

America

THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC WEEKLY

MAY 3, 2010 \$3.50

Government's Job One

TERESA GHILARDUCCI



HIRE
ME!

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OF MANY THINGS

Our family were great walkers, and so we could be great eaters. As a boy I would walk with my mother and grandmother to do the marketing. Staten Island in those days was a set of villages, each with its own market street. In New Brighton we would shop on Jersey Street. Shopping was a village experience, where we would meet and chat with friends, relatives and fellow parishioners.

Sometimes we would shop at the local A&P. Alongside today's gargantuan markets, it would seem like a large country store. More often we would stop at a succession of small shops. Chief among my grandmother's stops was DeSimone's butcher shop, with its saw-dusted floors, meat hooks and charts of meat cuts posted along the upper walls between stuffed trophies of wild game. For my grandmother and later my mother, dinner was never dinner without meat. When Mom was in her 80s, I would protest her planning to cook a roast on a steamy summer afternoon.

On every trip we would shop at the Italian or Jewish bakery. Occasionally we would take a slightly longer walk to the local "milk store," where we would buy fresh mozzarella and ricotta. When I was 12 or 13, my grandmother would send me by myself on Saturdays to the Italian bakery and the latteria. I found it strange there was a dairy store that didn't sell milk, where everything seemed bare and white, whereas the nearby bakery, almost as spare, was filled with fragrant aromas, warm colors and the intriguing shapes of Italian bread. Only as I grew older, when I had traveled to Italy and my palate had grown more subtle, did I appreciate the pristine glories of the dairy store.

En route we would pass a couple of vegetable and fruit stands. There I remember learning about seasonal produce and the tests for ripeness of different fruits: squeezing, sniffing, shaking, knocking. Grandmother would look at

the eye-appealing earliest crop of a certain fruit and say with regret, "Not yet. In two weeks, they will be ready." Even today the tastiest eating is from local produce in season.

Those shopping walks, along with Grandma's savory cooking and Grandpa's victory garden, were my introduction to the culinary arts. From my grandfather I learned the mystery of cold frames for winter crops, of blanching celery and protecting fruit trees with a coat of white wash. From Grandpa I also learned about greens: leaf lettuce, of course, but also Swiss chard, chickory, escarole, arugula and radicchio decades before they became fashionable.

Years later when as a second-year theology student I began to cook for our small Jesuit community, Grandma, then housebound, would wait for my weekly call to check a recipe before I headed out to an urban supermarket, crowded with strangers and packaged products, to purchase the food to prepare dinner.

For a Jesuit, who has spent much of his life at study and writing, sitting in meetings and lecturing at the podium, food shopping and cooking were for many years a refuge from the world of words. When computerized auto engines made obsolete what few mechanical skills I had gained, shopping and cooking gave me a way to exercise practical skills and indulge my sensate side. Watching a Bolognese sauce reduce again and again or continually stirring a risotto calls for the kind of relaxed attention that perhaps only a fly fisherman might find familiar.

Neither the shopping nor the cooking are things I have much time to do these days. The incessant demands of the Internet have me playing catch-up every day. But one day I hope to log out, shut down and return to the garden, the market and the stove top. And after that there will be fly fishing.

DREW CHRISTIANSEN, S.J.

America

PUBLISHED BY JESUITS OF THE UNITED STATES

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Cover: The School of Cinematic Arts commencement at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles on May 11, 2007. Reuters/Mario Anzuoni.

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www.americamagazine.org

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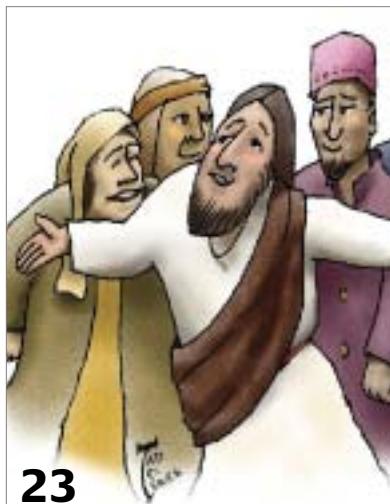
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A Sacramental Response

In his homily on April 15, Pope Benedict XVI spoke frankly. "We Christians, even in recent times, have often avoided the word *penance*, which seemed too harsh to us. Now...we see that being able to do penance is a grace, and we see how it is necessary to do penance, that is, to recognize what is mistaken in our life, to open oneself to forgiveness, to prepare oneself for forgiveness, to allow oneself to be transformed. The pain of penance, that is to say of purification and of transformation, this pain is grace...."

To heal the church in the wake of the sexual abuse crisis, the sacrament of reconciliation provides a model for a way forward. The sacrament includes several steps: first, confession. This has already begun in dioceses where bishops admitted their sins to victims, in liturgies or through pastoral letters and personal meetings. Second is a firm purpose of amendment. The U.S. bishops' Dallas charter is a step in this direction. But then comes penance. Oddly, this step has been avoided by many church leaders seeking forgiveness from the people of God. Only a few bishops have resigned. There have also been calls for penance to be undertaken by the entire church, like the pope's in his letter to Irish Catholics. But why should lay Catholics and innocent members of the clergy do penance.

Authentic penance must be done especially by abusive priests and the bishops who allowed the abuse to continue. That would mean more resignations, more public acts of penance and more of these bishops retiring to pray for victims of abuse. Only then can the church approach the ultimate goal of the sacrament—forgiveness. For in the present crisis the offending members of the clergy and hierarchy need the forgiveness of the whole people of God.

Collateral Damage

Some of the brutal reality of the U.S. campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan emerged when footage from the killing of two Reuters photographers in 2007 was leaked on the Internet in April. Actual combat is never going to look pretty, and this footage, depicting the brutal ending of the lives of more than a dozen people, is certainly hard to watch. The U.S. crew mistook the camera and tripod of the photographers for weapons, and many of the people gunned down when the helicopter crew got a green light to engage were clearly unarmed. When a van pulled up later to retrieve the wounded, the assault continued—this time

killing the would-be good Samaritans and seriously wounding two children. It is all too easy to second-guess decisions in the field, but it is hard to view this gun video without wondering if current rules of engagement are sufficiently protecting innocent lives in complicated combat zones.

No one should be under the illusion that the killing of noncombatants is completely preventable, and the U.S. command should be commended for its many efforts to keep civilian deaths to a minimum. This episode is a gruesome reminder that attention to that commitment cannot falter for a moment. Also troubling about this incident, however, are apparent attempts to divert investigations by withholding or tampering with evidence. The United States will not win the hearts and minds of the Afghan or Iraqi people if it does not reconsider its engagement policy in light of these unwarranted deaths. The government cannot but sacrifice the support of the American people when it attempts to cover up such failures.

Vanishing Seals

Canada's annual seal hunt has begun. This year the hunt's quota has increased by 50,000 to a total of 333,000. By the 1970s, unrestrained hunting had reduced the population of harp seals to an estimated two million, and quotas were introduced. The harp seal is the most targeted species, and 90 percent are pups less than three months old. The European Union has voiced concerns about inhumane aspects of the hunt. Killing methods include clubbing, netting and shooting. The U.S. Humane Society cites veterinary studies that "show high levels of cruelty at the slaughter, including wounded seals left to suffer in agony...impaled on metal hooks, and live seals cut open."

In addition, because of climatic warming less ice is forming on Canada's east coast, threatening seal birthing areas. When the ice is too thin, pups are forced into the open water before they are old enough to survive. As a consequence of these diverse pressures, seals represent yet another species whose survival is imperilled.

Now the fur industry has slowed because of the recession. Pelts that brought \$100 a few years ago now sell for only \$15 each. Campaigns against seal hunting have also played a part in the slowdown. But the hardest blow to the industry may be the European Union's ban on products from commercial sealing. Finalized in July 2009, the ban takes effect next August. The European Union is to be applauded for taking this step.

Choose Life

Officials in Pennsylvania say two teenage girls who were struck and killed by a high-speed Amtrak train committed suicide.... "Student, 20, Jumps to His Death at N.Y.U." "Man Dies in Leap Off Empire State Building...." "A group of teens in Massachusetts face landmark charges for harassing 15-year-old Phoebe Prince so brutally she committed suicide...." These newspaper stories appeared over the past few months. All involved the suicides of teenagers and young people. Suicide is a leading cause of death for young people between the ages of 15 and 24.

The overall statistics are staggering. Every year in the United States 33,000 men and women commit suicide. A similar number die in automobile accidents, but that number is decreasing while suicides are increasing. The number is nearly double the number of homicides (17,000), and suicide was the 11th-leading cause of death in the United States in 2006, the seventh most frequent cause among men. The suicide rate for people in the armed forces has doubled since 2001, and last year 182 service members took their own lives. In addition, in 2009 there were one million suicide attempts, of which 240,000 led to hospitalization.

Why this rise? Internet messages and online stories of suicides can trigger such thoughts in young people. Instead of fostering true community, the Internet leaves many teenagers isolated, caught up in their own virtual world and unprotected against anonymous bullying. Some sites indulge in a preoccupation with death; and in the world of the Web, once-isolated events can "go viral." In many cases, the increasingly competitive nature of leisure-time activities takes its toll on teenagers, who have always been moody but for whom teams and youth organizations once provided outlets. Another factor contributing to the rise in the suicide rate is the downturn in the economy. College students and recent graduates, like people of all ages who see little hope of economic improvement soon, are driven to desperation. Among the military, redeployment and repeated exposure to violent death produce enormous psychic pressures.

Surely the intensification of the culture of American individualism, with its idea of unrestricted freedom, builds social dynamics more conducive to the isolation and illusions of autonomy that precipitate suicide. Even in the 19th century sociologists commented on how individualist cultures had higher rates of suicide than more communitarian ones. Furthermore, today's 24/7 work culture discourages

the building of bonds among family members, friends, neighbors and colleagues that once provided the support that prevented suicides among the vulnerable. Likewise addictive entertainment, like playing video games and immersion as avatars in fictive universes, reduces the opportunity for authentic lived relationships. The assertion of liberties to the exclusion of obligations and responsibilities minimizes any sense of others when a person must make a weighty moral decision.



Secularization has also undermined the restraints against suicide. The Commandment "Thou shalt not kill!" does not resound or penetrate so deeply anymore. For some the divine command was simply an authoritative injunction. For others it rested on a relationship between God and oneself, supported by examination of conscience, pastoral counseling and confession of sins. In either case, the prohibition often prompted hesitation, reconsideration and a choice for life. The eclipse of religious wisdom has left many young men and women without the spiritual resources to face the temptation to suicide. Instead, deprived of conscious freedom, they are driven by dark impulses within and destructive forces without.

Although the Catholic Church maintains its opposition to suicide, it practices compassion toward the victims and their families, permitting funeral Masses and burial in consecrated ground. We need not despair of the eternal salvation of persons who have taken their own lives. But for at-risk people of any age, and particularly for teenagers, the church can continue to provide group programs and activities that reduce loneliness, provide companionship and develop healthy, lifelong interests.

With local, face-to-face communities ever scarcer, church-based services are more needed than ever. Especially with the added inconveniences of training and monitoring they face today, volunteer youth workers need encouragement and support from pastors and parishioners. Furthermore, helping the faithful to be aware of professional help (like the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline or 1-800-Suicide) through parish bulletins and campus notice boards, could reinforce the culture of life. In the face of the growing number of youthful suicides and attempted suicides, we need to be constantly reminded that we are all our brothers' and sisters' keepers.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

MEXICO

Priests and Parishes Threatened by Drug Cartels

The Mexican bishops' conference acknowledged in a statement on April 14 that Mexican priests have suffered numerous threats of violence, kidnapping and extortion from the nation's narcotics-trafficking cartels. The conference also confirmed that a growing number of priests—mostly serving in remote and mountainous areas rife with illegal drug trade activities—have been transferred to other parishes, assigned other types of work or even moved to other parts of the country because of threats. Other priests, meanwhile, have been forced to raise up to \$800 each week for extortion payments.

"We have personally felt the variety of problems that affect our homeland, such as the overflowing wave of violence and insecurity that has been ongoing for years and have claimed numerous victims—many of them innocent," the bishops said in their statement. "Many priests live their ministries in a heroic way, amid the fear of threats, poverty, violence, extortion and aggressions," they said. The statement was read by Auxiliary Bishop José Trinidad González of Guadalajara, Auxiliary Bishop René Rodríguez of Texcoco and Bishop Felipe Arizmendi Esquivel of San Cristóbal de las Casas as the bishops ended their spring planning session in suburban Mexico City.

The violence overflowing parts of

Mexico has claimed at least 22,700 lives—a figure recently revised upward by the federal government—since President Felipe Calderón took

office in December 2006 and sent the army and federal police to crack down on the cartels. "In spite of the grand efforts of various government agencies,



Mexican soldiers outside a murder scene in Juárez: Their presence has not been enough to stop drug-war violence.

SEXUAL ABUSE CRISIS

Pope Meets Abuse Victims in Malta, Expresses Shame, Sorrow

Pope Benedict XVI met in Malta with eight victims of sexual abuse by priests and promised the church would do "all in its power" to bring offenders to justice and protect children.

The pope was "deeply moved by their stories and expressed his shame and sorrow over what victims and their families have suffered," a Vatican statement said after the private encounter on April 18. "He prayed with them and assured them that the church is doing, and will continue to

do, all in its power to investigate allegations, to bring to justice those responsible for abuse and to implement effective measures designed to safeguard young people in the future," the statement said.

After his return from Malta, Pope Benedict spoke before a general audience in St. Peter's Square on April 21. Describing his experience with the Maltese victims of abuse, he said, "I shared in their suffering and, with emotion, I prayed with them, assuring action on behalf of the church." It

remains unclear what specific action the pope has in mind. Various national bishops conferences have implemented procedures for handling priests accused of sexually abusing children. None are more stringent than the zero-tolerance policy adopted by the United States, now being held up as a model, which bars credibly accused priests from any public church work while claims against them are under investigation.

The meeting at Malta's apostolic nunciature in Rabat came after a group of victims had asked to meet with the pope to tell him of their ordeal and ask for an apology. Participants at the meeting said the victims cried as they told their stories and that the pope had tears in his eyes.



fear exists and the insecurity destroying the life of so many communities isolates them and exposes them to new expressions of violence," Bishop

Rodríguez told reporters.

The statement marked the first time the bishops acknowledged that the violence attributed to the crackdown on the country's warring cartels has directly affected the church. The bishops released a pastoral letter on violence in February, but the issue has confounded the church as it has attempted to minister in seemingly lawless regions of Mexico without running afoul of either the government or the cartels. Equally challenging has been the question of how the church should respond to threats against priests.

Mexico's evangelical community went public on April 2, when the Mexico City newspaper Reforma published a report on how cartels and their affiliates have threatened to kidnap evangelical pastors and extorted churches and charity projects through protection rackets. The newspaper sought the opinion of the bishops' spokesman, the Rev. Manuel Corral, who initially denied similar threats

against members of the Catholic clergy, but stories of aggression against priests and the church quickly surfaced.

A parish church in the Chihuahua town of El Porvenir, which neighbors Fort Hancock, Tex., was damaged by an arson fire on Good Friday. The fire was extinguished by parishioners. Hours later, local military personnel, stationed just a few blocks away, finally arrived at the scene. The parish priest, the Rev. Salvador Salgado, denied he had been threatened but reported that other priests in the Diocese of Ciudad Juárez had been. Father Salgado expressed a sense of powerlessness in confronting the violence. In his region near Ciudad Juárez it has turned once-peaceful communities into ghost towns as frightened residents flee to Texas and cartel members burn down buildings thought to be affiliated with rivals. "This is something we can't meddle in, because there have been threats against us and because there will be reprisals against us priests," he said.

as he listened. "We now have peace in our hearts, even because the pope found time to meet us. We now look forward to the end of the court case, and closure of this chapter," one unidentified victim said.

The Vatican spokesman, Federico Lombardi, S.J., told journalists that the private meeting in the chapel of the nunciature lasted about 20 minutes. He said the pope, Archbishop Paul Cremona of Malta, Bishop Mario Grech of Gozo and eight male victims of abuse began the encounter kneeling in silent prayer. Pope Benedict then stood by the altar and met with each victim privately, Father Lombardi said.

At the end of the meeting, participants said a prayer together in Maltese

and the pope blessed the victims. One victim said the pope gave each of them a rosary and promised them they would be in his prayers. "I admire the pope for his courage in meeting us. He was embarrassed by the failings of others," said Lawrence Grech, a victim of abuse who had pushed for the meeting. Grech said he and the other victims at the meeting had been abused as boys by four priests at the St. Joseph Orphanage in Santa Venera.

Archbishop Cremona met on April 13 with a group of victims, including Grech, at their request. That meeting, which lasted two and a half

hours, was "a great help" to the victims, Grech told reporters. He said his only wish was that the meeting with Archbishop Cremona had happened earlier. "We have been waiting for seven years for our case to end, but justice has not yet been done," he said.



Victims of abuse at a press conference on April 12 advocate for a meeting with Pope Benedict.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Israel Deportation Order Troubles U.N.

Two orders by the Israeli military relating to movement in the occupied Palestinian territory may breach the fourth Geneva Convention and violate the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, a U.N. human rights expert said on April 19. "The orders appear to enable Israel to detain, prosecute, imprison and/or deport any and all persons present in the West Bank," said Richard Falk, U.N. Special Rapporteur on human rights in the occupied Palestinian territory. Falk said his concern was based on Israel's new definition of the term *infiltrator*. The term is defined as "a person who entered the Area unlawfully following the effective date, or a person who is present in the Area and does not lawfully hold a permit." "Even if this open-ended definition is not used to imprison or deport vast numbers of people, it causes unacceptable distress," Falk said, charging that "a wide range of violations of international human rights and international humanitarian law could be linked to actions carried out by the Government of Israel under these orders."

Gulf States Wait For Recovery

While pundits and politicians observe the first signs of a spring thaw in the troubled economy of the United States, workers in Gulf South states are still waiting for signs that their lives will be better. According to a new report from the Pew Economic Policy Group, in the Gulf South the number of unemployed persons has more than doubled to 2,654,281 in February 2010 from 1,208,649 in February 2008. While Louisiana—still "benefiting" from hurricane recovery spend-

NEWS BRIEFS

Archbishop William D. Borders, who retired in 1989 as the 13th archbishop of Baltimore, died on April 19. He was 96. • The legislative action arm of the Family Research Council announced on April 19 that it would raise \$500,000 to target 20 Democratic incumbents who voted for health care reform. • Bishop Paul Meng Qinglu, 47, became bishop of Hohhot in north central China on April 18, the first bishop ordained on the mainland since December 2007. • Rio de Janeiro's towering Christ the Redeemer statue, undergoing restoration, was spray-painted with graffiti by vandals, marring the world-famous monument in an act Rio's mayor called a "crime against the nation." • Caritas agencies in China are racing to assist survivors of the earthquake that hit Yushu County in Qinghai Province on April 7, killing more than 2,000 people and injuring more than 12,000. • The Carter Center reported that while Sudan's elections on April 17 were imperfect, they represent a key benchmark in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and contribute to increased political and civic participation in Sudan.



Rio de Janeiro restoration

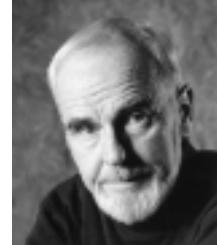
ing—and Texas continue to have unemployment levels below the national average of 9.7 percent, Florida (12.2 percent), Mississippi (11.4 percent) and Alabama (11.1 percent) endure rates that exceed the national level. Alabama has seen the greatest growth in unemployment—a 156 percent increase in just two years. Mississippi was not far behind with a 145 percent increase. Already, 3.5 million workers nationally have been out of work for more than a year, the highest number of workers idled for so long since World War II.

Irish Religious Offer More to Abuse Victims

Irish religious congregations have offered an additional 348 million euros (\$470 million) to compensate victims of abuse in church-run industrial

schools. But an Irish government spokesman said that amount, even added to the large sums already paid by religious orders, was still insufficient. The offer from the religious came almost 12 months after a report from the Commission to Inquire Into Child Abuse revealed that the physical and sexual abuse of children had been endemic in some government institutions run by religious orders. The commission heard from more than 10,000 former residents of the homes who alleged abuse. When the abuse first came to light in 2002, the religious congregations paid compensation totaling 128 million euros. Since the publication of the report in May 2009, compensation payouts from a redress board have increased dramatically and now amount to more than 1.3 billion euros.

From CNS and other sources.



Deeds, Not Words

Was it a sign, a warning to us Catholics, that the continuing child-abuse scandal flared once again, this time during Holy Week? We saw a parade of articles, attacks and defenses—all, by my reading, beside the fundamental point. Some of the defenses were embarrassing, ranging from self-serving claims that Catholic clergy members are no more abusive than any other group, that the criticisms amounted to gossip and media bias against the church, that everything was to blame but ourselves. Even Pope Benedict's heartfelt but stern letter to the church in Ireland seemed not to register in any meaningful way. Words failed.

Among the scribes of culture and church, allusions were made to Holy Week itself. But no one asked why Jesus himself was rejected and executed.

The Gospel reading for the eve of Passion/Palm Sunday makes it quite clear that Jesus was a threat to vested national and religious interests. "If people believe in him, we will lose our land and our nation." The reigning powers saw that he was a danger to their property, privilege and power. Even his apostles, arguing over who would be first in the kingdom, have to be rebuked by Jesus. In Luke's account Jesus says: "Among pagans, it is the kings who lord it over them.... This must not happen with you." The Christ-formed leader must never "lord" it over others. And any Christian leadership rejecting that

command is destined not only to failure, but to being a countersign to the Gospels. Such leaders might muster sympathy for their own caste, but precious little for any other. This is the worm at the core of many believers' discontent.

If there are priests and bishops who think they are better than other followers of Christ, or presume that they are to be served and honored, or who think their privileges and interests are more important than the people of God, they are destined to failure as ministers of the Gospel and will bring scandal on the church.

At the end of Lent 2010, two other prominent Catholics resurfaced in the news. The first is Marcial Maciel, of the Legionaries of Christ, who was sadly but honestly repudiated as "a model of Christian or priestly life" by the community he had founded. In addition to his sexual abuse of seminarians, this priest exercised tight control over the lives and monies of his followers while he garnered friendships among the powerful and privileged. Despite his exploitation of people in matters of money, sex and power, he was merely invited to end his life in quiet reflection and repose.

The second name to surface was that of Archbishop Oscar Romero, whose assassination occurred 30 years ago. This was a priest-bishop who lost all his allies in the Salvadoran oligarchy, and most of his fellow bishops as well, because of his choice to identify with Christ's poor and oppressed. He was murdered, so appropriately,

while celebrating Mass. There is no doubt that he died for being faithful to Jesus' model of leadership. One hopes that neglect of his cause for canonization has not been influenced by interests of power, property and privilege.

We are at a crossroads: the way of Maciel or the way of Romero. Like all great reforms in the history of the church, we may well be called to repent of the ways we have "larded" it over

others. Such change, however, is not effected by mere words. We need to act out the truth rather than merely utter it. Perhaps two prophetic actions could start us on our way.

The first is a pilgrimage to Assisi. Although Pope Benedict has been attacked, probably unfairly, he still repre-

sents the church and especially priests and bishops. Since he is not strong enough to walk a penitential pilgrimage to Assisi, he should send his closest proxy, to be met at the site for a liturgy invoking the patronage of St. Francis in reforming the church and establishing a shrine of repentance.

Second, Pope Benedict should press for the canonization of Romero. These two simple acts might indicate, even without words, that our church, still so loved by us, is not as interested in privilege as it is devoted to the way of the Lord Jesus.

Our problem is not that we are "too Catholic" or "not Catholic enough." The question for us is whether we believe in Christ, without whom all of our hierarchy, sacraments, laws and traditions are emptiness.

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



The line to enter the NYCHires Job Fair in New York on Dec. 9, 2009.



THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF GOVERNMENT
STIMULUS IN A STRUGGLING ECONOMY

Employment Benefits

BY TERESA GHILARDUCCI

With 15 million Americans officially unemployed and the national unemployment rate holding at 9.7 percent, the Labor Department reported a bit of welcome news in April: In the month of March employers added 162,000 nonfarm jobs across every sector but financial services. That number is the highest monthly total in two years. Also, during both February and March investment spending rose, a sign that typically precedes a financial recovery. Those are the positives.

Yet the list of negatives remains long. The number of new jobs in March fell short of many analysts' predictions, and 48,000 of the new temporary jobs will end in the fall when the U.S. census data have been collected. The official data also varnish the actual circumstances of workers. Nearly a third of the unemployed, for example, have been out of work for more than five months; another three million are no longer counted as unemployed because they have stopped looking for a job; and millions of underemployed Americans work far fewer hours than they would like. Nationally, only 55 percent of adults are currently employed, more of them women than men. Meanwhile, state and local governments faced with depressed revenues are slashing thousands of jobs; the real estate market has not recovered enough to boost construction projects; and consumer spending remains weak.

The Long-Term Costs

Unemployment also sets in motion a set of long-lasting negative effects. When a laid-off worker finds a new job, for example, it is often at a

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reduced salary, setting back the worker's total income for years. Seniors remain in the workplace because they cannot afford retirement, while young people cannot find their first job. Even college graduates who enter the workforce during a recession will earn less over their lifetime than those who enter in a strong economy. Joblessness scars workers and their families. It leads to personal indebtedness and delays in education, nutrition and health care. Protracted unemployment can lead to foreclosures and homelessness.

Such observations about the long-term effects of unemployment cast new light on what each generation owes to future generations. For just as government debt is passed on to future taxpayers, the lingering costs of joblessness are handed on as well. That process ought to be reversed. And it could be if the future cost of repaying the federal debt were weighed regularly against the benefits of preventing unemployment. In his State of the Union Address, for example, President Obama proposed small changes in the tax code—a credit for college tuition and a credit for retirement savings—to induce changes in education and retirement security and tax cuts to create jobs indirectly.

ON THE WEB

From the archives, Russell Barta on
“a civilization of work.”
americanmagazine.org/pages

In this recession, most of the damage to workers took place from December 2007 to March 2009, when one out of every 20 private sector jobs was eliminated. The rate of destruction was 50 percent greater than that of the recession in the early 1980s. Given the size of the problem, the first federal stimulus had to be large. And it was, at \$787 billion. Yet independent assessments credit the Obama administration's Recovery Act of February 2009 with the generation of more than 2 million jobs. They also predict that the unemployment rate would now exceed 11 percent had Congress not passed the stimulus.

How a Stimulus Creates Jobs

The way a stimulus works is through “the multiplier effect.” Government spends a dollar to employ a social worker, for example. That worker spends a dollar at the grocery store and gas station, which creates profits and wages for the workers and owners there. Consider \$100 billion of federal spending in 2009 on infrastructure projects, like putting a new roof on a school or erecting a bridge or retrofitting a public building to save energy. The multiplier effect ensures that the economic impact will exceed the \$100 billion

Three Reasons Not to Balance the Budget—Yet

A federal spending freeze in 2010 will cut government spending and job creation when the nation needs more stimulation, not less. As the first round of stimulus money is depleted, state and local governments will cut their spending, reducing demand in 2011. Why is a spending freeze a bad idea?

The math does not work. A spending freeze will exempt military, veterans and homeland-security related spending. It also cannot touch mandatory spending, and so could apply to only about 12 percent of the total federal budget. President Obama's freeze would therefore cover less than 3 percent of the predicted deficit increase over the next decade.

The politics do not work. The drive to cut the deficit is led by people who think the government is out of control and does not provide real benefits. But a spending freeze would reduce services across the board and adversely affect those who favor government spending for education, infrastructure, social services and national parks. This group would politically oppose such cuts.

Should the government balance its budget? Sure. Large, long-term deficits are harmful. If the economy is booming, the government should shrink its debt.

That is what President Clinton did in the 1990s, which allowed George W. Bush to enter the White House with a budget surplus. But President Bush increased spending—on wars, unnecessary tax cuts for the wealthy and a prescription drug program under Medicare—by going into debt. That used up the surplus and increased the deficit.

The economic measures do not work without inflationary pressure. U.S. Treasury notes are still one of the world's most coveted assets. Foreigners will not stop buying our debt, as some have erroneously suggested. Instead, big banks have a vested interest in stirring up fears of inflation, because inflation erodes the value of debt repayment, which is actually just the medicine a recessionary economy needs.

A poor economy calls for continued government deficit spending, keeping interest rates virtually at zero and doing everything possible to create jobs. After the economy begins to recover, the government should fight inflation and reduce the debt. That effort would include serious action to lower health care costs and good faith, bipartisan support for long-term tax increases.

T.G.

investment as the stimulus increases private incomes, raises public consumption and stimulates production.

The central point is this: Spending not only increases the deficit but also boosts economic activity. Activity leads to business profits and rising individual incomes, which lead to increased tax revenues that replenish the federal and state treasuries. According to the Congressional Budget Office, which calculated the effect of the stimulus package, federal revenue would increase by \$25 billion over the next 10 years, helping to decrease the federal debt.

The Best Strategies

Economic stimulus can take various forms. The stimulus of February 2009 took the form mostly of tax cuts. Tax cuts are fast and can be targeted to those who need the income boost the most, but they do not create a maximal number of jobs. Rather than spending the money and putting the multiplier effect in motion, people tend to save it or pay down credit card debt. This may be a good household strategy, but it does not make the economy grow.

During a recession, the best strategies include federal increases in benefits for unemployment, Social Security and disability. Why? Because these benefits go to people in lower income brackets, who spend most of it on consumer goods and services that indirectly create jobs. Infrastructure spending is another good strategy with double benefits: as it creates jobs, it also provides lasting public improvements. Federal aid to state and local governments, a third strategy, is good because it maintains existing social services and also enables local governments to assist those communities that need the most assistance.

These last two strategies are similar to those employed during the Great Depression, when the federal government, as the employer of last resort, created public works projects that made stone trails in our national parks, artistic masterpieces in public buildings and electricity for an entire region through the Tennessee Valley Authority.

In January 2010 the Congressional Budget Office measured the effect of various stimulus measures for each \$1 million spent (see *Policies for Increasing Economic Growth and Employment in 2010 and 2011*). It shows that for the five years from 2010 to 2015, assistance to the unemployed would create 15 jobs per \$1 million spent, that each \$1 million reduction in payroll taxes for employers could create 16 jobs and that U.S. infrastructure investment could create 10 jobs that would also put solar panels on post offices, restore national parks and make other civic improvements.

As for federally funded public works, the president's 2011 budget includes the skeleton of such a program, with increased funding for highway construction, promotion of energy efficiency (like environmentally friendly home weatherization) and scientific research. If imple-

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mented, it could boost job growth and ensure long-term benefits.

My own pet jobs proposal would be conversion of the nation's road signs to the metric system. Learning the metric system would help the nation to compete globally. Just think of the money businesses now waste by having to make two sets of products and written materials: one for U.S. customers and another for everyone else who uses the universal metric system.

Emergency Measures

Concerns about the growing federal deficit are real, but should be seen in the context of the recession. It helps to consider unemployment in medical terms. Viewed thus the federal stimulus is like emergency treatment. When an overweight smoker has a heart attack, the doctor temporarily puts aside long-term solutions, like better diet and exercise, in order to address the failing heart. This is the state of the economy now. Government needs to save the patient first and then prescribe the long-term rehabilitation (deficit reduction, stricter regulation of the financial sector, stronger government guarantees for retirement savings) to stave off future crises.

In recent history, governments have used deficit spending

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to save private markets when they failed. Given the high rates and protracted costs of unemployment, it is hard to understand the fierce opposition among some in Congress to policies that for over 70 years have reduced unemployment. The opposition appears to be deeply rooted in a political philosophy that favors small government, even if it costs workers their jobs.

In January the Obama administration took a step backward when it announced a federal government spending freeze. The freeze is popular among those worried about the deficit, but it is not a helpful way to create jobs or stimulate the economy. As an economist, I commend the president's

Recovery Act and budget proposals for including deficit spending. But I would argue that the nation needs a more confident, aggressive frontal attack on unemployment—a new stimulus package large enough to ensure that the resulting debt

will be paid back.

Deficit spending is investment spending; it expects a return. Though anti-deficit political forces want to make this a paradox, it is not. It is basic math. Deficit spending today solves deficits tomorrow. Businesses engage in deficit spending. Households do it. So do governments. Borrowing today to create jobs yields more tax revenue in tomorrow's healthier economy.

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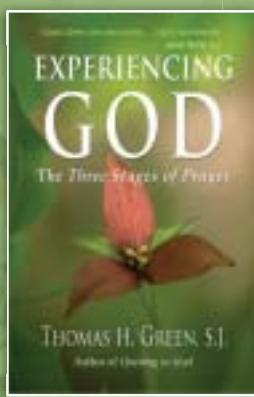
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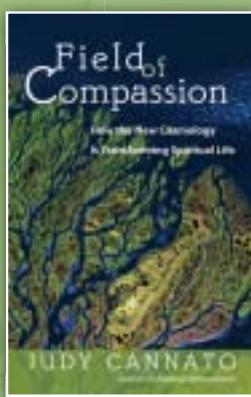
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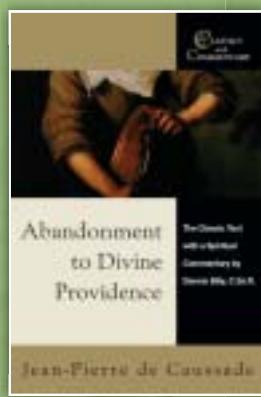
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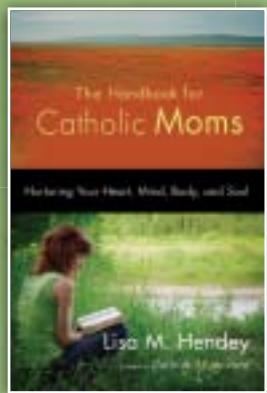
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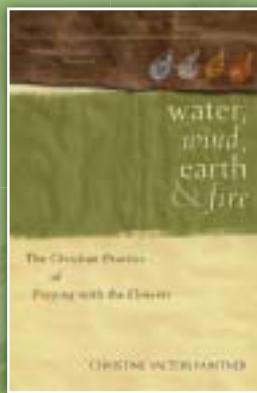
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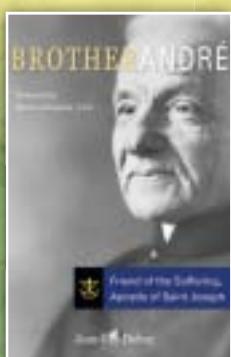


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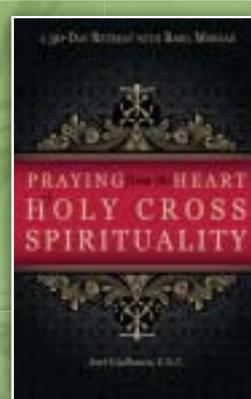


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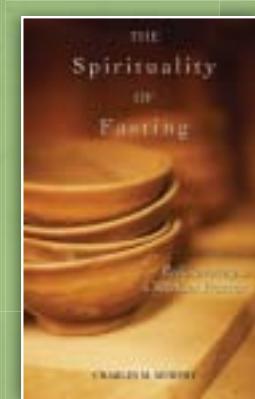
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BOOKS & CULTURE

ART | LEO J. O'DONOVAN

DIMENSIONS OF THE HOLY

Sacred Spanish art at the National Gallery

Describing Jesus and his disciples as they go up to Jerusalem, Mark the Evangelist writes: "Jesus was walking ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid" (10:32). That coupling of amazement and fear, according to Rudolf Otto in his classic *The Idea of the Holy* (1919), is the essence of human experience of

the divine or numinous. When God appears to human beings, it is, in Otto's memorable phrase, as *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, a holy mystery that awakens both fear and fascination. There are, of course, a variety of ways the experience can be expressed—as humbling and exalting, as awe and embrace, as deepened desire yet remorseful recoil. The expe-

rience can lead to tears of consolation or the desert of immense distance, both beyond words.

Such an experience of mingled awe and enchantment arises as one enters "The Sacred Made Real," an exhibition of 17th-century Spanish painting and sculpture currently at the National Gallery of Art in Washington. Somewhat abbreviated from an earlier installation in London's National Gallery, the show offers stellar examples of two types of art, one two-dimensional, the other three-dimensional, which are generally shown sep-



"Immaculate Conception," by Juan Martínez Montañés (c. 1620), left; and by Diego Velázquez (c. 1618-19), right.

PHOTOS: LEFT, IMAGEN M.A.S., COURTESY OF UNIVERSIDAD DE SEVILLA; RIGHT, © NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON

arately but here enter into revealing conversation.

During the Catholic Reformation, the artists of Spain's Golden Age developed an intense realism to stir and even shock viewers with stark, emotional and often anguished presentations of Christ, the Virgin and the saints. Several of the era's greatest painters are represented in the current exhibition, including Francisco de Zurbarán and Diego Velázquez. They are matched by less well-known sculptors like Juan Martínez Montañés and Pedro de Mena.

No pairing of works more vividly represents the interaction of painterly and sculptural interests than two versions of the Immaculate Conception (see pg. 17), one a sculpture attributed to Montañés (c. 1620), the other an early painting by Velázquez (1618-19). Both depict the Virgin slightly larger than life-size, according to the Book of Revelation's description of "a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars" (12:1-2). Together they exemplify a typology developed by Baroque artists in 17th-century Seville: a naturalistic young girl takes all her dignity from her clothing and surroundings.

Velázquez places his Mary, with her broad face and full cheeks, against an inky night sky, whose billowing white clouds give cosmic dimension to her swirling blue mantle. (She may have been modeled on Juana Pacheco, the daughter of Velázquez's master, Francisco Pacheco, whom the painter married.) At her feet are symbols suggesting her purity—a temple, a foun-

tain, a palm tree. The sculptural effect is striking, and Velázquez may well have studied an earlier Immaculate

innocence enduring all experience, transported to another time and still sensing a deeper root in your own.



"St. Francis Kneeling in Meditation," by Francisco de Zurbarán.

Conception by Montañés.

The Montañés Virgin evokes a similar serenity. But additional majesty attaches to the figure through the tunic decorated with pale flowers under a black cloak enriched with effulgent golden arabesques. Delightfully, the angels at her feet and on the pedestal seem neither awestruck nor prayerful but simply happy to be there.

You can stand before these two wondrous works, beguiled by the lovely faces, imagining the inner grace of each figure, drawn into the mystery of

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Conception by Montañés.
The Montañés Virgin evokes a similar serenity. But additional majesty attaches to the figure through the tunic decorated with pale flowers under a black cloak enriched with effulgent golden arabesques. Delightfully, the angels at her feet and on the pedestal seem neither awestruck nor prayerful but simply happy to be there.

Next to it is one of the greatest of all representations of prayer: Zurbarán's "Saint Francis Kneeling in Meditation" (1635-39), from London's National Gallery. You can enter the darkness with Francis as he kneels silent and enraptured, a skull cradled in his exquisitely painted hands. Light falls over your left shoulder onto his right shoulder. Looking up toward his face, you realize that you do not see his eyes, deep in the shadow of his cowl,

but only his handsome nose and parted lips. No words come, to him or you, no motion, no desire to be anywhere but here. The presence of God suffuses this image of the poorest and perhaps most beloved of all the followers of Christ.

Your eye moves across the canvas, from the strong hands with the slight indication of the stigmata on his right hand, to the tattered robe, down the plumb-line of the cord falling from his waist, over to the folds that cover his feet and knees, up again to the holy face. The figure is almost entirely on the right side of the painting, yet it balances because the coarse white of the habit at Francis's right arm pulls the figure to the left and gives it a pulsing stasis, an insistent silent presence. You wish the gallery were empty so that you could kneel.

The face of Francis is holy, not sacred. An unfortunate perpetuation of the dichotomy between the sacred and the profane continues to be used in art criticism (and many other places as well) when dealing with Christianity. It was, for example, the cause of considerable conceptual confusion at a major exhibition on religion in art two years ago at the Centre Pompidou in Paris, "Les traces du sacré." But what "sacred" means, in contrast to "profane" (that which lies outside the temple and is purely of this world), is "something set apart" in relation to the divine. It is separate, by some form of consecration, for religious usage.

But for a faith that confesses God's living among us and enduring for us death itself in Christ, our human world is no longer a realm apart but, rather, radically God's own. Its story and ours have come to be because the holy mystery of God graciously chooses to create a story that will be God's own, the story of God's holiness enfleshed in human holiness and suffering for it. Of all the words that might speak less definitely of the God beyond all language, it is "holiness" that best

accompanies "love." And so the representations of Christ and Mary and the saints that are magnificently brought together at the National Gallery might be said to be sacred, as art or music or dance in a church might be said to be. But the human

beings represented by the art are holy, because the God of holiness has dwelt in them through God's own Spirit—and always will.

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

BOOKS | WILLIAM REISER

VIRTUOUS LIVING

AFTER YOU BELIEVE

Why Christian Character Matters

By N. T. Wright

HarperOne. 320p \$24.99

One of the world's best published Scripture scholars and an Anglican bishop, N. T. Wright's latest book blends biblical competence (particularly with respect to Paul's letters) and pastoral experience. The blending is usually smooth, although the examples and stories can feel a bit windy. This is a book for a general audience with evangelical leanings about how a Christian goes about developing virtue, character or habits of thinking, feeling and acting. At various points the book will put the reader in mind of Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue* and Stanley

Hauerwas's *A Community of Character*, writers to whom Wright is "massively indebted" and whom he mentions in the afterword.

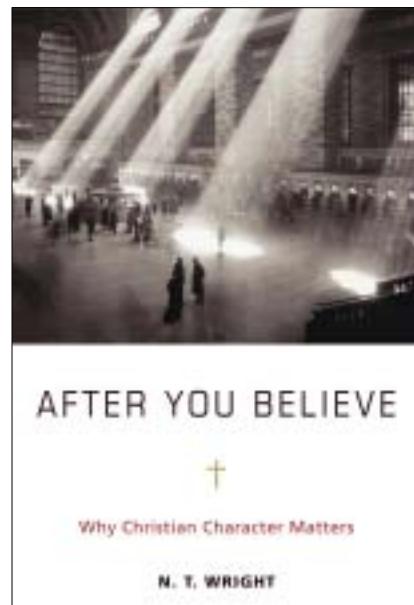
Being Christian, Wright explains, involves a lot more than keeping rules, although rules are certainly important in the process of individual growth as

well as in the ongoing life of the believing community. Ultimately, following Jesus should lead to an internalization of the example Jesus sets for his followers in the Gospel narratives. This internalization leads to the formation of a distinctively Christian character and the adoption of a Christ-self. Or as some ancient Christian writers said, having been created in the divine image, over a lifetime we put on the

divine likeness, which is Christ. Our being clothed with Christ (Gal 3:27), or putting on the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16, Phil 2:5), entails practice and great moral effort—the exercise of virtues. We learn by observing the evangelical practice of other believers. We need to immerse ourselves in reading and praying over Scripture.

And because salvation is corporate, the strength and inspiration that come from participating in the liturgical life of the church are indispensable for our becoming fully human.

To speak of becoming fully human supposes that we have an idea of what this fullness consists of, and so we are



led to think about divine intention. What does God want for us? Why have we been created? God wants to give us the kingdom, the very kingdom of God that was at the center of Jesus' teaching and mission. Jesus' resurrection makes clear that this kingdom will be nothing less than the "new heaven and new earth" of which Rv 21:1 speaks (thereby fulfilling the vision of Is 65:17). When that kingdom finally arrives, Jesus' followers will be worshiping and governing as priests and rulers in the new reality, the splendidly recreated world that the Creator intends for us. He writes: "When God redeems the whole creation, redeemed humans will play the key role, resuming the wise, healing sovereignty over the whole world for which God made them in the first place." The mission or vocation of each disciple now is to live in such a way that every thought, word and action somehow anticipates the glory that awaits us. The intelligibility of Christian existence, in other words, derives from the future and is patterned on the past. The future is a world transformed; the pattern is the selfless love and service of Jesus that found its most intense expression in the Cross. The practice of discipleship is going to involve suffering; but as with Jesus, the Messiah who gave his life, so too for us: first suffering, then glory.

Sometimes Wright's view of the future sounds close to science fiction. "In the new heavens and new earth,

there will be new vocations and new tasks," he says, an idea he develops in *Surprised by Hope* (2008). But is the goal or *telos* of the human race coincident with the *telos* of the whole universe? Here theologians and biblical scholars (and biblical writers) should measure their words when they begin thinking, for example, that human beings "will eventually reign in glory over the whole creation." After all, we may not be alone in the universe.

Notably absent from the present work is a nod to the work of liberation theologians or political theology. Wright characterizes as a "would-be Christian vision" those who believe that Christian practice here and now should consist of "working and campaigning for justice, peace, and the allevia-

tion of poverty and distress." In its place he advocates "the Spirit-led, habit-forming, truly human practice of faith, hope, and love, sustaining Christians in their calling to worship God and reflect his glory to the world."

Yet later he argues against those who focus on the Cross as atonement ("epistles people") without taking into account the history that led up to it ("gospels people"). He writes: "Kingdom and cross belong together. The whole story is the whole story." But this is exactly the point liberation theologians have been insisting upon,

except that they focus less on character formation and acquiring virtue and more on the kind of historical practice that is truly liberating for individuals as well as for societies. If there is one virtue particularly appropriate for our time, solidarity, with its political and social overtones, would certainly qualify. The integration of the cultivation of personal holiness with working for justice, which Wright calls for very briefly toward the end of the book, is what political holiness is all about.

Wright advocates "eschatological authenticity." What this amounts to is "no violence, no hatred of enemies, no anxious protection of land and proper-

ty against the pagan hordes" and, instead, "a glad and unwavering trust in the creator God." But while the New Testament char-

acterizes Jesus in priestly and royal terms, it also presents him as prophet. And so we might want to consider what exactly he was doing such that people interpreted his actions in terms of the category "prophet." The closest Wright comes to answering this seems to be when he connects prayer with feeling the pain of the world and when he attends to the work of peacemaking. Wright understands very well that in the end Jesus stood before the Roman governor and the chief priests. Yet it strikes me that it was the prophetic dimension of his life that made his death increasingly likely, whereas Wright highlights the "royal" and "priestly" aspects of Jesus' vocation. Given the extensive attention to Paul in the book—from which readers certainly stand to learn a great deal—I find myself concluding that, in the end, Wright seems to be more of an epistles person.

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LETTERS

Lay Managers

The toolbox approach ("The Pastor's Toolbox," by Thomas J. Healey and John Eriksen, 4/12) seems too narrowly focused on the ordained pastor. Increasingly many American parishes are managed day to day by quite capable nonordained laypeople or religious. They need as much help as our ordained pastors.

In fact, I think we should take their inspiration, even model, and begin to move all parishes to parish management (including internal lay ministry) by capable laypeople or religious, freeing our priests for heightened sacramental efforts.

JOHN MAINE
Miami, Fla.

Re "The Pastor's Toolbox": How many men, on receiving a call to the priesthood, look upon it as an oppor-

tunity to get involved with parish finances, budgets, personnel and risk management? I suspect very few.

Expecting pastors to be involved in these areas is, in fact, very poor personnel management on the part of bishops. In almost every parish there are dedicated Catholics skilled in such matters who would gladly serve their parish and their bishop with those skills.

Instead of offering pastors special help, bishops should assign laypeople experienced in those matters to those duties and offer special training to pastors for coping with loneliness on the job, the lack of support, the personality conflicts and the often unrealistic demands and expectations of the people of the parish. Training in giving homilies, individual spiritual guidance and counseling to troubled parishioners would help too.

ROGER GAMBATESE
Davis, Calif.

Come Calliope!

Kathleen Norris's "Something Wonderful Is Afoot," (4/5) is living proof that the world needs more poets.

WINIFRED HOLLOWAY
Saratoga Springs, N.Y.

Professional and Prayerful

I am grateful for your thoughtful, sensitive tribute to our sisters (Editorial, "The Sisters' Witness, 4/26). It has been and is my privilege to minister with sisters and to have been both edified and instructed by them for nearly 50 years in both Catholic health and Catholic Charities activities at the local, state and national levels.

Sisters are human beings like all the rest of us with all that implies, but as a group they are professional and prayerful, reflective and action-oriented. Catholic Health Association meetings are a constant source of renewal and refreshment, more like a retreat than a trade organization meeting.

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Whether in formal Catholic Charities activities or in the myriad grass-roots, direct care activities at home and abroad, they are the exemplars of what it is to be a Christian "social worker." How happy I am able to call them not only our sisters but my sisters.

(MSGR.) CHARLES FAHEY
Bronx, N.Y.

The Best in Catholicism

God bless the sisters. They were a huge encouragement to me during the final days of the health care reform process (especially after the disappointing behavior of the bishops). The sisters represent the best in Catholicism.

MEL EVANS
North Coast, Ore.

Courageous and Prophetic

What a beautiful tribute to these courageous and prophetic sisters! Thank you to them and to the equally

courageous editorial board of **America**. Unfortunately, though, we are already hearing of apparent retribution for their actions by several diocesan bishops. Let us pray for all involved that their (and our) actions may be truly based on the teachings of Jesus and not on our personal views.

SUSAN McCARTHY, R.D.C.
White Plains, N.Y.

Cause for Concern

"First, their communities have been the focus of an ongoing Vatican investigation, the purpose of which has never been fully explained" (Editorial, "The Sisters' Witness, 4/26). Is the fact that the number of women religious went from 179,954 in 1965 to 60,715 in 2009 not a good explanation for a concern on the part of the Holy See? Seminaries, colleges, universities and dioceses have all been investigated without incident. Why this unwar-

ranted, standoffish attitude? I applaud the sacrifices of the many sisters who continue to care for the sick, but let's be honest: religious sisters are not called to be social workers.

JAMES STEELE
Peoria, Ill.

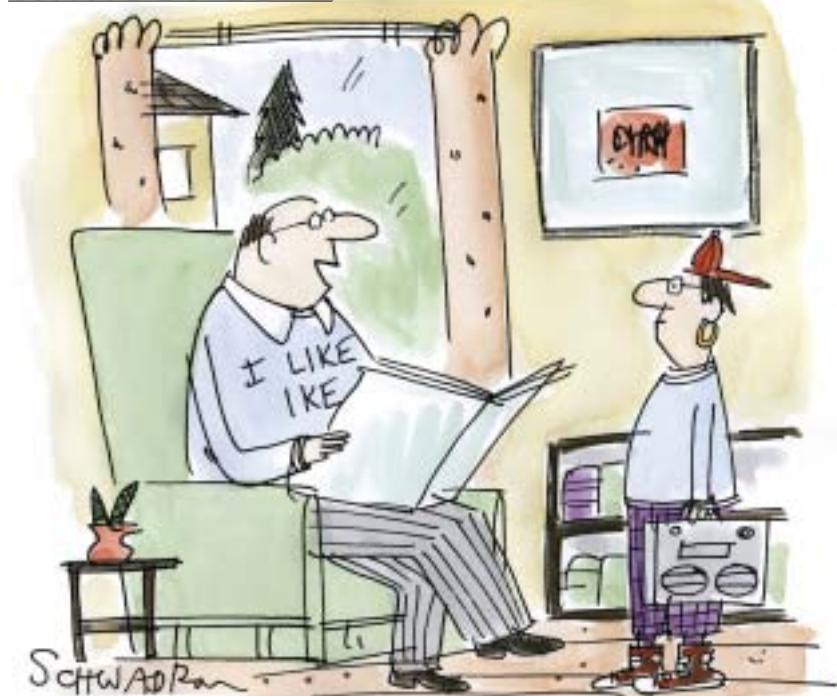
Faithful Witnesses

I am deeply grateful for the faithful witness of women religious and the Catholic Health Association in their support of a more inclusive and compassionate health care future in the United States. I have worked side-by-side with many of these women religious for nearly 10 years to extend health, wholeness and human dignity to all who live in this country.

I was moved to tears when I heard of their courageous letter to Congress in the final days of the debate, and I believe their actions were the turning point in the deliberations. As an ordained Protestant minister, I am honored to stand with them on this issue and any other that lifts up our sacred responsibility to work tirelessly on behalf of the common good. God bless you, sisters in faith and witness!

(REV.) LINDA HANNA WALLING
Cleveland, Ohio

WITHOUT GUILE



"Tell me what your earring means, and I'll tell you what my shirt means."

Santo Subito!

Re "Salvador's Saint," by Richard Amesbury and Andrew Kirschman (4/26): *Romero santo subito!* Indeed! In the end the Vatican will simply confirm what millions of ordinary people in their hearts already know. For some (like Pope Pius XII) genuine debate continues as to the candidate's status as a saint. But is there really any doubt about Romero being a martyr? Monsignor Romero, pray for us.

JOE CLEARY
Cherry Hill, N.J.

America (ISSN 0002-7049) is published weekly (except for 13 combined issues: Jan. 4-11, 18-25, Feb. 1-8, April 12-19, June 7-14, 21-28, July 5-12, 19-26, Aug. 2-9, 16-23, Aug. 30-Sept. 6, Sept. 13-20, Dec. 20-27) by America Press, Inc., 106 West 56th Street, New York, NY 10019. Periodicals postage is paid at New York, N.Y., and additional mailing offices. Business Manager: Lisa Pope; Circulation: Judith Palmer, (212) 581-4640. Subscriptions: United States, \$56 per year; add U.S. \$30 postage and GST (#131870719) for Canada; or add U.S. \$54 per year for international priority airmail. Postmaster: Send address changes to: America, 106 West 56th St. New York, NY 10019. Printed in the U.S.A.

The Gift of Peace

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER (C) MAY 9, 2010

Readings: Acts 15:1-2, 22-29; Ps 67:2-8; Rev 21:10-23; Jn 14:23-29

"My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you" (Jn 14:27)

When people disagree with one another about deeply held convictions, especially those based on religious beliefs, coming to peaceable agreement is no easy task. The vitriolic exchanges and even threats of physical violence that have been voiced in the process of reforming health care in the United States, for example, are quite different from the way the first Christians resolved their differences regarding observance of the Mosaic law in changing circumstances.

Today's first reading abbreviates Luke's description of the process, as it presents the problem and then jumps to the agreed-upon solution. It is helpful to look at the omitted verses from Acts 15 to see the steps by which communities of faith can accept and live out the gift of peace that Jesus promises his disciples in the Gospel.

As the Jesus movement spread outward to include more and more gentiles, heated debates ensued over whether these newcomers should keep the whole of the Mosaic law. Some said yes, some said no, and others argued for a compromise position: keep some observances, but not others. The next question was inevitable: if gentile Christians did not need to be circumcised or to observe all the dietary regulations, then should

Jewish Christians continue to be bound by them? How would a mixed community be able to eat together if some were keeping kosher and others not?

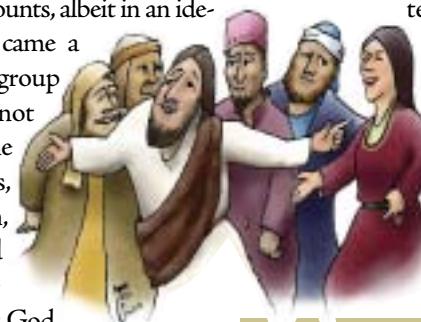
As Acts 15 recounts, albeit in an idealized way, there came a point when a group from Judea, not authorized by the Jerusalem leaders, came to Antioch, where Paul and Barnabas were recounting all that God was doing through them in their missionary travels among the gentiles. The Judeans, who were arguing for full observance of the law by gentiles, created no little dissension and debate, as Paul and Barnabas took them on, holding that gentiles should not be bound by the law.

In the verses omitted from today's first reading, Luke describes how all the leaders gathered in Jerusalem to resolve the dispute. First there was intense listening by all sides. Paul and Barnabas reported what God had done through them in gentile lands. Then some of the Pharisees who had become believers spoke of their conviction that the whole law must be observed by all. After much debate, Peter finally stood and put forth a decisive argument: it was apparent that God had given the Holy Spirit to the gentiles as well as to Jewish Christians, making no distinction between the two. He then argued for a relaxation of observance of the law. Then the leaders listened again to

Paul and Barnabas as they described "the signs and wonders God had worked among the gentiles through them" (15:12). Next James, the leader of the Jerusalem community, quoted a

text from Am 9:11-12 concerning God's ingathering of gentiles. He then proposed a compromise, as we hear in the remainder of today's first reading.

Through deep and



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- Listen to the promptings of the Spirit as you bring to prayer a situation of conflict in need of peaceful resolution.
- How is the gift of peace both freely given and empowering and yet costly in its demands?
- Ask the Spirit for the gift of a nondefensive, listening heart.

ART: TAD DUNNE

respectful listening to all sides, careful attention to what the Spirit is doing in present experience, study of the Scriptures, reflection on tradition, respectful debate and discussion, silence and prayer the first Christians arrived at a solution that allowed for communal living in peace among people of differing convictions. This process did not resolve the problem once and for all, but it gives us an example of how we might receive and live from the gift of peace given to us by the risen Christ.

BARBARA E. REID

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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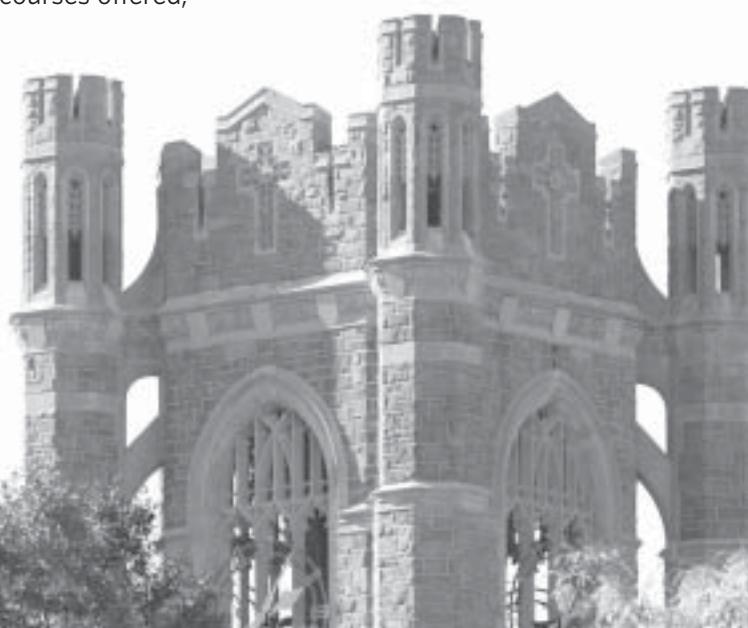
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