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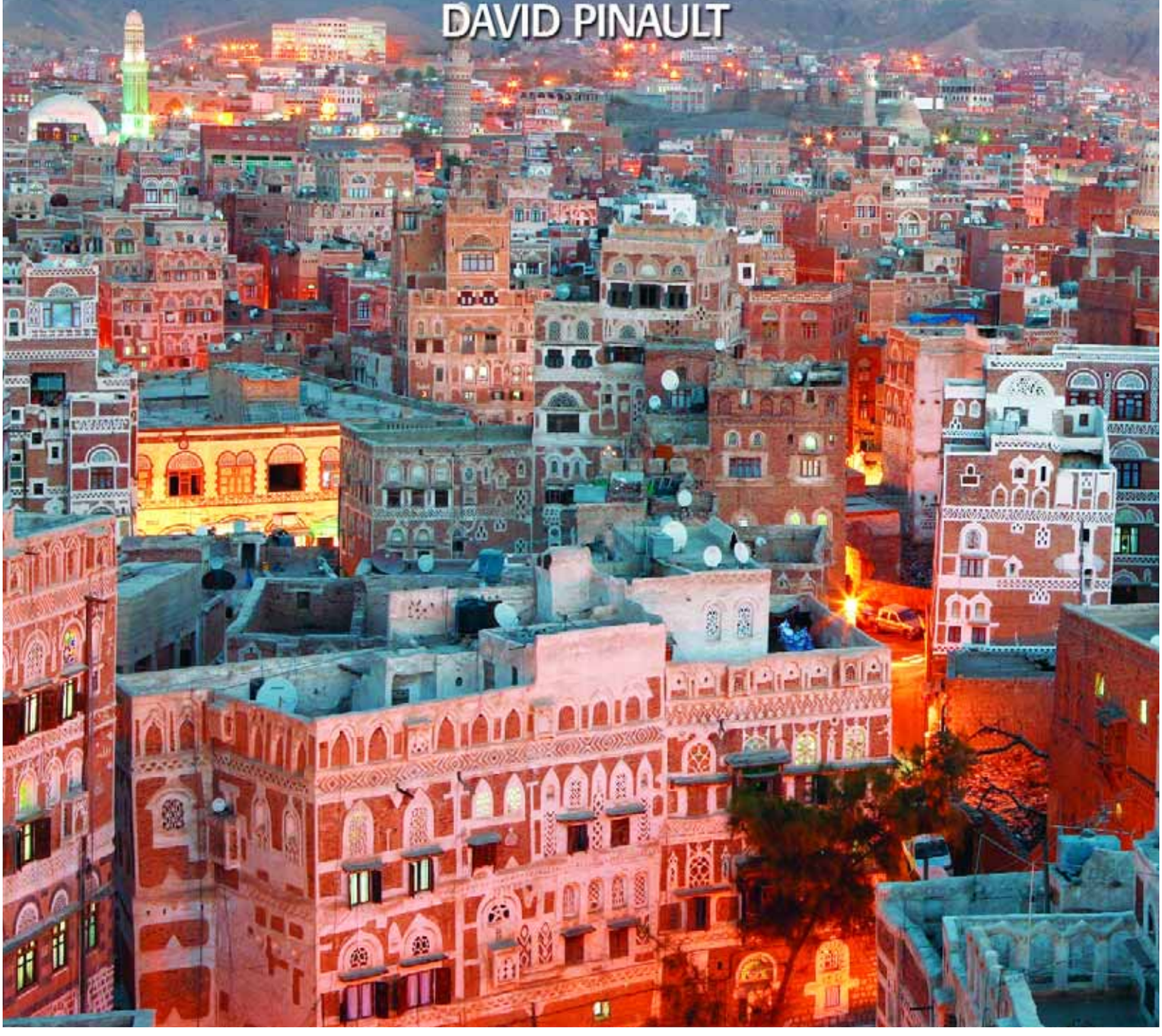
Hidden Prayer in Yemen

DAVID PINAULT



OF MANY THINGS

"Do you keep a journal?" When someone recently asked me this question, my reply was, "Well, in a way." The way consists mostly of jotting down notes about small observations caught on the fly that seem worth remembering. Scraps of blank paper kept in my back pocket for immediate access and ballpoint pens in a side pocket serve as my on-the-move writing equipment. If later in the day, at my desk, I tried to recall what I had noticed without these scraps of paper, I would probably have forgotten or would be too busy then to jot down the observations. The slips eventually become a journal, because sooner or later I staple them into a spiral notebook, messy-looking perhaps, but nonetheless a record of daily events.

Since I spend much time on the subway commuting to and from America House, many of the slips concern fellow passengers, especially those who have nowhere else to sleep. Some spend their nights there, either in the car itself or on a bench on the platform, or even on the floor. Such an environment is relatively safe, but it is a sad one too, in that it highlights the situation of those who are both homeless and, in many cases, mentally ill.

Very early one recent morning, I sat opposite a middle aged man in sandals and painted toenails leaning against the rear wall of a car in restless slumber, turning from side to side. Beside him was a child's stroller with a battered red suitcase on top. Abandoned strollers provide many homeless people with the means to transport their meager possessions from place to place.

Another early morning encounter, again at the end of the car, the safest section for many, was with an Asian woman. Neither asleep nor awake, she dozed opposite me, leaning against her own accumulated possessions. An abandoned luggage cart held what could not fit into the cloth bags behind her on the seat. Leaning back against the bags as a kind of huge cushion, she kept a wary eye on a man standing at the double doors waiting to leave at an upcoming stop.

Such sights can lead to anger that those in positions of authority do relatively little for this fragile population. But seeing them can also lead to prayer, the kind that comes from an awareness that afflicted human beings like these draw God down to them with the assurance of an eternal love. Little wonder that Jesus speaks of the last as becoming first when they leave this earth.

One recent morning I sat opposite a neatly dressed young man with his backpack on his lap. On top of it was an open paperback Bible. After finishing the section he was reading, he removed his glasses and carefully put them back in his breast pocket. The surprise for me was his youth and the attentiveness that marked his reading.

The early morning hours also see Post Office workers heading to their jobs, both men and women, in their blue pants with black stripes. Still, the unusual sights stand out most, and often they serve as examples of unexpected kindness. Once I noticed an older woman who, approached by a much younger one requesting money, offered to leave the subway at the older woman's stop and buy the younger one a full meal. The young woman accepted and both got off at West Fourth Street. Then there is the ever-familiar sight of a stranger helping a young mother carry a baby carriage up or down a steep set of subway stairs. Not unusual, but heartening nevertheless.

Subways are indeed a microcosm of the world, with its enormous diversity. Now and then I look back through my journal entries on those small slips of paper to remind myself of the world's needs and sorrows, but also of its occasional generosity.

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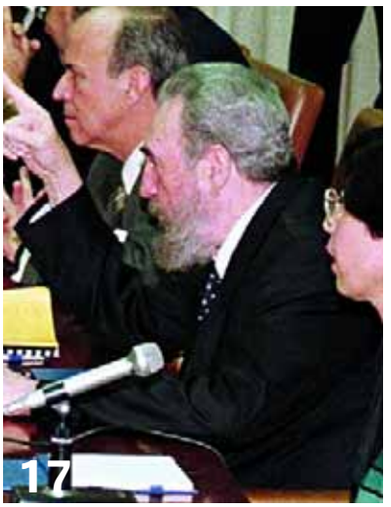

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The Nigerian author **Uwem Akpan, S.J.**, describes his method for writing fiction on our podcast, and from the archives, **Ivan Illich** on the failures of missionary work in Latin America. Plus, the first in a series of **Advent video reflections.** All at americamagazine.org.

A Good Death

It is generally understood that, like people, institutions also have lives, go through growth spurts, weather transitions and endure crises. During bleak periods it seems that institutions also face death. Last year a few Wall Street giants died in their sleep, not painless deaths, but lives snuffed out in the night. Some deaths are slow. Centuries of predictions of the church's demise still ring hollow, but religious life as the church has known it appears to be struggling for breath. As the sisters and brothers in religious congregations ask themselves, "Have we fulfilled God's purpose?" most Catholics would answer with a grateful, resounding yes. Religious communities may be at a turning point or a natural endpoint—the flower's death in due time, one lovely bloom off the rose of the church for now.

What are the hallmarks of a good death, institutionally speaking? News of the closure of the National Pastoral Life Center in New York on Nov. 30 prompts the question. Surely a good death includes having had some success toward a worthy goal. The N.P.L.C., founded by Msgr. Philip J. Murnion 25 years ago, aimed to support the church's parish ministry by attending to its leaders. The center faithfully served dioceses and parish leaders—pastors and staff primarily, but also core parishioners who came to its conferences and read its magazine, Church. The center did not long survive its founder's death. The center's considerable achievements deserve to be acknowledged and remembered. Two continue: the Catholic Common Ground Initiative moves to the Cardinal Joseph Bernardin Center for Theology and Ministry at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. The Roundtable for Diocesan Social Action Directors will be relocated in the Baltimore/Washington area. Who will now focus their energies on supporting parish leaders?

The Geography of Justice

Depending upon whom you consult, the federal courthouse in lower Manhattan, just blocks from ground zero, is either the best or the worst place to try Khalid Shaikh Mohammed and four other accused terrorist co-conspirators. Attorney General Eric Holder's announcement on Nov. 13 about plans for the trials of the 9/11 suspects set off a fierce debate over the proper location and type of trial.

By opting for a civilian trial, the Obama administration is definitively repudiating the Bush policy of circumventing civilian courts and relying on offshore detention locations (including Guantánamo Bay) and military commissions to try suspected terrorists. A civilian trial in any venue risks giving the suspects a platform for inflammatory rhetoric against the United States. The likelihood of such a publicity nightmare is bolstered by the treatment these suspects have received while in U.S. custody, including repeated waterboarding.

Raw geography has shaped the debate in New York itself. Local opponents of the decision cite the fear of reopening deep wounds that survivors of the terrorist attacks and the families of victims can scarcely bear. And could a pool of New Yorkers yield truly impartial jurors?

Most opponents of civilian trials object to offering the standard protections of the American criminal justice system to these particular defendants. But is it really possible to construct a coherent argument that starts with the premise that certain criminals do not deserve the routine due process rights found in U.S. law? That question directs attention back to the shadowy legal territory between the categories of enemy combatant and domestic criminal. Perhaps Manhattan turns out to be the perfect showplace of American justice. Let the trials begin.

Inquiring Minds

The Medill Innocence Project at Northwestern University has been widely praised for its work investigating the wrongful prosecution of criminal defendants. Thanks to research conducted by journalism students at Medill, 11 prisoners have been exonerated, including five who were on death row. Now the Innocence Project is the focus of an inquiry conducted by the Cook County prosecutor's office. Officials are seeking access to student notes and class curriculum materials related to an investigation that lead to the exoneration of Anthony McKinney, who was serving a life sentence. Prosecutors contend that students conducted their research in an improper manner and that although they later published an article on the case, the class materials they used are not protected by the laws that shield professional journalists. (The Chicago Sun-Times ultimately published an article based in part on the students' research.)

The passage of a proposed federal shield law that seeks to protect freelancers and bloggers as well as traditional reporters would be an important step toward clarifying the status of all working journalists. The Medill Innocence Project is proof that important work can be done by any reporter with the right blend of curiosity and determination. Whether a reporter's work appears in print or online or simply serves as a catalyst for other journalists should not diminish the writer's legal protections.

EDITORIAL

Up or Out

Afghanistan, we are told, is the "graveyard of empires." Visitors to the recent roving exhibit "Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures From the National Museum, Kabul" will know that description is an exaggeration. For Alexander the Great and his followers, it turns out, established colonial cities across northern and western Afghanistan. So not every foreign expedition has stumbled into disaster, like the ill-fated British and Indian troops annihilated in 1842 in the First Afghan War. Nonetheless, today Afghanistan does represent an extraordinary military and diplomatic challenge for the United States. The terrain is rugged, the climate inhospitable to invading armies. Its population consists of at least nine ethnic groups who speak more than 30 languages. Its tribal culture is, to put it kindly, highly defensive and its people skilled in irregular warfare. When the illegitimacy and corruption of the government in Kabul and the weakness of its police and military are added in, waging a counter-insurgency/counter-terrorism campaign in Afghanistan is a test of extraordinary complexity.

President Obama's long, drawn-out deliberation on Afghan strategy is not just due to his rational temperament, as his kinder critics have suggested. It is demanded by the multiple challenges Afghanistan presents any outside power seeking to shape events in what Maryann Cusimano Love aptly called "a fictional state" (**Am**. 11/16). In this context, deliberation is an asset, but it cannot assure a happy outcome. Whatever the strategy, however focused the goals, war and nation-building are both chancy undertakings. The principal issue that we believe should be weighed as the nation moves ahead is the human capacity of the U.S. military to wage this war.

Military capacity is far more than mere numbers. For one, the same men and women have been at war in Iraq and Afghanistan for several years—for three, four, five rotations. Never has a U.S. army served so long in the field. The toll on the troops and their families is enormous. Military suicides are at the highest level ever. The Medical Corps and the Veterans Administration are struggling to cope with the high number of active and retired soldiers and Marines afflicted with post-traumatic stress disorder. The Defense Department itself worries about the effects of extended deployments on the judgment and behavior of its personnel in the field, and with reluctance it has repeatedly lowered the qualifications for enlistees. Can we continue to ask the same men and women to bear the burdens of conflict year after year? Can we afford to have volunteers who are less qualified physically and educationally to wage a conflict as complex as this?

President Obama should be taken at his word when he says he puts the welfare of our men and women in uniform at the forefront of his duties as commander in chief. Continuation and expansion of the U.S. involvement in Afghanistan is likely to stress the military beyond the breaking point. Generals were talking four year ago of the need to rebuild capacity and morale. The only way we see to provide the personnel for a protracted engagement in Afghanistan is the renewal of the draft—for both men and women—perhaps within a program of compulsory national service. There will be objections about the time it will take to gear up to train new personnel, about the risk of the country turning against the war out of resistance to a draft. But a renewed draft is the only way to provide fresh troops of sufficient talent for this special battlefield. If it will take too long to train them, then we must face the conclusion that we are not up to the protracted struggle we face in Afghanistan. If a draft is unacceptable to Congress and the public, then we ought to admit our grasp has exceeded our reach and resign with honor as the world's policeman.

What's more, the fight in Afghanistan requires a restructuring of the military. General Stanley McChrystal's recommendations include an overlooked passage noting that the composition of forces needs to change. We need many more translators and cultural experts among their numbers. Even if these specialists were to be trained up from among the present personnel, we would not have them in time to see a near-term reversal of negative trends in the field. The troops, moreover, have not proved they will respect the specialists and work with them effectively, another task that will require long-term commitment. There are grave reasons to remain engaged in this conflict, but if we lack the capacity we need for the long haul, if we are unwilling to expand the circle of sacrifice more broadly within the country, then we should not ask our weary volunteer military personnel, many of them members of the National Guard and the Reserves, to fight it for us. Willingness to accept a draft is the test of the nation's commitment to what is coming to look like a war without end.

HUNGER

Pope Benedict Addresses Food Security at U.N. Conference

The U.N.-sponsored World Summit on Food Security in Rome ended Nov. 18 leaving many participants frustrated with the lack of progress on food security goals. Few high-level representatives from the developed world attended the meeting, and the only G8 head of state at the conference was the host nation's prime minister, Silvio Berlusconi.

The conference, organized by the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization, gathered delegates from around the world to identify concrete solutions to end hunger and malnutrition and discuss practical strategies aimed at stabilizing food prices after last year's disastrous and deadly escalation in basic commodity prices. Many attendees suggested the summit fell far short of achieving such goals. Some food security advocates were hoping the summit would be used to elevate and specify hunger and production goals. Among their specific goals were curtailing first world subsidies, formally committing the U.N. member states to eradicating global hunger completely by 2025 and increasing aid to developing world farmers to $44 billion annually. Instead, vague assurances to "substantially increase" agriculture aid were made, and the draft resolution merely restated the U.N. Millennium Development Goal of halving world hunger by 2015 and called for eradicating hunger "at the earliest possible date."

Representatives from the Catholic international development agencies Cidse and Caritas Internationalis were particularly critical of the conference outcome. A joint statement on Nov. 16 read: "The World Food Summit has failed to produce a concrete agenda for moving away from business as usual, even as the number of hungry in the world continues to rise."

Pope Benedict XVI spoke at the summit's opening. "Hunger is the most cruel and concrete sign of pover-

ROME

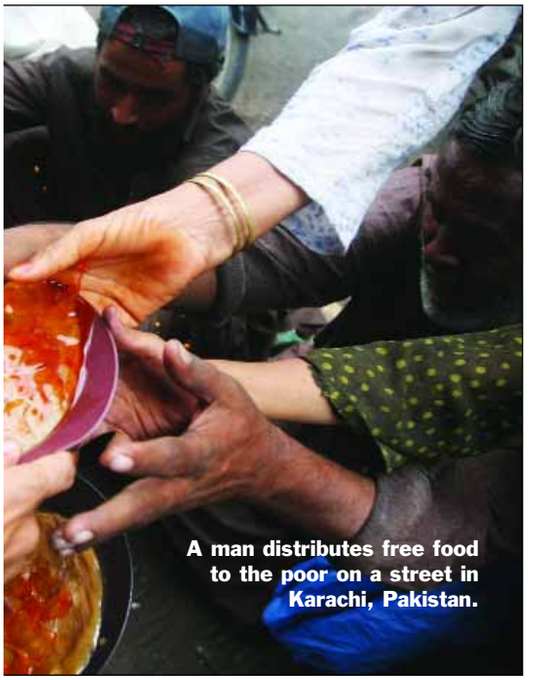
Glass Half Full: Anglican Leader, Vatican Official Assess Ecumenism

Archbishop Rowan Williams, spiritual leader of the Anglican Communion, said the ecumenical situation really is a "glass half full." He then held his water glass up to emphasize the point during a lecture at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome on Nov. 19. Even in the wake of Pope Benedict XVI's special provisions for Anglicans who want to leave Archbishop Williams's flock and join the Roman Catholic Church, his assessment of Catholic-Anglican relations seemed to surprise some people in the audience.

But they showed less surprise at remarks about what the next steps in ecumenical dialogue should be. Anglicans and Roman Catholics—indeed, all Christians engaged in ecumenical dialogue over the last 40 years—the archbishop said, need to ask themselves if the doctrines and practices still dividing them are anywhere near as important as the essential dogmas they share. His remarks came on the evening before beginning a series of meetings with Vatican officials and with Pope Benedict.

Cardinal Walter Kasper, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, also spoke on Nov. 19, and he affirmed the Catholic Church's commitment to continuing the search for full unity. "Ecumenism has a future, not because we want it, but because Jesus Christ wants it and because his spirit helps us in our commitment," he said. "The Catholic Church cannot simply stop and wait," he said. "It has a special responsibility. Its unique ecumenical responsibility comes, paradoxically, from the Petrine ministry [the ministry of the pope], which often is seen as the main obstacle for unity, but which understands itself as a ministry of unity."

As for the questions still dividing



A man distributes free food to the poor on a street in Karachi, Pakistan.

ty," he said. "Opulence and waste are no longer acceptable when the tragedy of hunger is assuming ever greater proportions." The pope called for greater action in creating "a network of economic institutions capable of guaranteeing regular access to sufficient food and water." He also argued that countries must "oppose those forms of aid that do grave damage to the agricultural sector, those approaches to food production that are geared solely towards consumption and lack a wider perspective, and especially greed, which causes speculation to rear its head even in the marketing of cereals, as if food were to be treated just like any other commodity."

In an era of climate change uncertainty and population concentrations in the poorest regions of the world, food security advocates say agricultural production must be improved as much as 70 percent by 2050. In addition, the environmental and human impact of existing industrial-modeled agricultural methods must be mitigated or reduced. According to the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization, more than one billion people are undernourished and one child dies every six seconds because of malnutrition.

Michael O'Brien from Ireland's Trocaire, a Caritas Internationalis member agency, blamed lack of political leadership "particularly on the part of G8 countries," for the summit's lackluster results.

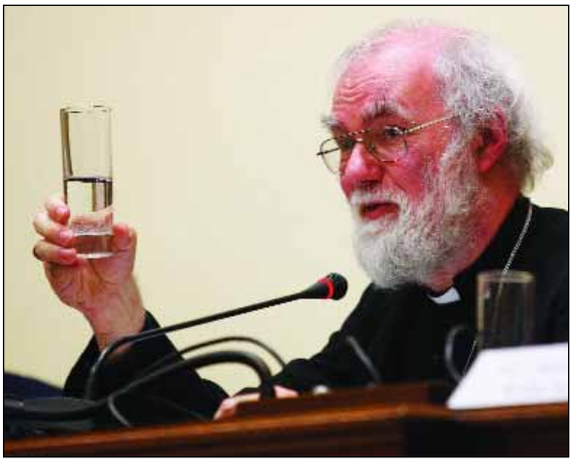
O'Brien is a strong advocate for redirecting institutional and financial resources to small-scale, sustainable farmers as the best means not only of combating hunger but also of improving living standards in the developing world. "Current food, agriculture and trade policies have promoted monocropping and export-oriented production," he said, "which have led to the reduction of agricultural biodiversity, undermined soil and landscape structures and threatened the use of [ecologically sustainable] practices." He said, "The experience of countries that have succeeded in reducing hunger and malnutrition shows that economic growth originating in agriculture, in particular the smallholder sector, is at least twice as effective in benefiting the poorest as growth from non-agriculture sectors."

Catholics and Anglicans, including the ordination of women, Cardinal Kasper told reporters, "We have to distinguish between differences that are contradictory and differences that are complementary. Complementary differences can exist in the church."

During their meeting, the archbishop and Vatican officials were expected to make final preparations for the third round of meetings of the formal Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, the official group for theological dialogue.

Archbishop Williams said that "for many Anglicans, not ordaining women has a possible unwelcome implication about the difference between baptized men and baptized women," a difference that is not made in any creed or fundamental statement of Christian faith.

The Anglican leader said the disagreements within the Anglican Communion over ordaining women obviously have caused internal tensions, but Anglicans still are seeking ways to preserve their unity without forcing those who have opposing views out of the communion. "And if it can be managed within the Anglican family, is this a possible model for the wider ecumenical scene?" he asked.



The "ecumenical glass is genuinely half full," according to Anglican Archbishop Rowan.

From CNS and other sources.

Catholic Charities Work Continues in D.C.

Auxiliary Bishop Barry C. Knestout of Washington said despite news reports to the contrary, "Catholic Charities is vowing to continue its services even if a same-sex marriage bill passes" in the District of Columbia's City Council. Bishop Knestout made the commitment in an open letter to local Catholics posted on the Web site of The Catholic Standard, Washington's archdiocesan newspaper. The bishop said the level of services will not be the same, though, because "without a meaningful religious exemption in the bill, Catholic Charities and other similar religious providers will become ineligible for contracts, grants and licenses to continue those services." Archdiocesan officials and other religious leaders in the district have said that if the council is going to pass the measure despite their objections, then it must include strong protections for religious conscience. Catholic Charities currently serves 68,000 people in the city, including one-third of Washing-ton's homeless.

AIDS Work Aims to Promote Dignity

The work of the Catholic Church in Africa to stem the spread of H.I.V. and to care for people living with AIDS is designed to respect the dignity and life of each person and to show solidarity with everyone in need, said the moderator of the Jesuit superiors in Africa and Madagascar. In a statement prepared for the commemoration of World AIDS Day on Dec. 1, Fratern Masawe, S.J., said that when AIDS first began to afflict Africa 25 years ago, "few of us reacted well. People who were H.I.V.-positive or suffered from AIDS could easily find themselves condemned, rejected, cast out and treated 'as good as dead.'" Over the years since, Catholic agencies have worked to prevent the spread of H.I.V., defend the dignity of people who are H.I.V.-positive and offer medical treatment and other assistance to those living with AIDS.

Report From U.S. Bishops' General Assembly

The U.S. Catholic bishops wrapped up a busy fall meeting in Baltimore on Nov. 16 to 19, during which:

• The bishops overwhelmingly approved a revision to the directives that guide Catholic health care facilities. New language clarifies that patients with chronic conditions who are not imminently dying should receive food and water by "medically assisted" means if they cannot take them normally. "This obligation extends to patients in chronic and presumably irreversible conditions (e.g., the 'persistent vegetative state') who can reasonably be expected to live indefinitely if given such care."

• The bishops approved with minimal discussion the English translation and U.S. adaptations of five final sections of the Roman Missal. The Vatican's Congregation for Divine Worship now must grant its *recognitio*, or approval, to allow the translations to proceed.

• The bishops approved a document criticizing some reproductive technologies to address infertility. "Life-Giving Love in an Age of Technology" rejected the use of donor eggs or sperm as well as surrogate motherhood, artificial insemination, in vitro fertilization and human cloning.

Karen Terry, from the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, reports to the bishops.

• The bishops heard an interim report from an ongoing study of the causes and contexts of sexual abuse by priests conducted by researchers from New York's John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Researchers told the bishops: "We do not find a connection between homosexual identity and the increased likelihood of subsequent abuse from the data that we have right now." They reported that the rise in sexual abuse cases in the 1960s and a decrease in the 1980s track with other behavioral changes during the same period.

• Another study reported that religious orders were shrinking in size and their members aging fast. Paul Bednarczyk, a Holy Cross brother who is executive director of the National Religious Vocations Conference, called the results of the study "Recent Vocations to Religious Life," conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University, "sobering." Brother Bednarczyk said the study found the number of men and women in religious life has decreased by 63 percent since the peak in the mid-1960s and that about 75 percent of the men and more than 90 percent of women religious are age 60 or older.

THOMAS MASSARO

Moving Goals

"When you are up to your neck in alligators, it is hard to remember that you were sent there to drain the swamp."

This colorful expression of folk wisdom points in several directions simultaneously. The adage prompts reflection, above all, on a phenomenon commonly known as "mission creep."

Recent foreign policy discussions on Iraq and especially Afghanistan routinely include references to mission creep. In each case U.S. military forces were sent abroad to accomplish one thing (topple Saddam Hussein, flush out Al Qaeda) but wound up engaged in a variety of activities that far exceeded the original mission. Some commentators deride as meddlesome nation-building the same contribution to physical and societal infrastructure that others praise as an exercise of fitting responsibility ("You break it, you own it").

Faith-based initiatives are another area where pundits wring hands over the threat of mission creep. If a charitable agency under religious auspices accepts public funding as a social service provider, the agency is obliged to abide by regulations and to measure outcomes in ways that raise the specter of mission creep. The fear of insidious shifts in priorities has deterred the administrators of some church-based programs from seeking out "charitable choice" funding for which they are fully eligible.

I recently received a letter from a Catholic sister seeking ethical advice about coping with mission creep. Her monastery has been so successful in producing high-quality (and delicious, I can attest) food products that the burgeoning production enterprise is threatening to distort the way the sisters spend their time and focus their energies. The sisters need to make a living, my correspondent explained, but greatly fear compromising their single-hearted devotion to prayer and contemplation. Without vigilance against mission creep, the very enterprise designed to support their livelihood may end up disrupting their lifestyle.

This episode recalls how Thomas Merton lamented (even cursed) the success of his monastery's industry of mail-order fruitcakes and other foods. The business of keeping up with ever-growing demand struck Merton as a distraction from what really should have been going on at the Abbey of Gethsemani. Ever the gadfly, Merton even wrote a satiric poem comparing the monastery's cheese factory to the tower of Babel.

Mission creep comes in many varieties, of course, so it is essential to calibrate one's response to the particular challenge at hand. For those two monasteries, some bold lines needed to be drawn to preserve a way of life against harmful incursions. Merton's playful mocking of incongruities he perceived seem pitch perfect as a reminder to his fellow monks of the proper values to be safeguarded. Fighting mission creep here is a matter of avoiding distractions and gaining awareness of human folly.

But there is nothing even remotely funny about the cases of Iraq and Afghanistan. The varieties of mission creep in each of these distinct instances present complex challenges for military planners. The landscape of each country is dotted with moral dilemmas. No course of U.S. action at the present crossroads can possibly preserve the full range of values and meet all the objectives worth achieving. An overly hasty retreat means turning our backs on struggling people and fragile systems of governance, but an indefinite occupation will be costly and probably unsustainable.

Jesus sought solitude in order to remain focused on carefully chosen goals.

Might the Gospels supply some guidance here? As usual with matters of public policy, not much light is shed by appeal to the simplistic question, What would Jesus do? Some Christians might imagine the earthly life of their savior to be characterized by frenetic activity, indeed by a high tolerance for mission creep, as he repeatedly responded to an array of urgent human needs in his public ministry. But for every passage portraying Jesus as prone to distraction and stretching his efforts to the limits of human endurance, there is another about Jesus pulling back for prayer and solitude in order to remain focused on carefully chosen goals.

Which is the real Jesus? The Gospels neither resolve that tension nor provide a detailed blueprint for dealing with mission creep in foreign policy or elsewhere. Once again, we are left to drain the swamp and cope with the alligators by our own lights.

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Christian and Muslim men in prayer

ISLAM AND THE PROBLEM OF RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

Hidden Prayer in Yemen

BY DAVID PINAULT

Christians in Sanaa, the capital city in Yemen, cannot pray in church. They must congregate in secret in their homes, and non-Christian Yemenis are monitored to ensure that they do not attend. During a recent visit to the country, I attended many of these clandestine services and watched with admiration as both foreigners and local Yemenis sought ways to practice their faith in a hostile environment.

Unfortunately, the plight of Christians in Yemen is not unique. In Iraq, Saudia Arabia and other countries in the Muslim world, freedom of worship is severely restricted, and the number of Christians has dwindled. The values of pluralism and diversity are dismissed in favor of a strict adherence to the rule of the Koran, which sees any visible Christian presence as an attempt at evangelization. Yemen is emblematic of an Islamic culture that fails to see the spiritual growth that can come from encounters with people of other faiths.

It was not always this way. One can still find traces of ancient Christian worship in Sanaa, at a site known as the Qalis. Finding it takes work. Walk through the alleys of Sanaa's Souq al-Milh (Salt Market) until you reach the eastern edge of the walled Old City. You will have to ask as you go for the Qalis: no placards or street signs identify the site. But 15 centuries ago it was something splendid. King Abrahah, a Christian from Ethiopia, ordered a church for pilgrims built in Sanaa within sight of the desert hills of Mount Nuqum. The building site was linked to a Christian Arabian legend. Locals believe that Jesus paused in Sanaa to pray during his journey in the wilderness prior to his public ministry.

The Qalis was built to dazzle. The 13th-century Muslim geographer Abd

PHOTO: REUTERS/KHALED AL-HARIRI

DAVID PINAULT *is an associate professor of religious studies at Santa Clara University, in Calif., and author of* Notes from the Fortune-Telling Parrot: Islam and the Struggle for Religious Pluralism in Pakistan *(Equinox Publishing).*

Allah Yaqut described the church as it looked in Abrahah's time: pulpits of ivory and ebony, crosses of silver and gold, walls of stone taken from the palace of Bilqees, queen of Sheba. Abrahah hoped the Qalis would rival Mecca's Kaaba shrine as a venue for pilgrims. But with Islam's triumph the church was looted, its pillars plundered to build Sanaa's Great Mosque. According to Yaqut, the wasteland around the deserted Qalis became the lair of lions, snakes and demonic jinns.

What is left is marked by a seven-foot-high circular wall that segregates the site from modern Sanaa. Climb this wall and you will gaze down into a pit that plunges 20 feet below street level. Today it is a garbage dump, its surface littered with tires and plastic bottles.

Praying in Secret

Christian worship persists in 21st-century Yemen in the form of secret house-church gatherings. Typically these are held on Friday mornings, the Muslim day of congregational prayer, when everyone is free from work. The services take place discreetly in rooms and private homes. The gatherings I attended were small—sometimes as few as three or four persons, never more than 25. What they lacked in number they made up for in fervor. The services featured singing, clapping, cries of petition and prayers of thanksgiving for the companionship of Jesus. "Here, in a Muslim country, we don't take our Christianity for granted," one participant said. "Here, with these small communities meeting 'underground,' the original spirit of Christianity can be revived."

The worshippers were both foreigners and long-term residents—nurses, teachers and physicians; aid workers engaged in projects involving water management, literacy or public health. Some came from Europe or America, but most were from Nigeria, the Philippines, Indonesia, Korea, India or East Africa. Some were charismatics, others evangelicals and fundamentalists of various denominations—very much a reflection, I thought, of the dynamic and expanding church worldwide.

Given this variety, some tension was inevitable. When I identified myself as a Catholic at one service, a self-described "born-again believer" replied that she used to be Catholic but now was a true Christian. Our host immediately reminded everyone that we should focus on our shared devotion to Christ.

Such a focus is appropriate, given the challenges facing Christians in Yemen. The government does not prohibit foreigners from private Christian worship, but authorities are intent on discouraging conversion from Islam. I heard reports of young Muslim men, apparently commissioned by the Yemeni government, posing as potential converts in an attempt to lure Christian foreigners into proselytizing. In one recent case, a Christian Ethiopian working in Sanaa as a day laborer gave an Arabic text of the New Testament to a Yemeni who feigned interest in the faith. The result: three months in jail followed by deportation.

Consequences can be far harsher for Yemenis who genuinely desire to convert. In a culture where religious identity is equated with loyalty to family, clan and nation, conversion from Islam is seen as treason, a threat to Yemen's communal identity—hence what one Muslim cleric described to me as *al-khawf min al-tansir*, "the fear of Christianization." (*Tansir* comes from the root *nasrani*, "Nazarene.") Muslims caught flirting with the "Nazarene" faith are routinely arrested, imprisoned and made to reaffirm their allegiance to Islam. Others suffer violence at the hands of their own families—"the only way," as one American resident told me, "in an honor/shame society for a father to erase the stain of shameful behavior on the part of his children."

Minority Persecution

Would-be Christians are not the only Yemenis to suffer religious persecution. For thousands of years Yemen was home to a sizable Jewish community. With the creation of Israel in 1948, however, anti-Jewish riots erupted throughout the Arab world, and most of Yemen's Jews fled to the newly established Jewish state. Now only a handful of Jewish families remain, and many of them have had to leave their villages and take refuge in Sanaa in the wake of death threats

by local militant Muslim groups that dominate rural areas. A notorious recent case involved Moshe Yaish Youssef Nahari, a resident of Raydah, a village in northern Yemen. Confronted on the street by an armed individual who demanded he embrace Islam, Nahari refused and was murdered on the spot.

Violent hostility to religious minorities is a problem in other Islamic countries as well. In Iraq in recent years, terrorists have used death threats against indigenous Christians in Mosul and elsewhere in northern Iraq to extort payment of what is known as the *jizyah*. This is the discriminatory tax imposed on "People of the Book"—Jews and Christians living under Islamic rule—in accordance with Chapter 9, verse 29 of the Koran: "Fight against those who do not believe in Allah…from among the People of the Book, until they pay the *jizyah* and have been humiliated and brought low."

Enforced during the height of Islamic political power in the days of the caliphate, collection of the tax was abandoned by secularizing governments of the modern Middle East. But some of today's Islamist movements view the *jizyah* as a marker of the resurgence of Islam. For years, Paulos Faraj Rahho, archbishop of Mosul's Chaldean Catholic community, had made *jizyah* payments to local militants on behalf of his diocese's Christians. Finally, as the security situation in Iraq improved, he refused any further payments, a decision that led to his kidnapping and murder in 2008. Eventually a member of Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia was convicted of the crime. Under such pressure, almost half of Iraq's Christians have fled the country.

Analogous developments are occurring in Pakistan. In April 2009 Christian day laborers residing in an impoverished part of Karachi known as Khuda ki Basti found warnings chalked on the walls of their neighborhood: "The Taliban are coming.… Be prepared to pay *jizyah* or embrace Islam." When the Christians registered their defiance by erasing the threats, ethnic Pashtuns living in Karachi attacked the neighborhood, killing an 11-year-old boy and injuring several men and women. The assailants torched homes and set fire to copies of the Bible.

The National Commission for Justice and Peace, Pakistan's leading human rights organization, has documented these abuses and others. Its director is the Catholic archbishop of Lahore, Lawrence John Saldanha. The N.C.J.P. reports that in Pakistan's tribal areas, a group calling itself Laskhar-e Islam (Army of Islam) has begun imposing the *jizyah* on local minority populations of Christians, Sikhs and Hindus. Nearby, in Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province, the Tehrik-e Taliban-e Pakistan (Pakistan Taliban Movement) has likewise targeted non-Muslims. At St. Mary's School in Sangota, which lies in the Swat Valley, where government troops have battled the

Taliban for control, the school's classrooms, convent and chapel were destroyed. Statues of the Buddha in the vicinity were also reportedly desecrated.

Building a Church in Yemen

Several years ago, in a conversation with Ali Abdullah Saleh, president of Yemen, Pope John Paul II petitioned for the construction of a church in Yemen's capital. The president promised he would see to it. Nothing has come of the promise. There are no churches in Saudi Arabia either, despite the presence of over one million foreign Christian workers and a personal plea from Pope Benedict XVI in 2007. Pope Benedict noted that in the 1990s the Italian government permitted the construction of a Saudi-financed mosque in Rome, a short distance from Vatican City. Yet so far Saudi Arabia's leaders have refused to follow suit and recognize the right to freedom of worship in their own country. Anwar Ashiqi, a Saudi religious scholar, summarizes the government's position: "It would be possible to launch official negotiations to construct a church in Saudi Arabia only after the pope and all the Christian churches recognize the Prophet Muhammad."

ON THE WEB
An Advent video reflection on John the Baptist.
americamagazine.org/video

I raised this issue in a conversation in June with a Sunni imam in Yemen's capital. An affable individual in his early 30s, this imam directs a mosque in Sanaa and is known as a *hafiz* (someone who has learned by heart the entire Koran). When I pointed out the disparity—mosques in Rome, no churches in Sanaa—he said this struck him as right. Islam, he stated, is *al-din al-niha'i* (the final, definitive religion). But Christianity and Judaism, he said, were religions from the past, outdated and superseded. "They may be permitted to exist," he continued, "but they shouldn't be allowed to propagate." A church in Sanaa might attract Yemeni Muslims, thereby facilitating *al-tansir*: the propagation of the Nazarene faith. Better, he said, to keep Yemen as nearly as possible 100 percent Muslim.

What this imam articulated was an attitude I encountered in all too many conversations in Sanaa: a resistance to religious pluralism. By pluralism I mean the notion that spiritual paths alternative to one's own have value; that these alternatives have something to teach us, even as they challenge us by their difference; and that one's religious identity and spiritual life are deepened by the self-reflection triggered in the encounter with diversity. Such encounters can take place only in settings where freedom of worship is allowed to flourish. In hindering the construction of Christian churches, countries like Yemen impoverish their own Islamic faith. A

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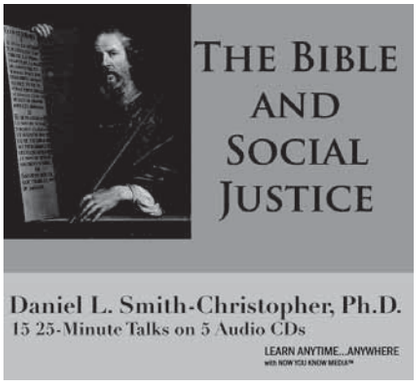

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About Your Presenter

Daniel L. Smith-Christopher is a professor of Old Testament Studies and the Director of Peace Studies at Loyola Marymount University. He received his doctorate in Old Testament Studies at Oxford University in England.

Named in 2006 "Undergraduate Theology Teacher of the Year" by Augsburg/Fortress Press, and in 2007, "Professor of the Year" by the Associated Students of Loyola Marymount University, Dr. Christopher is a celebrated speaker, award-winning teacher, author of 13 books, and internationally known bible expert.

He appears regularly on television on documentaries broadcast by A&E, Discovery, The History Channel, The National Geographic Network and PBS.

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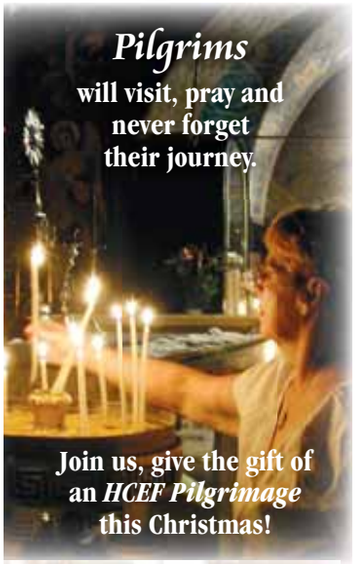

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The Great North-South Embrace

How collaboration among the churches of the Americas began

BY TOM QUIGLEY

Fifty years ago, the politics of Latin America barely registered in the minds of most people in United States, but in January 1959, the Castro-led Cuban revolution changed all that. Later that same year, a group of Catholic bishops from the Americas formed a movement that helped propel the church to an extraordinary engagement with Latin America. This is that story.

Before Castro led his rosary-wearing, bearded revolutionaries into Havana, the Vatican had expressed concern about the state of the church in Latin America. While most countries there were largely, if nominally, Catholic, that did not change the fact that the church was beset by many problems and not a few enemies. Protestant missionaries from the United States were regarded as poachers and no more inclined toward ecumenism than were the Catholics. Communism, Freemasonry, anticlericalism, laws restrictive of the rights of clergy and the woeful ignorance of the masses were seen as the evils of the time.

At the Vatican, Secretary of State Cardinal Domenico Tardini asked Archbishop Antonio Samoré to take charge

TOM QUIGLEY, *formerly associated with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, is a longtime observer of the church in Latin America.*

PHOTO: CNS/REUTERS

Cuba's President Fidel Castro, far right, meets with Catholic bishops from the Americas in Havana in 1999.

of Latin America. Archbishop Samoré had orchestrated the 1955 eucharistic congress in Rio de Janeiro, from which had come a regional secretariat for all the episcopal conferences of Latin America and the Caribbean, the Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano (Celam). Archbishop Samoré in turn asked the National Catholic Welfare Conference what the U.S. church was prepared to do for its brothers and sisters to the south. In November 1959, 18 bishops met at Georgetown University—six each from Canada, the United States and Latin America—to formulate a response.

Early meetings tended to focus on ways the North American churches could assist churches to the south.

Cardinal Richard Cushing of Boston, who became a cardinal in 1958, had just founded the Missionary Society of St. James the Apostle, a group of diocesan clergy prepared to offer pastoral assistance to Latin America. He was a natural choice to chair the Georgetown meeting. Two Latin American bishops—Dom Helder Câmara of Brazil and Bishop Manuel Larraín of Chile—were the undisputed leaders of a new vision of inter-American relations. Toward the end of the meeting, Dom Helder spoke of the church's duty to do all it can "to put an end to the scandal of the 20th century: two-thirds of humanity remains in a state of want and hunger." Even if the threat of Communism did not exist, he told the bishops, "we would still have the evangelical duty of fighting to narrow the gap between human beings.... It should be made clear that the task ahead of us is not to mobilize alms." The statement may have caught some of the North American bishops a bit off guard. "Our object," he said, "is to lead public opinion to understand that raising the underdeveloped world is a much more serious and urgent problem than the East-West conflict itself."

As a result of the meeting, a new office was created at the National Catholic Welfare Conference to work explicitly with Latin America. For many years it was the only office in the conference that dealt with a specific geographical region. Cardinal Cushing saw to it that whatever Dom Helder's views about the relative importance of mobilizing alms, funds would be provided.

Two weeks after the Georgetown meeting, the N.C.W.C. administrative board voted to create the Latin America Bureau and chose John Considine, a Maryknoll priest, as its first director. It readily developed an annual "million dollar fund," raised by direct appeals and existing collections and consigned initially to the Pontifical Commission for Latin America for distribution as the Roman office saw fit. The Pontifical Commission had been created the year before, some say as a check on the more progressive tendencies of the young and feisty Celam.

Catholic Inter-American Cooperation Program

As the Georgetown meeting ushered in the present era, hemispheric gatherings came to play a key role. One of the most successful and controversial initiatives of the Latin America Bureau was a 10-year series of inter-American meetings (1964-73) known as Cicop, the Catholic Inter-American Cooperation Program. At first a wide-ranging popular education program with study materials for schools and an annual observance called Latin America Cooperation Week, Cicop gradually became identified with its huge meetings.

The first meeting in Chicago attracted more than 1,500 participants, including then-Vice President Hubert Humphrey and several members of Congress. At the second, which drew some 2,000, Archbishop Samoré presented Cardinal Cushing with an apostolic letter from the pope praising the U.S. church's efforts to serve their confreres in Latin America. The letter noted that the number of "ecclesiastical, religious and lay personnel from the United States" then working in Latin America was 4,091—almost double the number recorded for 1960. The 1967 meeting in Boston, punctuated by Ivan Illich's blistering article "The Seamy Side of Charity" (**Am.**, 1/21/67), drew some 3,000 participants. The article drew the ire of Cardinal Cushing.

By its 10th meeting, Cicop had become a very "hot" and, some felt, overly politicized ecumenical gathering of social activists and academics. These were the largest, most diverse inter-American meetings being held anywhere. They provided a platform for many of Latin America's intellectual, religious and political leaders: future presidents like Rafael Caldera of Venezuela and Ricardo Arías Calderón of Panama came, and key bishops like Helder Câmara,

Manuel Larraín, Juan Landazuri, Marcos McGrath, Samuel Ruiz, Jorge Mejía and Affonso Gregory. Most of the well-known theologians of the continent, Catholic and Protestant—Gustavo Gutiérrez and Juan Luis Segundo, José Míguez Bonino and Rubem Alves—found their first U.S. audiences at Cicop.

The bishops decided, however, that the decade-long experiment should observe at least a year's moratorium and, if it were to be revived, future meetings would be keyed to the theme of that year's meeting of the Inter-American Bishops. The final Cicop in Dallas in February 1973 closed a dynamic chapter in the North-South relationship. The meeting gave special attention to the ongoing, turbulent situation in Chile; a few months later a coup there would affect the church in the region for years to come. Cicop was never revived.

The Inter-American Bishops' Meetings

Another set of hemispheric gatherings, however, would survive. Far smaller than Cicop, completely private and, as the name Inter-American Bishops suggests, restricted to bishops and their executive staff, these gatherings have continued with only slight interruptions since 1967. They were inspired in part by the success of the early Cicops and for several years were coordinated by the Latin American Bureau.

The fourth Inter-American Bishops gathering met in Caracas when Nelson Rockefeller, then governor of New York, was due to be there. For over a year he and his team conducted a fact-finding tour for then-President Richard Nixon that ultimately produced the famous Rockefeller report "Quality of Life in the Americas." But student unrest and opposition to the governor's visit had boiled over into public demonstrations, forcing him to cancel his visit and leaving the U.S. journalists who had come to Caracas without a story. When they learned that bishops from around the hemisphere were in town, they swarmed to the meeting site. They were rebuffed. Cardinal John Dearden, president of the U.S. Catholic Conference, let it be known that the bishops had not come to Venezuela to give interviews.

The Latin America Bureau director, the Rev. Mike Colonnese, strode forth to hold court with the press, criticized his own bosses for not meeting with the journalists and commented very critically on a policy issue that the U.S. bishops had never even considered. It concerned the International Petroleum Corporation in Peru, which had been seized the previous year by the Peruvian military. The military was demanding $1 billion from IPC's parent corporation, the Rockefeller family's Standard Oil. Back in Detroit, a fuming Cardinal Dearden determined that henceforth the meetings of the Inter-American Bishops would no longer be organized by the Latin America Bureau but by the general secretariat.

The Canadian bishops, observers at first, became full members in 1969. Early meetings focused largely on ways the North American churches could assist the churches to the south. The bishops discussed, sometimes acrimoniously, financial issues, the role of donors in determining the use of funds, the disparity of support for the missioners in contrast to the spartan conditions of the national clergy and questions like the relative autonomy of the foreign personnel. Over time the agenda has broadened. The bishops have exchanged views on free trade agreements, migration issues, drug trafficking, aggressive proselytizing by some evangelical groups and other broad thematic topics. The meetings pass no formal resolutions but offer opportunities for bishops to get to know one another and share experiences and views on issues of mutual concern.

Papal Volunteers

In 1960, a year before President John F. Kennedy's administration would launch the Peace Corps, the Pontifical Commission endorsed a world organization called the Papal Volunteers for Apostolic Collaboration in Latin America, which opened for business in 1961. Initially designed to be a grouping of independent diocesan programs loosely coordinated by the L.A.B., Pavla became fully national in 1964

with funding, placement and training centralized in a national office. The first office was in Chicago, but after consolidation of the Latin America Bureau's three offices in 1968, it moved to Washington. The third L.A.B. office was in Davenport, Iowa, where Father Colonnese served as Father Considine's administrative director, sparkplug and lightning rod. Father Colonnese would go on to head the church's Latin America office from 1968 until he was dismissed in 1971, the stormiest and possibly the most dynamic years of this story.

ON THE WEB
From 1967, Ivan Illich on "The Seamy Side of Charity." americamagazine.org/pages

By 1971 disagreements about the function and mode of operation of the Papal Volunteers (the name never stopped being problematic) resulted in the closing of the national office. A few dioceses continued their own programs. The lay volunteer movement itself went into hibernation during the politicized Vietnam years, only to come back stronger than ever a couple of decades later.

A Tithe of Labor and Aid

At the 1959 Georgetown meeting, Archbishop Samoré had floated the idea of a 10-year plan whereby teaching orders of religious would be encouraged to open schools in Latin America, five a year for a decade. That specific suggestion did not prosper, but Father Considine picked up the 10-year framework (he may have suggested it in the first place), which emerged at the 1961 meeting of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men held at the University of Notre Dame.

There, Msgr. Agostino Casaroli (later cardinal secretary of state) suggested a 10-year plan of aid, including a tithe of religious personnel by the end of the decade. The call for 10 percent of all religious congregations to serve for a time in Latin America was repeated to the Canadian Conference of Religious five days later and then again in Europe. Endorsed by Pope John XXIII and widely known as "the pope's proposal," the tithe was, like so much else, the brainchild of Father Considine.

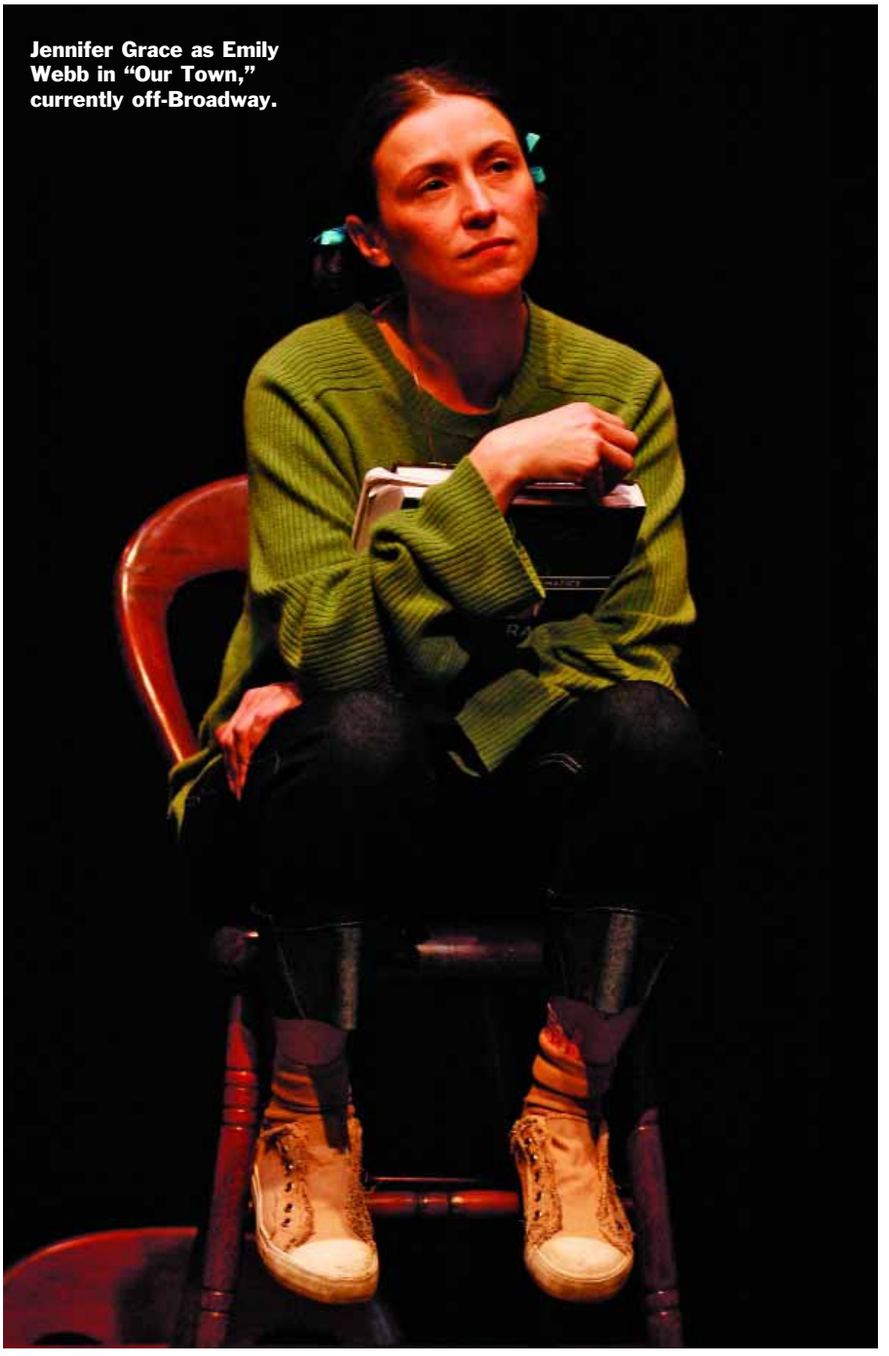
The proposal was greeted with both elation and alarm. Many religious and eventually diocesan clergy and lay volunteers felt a direct call from "Good Pope John" to spend at least a few years serving the church in Latin America. Others, especially in the South, were nonplussed at the prospect of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of well-meaning but inadequately prepared co-workers descending on them. The deluge, however, never took place. Instead, the careful work of Maryknoll, the Missionary Society of St. James and many international congregations enabled a hardy group of U.S. and Canadian missioners to write a memorable chapter in the history of both missiology and inter-American relations. A

IDEAS | ROBERT E. LAUDER

WHAT'S NEXT?

Contemporary perspectives on the mystery of death

What one believes about God bears directly on what one believes about the future of the human person—like whether, for example, this world is the last stop and death the final ending. Divinity and the future of humanity go together. That relationship, and its importance, have been evident since the time of Aristotle.



Jennifer Grace as Emily Webb in "Our Town," currently off-Broadway.

PHOTO: CAROL ROSEGG

What the great Greek philosopher thought about God is related to his thoughts about human persons and life beyond the grave. While Aristotle thought he could prove the existence of God (and his argument was good enough for St. Thomas Aquinas to adopt and adapt), he affirmed a God who did not love human persons and who did not even know they existed. For Aristotle thought it would lessen the divine majesty if God were involved with humanity in any way, even through knowledge. It is no wonder that St. Paul found the Greeks unreceptive to his preaching of the Incarnation. To them and to other Gentiles, the idea of God condescending to become human seemed like foolishness, even madness. It is understandable that Aristotle, who believed God had no involvement with humanity, would deny personal survival after death.

The linking of God's existence to the possibility of life beyond the grave runs like a thread through Western thought. In the medieval period one sees it in the work of Anselm, Bonaventure and Aquinas.

But in the 19th and 20th centuries, we find a militant atheism, much of which Henri de Lubac, S.J., rightly described as an "anti-theism," a rejection of God for the sake of human persons' dignity and development. The God rejected by several influential thinkers—Feuerbach, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Camus, Sartre and Bloch—was a God whose existence was thought to greatly hinder human growth. This explains, in part, the militancy of such atheists: they were killing the divine for the sake of human dignity.

To some extent that "murder" was

moral, because the God they rejected should have been rejected. It was not the God preached by Jesus, the loving Father calling persons to a new freedom. Believing they were releasing human beings from an impossible burden, and denying any personal immortality, none of these atheists, with the exception of Sartre and Camus, mourned the finality of death. They were, they believed, paving the way for a heaven on earth.

Those two 20th-century existentialists, however, realized that the finality of death made human existence absurd. Still, they believed that by facing the absurdity, new meanings might be created. In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus wrote of Sisyphus, eternally engaged in the pointless task of pushing a rock up a hill only to watch it roll down again: "He is stronger than his rock.... The struggle toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy."

We can admire Camus for his courage, because he takes death seriously, even if we find his response to death inadequate and neglectful of the implications of a deep experience of interpersonal love. Reflecting on his own mortality and the mortality of everyone he loved, he opted for absurdity. But can that be the final word?

The philosopher Charles Taylor has a more inclusive view of human life and death. He sees that both are illuminated by the experience of interpersonal love. Taylor has written: "For death is one of the things that make it very difficult to sustain a higher meaning of ordinary life, in particular love relationships. It's not just that these relationships matter to us a lot, and hence there is a grievous hole in our lives when our partner dies. It's also that, because these relationships are significant, they seem to demand eternity.... That's why the greatest crisis around comes from the death of a loved one...all joy strives for eternity, because it loses some of its sense if it doesn't last."

Walker Percy, the novelist, made a similar point in response to an interview question about why he did not accept scientific humanism as an interpretation of human existence. "It's not good enough," Percy said.

Today, however, many not only deny the existence of God and personal life beyond the grave but also think that the lack of both enhances and enriches life on earth.

Recently, while reading Kerry Kennedy's *Being Catholic Now: Prominent Americans Talk About Change in the Church and the Quest for Meaning*, I noticed that the comments of interviewees who are critical of the church and who no longer attend the Eucharist make no mention of Jesus' resurrection or his promise of our resurrection. They seem to have missed the central truth of Catholicism. Reflecting on the mystery of risen life and our sharing in it even before our death, I was reminded of the scene in Thornton Wilder's classic, "Our Town," in which Emily is so overwhelmed by the beauty of human life that she asks the Stage Manager, who is a kind of

ON THE WEB

David E. Nantais reviews Bruce Springsteen's tour.
americamagazine.org/culture

quasi-divine narrator, whether anyone realizes how wonderful human life is while they live it, "every, every minute." He replies, "The saints and the poets, maybe—they do a little."

Is there any mystery that reveals God's love for us and our significance as does the mystery of risen life? As people of faith in a secular culture, we know that the saints and the poets shed light on it. St. Paul expressed the mystery beautifully in his Letter to the Philippians: "For to me to live is Christ, to die is gain." And Gerard Manley Hopkins stirringly described the resurrection in "That Nature Is a Heraclitean Fire and of the Comfort of the Resurrection." After several verses about the changes and deaths in nature, the Jesuit poet writes:

Enough! the Resurrection,
A heart's-clarion! Away grief's gasping, joyless days, dejection.
Across my foundering deck shone
A beacon, an eternal beam. Flesh fade, and mortal trash
Fall to the residuary worm; world's wild fire, leave but ash:
In a flash, at a trumpet crash,
I am all at once what Christ is, since he was what I am, and
This Jack, joke, poor potsherd, patch, matchwood, immortal diamond,
Is immortal diamond.

REV. ROBERT E. LAUDER, *professor of philosophy at St. John's University in New York, is the author of* Magnetized by God: Religious Encounters Through Film, Theater, Literature and Painting *(2004).*

BOOKS | RICHARD GAILLARDETZ

A TOP TEN LIST

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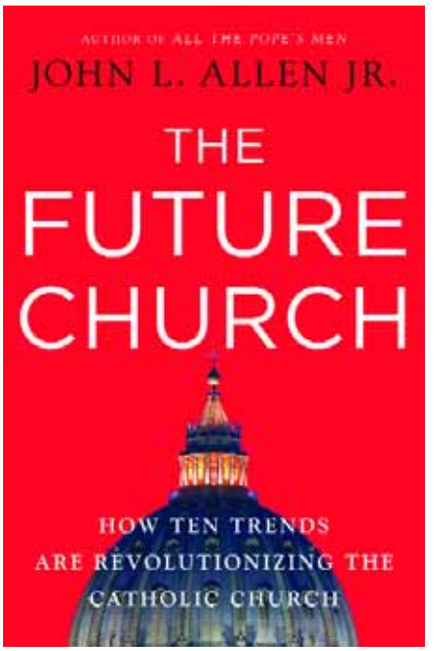
Doubleday. 480p $28
ISBN 9780385520386



John Allen is the English-speaking world's most informed, most insightful and most balanced commentator on the Roman Catholic Church today. Allen consistently offers richly textured reportage that refuses to opt for the superficial take on church events. His extensive travels across the globe, his years cultivating relationships among theologians, local church leaders and Vatican officials, his genuine curiosity regarding the manifold factors, apparent and hidden, that shape church events—all have uniquely equipped him to produce his most recent volume.

The Future Church explores a range of possible futures for the Roman Catholic Church based on what he identifies as 10 trends that will shape the church of the 21st century. Six criteria guided Allen's selection of the trends that would make his "top ten" list: 1) the trend had to apply to the global church; 2) it had to affect the church at the grass-roots level; 3) it had to be a trend that church leadership felt compelled to engage; 4) it had to have explanatory power, helping to make sense of otherwise disconnected church developments; 5) it had to have predictive power, meaning that it must help anticipate some new ecclesial developments and 6) it must not be ideologically driven.

The first trend is the transformation of the Catholic Church into a genuine "world church." Allen documents the momentous growth of the church in the global south and sketches out the distinctive ecclesial issues emerging there that will likely garner the church's attention in the decades to come. The second trend, "evangelical Catholicism," concerns Catholic leadership's growing preoccupation with the preservation of Catholic identity and the reassertion of normative church doctrine. Many of **America**'s readers will find this the most discouraging chapter, as Allen contends that while progressive Catholicism will by no means disappear in the church, it will likely wield little influence in shaping the agenda of future church leaders.

The third trend concerns the emergence of Islam, which has replaced Judaism as Catholicism's most important partner in interfaith dialogue. In spite of the negative fallout associated with Pope Benedict's Regensburg address, the pope sees Islam as a potential collaborator in the fight against the postmodern forces of secularization and relativism.

In the chapter on the fourth trend, "the new demography," Allen maps out some surprising changes in global population patterns, particularly the unexpected "fertility anxiety" that has emerged as a result of falling birth rates in Western Europe and Japan. He suggests ways in which the church may be well equipped to respond to

these developments. The "expanding role of the laity" is the fifth trend. This chapter gives considerable attention to a wide range of lay movements and the emergence of lay ecclesial ministry.

The sixth trend is "the biotech revolution," in which new reproductive technologies are emerging at a rapid pace and are attracting unprecedented attention from the church's teaching office.

The seventh trend, "globalization," considers not only the expansion of the reach of the Internet and the emergence of global markets, but the growing gap between rich and poor, festering regional military conflicts, expanding arms trade, human trafficking, increased migration and dire refugee problems. This global trend will lead to a growing emphasis on Catholic social teaching and encourage responses from a wide range of quasi-autonomous Catholic movements, associations, religious communities and ad hoc networks.

The eighth chapter, on ecology, suggests that Catholic teaching on stewardship and the sacredness of creation well situates the church to play a lead role in global discussions on pressing environmental issues.

"Multipolarism" attends to the emerging global influence not just of the United States but of four other emerging global powers: Brazil, Russia, India and China. Allen considers the potential contributions of the Catholic Church in those countries, even where the percentage of the Catholic population is likely to remain quite low.

The final trend considers the remarkable rise of Pentecostalism as "the de facto Southern way of being Christian."

Faithful to Peter Berger's axiom that no significant social phenomenon ever has a single cause, Allen resists simplistic narratives. At one point he considers 14 possible factors contributing to the rapid growth of Pentecostalism. Moreover, he also acknowledges that many of these trends stand in tension: the conservative impulse of evangelical Catholicism, for example, pulls in the opposite direction of an increased attentiveness to inculturation and the positive contributions of indigenous religions.

A particular strength of Allen's work lies in the character of his prognostications. With each trend Allen distinguishes among "near certain consequences," "probable consequences," "possible consequences" and "long shot consequences." This creates a fascinating portrait of the many possible futures of the church.

Allen dedicates an entire chapter to his explanation of why certain trends (e.g., the priest shortage, clerical sexual abuse, the growing role of women) did not make the list. Still, some of his trends seem to be more about larger societal developments to which the church must react rather than to trends in the church itself. Allen's book offers the reader a compelling account of the challenges and possibilities that lie before the Catholic Church in this still young century. Those who are invested in its future will find it an indispensable resource.

RICHARD GAILLARDETZ *is the Murray/Bacik Professor of Catholic Studies at the University of Toledo and the author of* Ecclesiology for a Global Church *(Orbis, 2008).*

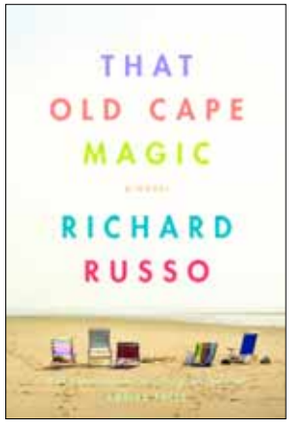
DEBORAH J. KNUTH KLENCK

MIXED UP IN MAINE

THAT OLD CAPE MAGIC

By Richard Russo
Knopf. 272p $25.95
ISBN 9780375414961

Richard Russo's new novel appears deceptively simple, after 2007's Dickensian *Bridge of Sighs*. That book took over 500 pages to tell a story spanning 50 years of three families in Russo's home territory of upstate New York, the setting for his Pulitzer prize-winning *Empire Falls* (2001) and several of his earlier books, including *Mohawk* and *Nobody's Fool*.



That Old Cape Magic departs from Russo's chronicling of the decline of the industrial Northeast, returning in a way to the academic territory of his comic novel *Straight Man* (1997), though the new novel's scope is much greater. Jack Griffin, its protagonist, is a professor of screenwriting at a small college, but don't expect another English-department farce.

Framed by two weddings a year apart—one on Cape Cod, one on the coast of Maine—the book has an almost Aristotelian unity and focus. (The weddings themselves are parallel, down to an elderly, wheel-chaired guest at each.) The year also begins and ends with the death of one of Griffin's long-divorced parents; and as he navigates the coast with first his father's ashes in the trunk and then his mother's as well, Griffin relives his past and considers his future. The year includes a leave from teaching to shop screenplays and made-for-TV rewrites with Tommy, his old Hollywood writing partner, while Griffin and Joy, his wife of over 30 years, undergo a trial separation. During this year, too, Griffin tends to his dying mother in the Indiana town where both his par-

ents were English professors.

The tightness of the novel's structure belies the profound contemplation of family—childhood, parenthood, friendship, marriage—packed into this crucial year of Griffin's life, a year when he undergoes what nowadays we still call a "mid-life crisis," even when it happens to someone who is 57.

Griffin is haunted by his parents' much vaunted "ironical" perspective on everything in life, especially their disdain for all things not Ivy League, including their own academic careers in the Midwest. Despite having renounced their snobbery, Griffin often seems to echo what would have been his parents' opinion of, for example, his middlebrow, Republican in-laws' bookless "home" in a gated community in California. Griffin has in a way achieved the goal—tenured professorship at a good New England college—that eluded his jaded and frankly unpleasant parents. His two trips to the beaches of the Northeast are filled with memories of his parents' only affirmative experience: their annual stays at various rental cottages on the Cape, where every year they would try to recapture "That Old Cape Magic," despite their mutual infidelities and appalling indifference to Griffin, their only child. "One glorious month, each summer," says Griffin's mother. "Sun. Sand. Water. Gin. Followed by eleven months of misery."

In contrast to the parents' nomadic existence renting sabbatical houses, Griffin and Joy have settled down in Joy's dream house, old and rambling, in Connecticut. But despite his allegiance to the optimistic Joy, Griffin cannot banish the sarcastic parental voices from his head. Introduced to Griffin at the second wedding, Joy's boss, the new dean of admissions, remarks that he has just "come on board," and Griffin's (late) mother interjects, "Come on board? What is he, a pirate?"

Russo uses several forms to tell his emotionally fraught story. Straight narrative is interlaced with scenes written out in the form of one of Griffin's screenplays or with Griffin's dying mother's "Morphine Narrative," a surprising, alternate version of the story of her marriage that her son cannot quite believe. We are even teased with the promise of an epistolary novel to be embedded near the end of the text.

Throughout the year, Griffin is also writing and revising a short story (a new medium for him), "The Summer of the Brownings." It recalls his own lost "Cape Magic," the one summer when at age 12 he actually made a friend. Getting to know the entire Browning family, who seem not to know what irony is, enhances the starkness of Griffin's emotional deprivation. By shaping the experience into fiction, Griffin converts what really must have been a loss of innocence into an exercise in nostalgia.

Over the year Griffin must come to terms with his complicated relationship with his parents as well as his more simple relationship with Joy—and joy. In a rare moment of moral clarity, Griffin's mother pays a backhanded compliment to her granddaughter Laura, but she could just as well be describing Joy: "She's so...kind, isn't she?... She makes me almost... ashamed." (She gets promptly back on course, however, continuing, "She's not brilliant, though, is she?") Gradually, Griffin learns to agree with Joy that he has had "too little faith—in the world, in her, in himself, in their good lives."

Only completing this year of, well, mourning—and publishing the story about the Brownings—can allow Griffin to recall with almost no trace of irony another of his family's annual rituals, their hapless search for the perfect Christmas tree, and himself lying under it, peering up at the branches, "imagining other worlds...among all the blinking lights and shiny ornaments."

And then he can silence his parents' voices and scatter their ashes.

DEBORAH J. KNUTH KLENCK *is a professor of English at Colgate University in Hamilton, N.Y.*

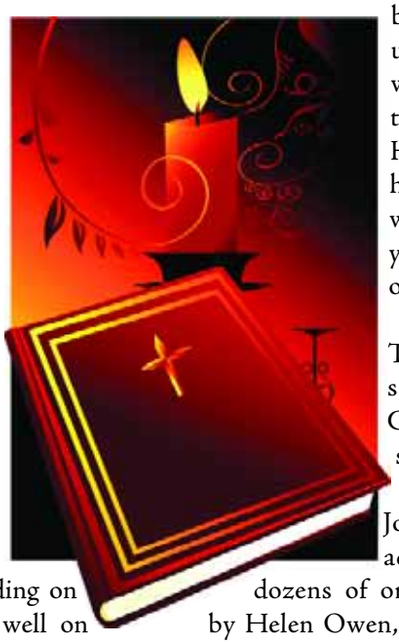
BOOK BRIEFS

TAKE THEM HOME FOR CHRISTMAS

Some lovely books have crossed my desk in recent weeks that are worthy of highlight as you review your Christmas shopping list. One is **A Classic Christmas: Spiritual Reflections, Timeless Literature and Treasured Verse & Scripture** (hardcover, $14.99, HarperOne), assembled by the publisher. With its gilded edges, satin ribbon marker and two-color design with illustrations throughout (drawings and period pencil sketches), it is a book that will be cherished year after year. Organized around seven sections (Hope, Love, Peace, Journey, Giving, Joy and The Gift) containing poetry, spiritual reflection, literary narrative, folk tales, theological insights and wisdom of the saints, it lives up to the "classic" in its title. It is well suited not only to private meditative reading, but to sharing and reading from at family gatherings. "Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel" (Is 12:6).

The distinguished art publisher Rizzoli International has just released a deluxe illustrated edition of Pope

Benedict XVI's **Jesus of Nazareth** (hardcover, $60). It contains over 120 full-color plates, reproductions of classical depictions of Jesus by a host of famous artists, including Caravaggio, Gaugin and Matisse. In a glowing review for **America** (6/4/07) of the original text-only edition (Doubleday), Gerald O'Collins, S.J., pointed out that "some sections read like beautifully crafted biblical homilies" and declared that the book "excellently achieves its central purpose." This new, lavishly illustrated and over-sized version, in a lay-flat binding on glossy stock, will sit well on anyone's coffee table this Christmas season, inviting family and visitors to peruse its spectacular pages.



For the sentimentally inclined, especially fans of "It's A Wonderful Life," I call your attention to Andrew Greeley's new novel, **Home for Christmas** (hardcover, $14.99, Forge). It would not be fair to readers to lay out the plot line. I shall say only that the story is about love and redemption in the life of its protagonist, an Iraq war hero, his near-death experience and "second chance" at love with his lifelong sweetheart. The characters are memorable, as are the lessons imparted by the popular and talented Greeley.

On the light side comes a truly enjoyable read for the whole family, **Almost First Dog: The Secret [Rejected] Portuguese Water Dog Applications**, with text by Spencer Starr and photographs by Sharon Montrose (hardcover, $16.95, Stewart, Tabori & Chang). Bo, the First Family's pet, contributes a brief foreword, acknowledging his luck at being chosen over some formidable "competition." These range from puppies to senior dogs—all strains and colorations of the breed—touting their unique qualities and what would make them the best White House resident. A humorous, clever and witty book, I assure you. Stuff it in someone's stocking.

Themes and passages from the Gospel of John, selected by John J. Gerhard, S.J., a Johannine scholar, accompanied by dozens of original oil paintings by Helen Owen, a self-taught artist, constitute **The Trail of Glory**, an oblong spiral-bound soft-cover book (The Orlando Truth, Inc., $24.95). A pictorial history of Jesus' public ministry, it will be appreciated by many as an aid to meditating on the journey of Jesus.

Those of a certain age certainly remember the dynamic preacher and now servant of God Fulton J. Sheen. As Dec. 9 marks the 20th anniversary of his death, it seems appropriate to single out a few books. Of all his writings, **Life of Christ** (paperback, Doubleday, $17.95) seems to have had the greatest staying power: it has been continuously in print and selling since it's original publication in 1958. And then there is **Treasure in Clay**, his autobiography (paperback, Doubleday, $15.95); and one of my favorites—because yours truly put it together and published it on the centennial of his birth—**From the Angel's Blackboard: The Best of Fulton J. Sheen** (paperback, Liguori, $16.95).

One of my special personal favorites is the Scottish mystery writer, poet, short story writer and novelist **Dame Muriel Spark** (to whom, incidentally, **America**'s editorial board bequeathed the 2001 Campion Award). You may wish to introduce her to a generation of new readers. Right at the top of the reading list, I suggest, should be her celebrated novel **The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie**, first published in 1961 and today available as part of the Harper Perennial Modern Classics ($12.99). Also recommended reading is **All the Stories of Muriel Spark** (paperback, New Directions, $19.95).

You might revisit **America**'s book review section as well for additional gift-giving ideas. May your Christmas be joy-filled and wondrous.

P.A.K.

Book Briefs is written by Patricia A. Kossmann, literary editor of ***America****.*

CLASSIFIED

LETTERS

More Than Disagreeing

Thank you for the excellent commentary ("Slandering the President," by John Kavanaugh, S.J., 11/23). I've been waiting for the Catholic hierarchy to make similar statements about these sins of slander, calumny and libel. No matter what the side and what the reason, to undermine our political leaders as Beck, Limbaugh and others are doing is wrong. To disagree is one thing, to slander is another. I too receive much of this nonsense by e-mail, and I always reply that I don't want to be part of it.

I have lost some friends by telling them not to send me this junk. I have been told that Limbaugh, Beck and conservative talk radio in general are the only ways people get the truth. What a shame that our media stoop so low, and too many are listening and reading! Your article reminds me to preach again about such sins and to avoid lowering myself by like criticism of those with whom I disagree.

(REV.) JOHN MUDD
Washington, D.C.

Understanding the Fear

Thank you for Father Kavanaugh's column, and I am delighted to see it run in a Catholic magazine. Fortunately I do not get the kinds of e-mail Father Kavanaugh seems to be prey to—my sheltered life, I guess. How do we deal with the kind of ignorance and fear that the views of Beck, Limbaugh and their disciples batten on?

I do think the fear is important, and as Christians, we must try to understand that fear and do what we can to assuage it. It would certainly help if more Catholic leaders were willing to speak out against the poison that undermines our society and encourages the kind of polarization we see all too often, not only in our politics, but in our church.

NICHOLAS CLIFFORD
New Haven, Vt.

Grass-Roots Conversation

The United States has a proud tradition of vicious political campaigning, starting with the race between Vice-President Thomas Jefferson against his president, John Adams. What is happening on the radio and in campaigns is not so much a concern to me as the declining level of conversation among common people like myself. Robert Putman documented this in his book *Bowling Alone* a few years ago.

At about the same time, Chris Phillips wrote his book called *Socrates Cafe*. After I read both books, a few of us started Socrates Cafe meetings here in Denver, and small groups like it are springing up all around the country. And we have been trying to encourage common people to take a turn on the soapbox at what we are calling Denver Speakers Corner, which meets each Sunday afternoon at Civic Center park.

Our best hope for sane politics is a restoration of the grass roots, people in small groups having good conversation. It seems to me that the Internet is helping to bring that about. Being critical of the offenders may just play into their hands and increase their audience. It might be better just to focus on encouraging Catholics to become more engaged in civic dialogue with diverse groups in a reasonable way, maybe even calling in to talk radio shows to be witnesses for truth as each of us sees it.

JOHN WREN
Denver, Colo.

Watching the Web

Re "Monastic Analysis," by Matt Nannery (11/23): I bought a subscription to the Web version of **America** in order to read this article. It was well worth it! Thank you.

BETH CIOFFELETTI
Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.

Hat(s) Off to the Bishops

Re "High Stakes Success on Health Care for U.S.C.C.B." (Signs of the Times, 11/23): Only the Catholic bishops stood between public funding of abortion and the status quo, which does not permit it except in cases of rape and the mother's physical peril. We could all have hoped that the nation as a whole would have chosen to affirm the first right of our founding fathers, but that is not the case. My hat is off to the bishops for being consistent with themselves and the moral values of the church on this issue. It may not have been a widely popular position to hold, but it does take a small and just step in the direction of limiting the slaughter of the millions of innocent, sentient, unborn children in our nation.

WALTER MATTINGLY
Jacksonville, Fla.

Associates Also Inspired

To the "other voices" Sister Doris Gottemoeller ("A Visitor's Guide," 11/23) identifies as significant to any assessment of contemporary religious—students, co-workers, recipients of care—I would add the numerous associates attracted to the lives of prayer and service sisters provide. These lay women and men experience a welcome in religious communities whose charisms they support and whose prayer life inspires them.

Most important, in my view, is Sister Gottemoeller's criticism of the lack of transparency in which the Vatican investigation is mired. Few things are more offensive than the web of secrecy that prevents us from knowing how our efforts to live the Gospel are being interpreted to a culture so foreign to our own.

CAMILLE D'ARIENZO, R.S.M.
Glendale, N.Y.

Insight and Example

On the recommendation of my spiritual director, I read this beautiful story of forgiveness ("A Survivor's Story," by George Anderson, S.J., 11/23) while camping in New Hampshire. It helped me realize that all hatefulness and mean-spiritedness is expressed because people have a deep-seated agenda that they cannot let go of. It helped me reach out with a positive response or just a listening ear to those who express their negative views. Immaculée Ilibagaza is a beautiful person, who should be an example to all.

RITA PETERS
Miami Shores, Fla.

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

Ahead of Her Times

Re "Our Brothers, the Jews," by Dorothy Day (11/9): Thank you for printing the manuscript by Dorothy Day. We would, respectfully, like to make one correction. The editorial note by Charles B. Gallagher, S.J., stated that the manuscript was submitted in 1933, "more than five years before Dorothy Day's views on Jewish matters became widely known."

Her position with regard to the prejudice toward the Jewish people was made plain in The Catholic Worker as early as 1933. In that year an article appeared under the headline "Denver Bishop Scores Un-American Immoral Persecution of Jews," and in March 1934, in her own column, Dorothy wrote of "feeling rather pessimistic of Gentile attitudes towards Jews" expressed in some of the letters to The Catholic Worker. By May 1934 there was a front-page article lamenting the "quiet insidious persecution of Hitler's brown shirts" and lauding Cardinal Faulhaber's courageous public attacks against "Hitler's persecution of the Jews." In October 1934 a reflection on the mystical body of Christ stated that Christians "may not hate Negroes, Jews and Communists. When they are guilty of prejudice, they are injuring the body of Christ."

Perhaps this does not constitute her views being "widely known," but they were certainly as widely and consistently distributed as any of the other ideas and positions of the Catholic Worker movement.

THE EDITORS
THE CATHOLIC WORKER
New York, N.Y.

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God's Joy

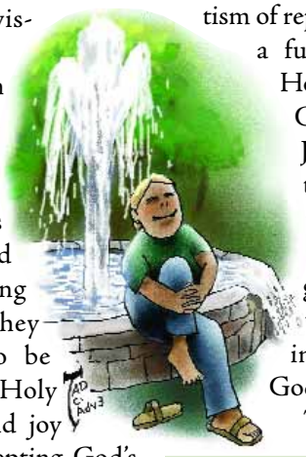
THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT (C), DEC. 13, 2009

Readings: Zep 3:14-18a; Is 12:2-6; Phil 4:4-7; Lk 3:10-18

The crowds asked John the Baptist, "What should we do?" (Lk 3:10)

"You will know." This was the sage advice I received from a wise mentor at a time when I was at a crossroads in making an important life decision. How much easier it would be, I thought, if someone could just tell me what was the right thing to do. I knew, however, that my mentor was right. No one else could answer the deepest questions for me about the choice to be made. She pointed me to the heart of wisdom residing within me, by which I would know what was the Spirit's prompting.

In today's Gospel, one group after another wants John the Baptist to help them know what they should do. They have been touched by his invitation to repent and believe the good news and have been washed free of all their sinful choices from the past. But what's the next step? There is no one-size-fits-all response. John's advice is tailored to each according to their circumstances. Nothing he suggests is very dramatic or extraordinary: If you have extra clothing, then share it with those who have none. If you have food, share it with those who are hungry. If you collect money, take only what you need. And if you have military might, do not abuse it. These admonitions seem obvious—they are things that "you will know" if you listen to the wisdom within.



When Zephaniah declares, "God is in your midst," it is a reassurance that the divine guidance resides within each person and within each believing community when they allow their hearts to be turned toward the Holy One. The freedom and joy that well up from accepting God's forgiving love is, as Isaiah says in the responsorial psalm, like drawing water at a fountain of salvation. You can return to this fountain again and again to drink deeply of its saving power. A fountain circulates living, active water, always fresh and pure, not like a cistern that collects "dead" water in a stagnant pool. At the fountain of salvation one drinks in joy, courage and strength, which overflow in our actions toward others.

The theme of joy weaves throughout the readings and the liturgy on this Gaudete (Latin for "rejoice") Sunday. The joy is not only our own from the forgiveness and salvation that sets us free, but God also rejoices and sings, delighting in renewing us in love (Zep 3:17-18). This joy and mutual delight wants to be shared in wider and wider circles. What shall we do to make that happen? You will know.

In today's Gospel, John the Baptist speaks about a more advanced stage of turning toward God. Beyond the baptism of repentance and its freeing joy is a further "baptism" with "the Holy Spirit and fire" that the Christ brings. Followers of Jesus will be empowered by the Spirit, who emboldens them for all manner of ministries. They will also undergo a purification process, a winnowing away of any imperfections that impede God's love and joy.

The winnowing is not so much a process that separates out people who tend to do good and people who tend more to sin; rather it is a refining for all who turn to Christ, a burning away of all that keeps us from experiencing God's delight and from knowing how to share that with others. This, then, is what distinguishes joy from optimism. A cheery outlook is not necessarily a Christian virtue. But a radical joy that accompanies a refinement by fire is one of the paradoxical hallmarks of our faith.

BARBARA E. REID

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- Sit with God and feel the joy of the Holy One who delights over you.
- How do you answer the question, "What should we do?"
- How has your joy grown through experiences of purifying "fire"?

ART: TAD DUNNE

BARBARA E. REID, O.P., *a member of the Dominican Sisters of Grand Rapids, Mich., is a professor of New Testament studies at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, Ill., where she is vice president and academic dean.*

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Papal quotation taken from remarks made following the *Angelus* in Saint Peter's Square, February 1, 2009.