

America



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History and The Tea Party

MICHAEL SEAN WINTERS

Catholics at Work Part 2
Rape in the Congo

OF MANY THINGS

There are special delights in miniatures. My late friend Ivan Kats, a book dealer whose Connecticut farmhouse was packed floor to ceiling with old and rare books, delighted in showing me palm-sized catechisms from the 18th century.

Last year Karen Sue Smith gave me Thad Carhart's *The Piano Shop on the Left Bank* (Random House), a memoir by a middle-aged American writer who rediscovers the piano in Paris. As he tells his own story, he explores the secondhand piano business, piano construction, sounding boards, piano tuning, connoisseurship, teaching styles and more. Reading *The Piano Shop* was like sharing skills and pleasures of a good friend. Recently I was given another small book of similar pleasure, Paula Butturini's *Keeping the Feast* (Riverhead), a hymn to the humanizing powers of food.

As I was leaving brunch at Washington's Café DeLuxe a couple of weeks ago, I stopped to say hello to the columnist E. J. Dionne. E.J. greeted me saying, "Drew, I want you to meet a good friend—and you must read her book." And so I met Paula Butturini. She and her husband, John Tagliabue, and E.J. had been correspondents together in Rome in the 1980s. On the trip back to New York I read the book ravenously.

My quick engagement came naturally enough, since on my mother's side of the family I come from the same Italian-American food culture as Butturini and Tagliabue. Butturini has a prodigious memory for food that is matched only by that of the late Julia Child. But unlike Child's *My Life in France* (Knopf), *Keeping the Feast* did not leave me feeling overstuffed, because the discussions of ingredients, markets, cooking and shared meals are tied to a social context, life passages and beloved family members.

The paramount example may be Paula's narrative of her falling in love

with John over late-night meals and conversations after they both had filed their stories. There was nothing conventionally romantic to her account, but it is so true and so human—genuine friendship flowering into love—that it strikes deep. What is more remarkable, however, is the burden of the book, the healing power of food during John's deep and prolonged depression.

In the fall of 1989, the Tagliabues were re-assigned to Warsaw just as Eastern Europe was breaking free of Communist oppression. On assignment in Prague, Paula was badly beaten by government thugs; a few weeks later, John was shot by a sniper in Romania. Physical recovery was followed by psychological depression. As both John and Paula were losing the person John once was, the comforts and rituals of food became a way to keep a grasp on life.

Later, after the birth of their daughter, Julia, in relating Italian baby-feeding habits, Butturini tells how her own mother force-fed her as a child to prevent her from growing unhealthily thin. The scenes summoned up memories of my own grandmother saving special morsels of meat for me or frying meatballs on Sunday mornings, offering them to me for the same reason, to strengthen a small, thin boy, with the half-order, half-plea, *Mangia, figlio mio, mangia*.

R.I.P.

George W. Hunt, S.J. *America's* 11th editor in chief (1984–98), died on Feb. 25 after a short battle with cancer. Before serving as chief, he was literary editor. As James Martin, S.J., has written, Father Hunt's writing style was "graceful, elegant, measured." He was best known for his *Of Many Things* columns, where readers learned of his love of books and baseball. He produced a column every week in long-hand and to exact length.

DREW CHRISTIANSEN, S.J.

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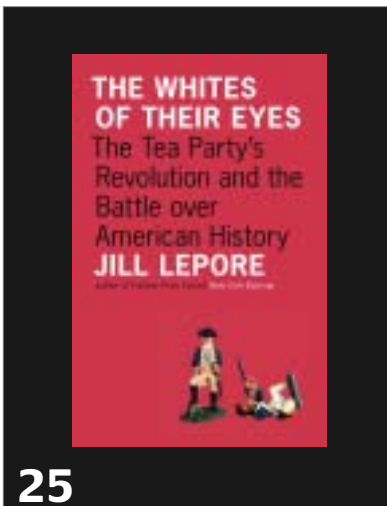
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Cover: A Tea Party member dressed as a patriot at the Conservative Political Action conference in Washington, D.C., on Feb. 10. Reuters/Kevin Lamarque

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ON THE WEB

An archive of essays by former editor in chief **George W. Hunt, S.J.**, right. Plus, a slideshow report on the war on women in **Congo**, and a podcast interview with the novelist **Peter A. Quinn**. All at americamagazine.org.



Union Busting

As the Wall-Street-led, job-killing recession continues to claim victims, states and municipalities are attempting to balance their budgets on the backs of workers. No doubt, contracts drafted in more prosperous times that allowed civil servants to retire after 20 years and collect pensions and benefits for another 40 or 50 years are a burden and will need to be restructured. But ending the right of unions to collective bargaining is a nuclear option that will destroy an essential right and undercut chances for long-term prosperity.

Busting unions, however, is exactly what several governors, with Wisconsin's Scott Walker in the lead, are trying to do. Beyond demands for sacrifices from state workers to balance budgets, Governor Walker has proposed ending the right of public employees' unions to bargain collectively. Union members are ready to pay more toward health care and accept their fair share of budget cuts. But at a time of heightened inequality, curtailing an essential union right would be a crippling blow not only to labor but to the American middle class. After all, by establishing wage and benefit standards unions have helped establish standards not just for their members but for whole sectors of the economy.

Since the Reagan administration, the middle class has shared very little in the nation's increased prosperity. The common good demands that burdens and benefits of public life be shared fairly. It is more than right that the businesses and individuals whose profits swelled during those lost years be required to pay higher taxes for the upkeep of the quality of American life and its future.

Signs of Something Greater

Something dramatic happened in St. Mary's Pro-Cathedral in Dublin in late February. As part of the Vatican's investigation into the clerical abuse scandals in Ireland, Cardinal Sean O'Malley, O.F.M.Cap., archbishop of Boston, and Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of Dublin presided at a "Liturgy of Lament and Repentance," intended to express the church's sorrow and regret for the abuse of children by priests. Before the Mass both archbishops prostrated themselves before the altar in a penitential gesture that evoked the Good Friday liturgy. During the Mass they washed the feet of several victims of abuse, an action usually seen only on Holy Thursday.

In Catholic life symbols matter; they point to something greater than what can be grasped by the senses alone. Ashes are more than burnt matter; water is more than a

liquid; a flame is more than fire. So as the church confronts the legacy of sexual abuse, symbolic gestures are needed. They can speak to the Catholic imagination as much as words do. Many people have waited a long time to see such public acts of contrition; and the archbishops' gestures should be taken as a model for church leaders in the United States. But as both archbishops have indicated, symbols are not enough; for symbols to be made "real," they must be matched by action. Archbishop Martin has worked diligently for change in his church and during the Mass thanked victims for not remaining silent. "I appeal to you to continue to speak out," he said. "There is still a long path to journey in honesty before we can truly merit forgiveness." Part of that journey will be listening, part of it symbolic actions; most of it will be real reform.

A Dirty Word

Of all the dirty words tossed around Washington these days perhaps none is said with more distaste than *earmarks*. President Obama, in his recent State of the Union address, vowed to veto any bill with earmarks, and now both houses of Congress have approved a two-year ban. Earmarks have become synonymous with pork-barrel spending, because the money is often directed to Congressional districts *sub rosa*, without an opportunity for public review.

The system is flawed, to be sure, and introducing more transparency would help put an end to federally funded boondoggles. (See "Nowhere, Bridge to.") Yet should earmarks ultimately be eliminated altogether? Earmarks have played a crucial role in buoying local economies. Without them, for example, Hawaii would lag far behind other states on a range of economic indicators. Louisiana, too, benefited from federal earmarks in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. In other parts of the country, earmarks have built roads and hospitals. And they have created jobs, no small matter in the current economic climate.

Problems do exist: the House Appropriations Committee, for example, has historically exercised far too much control over where federal monies are spent. Yet one of Congress's key roles is to appropriate money: the Constitution says so. A reform of the earmark system, rather than its complete abolition, seems the wiser route—a process already begun by Congressional Democrats before they reluctantly agreed to the ban. When the subject comes up again for debate, supporters might point to two high-profile initiatives that began as earmarks: the Human Genome Project and the nutrition program known as WIC.

Lean, Not Mean

As Congress works out the 2012 federal budget, senators and representatives should keep in mind the millions of unemployed Americans still looking for work, the families with homes in foreclosure and others living on the edge. In this fragile recovery, the nation's fiscal health depends on timing as much as on the right mix of cuts and investments. Austerity could backfire; just look at Britain. Since last summer's drastic cutbacks, its economy has been in decline.

President Obama's \$3.7 trillion budget contains good news. It invests in education, public transportation and green energy financed by curtailing tax breaks for oil companies; these allocations promote long-term growth. The budget also cuts spending: a freeze on discretionary expenditures saves \$400 billion and grants to the states to reform medical malpractice laws indirectly reduce the costs of health care. The budget also raises \$375 billion in revenue by ending some corporate tax breaks, imposing a bank tax and higher rates on capital gains and the unemployment payroll tax and capping itemized deductions for high-income filers. Over a decade this budget would shave \$1.1 trillion from the deficit.

Overall, however, the budget is too cautious. It continues giveaways to the affluent, like the mortgage interest deduction on second homes, while too many of its cuts, like home-heating assistance, community development block grants, job training programs and student loans, would harm persons with the lowest incomes. That is an assault on elementary justice.

The scope of the president's budget, moreover, is too narrow, focused on just 12 percent of the overall federal budget, a part called "non-security discretionary spending," which excludes allocations for the Defense Department and the Department of Homeland Security. Instead, Congress must sift through "mandatory expenditures" set up by law to look for cuts that promote fairness and economic growth.

Interest payments on the federal deficit cannot be cut, of course. And Congress is debating whether Social Security even belongs in this budget process, since it is solvent and will remain so for the next 27 years. It has customarily been treated as a separate item, with its own funding, and it is not appropriate to lump it in with entitlements, as its opponents have done. Trimming defense and health care, however, could cut the deficit and leave the recovery intact.

Defense. Mr. Obama would allow future increases to the defense budget to grow no faster than the inflation rate,

saving \$78 billion. But that assumes increases, when defense already makes up a quarter of the federal budget. Instead, defense should be cut by at least the amount excised from the domestic budget, \$400 billion, now while Congress supports reductions. Canceling the alternative F-35 jet engine project and the Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle will save around \$14 billion. Other weapons projects could be canceled or postponed and the budget of each military branch made as lean as possible without jeopardizing national security. The Secretary of Defense would raise the employee portion of the health insurance premium for retirees and contractors. But health care, which equals one-tenth of the Pentagon's budget, could be reduced further.



Health care. Medicare, under the Affordable Care Act, was cut enough to extend its life by a decade. But curbing health care costs, which are more than one-third of the federal budget and growing, is essential. The best ideas include: (1) changes in the way hospitals and doctors are paid, so that physicians are rewarded for quality treatment rather than the number of tests performed; (2) research to determine the best treatments and medicines for specific illnesses, so that the latest, newest and most expensive do not replace less expensive treatments and drugs that are as effective or better; and (3) means-testing of eligibility for Medicare and/or allowing income-related differentials in its patient payment scale. Reducing those costs, not rushing to slash the deficit, is the way forward.

Tax reform. Since austerity is counterproductive and spending cuts are inadequate, revenues must be raised. The budget rightly calls for corporate tax reform. But after a decade of tax cuts that favored wealthy individuals, progressive individual tax reform is overdue. This fact has not escaped ordinary citizens, who can make wise choices about the federal budget, despite its size and complexity. A recent study at the University of Maryland asked a sample of 800 adults to propose a federal budget. Participants increased spending on job training, the environment and education. On average, they cut spending by \$146 billion for the year, with the biggest cuts (more than \$100 billion) in defense; they also cut veterans' benefits, the space program and federal highways. Most important, they raised revenue by \$292 billion, almost double the amount they cut. Washington should pay attention to that.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

SPECIAL REPORT

Change of Leadership Or Change of Direction?

There are many things still unclear about why Lesley-Anne Knight, secretary general of Caritas Internationalis, has been unexpectedly prevented from applying for a second term of office. It could be that the Vatican Curia is planning some radical structural changes and Knight is seen as an obstacle.

According to Caritas, its leadership “deeply regrets the decision of the Holy See.” The president of Caritas, Cardinal Oscar Andrés Rodríguez de Maradiaga of Honduras, voiced his “incomprehension” at the decision. The organization’s leadership bureau—Cardinal Rodríguez, Knight, the organization’s treasurer and seven regional presidents—met with Cardinal Secretary of State Tarcisio Bertone on Feb. 5, but they were unable to change the position of the Holy See on Knight’s reappointment.

On Feb. 15, Cardinal Bertone wrote to the bishops’ conferences of the world to explain that the Vatican was not going to renew Knight’s mandate after the general assembly of Caritas in May. In the three-page letter, Cardinal Bertone

said Caritas needed a stronger Catholic identity. The next four years, he explained, would focus on “harmonizing the theological dimension of Caritas Internationalis...with its role as an organization operating on the international stage.” This would require, he said, greater cooperation with other ecclesial bodies and with Vatican dicasteries that have an “interest” in Caritas activities. Caritas’s advocacy work, he explained, needs to be better coordinated “in strict cooperation with the Holy See, which is specifically competent in this regard.”

A firmer Catholic identity and tighter bonds with the Vatican? Why not ask Knight to effect these changes? The head of the Pontifical Council Cor Unum, Cardinal Robert Sarah of Guinea, has indicated that Knight’s competence is not in question. Colleagues speak of her with great respect. She radiates intelligence and

competence. And Cardinal Bertone in his letter insists that denying her a second term “is in no way to cast doubt on her merits or diminish the appreciation for the services she has already rendered.” So what is the problem with another term?

“We’re just as much in the dark as anyone else,” a source close to Knight said.

There are reports that Knight has drawn the ire of Vatican officials with “occasional blunt criticism about the church bureaucracy”; and her predecessor, Duncan MacLaren, who was secretary general for two terms (1999-2007), suggests that longstanding tensions between Caritas and Cor Unum, which oversees relief and development work for the Vatican, might be at work behind the decision.

Cardinal Sarah’s remarks seem to underline this clash of cultures. “We

can be competent in organizing but lack some qualities for coordinating work or for reinforcing the Catholic identity,” he said, referring to Knight. He mentions “new internal challenges,” including the revision of the agency’s institutional statutes, which “involve internal collaboration, the Catholic identity of the confederation, cooperation with the Holy See, greater participation of the various continents, a proper understanding of the proper autonomy of each Caritas member of the confederation.”

Read between those lines, and Knight—together with the rest of Caritas leadership—stands accused in some Vatican quarters of being too independent of the Curia, too much like secular nongovernmental organizations and too inattentive to the presumably more traditional sensibilities of member organizations in



Lesley-Anne Knight at a conference on pediatric H.I.V. in October 2009, sponsored by Caritas Internationalis.

CUBA

Church Faces New Realities

In 1612 a small statue of Mary was discovered by three fishermen in Cuba's Bay of Nipe. The figure was completely dry and floated toward their boat on a board inscribed with the words, "I am the Virgin of Charity." Archbishop Dionisio García Ibáñez of Santiago, Cuba, president of the Cuban bishops' conference, wants the world to remember that event during the 400th anniversary celebration for Our Lady of Charity and the Basilica Sanctuary of the Virgin of Charity in El Cobre in 2012.

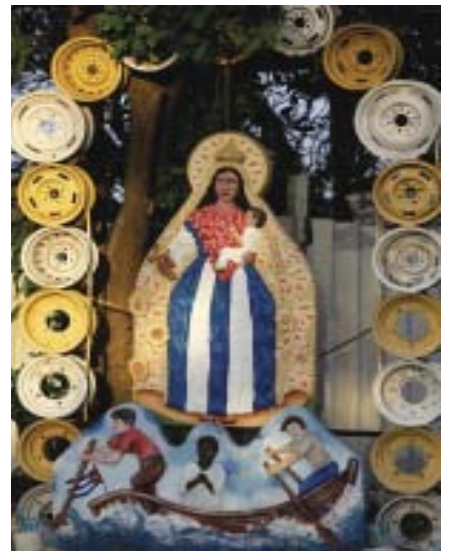
Accompanied by Auxiliary Bishop Octavio Cisneros of Brooklyn, N.Y., and Mario Paredes, chairman of the board of the Catholic Association of Latino Leaders, the archbishop traveled to several major U.S. cities to meet with Cuban-Americans and church leaders. On Feb. 21 they stopped at America House in New York. Promoting the anniversary, the archbishop also sought to raise awareness of the changes taking place in Cuba. Although there is a long history of persecution of the church by the Communist government, the archbishop said conditions for Catholics have improved. "There is a better understanding of religion in Cuba," he said. "But it's not easy; it is a process."

Archbishop García said that the role of the church as a mediator in Cuba is an increasingly significant one and that the church strives to embody the goals set out by the Cuban National Ecclesial Encounter in 1986—to be a prayerful, incarnated missionary church. "We have been an isolated society for a long time, so a slow process is required to lead us to

face new realities in society and the world," he said.

Archbishop García hopes the anniversary will inspire a global pilgrimage next year to El Cobre. The sanctuary hosts thousands of pilgrims annually, concentrated around the feast of the Virgin of Charity, Sept. 8. Most of those visitors come from within Cuba. This year, however, with the recently announced loosening of U.S. restrictions on travel to Cuba for religious purposes and the end in 2010 of limits on how often Cuban-Americans may visit family in Cuba, the anniversary could see an increase in the number of U.S. pilgrims.

Archbishop García noted that one slogan for the anniversary year is "Charity unites us," a reference to both the patron and the virtue. He said that most Cubans, Catholic or not, have a statue of Our Lady of Charity in their home. "Our Lady of Charity is not only for Catholics," he said. "She is a symbol in the nation. People see in Our Lady something positive and good. She has entered into our history and culture."



A depiction in Havana of Cuba's patroness, Our Lady of Charity of El Cobre, framed by wheel rims.

the developing world.

The change of leadership at Caritas is in some ways reminiscent of the takeover of English liturgical translations from the International Committee on English in the Liturgy, which also had its origin in a dispute over authority—in that case, with the Congregation for Divine Worship.

Whatever else it may be, this shake-up is an assertion of control by Vatican departments suspicious of Caritas's autonomy and global reach. Reforms may be coming to establish a direct supervisory role for Cor Unum and other dicasteries. But for what purpose? The liturgical translation fiasco should serve as a warning. Interference from above can create more problems than it solves.

AUSTEN IVEREIGH is America's European correspondent.

Catholic Minister Assassinated

Church leaders around the world expressed their distress at the murder of Shahbaz Bhatti, Pakistan's minister for minorities. Gunmen ambushed Bhatti's car in broad daylight in the capital, Islamabad, on March 2. Bhatti, the cabinet's only Christian minister, had received death threats for urging reform to Pakistan's notorious blasphemy laws. Federico Lombardi, S.J., the Vatican spokesperson, said: "The assassination of Shahbaz Bhatti shows how right the Pope is in his persistent remarks concerning violence against Christians and against religious freedom in general. Bhatti was the first Catholic to hold such an office. We recall how he...bore witness to his own commitment to peaceful coexistence among the religious communities of his country. Our prayers for the victim, our condemnation for this unspeakable act of violence, our closeness to Pakistani Christians who suffer hatred are accompanied by an appeal that everyone may become aware of the urgent importance of defending both religious freedom and Christians who are subject to violence and persecution."

African Bishops Seek Election Delay

Southern Africa's Catholic bishops urged the region's governments to intervene in Zimbabwe, where they warned elections would be "dangerously premature" if held this year. "Conditions in the country are emphatically not conducive to elections in 2011," the Inter-Regional Meeting of the Bishops of Southern Africa said in a statement on Feb. 22 addressed to Angola's President José Eduardo dos Santos, who heads the

NEWS BRIEFS

Archbishop **Silvano Tomasi**, the Vatican's representative to the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva, on Feb. 28 reported the Vatican's concern over the loss of life in Libya, the targeting of peaceful protesters and "the indiscriminate use of force." • In a private audience on Feb. 23, **Masoud Barzani**, president of the Kurdistan Regional Government in northern Iraq, told Pope Benedict XVI that his administration would continue to support the thousands of Christians who have fled violence in the south. • The U.S. bishops' Office of General Counsel said the Obama administration's decision to no longer support the **Defense of Marriage Act** in legal challenges "represents an abdication" of its "constitutional obligation to ensure that laws of the United States are faithfully executed." • The Vatican reports higher numbers of priests, deacons, bishops, dioceses and Catholics overall in 2009, but a still declining number of **women religious**. • Ireland's Catholic bishops charged that a "bonus culture" promoted "reckless gambling practices" in banking and financial institutions during the **Celtic Tiger** boom years that led to "immense suffering" for many during the current recession's economic bust.



Protestors in Benghazi, Libya

Southern African Development Community. Zimbabwe has not yet scheduled elections, but President Robert Mugabe has said they would be held this year. The bishops said reports have emerged that Mugabe is preparing to restrict freedom of association among the people, impose stricter limits on the media and use an outdated voters' roll. "The nation is in the grip of extreme fear, polarization is still evident" and there are "increasing signs of intimidation" and violence as the election campaign builds, they said.

Traditionalists Break With Vatican—Again

Bishop Bernard Fellay, superior general of the Society of St. Pius X, said on Feb. 21 that reconciliation talks with

the Vatican would soon end with little change in the views of either side. The talks were launched in late 2009 in an effort by Pope Benedict XVI to repair a 21-year break with the society. The pope said that full communion for the group's members would depend on "true recognition of the magisterium and the authority of the pope and of the Second Vatican Council." But Bishop Fellay said his society went into the talks with a different purpose: to show the contradictions between the church's traditional teachings and its practices since the Second Vatican Council. That is "the only goal that we are pursuing," he said, and the dialogue with the Vatican is not a search for compromise but "a question of faith."

From CNS and other sources.



Special Delivery

On a special day at this time of the year, but more years ago than I care to remember, I received my very first birthday greeting. I still cherish it because it came from my father, who was serving away from home in the Air Force and who had hardly had a chance yet to get to know me. Not one to show much of how he was feeling, he nevertheless sent me this greeting, in beautiful copperplate handwriting on a simple piece of paper:

My dear Margaret. As the shop hasn't got any birthday cards for little girls only one year old, I have to write and say 'Happy Birthday' this way. With lots of love from Daddy.

The memory of this letter came to mind twice recently, when I heard the stories of two other letters, both just as special for different reasons.

The first was a friend's reminiscence about her early childhood. Her father, she told me, had been almost blind with apparently inoperable cataracts on both eyes. Unable, therefore, to manage his own business correspondence, he recruited his eldest daughter, then still of primary school age, to read his letters to him and write the responses. She became very adept at this task but, inevitably, sometimes resented the burden of her role.

Time passed, eye surgery techniques improved, and eventually it became possible to remove the cataracts. By this time she was grown up and living away from home. Then

one day a letter arrived from her father, beautifully penned, thanking her for all her support in earlier years and celebrating the fact that now, at last, he was able to write this, his first letter in his own hand.

A few hours later, the second story came my way. It was at the end of a day of reflection in which a group of participants had been thinking, among other things, about how very often we don't get to see the fruits of the seeds we sow in the soil of humanity as we live our lives. We called these the "hidden fruit" and had been struck by the importance of trusting that the seeds we sow will indeed bear fruit, but in God's time and in God's way.

One participant told how she had picked a book off the shelf and found an old letter folded away between its pages. The letter was from her mother, written a few months before her death. It was an upbeat, hope-filled letter, describing a wonderful afternoon spent in the garden planting bulbs for the coming springtime. "I know I won't see the blossoms myself," she had written, "but I have been so happy planting something that will bring joy to others when I am gone."

There was a silence around the room. For a moment we were all there in that beloved garden which, the daughter said, had been vibrant with spring flowers on the day of her mother's funeral.

Three letters, each with its own unique message to deliver: a message of love that transcends all separation and distance and difficulty; a message

of gratitude that remembers past blessings and rejoices in being able to give thanks; a message of hope and trust in a future that we may never see but that we are seeding here and now in the present moment.

Paul reminds us: "You are a letter from Christ, written not in ink but with the spirit of the living God, not on stone tablets but on the tablets of human hearts" (2 Cor 3:1-3). Perhaps this is more than just a striking image. Perhaps it is a challenge for every single morning. Each day, as we emerge from the cocoon of sleep and come out from between our sheets, we might just pause to reflect that we are like a letter being taken out of an envelope and delivered into the world of this new day.

Every letter carries its own personal message. Some make demands. Some generate anxiety or frustration, or even anger. Some give life and hope. Some are full of words but mean nothing. Others say little but mean everything: letters written out of duty, threatening letters, letters of encouragement, letters that inspire, letters that speak of love.

When you get up tomorrow, and your "letter" comes out of its envelope, what kind of a letter will it be, and how will it affect the hearts of those who receive it? Will your presence in the world tomorrow shed light or cast shadows upon those you meet? We might do well to begin every morning by asking for the grace that we might truly be "letters from Christ," adding a little bit, each new day, to the store of love, hope and trust in the world.

Begin each day by asking for the grace to be a 'letter from Christ.'

Margaret Silf lives in Scotland. Her latest books are *Roots and Wings*, *The Way of Wisdom* and *Compas Points*.

Catholic News Service reporter Carol Zimmermann interviews a woman after Hurricane Katrina in 2005 in Biloxi, Miss.



PHOTO: CNS/BOB ROLLER



PART 2 IN A SERIES

Catholics At Work

Character-Driven

‘Peter’s faith—and lack thereof—helps guide my writing and my life.’

BY PETER A. QUINN

A novelist and a Catholic, I practice my faith and my novel writing in separate spheres. I make no attempt in my books to explain or defend Catholic teaching. For its part, the church has enough problems without bearing responsibility for my ineptitude as a writer. Yet distinct as they are, the two are not sealed off from each other: The convictions that infuse and inform my writing are grounded in my Catholicism.

For me, the essence of novel writing is the exploration of character. I never start with an outline. I begin with characters. They give me my plots, not vice versa. My relationship with my Catholic faith is grounded in that same dynamic. Beginning with Peter (the name I was given at baptism), it is all about characters, the amazing troupe found in the Jewish and Christian Scriptures and the procession of saints and sinners I continue to encounter in my life.

As a child in the days of the Latin Mass, my ears perked up when I heard Peter mentioned in the Gospel. My fondness for him has deepened as I’ve grown older. Bullheaded, mercurial, a husband who worked hard at his day job (fisherman) while pursuing another vocation (apostle), Peter has been my patron in the struggle to believe and to hold a job, raise a family and write novels.



PHOTO: DON POLLARD

Full Disclosure

Belief and the bench

BY TERRENCE BERG

Work as a federal prosecutor can require long hours at the office, stressful court situations that drain one's energy and powers of thinking, and complicated legal problems that require all of one's mind and judgment. Sometimes the day feels unequally divided: 80 percent for work and 20 percent for the "rest of life." In that rest of life are the things that really matter: marriage, raising children, family, friendships and activities like home and lawn maintenance, recreation, social occasions and exercise. Somewhere in there are also church, faith and spiritual life.

I know it is not supposed to be that way, that spirituality should not be a separate item on the rest-of-life menu, something to take up like a hobby after work. If active and strong, faith is like character; we take it with us into any situation. It influences how we think and act, whether consciously or not. But as much as I recognize and occasionally pursue the goal of integrating spiritual life into daily work, most of the time I am too busy to think about God or to reflect or pray as the day flies by.

Does this mean that my Catholic faith does not affect my work? I've whispered too many "Hail Mary's" on my way to receive a jury verdict, grappled with ethical issues that required asking for divine guidance, and have thanked God too many times for helping me stay cool when attacked by opposing counsel not to know that faith affects my outlook on life, my values, my approach and attitudes toward the people and problems I encounter as a prosecutor.

Apart from the murmured prayers (or muttered curses) that may erupt during the day, faith's deeper influence on my work comes from the way fundamental beliefs translate into values and eventually into patterns of conduct. A believing Catholic embraces a tradition with a deep consciousness of God's presence in the world, particularly in each human person. Seeing God in people is a belief that, for me, translates into the value of humility, a value not often associated with lawyers or prosecutors. In practice, humility means treating each person with equal dignity, deserving of respect.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF AUTHOR

Whether Catholic or not, every novelist, it seems to me, can see him or herself in the scene from the Gospel of Matthew in which Peter summons the courage to get out of his fishing boat—to abandon his comfort zone—and walk on water. I remember having a similar experience when, after years of talking about writing a novel, I actually set out to write one. The sinking feeling that I was in way over my head soon followed the exhilaration of the first few steps.

In the Gospel, Jesus reaches his hand out to Peter and says to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" As a believer and a writer, I have shared Peter's doubt. Each time I start a novel, I have the same sensation of going over the side of the boat. With all three novels I have published, I have despaired of finishing more times than I care to remember. In the practice of my faith, there are times I am confident and at peace; at other moments, I waver and feel bereft.

Peter did not drown. He gripped Jesus' hand, pulled himself up and went back to the boat. He continued to live with his imperfections and kept wrestling with his doubts. He was rebuked by Jesus for his dimwittedness ("Get behind me, Satan"). Put to the test, he not only denied Jesus but ran away, absenting himself from the bloody scandal of Calvary. Even when he returned and took a leadership role, he was challenged by Paul for his narrow vision of the Christian community and made to change his stand.

At the very end, according to legend, Peter was fleeing martyrdom in Rome when Jesus appeared hurrying in the opposite direction. "Where are you going?" Peter asked. Jesus answered, "I am going to Rome to be crucified again." Peter went back. Familiar as he was with failure, he did not give up. He persisted.

I have a statue of Peter in the room in which I write. He holds his iconic keys to the kingdom that Jesus said is in

each one of us. My attachment to Peter is personal and professional. He is a constant reminder of our common human

struggle with individual fallibility and the terrifying fragility of all existence—a struggle faced perhaps by novelists and artists in special ways.

Peter is also an example of a person undefeated by his flaws, able to acknowledge his inadequacies yet keep the faith, clinging always "to the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." I would find it impossible to be a novelist or a Catholic without taking to heart Peter's worldly and holy persistence.

PETER A. QUINN, formerly a speechwriter for two New York State governors, Hugh Carey and Mario Cuomo, retired from Time Warner as corporate editorial director in 2007. His third novel, *The Man Who Never Returned* (*Overlook*, 2010), was published in August.

ON THE WEB

A conversation
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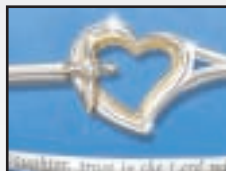
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For a prosecutor, the accused—regardless of how terrible the crime—deserves respect as a person just as much as do the judge, the other lawyers, the jury or the witnesses, agents or police officers. The defendant in the dock is at that moment the least of our brothers or sisters. Ensuring fair treatment and the right to due process is as much the prosecutor's responsibility as is proving guilt. Respect for human dignity also influences how one treats opposing counsel, witnesses, victims and professional colleagues. Respect and humility involve more than being polite and professional. These fundamental values have given life to many of the ethical standards intended to ensure fairness in criminal trials. Animated by such values, a prosecutor will want to vigorously ensure that any and all evidence (especially evidence that hurts the government's case) is turned over to the defense as required under criminal discovery rules. Full disclosure of the facts, "warts and all," follows from an approach that values each person's dignity.

Judges often say that sentencing is their most difficult task. Sitting in judgment over a fellow human being is an awesome responsibility. So is the responsibility prosecutors have in representing the people's interests at the time of sentencing. Those interests usually call for punishment, deterrence and protection of the public. When the question is no longer the fairness of the trial but the nature of the crime and the appropriate punishment—that is when it is hardest to see the convicted person as worthy of the same dignity society accords to the judge, the lawyers or others in the courtroom.

Yet as a Catholic I remember that Jesus (though innocent) once stood where that defendant stands, about to be sentenced by Pilate, his prosecutor and judge. Suddenly the values of humility and the equal dignity of the defendant seem to fit at the time of sentencing as well.

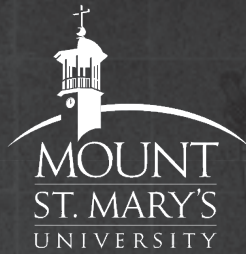
The high pressure, deadline-driven job of a federal prosecutor can make one feel that there is no time for the peaceful, meditative practices of the spiritual life. And the competitive nature of the adversarial judicial process can sometimes enshrine "winning" as the highest goal. Faith illuminates different values, however, like acting with humility and seeing God in others.

Seeing God in people is a belief that for me translates into the value of humility.

ON THE WEB

An archive of essays
by George W. Hunt, S.J.
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TERRENCE BERG is a federal prosecutor in Detroit, Mich. The views expressed in this article are those of the author and are not intended to express the views of the U.S. Department of Justice.



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Weapon of War

Who will protect the women of Congo?

BY KEVIN CLARKE

Olun Kamitatu looks drawn and tired after spending a long day at the United Nations in New York City, petitioning its international bureaucrats for a more forceful and comprehensive presence in Democratic Republic of Congo. “You have to have faith in the people of good will,” a U.N. official who hurried off to his next meeting said to her. “Where are they?” asked an exasperated Ms. Kamitatu.

People of good will were hard to find in Congo, last July, when Ms. Kamitatu completed her U.N. visit. On the same day her appeal was patiently tolerated in New York, Mai-Mai militia and Hutu rebels with the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (F.D.L.R.) were finishing up a raid in North Kivu province, beating and dragging the village men from their homes, then raping scores of their mothers, sisters and wives before their eyes in what has become a familiar, brutal exercise. U.N. forces in the field did not prevent the attacks or succeed in rounding up the perpetrators afterward. Not until Oct. 5, months later, did U.N. forces arrest one of the leaders of the village attacks, which continued into August and ultimately included the rapes of some 500 men, women and children.

Ms. Kamitatu, the regional technical advisor for extractive industries and governance for the Central Africa Regional Office of Catholic Relief Services, was accompanied in Manhattan by Mathilde Muhindo Mwahmini, the director of the Centre Olame of the Archdiocese of Bukavu in South Kivu. Centre Olame (“living with dignity”), a C.R.S. partner, has worked for 50 years to improve the status of women in Congolese society. The center was instrumental in bringing to light the extraordinary level of sexual violence that has typified the brutality of the Congo conflict. Ms. Mwahmini’s agency was among the first to document officially the use of rape as an instrument of warfare and to respond to the survivors, mostly women.

Still, the news from Congo, since the two women appealed to the United Nations offers little evidence that this long nightmare is nearing an end. The United Nations reported on Oct. 15, 2010, that as many as 15,000 women were raped in Congo’s eastern provinces in 2009. The report

that the F.D.L.R., members of the Lord’s Resistance Army and other militia and bandit groups continue mass rape was no surprise, but according to other U.N. findings, even Congo’s government soldiers have taken part in the sexual assaults.

In late October news of other mass rapes and assaults along the border with Angola began to surface as survivors reached authorities. As many as 650 women and girls were reported raped during a mass expulsion of Congolese refugees from Angola. Many victims told U.N. officials that they had been locked in dungeon-like conditions for weeks and raped repeatedly by “security forces.” It was unclear if these forces were Angolan or Congolese.

In many parts of the D.R.C., normality—or what passes for it in a poor country headed by a weak and at times corrupt government—has returned. In the Congo’s east, however, violence remains a major problem. Despite having conducted in 2006 its first multiparty election since 1960, the Congo is unstable, says Ms. Mwahmini. “We still have foreign armed groups [and] the insecurity persists.”

“Most of these clashes,” adds Ms. Kamitatu, “actually happen in the mining areas. We have observed that mining areas have become more and more militarized.”

The U.N.’s pacification and democratization campaigns in Congo are among the largest and costliest in the organization’s history. The two women fear mission exhaustion has diminished the effectiveness of the campaigns. The outrages in Kivu and along the Angolan border justified their fears. “What really shocks me,” says Ms. Kamitatu, “is that on the one hand we see all this [international] assistance, and then when you talk to U.N. peacekeeping staff, they say they don’t have enough resources to fulfill their mandate.”

“That’s why we are here to say that the war in the Congo, the violence against women,” says Mwahmini, “...has lasted too long, and we need to put an end to it.”

“We believe that if the Congolese government does what it’s supposed to do and the international community...also does what it’s supposed to do,” Ms. Kamitatu says, “then the lives of women and children will be spared.”

The U.N. peacekeeping force in Congo (the U.N. Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo, better known by its French acronym, Monusco) is the largest in the world, with more than

KEVIN CLARKE is an associate editor of *America*.



Margot Wallström, third from right, the U.N. special representative on sexual violence in conflict, listens to villagers in Kitchanga, in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, in October 2010.

19,000 troops across the country. Critics of Monusco, like the international aid and development organization Oxfam, complain that the force is so ineffective that humanitarian organizations cannot safely complete their missions, and they point out that Congolese continue to die not just at the hands of rebels and bandits but also because medical, sanitary and food aid is still not reaching the people in need.

Years after the United Nations arrived in Congo, the question persists: Who will protect the people?

The arrival of Hutu escaping into Congo in the chaotic aftermath of the 1994 Tutsi genocide in Rwanda began a period of violence and civic disintegration that continues. Some five million Congolese have died during the conflict, and it is estimated that every 30 minutes a woman in the eastern provinces is raped.

The Hutu and other rebel, ethnic and bandit groups are one cause for the dislocation, but the conflicts have been abetted by the weakness of the central government. The violence also has been fueled by so-called conflict commodities—coltan, gold, tin and copper—rich deposits of metals and minerals that should have been a huge resource for Congo's economic development. Instead, they have been a curse, supporting the violence.

Miracle Workers

In the Democratic Republic of Congo's patriarchal culture, the status of women is low, but the persistence of rape and sexual assault in war has further degraded their status. Ms. Mwahmini laments the "reversal," noting that during 50 years of independence, women in Congo had greatly improved their position in society, achieving political office and places of authority and power. "They were the ones who remained in the villages when the husband fled.... They had to provide for the children," she says. "We've also seen a new generation of [women] traders who are traveling to Hong Kong or Dubai or China to buy goods that they bring and sell in the Congo, and by doing this they provide jobs to other women. And that's why I think that the people who are using rape as a weapon of war know the potential of Congolese women. They understand that by targeting women they affect the whole community."

The Center Olame maintains a listening center focused on "detraumatizing" women; it has served almost 6,000 Congolese women between the ages of 8 and 75. "Nobody was spared," reflects Ms. Mwahmini. "There was no question of age. Young, elderly—it didn't matter."

One of the first victims Ms. Mwahmini interviewed was an elderly woman. She and her husband "were attacked during

PHOTO: REUTERS/KATRINA IWANSON

the night. Her husband, he was brutally beaten, and she was raped," Mwahmini remembers. "The first soldier raped her, then the second, and then the third soldier.... As the fourth one was approaching, they heard the voice of a commander, who told the soldier, 'Leave her alone, she's an old woman.'

"From that testimony we understood that this was... planned, that there was an authority... watching and... guiding all of this."

The use of rape has become so widespread now, Ms. Mwahmini says, that this kind of sexual violence has been trivialized in Congolese society. Worse, many of the perpetrators named by investigations that Center Olame contributed to, including a prominent study from Human Rights Watch, have not been prosecuted; many perpetrators have been promoted within the Congolese military and government, an impunity that Ms. Mwahmini says "fuels the phenomenon."

"The Center Olame is here to restore the dignity of women," says Ms. Mwahmini. "Now there's a perception of Congolese women as raped women."

"No," she says, "we are here to say that Congolese women are strong."

Not all the news from Congo is bad. "We have a wonderful people; they do not accept their fate; and we have the natural beauty of the country that [tourists] will keep coming to see," says Ms. Mwahmini. "The Congolese people

believe in life...despite everything."

Ms. Kamitatu is likewise impressed by the people's resilience. "Somehow the conflict has strengthened us as a nation," she says. "We used to think of ourselves as more of, you know, 'I'm from Bandundu; she's from Kivu.'" Now the struggle to survive has united them. She says, "We want to remain Congolese; we don't want a single portion of our territory to be given to anybody else. This is who we are, and this is the country that God gave us, so let it be."

Another source of hope has been the actions of the global civic community. "I was really amazed [to discover]," says Ms. Kamitatu, "the level of commitment that some of the American Catholics have to this issue. They've never been to the D.R.C.; they don't know anyone in the D.R.C.; but they've educated themselves. We've heard testimony from ordinary American Catholics that have harassed, literally, their representatives to make sure they pass [legislation aimed at containing Congo's conflict commodity trade]." Ms. Kamitatu is gratified by the introduction of this "first of its kind" legislation in the U.S. Congress. "Now we are able to use that as we're meeting other missions to say, 'The U.S. has done that, what are you going to do?'"

Other Signs of Hope

According to Ms. Kamitatu, the government in Kinshasa has improved its effectiveness and taken steps toward trans-

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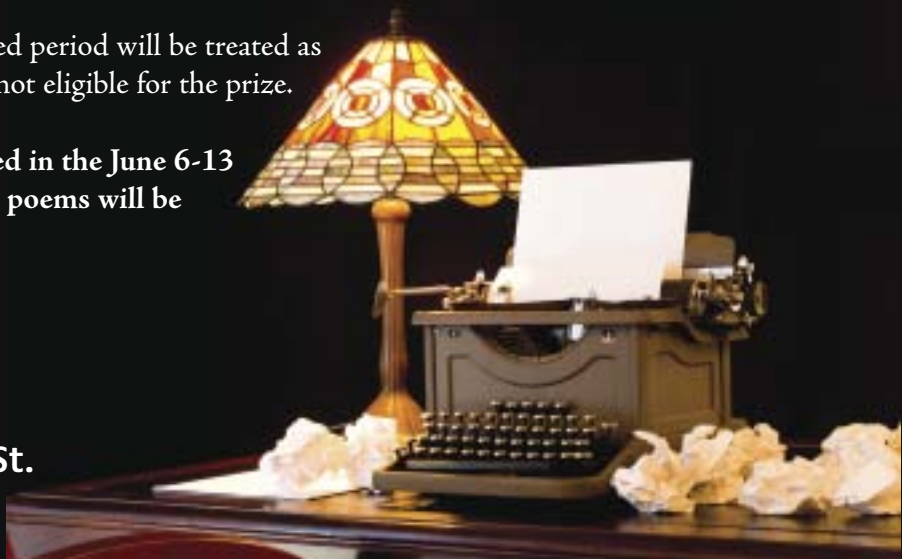
Each entrant is asked to submit only one typed, unpublished poem of 30 lines or fewer that is not under consideration elsewhere. Include contact information on the same page as the poem. Poems will not be returned. Please do not submit poems by e-mail or fax. Submissions must be postmarked between Jan. 1 and March 31, 2011.

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parency in its dealing with multinationals and in state expenditures. It still has far to go. But while violence plagues the resource-rich provinces, the more commonplace hazards of poverty are the people's main preoccupations in other provinces. "Can I get health care? Can I get food? Can I get an education for my children?" asks Ms. Mwachini.

To resolve the conflict, Ms. Kamitatu says the international community must do two things. First, better police the outflow of conflict commodities from the Congo. "Most of these groups occupy mining areas, and they use the revenues from the extraction and sale of these minerals to continue fighting," she explains. "Unless we address that, they will keep fighting."

Second, the international community must devise a practical plan for resettling the Hutu refugees who fled Rwanda and now live in Congo. It has been 16 years since the Hutu first entered Congo to escape the retribution of the victorious Tutsi, who seized control of Rwanda and ended the genocide there. Now those innocent of genocide remain trapped among the guilty. Some of the F.D.L.R. rebels now harassing the Congolese countryside were just children when they fled Rwanda. Ms. Kamitatu suggests the Congolese and Rwandan governments agree on resettling and rehabilitating those Hutus who can be restored. "But...I'm not sure there is a political will to get there," she said.

"Is there a regional solution to the F.D.L.R.?" Ms. Kamitatu asks. "If we are able to disarm them, what do we do with them? That's the question nobody wants to answer.... What we've heard [at the United Nations] is: 'We will disarm them, demobilize them and move them to another part of the D.R.C.' Is that the solution? I think the country is an integrated region and the international community needs to find a more lasting solution [than relocation within Congo] so that we give an incentive to those that no longer want to fight."

In 2010 Congo celebrated its 50th year of independence, a bittersweet milestone in Ms. Mwachini's view. For its 60th celebration she hopes to celebrate a nation that addresses its people's basic needs, pays its civil servants, builds roads and infrastructure and thoughtfully invests its vast riches in the development of its people.

Ms. Kamitatu smiles wanly at her friend's laundry list of national improvements. More than better infrastructure, she says, the nation needs a change of heart. "What I would really like to see within the next 10 years is a new generation of leaders—even if we don't have all the roads and all the other things.... I think the failure of the Congo...has been the absence of leaders with a vision; and if we have that, then slowly but surely we will get there." **A**

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A slideshow report on conflict in Congo.
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KILLER COMEDIES

Four sitcoms escape the shadow of criminal drama.

Television has become a wasteland of crime labs, police stations and courtrooms. Every title is an initialism, followed by a colon and a major U.S. city name, apparently the only way viewers can discern which crime series they are watching. From “C.S.I.” to “N.C.I.S.,” each blends into the next, an hourlong blur of DNA samples and police interrogations.

Not long ago, the sitcom was the genre of choice for network programmers. The airwaves were flooded with one hilarious family after another, each show set primarily in a living room and kitchen, each with a sofa facing the camera and a child under 10 cracking

wise. Laugh tracks were to television circa 1987 what forensic labs are today. Then, like the western before it, the sitcom fell out of favor with television executives and dominates no longer. A Darwinian component has come into play: with exceptions, a higher level of quality is required for sitcom survival.

Four current shows meet the gold standard for comedy and offer a welcome respite from television’s barrage of microscopic evidence and quirky-yet-passionate detectives.

With its seams a bit stretched in its fifth season, **30 Rock** (NBC) is still the funniest, smartest show on television. Marrying sophisticated writing,

high-quality performance and a heart as soft as a plush toy, the show owes its success to its mastermind, star and creative force, Tina Fey.

The show, however, struggles to introduce new characters that are as robust as its already established troupe of comedic virtuosos. The cast has not benefited from recent additions, like the usually reliable Elizabeth Banks as the love interest of the network bigwig Jack Donaghy (Alec Baldwin). Still, this is nitpicking. The show can rely on Fey’s Liz Lemon, one of the most likable television protagonists. Fey is supported by a talented ensemble that includes Baldwin (in the role of his career), Jane Krakowski, Tracy Morgan and the underrated Jack McBrayer as the lovably earnest page, Kenneth.

While the critical acclaim of “30 Rock” makes it immune to the threat



The cast of “The Big Bang Theory”

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of cancellation (despite mediocre ratings), “Rock’s” sister show, **Parks and Recreation**, could be in danger of not seeing another season. Already given the dubious task of being a mid-season replacement (its third season premiered in January), “Parks” will be fighting for its life over the next few months and hoping that the addition of Rob Lowe will improve its less-than-stellar ratings.

Though not of the same quality as Tina Fey’s show, “Parks,” which follows the ins and outs of a small-town bureaucracy in Nowhere, Ind., is still one of the best shows on television, thanks to the performance of Amy Poehler. Television has provided many memorable high-status buffoons, but few with as much nuance and depth as Poehler’s Leslie Knope.

It is an easy trap for a comedic actor to patronize his or her role, to step outside of the part and paint it with broad strokes so that there is little doubt about the contempt the actor feels for the part, as if to say, “This is not me.” But Poehler rises above such condescension and uses her acting ability (an area where she outpaces her “Saturday Night Live” chum Fey) to offer a consistently vulnerable yet hilarious performance.

“Parks” can be patchy at times. Poehler’s supporting cast is a bit uneven, and some characters are downright unlikable, like Ron Swanson (Nick Offerman), who hits all the wrong notes as Leslie’s poker-faced superior. The writing can also be hit-or-miss, sliding quickly from comedy feast to famine. Still, Poehler’s performance makes the show worth watching. One hopes that NBC lets the show find its footing.

The Big Bang Theory, on CBS, has never needed to find its footing. It has been secure since it first aired in



Stephen Mangan, left, as Sean Lincoln and Matt LeBlanc as himself in “Episodes”

2007 and is hitting its peak as it moves toward the midway point of its fourth season. The show revolves around two genius misfits (Johnny Galecki and Jim Parsons), their beautiful blonde waitress neighbor (Kaley Cuoco) and their socially incompetent colleagues (Simon Helburg and Kunal Nayyar).

In a rare move, “Bang” puts the lives of social misfits front and center. While it sometimes uses their idiosyncrasies for comic effect, it never stoops to meanspiritedness or cliché. The show’s appeal lies in the brokenness of each of the characters. Helburg, in particular, takes what could otherwise be a one-note role as a mama’s boy and self-perceived Casanova and devises a funny, loving portrait of uncertainty and repression.

Leaving structural innovation and technical dexterity to other shows,

“Bang” focuses solely on the laughs. This is meat-and-potatoes comedy, like “Friends.” Indeed the show seems to be a direct descendant of that NBC classic in style and temperament. “Bang” is also kind; it exhibits little of the irreverent tone most sitcoms adopt in a desperate attempt to acquire the 18-to-24 age demographic coveted by networks and advertisers.

If your cable is more than basic, you might try Showtime’s **Episodes**, which illustrates the “Americanization” of a fictional British television series, an intriguing premise given that American television has been pilfering from its British cousins for decades. (The first “season finale” aired on Feb. 20, but the show is easy to find in reruns and on demand.) “All in the Family,” “The Office” and “Friends” all have roots across the pond. What is

most intriguing are the numerous transitions a British show must undergo to become palatable to American audiences. This show illuminates the differences between British and American humor.

A joint U.K./U.S. production, "Episodes" is a perfect amalgamation. At its best, British humor is intelligent, fleet and nuanced; conversely, it too easily slides into the caustic, alienating and mean-spirited. American humor is traditionally much broader, more physical and gregarious; at its worst it can be sophomoric, abrasive and repulsive. "Episodes" is sharp-witted and droll, as the best British comedy can be, without losing the earnestness and warmth fundamental to American humor.

But "Episodes" is also an authentic account of the havoc that major transitions can play in our lives, particularly on those relationships that mean the most to us. In this instance the relationship is that of a down-to-earth and delightfully acerbic husband-and-wife writing team, Beverly and Sean Lincoln (Tasmin Greig and Stephen Mangan), who as immigrants to Hollywood from Britain attempt to negotiate the lavish, lush and brutally dishonest world of American television while keeping their wits about them.

Greig's Beverly is the show's rudder. Her no-nonsense sensibility is wonderfully set in relief against a backdrop of excess and fantasy from which even her husband is not immune. Greig evokes Emma Thompson at her finest, and Beverly is the quintessential comedic "straight woman." Mangan matches her as the similarly clear-headed Sean, whose occasional flights of whimsy provide fodder for Greig's impeccable reactions and delivery. The two of them hit the right notes in one of TV's great comedic couplings.

If the show falters, it would be in its "American" aspect. The stunt casting of Matt LeBlanc playing himself would

seem to have potential for a meta-humor extravaganza. But, alas, most of the jokes fall short, primarily because Matt LeBlanc's "Matt LeBlanc" is frighteningly similar to Matt LeBlanc's character in the failed sitcom "Joey," and audiences are too familiar with the long-played-out comedic possibilities that character has to offer. The other "American" components of the show work brilliantly, particularly Kathleen Rose Perkins's hilariously poignant turn as the producer's ever smiling, ever

suffering assistant/mistress.

The television landscape these days is grim, with little to appeal to a thoughtful, reflective audience. Even cable networks, which usually produce one or two offerings of particular relevance, have hit a creative and intellectual dry spot. Yet these four shows, at least, offer a much-needed oasis in a desert of crime dramas.

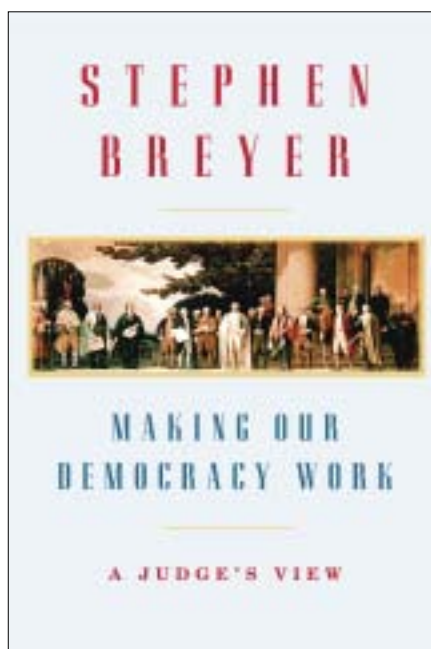
JAKE MARTIN, S.J., is a Jesuit scholastic teaching theater and theology at Loyola Academy in Wilmette, Ill.

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Kevin Clarke considers I.B.M.'s supercomputer, Watson. americamagazine.org/culture

BOOKS | CAROL NACKENOFF

CALL TO ORDER



MAKING OUR DEMOCRACY WORK A Judge's View

By Stephen Breyer
Knopf. 288p \$26.95

In recent years, the public has been treated to a number of books by current or recent Supreme Court justices. Among this group, Stephen G. Breyer

stands out as an especially prolific author. As a former professor at Harvard Law School with a specialty in administrative law, Justice Breyer had authored or co-authored several books long before his nomination to the court. Since joining the court, Justice Breyer has published more broadly about the court's place in democratic governance. *Making Our Democracy Work* follows five years after the publication of *Active Liberty* (2005).

The earlier volume sought to establish that the Constitution aimed at maximizing liberty, arguing that its efforts to create democratic political institutions will succeed only if the public actively participates in the nation's political life. *Active Liberty* can be viewed as a counterweight to Antonin Scalia's *A Matter of Interpretation* (1997) and to other writings by this outspoken conservative justice. This new book argues that the people need to understand the court and that the court must act in such a way that the public will accept its decisions, for acceptance is never a sure thing. This second point means

that the court must respect other branches of government, must think about comparative specialization and must be pragmatic. He argues that workable decisions must be widely acceptable ones.

Justice Breyer positions himself as a liberal champion of judicial restraint. He speaks of an attitude of deference to other decision makers. If measured by the number of pieces of congressional legislation he voted to strike down, that portrait would seem to be rather accurate. An op-ed piece by Paul Gewirtz and Chad Golder (The New York Times, 7/6/05) entitled "Who Are the Activists?" ranked Breyer last in this measure of activism among all the justices in decisions since he joined the court (membership had then been constant since 1994).

A corollary to Justice Breyer's first argument is that the people need a court they can understand. While this claim does not differentiate him from far more conservative legal scholars, the difference is in what this means. Robert F. Nagel, for instance, has argued in *Constitutional Cultures* that the public wants and needs a constitution with a relatively plain, stable meaning—not one that varies with a plethora of tests and doctrines invented by the legal community and the judiciary. In Nagel's narrative, an over-active Supreme Court, aided by the legal community, has usurped a great deal of public policy-making power and stands in an antagonistic relationship to the political culture. For contemporary conservatives, the judge should stick to text and the original public meaning of that language.

Justice Breyer, to the contrary, firmly believes that the public wants and needs pragmatic constitutional interpretation—an interpretation exercised by expert technicians who have to weigh and balance a number of difficult considerations that don't have easy answers. A workable constitution

is one that allows problems to be solved in a way that the public, as well as other governmental institutions, can find acceptable. Justice Breyer argues that justices must think about purposes and consequences of a statute in reaching workable decisions. He believes the advantages of his more flexible approach to creating a workable constitution include "legislator empowering" versus "judge empowering" decision-making, transparency and rational explanation, and greater rights protection.

Part I of this book considers, through a history of judicial review, how the public gradually came to accept the court's decisions as authoritative. Distinct chapters offer concise and good explorations of key cases in that history, from *Marbury v. Madison* to *Bush v. Gore*, along with the political difficulties these cases and decisions posed.

Part II develops the argument that the court should "recognize and

respect the roles of other governmental institutions—Congress, the president, executive branch administrators, the states, other courts—and it should take account of the experience of each." This will help the court maintain the public trust it has acquired. Breyer examines relations between the court and each of these institutions in turn. The chapter that considers administrative agency rulemaking is especially good—not surprising, given the author's academic specialty. Breyer also argues that in weighing the merits of stability versus change as the court confronts its own past decisions, stability is frequently the wiser choice.

Part III offers an argument about how the court preserves permanent constitutional values and principles regarding individual rights and liberties while confronting other governmental institutions. Special interpretive tools he endorses for determining where and how to apply rights-safeguarding provisions are the use of val-

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ues, “the constitutional analogue of statutory purposes” and proportionality, or balancing, “when a statute restricts one constitutionally protected interest in order to further some other comparably important interest.” What follows are interesting discussions about Breyer’s view on the recent Second Amendment cases, national security issues as seen through a re-examination of the World War II Japanese relocation cases, and considerations about presidential power and accountability through consideration of the post-2001 Guantánamo Bay detention cases.

In claiming that “in fits and starts, the Supreme Court came to be accepted and trusted as a guardian of the Constitution,” Breyer may believe the court has more power to be the final arbiter of constitutional disputes than a good number of contemporary scholars of law and courts believe it has. Certain chapters, such as the one on Korematsu and Japanese internment, do make clear that the court is

not always the final word on constitutional meaning. In Justice Breyer’s world, the court patrols constitutional boundaries. In his view, Congress (and the court) have done a good job “to protect the states from federal efforts to accrue power at their expense.” Conservatives might well disagree. Readers might well ask whether, in a highly polarized political climate, Breyer defines the people as those parts of the public who agree with him.

Justice Breyer’s writing is lively and engaging. It is extremely accessible and assumes no prior knowledge of the Supreme Court as an institution or of its major decisions. A reader who is not well read on the Supreme Court is likely to be richly rewarded for reading *Making Our Democracy Work*. While this book does not break new ground, it is a fine read and should encourage thoughtful reflection and discussion.

CAROL NACKENOFF is a professor of political science at Swarthmore College.

WAYNE A. HOLST

THE FAR HORIZON

SOULS IN FULL SAIL

A Christian Spirituality for the Later Years

By Emilie Griffin
InterVarsity Press. 180p \$15

A dear friend and role model for voyaging the senior years died during the Christmas holidays. He had lived a rich and full life and ended his days with an undaunted but surrendered spirit. His exemplary way of handling things often came to mind as I read Emilie Griffin’s helpful spiritual guide to Christian aging. My friend lived, to my mind, what Griffin so beautifully describes.

“I’m adjusting to the new normal,” was his frequently brave and always

hopeful comment as he “navigated longingly toward home” with an inspiring blend of restlessness and accommodation.

“There are right and wrong ways to deal with our fears as we move into later life,” writes Griffin in a chapter on the challenges that must be faced. “As we pursue the life voyage, we stop keeping a résumé; earning a degree seems less important than receiving an accolade; it is time to do less, to accept the thanks being given

for what we have already done.”

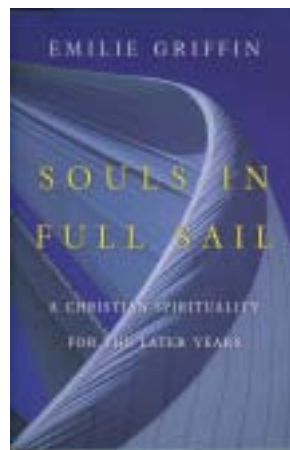
Griffin is a writer and editor. A native of New Orleans, she worked and lived for many years in New York City. The author of 16 books on the spiritual life, she has contributed to many more. She and her husband, William, an author, editor and translator, now reside in Alexandria, La. As playwrights, they studied under Edward Albee in New York. This rich experience is reflected in these pages.

A lover of words who wrestles with the implications of her British and German heritage, Griffin enriches her chapters with quotations from such notables as C. S. Lewis and John Henry Newman. She includes examples of her own poetry to emphasize a point. Her wide-ranging literary and dramatic tastes show her to be as adept at quoting from Latin authors as she is in using songs from Broadway musicals like “Gypsy” or “A Chorus Line.”

A woman whose forebears knew privilege, and lost it, she writes from a background of both opportunity and difficulty. She has had to contend with physical loss and walks today with a cane. From it all, a profound spiritual maturity serves as grounding for what she discusses in this book’s 10 chapters.

As the title suggests, the author uses the images of sailing and voyaging to reflect the imagery and metaphor she believes to be necessary for unpacking and clarifying the mysteries of faith encountered along our life journey. We set out on this new and uncharted mission recognizing that old age has indeed arrived. We may deny it or try to fight it, but ultimately we will need to surrender to it if we want to be enriched.

Older people can serve as our mentors, both in how we too want to live and what we want to avoid.



Our true “vocation” in the senior years, the author stresses, is to spend time working with the people who inspire us and encourage those things at which we excel. Cardinal Newman said that we all need to be engaged with “some definite service” that provides meaning and the rewards of faithfulness. Living well with a “baptized imagination” (C. S. Lewis) is a gift we give ourselves and others as we cultivate old and new friendships across the years.

We all need to learn, as my spiritual teacher was able to do, how to transcend and reframe the infirmities we encounter, while we continue to grow with those we love and seek to forgive our adversaries while there is still time.

In her chapter “Night Fears,” Griffin refers to the temptations we possibly face as certain powers diminish. Sexuality, for example, remains part of our humanity. Both men and women may be tempted to resort to thoughts and behaviors that can deceive us into thinking we retain the prowess we once commanded. Spiritual courage helps us to realize that we still have much to offer and to discern what truly nurtures the ego.

Family rituals on special occasions like Thanksgiving and Christmas need to be rethought. The weave of family personalities and their stories gives meaning, but senior members need to “give way” to the younger generations, treating them as peers and allowing them to take responsibility for many family activities. A great gift of aging is to be able to look at “spiritual pinpoints,” when we become more keenly aware of the things that matter and the things that do not.

George Bernard Shaw was a late bloomer as a playwright, who did some of his best work as an octogenarian. We too can find creative ways that bring us joy. The important thing is to be focused on the present and to let the future tend to itself.

Readers of this book will need to

square their own unique experiences with those of the author. Few of us share her ancestry, her professional achievements and her gift for using words, yet all of us can identify with her because of the way her writing engages us.

The voyage tends homeward as a longing toward completion becomes more real. “Growing older doesn’t have to be learned,” Griffin writes. “It simply happens. But to live it with grace is a kind of learning, which like all learning is painful.”

We must be concerned about prac-

tical things; people of faith are often better prepared for life’s vagaries. We hope that we too can continue to adjust to the ever-changing “new normality” that life brings; and that when our time for completion comes, we too will face it with equanimity.

Souls in Full Sail should find a place in our libraries, even as many of us seek to divest ourselves of much life-long accumulation.

WAYNE A. HOLST teaches religion and culture at the University of Calgary and helps to coordinate adult spiritual development at St. David’s United Church in that city.

MICHAEL SEAN WINTERS PATRIOT GAMES

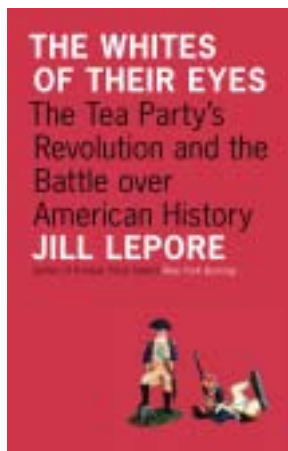
THE WHITES OF THEIR EYES The Tea Party’s Revolution and the Battle Over American History

By Jill Lepore
Princeton Univ. Press. 224p \$19.95

A core belief of the Tea Party is that contemporary politics should be viewed through the lens of the American founding. Jill Lepore’s new book looks at the Tea Party itself through the lens of that belief, and the resulting picture is not a pretty one. Lepore teaches history at Harvard, and she writes for *The New Yorker*, so she epitomizes the “liberal cultural elite” the Tea Partiers decry. This book is a kind of payback, unleashing her wealth of learning and her stylish prose on the Tea Party’s self-identity.

Lepore’s first gripe with the Tea Party is that they whitewash history. Not only do they buy into the hagiographic treatment of the founding fathers that we associate with the History Channel, but they avoid all the controversies that con-

sumed the founders, such as the debate over slavery. “There were very few black people in the Tea Party,” Lepore notes, “but there were no black people at all in the Tea Party’s eighteenth century. Nor, for that matter, were there any women, aside from Abigail Adams, and no slavery, poverty, ignorance, insanity, sickness, or misery.”



The Tea Partiers not only misunderstand the founding, according to Lepore, they fail to grasp how history relates to the present. “Time moves forward, not backward. Chronology is like gravity. Nothing falls up. We cannot go back to the eighteenth century, and the Founding Fathers are not, in fact, here with us today.” This section of

the book is a little too succinct for such metaphysical thoughts, or a little too metaphysical for so succinct a book, but either way the reader should have been spared this particular digression.

This train of thought leads Lepore to one of the few moral misjudgments in her text. She writes, “The study of

history requires investigation, imagination, empathy, and respect. Reverence just doesn't enter into it." Catholics, of course, revere certain historical figures as saints, but one need not be a Catholic, or even an American, to revere someone of Lincoln's stature, nor do the hypocrisies and moral lapses of a man like Jefferson steal away one iota of our admiration for his gifts. Hagiography is one danger, but the instinct to deny human greatness is another.

Lepore is much stronger when she detours into a riff on the late, great historian Richard Hofstadter. She notes the tendency among academic historians to avoid drawing sweeping conclusions about the past, still less anything like a lesson for our own time, a trend Hofstadter defied. While his colleagues buried themselves in minutiae, Hofstadter stood for the proposition that "historians with something to say about the relationship between the past and the present had an obligation to say it, as carefully as possible, by

writing with method, perspective, skepticism, and an authority that derived not only from their discipline but also from their distance from the corridors of power." If the Tea Partiers mangle history, it is because they can: academic historians were so busy trying to get published in the Northeast Michigan Quarterly Review, they abandoned their responsibility to teach the nation about its own roots.

Snappy writing, especially in the writing of history, is a gift to the reader, and Lepore exhibits that gift in spades. "The remarkable debate about sovereignty and liberty that took place between 1761, when James Otis argued the writs of assistance case, and 1791, when the Bill of Rights was ratified, contains an ocean of ideas," Lepore writes. "You can fish almost anything out of it. (Almost anything, but not everything. There are fish that

just weren't around in the eighteenth century, although that doesn't stop people from angling for them. Glenn Beck once said that George Washington was opposed to socialism.)" That is mighty fine prose.

The strongest parts of the book are the pages where Lepore shows how the Tea Party does not, in fact, mimic the founders they adulate, but the

1970s radicals they detest. Lefties, too, have distorted the history of the founding for political ends. Though it was Jeremy Rifkin who wrote, "the revolutionary heritage must be used as a tactical weapon to isolate the existing institutions and those in power," it does not require much to imagine that remark coming from the Tea Party strategist Dick Armey.

Lepore's book could have benefited from a sharper editorial pen. The long section on Mercy Otis Warren, the remarkable early historian of the Revolution, feels like it was forced into the book, adding little to the central argument. We also learn more than we need to know about Richard Nixon's dealings with the Bicentennial Commission and other stories that distract more than they elucidate.

Nonetheless, this is an important book. It is one thing for Glenn Beck to distort history, but Lepore shows how his esoteric, historically unfounded ideas are making their way into school curricula. Those of us who resent the hijacking of our history need to be informed about both the hijacking and the real story of the founding. Lepore's text is a highly readable place to start in the urgent task of reclaiming both the historical and the political debate from the Tea Party.

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

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LETTERS

I Fear You Are Wrong

I welcome your editorial "Laity Near the Top?" (2/21), but I fear that as long as we have the celibate hierarchy in Rome calling all the shots, it will never lead to anything positive. The beautiful sayings you quote from Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI are contradicted by the concrete decisions they have made, including the appointment of loyalist bishops who subscribe to every word coming from the Vatican and the new liturgical translations, to mention only two. They still think that they, not the people, have all the answers.

TOM LENERT
Los Angeles, Calif.

Christ Left No Structure

A couple of the comments posted online concerning your editorial "Laity Near the Top?" (2/21) refer to the "hierarchical structure given to us by Christ." I cannot think of a Catholic theologian or Scripture scholar who would not contest that statement. The Gospels make no mention of a hierarchical structure. Christ chose Peter, the "rock" on whom the church would be built (that is open to interpretation) and commanded him, "Feed my sheep." The Acts of the Apostles refer to overseers, which we translate as "bishops," and elders who presided at the Eucharist, which we translate as "priests," and servants, whom we call "deacons." These are functions, not offices exercising power. The hierarchical structure was given by Emperor Constantine in the early fourth century. Much of the structure of the church is adapted from the Roman empire. There is nothing sacred about our

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structure, which is neither infallible nor unchangeable.

KEN LOVASIK
Pittsburgh, Pa.

An Old Good Idea

The editorial "Laity Near the Top?" (2/21) reminds me that in the lifetime of many of us, one of the hierarchy's greatest follies was not listening to Paul VI's birth control commission, composed of distinguished lay persons, when it handed in its report supporting artificial birth control. The negative domino effect of the decision to reject the report haunts the church today. The life experience of laypersons is an untapped mine of riches that could, over a long period of time, begin to heal much of the damage that has led to the empty pews described in **America's** editorial. The idea of a council sharing functions with the College of Cardinals is not new. The Association for the Rights of Catholics in the Church made this proposal 15 years ago.

MARY LOUISE HARTMAN
Princeton, N.J.

Say Clearly the War Is Wrong

Blessings on Bishop Robert W.

McElroy for his excellent article, "War Without End" (2/21). Would that the bishop might take the next step and declare that the war in Afghanistan is immoral. Bishop Carrol Dozier of Memphis said about Vietnam in 1970 that the only moral alternative was the immediate withdrawal of all American troops. Would that every bishop would provide guidance to our youth not to become part of a professional army. Many Catholic religious leaders share Bishop McElroy's perspective, but they have not clearly proclaimed this war to be immoral. Perhaps Bishop McElroy can give his fellow bishops the courage to do so.

(REV.) GEORGE J. KUHN
Yonkers, N.Y.

We Would Help, Except...

Re "Saving the Neighborhood" (2/28): I don't know if all this hindsight and nostalgia on urban neighborhood life is all that accurate. I grew up in a neighborhood in Queens, N.Y., and while we knew everyone in our parish and perhaps those who lived within a 10-block radius of our apartment, people still tended to adopt a mind-your-own-business attitude



when it came to the more troublesome aspects of various families. We knew who drank, who hit their wives and abused their kids, but no one ever did anything about it, and the police were not likely to respond to those situations unless things got seriously out of control—by which I mean that the abuser could no longer talk his way out of it. People helped when food and clothing were concerned, but not with the kind of problem Jared Loughner and his family were in.

NORA MCKENNA
San Francisco, Calif.

Two-Way Street

What Cardinal Donald Wuerl says about listening in “Pass It On” (2/28) is important, but listening has to be a two-way street. There should also be an openness to learn from other times, places and traditions, from Native Americas, the East, American mystics, philosophers and scientists. So the issue is not just whether the world is

listening but whether the church is listening. To teach “unchanging truth” requires understanding how, if it is the truth, it can still be more deeply understood and expanded.

MICHAEL A. OLSON
Drayden, Md.

Bent Body, Great Beauty

The article by Jon R. Sweeney and Michal Woll on their visit to Our Lady Before Tyn in Prague (“Alt-Honeymoon,” 1/24), portrays a bleak and depressing church. I found it difficult to recognize the church I had visited 20 years ago, shortly after the Velvet Revolution. The church then was dusty and not cared for and the lighting dim, but it was filled with people. It was the Saturday of Holy Week and the baptism of children was the center of the vigil.

I kept noticing a small hunch-backed woman moving almost furtively down and across the aisles. I dismissed her as a street person looking

for the exit.

Following the baptisms, a choir of young women began singing. At first I could not see where the music was coming from, but eventually I was able to find the choir; and there I discovered the woman I had presumed to be a street person. She was directing the choir. The acoustics amplified the women’s voices and filled the large Gothic space. The director, whom I had carelessly reduced to a church mouse in my own mind, was leading the voices with energy and artistry that transcended her own body’s limits.

MALCOLM WARFORD
Staunton, Va.

All Sound and Light

Just back from an Israel-sponsored trip to the Holy Land for Catholic journalists, I was interested in Alicia von Stamwitz’s “Waking Up in Jerusalem” (2/21). Our guide and driver were not allowed to accompany us to Bethlehem, since Israelis are not allowed into the Territories. As the days went on I became keenly aware of the propaganda we were hearing and how archeology too can be used as propaganda, especially as I listened to explanations of sites we visited. The trip had been billed as “spiritual, non-geopolitical,” but I wondered how politics could ever be disengaged from the religious aspects.

In particular I began to realize that the Palestinians had been “non-existent,” as if they had disappeared. There was an eerie feeling at the amazing sound and light show on the history of Jerusalem at the citadel, which fast-forwarded over several centuries of history to arrive at today’s reality, with no mention of the Palestinians who had lived there in the 20th century and before. With very few exceptions we never got to meet any Christians. Which leads me to thank **America** for its coverage of Christian communities in the Middle East.

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Mountaintop Vision

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT (A), MARCH 20, 2011

Readings: Gn 12:1-4a; Ps 33:4-22; 2 Tm 1:8b-10; Mt 17:1-9

“He was transfigured before them; his face shone like the sun” (Mt 17:2)

What really happened at the Transfiguration? Each of the Evangelists tells the story slightly differently, with his own theological emphases. Was it a miraculous glimpse of Jesus’ heavenly glory? A temporary unveiling of his divine nature to give hope to his disciples? Or was it a recasting of a resurrection appearance story placed in the middle of the Gospel? These and other theories have long been entertained by biblical scholars.

In Matthew’s version, the radiance of Jesus’ face and clothing and the brightness of the cloud that overshadows the disciples are highlighted. Coming on the heels of Jesus’ teaching that he must suffer and die before being raised up (16:21), the brilliance underscores that Jesus, although executed as a criminal, is righteous. As Jesus had told his disciples, at the end of the age “the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their father” (13:43). The voice from the cloud likewise reaffirms Jesus’ identity as God’s beloved son, upon whom divine favor rests (as at his baptism, 3:17). The admonition “listen to him” echoes Dt 18:15 and emphasizes that Jesus is the authentic interpreter of the Mosaic law and the prophets. He is not replacing Moses and Elijah but continues the long line of faithful leaders.

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.

The presence of Moses and Elijah recalls their powerful mountaintop experiences of God and hints that similar things happen there to Jesus. On Mount Sinai God spoke to Moses face to face, entrusting to him the commandments that would guide his people to live in faithfulness through the desert days ahead. The glory of God is reflected on Moses’ own face as he returns to the difficult task of leadership (Ex 34:29). Elijah flees to the same mountain when trying to escape the murderous intents of Jezebel. There God speaks to him in a “still, small voice,” giving him the courage to go forward to anoint a new king and Elisha as his successor (1 Kgs 19). Likewise, Jesus is at a turning point in his mission. There are those who seek his life, as well as those who try to live faithfully God’s law that he teaches. On the mountaintop, he is able to see with God’s own vision the way forward in faithfulness.

Jesus’ transforming experience also resonates with that of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., who on the night before he was assassinated declared that he had been to the mountaintop and had seen the promised land. He set aside all fear and assured his followers that even if he were killed, as a people they would get to the promised land. God’s transformative love radi-

ates through a face determined to love no matter what the other’s response. As Jesus had taught his disciples from a mountaintop about transforming enmity through love, so King reminded his followers to disarm police forces through loving, nonviolent confrontation and to answer firehoses with “a certain kind of fire that no water could put out.”

King urged his listeners to continue to struggle for justice here and now, not just wait for



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- Go to the mountaintop with Jesus. What vision do you see?
- How does the mountaintop vision strengthen us for the desert journey to freedom?
- Pray for God’s transformative love to radiate through you by choosing to love no matter the other’s response.

“long white robes over yonder.” So too, Jesus’ radiant clothes in the Gospel are not simply a glimpse of his own divine status but a vision of the way in which each beloved child of God is to be clothed here and now. King urged his followers to give themselves to this struggle until the end, saying, “Nothing would be more tragic than to stop at this point.” For Jesus, nothing would have been more tragic than to stop with teaching, preaching and healing in the Galilee. To bring transfigured life to completion for all, he continues on toward Jerusalem.

BARBARA E. REID

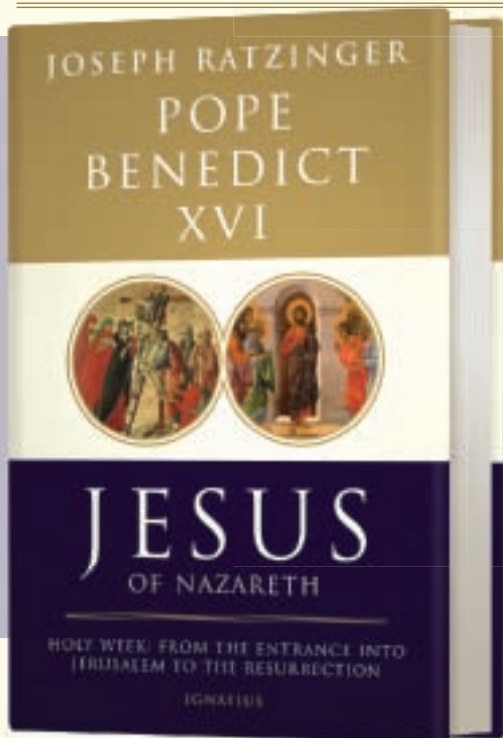
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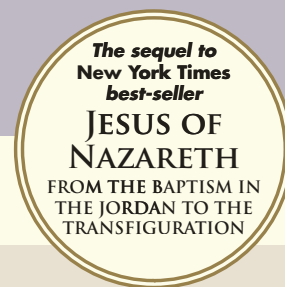
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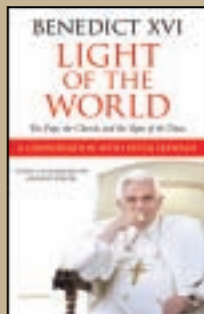
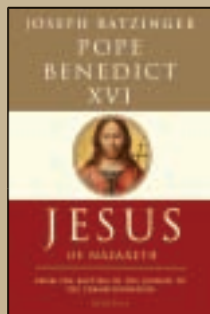
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