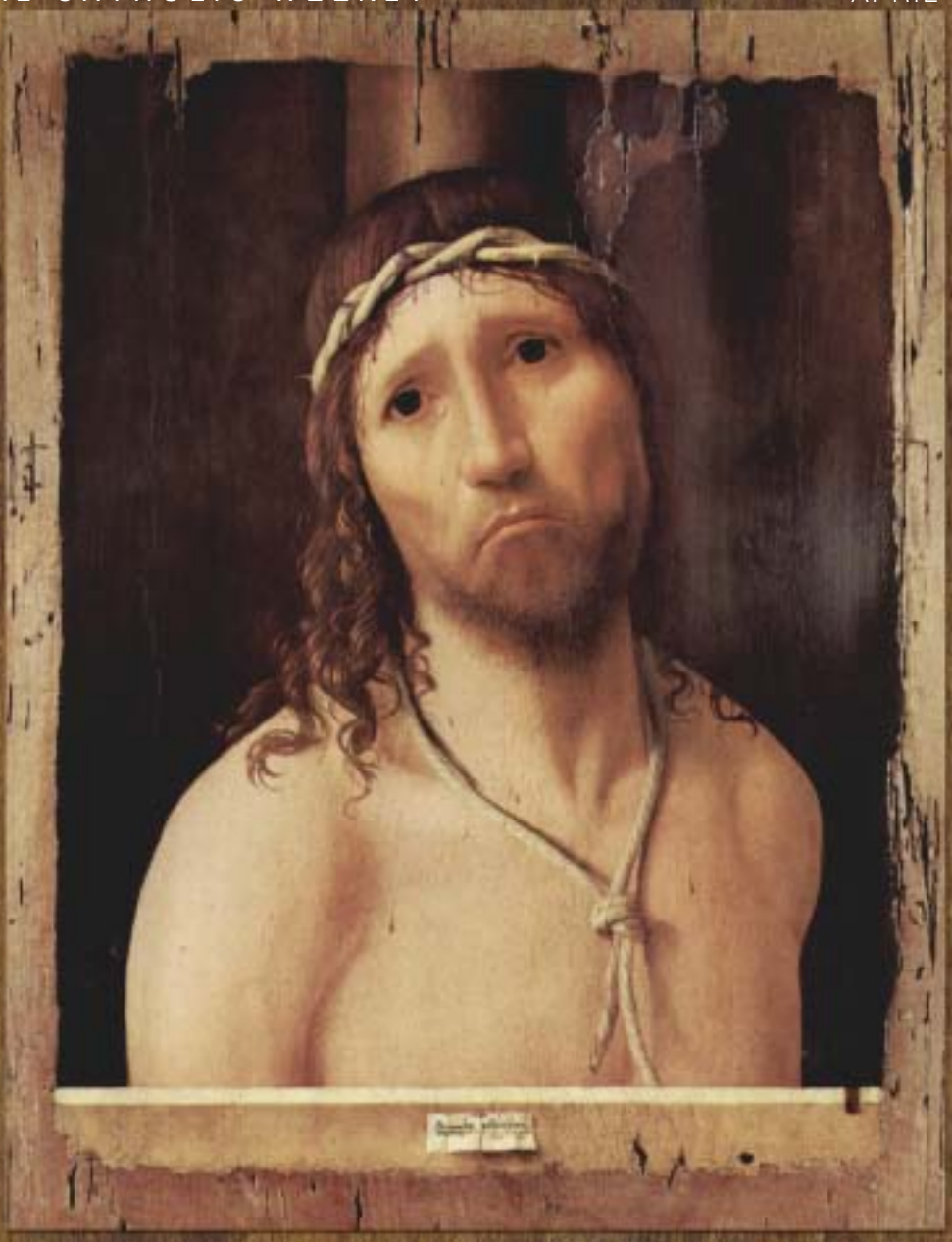
America

THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC WEEKLY APRIL 18, 2011 $3.50



The Suffering Christ
LEO J. O'DONOVAN

Torture in America
KENNETH R. HIMES

OF MANY THINGS

It's official: I am now a certified, card-carrying member of the senior set. I am also at present undergoing intensive physical therapy on my right knee (on which arthroscopic surgery was performed two years ago). Will the pain and discomfort, I wonder, ever go away? I realize our bodies change as we get older; we experience more aches and pains; we begin to consume more health supplements; our moving parts may not be moving sprightly to tuneful music; and our coping mechanisms vary.

For myself, a fighter, I continually call to mind my mother's wise words to a young Patricia, who admired her mother's acceptance and positive attitude in dealing with health issues. "Always remember," she counseled, "arthritis loves a rocking chair." Only now have I come to understand (and experience) that reality concretely.

Why some people develop physical or mental problems and others seem not to, and at what age our bodies start slowing down, are not easy questions to address, given the complex variables involved in each person's genetics and lifestyle. An epidemiologist named David Snowdon was captivated by such questions. Beginning back in the mid-1980s and continuing well into the '90s he directed a research project that was dubbed the Nun Study. His subjects were 678 members of the School Sisters of Notre Dame in Mankato, Minn., ranging in age from 75 to 104.

He found a direct correlation between the nuns' educational levels and the level of any disabilities they exhibited. He tracked as well the state of their mental health, attributing the low rate of Alzheimer's among them to high linguistic and writing skills developed in younger years. Snowdon published the results of his study in a book called *Aging With Grace: What the Nun Study Teaches Us About Leading Longer, Healthier, and More Meaningful Lives*. (Bantam Books, 2001).

Snowdon's book should expand our thinking about the relationship between longevity and quality of life. Besides the obvious prescriptions—good diet and exercise—social contact, professionals agree, is a critical factor in keeping elders feeling connected to and part of a larger community. Senior centers across the country provide that vital link. According to the National Council on Aging, today nearly 11,000 senior centers serve a million older adults every day. A friend of mine, who for years managed one such center, recalls how sharing meals and activities together visibly buoyed everyone's spirits. Each person drew strength and determination from others. For a while, they even forgot about their aches and pains.

In my case, a circle of friends—many of whom are already retired—with similar likes and dislikes fills the social bill. Of course, they can't alleviate my joint pains. In that, we are all on our own. I try to maintain a strict regimen of floor exercises at home each evening and, during the summer, lots of water aerobics at the pool club to which I belong. But those bumps on my fingers, I accept, will never disappear.

No one, especially me, likes a whiner. It is better to put our pains in perspective; there's always something to rejoice about. In her poem "Self-Portrait," from *Red Bird* (Beacon Press, 2008), the poet Mary Oliver, then 70ish, wrote, in part: "Onward, old legs!/ There are the long, pale dunes; on the other side/ the roses are blooming and finding their labor/ no adversity to the spirit.// Upward, old legs! There…is the sea/ shining like a song…."

This issue of **America** appears as we begin Holy Week and recall Christ's passion. My prayer is for continued strength to accept the baggage that comes with getting older and, most of all, to remember that whatever the future brings, the cross is the way to the crown.

PATRICIA A. KOSSMANN

America

Published by Jesuits of the United States

106 West 56th Street
New York, NY 10019-3803

Ph: 212-581-4640; Fax: 212-399-3596

E-mail: america@americamagazine.org; letters@americamagazine.org
Web site: www.americamagazine.org.
Customer Service: 1-800-627-9533

Cover: "Christ Crowned With Thorns," by Antonello da Messina. Photo: Wikimedia Commons/The Yorck Project

Contents

www.americamagazine.org VOL. 204 NO. 13, WHOLE NO. 4930 APRIL 18, 2011

ARTICLES

COLUMNS & DEPARTMENTS

BOOKS & CULTURE

ON THE WEB

Mary Ellen O'Connell of the University of Notre Dame analyzes the **intervention in Libya.** Plus, Kenneth R. Himes, O.F.M., discusses the **torture problem** on our podcast. All at americamagazine.org.

Libya: Proceed With Caution

As many as 40 Libyan civilians may have been killed in Tripoli in late March by coalition air strikes meant to weaken forces loyal to Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi. This is not good news for the U.N.-sanctioned air campaign intended to protect civilians and enforce a no-fly zone and an arms embargo against Libya. Nor is it good news for the emerging doctrine of the responsibility to protect. More verifiable unintended deaths among noncombatants on the Qaddafi side should rightly compel the end of this large-scale intervention. There is more at stake in the intervention now than the ousting of a despot.

It has taken almost a century for the international community to come to terms with the problems of genocide and crimes against humanity. As an international doctrine, responsibility to protect is still in its youth, emerging out of failures to intervene in Congo, Rwanda and the Sudan. It will likely take a long time before the idea hardens into a widely accepted protocol that would trigger multilateral intervention to forestall a country's criminal use of force against its own people. There will surely be missteps as this doctrine evolves. The multilateral campaign in Libya should not be one of them.

The coalition has already begun what appears to be a dangerous if predictable expansion of the aims of the campaign from protecting civilians to ensuring the survival of the Libyan revolution. More civilian deaths or the failure to achieve the coalition's changing goals could set back the responsibility to protect just as this important doctrine is beginning to find its place in the diplomatic world. It could be years before confidence in the responsibility to protect is restored, while in the meantime any number of people may perish as new crimes against humanity go unaddressed. The West needs to proceed with more caution than it has so far demonstrated.

Send in the Drones

On March 17 news outlets reported that missiles fired from C.I.A. drones killed 26 people at a rural council meeting in Pakistan. Some of those killed were Taliban mediators; most were local tribesmen and elders. This was the sixth day of drone strikes that week.

The day before, reports appeared of U.S. drones carrying on spy missions deep inside Mexico, with the cooperation of Mexican president Felipe Calderón, to help the so-called war on drugs. These missions had been kept secret to avoid upsetting Mexican citizens wary of U.S. influence.

Late on March 17, television news reported that the United States was using a drone to monitor the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in Japan to help fight the nuclear meltdown there. "Drones for Peace," perhaps?

The Pakistanis are outraged that U.S. drones are killing their fellow citizens. The Mexicans suffer from drug-related violence but do not like the United States spying on them. The Japanese reaction to drone surveillance has not yet been noted.

Armed or unarmed, drones show an amoral efficiency. Some hit the innocent while targetting the guilty but do not go to jail and can continue to operate. They get shot down or malfunction but are easy, though expensive, to replace. They do not think or feel or suffer. (The toll on their remote handlers is a different story.) They are not accountable for what they do—they are only following orders.

Vanishing Religion?

A popular story tells of a prediction made by the 18th-century philosopher Voltaire: "One hundred years from my day," he said, "there will not be a Bible on the earth except one that is looked upon by an antiquarian curiosity seeker."

As the bestselling book of all time, the Bible is still around, as are predictions about the demise of religion. Recently, U.S. researchers used a mathematical formula to predict that in nine Western countries, the number of individuals affiliated with organized religion will all but cease to exist. The study drew on 100 years of census data from Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Austria, the Czech Republic, Finland and Switzerland. In 1961, 0.04 percent of Ireland's population claimed no religious affiliation; in 2006 the number was 4.2 percent. Today, 40 percent of the population of the Netherlands is unaffiliated, a number expected to reach 70 percent by 2050. The researchers observed that individuals tend to want to be affiliated with a majority and that in countries where religion is seen as in decline, it is socially and politically useful to disassociate oneself from it.

Does all this really add up to the extinction of organized religion in these locations? Not necessarily. The desire to belong to a religion goes beyond the utilitarian; and human behavior and patterns of belief are far more complex than can be accounted for by any mathematical formula. Even within the same family tree, religious beliefs can cover a wide range. In 1881, just over 100 years after Voltaire's death, his great grandniece gave birth to a son, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. The Jesuit paleontologist could perhaps be labelled an "antiquarian curiosity seeker," but he certainly was not the only man around with a Bible.

Diplomacy as Exit Strategy

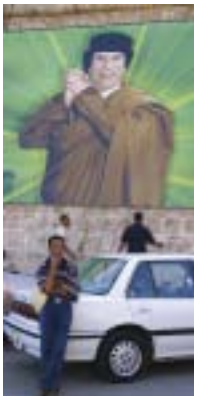
Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi hangs on, even as his foreign minister and others in his inner circle are heading for the exits. If only he would take the hint. The Libyan leader's "show no mercy" order toward his opposition has led to a virtually universal call for his ouster. Discredited regime change redux? The United Kingdom and the United States are again cooperating, as in Iraq; both urge Mr. Qaddafi to go. Curiously, however, only Britain seems serious about exploring a negotiated end to the military action. While the British foreign secretary, William Hague, has renounced the idea of arming the rebel forces, President Obama has left that option open and is under pressure to oust Colonel Qaddafi by force. He should resist, consistent with his astute transfer of the leadership of the intervention to NATO.

Can the U.N.-authorized military action be deemed a success? Yes, as long as its essential purpose of protecting civilian populations through the no-fly zone and other appropriate means is not transformed into an all-out campaign to defeat Mr. Qaddafi.

Tomahawks and the air sorties have loosened Colonel Qaddafi's grip, but they are too indirect to dislodge "the leader." Given his advantages in troop numbers, heavy weapons and long-range artillery, he has the means to retake rebel outposts. Nonetheless, the answer cannot be to arm the rebels, which is one step from training and then assisting them, which would in turn be a step toward "boots on the ground," the trap of Iraq.

Experience in Iraq teaches that democratic reform is not easily accomplished even with massive, years-long military support. There is less reason to think that in Libya democracy can be advanced by a crowd of near-teenagers firing weapons into the air from old pick-ups with a tendency to go in reverse. Rather than arming rebels who are a checkered and largely unknown lot, it would be wiser to deploy a first-rate diplomatic team—now. Imagine a team composed of Colin Powell from the United States, Javier Solana of the European Union and NATO, Abdoulaye Wade of the African Union and Amr Moussa of the Arab League.

The initial tasks for such a distinguished team would be to secure a verifiable cease-fire and candidly size up the rebels, not in terms of their potential to fight but their ability to govern. If the rebels' capacity for self-government is great and likely to command respect, Colonel Qaddafi could be offered an ultimatum: If you want to avoid being pursued like an at-large felon, then stop killing civilians and step aside. For purposes of negotiation, scenarios like prosecution in the International Criminal Court may be left vague for now.



Mr. Qaddafi has reason to bargain, and his emissaries have been exploring options in missions to the United Kingdom, Greece, Malta and Turkey. While President Obama ponders, his State Department has been cool to these overtures from Qaddafi advisors, assessing them so far as more publicity than as real moves toward peace.

One of the side benefits of President Obama's low-profile, multilateral approach in Libya is its supple ability to promote the greater good while allowing for shades of gray. Not every Libyan need be (or is) convinced of Mr. Qaddafi's evil soul. Given the limits of the U.N. resolution and the economic and political restraints on the intervening coalition, resolution of the conflict will entail compromise. Better a limited compromise undertaken in negotiation than a muddled endgame in which military force fails to achieve an ideal democratic outcome and leaves in its wake civil strife and a prolonged humanitarian emergency. Contemplating any continuing role for Mr. Qaddafi cuts against the usual zero-sum nature of military campaigns. But achieving resolution of conflict need not be thought of as winning or losing a war.

Those who have suffered wrongful detention or worse as a consequence of Colonel Qaddafi's vengeful ways will likely find any exit by "the leader" in anything other than a hearse insufficient. Yet just as the United States learned from mistakes in Iraq, it should have learned from past retaliation for terrorist acts. President Reagan's air strikes against Libya in 1986, for example, merely deepened, not lessened world tension. There is little doubt that the rightful exit for Mr. Qaddafi leads directly to the courthouse and his conviction. Yet the role of diplomacy is to achieve resolution of a conflict as early as possible. Better to settle with a word, as St. Augustine wrote, than with the sword.

President Obama has thus far kept his promise to wind down the role of the U.S. military. Going through the door marked diplomacy is the next step and one that should be taken now.

The author, who requests anonymity, is a diplomat who has explored resolving the present dispute with Turkish and Libyan officials.

VIETNAM

Montagnard Christians Targeted By 'Political Security' Units

The government of Vietnam has intensified repression of indigenous Christians from the country's central highland provinces, Human Rights Watch charges in a report released on March 30. The latest government crackdown on these indigenous peoples, known collectively as Montagnards, has coincided with a press by these communities for religious freedom and land rights.

"Montagnards face harsh persecution in Vietnam, particularly those who worship in independent house churches, because the authorities don't tolerate religious activity outside their sight or control," said Phil Robertson, deputy Asia director of Human Rights Watch. "The Vietnamese government has been steadily tightening the screws on independent Montagnard religious groups, claiming they are using religion to incite unrest." According to the report, *Montagnard Christians in Vietnam: A Case Study in Religious Repression*, special "political security" units conduct operations with provincial police to capture, detain and interrogate people they identify as political activists or leaders of unregistered house churches.

The report documents police sweeps to root out Montagnards in hiding. It details how the authorities have dissolved house church gatherings, orchestrated coerced renunciations of faith and sealed off the border to prevent asylum seekers from fleeing to Cambodia. More than 70 Montagnards were detained or arrested in 2010 alone, according to the report, and more than 250 have been imprisoned on national security charges.

Protestant Montagnards have faced repression for many years, but Catholic Montagnards have more

ABUSE CRISIS

Is Restorative Justice Possible In Aftermath of Scandal?

In a frank address to participants at a conference in Milwaukee, Wis., on April 4, focusing on the church's sexual abuse crisis, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of Dublin described how the church could achieve justice in the aftermath of this devastating global scandal. "Restorative justice is not cheap justice," he said. "It is not justice without recognition of wrongdoing, without putting the balance right. Restorative justice may possibly even be about forgiveness, but again not about cheap forgiveness."

He asked, "What does restorative justice mean for victims?

"This is the challenge which haunts me," the archbishop said. "I wish that I could promise that magic term 'closure' to victims. But I am aware that even saying that can be offensive to survivors. I cannot determine when they find closure. There is no fast-track healing.... I cannot achieve healing by decree....."

"Spectacularly wrong" was his assessment of the Archdiocese of Dublin's handling of priest-abusers and of victims who summoned up enough courage to come forward. In the aftermath of the crisis in Ireland, he said, "I still cannot accept a situation that no one need assume accountability in the face of the terrible damage that was done to children in the church of Christ in Dublin and in the face of how that damage was addressed."

During the speech, which was given at a conference titled "Harm, Hope and Healing," held at the Marquette University Law School, Archbishop Martin charged that the church has yet to address fully problems of clericalism and pathology within its seminaries that contributed to the scandal. More important, Archbishop Martin said,

Montagnard refugees escape into Cambodia during unrest in 2004.

PHOTO: REUTERS/ADREES LATIF

recently become a target of Vietnamese authorities, particularly the Ha Mon Catholic sect, which started in Kon Tum province in 1999. Forced renunciation ceremonies and public criticism meetings have been conducted in recent months in Kon Tum, Gia Lai and Dak Lak provinces for Ha Mon followers, in which Montagnard Christians have been forced to confess to wrongdoings and to sign pledges to abandon the so-called false religion.

"People in the Central Highlands who wish to worship in independent house churches risk public humiliation, violent reprisals, arrest and even prison time," Robertson said.

Former Montagnard political prisoners and detainees report that they were severely beaten or tortured in police custody and pre-trial detention. Since 2001, at least 25 Montagnards have died in custody after beatings or illnesses or shortly after being prematurely released by prison authorities to a hospital or home.

The government says that Montagnards who belong to unregistered house churches outside the control of the official Southern Evangelical Church of Vietnam are "Dega Protestants," which authorities allege is not a legitimate religious group but a cover for a Montagnard independence movement. Vietnamese law requires all religious groups to register with the government and operate under government-approved religious organizations.

"Freedom of religion does not mean freedom for state-sanctioned religions only," Robertson said. "Vietnam should immediately recognize independent religious groups and let them practice their beliefs."

Human Rights Watch called on the Vietnamese government to end immediately its systematic repression of Montagnards, allow independent religious organizations to conduct religious activities freely and release all Montagnards imprisoned for peaceful religious or political activities. It called on the United States to reinstate Vietnam's designation as a "country of particular concern" for violations of religious freedom.

was recovering the notion that the direct victims of the abuse needed to be the focus of healing.

"A church which becomes a restorative community," he said, "will be one where the care of each one of the most vulnerable and most wounded will truly become the dominant concern of the 99 others, who will learn to abandon their own security and try to represent Christ, who still seeks out the abandoned and heals the troubled." But before any true healing could begin, he said, victims needed to perceive true remorse on the part of their abusers. Archbishop Martin admitted he had encountered little evidence of such remorse himself.

"I feel that I can honestly say that with perhaps two exceptions, I have not encountered a real and unconditional admission of guilt and responsibility on the part of priest offenders in my diocese," he said. "It is very hard to speak of meaningful forgiveness of an offender when the offender refuses to recognize the facts and the full significance of the facts."

Efforts to cover up the abuse and protect the institution only made the scandal worse. "We have to learn that the truth has a power to set free which half-truths do not have," he said. "The first condition for restorative justice is that all parties are willing to tell the truth and to take ownership of the truth, even when the truth is unpleasant.

Diarmuid Martin

COURTESY OF MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY LAW SCHOOL

"As I said at a recent liturgy of lament in Dublin," he continued, "the truth will set us free, but not in a simplistic way. The truth hurts. The truth cleanses not like smooth designer soap, but like a fire that burns and hurts and lances."

Tuition Credit Survives Supreme Court

The Supreme Court on April 4 tossed out a challenge to Arizona's tuition tax credit program. That initiative in many cases directs scholarship money to private schools, including Catholic schools. The 5-to-4 ruling, written by Justice Anthony Kennedy, held that Arizona taxpayers lack jurisdiction for challenging the program. He argued that because the support is generated through tax credits for donations to scholarship organizations, no actual state spending is involved. In a strong dissent, Justice Elena Kagan said that because of the program the state lost an estimated $350 million in revenue. "The court's arbitrary distinction threatens to eliminate all occasions for a taxpayer to contest the government's monetary support of religion. Precisely because appropriations and tax breaks can achieve identical objectives," wrote Kagan, "the government can easily substitute one for the other."

Religious Liberty for All

"We remain firmly committed to the defense of religious liberty for all—not just for Catholics—because our commitment is to the dignity of each and every human person," said Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, the retired archbishop of Washington, in Senate testimony on March 29. "As a community that has been the target of religious discrimination, we understand the need today to bring attention to protecting the civil rights of our Muslim brothers and sisters," Cardinal McCarrick said. "We see religious freedom as an essential foundation for our life together in our own nation and across the globe." Commenting on the treatment of religious minorities in Muslim nations, Cardinal McCarrick said: "Let them look to our nation, where we work to ensure that their Muslim sisters and brothers are treated with dignity and their religious identity and beliefs are treated with respect. Let them see a people blessed with hard-won religious freedom living out our commitment to the rights of all by demonstrating full respect for the identity, integrity and freedom of all religions."

Protests in South Africa

Violent protests by South Africans demanding better living conditions are a warning to the authorities, church leaders said. Police fired rubber bullets on March 30 at protesters in Zandspruit, a shanty settlement on the outskirts of Johannesburg. On March 31 the South African Council of Churches said, "The violent developments associated with poor delivery of social services" are a "rude reawakening call to the authorities" as well as "an indication of just how destructive things can turn out to be if local government councilors and political parties continue to ignore the needs of the people." As in many squatter camps around Johannesburg, Zandspruit residents live in squalid conditions, sharing toilets and communal water taps, with little or no electricity. Neighboring suburbs have some of Africa's most expensive real estate. "Our early warning to South Africa's leadership is that all efforts" must be made "to save this democracy lest we walk the path of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya...where social instability reigns," church leaders said.

From CNS and other sources.

NEWS BRIEFS

Elizabeth A. Johnson

The cure of a French television repairman who completed a 1,000-mile hike after his paralyzed leg was inexplicably healed has become the **68th miracle** to be recognized at Lourdes. ⬩ The U.S. bishops' Committee on Doctrine concluded on March 30 that a book published in 2007 by the theologian **Elizabeth A. Johnson,** C.S.J., "contains misrepresentations, ambiguities and errors." Sister Johnson said the committee radically misinterprets her work. ⬩ Bishop-designate **William J. Wright**, 58, was named the new bishop of Maitland-Newcastle in Australia on April 4. He succeeds Bishop Michael J. Malone, 71, who requested early retirement after struggling with the sexual abuse scandal for "15 difficult years." ⬩ Pope Benedict XVI has encouraged the so-called patriotic and underground Catholic churches in mainland China to be reconciled. But some argue, according to Archbishop **Savio Hon Tai-Fai**, secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, that the "clandestine communities still have a reason to exist" as the only way to be faithful to the universal church. ⬩ The U.S. Army has started **training chaplains** regarding the repeal of the ban on openly gay service members, saying those who are unable to follow the forthcoming policy could seek a voluntary departure.

THOMAS MASSARO

Some Kind of Deficit

My friends are tired of hearing me bemoan how seldom public discourse ever gets around to addressing substantive issues of justice, such as the shape of public finance and budgeting. So I suppose I ought to be rejoicing that our nation is conducting serious high-level debates about economic priorities: fierce budget battles in Washington; statehouse rallies in Wisconsin in support of beleaguered public-sector unions; deficit hawks wielding the budget axe with a vengeance; Congressional wrangling on debt ceiling extensions.

Sure, I am glad that such matters at least occasionally eclipse celebrity scandals and have maintained a place on the front page alongside the recent crises in Japan and Libya. If I harbor disappointment, it is because so many of our political leaders are getting it all wrong and are endorsing the wrong priorities entirely.

The shape of the current budget debates changes from minute to minute, and there is no way to predict the eventual outcome. Will we avert a government shutdown, or will the reckless game of "chicken" prevent sensible bipartisan compromise? But beyond the ebb and flow of events, a key challenge is to stay in touch with the bedrock ethical principles that should guide any process of social deliberation. Spiritual writers use the phrase *id quod volo* ("that which I desire") to capture this task of discerning proper and heartfelt goals. I deeply desire to live in a country that:

1. *Does not abandon its poor to starvation, homelessness and destitution.* Deficit hawks always seem to circle above the prey of anti-poverty programs, especially those with shadowy names like community services block grants. But the more you know about the crucial assistance they provide to struggling people and neighborhoods, the more eager you will be to exempt these particular heads from the chopping block. Investments in community health centers, job training and early childhood development for disadvantaged groups, through programs like Head Start, will surely in the long run save money for government at all levels. Current proposals to cut them sharply amount to eating our seed corn. Whether we argue from outcomes or from ethics, it is easy to agree with a line from a recent letter from the U.S. bishops' conference to the Senate: "In a time of economic crisis, poor and vulnerable people are in greater need of assistance, not less."

Current budget proposals amount to eating our seed corn.

2. *Protects the rights of workers to organize and engage in collective bargaining.* Several cash-strapped states are seeking to limit the influence of public-sector unions. Even some Catholic voices, like the Rev. Robert Sirico of the Acton Institute, are piling on against the unions, demonizing them as impediments to prosperity and justice. To his great credit, Archbishop Jerome Listecki of Milwaukee stepped up to defend the constant tradition of church support for organized labor, writing: "Hard times do not nullify the moral obligation each of us has to respect the legitimate rights of workers." Scapegoating and demonizing organized labor is a sure sign that the drift of public deliberation is turning away from authentic social justice.

3. *Maintains a commitment to the least privileged around the world.* The slash-and-burn approach to budget-cutting has targeted the already modest funding the United States provides to assist programs crucial for development. Foreign aid makes possible life-saving public health and social service outreach to some of the poorest people on earth. Cutting humanitarian aid and international poverty-focused development assistance would seriously undermine our nation's leadership position in the world community. Fighting epidemics and helping people grow subsistence crops are not optional expenditures for a responsible nation, no matter how badly it needs to pinch pennies.

Each of us could compile a much longer list of deep desires, but these three priorities will always be near the top of my list.

Sure, deficits are serious concerns, but the current budget process is heading in a direction that is ethically and practically indefensible. Leaders from both parties appear not to be acting on consistent principles and seem unaware of the real human costs they are imposing through austerity plans. When politicians hide behind the mantra, "We are broke," I am often tempted to think, "Morally bankrupt may be more like it."

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

Family of Love

PERSONALIZED DIAMOND BRACELET

A Fine Jewelry Exclusive from
The Bradford Exchange

Shown Actual Size

10 Genuine Diamonds

FREE Personalized Engraving

Shimmering Sterling Silver Plating and 24K Gold Plating

Celebrate the Gift of Family with Sparkling Ribbons of Love

The brilliance of genuine diamonds radiates in a beautiful presentation of the love you cherish most. Introducing the exclusive *"Family of Love" Personalized Diamond Bracelet*—a celebration of the most precious bond of all!

Personalized with the Names of Your Choice

Exquisitely hand-crafted, this stunning bracelet features 10 genuine diamonds set between wave-shaped links plated in gleaming sterling silver with 24K gold-plated accents. You create a special keepsake by personalizing your bracelet with up to 10 elegantly engraved names. The bracelet is adjustable from 7" to 8" and features a 24K gold and silver plated heart charm at the clasp.

A Remarkable Value ... Available for a Limited Time

The *"Family of Love" Personalized Diamond Bracelet* is a remarkable value at $119,* payable in 4 installments of just $29.75 each, and backed by our unconditional 120-day guarantee. To reserve, send no money now; just mail the Reservation Application. Don't miss out on this Bradford Exchange exclusive—order today!

Shown with 4 names engraved

Each member of the family... as precious as a diamond!

Arrives in a custom case with gift box and Certificate of Authenticity

www.bradfordexchange.com/family

 Printed in U.S.A. 01-10678-001-BIU2

LIMITED-TIME OFFER

Reservations will be accepted on a first-come-first-served basis. Respond as soon as possible to reserve your bracelet.

Charms shown actual size

*Plus a total of $9.98 for shipping and service. Allow 4-6 weeks for delivery of your jewelry after we receive your initial deposit. Subject to product availability and order acceptance.

Please list names (up to 10) in the order you would like them to appear. Names will be engraved on the links from left to right, and centered on the bracelet.

1. ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
2. ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
3. ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
4. ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
5. ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
6. ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
7. ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
8. ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
9. ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
10. ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

RESERVATION APPLICATION **SEND NO MONEY NOW**

THE BRADFORD EXCHANGE JEWELRY

P.O. Box 806 Morton Grove, IL 60053-0806

YES. Please reserve the "Family of Love" bracelet for me with the names indicated at left. (Limited to 10 names, 10 letters per name).

Signature _____

Mrs. Mr. Ms. _____
Name (Please Print Clearly)

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

E-mail (optional) _____

01-10678-001-E39411

A detainee's feet are shackled to the floor at the Guantánamo Bay Naval Base.

PHOTO: REUTERS/MICHELLE SHEPHARD/POOL

How to build a public consensus for the moral treatment of detainees

Divided On Torture

KENNETH R. HIMES

This year marks the second anniversary of President Barack Obama's executive order reversing U.S. policies regarding detainees captured in armed conflict. Presidential Order 13491 set minimal standards for the treatment and interrogation of captured individuals, required the Central Intelligence Agency to close any detention facilities it was operating and guaranteed that the International Committee of the Red Cross would have timely access to all detainees in U.S. custody.

Although Mr. Obama's order was welcomed by critics of the administration of George W. Bush, questions about America's long-term policy on torture remain. Another president could issue a new executive order that overturns the Obama policy. A presidential executive order is nonstatutory; it does not entail a change in the law but is an executive decision that can be reversed by a successor. Future presidents may find themselves under pressure to change policies because the United States has yet to establish a moral consensus regarding detainee treatment and the inappropriateness of torture.

In his recently published memoir *Decision Points,* President Bush admitted that he personally authorized the waterboarding of Khaled Sheikh Mohammed, a key figure in the Al Qaeda network. Despite abundant evidence at the time that waterboarding was morally condemned and legally prohibited (including the historical fact that the United States charged Japanese military figures with war crimes precisely for waterboarding during World War II), Mr. Bush's admission caused little subsequent outcry.

During a televised interview on NBC on Nov. 9, 2010, Matt Lauer asked the former president, "Why is waterboarding legal, in your opinion?" Mr. Bush replied, "Because the lawyers said it was legal." If the Bush administration was able to skirt or simply violate treaties and legislation

KENNETH R. HIMES, O.F.M., *teaches Christian ethics in the theology department of Boston College, Chestnut Hill, Mass.*

that prohibit torture and the cruel and inhumane treatment of detainees, what assurance is there that the abuse of human beings in custody will not happen again? How can one deal with the fact that the United States adopted as government policy methods of interrogation that violated norms against the inhumane treatment of detainees and, in at least some cases, rose to the level of torture? What can be done to prevent the nation's return to such methods in the future?

What Should Citizens Do?

Some critics of Mr. Bush's administration called for criminal prosecution of those who were involved in the formulation and carrying out of abuse of detainees. Upon taking office, President Obama demonstrated little interest in pursuing this strategy. His decision was a disappointment to some, who discussed the feasibility and the wisdom of pursuing prosecution. In time, as the nation became engrossed in the economic recession, that debate seemed to quiet down. It was revived briefly a few months later when Attorney General Eric Holder released previously secret memos of the Office of Legal Counsel that revealed the reasoning behind the Bush detainee policy and details of its enactment. Calls for prosecution were drowned out again by the arguments over economic policy and health care reform.

Holding civilian and military leaders accountable for misdeeds can be an effective way to deter future wrongdoing. Yet any criminal prosecution would face daunting challenges. Public officials would take legal cover in the memos of the Office of Legal Counsel, and C.I.A. interrogators would cite the retroactive immunity granted in 2006 by Congress. And the option of criminal prosecution has gathered little support from the general population.

Eschewing prosecution, however, should not mean abandoning all other measures to avoid a recurrence of activity that brought great shame to the nation and served as a public relations and recruitment bonanza for its enemies. Three alternative options have been proposed by various public figures.

One possibility is to do nothing. Some critics of the Bush-era policies maintain that history's judgment is sufficient: Let the shame of an evil legacy be the final word for the proponents of torture. Yet this approach overlooks the need to establish firmly a national commitment opposing torture and the cruel treatment of detainees, a commitment that is not evident at present.

A second option is to call for a bipartisan Congressional investigation. The existing climate in Washington, however, makes this unlikely. A deeply partisan legislature would split along predictable lines in any examination of the previous administration's record. All polling data suggest that an overwhelming majority of Americans hold Congress in very low esteem. Whatever comes out of a Congressional study would not be trusted by many citizens.

There is, however, a third option: A panel, made up of respected individuals who are not identified with highly partisan politics, could hold hearings, gather evidence and produce a study that helps educate the nation about torture and U.S. policy. Retired federal judges, diplomats and military officers could be candidates for such a panel. Perhaps religious and educational leaders might also serve. The panel should be empowered to subpoena and to grant immunity to witnesses. It should have the authority and clearance to examine all relevant documents as well as the necessary staffing and budget to conduct its work expeditiously yet thoroughly.

The priority of the panel would be to seek the truth as to what happened in the treatment of detainees and to make this information widely known. Since a major part of the goal is to educate the citizenry and work toward a moral consensus on the subject of torture, it is vital that the panel's work be as transparent and acces-

18TH-CENTURY REFORMS

The first great popular movement to abolish torture occurred during the 18th century on the European continent. In 1764 the Jesuit-educated Italian humanist Cesare Beccaria wrote a short book, *On Crimes and Punishments*, which examined the system of criminal law. In particular, Beccaria advocated the abolition of the death penalty and of torture as part of legal proceedings. Translated into several languages, the book helped set off movements that removed torture within the criminal justice system. At the outset of the 1700s every European country allowed torture in its criminal law code; by the end of the century no European country did.

The abolition of torture affected the legal system, but it did not end the use of torture in other circumstances. The 19th and 20th centuries continued to see torture employed during times of revolution and war. While international treaties and national legislation ban torture today, these legal instruments are frequently violated, often with the tacit or explicit consent of leaders and citizens who believe national security to be at stake. In the 21st century what is needed is a popular will to extend the abolition of torture from criminal law to all state activity.

sible as possible. There should be televised public hearings of key testimony and discussion. The panel might submit recommendations for future action based on its findings, such as the reform of the Office of Legal Counsel, revised methods for Congressional oversight of our intelligence operations or new training programs for individuals serving as interrogators.

The panel's main task, though, would be to foster an informed moral discussion about torture and the cruel and inhumane treatment of detainees. Without a strong majority of citizens who support a clear ban on these activities, our national leaders may find themselves someday in a setting similar to that of the days immediately after 9/11, a period Drew Christiansen, S.J., aptly described as "a time of moral panic" (**Am.,** 10/2/06) In such an anxious and insecure climate, the temptation to engage in actions that are unworthy of a nation founded on basic rights will be strong.

A Public Moral Consensus

Critics of the Bush administration may prefer to place blame at the highest levels of government and at the feet of C.I.A. and military operatives. Waterboarding and other abuses against human dignity, however, were publicly revealed to have happened in May 2004. Five months later, in November 2004, 62 million Americans voted to re-elect George W. Bush, even though torture had been reported in the media during the spring and summer prior to the general election. The record also suggests that Congressional leaders in both parties and from both houses attended briefings about C.I.A. practices and raised no serious objection at the time. Perhaps out of fear of appearing soft on terrorism, there was precious little public dissent by national leaders regarding U.S. treatment of detainees.

The crucial issue that opponents of torture must face is not what political leaders think but a lingering sense among the citizenry that torture can be necessary for national security and is therefore defensible. We as a nation need to build a moral consensus within the culture against torture. It will not be an easy task.

In numerous surveys conducted since 2004, the Pew Research Center has asked Americans about the use of torture on terrorists in order to gain important intelligence information. The surveys have varied little in their results. About half of respondents say torture could be justified "often" or at least "sometimes." A slightly smaller percentage respond that torture could be justified "rarely" or "never." Other polls by various news organizations like CNN or The Washington Post have similarly found a roughly 50-50 split in public opinion on this question. Even the opposition to torture is fragile, because those who think torture can "rarely" be used are likely to weaken if ever there is another major terrorist attack on American soil.

The Pew Center surveys also show that more than half of American Catholics support the use of torture and that this support correlates positively with more frequent church attendance. (Also revealed in the Pew survey: Catholic Republicans are far more willing to approve torture than are Catholic Democrats.) Opposition to torture within the Catholic moral tradition is founded upon the theological claim that all persons possess an inalienable dignity as a result of being created in the image and likeness of God. Respect for the human dignity of all persons is the bedrock for much of Catholic ethical reasoning, and torture is judged to be a direct assault upon that dignity. Hence the church's teaching, as expressed in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, that the "prohibition against torture" is a principle that "cannot be contravened under any circumstances." To understand that claim and to encourage Catholic citizens to oppose torture, the U.S. bishops approved a study guide, *Torture Is a Moral Issue* (2006).

ON THE WEB
A conversation with
Kenneth R. Himes, O.F.M.
americamagazine.org/podcast

Confronting Ourselves

The nation's political leaders cannot be expected to withstand the pressure to torture suspected terrorists if a majority of the citizenry endorses the use of torture in order to gain information. Torture must be brought into the public forum where society can confront it. Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau of France remarked, "War is too important to be left to the generals." One might offer a parallel that "torture is too important to be left to the interrogators."

For the sake of the national conscience, we Americans must learn what our nation did after the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, why it was done and whether it was indeed "necessary." There are large holes in our public knowledge of how torture came to be practiced by our government, how it was implemented and whether it produced anything of import. Did some actors go beyond what even the Office of Legal Counsel approved? How much did the Congressional leadership know and when? Is it true, as the C.I.A.'s own inspector general reported, that there was no clear evidence that crucial intelligence was obtained by the "enhanced interrogation" techniques? In sum, there is much to learn from a thorough investigation and honest report to the public.

Despite the constant criticism of politicians, the fact is that citizens usually elect public officials who reflect the broad currents of the American mainstream. It is imperative, therefore, that as a people we establish a moral consensus that will condemn unworthy acts done in our name and support political leaders who will oppose terrorists without transgressing our moral convictions. A

Guest House
Addiction Services for Catholic Clergy & Religious

Join Our Faculty:

James Coupe, Psy.D.
Carlo DiClemente, Ph.D., ABPP
Denise Egan Stack, LMHC
John C. Eustace, M.D.
Rev. James Flavin, LMHC
Rev. Donald Hummel, M.A., D. Min.
Rev. Hugh Lagan, SMA, Psy.D.
Rev. Richard Lewandowski, LMHC
Rev. Gerard McGlone, SJ, Ph.D.
Samuel Mikail, Ph.D., ABPP
Sr. Mary Persico, IHM
Bro. Seán Sammon, FMS, Ph.D.
Kathleen Spitz, M.A., NCC, LPC

Conference to be held at the
Boston Marriott Newton
2345 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton, Massachusetts 02466
617-969-1000

10th Annual Summer Conference on Addictions

Addictions Ministry and Compassion Fatigue
Caring for the Mind, Body and Soul

JULY 11-13, 2011
Newton, MA
Boston Marriott Newton Hotel

The conference will address the issues of addiction, recovery, change, spirituality, resiliency, and trans-generational solidarity, within the framework of consecrated life and community in both religious and clergy. Guest House invites clergy and religious leaders as well as vocation directors, seminary personnel, those in spiritual formation, continuing education, leaders working with Catholic clergy and religious, and healthcare CEO's and Catholic educators.

Guest House is approved by NAADAC (National Association of Addiction Professionals) for conference attendees earning ten (10) Continuing Education Credits (CEU's). To ensure lodging, r**egistration must be received by June 20th; after June 20, 2011**, all remaining rooms will be released. Should you wish to extend your stay, contact the Marriott Sales Events Department for room rate and availability, 617-630-3505.
Registration fee is inclusive of 5 meals and 2 nights lodging, Monday, July 11 and Tuesday, July 12, 2011.

Mail this completed registration form to:
Guest House
Colleen Richards, Project Coordinator
1601 Joslyn Road
Lake Orion, MI 48360
or Fax to: 248-391-0210

Payable by check to Guest House or by Credit Card
Online registration available by visiting www.guesthouse.org

Cancellation and Refunds: A refund of fees paid, less $75, will be made if cancellation notification is received before June 24, 2011. After June 24, no refunds will be made.

REGISTRATION

☐ Yes, I hold a Leadership position within a Diocese or Religious Order or am a leader working with Catholic Clergy and Religious and would like to attend the Conference. (Includes presentations, meals and 2 nights lodging, July 11 and July 12, 2011) $199.00
(The cost of the 2 nights of lodging is being underwritten by generous Guest House donors.)

☐ I do not hold a Leadership position but would like to attend the Conference.
(All presentations- meals, 2 nights lodging -July 11 and July 12) $399.00

☐ Full Conference Registration Commuter (presentations and meals, without lodging) $199.00

Email address: _____
Name: _____
Diocese/Religious Order: _____
Position within Diocese/Religious Order: _____
Other Job Title: _____
Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____
Telephone: _____
Card Type: ☐ Visa ☐ Master Card ☐ Discover ☐ Amer. Exp.
Name on Card: _____
Credit Card Number: _____
Expiration Date: (mm/yy) _____

Collaborative Co-Sponsors: Saint John Vianney Center · Saint Luke Institute · Southdown Institute

SPECIAL EASTER OFFER FROM AMERICA MAGAZINE!

DO YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHO WOULD LOVE AMERICA?

Our special Easter offer makes this the best time to share **America** with a friend or loved one.

Celebrate your faith this Easter by subscribing or giving a gift at the special rate of only $32 for one full year! That's over 65% off the cover price!

Interested in learning more about your faith, about the country, about the world? Then why not subscribe to **America** magazine, the national Catholic weekly, founded by the Jesuits in 1909? This award-winning publication provides provocative articles on a wide variety of topics - from politics to the sacraments - and offers reviews on books, film, television and theater, and also offers a weekly column on the readings of the Sunday Mass. It is a magazine for thoughtful Catholics and those who care what Catholics are thinking.

WINNER OF OVER 100 AWARDS FROM THE CATHOLIC PRESS ASSOCIATION

To take advantage, just fill out the form below, and mail it with your payment to:
America, Subscription Department, P.O. Box 293159, Kettering, OH 45429-9774
Or you can call us at 1-800-627-9533 (mention code B3161).

Code: BC3161

For additional orders, please include each name and address on a separate sheet of paper.

To cover postage and GST, please add US $30 for Canadian subscriptions.

All subscriptions payable in US funds only. All new subscriptions will commence 4 to 6 weeks after receipt. Offer valid on new subscriptions only.

☐ Yes! Please start a one-year print subscription at the special rate of $32

Name

Address

City | State | Zip

E-mail (optional)

BILLING INFORMATION

Name

Address

City | State | Zip

E-mail (optional)

☐ Yes! Please start a gift subscription at the special rate of $32 for the first year

Name

Address

City | State | Zip

E-mail (optional)

☐ CHECK ENCLOSED

☐ BILL ME

☐ PLEASE BILL MY CREDIT CARD

Card No.

Expiration Date /

Family Reunion

Even America's political polarization cannot keep us apart

BY COLLEEN SHADDOX

I was maybe 9 when Dad sent me to my room for announcing at the dinner table, "Jesus is a liberal." Dad was a conservative sort, fond of phrases like "welfare queen" and "love it or leave it." He managed to sire three children who saw the world as he did. Then I came along, so different from the rest that I sometimes believed the stories my sister told about finding me on the doorstep. But I have Dad's nose and Mom's green eyes. There is no doubt I am a homegrown little Bolshevik.

One hears a lot lately about the polarization in the United States. I grew up with political polarization, and it has often been unpleasant. I have screamed and been screamed at. I have spent most of my life trying to convince my siblings how very wrong they were about absolutely everything. They have quaintly persisted in their beliefs and actually tried to convince me that I was wrong. You can guess their success.

Such endless arguments are not a whole lot of fun. Eventually I looked for excuses to avoid family gatherings. That became much easier when my mother became too old and frail to organize them. I spent free time hanging out with my friends, talking about that interesting story we had heard on National Public Radio or the great new place in town to get fair-trade cocoa. Nobody complained about taxes or spoke disparagingly of less developed

ART: DAN SALAMIDA

countries—guiltily sometimes, but never disparagingly. It was entirely pleasant.

But I missed my family.

Homecoming

Strange though it may seem, you can hate everything a person stands for and still love the person. It is not an easy or comfortable love, but why should love be either of those things?

I started showing up at Thanksgiving again. The family consensus seems to be that no one is going to convert anyone at this point, so we don't speak about politics, which includes world affairs, the environment, sexuality, taxation, the character of poor people, race relations, the quality of our public schools.... It is a long list.

So what's left? We can talk about our mother's devil's food cake. No one ever got Mother to write down the recipe, so its exquisite texture and aroma live only in our shared memory. We can talk about how Uncle Tom pretended the family was actually a Cub Scout troop in order to get into Yale football games for free; about working at the restaurant with Mom, after which it took two shampoos to remove the smell of grease from our hair; about Prince, a dog big enough and gentle enough to ride.

These are not topics of national import, but they are not nothing either. Maybe someday we will be comfortable enough to talk politics again. I am really not sure. I am not even sure it matters.

The point of this little dispatch on family dynamics is simply this: People of all persuasions are first and foremost people. When we forget this, it is easy to be rude—or worse. I sometimes think that the best thing this country could do is to ignore the problems it faces, just for a day. Send the Tea Partiers and the folks from MoveOn.org apple-picking together with the express understanding that they not discuss sustainable agriculture, global warming or any other "newsy topics" the trip might bring up. Or maybe have a bunch of Rush Limbaugh's dittoheads and the Rachel Maddow crowd take in a movie, preferably a light romantic comedy, and then go out for some ice cream.

Such exercises will not erase our political divisions, but they might make them a bit less mean-spirited. And if we keep talking to each other long enough, we may even see that the things we treasure most look very much alike. A

COLLEEN SHADDOX *'s essays have been featured on National Public Radio and in The New York Times, The Washington Post and many other publications. She lives in Connecticut with her husband and son.*

How God Speaks

Parents can help children learn how to listen to God.

BY EDWARD McCORMACK

No parents want to receive an unexpected call from their child's school. When a guidance counselor called to report that our daughter Nina, who is in second grade, said some hurtful things to her friend Annie, my wife and I became concerned. That night, as we finished dinner, my wife turned to Nina: "Do you want to talk about what happened between you and Annie today?"

Nina sat straight up, her face turned ashen and her head dropped down. She slowly got up from her chair and made her way over to her monther, sat on her lap, placed her head on my wife's chest and whispered in her ear. My wife put her arms around Nina and pulled her close as she listened to her. The confession ended, and Nina looked up at her mother. My wife explained that Nina knew what she had said was wrong. She asked Nina to write a letter of apology, which she promptly did, to be delivered to her friend the next day.

Nina went downstairs to play with her sister until bedtime. As I listened to her laugh, shout and happily shriek, I knew she was back to her old self. At bedtime Nina said her prayers with me and told me how much better she felt after talking to us about what happened between her and Annie.

The Practice of Speaking to God

The next day, Nina came home from school with a pamphlet on prayer entitled, *Catholic Prayer for Catholic Families*. It happily coincided with our desire to be a family of prayer. We say grace at meals and an Our Father or prayer of thanks at bedtime, but we want prayer to become a disposition that shapes how our family relates to the world. We want our children to develop a relationship with God and to become more attentive to God's presence throughout their day. In short, we want to cultivate a contemplative posture of finding God in all things.

During dinner, we read and discussed the introductory section of the pamphlet. It stressed that all prayer begins with the initiative of God, who invites us to know him in a personal manner. The triune mystery, the energizing presence in all things, is constantly reaching out to us through the indwelling Spirit. What appears to be our initiative is actually our response to God's Spirit prompting us to pray. Often we go about the day unaware of God's gracious presence calling us to new life. When we pray, we wake up to God's call and loving embrace. This is why St. Paul advises, "Pray without ceasing."

The pamphlet encouraged us to speak to God in prayer as one friend to another. I asked my kids what they could say to God in prayer. Much to my surprise, Julia, our 5-year-old, began to offer concrete examples: thanking God for food, our house, our teachers; asking God to bring Mommy safely home from work or saying sorry when we hurt each other. Her suggestions corresponded to those in the pamphlet: prayer of thanks, petition and forgiveness.

After dinner and a little violin practice, I read a chapter from a Harry Potter book to Nina. Julia asked me to read the Noah story from her children's Bible. After reading about the flood and the rainbow, Nina asked me, "Why doesn't God speak to us the way he spoke to Noah?" It was a profound question in light of our recent discus-

ART: BOB WIACEK

EDWARD McCORMACK *is an assistant professor of Christian spirituality and chair of the Christian spirituality department at Washington Theological Union, where he specializes in Ignatian spirituality.*

sion about prayer. I assured my daughters that God does speak to us, especially when we pray.

Christian tradition teaches that God speaks to us in many ways, especially through Jesus Christ, but many struggle to hear God speak at all. The psalmist warns, "If today you hear God's voice, harden not your hearts." That is a big *if*. The psalmist thinks the problem is hard hearts, which is no doubt true, but we also have a hearing problem. Children are more direct about it, but adults, living in a fast-paced noisy world, struggle to hear the voice of God. Many Christians do not know how to listen for God's voice because they do not know how God speaks. Many conclude, as my daughter did, that God does not speak to us as God spoke to Noah. If we do not expect God to speak to us, we will not listen for God's voice.

How does God speak to us?

After what Nina had experienced the previous day with her mother, I was surprised that she did not believe God could speak to her "the way he spoke to Noah."

"Nina, I thought God spoke to you loudly and powerfully the other night," I said.

St. Ignatius Loyola teaches that parts of us have not been healed and freed by Christ. Sometimes we act against the work and mission of Christ and engage in destructive behavior. When these situations arise, the Holy Spirit works to change our behavior by filling us with remorse. Many Christians assume they only experience God in moments of peace and joy, but Ignatius reminds us that God speaks to us in other ways, particularly in experiences of remorse. This is an act of love on God's part because God desires to free us from our distorted attitudes and actions. I explained to Nina that God spoke to her through her feelings of regret and sorrow over how she treated Annie.

The Lord also spoke to Nina as she lay in her mother's arms and whispered her confession. Through my wife's embrace, Nina heard and experienced the Lord's mercy and compassion. After admitting what she did and agreeing to write an apology, she felt light, happy and filled with energy. She felt like herself again.

According to St. Ignatius, God encourages the person who seeks to do good by restoring relationships and by filling her with energy, courage, clarity and inspirations. God also gives spiritual consolation. The most common form is feelings of quiet and peace and experiences of interior joy that attract us to live like Christ. The Lord gave Nina a desire to write that letter, the courage to deliver it and the inspiration to act differently toward Annie in the future. Nina experienced how pleased God was with her decision, freeing her from guilt and filling her with joy. That was an experience of spiritual consolation, a result of her cooperation with the Lord.

Doubting Julia

Julia sat next to me listening as I explained to Nina how God had spoken to her in the last two days. "Dad, God doesn't speak to me the way God spoke to Nina," she said.

"But God speaks to you every day," I replied. Julia immediately tested my claim by getting on her knees in front of me, folding her little hands and bowing her head in prayer. When she sat back on the couch, she looked at me and said, "Dad, I just listened for God's voice, and he didn't speak to me as he did to Nina or Noah!"

St. Ignatius believed that all the good we receive in our lives comes from God, like light streaming toward us from the sun. I asked Julia, "What good things were you given today?" She immediately named her mom, her sister, one of her friends and our house. Of course, these were but a few of the many goods God gave her. I reminded her that all of them came from God to her. "Do you know what God is saying to you when he gives you such good things?"

"No," she answered.

I looked her in the eye and said, "God is telling you how much he likes you and cares for you." A big smile appeared on her face.

I paused for a moment and added: "Girls, there are many children who do not have all the good things you have. Many children around the world go hungry, live with violence and do not have a home." They nodded their heads as I spoke. "God is also with them and loves them very much, but the people God sent to care for them do not always listen to God."

"How is God with them?" asked Nina.

I thought for a moment and replied, "Remember Jesus was born poor and died a horrible death showing us that God is with the poor and the suffering. Just as Jesus walked with the disciples on the road to Emmaus—and you know that story—he walks with all who suffer. He lives in their hearts giving them courage, strength, peace and hope."

Does God speak to grown-ups?

Why doesn't God speak to me as he spoke to the prophets or the disciples of Jesus? This is a common question for many Christians, adults as well as children. Nina's experience, interpreted in the light of fundamental Ignatian principles, reminds me that the Lord Jesus is always speaking to us through our relationships and choices, through our feelings, desires, imagination and thoughts. He speaks through creation, through the gift of our lives, through other people and through our own abilities, opportunities and struggles. The Lord desires to be in a relationship with us, to free and transform us into his image. Our task is to listen and respond. A

GETHSEMANE

Will no one wake and watch this night with me?
—Not one. All scattered on the moon-blanched soil,
disciples still as stones in deepest sleep,
fleeing his face and rush of sacrifice:
in this harsh garden, flint-heart of the world
fallen on evil days and evil ways—
Gethsemane, where the olive's pressed to oil,
even as he, crushed by Almighty God,
cries out, *O Lord, let pass this bitter cup...*
kneeling in anguish, dying drop by drop.

RICHARD O'CONNELL

RICHARD O'CONNELL *is the editor and publisher of Atlantis Editions. His most recent poetry collections are* Dawn Crossing *and* Waiting for the Terrorists.

ART | LEO J. O'DONOVAN

CONTEMPLATIVE COMPASSION

Antonello da Messina and the suffering Christ

The head and upper chest of the figure emerging from the dark background seem at first to face us squarely. With its broad peasant's nose and slightly parted, full lips, the face would not be remarkable but for the searching eyes and their haunting expression. Gradually one notices, thanks to the light and subtle modulation of the flesh, that the head and shoulders turn somewhat to their left. Resting lightly on the figure's head, and casting a shadow, is the strangely delicate circlet of a thorny branch. (Were it gold, it could almost be a prince's crown.) The arms are bound behind the figure's back.

This is Antonello da Messina's "Christ Crowned With Thorns" (see cover), a painting from 1470, now in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and an exquisite example of what has been called an Ecce Homo or Man of Sorrows genre that had been popular in the West for almost two centuries before this panel was painted. (In the East the theme emerged in the 12th century.) This suffering Christ confronts not just his tormentors but everyone who is arrested by his image. He suffers, yes. Above all, though, he questions. What might he be saying? Subject to such abuse, does he defend himself? Implore? Accuse? Judge, perhaps?

"Christ at the Column" (1476-78)

PHOTO: R. G. OJEDA. © RÉUNION DES MUSÉES NATIONAUX / ART RESOURCE

One remembers the Reproaches of the Good Friday liturgy: "My people, what have I done to you? How have I offended you? Answer me!" Except that this face is as gentle as it is searching; this wounded body is still somehow inviolate. Only the first verse of the Reproaches seems to apply: "My people, what have I done to you?"

The Christ this painting invites us to contemplate is too infinitely open to be demanding. "Why?" he simply asks. Why are you doing this? Rather than judge or accuse, his eyes—which seem to follow you wherever you go in the gallery—see into all unwarranted human suffering, raising the question of its meaning in the simplest, most elemental form. We wish the lips would part farther, to utter a word to which we could respond. For the mute, hurt gaze allows no self-justifying response, nor even a plea for forgiveness. It is life itself that is questioned: our human nature and the God who created it.

The French philosopher Jacques Maritain once spoke of poetry as "that intercommunication between the inner being of things and the inner being of the human Self which is a kind of divination…what Plato called *mousiké*." In this sense one might well call the author of this work, Antonello da Messina, a poet and a poetic master of contemplation.

Antonello's Story

The artist was born Antonello di Giovanni di Antonio about 1430 (the details of his biography are unclear) in Messina, at that time part of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. After an apprenticeship he traveled to Naples,

where sometime between 1445 and 1455 he became a pupil of Niccolò Colantonio and learned the techniques of Flemish oil painting. It was a time when Spanish, Provençal, Flemish and Italian influences all mingled in Naples. Antonello also was exposed to the great Netherlandish art that the king patronized, probably including works by Jan van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden.

By 1457 or so, Antonello had married in Messina, had a son and had begun to receive significant commissions. In the late 1460s he traveled to the mainland, perhaps journeying to Northern Italy and studying the work of Fra Angelico and Piero della Francesca, whose sense of volumetric proportions clearly influenced him. In time, Antonello became known for scenes from the Passion of Christ, Madonnas with the Child and secular portraits.

But it was a well-documented trip to Venice in 1475-76 that led to his greatest work—and to his major influence on such Venetian artists as Giovanni Bellini. In Venice Antonello painted the famous "Il Condottiere" (a three-quarter profile and an image of formidable resolution, now in the Louvre) and his masterpiece, the San Cassiano Altarpiece (a fragment of which is the pride of the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna). Returning to Sicily, the artist combined Italian elegance and Flemish detail in his "Virgin Annunciate" (c. 1476), a mysterious, regal girl, and in a great Pietà (to which I will return). Antonello dictated his will in February 1479 and died a few months later.

'Christ at the Column'

In these waning days of Lent, I turn to a second type of suffering Christ that Antonello developed after "Christ Crowned With Thorns." It is Christ Bound to the Pillar, and the supreme example is arguably "Christ at the Column" (c. 1476-78, p. 24), in the Louvre. Here, with the column behind him, an anguished, bust-length Christ looks toward heaven as if in rapture. A braided crown of thorns sits on his thick auburn hair, drawing little blood; he has a light beard; a few delicately painted tears lie on his cheeks. The rope around his neck is knotted at the bottom center (adding to the illusion of depth), then falls over his right shoulder, behind his neck and down his left shoulder.

"Dead Christ Supported by an Angel" (1476)

The desolation is extreme, but the body of the Lord suffers no disfigurement; the artist clearly chose psychological rather than merely physical revelation. The image draws us toward both heaven and earth, with a muted pathos unique to Antonello. The viewer, too, with the suffering Christ, looks for the mercy of God and for the fate of one's fellow man. This is incarnation just before its final test.

The artist also painted three crucifixions. The simplest and most contemplative of these is a small votive panel (for private prayer), now in London's National Gallery. While his other Crucifixions show the two thieves on either side of Jesus (not nailed to crosses but hung on trees), the London version shows only Jesus, a slender figure on a cross so high that he seems to float in the sky. Skulls surround the base of the cross. But Mary, to Jesus' right, sits rapt in contemplation, while John, to the left, sits in prayer. You are bidden, humbly, to join them. Sit at the cross? you might ask. Yes, says the poet; imitate the mother and the apostle who will now be her son.

The 'Dead Christ'

The startlingly contemplative mood also suffuses Antonello's last painting, completed perhaps with the help of Jacobello: "Dead Christ Supported by an Angel," which is sometimes called a Pietà, because the dead Christ is being mourned. One of the greatest treasures of the Prado in Madrid, this moderately sized panel has monumental effect. The dead subject sits almost upright in the center of the painting, the wound in his side still pouring blood; his head falls back, utterly helpless. Behind him, looking toward the viewer, a small angel weeps as he (implausibly) supports the Lord. Christ's left hand falls into a space that is surrounded in the middle distance by skulls and bones. In the far background is the walled city of Messina, with its cathedral church and bell tower.

ON THE WEB
John R. McCarthy reviews the film "Soul Surfer."
americamagazine.org/culture

PHOTO: ERICH LESSING/ART RESOURCES

Here the depths of sorrow sound once more, but with a dignity and calm that draws us into the mystery. Stay; keep watch, you feel the painter say. This, in a searing yet serene image, is the revelation of sin and redemption all in one—and of love beyond telling.

I have never read that Antonello da Messina led a saint's life. And there is often a gap (sometimes great) between an artist's life and work. It is fairly certain that this artist was industrious in pursuing his painter's profession and not averse to worldly recompense. But contemplating his panels, I felt a saintliness shining through. And what this artist offers us for Lenten prayer—or anytime—is saintly surely.

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

BOOKINGS | MARYANN CUSIMANO LOVE

CARING FOR GOD'S CREATION

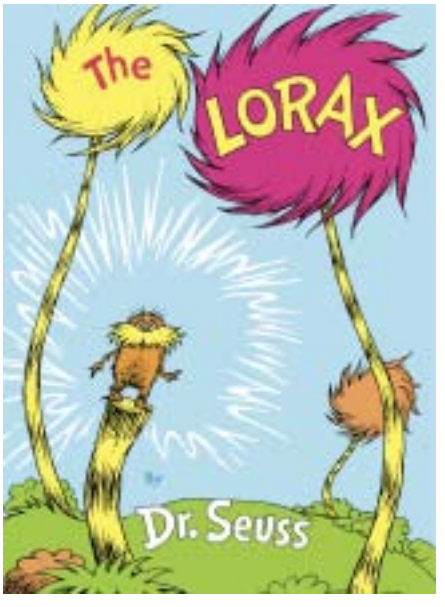
Books for budding environmentalists

In the Book of Genesis, God creates a lush world thick with birds, fish, animals and every good thing, and entrusts this sacred gift to man. This environmental stewardship motivates "green" Pope Benedict's activism, from installing solar panels in the Vatican to urging a response to global climate change. It is our religious obligation to protect the planet. **St. Francis and the Animals**, with gentle rhymes by Alice Joyce Davidson and accessible art by Maggie Swanson (Regina Press, 2006), provides a lovely introduction for young children to the Franciscan call to creation-care.

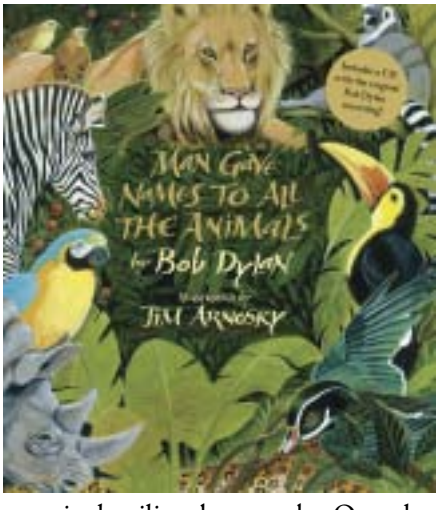
A host of books for young readers explore green themes. A new children's picture book, richly illustrated by Jim Arnosky, offers a revision of this Genesis moment in all its primeval, Garden-of-Eden grandeur. In **Man Gave Names to All the Animals** (Sterling Publishing, 2010, ages 1-6 years), Arnosky illustrates the lyrics to "Man Gave Names to All the Animals," by the Pulitzer Prize-winning songwriter Bob Dylan. You do not have to be a Dylan fan to appreciate Arnosky's realistic pencil and acrylic paintings of 170 animals (all named on the back page) and the subtle message they send of our responsibilities as stewards of creation. If you are a Dylan fan, however, you will appreciate that the book comes with a CD of the song, a great way to turn story time into a sing-along.

A Classic

Dr. Seuss's **The Lorax** (Random House, ages 4-8) also opens with echoes of Eden. But the primeval forest as imagined by Dr. Seuss (a k a Theodore Geisel) is composed of Truffala trees, rendered in eye-popping colors and improbable shapes. *The Lorax* is Seuss's 20th-century adaptation of the Fall in Genesis. In Geisel's version, mankind destroys paradise not by eating forbidden fruit but by chopping down all the fruit trees, a severe violation of Judaic law, *bal tashchit*.



Marking its 40th anniversary this year, the children's classic is (unfortunately) just as topical today. The original tree-hugger, the Lorax, and his fantastic Seussian companions, the Brown Bar-ba-loots, the Swomee-swans and the Humming-fish, live in a "glorious," balanced eco-system until the arrival of the Once-ler, who is "crazy with greed." The Once-ler chops down the Truffala trees to make Thneeds, a consumer product of



marginal utility; but, as the Once-ler crows, "You never can tell what some people will buy." The Lorax argues for environmental protection and for the prophetic responsibility to speak on behalf of the voiceless. "I am the Lorax. I speak for the trees. I speak for the trees, for the trees have no tongues. And I'm asking you, sir, at the top of my lungs" to stop the eco-genocide.

The Once-ler, intent on profit, retorts that "business is business! And business must grow!... I have my rights, sir, and I'm telling you, I intend to go on doing just what I do!" He does not heed the Lorax's dire warnings, or even believe them, until it is too late.

As the tragedy unfolds, Seuss's color palette fades from bold colors to grimy

tones until Eden has been destroyed. But Dr. Seuss places his hopes in our children, giving them the last Truffala seed, and a mission; "UNLESS someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not." That is a wonderful line that I use in my classes at Catholic University. It will soon come to life in the 3D movie now in production, starring Mr. DeVito as the voice of the Lorax, Zac Efron as the boy given the last Truffala seed (named Ted in honor of Theodore Geisel) and with some new characters added, like Betty White as the boy's grandmother. It speaks to our climate-changed, post-BP oil spill world. As Danny DeVito noted in an interview in USA Today, "We've got to wake up and smell the oil burning."

Kevin Henkes, a Caldecott Medal-winning children's book artist and author, playfully conveys the joys of nature and tending the earth in **My Garden** (Greenwillow Books, 2010, ages 4-8). In a perfect match of simple, poetic text and navy outlines with bright Easter egg colors, Henkes does not preach, but invites children to ponder the creative bounty of the earth. A young girl considers the wonders of her garden. "In my garden, there would be birds and butterflies by the hundreds, so that the air was humming with wings," and "a great big jellybean bush." Henkes plants seeds of the love of creation-care, covers them with dirt and pats "down the dirt with my foot.... Who knows what might happen?"

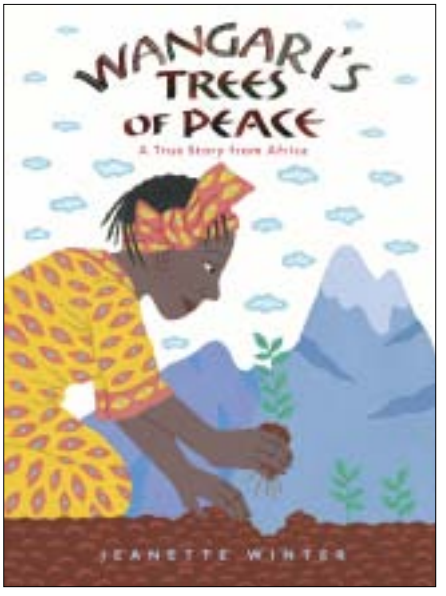
Gardens and Animals

In **Let's Save the Animals** (Candlewick Press, 2010, ages 3-8), Frances Barry uses textured, cut-paper collages and ingenious layouts (the open book creates an oval shape, so readers hold the world in their hands) to urge her young readers to save the endangered species illustrated throughout the book. In large text she simply describes the animals in their habitats: "I'd save the orangutan, stretching from branch to branch and swinging through the tropical rain forest." In smaller text creatively intertwined with the art, she offers more details about the causes of the animals' demise. The lift-the-flap format not only invites reader participation but also underscores the book's theme of these species' precarious fate: "Now you see them, now you don't." Black animal cutouts against black backgrounds illustrate their absence. The final page spread lists 10 simple ways children can help protect endangered species.

A non-fiction picture book by Jeanette Winter, **Wangari's Trees of Peace: A True Story from Africa**, (Harcourt, 2008, ages 4-8), tells the inspiring story of Wangari Maathai, awarded the Nobel Prize for her Green Belt Movement. To combat deforestation in her native Kenya, she enlists local women to plant more indigenous trees. Trees help the land and the farmers avoid desertification and poverty, and they also build peace, as environmental degradation spurs violent conflicts over scarce farmland and resources. Her movement has spread to 30 African countries, helping poor, African women farmers, the poorest farmers on the earth (according to the U.N. World Food Program). Simple text and pictures clarify the intersections of environmental damage, poverty and violence. Imprisoned for her activism, Wangari is not the only to have been imprisoned. "Talk of the trees spreads over all of Africa, like ripples in Lake Victoria...until there are over 30 million trees where there were none." Winter's words are complemented by her bright colors and repetitive patterns that conjure up the beauty of Africa.

Now to Florida

The world is funnier with Carl Hiassen in it. A persistent and ironic investigative reporter, Hiassen has been writing exposés about corruption in South Florida for The Miami Herald for nearly 40 years. He weaves his stories with an honest, satiric wit reminiscent of Mark Twain. Recently, he has adapted his talent to middle school and teen fiction, with great success. In a trio of novels, kids become "everyday environmentalists," sometimes reluctantly. They do not set out to save Florida's wetlands and endangered species, but a funny thing happens on the way to school. They uncover corporate pollution and coverups and decide they must respond, while the adults around them are often either unable or unwilling to take on the issues. The quirky characters and deadpan descriptions of the



good, the bad and the crazy in South Florida are as thick as Spanish moss in a Florida swamp, so real you will practically feel the mosquitoes bite.

In Hiassen's **Scat** (Knopf, 2009, ages 9-12), a class field trip to the Black Vine Swamp goes unexpectedly awry, as their feared battle-axe of a biology teacher (the aptly named Mrs. Starch) and the class underachiever and arsonist, Smoke, go missing in a suspicious fire at the swamp. An oil company illegally drilling in the swamp set the fire in an attempt to cover their tracks and frames Smoke for the fire. But the persistence and ingenuity of the classmates Nick and Marta exonerate Smoke, find Mrs. Starch (actually an environmental activist) and save an endangered Florida black panther and her cub along the way. The pace, characters, sense of place and poignant humor of the novels alone make them essential reading. The green themes are a bonus. The author's tongue-in-cheek humor and sunny Florida settings nicely balance the more serious ethical and environmental challenges. Readers familiar with Hiassen's profanity-laced crime novels for adults can rest easy; these books are profanity-free.

It's Easy Being Green

Because the specifics of creation-care can be complicated, a host of new nonfiction books clarify these issues for elementary-school age through teenage children and their parents and teachers. Three in this category stand out. **What's the Point of Being Green?**, by Jacqui Bailey (Barron's, 2010, ages 9-12), clearly explains environmental issues without talking down to children. Organized in useful blocks from "What's the Problem?" and "How Did It Get So Bad?" to "So What Can We Do?"—suggestions for action at the individual, community and international levels—the book deftly weaves photos, facts and tips for action. The sections "Why Do Some People Go Hungry?" and "How Wealthy Are You?" are by themselves worth the price of the book, as many green books do not mention that the poor suffer most from environmental damage.

Earth in the Hot Seat: Bulletins from a Warming World, by Marfe Ferguson Delano (National Geographic Society, 2009, ages 9-12), combines superb National Geogra-phic photography and compelling comments from scientists, like: "Things that normally happen in geologic time are happening during the span of a human lifetime. It's like watching the Statue of Liberty melt." The photos memorably tell the story, including before-and-after pictures of melting glaciers and representations of the carbon emitted by a sport utility vehicle.

A Kid's Guide to Global Warming: How It Affects You and What You Can Do About It, by Glenn Murphy (Weldon Owen, 2008), also clearly explains climate change with fascinating pictures and graphs; but except for a photo in the disease section, the book overlooks the disproportionate effect of climate change on the world's poor.

All these books shine a bright light on environmental pain, while urging individual and collective action to resurrect our suffering planet—a fine message for Earth Day and every day.

MARYANN CUSIMANO LOVE, *a professor of international relations at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., has written several children's books.*

LETTERS

God Did What?

Ilia Delio's "Faith and the Cosmos" (4/4) reminds me, as I work on my Ph.D. in historical theology at a Catholic university, that few of my colleagues are capable of doing much in regard to science and evolution. The biggest obstacle is not lack of desire, let alone an anti-scientific viewpoint, but the Herculean task of trying to be competent in theology, ancient and modern languages, philosophy and science. In spite of these barriers, faith and science is a recurring theme in the introductory theology course I teach, including a special unit on Genesis 1-3 and evolution. Unfortunately, almost none of my students understand methodology, the distinction between theory and opinion and the cultural relativism that says "everybody is entitled to their opinion." It is an embarrassment that the general population is anti-evolution when so many of the ministers, Catholic and Protestant, are not.

ADAM RASMUSSEN
Silver Spring, Md.

No Original Sin

Re "Faith and the Cosmos" (4/4): One problem with the church's approach to science is that it refuses to give scientific findings due status vis-à-vis theology if science indicates a need to modify its interpretation of a revealed truth. Consider, for example, the scientific evidence against Adam and Eve being actual historical individuals. Without them the concept of original sin and the Fall requires considerable revision. The Vatican will have none of it. The theologian John Haught's concept replaces the "fallen nature" tradition with one of constant becoming. Thus humankind's propensity to sin is a consequence of its evolutionary contingency, not some single moment of turning away from God in a garden. And Christ's redeeming act is not so much to wipe away original sin as to continue humans more accurately on spiritual growth. There are more examples, but until the Vatican gives to science the status it needs to influence theology, the problem will remain.

CHARLES KELLER
Los Alamos, N.M.

Speak Out

The article "Good Counsel," by Fran Hezel, S.J. (Faith in Focus, 3/28), is full of down-to-earth perspectives, perhaps based in part on his time spent in a multicultural milieu, to which I can relate. The older I get, the less seriously I take myself and the more time I try to devote to laughter. But I take seriously using my gray hairs and experience to speak up and speak out for those young people around me who cannot do so, mostly out of fear. As Janis Joplin once sang, "Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose."

CRAIG B. McKEE
Hong Kong

'Hi! I'm Fran'

Francis X. Hezel, S.J., seems to think we should adopt the cultural norms of the people in Micronesia (Of Many Things, 3/28). Why? If we go to Micronesia, yes, we should observe

their cultural norms. But if they come here, no. They should adapt. Furthermore, what is "curt" about saying, "Hello, my name is George?" Is Father Hezel unable to respond, "My name is Father Hezel. Nice to meet you. How do you happen to be at this event?"

But the author's story is an effective attention-grabber leading into what I suspect is the real point of his article: a description of the people of Micronesia, which is quite interesting.

THOMAS BRANDIN
Los Angeles, Calif.

Smart Woman

Allen Hubbard Jr.'s "A Recurring Vision" (3/28) about St. Teresa reminds us that in mysticism Christ is to the Christian what Sisyphus is to Albert Camus: a figure who bears pains similar to ours and provides a symbol of identification. Otherwise it is easy for people to turn away from religion that they perceive as revolving around salvation, when the immediate vantage point of life affirms that suffering is and will always be an essential component. I am impressed by this essay.

St. Teresa is my favorite saint. A mystic, a practical woman, compassionate, smart and shrewd. With the Inquisition still out and about in her day, she had to deal carefully with church powers, but she remained focused on Christ and the care of her sisters in faith.

WINIFRED HOLLOWAY
Saratoga Springs, N.Y.

Write About It Later

"A Recurring Vision," by Allen Hubbard Jr. (3/28), reminds me of the saying "You can know all things and know nothing in the right way." The author, an undergraduate in religious studies, states that he was required to read St. Teresa of Ávila. He then quotes Carl Sagan, an atheist, and analyzes Sagan's statement comparing God's covenant as symbolic of God's enduring interest in and attention to humanity. But God's covenant is one of love, not "interest." He then compares the relationship of Christ to the Christian to that of Sisyphus to Camus. But the task of Sisyphus is to do nothing but the same task over and over.

The task of the Christian is to seek Christ in prayer to achieve union. Since Mr. Hubbard admits he has not experienced spiritual rapture, he would do well to leave writing about it to St. Teresa, John of the Cross and contemporaries like John Padberg, S.J., and the late David Fleming, S.J., to name only a few.

CECILIA VOSSMEYER
St. Louis, Mo.

Out of Date?

Reading Gary L. Chamberlain's "Nursing Shift" (3/28), I had to turn back to the cover to check the date. Was I reading a copy that had been lost in the mail? Although I agree there are serious ethical issues related to the practice of recruiting professionals from other countries, there does not seem to be a nursing shortage at this time. The hospital with which I am associated has had R.N. graduates working as dietary aids since their graduation last spring while they wait for a nursing position to open up. A niece of mine had to go 2,000 miles away from home to find a nursing job after graduation. And this is only a part-time job. A good article. But is it timely?

ELIZABETH A. GAVULA
Flourtown, Pa.

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

America (ISSN 0002-7049) is published weekly (except for 12 combined issues: Jan. 3-10-17, 24-31, May 2-9, June 6-13, 20-27, July 4-11, 18-25, Aug. 1-8, 15-22, Aug. 29-Sept. 5, Nov. 28-Dec. 5, Dec. 19-26) by America Press, Inc., 106 West 56th Street, New York, NY 10019. Periodicals postage is paid at New York, N.Y., and additional mailing offices. Business Manager: Lisa Pope; Circulation: Judith Palmer, (212) 581-4640. Subscriptions: United States, $56 per year; add U.S. $30 postage and GST (#131870719) for Canada; or add U.S. $54 per year for international priority airmail. Postmaster: Send address changes to: America, 106 West 56th St. New York, NY 10019. Printed in U.S.A.

Quaking With Joy

EASTER (A), APRIL 24, 2011

Readings: Acts 10:34a-43; Ps 118:1-2, 16-23; Col 3:1-4; Mt 28:1-10

"And behold, there was a great earthquake" (Mt 28:2)

As the people of Japan, Christchurch and Haiti slowly rebuild their lives after suffering the devastating effects of earthquakes, a detail unique to Matthew's account of the empty tomb catches one's attention. The placid daybreak is shattered with "a great earthquake" (28:2), echoing the description of the aftermath of the death of Jesus found only in Matthew. Just after Jesus utters his final words and breathes his last, Matthew says, "The earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many" (27:51-53).

While the earthquakes of our day cause massive loss of life by entombing people in the rubble of collapsed buildings, the earthquakes in the Gospel have the opposite effect: they split open tombs and raise to new life those held in the grip of death. They signal tectonic shifts made possible for humankind through God's action in Christ.

Foremost is the shift away from paralyzing fear to an empowering joy. The angel's first words to the women are, "Do not be afraid!" (v. 5). The centurion and those keeping watch over the crucified Jesus were terrified at the earthquake and what took place after his death (27:54), as were the guards at the tomb, who "were shaken with fear" so that they "became like dead men." Not so Jesus' disciples. The angel directs them away from seeking Jesus the crucified so that they can experience him as risen. God's messenger invites them to come and see the place where he lay but then directs them to go out quickly. They are not to stay in the place of death. They are not to build a monument to the martyr Jesus and glorify his death but rather to announce and live the new life that bursts forth from the empty grave.

Harboring some fear, they follow the angel's instructions and let joy overtake them. Then Jesus himself appears to them and reiterates his oft-repeated invitation to his disciples to let go the death-grip of fear (Mt 8:26; 10:26, 28, 31; 14:27; 17:7). They can move from fear to joy, when they come to know that Jesus never abandons his earthquaked people and that he is able to transform even the most brutal effects of violence. It is not only in this one definitive act of raising the crucified Christ that God's life-giving power is exercised, but in every act of forgiveness and in every move toward reconciliation enacted by Jesus' disciples.

Easter is not only about what happened to Jesus but, to a great degree, it is about what happens to us as we live lives that are transformed by his rising. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul speaks about Christians being so united with Christ that when he dies, we die with him. And when he is raised, so we too. We not only await final transformation but, every time we stand with the crucified peoples of our day, as did Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, the Risen One is alive in us as we break the hold of death-dealing powers even now.

The poet laureate Maya Angelou captures this sense in her poem, "Still I Rise," as she speaks about the past horrors of an enslaved people: "Out of the huts of history's shame/ I rise/ Up from a past that's rooted in pain/ I rise/.../ Leaving behind nights of terror and fear/ I rise/ Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear/ I rise/ Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,/ I am the dream and the hope of the slave./ I rise/ I rise/ I rise."

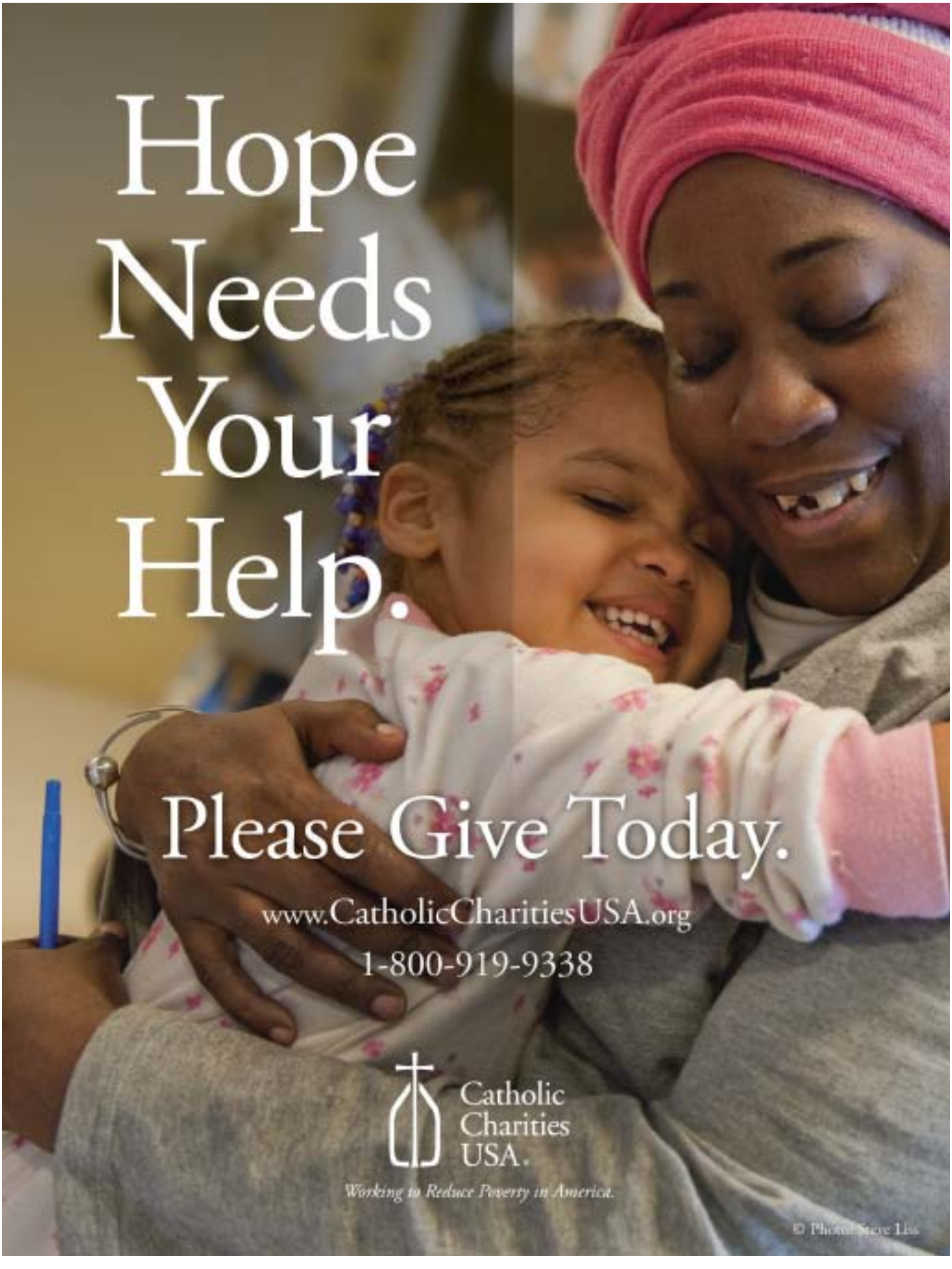
BARBARA E. REID

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- Out of what fear and pain is Jesus helping you to rise?
- How do you and your faith community stand in solidarity with today's crucified peoples?
- What is sealed in the tomb of your heart that God's angel wants to release?

ART: TAD DUNNE

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


Hope
Needs
Your
Help.
Please Give Today.
www.CatholicCharitiesUSA.org
1-800-919-9338
Catholic
Charities
USA.
Working to Reduce Poverty in America.