 20 centuries—is required for effective biblical reading today. I ask, How do you know the difference between *Winnie the Pooh*, *The Brothers Karamazov*, the *Divine Comedy*, Carl Sandburg's *Lincoln* and Gore Vidal's

ON THE WEB

Richard Leonard, S.J., reviews "Angels & Demons." americamagazine.org/culture

Lincoln? Then I answer my own question: You have been taught by a long and disciplined tradition of interpretation. Something similar is at play in authentic biblical reading.

The fourth YouTube heresy is *Marcionism*, which brings us back to one of Irenaeus's principal opponents, Marcion. He held that the New Testament represented the revelation of the true God, but that the Old Testament was the revelation of a pathetic demigod marked by pettiness, jealousy and violence. This ancient heresy reappears practically intact on the YouTube forums. My interlocutors complain about the morally offensive, vain, psychotic and violent God of the Old Testament, who commands that a ban be put on cities, who orders genocide so that his people can take possession of the Promised Land, who commands that children's heads be dashed against stones. In the wake of the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, this complaint becomes more pointed. If I gesture toward the wisdom of the biblical tradition, I am met with this objection.

I urge my respondents to read the entire Bible in the light of Christ crucified and risen from the dead. I tell them of an image in the Book of Revelation of a lamb standing as though slain. When no one else in the heavenly court is able to open the scroll that symbolizes all of salvation history, the lamb alone succeeds. This indicates that the nonviolent Christ, who took upon himself the

sin of the world and returned in forgiving love, is the interpretive key to the Bible. It was in this light that Origen, for example, read the texts concerning the Old Testament ban as an allegory about the struggle against sin. The bottom line is this: One should never drive a wedge between the two testaments; instead, one should allow Christ to be the structuring logic of the entire Scripture.

What is blocking the preaching of the faith, especially to younger people? Many things. But I would suggest that preachers, teachers, evangelists and catechists might attend with some care to these four.

REV. ROBERT BARRON holds the Francis Cardinal George Chair of Faith and Culture at the University of St. Mary of the Lake/Mundelein Seminary in Mundelein, Ill. His Web site is www.wordonfire.org.

BOOKS | SALLY CUNNEEN

JUDGE FOR YOURSELF

A JURY OF HER PEERS

American Women Writers From Anne Bradstreet to Annie Proulx

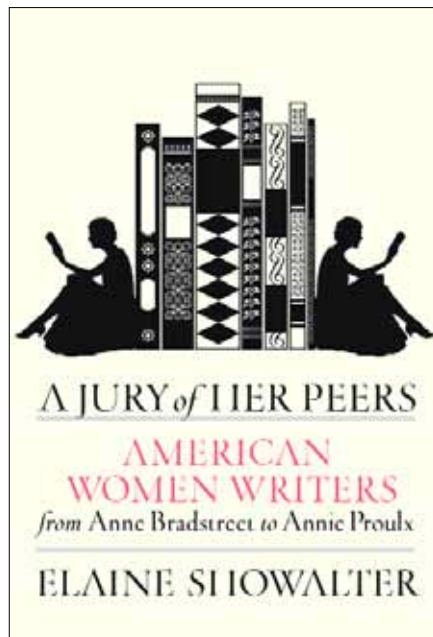
By Elaine Showalter
Knopf. 608p \$30
ISBN 9781400041237

Elaine Showalter's book is a delightful literary voyage, guided by a woman who truly knows the territory. Neither an anthology nor an academic critique, it is something quite original, the first informed popular literary history of American women writers. It was inspired by a question this distinguished author of 18 books on literature and the humanities kept asking herself: Why have so many women writers disappeared from literary history?

The question brought to Showalter's mind the 1917 story of Susan Glaspell, "A Jury of Her Peers," based on her coverage of a real murder case. Glaspell places two farm women in the kitchen of the murder home, waiting for their police officer husbands to solve the crime. The wives come to the accurate conclusion that the murderer is a joyless woman driven mad by a cruel husband. But they do not share this information; their husbands do not notice evidence that seems obvious to the women; and the

accused woman is acquitted by a jury of her peers.

Showalter narrows her choice of authors to professionally published women writers in America from the 17th century to the present, ignoring



diarists and private letter writers. She examines the work of short story writers, novelists and poets, within the context of the authors' lives against a constantly changing background of the revolution, slavery, the civil war, Depression and increasing freedom.

The task seems daunting for one person, even in our age of electronic

servants, but Showalter carries it off with a sure voice. The first two-thirds of the book are a special pleasure, including information on women writers most of us have never heard of: Mercy Warren, the first dramatist treated; Judith Murray, the fiery first feminist; Susanna Rowson, the first bestselling novelist; and Mary Rowlandson, who not only survived capture by Narragansett Indians but wrote about her interracial experience with genuine understanding.

About writers we know, like the 17th-century poet Anne Bradstreet, we gain new insight, for Showalter describes their work in relation to their lives and hopes. In this early period, men were expected to praise Bradstreet's published poems, not only praising them but testifying that she had neglected no housewifely duty in writing them. The chores were heavy in her case, since she had eight children to raise and endured many illnesses as well as the burning of her beloved home.

In the early 19th-century, women writers were able to use fictional characters to treat forbidden topics: romantic mad-women, for instance, the popular Crazy Janes of the period. Lydia Maria Child wrote novels, short stories, women's history, domestic advice and children's books, and attacked racial prejudice. Ironically, she is known to us today only as the author of the lines "Over the river and through the woods to grandmother's house we go."

The 1850s was distinguished by female concern for home and family. Even as Nathaniel Hawthorne complained about the multitude of "women scribblers," American women became the majority of fiction readers. For the first time, the literary marketplace pitted men against women. Ambitious and brilliant women like Julia Ward Howe were often thwarted and discouraged from writing, in her case by both father and husband.

Despite similar lack of support from her husband, Harriet Beecher Stowe, forever known for *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, determined not "to become a mere domestic slave" but to save three hours a day from her children and housework to become a prolific writer (nine novels). Showalter considers her the most important woman writer in American history; she was the first to present men speaking to each other about business concerns, something women were not supposed to overhear.

If Showalter has a deficiency, it is a kind of tin ear to religion. This may account for her later lack of emphasis on the religious dimension of Flannery O'Connor's work and the strange absence of Mary Gordon from her list of contemporary writers.

Spirituality was important to Emily Dickinson, too, and though Showalter acknowledges her work as original and unique, she hesitates to analyze her inspiration, seeing the poet as "divorced from her social context." As the fair and good critic she is, however, she observes that Dickinson's poems, which explode the usual female images of bees and flowers into erotic and unexpected directions, are "unmistakable, while the verses of virtually all of her female contemporaries are interchangeable."

The number of women writers grew substantially in the 19th century. Showalter covers the "local color" writing by the first group of women who took themselves seriously as artists: among them Mary Wilkins Freeman, author of the short story "A New England Nun," now in most anthologies, and the poignant *Revolt of Mother* (which, surprisingly, goes unmentioned); and Sarah Orne Jewett, known for "The Country of the Pointed Firs," and her story of a brave girl's sacrifice of romance for the protection of a bird in "A White Heron." We hear of Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona*, a story of tragic love between an Indian and a woman of

mixed race that became a huge popular success. We learn about Emma Lazarus's protests against anti-Semitism and her eloquent defense of persecuted immigrants, which provide background to her famous poem that appears on the base of the Statue of Liberty.

Two authors, whom Showalter views as "the greatest women novelists of the first half of the twentieth century," are given a chapter each: Edith Wharton and Willa Cather. Both wanted to be writers, not "woman writers," and succeeded brilliantly, though many male critics of the period did not see the strength and originality of Cather's work. By now readers have made both part of the canon of American literature.

The last third of the book deals with more recent poets and novelists, many familiar to us (from Marianne Moore to Sylvia Plath and Adrienne Rich, from Katherine Anne Porter and Zora Neale Hurston to Flannery O'Connor). The author's inclusiveness is remarkable, introducing us to black,

Latino, Asian and many other fine writers. Unfortunately, though, because of her disproportionate interest in the content and popularity of women's works, she gives as much or more attention to *Gone With the Wind* and *Peyton Place* than to Tillie Olsen's stories or Elizabeth Bishop's poetry.

But Showalter has not written this book to show off her own critical abilities; she has a different and more worthy aim. She gives us this rich, entertaining volume and lets us judge for ourselves what is art and what literature is worth preserving. Like a well-informed tour guide, she points out new places we must explore ourselves.

The verdict as to which women writers should be added to the canon will take a while to come in, but in the meantime Showalter has given us an invaluable volume to guide our deliberations.

SALLY CUNNEEN is emerita professor of English at Rockland Community College of the State University of New York and the author of *In Search of Mary*.

MICHAEL SEAN WINTERS

REACH HIGHER, LIVE BETTER

THE FUTURE OF LIBERALISM

By Alan Wolfe
Knopf. 352p \$25.95
ISBN 9780307266774

The first difficulty in reviewing a book by Alan Wolfe is that his books are so chock full of quotable quotes, salient observations and incisive criticisms, making it difficult to choose which ones to highlight. The second difficulty is that Wolfe provokes so many questions, you find yourself wishing he had written more on half a dozen issues. The third difficulty is remembering to feed the dogs: I am the slowest of readers, but once you start read-

ing *The Future of Liberalism*, do not expect to get much else accomplished until you have finished.

Many university professors write lethally boring books with ambitious titles, but Wolfe is not one of them. His prose never bogs down; his examples and analogies ring true; and sometimes he pens a sentence that makes you put the book down and wish you had written it yourself. "No one is more temperamentally conservative than a Manhattan leftist living in a rent-controlled apartment and holding tenure at a university," Wolfe writes, in a sentence that shows at once his power of illustration and his courage

in challenging his own.

"But in truth, liberalism's enemy is not religion but religious oppression and its friend is not skepticism but freedom, including religious freedom," Wolfe concludes after cataloguing the complex history of liberalism and religion, one of the book's strongest sections. Essentially, he encourages liberals to abandon any hostility to religion while insisting that religion abide by liberalism's rules for governance of the public square. Unlike many liberals, who reject all religious arguments, Wolfe is more nuanced. He grants that religion can motivate people to justice as well as to intolerance: For every Jerry Falwell there is a Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Only once does he overstep when he seems to condemn pre-Enlightenment religion: "Ostensibly in the business of saving souls, it had managed to find time for teaching orthodoxy, discouraging tolerance, and promoting obedience." While the church must apologize for its indifference to the close relationship between human dignity and tolerance, teaching orthodoxy and promoting obedience are essential tasks of faith. As Wolfe catalogues elsewhere, a concern for truth is not unimportant; and while obedience may not be a liberal characteristic, any religion that believes God has revealed himself must in some sense be obedient to that revelation.

Wolfe (director of the Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life at Boston College) shows why liberalism remains the political creed that still corresponds more closely than any other to human dignity. Against those who advocate censorship, be they the "hate speech" enforcers on the left or modern Puritans on the right, Wolfe

argues, "From the standpoint of encouraging people to think about the world around them, wrongheaded opinions are better than no opinions."

He brilliantly links those who would resent the linkage in their shared disdain for liberalism: "Perhaps fundamentalist Christians and atheistic Darwinists should stop taking each other to court and instead join forces, united by their mutual contempt for the quintessential liberal idea that human beings have the capacity to create

that monument of artifice called 'culture,' which, in turn, enables them to bring meaning and direction to their lives." Indeed, Wolfe's takedown of socio-biologists and evolutionary psychologists is so exact, and so necessary, it should be mandatory reading for all who care about the meaning of the word freedom.

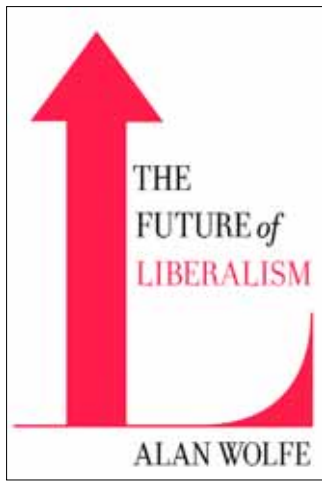
My only objection, and one that in fact supports Wolfe's argument, has to do with his treatment of Hurricane Katrina. He is spot on in showing how conservative contempt for government left the administration ill-equipped to deploy the government's resources

when they were desperately needed in New Orleans after the hurricane made landfall. But the suffering in New Orleans was not, in fact, the direct result of the hurricane: It was the direct result of the failure of the levees that had been built by the Army Corps of Engineers. There was no escaping federal responsibility both for the catastrophe and for the response, or lack thereof.

Alan Wolfe is one of the few non-Christian writers who write about Christianity with deep insights that require attention. I can't think of another who would notice, still less understand, why what Isaiah Berlin called negative liberty, or "freedom from," ultimately cannot be the source of any synthesis between liberalism and Christian faith, that only a Kantian positive notion of liberty, or "freedom for," can effectively enter into dialogue with Christian theology. Again, those pages alone are worth the price of the book.

Read this book. Dog-ear it. Keep it close at hand. Like its author, it is a treasure trove of intelligence, decency and wisdom.

MICHAEL SEAN WINTERS is the author of *Left at the Altar: How the Democrats Lost the Catholics and How the Catholics Can Save the Democrats* (Perseus Books Group, 2008).



CLAIRE SCHAEFFER-DUFFY

MURDER, MONEY, MAYHEM

THE SAMARITAN'S SECRET

An Omar Yussef Mystery

By Matt Beynon Rees
Soho Crime. 288p \$24
ISBN 9781569475454

Days of pleasure are rare for Omar Yussef. The 57-year-old Palestinian school teacher turned detective is in the West Bank town of Nablus to attend a

wedding, when he quickly finds himself investigating two crimes—the theft of the Abisha Scroll, the oldest and most revered text of the Samaritan sect, and the murder of Ishaq, a young homosexual Samaritan who had served as financial advisor to the late Yasser Arafat and had access to the "Old Man's" illicit accounts.

It is a race against time for the

endearingly cranky Omar Yussef, who must solve the murder and locate Arafat's foreign stash before the World Bank cuts off funding for the Palestinian Territories. Was Ishaq killed because of his sexual preference or for his knowledge of Arafat's millions? Or was he the "collateral damage" of a power struggle between Hamas and Fatah?

Motives overlap in *The Samaritan's Secret*, a multi-layered mystery by Matt Beynon Rees. The former Jerusalem bureau chief for Time left reporting to write award-winning crime novels that feature fiction's only Palestinian detective. In this, his third book, Rees masterfully concocts another claustrophobic tale from the occupied territories that takes us deep into the Palestinian experience even as it entertains.

Two-thousand-year-old Nablus is a town saturated in history and secrets. Built atop the Roman city of Neapolis, which supplanted the ancient Jewish city of Shekem, Nablus was once the hub of Palestinian commerce and poetry. Today, the town suffocates under a fearsome insularity. "It's only faith in Allah that allows you to believe that your soul might escape this town, even when you die," says

Nouri Awwadi, a Hamas militant and native of Nablus.

Omar Yussef's search for Ishaq's killer takes him through the shadowy streets of Nablus's covered casbah and into the crumbling Toaqan Palace, now a slum. From the edge of a public square littered with "posters advertising the latest martyr," he watches as the stern Sheikh Bader presides over a Hamas-sponsored wedding of 15 couples. Among the grooms is the ruddy-faced Islamist Awwadi. Like Ishaq, he prefers men to women, and seeks his pleasure in the mildewed steam rooms of the town's Turkish baths.

Love and desire are no less complicated in the mansions of the elite or in the Samaritan homes scattered along the ridge of Nablus's Mount Jerizim. Descendants of the ancient Israelites, the Samaritans believe Mount Jerizim is where God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. For thousands of years, they have lived within view of the mountain, remaining even during

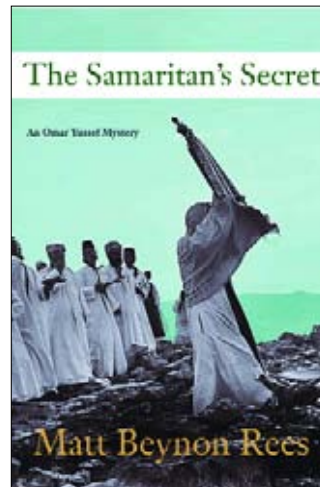
the Babylonian exile. The Torah is their text and the nearly 4,000-year-old Abisha Scroll their bridge to the Messiah. "Without this scroll, our Messiah can never return to us," says the fiercely protective Samaritan priest Jabril Ben-Tabia.

But the Samaritans of Nablus are a jeopardized tribe. Their community, which has dwindled to 600 people, lives in isolation on holy Jerizim's ridge, where their deformed children bear "the unmistakable signs of in-breeding."

Omar Yussef moves in and out of Nablus's distinct and colliding worlds. Subplots abound, and there are as many red herrings in *The Samaritan's Secret* as there are dead-end alleyways in the town's casbah. The Palestinian investigator is a Muslim humanist, a man of heroic integrity and obvious vulnerabilities. He is irritated by narrow-mindedness and his aging knees. He fights self-doubt. Doggedly persistent in eliciting confessions, he weeps over what is revealed.

Omar Yussef's sidekick, Khamis Zeydan, who has aided the school-teacher in the past, features prominently in this tale and provides much of its emotional tension. The alcoholic police chief of Bethlehem is a haunted man, living a paradox. Formerly the P.L.O.'s top assassin, he now enforces the law for a still stateless people. His struggle to shed the past is complicated by the fact that his former lover is now married and lives in one of Nablus's mansions. Although Zeydan swings between cynicism and gritty hope, his commitment to his truth-seeking friend remains constant.

The banter between the two men yields some of the most humorous and poignant passages in the book. When

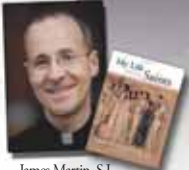


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James Martin, SJ.



the hardened police chief reminds the empathetic detective that understanding the “inhumanity of the murderer” requires cold detachment, Omar Yusef replies: “You’re forgetting that passion and love might enter it. I prefer to enter the head of the killer by feeling those emotions rather than by hate and violence.”

Fiction has become Rees’s means for “entering the heads” of the Palestinians. In his desire to know what he calls “the most emotionally real elements” of a place, he gives us Palestine’s important stories. As with the previous books in this series, the Israeli occupation remains the unexamined variable. In

other reviews, I have criticized Rees for this omission. Conflict breeds lawlessness; and to tell a tale of Palestinian criminality apart from the larger context of Israel’s incursion seems incomplete. But perhaps because I read this book while the conflict in Gaza raged, I found myself grateful for the opportunity to consider Palestinians in their own light, apart from the stereotype of victim or terrorist. The people in Omar Yusef’s world know familial love and disappointment. They live with regret, fight despair, cherish happiness and, against great odds, try to do the right thing.

“My novels focus on those individ-

uals who are prepared to stand up and take risks—albeit small by our standards but enormous by theirs,” said Rees during an interview on National Public Radio last summer. “It’s not that at the end some grandiose peace is achieved. The scale is much smaller, more like episodes in the larger scheme of things, which get resolved.”

Amid all the tales of destruction recently emanating from the Palestinian Territories, I welcomed contemplating Rees’s episodic peace.

CLAIRE SCHAEFFER-DUFFY, a freelance writer, is a member of the Saints Francis and Thérèse Catholic Worker Community in Worcester, Mass.

CLASSIFIED

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Transition,” Margaret Silf, June 22-28; directed retreats, July 1-9, 12-20, 23-31, 1-31; “Where in the World Is My God?” (retreat for women), Janice Farnham, R.J.M., and Rosemary Mangan, R.J.M., July 24-26; “Returning to the Garden as a Way of Life,” Teresita Morse, R.J.M., July 30-Aug. 2. Please visit www.bethanyspiritualitycenter.org.

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LETTERS

Counting the Cost

Re “Slowing the Exodus,” by John J. DiIulio Jr. (5/11): One of the biggest tragedies in our church is that we are doing precious little to help teens grow in their understanding of their faith. Compared to mainline Protestant churches and mega-churches, which use many resources to keep their teens connected, Catholics seem to be totally indifferent to teens.

We need to wake up and join the 21st century and help high-school age Catholics know that they are important enough for us to invest our resources in them. Catholic schools are too expensive for the majority of families, so money and resources should be directed toward parishes. We also need to invest in the education of future youth ministers and catechists for teens, and pay them a decent wage. This will be expensive, but doing nothing results in many adults being uneducated in their faith and explains, in part, the exodus of young people from the church.

MARY CARROLL
New York, N.Y.

Living Wage

Re your editorial on dealing with the priest shortage (“A Modest Proposal,” 5/4): We need a revolution in the way the church—laity included—views the priesthood. Priestly ministry is demanding work, requiring long hours, little time off, lousy pay and no real pension plan. I think celibacy for diocesan priests should be optional, but are rank-and-file Catholics aware of what changes that will mean for them? When Father has a wife and kids to feed, do Catholics really think the dollar they throw in the basket will be enough?

If a real discussion of married priests were to happen, it must start with a discussion of fairer treatment of priests, including realistic salaries

and retirement options. That alone might make the priesthood a more attractive vocation for some. But that requires recognition by the laity of what this would entail. Otherwise a married priesthood would solve nothing, because no married man would enter such a vocation—he could not afford it.

DON BAKER
New York, N.Y.

Nothing to Lose

What would Jesus do about the priest shortage (Editorial, 5/4)? Jesus “called” all around him, whether they were married men (Peter), single men (John) or women (Mary Magdalene, the first of the apostles). Why not throw open today our “leadership” to all who are of good character and interested in serving? The church might just be surprised at the movement of the Spirit in solving the current shortage. What is there to lose?

PAUL ACKERMAN
Columbus, Mo.

Another Solution

You correctly point out in your editorial on the priest shortage (5/4) that sacramental ministry must be connected to other pastoral ministries, and you cite Canons 528 and 529. But these canons, in directing the priest to be catechist, evangelist and bearer of the works of mercy to the community, define more the diaconate as subsumed into the priesthood than the priesthood itself.

May I suggest an enhanced diaconate (including women) as a remedy for the church’s crying need for ministers?

PHYLLIS ZAGANO
Limerick, Ireland

In Transition

Re your editorial on the priest shortage (5/4): I am 27 years old and a diocesan seminarian. I will soon be ordained to the diaconate and will be a priest within a year. My home diocese

had not been able to foster vocations for a number of years, but has recently experienced a resurgence of good young (and old) candidates for the priesthood. During our experience of the decline in vocations, it was all too common to hear rumblings about how “the church is in transition” or what “the spirit of the Second Vatican Council” called for. In charity, a complete lack of formation led us to the point where people could advance their own opinions against the church in her teaching capacity.

What people failed to realize was that they were replacing dogma with dogma—no more explored or well-developed than what we had traditionally been offered. A few years ago we gladly received a bishop who is faithful to the magisterium. By making vocations a priority, we have seen a tenfold increase in the number of men seeking ordination.

For pragmatic reasons alone, I would be in favor of seeing how Christ will provide for his church, to which he promised his everlasting presence (eucharistically as well as in other ways). But celibacy is a beautiful gift, and I thank God almost every day that he has called me to love him and his people in this most special way. I eagerly await the day when I will love the church (yep, that’s you) with the same love that Jesus pours out for each and every one of us.

PATRICK JOHNSON
Mountain Lakes, N.J.

Back to the Future

As the number of priests declines, perhaps we will reach back into the past and allow the revival of an ancient tradition in our church, when each community presented to their bishop one from among them whom they had called to preside at Eucharist and serve their community. Remember St. Augustine? And what about all those gifted women?

(REV.) RICH BRODERICK
Cambridge, N.Y.

On Mission

Your editorial on the possibilities for expanding priestly ministry is especially apropos for the many dispersed Catholic communities in “mission” areas that have been and continue to be nourished primarily by catechists, and in some places by married deacons. During a conference in 1984 in Rome on the topic of lay catechists, this refrain was raised by a number of participants. I wonder how strongly this remains an expressed desire in newly evangelized areas of the world.

KENNETH J. HEZEL, S.J.
Tamuning, Guam

Tongue-Tied

In your issue of 5/11 (Letters), Bishop Sylvester D. Ryan comments that there are some active bishops who strongly support the president of the University of Notre Dame in the controversy over Barack Obama’s commencement address there. Perhaps as we approach the feast of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit will give them the courage to speak out.

JOHN M. YOUNG
Dix Hills, N.Y.

Disappointing

Your recent editorial “Sectarian Catholicism” (5/11) grievously disappoints, because it does not weigh rightly the evil of abortion or the power of elected officials, and because it mistakenly equates the actions of the pope in receiving officials of state with inviting them on his own initiative or conferring honors upon them.

Our mission, and that of all others who do recognize the terrible evil of abortion, must be to give that witness, peacefully and courteously but firmly,

to the entire nation. The church (including its universities) should not be perceived as a great tent where good and evil are enthroned equally, each making its own cause for acceptance. This is not simply a debate about prudential decisions regarding church policies in the public forum.

Also, the pope does not invite advocates of one grave evil or another to share a prestigious role in his ministry or to be honored by him. Such persons may seek to meet with him as a head of state (which he is), and if they are so identified with evil practices, the pope will exhort them (as he has) in a manner that takes account of their position, responsibilities and commitment to safeguard human life and human dignity.

(REV.) DANIEL S. HAMILTON
Lindenhurst, N.Y.

Slash and Burn

Bravo to your editors for the editorial on sectarian Catholics (5/11)! While hyper-Republicans slash and burn to make political points, and our bishops either play along or are ominously silent, the church’s hold on Americans continues to erode (as documented in “Slowing the Exodus,” by John J. DiIulio Jr., in the same issue). Catholics of all political persuasions need to put their faith first and let their politics follow.

A way to do this—and to provide a true and compelling witness to our culture and to the ever-increasing numbers of former Catholics—is to renounce violence in all situations, from abortion to the death penalty, from war to assisted suicide, from destruction of embryos to destruction of the environment. There is plenty in Catholic social teaching to argue for such a comprehensive approach. Christ did not teach that only the “innocent” have to be protected while everyone else is fair game for “prudential” violence.

We need at least some of our cardi-

nals and bishops to step front-and-center and speak out for a comprehensive “culture of life,” an approach faithful in all respects to Pope John Paul II’s vision. Except on abortion, so much of what the Catholic Church in the United States is doing on a wide variety of issues is practically secret. Can anyone lead us forward from this state of stagnation and decline?

MARK E. RONDEAU
North Adams, Mass.

Ears to Hear

I am proud of your magazine for its editorial on those who are so sure of what it means to be a Catholic and so certain of what is intrinsically evil (5/11). I found the following particularly insightful: “For today’s sectarians, it is not adherence to the church’s doctrine on the evil of abortion that counts for orthodoxy, but adherence to a particular political program and fierce opposition to any proposal short of that program.”

At the recent 35th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus, its members were encouraged to “go to the frontiers,” to address the more challenging issues facing us, and your editorial does this.

Could I humbly suggest that the church envision structures that will make dialogue among all groups in the church more rational and loving? There seem to be many voices in the church today, but where are the ears?

BENJAMIN J. URMSTON, S.J.
Cincinnati, Ohio

Fair Play

Perhaps the University of Notre Dame could have invited Bishop Richard Williamson of the Society of St. Pius X to speak at its commencement, and given him an honorary degree. When the expected complaints started rolling in, I would look to your magazine to champion his right to receive it. Or not.

LEONARD NUGENT
Oak Ridge, Tenn.

America (ISSN 0002-7049) is published weekly (except for 13 combined issues: Jan. 5-12, 19-26, March 30-April 6, April 20-27, May 25-June 1, June 8-15, 22-29, July 6-13, 20-27, Aug. 3-10, 17-24, Aug. 31-Sept. 7, Dec. 21-28) by America Press, Inc., 106 West 56th Street, New York, NY 10019. Periodicals postage is paid at New York, N.Y., and additional mailing offices. Business Manager: Lisa Pope; Circulation: Judith Palmer, (212) 581-4640. Subscriptions: United States, \$48 per year; add U.S. \$22 postage and GST (#131870719) for Canada; or add U.S. \$32 per year for overseas surface postage. For overseas airmail delivery, please call for rates. Postmaster: Send address changes to: America, 106 West 56th St. New York, NY 10019. Printed in the U.S.A.

Empowering Spirit

PENTECOST (B), MAY 31, 2009

Readings: Acts 2:1-11; Ps 104:1, 24, 29-34; 1 Cor 12:3-7, 12-13; Jn 20:19-23

“And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:4)

Like a faceted gem whose brilliance takes different contours when examined from distinct angles, today’s readings open up multiple dimensions of meaning for the feast of Pentecost. The gift of the Spirit to the disciples is one more facet of the ineffable mystery that encompasses Jesus’ passion, death, resurrection, ascension and glorification. For the Fourth Evangelist these all occur in one instant. Luke, in contrast, narrates each of these as a separate event, with precise time markers. He tells of resurrection appearances that took place over 40 days before the ascension (Acts 1:3). Now on Pentecost, literally the 50th day after Passover, the gift of the Spirit comes with audible and visible signs.

In Luke’s infancy narrative, all the characters are filled with the Spirit: John the Baptist (1:15, 17), Mary (1:35), Elizabeth (1:41), Zechariah (1:67) and Simeon (2:25-27). But once Jesus begins his ministry, only he is said to be empowered by the Holy Spirit. Now, on Pentecost, his followers receive this gift. Its first manifestation is facile communication across boundaries of difference. In Jerusalem there are Jewish residents (*katoikountes* means residents, not visitors for the feast) from every nation, and each understands in his or her native language. Luke gives us a powerful image of unity created when preachers,

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teachers and catechists, gifted by the Spirit, adopt the culture and language of those with whom they share the good news.

In the Gospel of John, the Spirit is handed over at the moment of Jesus’ death: Jesus declares, “It is finished,” and simultaneously he “handed over the Spirit” (19:30). This expression is not a euphemism for death; it is nowhere used that way in Scripture or in secular Greek literature. Again at 20:22 Jesus breathes on the disciples on Easter evening, saying, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” He revivifies them in a way that recalls the Creator bringing to life the first human being by blowing into the nostrils the breath of life (Gn 2:7).



The risen Christ passes through locked doors and empowers the disciples with the Spirit to continue his mission of unlocking with the gift of forgiveness any hearts bound in fear. The offer of forgiveness does not erase or make light of the wounds that have been inflicted, but it surrounds the woundedness with a power that moves toward healing and peace. The Spirit also enables the community of believers to hold on to each member and not lose anyone. In the second half of v. 23 there is no word “sins” in the Greek text. It does not speak of retaining “sins” of others, but of a Spirit-enabled power to retain every beloved one, just as Jesus did not let a single one be lost.

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- What gifts has the Spirit given you for welcoming the stranger by learning their ways of hearing the Gospel?
- Ask the Spirit to help you claim the gift of forgiveness and the power not to let go any of God’s beloved.

ART: TAD DUNNE

Circles of Love

MOST HOLY TRINITY (B), JUNE 7, 2009

Readings: Dt 4:32-34, 39-40; Ps 33:4-9, 18-22; Rom 8:14-17; Mt 28:16-20

“I am with you always” (Mt 28:20)

Go only “to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” was Jesus’ firm instruction to the disciples when he first sent them out on mission (Mt 10:6). Later, when a Canaanite woman pleaded with Jesus to heal her daughter, he again declared

that he was sent “only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (15:24). His concern was to feed his own people (15:26), and he did not see her as one of them. Her respectful and insistent response in word and gesture, however, helped trigger a profound change in

Jesus' understanding of the scope of his mission. At the end of the Gospel, he commissions his disciples to go everywhere, making disciples of all nations (28:19).

A similarly profound shift occurred in the life of the apostle Paul, who went from persecuting Christians who were reinterpreting the parameters of the family of God, to being the most ardent proponent of the inclusion of all. By the time Paul writes to the community in Rome in the late 60s, he is able to say that all who are led by the Spirit are "children of God." This same expression had been used of the Israelites (Dt 14:1). Paul presses the metaphor further, insisting that all these varied children of God are not just appendages to the family, but are full and true heirs. Being a full member of the family and an heir means inheriting the pattern of life set by Jesus: a life of loving service that is costly, but which ends in glorious transformation.

The relationship between parents and children who are full heirs is only one metaphor by which to speak of the mysterious love of the Trinity. Augustine liked to speak of the three persons as "Lover, Beloved, and Love." Hildegard of Bingen favored "Fire, Burning, and Flashing

Forth." One might name them "Eternal Giver, Receiver and Outburst of Joy." There is no limit to the ways we can speak of the profound mystery of the Three in One. The three persons are a communion of love that interweave each other in endless patterns of saving activity.

The first reading today assures us that the mystery of the divine love is not something that remains nebulous and intangible. Rather, the saving activity of God is concrete and visible both in great moments and in the routines of everyday life. Jesus' promise "I am with you always" (Mt 28:20) assures all God's Spirit-led children in every race and nation that the divine presence continues to create, save and vivify whenever we allow it free rein to draw us into the Trinity's ever-expanding circles of love.

BARBARA E. REID

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- Talk with Jesus about the ways you see "outsiders." What could turn your heart to see them as one of God's beloved children?
- What names capture best for you the ever-expanding communion of love that is the Trinity? Try out a new name for the Three in One in your prayer.



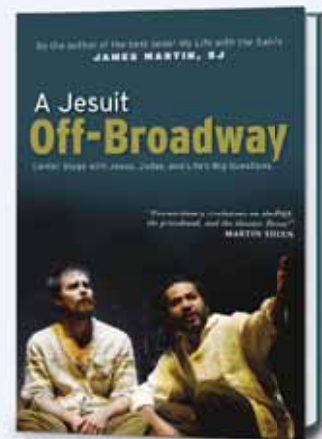
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When elected to the Secretary-Generalship in 1997, Mr. Annan became the first Secretary-General chosen directly from the United Nations staff, and the first from a black African nation. On Dec. 10, 2001, Annan and the United Nations received the Nobel Peace Prize. Since leaving the United Nations, Mr. Annan was appointed Chairman of the Board of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, the Africa Progress Panel, the Global Humanitarian Forum and the Mo Ibrahim Prize Committee for Achievement in African Leadership. Mr. Annan has also established his Kofi Annan Foundation in Geneva and is a member of the Elders.

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