THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

America

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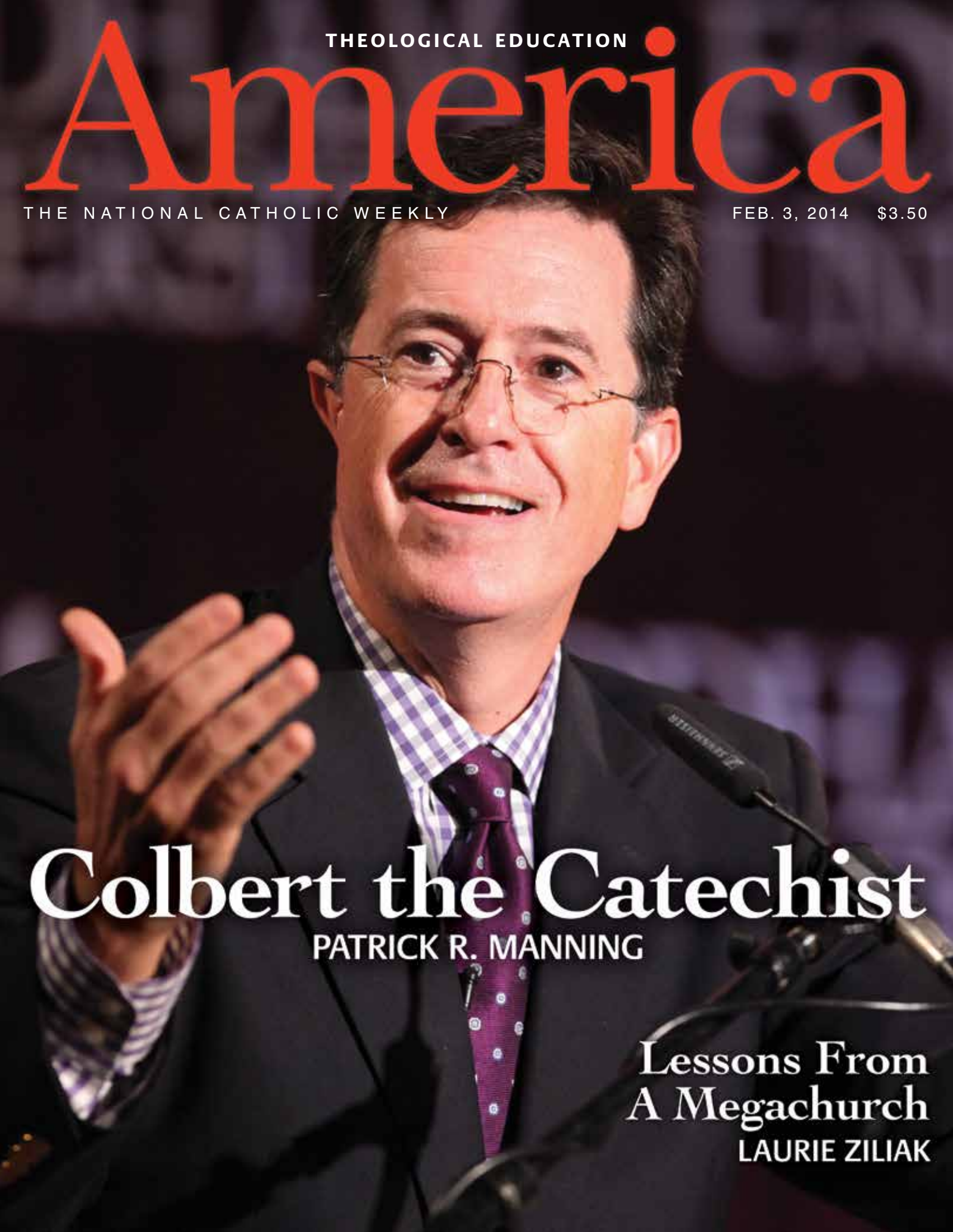

Colbert the Catechist

PATRICK R. MANNING

Lessons From A Megachurch

LAURIE ZILIAK

OF MANY THINGS

As this issue goes to press, last-minute preparations are underway for the March for Life, the annual gathering of pro-life activists, clergy and civic leaders in Washington, D.C. From our founding in 1909, **America** has advocated for a consistent ethic of life in all our private choices and public decision-making. In this commitment, we are allied with the sentiments expressed in the statement by the Society of Jesus of the United States, "Standing for the Unborn," which was published in **America** on May 26, 2003. **MATT MALONE, S.J.**

> When we, the leadership of the Society of Jesus in the United States, survey the developments unfolding in our culture, we are deeply distressed at the massive injustices. A spirit of callous disregard for life shows itself in direct assaults on human life such as abortion and capital punishment, as well as in senseless violence, escalating militarism, racism, xenophobia and the skewed accumulation of wealth and life-sustaining resources. These realities compel us to speak out against what Pope John Paul II has called "the culture of death."...
>
> Some influential voices posit a zero-sum conflict between "women's reproductive rights" and the right to life of unborn children. Jesuits ought to find their place among those who demonstrate the obvious confluence of women's rights and respect for life in all its forms. Pope John Paul II summed this partnership up when he wrote: "Therefore, in firmly rejecting 'pro-choice' it is necessary to become courageously 'pro-woman,' promoting a choice that is truly in favor of women."...
>
> As Catholics and Jesuits, we would naturally prefer to live in a country where every citizen, voter and court consistently favor legal recognition of and protection for the unborn.... We must acknowledge, however, that phrases such as "the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness"...are phrases with contested meanings that others understand differently than we do.... The more attractive option seeks neither to flee nor to dominate situations of pluralism. It commits us rather to a process of engaging those who initially disagree with us on some issues, seeking to create an acceptable consensus wherever possible by building upon those truths on which we can reach agreement....
>
> This path of "proposing, rather than imposing," was described by the great American Jesuit theologian of the past century, John Courtney Murray. While emphasizing the value of tolerance and mutual dialogue, he also advised against any sort of moral relativism....
>
> Another way of describing this stance is to say that Jesuits are committed to narrowing the gap between the current civil law of our nation and the demands of the moral law as we understand it. Our long-term goal remains full legal recognition of and protection for the unborn child—from the moment of conception....
>
> In the near future, we cannot realistically expect complete agreement among all participants in the abortion debate. We must listen respectfully to others' opinions, just as we expect a fair hearing of our own arguments against abortion. Our confidence in the persuasive power of well articulated defenses of pro-life positions sustains us, even as we acknowledge the long struggle ahead.... In the meantime, our common calling is to stand in solidarity with the unborn, the "least of our brothers and sisters" (Mt 25:40), through prayer and political activism.

America

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ON THE WEB

Clips from **"The Colbert Report"** and selections from **America**'s coverage of "Humanae Vitae." Plus, the Catholic Book Club discusses a new history of the **North American martyrs**. All at americamagazine.org.

Talking Poverty

Fifty years after President Lyndon B. Johnson declared a "war on poverty," the worthiness of those initiatives is still being debated. This is puzzling. The poor may still be with us, but without the expansion of government programs for the sick and the elderly in the 1960s, they would be many more in number.

That the nation started talking about poverty was largely due to a Catholic president and a former member of the Catholic Worker movement. In 1962 Michael Harrington, an admirer of Dorothy Day, wrote *The Other America*, a short, eloquent indictment of a country that let so many of its citizens go hungry. President John F. Kennedy was aware of the book and took up the cause, which was continued by President Johnson. The government arm of the war on poverty was led by Sargent Shriver, a member of the Kennedy family. Joseph A. Califano Jr., like Harrington a graduate of the College of the Holy Cross, helped guide the implementation of the Great Society as a policy adviser to President Johnson.

Today a conversation on poverty has started again, inspired in part by the words of Pope Francis. Once again Catholic politicians are in the middle of the discussion. They do not agree on a common approach, but perhaps common ground can be found on two fronts. First, government is not the only answer. Private anti-poverty initiatives can also be very effective. When it comes to fighting poverty, the central question should not be "Who pays for it?" but "Does it work?" Second, when executed thoughtfully, government programs can work. President Johnson's domestic policy agenda resulted in a substantial drop in the number of Americans living below the poverty line.

Family-Friendly Francis

"Let them eat; no worries." Pope Francis spoke these words not in support of the poor in the streets, as is his custom, but on behalf of infants in the Sistine Chapel. On Jan. 12, the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, Francis described the 32 infants presented for baptism there as "the main focus" and, noting that the children might grow hungry during the lengthy ceremony, he urged the mothers to feel free to breastfeed them during the liturgy. Breastfeeding in public has long attracted controversy in the United States, so many U.S. Catholics have found Francis' frankness on the matter to be a refreshing acknowledgment of the practice as a natural part of motherhood.

Many also have been encouraged by Francis' response to one of the couples who presented their child for baptism but reportedly are not married in the church. The baptism of this child by Francis reflects a loving and pastoral decision, but not a remarkable one, canonically speaking. Francis made clear during his homily that he expected parents to pass on the faith, calling it a "duty" and "the most beautiful inheritance they will leave" their children. In his Angelus message, he also expressed hope that the parents' encounter that day would help them to rediscover their own faith "in a new way."

Pope Francis' actions acknowledge the fact that family situations often viewed by the church as anomalies are in many societies the new everyday reality. Recognizing that our world is a complicated and "messy" place, to use Francis' word, is the first step toward welcoming and comforting today's nontraditional families in their quest to follow more faithfully the One whose own family situation was anything but ordinary.

Pot-Buyers' Remorse?

Watching buyers line up outside marijuana apothecaries looking for all the world like a queue forming before the latest Apple store opening provoked a sense of amazement as legal retail recreational marijuana sales began in Colorado on Jan. 1. While arguments in favor of formalizing the U.S. pot market are many, now that the nation's 420 moment has finally arrived, one cannot help feeling a slight twinge of buyer's remorse. Is this really a good idea?

Other states now appear poised to end the hypocrisy around marijuana use and a costly and discriminatory prohibition that produced as many judicial victims as it purported to save. But is the nation seeding a generation of psychotropic thrill seekers, gatewaying through a pot haze into a lifetime of more serious addictions? Is it plumping up the psychological pillows for Gen-Rx non-achievers?

The whole nation will be watching Colorado and Washington as this first try at legalization—rationalizing a market that will persist with or without state approval or regulation—unfolds. Parents are already properly concerned about legalized pot's trickle-down potential. And what will happen when Big Tobacco, eyeing the profit potential of marijuana, shifts its production and marketing might to a new opportunity? Is there a stoned version of Joe Camel already waiting in the wings on Madison Avenue? Attentive regulators and good data will be needed to assess this needed social experiment.

Saving South Sudan

A U.N. REFUGEE CAMP IN JUBA, SOUTH SUDAN, JAN. 7, 2014. CNS PHOTO/JAMES AKENA, REUTERS

From Juba, the capital city of South Sudan, the Catholic bishops of that republic proclaimed on Nov. 15 a pastoral message of "hope and encouragement," marking the conclusion of the church's Year of Faith and celebrating this young state's independence from Sudan in 2011. The civil war in Sudan from 1983 to 2005 had cost an estimated two million lives. Independence was a special joy for Christians, who had suffered greatly under the regime of President Omar Hassan al-Bashir. But the bishops offered this reminder: "Building a new nation is not a quick nor easy task." Many citizens had never experienced democracy, peace, religious freedom and ecumenical cooperation. There were causes for concern and a "widespread feeling that something is not right," the bishops acknowledged.

Two months ago the internecine tensions broke out into open conflict when President Salva Kiir accused Riek Machar, the vice president he had dismissed in July, of attempting a coup on Dec. 16. Fighting erupted between their personal militias and spread throughout the country. To some this was an extension of ancient ethnic conflicts: Kiir's Dinka ethnic group versus Machar's Nuer group. To others it was a struggle for control of the oil fields and the pipeline that links South Sudan with its divorced neighbor to the north. To political analysts it was the failure of the U.N. peacekeeping mission, negotiators of the 2011 split, to deal with deeper problems like the inequitable distribution of wealth and resources, government corruption and the lack of a unified national military.

As of this writing, 400,000 South Sudanese have fled their homes in search of safety. Two hundred of these, mostly women and children, died when their boat sank in the Nile River. Reports of mass graves, dozens of dead, mangled and bloated bodies lining the roadside from the airport to the recently recaptured city of Bentiu, plus the looted shops and burned-out homes, cars and buses, testify to hatred run wild. Toby Lanzer, the U.N. humanitarian official in South Sudan, has "absolutely no doubt" that thousands have been killed.

The U.N. Security Council has voted to send 12,500 troops and 1,323 civilian police, though U.N. chief Ban Ki-moon insists, "This is a political crisis which requires a peaceful, political solution." The United States has deployed small contingents of Marines in Uganda, South Sudan and Djibouti. A small but robust contingent of the Police Defense Forces of Uganda have arrived to secure the Juba International Airport, evacuate Ugandan citizens, deliver medical supplies and help end the killing, looting and bloodletting. Delegates from all sides recently assembled in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to begin negotiations.

Amir Idris, a professor of African history and politics at Fordham University, wrote in The Sudan Tribune (1/12) that the rebuilding of South Sudan requires an intellectual endeavor to replace the colonial state of mind, which explains societal events by the underlying blood ties. A more inclusive approach that cultivates new capabilities for citizenship builds on three premises: the conflict is neither ethnic nor cultural but political; ethnic identities are not static and can be peaceful if restructured in a way that makes coexistence with overlapping identities possible; and political violence calls for a political solution, which requires that the people reinvent themselves by redefining their identities to democratize the state. The people of South Sudan should seek an inclusive citizenship and an equal distribution of power and wealth for all.

Above all, South Sudan must address the history of violence in the region as well as the absence of law and order and the weak sense of national identity. In response to the ineffectual justice system, David Deng and Elizabeth Deng, lawyers based in South Sudan and Kenya, respectively, have proposed a hybrid court—similar to those in Sierra Leone, Kosovo and Cambodia—within the judiciary of South Sudan.

Meanwhile, the United States needs to repair its relationship with President Kiir and maintain its credibility as an unbiased mediator in the conflict by avoiding the temptation to throw its support to one side or another. Rather, the United States should increase the level of humanitarian aid to the region and do everything possible to encourage a negotiated peaceful resolution. The negotiations present an opportunity to work with China, which is reportedly playing a constructive role in the peace process.

If the meetings in Ethiopia bear fruit and if the leadership of South Sudan can be convinced to rethink the organization of the new country, the joy expressed in the bishops' statement will be validated and the open letter released by church leaders in South Sudan under the auspices of the World Council of Churches on Dec. 18, 2013, will ring true: We "identify ourselves not as representatives of tribes or denominations but as leaders and representatives of one church and one body of Christ."

REPLY ALL

The Gun Control Lobby

Re "Inexcusable Inaction" (Editorial, 12/9): I am deeply touched by the clarity and passion with which the editors have pursued the idiocy of our current gun law impasse. In sympathy with this cause, I have a plan to achieve victory.

Right now legislators are reluctant to act because they fear the N.R.A.'s opposition will mean political suicide. But what if legislators in either party were faced with certain removal from office if they did not support sensible gun restrictions? If an overwhelming majority of Americans are disgusted with the current paralysis of legislators to enact sensible, serious gun legislation, then we already have the ferment to achieve our goal. We just need to mobilize and direct the palpable anger in a politically effective way.

We should create an online petition asking people to add their names to the following mandate: "I vow to vote against Representative X or Senator X if they do not vote in favor of [a particular bill] promoting sensible gun restrictions." Legislators will no longer fear the N.R.A.; instead they will need to respond to their constituents. And this plan requires less effort than mobilization to repeal the Second Amendment.

(REV.) STEVEN J. MARINUCCI
Philadelphia, Pa.

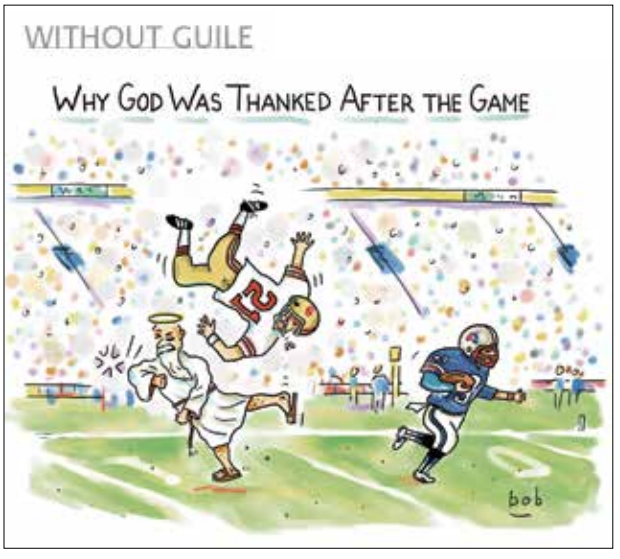


PHOTO: BOB ECKSTEIN

Stop the Shooters

"Inexcusable Inaction" is dead wrong. Dead, as in Newtown dead, Aurora dead, Fort Hood dead, the Navy Yard dead, etc., etc. None of these tragedies would have happened if some of the workers in those shooting galleries had their own handguns with them. The demented and cowardly murderers killed dozens of people without a single shot fired in self-defense.

If potential shooters knew in advance that their targets would shoot back, knew that many people carry a concealed weapon, knew that loaded guns are everywhere, saw signs announcing that fact in plain view at all the entrances, there would be far fewer horrific, and avoidable, massacres.

Two years ago an intruder invaded a house close by and killed two brothers who he believed owned a coin collection. He could have kicked in the wrong door and killed me and my daughter. When that foot crashes through the door, it is too late to call 911. Now I have a Class A license to carry concealed and a loaded handgun in my home.

Until you change your simple-minded, Pollyanna, truly asinine position on guns, please delete the word "Catholic" and substitute the word "liberal," in all caps, in the **America** masthead. If only I had a subscription to cancel!

JOHN NATALE
Winchester, Mass.

Editor's Note: To subscribe to ***America****, call (800) 627-9533.*

Too Little, Too Late

"The Continuing Crisis," by Jon Fuller, S.J., M.D. (12/2), hints at some of the uncharitable responses AIDS patients and gays met with from many church representatives in the first several years of the AIDS crisis. Yes, there are outstanding examples of great works of mercy by some individuals and a few institutions, like St. Vincent's Hospital in New York. But there were also many bishops and priests who spread pernicious statements about "divine retribution" and sinful lifestyles. There were many grieving family members who were told to find some other place for their loved one's funeral.

The church's positive reaction to the AIDS crisis has been too little, too late. Just how much the church has contributed to the spreading of AIDS, in Africa and Asia, where it mobilized efforts against full public health measures including condom distribution, or in the United States, where it still opposes sex education in public schools, is a sad question.

ERNEST C. RASKAUSKAS JR.
Washington, D.C.

Other Bright Ideas

It seems like an editorial prank by **America** to publish "Feminism at Fifty," by Sidney Callahan (12/2), about Betty Friedan, juxtaposed with the letter by Bishop Peter A. Rosazza (State of the Question) that urges study of a "theology of men." Ms. Friedan might unloose some choice expletives were she here to react.

The bishop's letter is not consistent with the activism of the Catholic Interracial Council he seemed to support during the social, sexual and even religious upheavals in the 1960s. Haven't we been operating on a males-first basis since St. Paul was an upstart? Perhaps Bishop Rosazza ought to re-read Ms. Friedan and listen to Professor Callahan.

ROBERT BARAT KEANE
Ormond Beach, Fla.

Modern-Day Slavery

I enjoyed reading "Criminal Injustice," by Margot Patterson (12/2). I know the scales of justice are not balanced for poor people of color. Harsher pen-

alties are not the solution in the war on drugs. It only destroys black families. Blacks come out of prison with few resources: skills, education, jobs, housing and so on. So what happens? People return to prison, perhaps for life, and the next generation is left with the same problems—only now the children share cells with their parent, who may never get out.

I call this modern-day slavery. Prisons are big business, like cotton was. What is better: slavery in the past or today? They are the same.

Thank God for people who understand human suffering all over the world and take up the cause and help the less fortunate. "Those who oppress the poor revile their maker, but those who are kind to the needy honor him" (Prov 14:31).

DENISE SUTTON
Haverstraw, N.Y.

Fair Comparisons

In "Beware: Non-Celibates Writing about Celibacy" (In All Things, 12/2), James Martin, S.J., makes many good points and offers a good response to overstated claims made in "Sex and the Single Priest," by Bill Keller, in The New York Times (12/1). But I must push back on Father Martin's line of argumentation. Sure, sexual abuse happens in families and schools and football programs. But we need to compare apples to apples.

There is a lot of abuse in public schools, but we have to look at how many hours children spend in public schools and compare that with the hours spent in church activities. The same applies to families. Of course there is way more abuse in families, but how much more, and is it proportionate? What we really need—I'm not aware of such data—is a comparison of the rates of child abuse by married Protestant and Orthodox clergy with the rates among celibate Catholic clergy.

I have no doubt that celibacy is a healthy, happy way to live. But has the child abuse rate been higher among Catholic clergy because of celibacy? Let's get the data and find out.

ANTHONY RUFF, O.S.B.
Online comment

Two Vocations

Father Martin cites a survey that indicates 95 percent (of priests) "would definitely or probably choose priesthood again." I believe it. Priesthood can be a fascinating profession, and working with people can be very fulfilling. But how many of that 95 percent would like to be both priests and husbands? I suspect very many.

THOMAS RICE
Tübingen, Germany

STATUS UPDATE

In a special podcast, "A Legacy of Peace," Bishop Thomas J. Gumbleton, retired auxiliary bishop of Detroit, speaks about the life and legacy of Nelson Mandela. In the interview, Bishop Gumbleton suggests that a truth and reconciliation commission, like the one championed by Mandela in South Africa, could be a source of healing and reconciliation as the church seeks to address the ongoing sexual abuse crisis. Readers respond:

Yes. Yes. Yes. Amen! Bishop Gumbleton says: "The bishops at the beginning turned to their lawyers, so the survivors also went to lawyers, so the whole process became an adversarial process. What the victims are looking for—they're willing to forgive but if no one is there to receive the forgiveness, then reconciliation is impossible."

Huge numbers of people are stuck there, waiting with the survivors for the bishops to comprehend what they did and ask forgiveness.

BETTY D. THOMPSON

Bishop Gumbleton's quote reminds me of why the cutting-edge and compassionate sector of the legal profession is promoting "restorative justice." The focus is not on lawyering up and smacking people down; it's on listening to and healing for the victims, recognition of the true wrongs that occurred (especially by the wrongdoers) and, I hope, preventing further problems by putting a human face on the injury. Humanity comes first, not litigation strategy. This is how it should have been for dispute resolution across the board.

MARLA SCHWALLER CAREW

I'm a real admirer of Bishop Gumbleton, but I don't share his optimism here. Even if the wrongdoers were prepared to be fully honest, would truth and reconciliation commissions harm the victim more than they would help him/her? When someone has been very seriously harmed, is it fair to stress the obligation to forgive, or do we run the risk of making victims who are at different stages of painful healing processes feel inappropriate guilt because of an inability to forgive the wrongdoer on a timetable that is convenient for the larger community?

Reconciliation goes way beyond forgiveness and seems like an overwhelming burden to place on some victims, who might heal best if they are able to separate as much as possible from the perpetrator and those who engaged in a cover-up.

I realize that Bishop Gumbleton is himself a survivor of sexual abuse and that something along the lines of truth/reconciliation might be quite helpful for some victims in some circumstances, but any such processes would need to be implemented with special care not to harm those who don't want to, shouldn't or are not ready to participate.

NICOLE PEREZ

HOLY LAND

Catholic Bishops Call Gaza Conditions a 'Shocking Scandal'

Bishops from North America, Europe and Africa called on international leaders to act immediately so people living in the Gaza Strip can have access to basic necessities.

"Gaza is a man-made disaster, a shocking scandal, an injustice that cries out to the human community for a resolution," the visiting bishops said in a joint statement released on Jan. 16. "We call upon political leaders to improve the humanitarian situation of the people in Gaza, assuring access to the basic necessities for a dignified human life, the possibilities for economic development and freedom of movement."

The bishops spent two days of their tour of the Middle East on Jan. 11-16 visiting Christian schools and social and health institutions in Gaza as well as meeting with the local parishioners. Their visit, known as the Holy Land Coordination, is an annual event that began in 1988 at the request of the Vatican. The delegation also visited Palestinian Catholic schools in Gaza, East Jerusalem and Bethlehem, on the occupied West Bank.

"In the seemingly hopeless situation of Gaza, we met people of hope," the bishops said. "We were encouraged by our visit to tiny Christian communities which, day after day, through many institutions, reach out with compassion to the poorest of the poor, both Muslim and Christian."

The Christian community of Gaza is made up of about 2,500 Christians out of a total Gazan population of more than 1.5 million people. The majority of the Christians belong to the Greek

PROTECTING CHILDREN

Vatican Policy on Abuse Charges Scrutinized by U.N. Committee

Testifying before the U.N. Committee on the Rights of the Child, Vatican representatives acknowledged the horror of sexual abuse by members of the clergy and, under sometimes intense questioning, insisted the Vatican was serious about protecting children.

Archbishop Silvano Tomasi, the Vatican observer to U.N. agencies in Geneva, said the church recognizes the abuse of children as both a crime and sin, and the Vatican has been promoting policies that, "when properly applied, will help eliminate the occurrence of child sexual abuse by clergy and other church personnel." The archbishop spoke in Geneva on Jan. 16 during the committee's annual session to review reports from states that signed the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Auxiliary Bishop Charles Scicluna of Malta, the former sex abuse investigator in the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, also appeared before the U.N. committee. One of the committee members complained that Vatican procedures "aren't very transparent and the victims don't take part" in the proceedings. Bishop Scicluna responded that the Holy See knows "there are things that need to be done differently," particularly in addressing concerns about whether a local church has covered up cases of alleged abuse.

"States need to take action against the obstruction of justice," no matter who is involved, he said. "Only the truth will help us move on."

Committee members asked repeatedly about the total number of accusations made against Catholic clergy around the world and about the results of investigations on every level. Bishop Scicluna said the Vatican has "no statistics on how cases developed. That does not mean it should be this way. It is in the public interest to know the outcomes of the procedures."

Archbishop Tomasi told the committee that in December Pope Francis approved the establishment of an international commission to promote child

CHRISTMAS FLOOD. Heavy rains in December overwhelmed the decrepit infrastructure of Gaza City.

Orthodox Church, with just under 200 Catholics living in Gaza. Israel has blockaded the Gaza Strip since Hamas took control in 2007, although it loosened restrictions in 2010. Egypt opened one border crossing to Gaza in 2011.

In their statement, the bishops noted the warmth with which they were received in Gaza and also the Christians' request that they not be forgotten by Christians in the rest of the world. They wrote: "We urge public officials to become leaders of hope, not people of obstruction."

Archbishop Paul-André Durocher of Gatineau, Quebec, president of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, said he was struck by the important role Christian institutions and organizations play in reconciliation between Christians and Muslims. "We often picture Muslim-Christian relations in the rest of the world being antagonistic but here...at least where Christian institutions are running [programs], they really build relationships. It is quite remarkable and hopefilled."

Archbishop Stephen Brislin of Cape Town, South Africa, said he felt a "great affinity" with the Palestinians, whose suffering he compared to that of blacks in South Africa under apartheid. "I personally would not call [Israel] an apartheid state. I believe there are nuances in the Holy Land which must be recognized...but it is very similar to apartheid in the sense of the loss of human dignity and of the subjection of people to the political will of others," Archbishop Brislin said.

He said South Africa's example should offer hope to the people of the Holy Land.

"We must never forget that democracy in South Africa brought not only liberation to black people but also to white people because it freed whites from the burden of oppressing people and allowed us to develop normal relationships with our fellow human beings," the archbishop said. "The same can be true of the Holy Land, and I believe it will be."

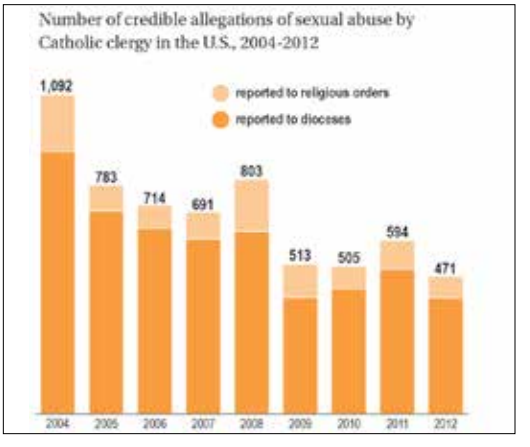
protection and prevent abuse. He said Vatican City State recently updated its laws to define and set out penalties for specific crimes against minors, including the sale of children, child prostitution, the military recruitment of children, sexual violence against children and producing or possessing child pornography.

In late November, the Vatican responded in writing to questions from the committee about its last report on compliance with the treaty; much of the Vatican response involved explaining the difference between the Vatican's direct legal jurisdiction over Vatican City State and its moral and canonical influence over Catholics around the world. "Priests are not functionaries of the Vatican," Archbishop Tomasi told the committee. "They are citizens of their own state and fall under the jurisdiction of that state."

Archbishop Tomasi declined to discuss details of the Vatican's investigation of Archbishop Jozef Wesolowski, removed as nuncio to the Dominican Republic in August after he was accused of paying for sex with boys, except to report that it was still underway but would be handled "with the severity it deserves." Asked if Archbishop Wesolowski would be extradited, Archbishop Tomasi said that as a diplomat, he would be tried at the Vatican under Vatican civil laws.

In the days before the U.N. committee meeting, organizations representing victims of clerical sexual abuse continued to make public criticisms of the Vatican and to argue that it had direct responsibility for handling or mishandling cases of abuse around the globe.

Archbishop Tomasi told Vatican Radio, "The criticisms are easy to make and sometimes have a basis in reality." At the same time, he said, "the accusation that the Holy See has blocked the carrying out of justice seems to be unfounded."



SOURCE: 2012 REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE "CHARTER FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE," U.S. CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS.-CREDIT-CNS/NANCY PHELAN WIECHEC

Vatican Group: Stop Arms to Syria

A Vatican study group is urging world leaders to stop the flow of arms into Syria and to press for an immediate and complete cease-fire there without political preconditions. "Political transformation is needed," its written statement said, but "it is not a precondition for ending violence; rather it will accompany the cessation of violence and the rebuilding of trust." Once greater trust and cooperation are built, "new political forms in Syria are needed to ensure representation, participation, reform and the voice and security of all social groups," it said. The statement was based on discussion during a day-long, closed-door workshop hosted on Jan. 13 by the Pontifical Academy for Sciences. The statement, addressed to Pope Francis, was also meant to help inform leaders taking part in U.N.-backed peace talks scheduled to begin in Geneva on Jan. 22.

NEWS BRIEFS

Bill de Blasio and Timothy M. Dolan

A new Web resource at www.sj2014.net, commemorating the **restoration of the Society of Jesus** in 1814, was launched in January. ✦ New Mexico's Catholic bishops said they strongly oppose the "authorization of **assisted suicide by the state**" after a court in Albuquerque ruled on Jan. 13 that terminally ill, mentally competent patients have the right to request a physician's help in committing suicide. ✦ **Tamil bishops in Sri Lanka** on Jan. 12 called for an independent inquiry into reported war crimes during the closing stages of the protracted ethnic war on that island nation in the Indian Ocean in 2009. ✦ Cardinal-designate **Pietro Parolin**, Vatican secretary of state, met on Jan. 14 with his U.S. counterpart, John Kerry, to discuss ongoing tensions in the Middle East, as well as the U.S. bishops' concerns about the Obama administration's contraception mandate. ✦ The **Ukrainian Catholic Church** on Jan. 13 accused the government of Soviet-style repression after it was threatened with new restrictions for backing demonstrators protesting the country's withdrawal from a deal with the European Union. ✦ New York's newly elected mayor, **Bill de Blasio**, paid an afternoon visit to Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York on Jan. 13. Both leaders expressed a desire to persuade Pope Francis to visit their city.

A World of Intolerance

A Pew Research Center study issued on Jan. 14 shows another increase in hostility toward religion by most of the world's 198 nations. The share of countries with a high or very high level of social hostility involving religion reached a six-year peak in 2012, the study said. The number of nations showing hostility toward Christians rose from 106 to 110, according to the study. "Overall, across the six years of this study, religious groups were harassed in a total of 185 countries at one time or another," the study said. "Members of the world's two largest religious groups—Christians and Muslims, who together comprise more than half of the global population—were harassed in the largest number of countries, 151 and 135, respectively." On a scale of hostile incidents involving religion, the Middle East-North Africa region had a score of 6.4 out of 10, more than twice that of the next-most-hostile region. The Americas had the lowest score, at 0.4. The United States received its third straight year of "moderate" for both government restrictions on religion and social hostility toward religion.

Turmoil in Michoacán

A Mexican bishop has rebuked the federal government for sending soldiers to seize the weapons of self-defense groups formed to fight off violent drug cartels and criminal gangs in the western state of Michoacán. Bishop Miguel Patino Velázquez of Apatzingán said the strategy was wrong and targeted the people trying to protect themselves. Bishop Patino issued a pastoral letter on Jan. 15, shortly after an attempt by soldiers to disarm a self-defense group near the town of Antúnez went awry, leaving at least three villagers dead. "Instead of searching for the criminals harming the community, the Mexican military, acting on the orders of superiors, went to disarm the self-defense groups," Bishop Patino said. "The situation got out of control and [the soldiers], seeing themselves surrounded by the population, started to shoot, first in the air and later at persons." The incident demonstrated the deep distrust many in this rugged region of Michoacán have in their institutions, which have been unable or unwilling to dismantle a drug cartel known as Knights Templar and its predecessor, La Familia Michoacana, over the past seven years.

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MARGOT PATTERSON

Washington Revisited

I remember being told in a philosophy class I took in college years ago that "wherever you go, you meet Plato on the way back." I dutifully plowed through *The Republic*, but it wasn't until years later, when I was reading Plato's earlier works, the *Apology*, *Crito* and *Phaedo*, that I came to appreciate the truth of that quip.

I returned from a trip to Washington, D.C., over the holidays thinking something similar could be said about our first president: Wherever you go in this country, you're never far from Washington.

Washington of course has come to signify any number of things. There's the man himself, the capital city named after him and the federal government, which synonym-seeking journalists often identify by the W word. Then there are the countless streets, squares and parks that bear the name of Washington. (I note that **America** magazine was born in 1909, auspiciously, on 32 Washington Square in New York.)

Given so many Washingtons scattered around the country, it's oddly easy to forget the person they celebrate. Like the purloined letter, that which is readily apparent becomes invisible. Heroes have a tendency to morph into monuments—cold, stony and forgotten.

Washington and Thomas Jefferson became a little more real to me during my trip, in part because of a visit to Mount Vernon. The candle-lit tour I took of Washington's home omitted some of the highlights I would have seen during the daytime: Washington's tomb, the key to the Bastille his friend the Marquis de Lafayette sent him in 1790, the set of false teeth on display. (Washington suffered from bad teeth, only one of which survived into his presidency.)

I did learn about standards of hospitality, which were considerably more demanding then than they are now. Both before he became president and after he left office, George and Martha entertained constantly. About two days out of three they were at it. Some guests were strangers, travelers who needed a place to stay for the night. Others came expressly to see Washington. In 1798, they had 677 houseguests. That is a lot of visitors and impressed on me Washington's self-restraint, graciousness and long-suffering nature. One guest stayed nine months; when he left, Washington noted his departure in his diary but refrained from further comment.

History is schooling for philosophy, a cure for both despair and easy optimism.

Jefferson was a more dicey character than Washington. He was a bit of a back-stabber, prone to writing attacks on Washington and getting others to sign their names to them. Washington understandably cooled toward his former secretary of state when he learned of this. Martha Washington counted as the two saddest days of her life the day her husband died and the day, a year later, on which Jefferson visited Mount Vernon.

Still, Jefferson was a great man, even if sometimes not a very good one. His personal library was the embryo of the Library of Congress, and to hear about his collection of 6,487 volumes encompassing art, architecture, literature, science, geography and almost every branch of knowledge is to realize what a superb mind he had. My brother-in-law opined there wasn't much to see at the Library of Congress apart from the reading room. He is a lawyer, alternately laconic or litigious, and it is rare that one has the pleasure of catching him so flamboyantly wrong. The original library is the most splendid public building I've ever seen in this country. If there's a better one, I'd like to know so I can visit it.

I came home feeling better about Washington in all its multiple dimensions. Congress is a wreck-in-progress, but the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian are first-rate; the capital looked grand; and I left feeling indebted to the founding fathers. They had their troubles too, and what a good thing it would be if we read more about them—sobering, yet possibly reassuring.

History is schooling for philosophy, a cure for both despair and easy optimism. Our best leaders often lived in the worst of times and experienced travails that far dwarf today's. The vices of democracy have not changed. The dangers Washington cited in his farewell address to the nation remain: false patriotism, the despotism of political parties, threats to the checks and balances of government, alliances with foreign countries that will blind the nation to its best interest. All apply to the issues we face now.

MARGOT PATTERSON *is a writer who lives in Kansas City, Mo.*

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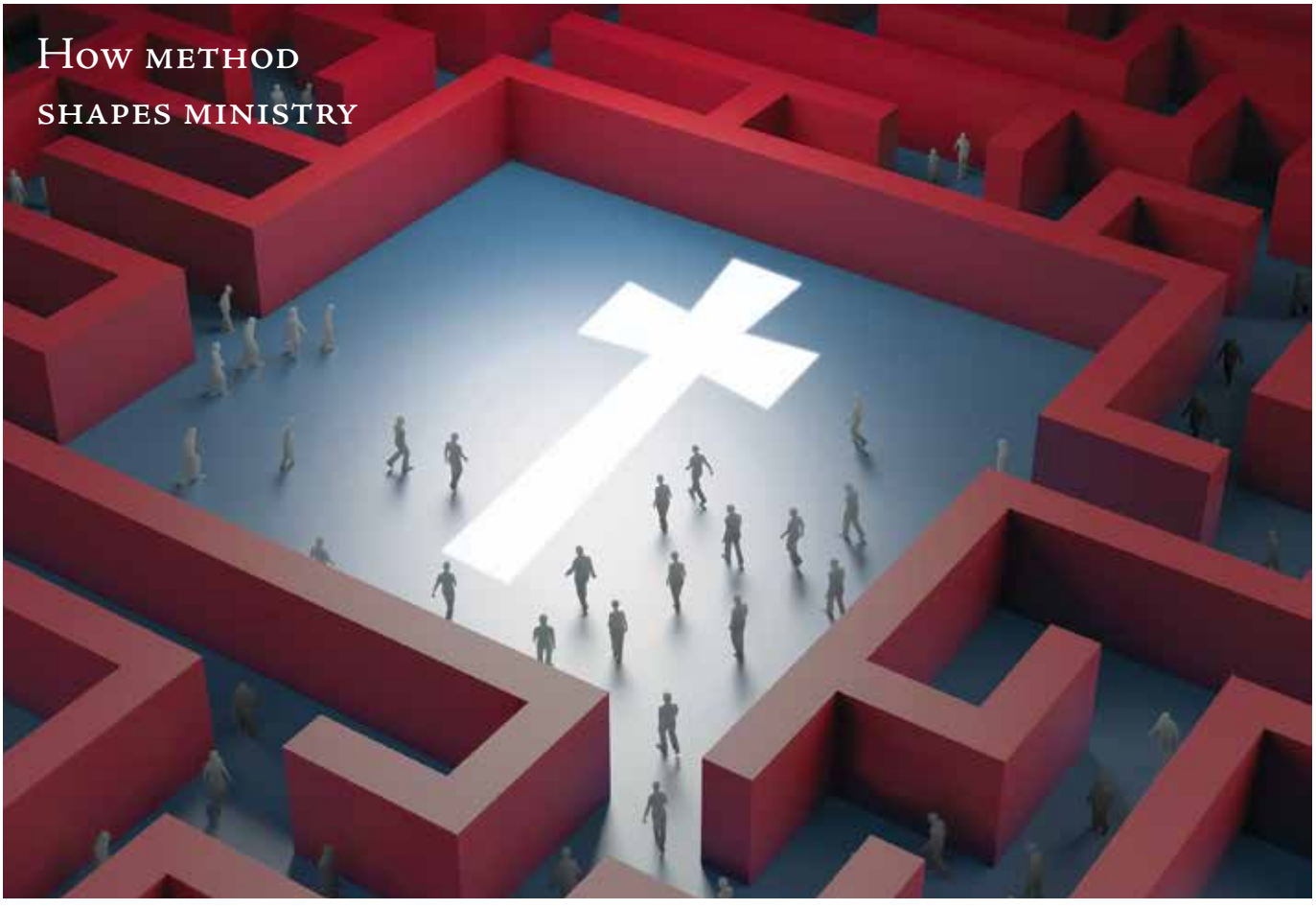

How method shapes ministry

A Faith That Works

BY J. MICHAEL BYRON

At my father's recent funeral, a priest approached me in order to marvel out loud, as he had done before, that he was amazed to discover through conversations with my father that this 80-year-old, lifelong practicing Catholic was such a "liberal." Nobody in my childhood home would have recognized that term as descriptive of my father. Neither would "conservative" have applied. Those categories simply make no sense in describing his Catholic disposition. He received his formal education—through college—at Catholic schools during the 1930s and '40s. He never pontificated about the benefits or evils of the Second Vatican Council, the pope or the liturgy. He just prayed in a thoroughly Catholic manner, went to church every Sunday, served the parish and the archdiocese in several leadership positions and made sure his children were raised and educated in the faith. How is that "liberal" or "conservative"? It is simply Catholic.

There was an underlying theological method, however, even though my dad—the most brilliant thinker I ever knew—would not have been able to carry on a formal conversation

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about it. (He once told me that my doctoral dissertation was the most baffling prose he ever attempted to read.) Every cleric, every pastoral minister, indeed every engaged Catholic Christian, approaches pastoral situations with an operative theological method. Many, perhaps most, might be unaware of how to identify the method and are therefore incapable of articulating and evaluating it. Nonetheless, the type of theological methodology is perhaps the most basic indicator of how people live into their vocations, whether clerical or lay.

Catholics today must ask whether a particular theological method adequately accounts for the data of experience or, alternatively, whether experience ought to be relevant at all. In other words: Is the task of faith and ministry today the resolution of intellectual quandaries, or is it something else? Does one confront pastoral situations in order to explain the "why" of events, or to be pastorally present to the "what" of events, even without an immediate theory? How a person answers those questions will disclose his or her theological method or "first principles."

How was my father's faith 'liberal' or 'conservative'? It is simply Catholic.

How We Evaluate

To speak of theological method may strike one as abstract and uninteresting, but in fact it is a concrete, informative investigation. Perhaps the very term "method" could be misleading, because it seems to suggest that the minister has been deliberate in reflecting upon his or her first principles and has consciously opted for one or another. This is typically not the case. A methodology critically reflected upon could rightly be called a bias or even an ideology, because it represents a deliberately chosen, default set of immovable assumptions about how decisions get made in ministry, how priorities are evaluated, what data are considered and why. A theological method, whether conscious or not, is essentially a judgment about the bedrock convictions and dispositions with which one enters into pastoral activities.

None of us can avoid making use of a method, nor should we; the worst possible kind of method is uncritical because it is not named. For example, whatever a person thinks of the various liberation theologies operative in the church, one of the contributions they make to critical thinking is that each is quite up-front in articulating a set of first principles that guide reflection and discussion. Usually those principles have to do with existential suffering or oppression in history. A method might be viewed as inadequate, but this judgment requires the critic to articulate his or her own method and why it is superior.

Today some use a category of methodologies that can be called "transcendental." These operate from a certain set of convictions about human anthropology, and there is more than one specific kind: the ontology of the human person, the universal structure of human cognition and understanding and so on. Great theologians like Karl Rahner, S.J., and Bernard Lonergan, S.J., identified their convictions up-front, but many pastoral ministers employ such presumptions without ever thinking about why or whether they are adequate.

Various fundamentalisms reflect yet another methodology that is increasingly found in all religions today. In general these appeal to a single source of authority without subjecting it to critical review. This could be the Bible, the Koran, the pope, the Code of Canon Law or some other chosen font of unquestionable truth. Within fundamentalism it suffices to simply appeal to a text or a teaching to solve ministerial questions.

Jesus never offered his disciples a tutorial on theological method, as far as we know, and honest attention to the texts of the New Testament can reasonably bear a plurality of methods. For example, Jesus sometimes responds to pastoral situations by quoting the Mosaic Law. At other times he warns against appealing to law and instead urges compassion. Those are different operative methods. Pastoral theologians need to make such judgments. In fact, throughout Catholic history a variety of methodologies has been employed, deliberately or otherwise, by theological and magisterial tradition.

Many patristic theologians believed, for example, that simply quoting the words of early Christian heroes was sufficient to resolve debates. Thomas Aquinas did this to a lesser extent, but added the scholastic predilection for appealing to natural law and the philosophy of Aristotle. He appealed to some different grounds for theological authority, and he attended to some questions more than others. The most credible expressions of doctrine and law and theological opinion are self-conscious about their underlying method. So much of the present rancor in Catholic polemics over doctrine and pastoral practice is not so much about faith in the true Christ or the true church as it is about methodology.

To speak of method in ministry is, in essence, to pose this question: What information, data and authority are most persuasive in rendering pastoral judgments in ministry, and why? To give attention to method can rescue us from the insoluble and (in my opinion) completely meaningless and often uncharitable reflex of many during the past two generations: to pit the "liberal" Catholics against the "conservative" or "orthodox" ones, whether lay or ordained. Those labels should never be used in ministry because they do not contribute anything toward understanding. They are political

tags, and ministry is not fundamentally about politics, in the modern sense of American polemics.

Challenged Narrative

My father was raised in a traditional Catholic home and school system during the early-mid-20th century. By traditional I mean there was an unchallenged assumption that Catholic doctrine was pretty much capable of accounting for the meta-narrative of the world, culture and people everywhere. In other words, the often messy and ambiguous experiences of people's lives "on the ground" were considered not so much to be challenges to the prevalent Catholic story as problems to be adjudicated by the Catholic story, expressed by the institution and magisterium.

ON THE WEB
Video reporting from Catholic News Service.
americamagazine.org/video

That is not a surprise. The theological-methodological landscape was controlled at that time—as it had been for centuries—by an approach now commonly called "neo-Thomism," a method neither blessed nor condemned by Scripture, since it did not appear until more than a millennium after Jesus' death and resurrection. Thomism was vigorously endorsed by popes and bishops, especially Pius IX, in the period following the French Revolution and the Enlightenment. But Thomism, like any other method before or since, is not the Gospel. It is a way of trying to understand the meaning of the Gospel through certain interpretive choices.

Thomism (and neo-Thomism) excels at abstraction. It follows the logic of intellectual propositions, like in Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*, and thus arrives at clear conceptual distinctions in doctrine that flow from various questions. For example: Is the existence of God self-evident?

For my father, an important tipping point came when, as an adult, he began to experience dissonance between the Catholic meta-narrative and his life experiences, particularly when a few of his friends' adult children revealed they had a same-sex attraction. This was disruptive of the neo-Thomist theological worldview he had previously assumed. Another example: my father encountered many Jewish people and at least a few atheists in his broad professional circle, and he had to determine how to respond to them. My father was in his 50s and 60s when most of this occurred, and it forced a methodological decision upon him—even though he could not have identified it as such. He had to decide: To what extent ought experience, even the emotional life, matter in thinking about God, church and salvation and in being present to people? To follow neo-Thomist training and instincts would lead toward one answer. To attend primarily to the experiences, emotions and claims of his friends and associates would lead in a different direction. The point here is not to determine the better choice, but to make clear that it is an unavoidable choice, based on different criteria for an adequate pastoral-theological methodology.

My father and mother made the choice to allow the claims of his friends and their children to help shape their view of God and God's will. They allowed concrete experiences to dialogue with and perhaps even relativize abstractions of Thomistic theology. This is a decision, albeit un-thematic, about theological methodology. It is a decision to question the presumptions of a meta-narrative. I think the priest thought my dad was "liberal" because my dad listened respectfully to others, took seriously their perspectives and perhaps allowed this to shape his own beliefs. This is not "liberal." It is merely giving a privileged place to dialogue in the development of theology.

Speaking more universally: To what extent—if at all—ought emotions, feelings, personal experience, context or the dissonant religious claims of others matter in shaping or establishing one's "first principles" for making theological and pastoral judgments? Under the rules of Thomism, none of these things count for very much—and perhaps they should not. This is not a conversation about "liberal" vs. "conservative" dispositions in pastoral theology. It is about which data should be primary, and why, for determining the most appropriate pastoral practice. This question allows for measured, intelligent and dispassionate theological conversation on the basis of merits of various claims, the kind of conversation that would be a major step forward. A

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Life Lessons

How I teach 'Humanae Vitae'

BY JAMES F. KEENAN

When I teach the papal encyclical "Humanae Vitae," published in 1968, I usually do so with a class of undergraduate students at Boston College. I teach it after studying with them five other noteworthy texts: the two creation accounts in Genesis, the teachings on marriage and sexuality by Paul and then by Augustine, and finally the papal encyclical, "Casti Connubii" (1930).

In many instances I try to teach them how to read and understand "Humanae Vitae" as a real, authoritative document. I lead them, as I do here, through the document, paragraph by paragraph (indicated by the numbers in parentheses).

First, I explain to them who wrote it and to whom. I have them see that the encyclical, that is, the papal letter, was written to brother bishops, clergy, Catholic laity and to all people of good will. I help them understand the different hierarchical levels of the audience. I also explain that the universal audience reflects the conviction of the pope and, indeed, the Catholic tradition, that such natural law teachings are not simply for Catholics but for all persons, since these teachings are from right reason.

I then try to help them see that Pope Paul VI wrote it and that, as a papal encyclical, it expresses the authoritative teaching from a pope. Without trying to get into exactly how authoritative a specific encyclical is, I try to highlight that in modern times the encyclical is a major mode of authoritative teaching that imposes objective claims on the consciences of all.

I then try to explain that "Humanae Vitae" was a document that was responding to the signs of the times; it was written in response to questions that were raised most notably by the invention and marketing of the birth control pill. The pill, like many other inventions, gave humanity the opportunity to dominate and rationally organize the forces of nature such that, we could now "extend this control over every aspect" of our own lives (No. 2). In one sense the document is specifically reflecting on birth control, but in a broader sense, the pope is asking the fundamental question of whether every invention is in itself worthy.

In teaching the encyclical I often find that students today do not appreciate the specific concern of the encyclical. They tend to think that the letter was about the birth control pill. I tell them it was about married people who were wondering about the use of contraception for the purpose of responsible parenting.

I then remind them that church teaching upholds marriage as the only legitimate context for sexual activity between a man and a woman. That is, I reiterate church teaching about the rightness of chastity and the wrongness of sex outside of marriage. Here, then, I note that the church was not considering whether birth control in any context was legitimate, but whether married couples alone could use it. No one, I remind them, was asking the more general question ("Can anyone use birth control?") simply because contraception could only have been entertained as morally legitimate in the context of marriage, where sexual intimacy is permissible. This helps open their eyes to the many, many references to "married love" made in the encyclical.

I also introduce them to an argument, the principle of totality, which was current in the 1960s. This principle follows from a metaphysical insight that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, and that therefore if a married couple is committed to having children, they do not need to leave each and every act of sexual love open to procreation. In other words, the principle of totality lets married couples believe that "procreative finality applies to the totality of the married life rather than to each single act" (No. 3). According to this argument, Christian marriage could be open to contraception in specific circumstances, but not in the marriage as a total reality. I alert them to the fact that later in the encyclical the pope rejects this use of the principle.

I note the authority of the church's competency to teach the natural law and that adherence to the law is required for our salvation (No. 4). I similarly note the commission that Pope John XXIII established for the study of the correct regulations of births and that Pope Paul VI confirmed and expanded that commission (No. 5). I add that my own life was affected by two members on that commission: John Ford, S.J., whose position at Weston Jesuit School of Theology I later held, and Josef Fuchs, S.J., with whom I did my dissertation. I describe the very different roles they ended up having as members of the commission.

I note that the commission produced a majority report influenced by Father Fuchs, among others, suggesting that married couples could regulate the ordering of the birth of

JAMES F. KEENAN, S.J., *Founders Professor of Theology at Boston College, is writing a book about university ethics (Rowman and Littlefield).*

their children through contraception, and a minority report influenced by Father Ford that contended against this position. I add that the pope saw in the disagreement the need to personally examine this question, particularly in light of the "moral doctrine on marriage constantly taught by the magisterium of the church" (No. 6). Having covered this background, I turn to the doctrinal principles of the encyclical.

I note that a new development emerges immediately in this section. The encyclical talks about sexual intimacy not as a right or a duty, nor as permissible or tolerable, as theologians and bishops had in earlier days. Nor does the document immediately turn to procreation as the primary end of marriage, as it did in "Casti Connubii." Rather it turns to "married love," which derives its nature and nobility from God who is love (No. 8, reiterated in No. 11). I have my students study how the encyclical specifically describes this love: friendship, faithful, exclusive and fecund (No. 9). I turn then to the question of the ordering of births in responsible parenthood. Here I focus on the notion of an objective moral order, a concept the students reasonably acknowledge and respect (No. 10).

Pope Paul VI at the Vatican.

Students today do not appreciate the specific concern of the encyclical. They tend to think that it was about the birth control pill.

I then have them study paragraph 11. Here I highlight the natural law's recognition of the "intrinsic relationship" between sexual activity and procreation. While the encyclical acknowledges that any natural infertility does not compromise the moral legitimacy of sexual intimacy in marriage, still, "each and every marital act must of necessity retain its intrinsic relationship to the procreation of human life" (No. 11). Here the encyclical instructs us on the twofold, inherent significance of marital, sexual activity as unitive and procreative. There are no moral grounds for breaking this bond (No. 12).

The magisterium then demonstrates the rationality of its argument. Just as a sexual act with an unwilling spouse is no true act of love, so too a conjugal act that "impairs the capacity to transmit life" "frustrates" God's designs and "contradicts the will of the Author of life" (No. 13). In highlighting the moral limits of our actions, the encyclical returns to an earlier observation: just as we do not have an unlimited domination of our lives, so too we cannot claim an unlimited dominion over our sexual faculties.

The document then specifically enunciates those activities that are by no means legitimate for the regulation of births. First, it names "the direct interruption of the generative process already begun," above all "direct abortion"; then it re-declares its opposition to direct sterilization. Finally, it declares: "Similarly excluded is any action which either before, at the moment of, or after sexual intercourse, is specifically intended to prevent procreation—whether as an end or as a means." It then names certain casuistic principles that cannot be invoked in order to legitimate deliberately contraceptive conjugal activity: lesser evil, totality and toleration (No. 14).

It does, however, acknowledge that it "does not consider at all illicit the use of those therapeutic means necessary to cure bodily diseases, even if a foreseeable impediment to procreation should result there from—provided such impediment is not directly intended for any motive" (No. 15). This paragraph highlights an important distinction, first articulated, as the encyclical notes, by Pope Pius XII.

As a theologian who has worked in the area of H.I.V./AIDS, trying to combat stigma, while advocating for proper

education and equal accessibility to treatment for all people, I have also espoused a comprehensive prevention strategy, which includes the use of the condom, not as a contraceptive, but as a preventive or prophylactic device. This certainly applies in the case of a discordant couple (where one spouse is H.I.V. positive and the other is not) who are infertile, whether by illness, accident or age. Certainly such a couple using a condom in their marital intimacy are not in any way using the device as a contraceptive. As such, it is not an immoral activity.

Paragraph 15, I think, may be applied to those discordant married couples who may be fertile. "Humanae Vitae" does not prohibit the discordant couple from engaging in sexual intimacy while using a condom solely to prevent the transmission of the virus and not in any deliberately contraceptive way.

I think it is worth noting that I have continuously upheld the teaching of "Humanae Vitae" and through it, I have also spoken, for 25 years, about the moral legitimacy of a comprehensive H.I.V. prevention strategy, that insists on marital fidelity, abstinence of sexual relations outside of marriage and the human dignity of the person, while including the use of the condom solely as a strategy to prevent disease in the context of the loving intimacy of discordant couples.

ON THE WEB
America's coverage of "Humanae Vitae."
americamagazine.org/vantagepoint

In Paragraph 16, the encyclical highlights that no couple needs to refrain from sexual intimacy at a time of infertility. It contrasts couples who rightly engage in sexual intimacy at times of infertility with those who "obstruct the natural development of the generative process."

The document moves to its conclusion with warnings about the social repercussions of legitimating contraceptive activity and reminding readers of the limits of human power (No. 17). It also acknowledges that its position toward the natural law is not to be its arbiter, but rather its "guardian and interpreter" (No. 18).

In its last section on pastoral directives, the encyclical urges all to appreciate the law of God (No. 20), the value of self-discipline (No. 21) and the relevant need to promote chastity. It appeals to public authorities to seek true solutions to overpopulation and to scientists to study "natural rhythms" so as to "succeed in determining a sufficiently secure basis for the chaste limitation of offspring" (No. 24). It positively admonishes couples struggling with the matter (No. 25) and exhorts priests (No. 28) and bishops (No. 30) to minister well and to uphold the constant teaching of the church.

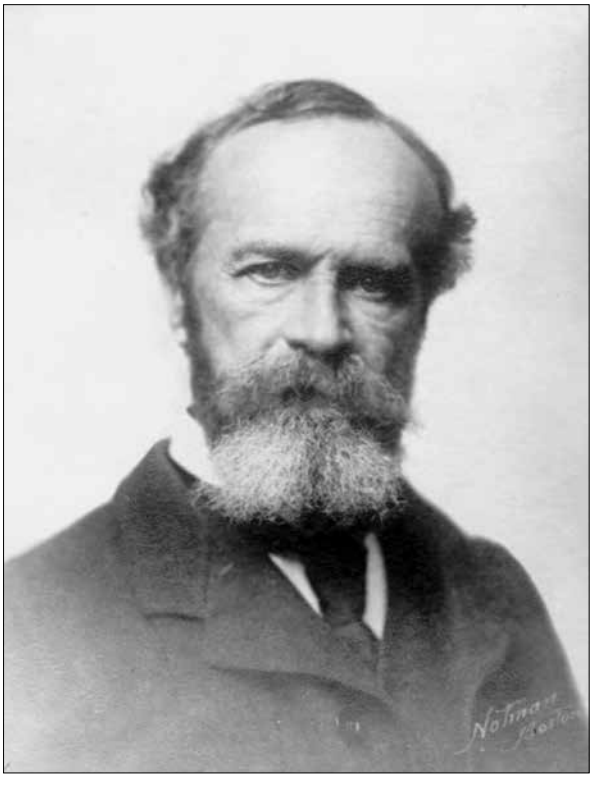
I find that following this close textual approach gives my students full appreciation of the teaching and the doctrine of "Humanae Vitae." A

Varieties of Insights

The wisdom of William James

BY ROBERT MORNEAU

Adam Lord Gifford (1820–87), a philosophic man with considerable wealth, bequeathed to four universities in Scotland an endowment to support work regarding natural theology. For the more than 100 years since that gift, noted thinkers and writers have been drawn to Scotland to share their research and insights. Many of those lectures have been published; a number of them are considered classics in their field.



One of those classics is *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*, a series of 20 lectures delivered by William James at Edinburgh in 1901–2. James (1842–1910), a noted philosopher and psychologist—and brother of the novelist Henry James and son of the theologian Henry James Sr.—taught at Harvard for many years. Central to his thought was pragmatism as a major criterion for truth. His fluency in languages and his breadth of knowledge were extensive.

In *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, James deals with topics like saintliness, mysticism, conversion, the divided self and the sick and the healthy-minded soul. Using passages (often extreme and eccentric) from individuals who had religious experiences and wrote about them, James analyzes how the human spirit attempts to engage in the mystery of divine transcendence.

As I read and reread this classic, I am amazed at both the depth of knowledge and style of James's writing, so many wonderful turns of phrases, so many wonderful insights not only into religious experiences but into life itself. Here are 10 insights from William James that have haunted me on my pilgrim journey. (Direct quotations from James are italicized.)

1. The human condition applies to everyone.

The sanest and best of us are of one clay with lunatics and prison inmates, and death finally runs the robustest of us down.

There is in life a universality; we are all in the same canoe. No one is exempt from weariness, from moral failure (sin), from psychological distress, from *acedia*, from physical, intellectual and spiritual limitations. We are all of the same clay. How that clay is shaped for good or ill depends upon our use of human freedom and the circumstances of our life and culture. But way down deep, we all, whether sane or crazy, whether free or incarcerated, will face diminishment and death. Compassion, therefore, seems to be the order of the day.

2. Our feelings affect our character.

Both thought and feeling are determinants of conduct, and the same conduct may be determined either by feeling or by thought. When we survey the whole field of religion, we find a great variety in the thoughts that have prevailed there; but the feelings on the one hand and the conduct on the other are almost always the same, for Stoic, Christian, and Buddhist saints are practically indistinguishable in their lives.

A great case can be made for orthodoxy, right thinking. The theater critic Walter Kerr reminds us: "An infection begun in the mind reaches every extremity." And so it does. But James's point is fascinating in his claim that among the really good people in history (called saints), their feelings and their behavior are essentially the same: lives of love, compassion and forgiveness would certainly be a partial description of their existence. But as for thought, how differently do believers and philosophers conceive of the world and, for that matter, truth. This being said, thoughts are tremendously important, as are feelings, in shaping our conduct. We might add to James's determinants the signif-

MOST REV. ROBERT MORNEAU, *auxiliary bishop emeritus of Green Bay, Wis., is the pastor of Resurrection Parish.*

icance of images and stories in shaping our inner life and our behavior.

3. Naturalism is not enough.

For naturalism, fed on recent cosmological speculations, mankind is in a position similar to that of a set of people living on a frozen lake surrounded by cliffs over which there is no escape, yet knowing that little by little the ice is melting, and the inevitable day drawing near when the last film of it will disappear, and to be drowned ignominiously will be the human creature's portion. The merrier the skating, the warmer and the more sparkling the sun by day, and the ruddier the bonfires at night, the more poignant the sadness with which one must take in the meaning of the total situation.

In Dante's *Inferno*, hell is not fire but ice, which makes any growth or motion impossible. For the naturalist, our world resembles a frozen lake that, though often offering experiences of merriment, nonetheless, in the end, offers only annihilation. No wonder that in the ancient tradition, melancholy was the eighth capital sin. Naturalism precludes a vision of a future life or, for that matter, any unseen reality that is the object of faith and worship. James captures brilliantly and with astounding emotion the plight of the human race devoid of any reality beyond time and space.

James captures brilliantly and with astounding emotion the plight of the human race devoid of any reality beyond time and space.

4. Saints are torchbearers, vivifiers and animators.

The saints, with their extravagance of human tenderness, are the great torch-bearers of this belief [sacredness of everyone], the tip of the wedge, the clearers of the darkness. Like the single drops which sparkle in the sun as they are flung far ahead of the advancing edge of a wave-crest or of a flood, they show the way and are forerunners. The world is not yet with them, so they often seem in the midst of the world's affairs to be preposterous. Yet they are impregnators of the world, vivifiers and animators of potentialities of goodness which but for them would lie forever dormant. It is not possible to be quite as mean as we naturally are, when they have passed before us. One fire kindles another; and without that overtrust in human worth which they show, the rest of us would lie in spiritual stagnancy.

Certain individuals, graced with self-forgetfulness and committed to doing good, are known as holy people or saints. Their passion is to express love, to shed light on the dark world, to give life to those around them. James speaks of saints as "authors, auctores, increasers, of goodness." Their radical conviction is that every person is sacred and merits not only respect but our active care. Because their lives are characterized by responsibility and generosity, they radiate a deep joy and peace. Would that all of us have the "overtrust" of the saints.

5. We need to address the big question.

What is human life's chief concern?

In the end, what really matters on this complex, messy human journey? The philosopher Paul Tillich used the expression "ultimate concern." William James provides a service simply by posing the question in such a succinct and direct manner. Our concerns in life are many: physical well-being, political stability, economic security, educational opportunities, enduring and endearing relationships. The list goes on. But as for putting first things first, what is it that resides on the top of our own agenda? Within the Christian tradition, the chief concern has been union with God and unity among ourselves. It was that unity and union that offered a modicum of peace and joy.

6. We are all susceptible to something.

Mankind is susceptible and suggestible in opposite directions, and the rivalry of influences is unsleeping.

Some individuals are gullible, ready to accept any idea or conduct of life. Without doubt, everyone is susceptible to a certain degree, everyone is suggestible up to a point. What we pay attention to shapes our days. What makes life and decision-making so difficult is that we are all surrounded by thousands of influences, whether from social media or the family system, from a third-grade teacher or a university professor, from the latest book we've read or the editorial in the morning paper. And, of course, these many voices often contradict one another. What's a person to do? Here enters the art of discernment, sorting out wherein the truth lies. Throughout his life James sought to ferret out the truth of life and human nature.

ON THE WEB
The Catholic Book Club discusses a history of the North American martyrs. americamagazine.org/cbc

7. We must make God our business.

We and God have business with each other; and in opening ourselves to his influence our deepest destiny is fulfilled.

Speaking of influences, how does the human spirit open itself to the divine with whom it has business? Does God speak to humankind and in what fashion? Some would posit that we encounter the divine in sacred writings (Scripture), others that God speaks through the community and daily experienc-

es. Still others maintain that it is in the inner recesses of our being, the domain of the unconscious (dreams, etc.) that God will make the divine presence felt. James is concerned about our "deepest destiny." If there are no transactions between God and the human spirit, the ballgame is over.

8. Appearances can be deceiving.
The roots of a man's virtue are inaccessible to us. No appearances whatever are infallible proofs of grace. Our practice is the only sure evidence, even to ourselves, that we are genuinely Christians.

One of the characteristics of our human spirit is its inaccessibility. We smile looking back on the 1930 detective story "The Shadow." "Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men? The Shadow knows!" This invisible crime fighter makes a claim that few psychologists or philosophers would have the arrogance to make. Appearances do not reveal all; our inner virtues and vices are buried deep. In his conviction that truth is found in pragmatism, James asserts that our deeds and conduct demonstrate whether our claim to be Christian is verified. Indeed, such is the position of the Last Judgment scene in Matthew's Gospel. The sheep and goats are separated according to what they did or did not do to others.

9. We must choose the keynote of our own lives.
No fact in human nature is more characteristic than its willingness to live on a chance. The existence of the chance makes the difference, as Edmund Gurney says, between a life of which the keynote is resignation and a life of which the keynote is hope.

Moses placed before his people a choice: life or death. We have before us resignation or hope, love or hate, joy or sadness. People of hope look to the future with a sense of possibility. They are ready to risk and take a chance without knowing for certain what awaits them. People of hope have an abiding sense of trust and have the ability to buy into a promise. The other option is not appealing: blind resignation. What will be will be. Emily Dickinson said that hope is "the thing with feathers." Woody Allen's book *Without Feathers* calls out to the resigned people, not the hopeful ones.

10. Laughter expands the soul.
Even the momentary expansion of the soul in laughter is, to however slight an extent, a religious exercise.

In her autobiography, *Story of a Soul,* St. Thérèse of Lisieux speaks of the contraction and expansion of her inner being. For her, God's grace caused expansion and great vitality, whereas contraction brought a narrowing of life and was not a sign of God's Spirit. If it is true that laughter (not ridicule or scorn) expands the soul and offers emancipation, then it might well be characterized as a religious experience. Even a diminished laughter, the smile, might well be in the same category and an instrument of grace. G. K. Chesterton writes in *The Everlasting Man:* "Alone among the animals, [man] is shaken with the beautiful madness called laughter; as if he had caught sight of some secret in the very shape of the universe hidden from the universe itself."

William James pondered not only the mystery of the human person but also the possibility that there is a God who was mindful of the creature so wondrously made. To reflect upon those ponderings might give us some insight into our own human nature and how God intervenes in human affairs. A

Truth and Truthiness

What Catholic catechists can learn from Stephen Colbert

BY PATRICK R. MANNING

Stephen Colbert has figured out how to reach people, and Catholic educators should take notice. Since the debut of his late-night satirical news show, "The Colbert Report," in 2005, Colbert has gained immense popularity. Each night his program opens to the thunderous applause and chanting of a packed studio audience. The show has garnered many awards, including two primetime Emmys, several additional nominations and the honor of coining the Merriam-Webster word of the year for 2006: *truthiness*.

Yet Mr. Colbert's influence goes beyond introducing new vocabulary into American culture. In an article in The New York Times in 2012, Charles McGrath observed that Colbert's conservative, blowhard persona was beginning to transgress the bounds of his television studio and meddle in the real world. Fans of the show do not just tune in for a laugh, turn off the TV set at show's end and forget about it. They take action based on what they hear, and our culture has been changed as a result.

As members of a church tasked with reaching out to the world in a new evangelization, teachers of the Catholic faith should be intrigued by the way Stephen Colbert has captivated his audience. What might we do to be as effective in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ as Colbert has been in spreading the gospel of Stephen? Instead of spying on the Sunday school classroom where Mr. Colbert has served as a Catholic catechist, I suggest attending to the place where he is most in his element—on air.

Stephen Colbert's meteoric rise to fame has been aided by his charismatic personality, improv comedy training and a talented team of writers—advantages the average catechist cannot count on. Yet there is something more basic and replicable underlying his success. Indeed, I have come to the rather surprising conclusion that he embodies (unintention-

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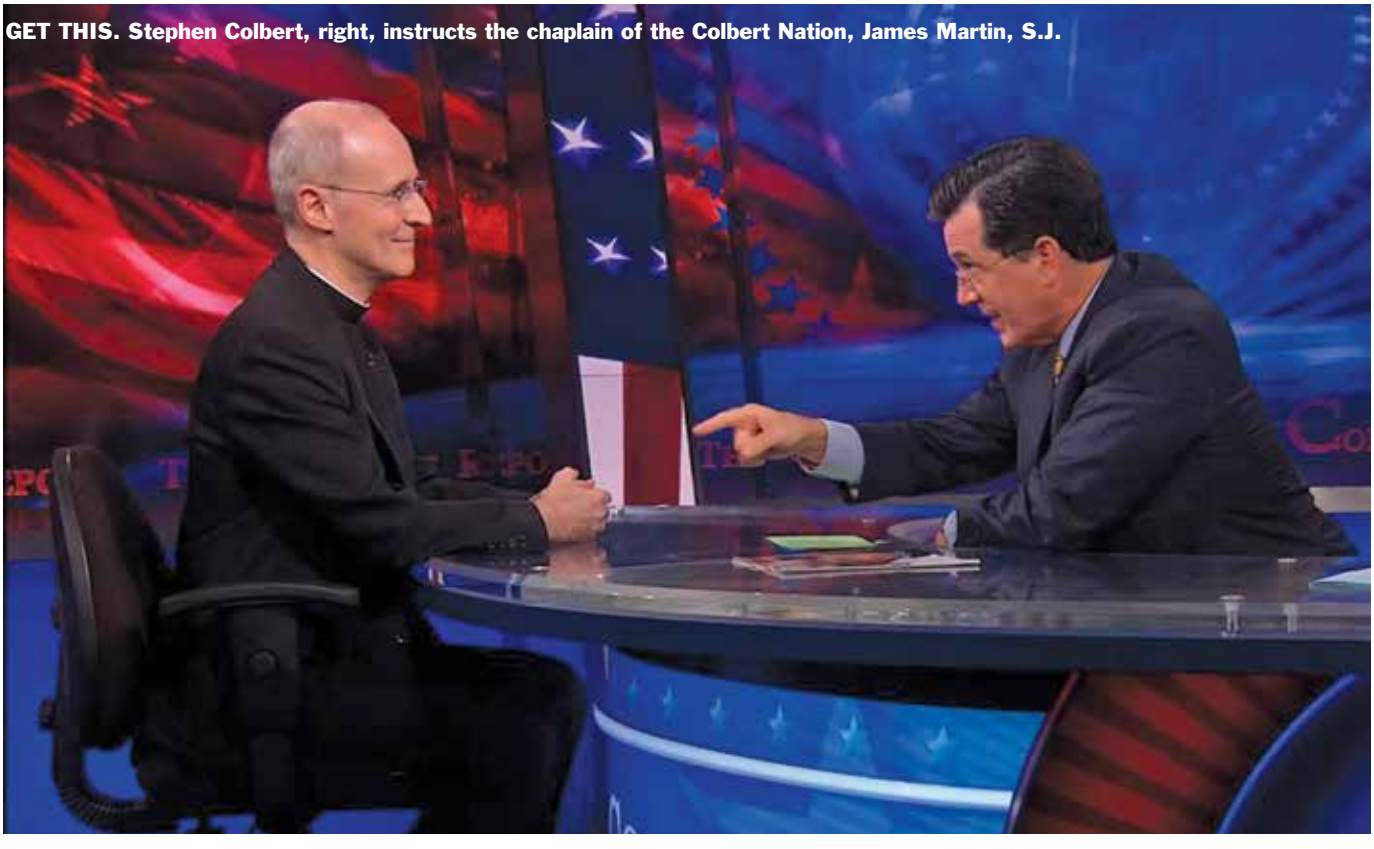


GET THIS. Stephen Colbert, right, instructs the chaplain of the Colbert Nation, James Martin, S.J.

PHOTO: THE COLBERT REPOT/COMEDY CENTRAL

ally, no doubt) a formula for effective catechesis proffered by St. Augustine of Hippo in the fourth and fifth centuries: delight, instruct and persuade.

The Entertainer

First, Augustine tells catechists in *On Christian Doctrine* that they must delight their audience: "A hearer must be delighted, so that he can be gripped and made to listen." This church father knew that it matters little whether one speaks the truth if one's audience is not interested enough to pay attention. A boring presentation makes an audience less receptive and less likely to return, while a pleasing presentation renders an audience eager to listen and even to come back for more. In short, style makes a difference.

Augustine practiced what he preached. A classically trained orator, his golden tongue was known to move his audiences to tears or applause or both. People today are at least as hungry for entertainment as they were in Augustine's time, but what passes for delightful changes with the times. People may no longer flock to public squares to hear great orators, but millions are tuning in to "The Colbert Report" every night, and it is not difficult to understand why. Stephen Colbert is utterly delightful.

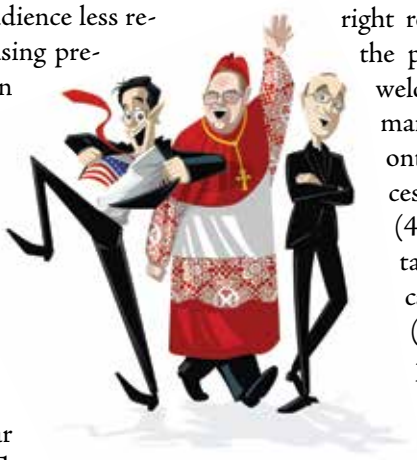
With impeccable wit and timing, he ridicules politicians' foibles and blunders, extols his own virtues and revels in consumerist decadence and pop culture fads, all with a tongue-in-cheek, wink-of-the-eye demeanor that keeps his audience in hysterics. If the torrent of rapid-fire jokes were not enough to keep viewers engaged, Colbert varies his delivery with an ever-expanding arsenal of recurring segments. These include the "ThreatDown" in which he identifies the newest threats to the American public (frequently including bears and robots) and "The Word," in which his discussion of current events is punctuated by the periodic appearance of punny asides on the screen.

In one session of "The Word," Colbert reported on an Iowa hospital's deportation of two comatose immigrant workers without any prompting from the government. Following a clip from the local news, Colbert quipped sarcastically: "Deported is such a harsh word. The hospital simply moved them to the intensive we-don't-care unit." Meanwhile, "The I. Don't C. U." flashes on the screen above the host's shoulder.

Colbert appears to have found the sweet spot for modern audiences with his blend of humor and a barrage of media-enhanced segments. Fortunately, these modes of expression can just as well serve as tools for evangelization as for political satire. Catechists would do well to avail themselves of whatever opportunities current popular culture presents for drawing people into the Catholic faith.

Instruction Matters

Augustine also emphasized the importance of instructing the audience. Though an engaging style is helpful for gaining and holding an audience's attention, a Christian teacher's primary aim is not to entertain but rather to hand on God's saving truth. The best method of teaching is not necessarily the most amusing but rather "one by which the listener hears the truth and understands what he hears." In this regard, too, Colbert has proven himself a master.



Indeed, the show's reporting can be downright revelatory. During one episode prior to the presidential election in 2012, Colbert welcomed Trevor Potter, the former chairman of the Federal Election Committee, onto the show. Talking through the process for setting up Colbert's own 501(c)(4) shell corporation, the two "incidentally" revealed the fact that corporations can donate unlimited funds to 501(c)(4)'s, which can then be transferred to political action committees, or super PACs, that support political candidates without disclosing the original donors. "What is the difference between that and money laundering?" Colbert asked Potter. Potter's response: "It's hard to say."

Jesus did not teach trivia. He taught "words of eternal life" (Jn 6:68) that transform his followers and lead to salvation. The most important indicator of the effectiveness of Catholic catechesis will be the extent to which our students not only know the truth God has revealed but also "do the truth in love." One can hardly expect students to live out a faith whose content they neither know nor understand. Any teachers who neglect God's revealed truth in their lessons are building houses upon sand.

The Art of Persuasion

Finally, Augustine underscores the need to persuade one's audience. Essential though knowledge is, teaching falls short if students' learning does not affect their living. This is eminently true in the case of Christian teaching, whose definitive aim is a lived relationship with Christ. Developing such a relationship requires learners to internalize the truth they have learned and make a personal decision for Christ. For, as Augustine notes, the person who still needs to be enticed with delightful speech to do the right thing has not yet fully grasped the meaning of Christ's truth.

What is perhaps most impressive and even a little uncanny about Colbert is his ability to regularly persuade his vast audience to take action. Despite the fact that the Colber Report is a comedy show, it is evident in exchanges like the one above with Potter on the show, and even more in

ART FOR THE "CARDINAL AND COLBERT" EVENT AT FORDHAM UNIVERSITY, SEPT. 14, 2012. STEPHEN COLBERT, CARDINAL DOLAN AND JAMES MARTIN, S.J. CNS ARTWORK/COURTESY TIM LUECKE

his testimony about migrant worker rights before a House Judiciary subcommittee in 2008, that this fake-news host intends for his audience to take action in the real word on the information he presents. When Colbert wants his viewers to do something, he does not settle for a vague, innocuous suggestion. He tells them explicitly what ought to be done…and they do it.

In 2006, for example, Colbert proclaimed facetiously from his desktop pulpit that, thanks to Wikipedia, if enough people agree on something, it becomes true. To prove his point, he urged viewers to modify the Wikipedia article on elephants to say, "Elephant population in Africa has tripled over the past six months." The response was so immediate and overwhelming that Wikipedia had to restrict editing of the page to prevent further changes.

ON THE WEB
Clips from
"The Colbert Report."
americamagazine.org/video

Catholic catechesis has been conspicuously less effective in this regard, so much so that the Second Vatican Council, in the "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," lamented the "split between the faith which many profess and their daily lives" as one of the most serious problems of our age. It is not enough to teach students what Jesus and his church teach or even what that teaching has to do with their lives. Catechists need to convince them that Jesus is worth loving and the way of life to which he calls us is worth living. And there is no argument more convincing than the witness of the teacher's own lived faith. By offering such a model of discipleship and bringing students' existential questions and concerns into dialogue with church teaching, catechists provide them with the roadmap they need to translate their learning into their daily lives.

So how has Colbert been so effective in reaching his audience? How might Catholic catechists do likewise? In a word, by appealing to the whole person. When Jesus invited us to follow him, he urged us to do so with nothing less than our full selves. He commanded, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mk 12:30; cf. Lk 10:27). If we want our students to seek Christ with their whole selves, we must engage them in the fullness of their being—heart, mind and will.

St. Augustine long ago offered a formula for doing just this: delight the heart, instruct the mind, persuade the will. Stephen Colbert has demonstrated that this formula is still effective in our own time. If Catholic catechists were to apply the lessons of Colbert's success to their own work of evangelization, our country might very well become not just a "Colbert Nation" but a people of God.

CROWD SOURCING. Sunday service at the 7,000-seat Willow Creek Community in South Barrington, Ill.

PHOTO: REUTERS/JOHN GRESS

Worship at Willow Creek

Lessons from a megachurch

BY LAURIE ZILIAK

My brother is what we used to call a fallen-away Catholic. After years of searching as an adult, he found a church home that is truly life-giving to him. He now belongs to an evangelical megachurch located in the suburbs of Chicago that is home to more than 24,000 worshipers each weekend. The church, Willow Creek, was founded in 1975 and continues to serve as a model and mentor for the evangelical movement today.

For our family, my brother's denominational choice is not a tragedy comparable to what happened when my grandmother's sister married a Lutheran in the 1940s. My grandmother and her siblings were not allowed to go to their baby sister's wedding nor have any contact with her. In the "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church," the Second Vatican Council opened the door for those outside the Catholic Church. "Many elements of sanctification and of truth," the council teaches, "are found outside [its] visible confines" (No. 8). I still remember the joy on my grandmother's face when she spoke of the reunion with her sister almost 40 years after the wedding.

My brother's embrace of a different tradition, then, is not the challenge it once might have been. The real struggle is that his new home is a church that was an object of scorn and ridicule in our Catholic community for our entire youth. As Willow Creek took root and blossomed, much criticism was leveled by those among the "faithful" in our community for its use of rock bands and entertainment-like worship. It took a while for my brother to become comfortable in this new skin; and to this day, he is almost apologetic when he discusses his faith life with us.

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We want to support our brother, so for the past few years our visits with him have included attending Willow Creek (often on Saturday evening, so we can attend Mass on Sunday morning). As I attend these worship services, I make the usual observations of one who has been steeped in Catholic tradition for many years. I note the absence of ritual and sacramentality and identify significant theological differences. Most striking is the place and understanding of community in worship. Ritual does not seem to have a presence at Willow Creek. Unlike the Catholic tradition, there is no shared understanding or consistent practice for when the assembly sits and stands. The structure of worship varies greatly from week to week. While many are gathered in a large auditorium, the prayers and music focus attention on the individual's relationship with God. As I experience worship at Willow Creek, I cannot help but reflect on the very communal nature of Catholic liturgy.

In spite of these significant differences, I have gained a growing appreciation for the worship practices of megachurches like Willow Creek. Without changing our tradition or theology, Catholics could learn a lot from evangelical churches, especially regarding liturgical practice.

Rethinking Participation

Most liturgically minded Catholics are well aware of the call of the "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy," which insists that "all the faithful should be led to that full, conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy" (No. 14). Indeed, we are not to be observers, but to participate in worship by virtue of our baptism. As the "summit" and the "font" of the church's activity, liturgy is the avenue in which "all...come together to praise God" (No. 10). Participation is central to every liturgical celebration.

"Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship," a document released by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2007, further explores the nature of participation, insisting that it must be both internal and external. Drawing on the postconciliar "Instruction on Music in the Liturgy," the bishops write that internal participation involves listening attentively so that all may "unite themselves interiorly" to the actions, proclamations or music that they may reflect on the divine. Internal participation, then, is, effectively, "interior listening" or "meditative quiet."

What if we were to understand internal participation a little differently? Consider a typical scene at Willow Creek. A large auditorium is filled with thousands of people. Many have their hands in the air and are swaying to music, their body language clearly indicating that they have been moved. Others have their arms around loved ones in a way that indicates this is a powerful, shared moment. Still others are in their seats, eyes closed, lost in prayer. The internal engagement is visible to the naked eye and takes a variety of forms.

A traditional hymn interpreted by a praise band can be a powerful moment of prayer.

What if we, as Catholics, were to allow for a diversity of internal participation? How might our assemblies engage in worship differently? At the very least, watching these intense displays of internal participation leads one to ask if our Catholic assemblies are simply going through the motions. How often are we truly being transformed through our participation in such a way that we cannot help moving in response?

We can learn from Willow Creek in the area of external participation as well. Take a traditional hymn. Perhaps the words are very appropriate for the Gospel, and the hymn would be a good choice for a particular Sunday. How shall we best accompany our assembly? Piano? Organ? Brass instruments? Perhaps we should try something different, like a praise band. A praise band uses modern instrumentation like the electric guitar, bass, keyboard and drums to lead music for worship.

A traditional hymn interpreted by a praise band can be a powerful moment of prayer. A praise band can preserve the integrity of the hymn but give it a very different sound—one that is fuller and more modern. Successful implementation requires skill and practice, but when done right can truly promote the participation we strive for each week. At Willow Creek, we sang a Protestant hymn ("Take my life and let it be consecrated Lord to Thee...") and were asked to do a verse unaccompanied. In a large auditorium with thousands of voices singing, it certainly sounded like a significant moment of "full, conscious and active participation."

Everyday Music

Modern music is also incorporated into the services at Willow Creek. "How did you do with that Hosanna song?" my brother asked after one service. "It took me a while to get it, but I finally caught on," I responded. "Yes," he said, "we all know it because it's on the radio all the time."

It took me a while to "get it" because the melody was syncopated, with very few long notes. The melody was a series of shorter notes that jumped around on the off beats. And yet, the community sang with one strong voice. They clearly

knew the song, and their strength of participation allowed my family to learn the music and join in.

Our local Catholic assembly still struggles with Steve Angrisano's "My Soul Is Thirsting," largely because the melody is too syncopated. The congregation throws off the cantor by singing the refrain "straight" while the cantor tries to honor the original rhythm, and what should be a communal proclamation of the Scripture becomes an awkward and sometimes frustrating moment.

As I recalled these two experiences, some questions came to mind: Do I know any radio stations that play music by David Haas or Marty Haugen? How about Tony Alonso or Lori True? How is the music we use at liturgy truly connected to our daily lives? Do we hear and sing it only on Sundays? How different might our liturgical experience be if our liturgical music were part of our everyday experience?

I wonder if this is the crux of the struggle many parishes and ministries face regarding music. People want to sing music at Mass that is part of their lives beyond Sunday. In my small town, I cannot find Catholic liturgical music on the dial, but can easily locate Christian rock on multiple stations. Some of the older generations lament that our youth do not know the old hymns and that we should make sure they learn them. Yet our young people do not seem to have much interest in doing so. Perhaps Catholics should consider using music that speaks to multiple generations and to all aspects of our lives, inviting deeper participation, both internal and external.

Entertainment or Prayer?

The physical environment of Willow Creek helps facilitate participation in surprising ways. The church consists of a huge auditorium (their word choice, not mine) that seats thousands. Front and center is a large stage set with instruments for a rock band and a podium and other background "scenery," which is changed periodically to fit the worship service. A 25-foot screen sits in the middle of the stage, flanked by two screens of the same size, reminiscent of the kind seen at a rock concert. Above the main stage, directly in front of the balcony seating, are four smaller screens.

As worshipers are gathering, the screens display a variety of images, alternating between community announcements and quotations, biblical and otherwise (I have seen the words of St. Francis of Assisi many times), immediately focusing the congregation's attention and drawing worshipers in. As the service begins, so does the live feed, and no matter where one is sitting, worshipers feel like they are in the midst of the action. Facial expressions of the band and speakers are crystal clear. The huge screens serve to draw each individual in and make a very big church feel truly intimate.

The screens also convey information to help worshipers participate. As the live feed of the band is projected, so are the lyrics to the music, enabling all to join in. As the speaker quotes a Bible verse, the citation and the text appear on the screens, allowing one to hear and digest the text. There are no awkward or disruptive announcements about where to find the gathering song. There are no hymnals or worship guides to pick up and thumb through. Everything is right in front of the assembly, and the screens help facilitate a seamless transition from one part of the service to the next.

The sound system also serves to facilitate prayer. The words and music are very clear, but never overwhelming. According to Willow Creek publicity material, the sound system was "designed to reflect the sound of the congregation singing while absorbing other audio from the sound system, allowing for better acoustics and worship experiences."

At first glance, the megachurch appears to be simply mega-entertainment, but Willow Creek has embraced the benefits and possibilities of modern technology and uses them in the service of prayer. Instead of rejecting technical innovations, Willow Creek employs modern means to facilitate the activity and participation of the gathered community. As I reflect back on our visits, I am struck by how rarely our attention was diverted from the service by logistical interruptions.

The Catholic Church can learn much from the success of the many megachurches in our country today. Any community that is able to draw in 24,000 worshipers in a single weekend is clearly doing something right. Yes, there are significant theological and liturgical differences that cannot and, indeed, should not be overlooked. It is evident, though, that Willow Creek has been successful in engaging their worshiping community. Perhaps Catholics can learn from their success. A

A Feathered Thing

On the resiliency of hope

BY ROBERT P. MALONEY

"I guess we never see the plan," Kay said to me with resignation. I sensed no resentment in her voice; on the contrary, I heard undertones of confidence. She was sitting across from me at the breakfast table after Mass. I had just preached on our being God's "handiwork" (Eph 2:10) and had suggested the image of God as a sculptor working in our lives like Donatello, Michelangelo or Bernini, chipping away at a block of marble with a plan in mind that only he can see, wielding hammer and chisel, and then sanding, polishing and refining until the final product was a thing of beauty.

Kay was alone in life. Her two sons died when they were in their 20s. Her daughter passed on soon afterward, succumbing to cancer prematurely. A few years later, her husband went into the hospital for a routine operation on his knee and died when a blood clot hit his heart. Although she rarely spoke about what she believed, I sensed that she had a quiet, enduring hope in the hidden plan of God. As I listened to her across the table, I thought of Emily Dickinson's words:

Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune—without the words—
And never stops at all.

So many of life's events conspire to beat hope down. But perched in the soul of the stalwart, it chants its tune persistently. Sometimes it expresses itself in the simplest ways. Over the years several incidents have made me ponder the resiliency of hope.

The first occurred almost two decades ago in China. One evening I received precise instructions: At 4 a.m. I was to leave the hotel where I was staying. Once outside I was to turn right and follow, at a distance of 50 feet, a woman who would guide me through dark streets to the Mass I was to celebrate. I followed her for about 15 minutes. Then, suddenly, I saw a door open, and my guide slipped inside quickly. When I arrived at the same spot, the door opened, again and I entered. We climbed four flights of stairs silently and then knocked gently on a door. After a pause, someone opened the door and we went into a tiny attic. There, hidden away in mainland China, I celebrated Mass with 14 elderly members of the Daughters of Charity. When someone tapped on the door just after Mass began, everyone froze with tension for fear that the police were arriving, but it was another sister.

These Chinese nuns have been cut off from their community for 45 years. That day they renewed their vows in this candle-lit attic with great emotion; this was the first time they were gathered together like this since 1949. They had remained faithful, in hiding, all those years. They were very poor. They prayed daily in private and went out almost every day to serve the needy. One told me that in 1950 she had been questioned for seven days and seven nights without rest, her interrogators taking turns, and was then thrown in prison for 30 years.

During my journey, I found 70 elderly Daughters of Charity in mainland China. They had been living underground, in hope, for decades. Though I offered them financial help, they refused. They told me that they had all they needed and radiated confidence in the transforming power of the Gospel.

The second incident occurred much closer to home. About eight years ago, my niece lost her 2-year-old baby, Maeve. Hundreds of people came to the wake. After Maeve's coffin was closed, someone overheard her brothers and sisters talking. Her littlest brother said, "Is she playing inside that box?" His older sister replied, "No; Mama says she's playing in heaven."

Maeve never learned to walk, nor did she ever speak. The handicap with which she was born impeded her growth from the start and then abruptly stole her life away. But she lived and died evoking love and radiating it back. Her father said at her funeral, "Every time you saw her, you wanted to kiss her."

When we witness death, we often ask why; all the more so with a child. Why was Maeve born with disabilities? Why did she die long before those who loved her and nourished her? Sometimes in anger we blame God and ask, How can a good God let a child like Maeve die? Questions like this are perennial. Thomas Gray lamented:

Full many a gem of purest ray serene

ROBERT P. MALONEY, C.M., *former superior general of the Congregation of the Mission, serves as administrator for Dream, a joint project of the Community of Sant'Egidio and the Daughters of Charity for combating AIDS in Africa.*

The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear.
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,/
And waste its sweetness on the des ert air.

We have no ready answers to such complaints, only a persistent hope that points us beyond our grief. A feathered thing perches in our souls, singing out.

Hope moves us to ask not just why Maeve died, but why she was born in the first place. Had she not been born, would her mother and father and brothers and sisters have ever loved as they learned to love during the two years of Maeve's life? Would they ever have learned to give as they gave and to pray as they prayed? If heaven is union with those whom we love, then was Maeve's presence in her family its foretaste? Maeve reminded us that the communion of saints is a communion of human imperfection; one of its building blocks is what we make of our own weakness and the weakness of those who surround us. A grieving woman, who had just lost a child, once wrote: "Some may wonder why, after my experience, I still make the painful effort to believe. I can only respond that, despite my doubts, having seen the breathtaking perfection of my daughter's peaceful face, I find it impossible to believe that God was not there."

ART: DAN SALAMIDA

The third incident occurred recently. I was giving a talk about an AIDS project that I work with in Africa. In my introduction, I told the audience that 22.9 million people in sub-Saharan Africa were living with AIDS and that only a small fraction of them would receive the type of treatment that is now available in the United States and Western Europe. So, millions would die, even though, with well-monitored drug therapy, they could have lived a normal life span. After my talk a priest in the audience came up to me, shaking his head, and said, "It's hopeless."

But that evening I found myself reflecting on the thousands of people who are dedicating their lives to AIDS care in Africa. The feathered thing perched in their souls resists the temptation to quit. It sings a song that cannot be silenced. I thought of the lovely image of hope attributed to Augustine: "Hope has two beautiful daughters. Their names are Anger and Courage: anger at the way things are, and courage to work to change them." Anger, Hope's first daughter, reacts spontaneously in the face of evil, refusing to accept unjust social and economic structures that deprive the poor of life: unjust laws, power-based economic relationships, inequitable treaties, artificial boundaries, oppressive or corrupt governments and numerous other subtle obstacles to harmonious societal relationships. Then Hope's second daughter, Courage, standing at Anger's side and singing out persistently, searches for ways "to strive, to seek, to find and not to yield," as Tennyson put it.

One of the world's most persistent nighttime singers is the nightingale, a small, plain brown bird with a reddish tail. It chants on and on with remarkable beauty and endurance. Keats immortalized the hope it proclaims:

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown.

These days Latin American theologians speak of *la esperanza transformadora*, "transforming hope." Without it life is pessimistic; little movement toward change takes place. But when transforming hope resides in a person, it generates the energy we call anger and initiates creative action. Perched in the soul, it sings its song persistently. It cannot be dissuaded.

Christian hope is both realistic and optimistic. It is realistic because it recognizes life's tragedies: sickness, sin, infidelity, suffering, natural calamities, violence, war, death. But it is optimistic because it trusts in a new heaven and a new earth, where sin and death are vanquished. Believing in the words of the Creed, on which we rarely reflect, it looks forward to "the resurrection of the body" and "the life of the world to come."

In the midst of one of the Czech Republic's most difficult times, Václav Havel stated: "Either we have hope within us or we don't. It is a dimension of the soul…. Hope in this deep and powerful sense is the ability to work for something because it is good, not just because it stands a chance to succeed…. It is this hope, above all, that gives us the strength to live and continually to try new things, even in conditions that seem as hopeless as ours do here and now." That kind of hope is the feathered thing that perches in the soul—and enables our hearts to soar. A

Postmodern Catholicism

There it was again.

I was concelebrating at a funeral Mass for a deceased Jesuit. The homilist praised the deceased for having "built a bridge between postmodern culture and the church."

I was sitting in a tour bus in Miami. The tour guide asked us to look to our left at the Art Deco buildings in South Beach and then to our right at a new set of postmodern office buildings. I asked her what made the buildings postmodern. She said she didn't know; the term was just part of the script.

In a review of my play, "Veiled," a critic claimed that "Conley was trying to be postmodern but is barely premodern." I'm still baffled.

When ecclesiastics exhort us to engage in the new evangelization, they almost inevitably urge us to evangelize postmodern culture, but it remains unclear just what we are supposed to evangelize.

Among the theorists of postmodernity, the French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard (1924–98) might be the most helpful in this regard. Not only does he indicate how the culture we live in differs from the one in which we began the 20th century; he can help us to identify postmodern traits of contemporary Catholicism itself as we attempt to proclaim the Gospel in a society which seems resistant to it.

According to Lyotard, one of the striking traits of postmodernity is the collapse of the great narratives that had dominated an earlier modernity. Rooted in the Enlightenment, these narratives insisted that humanity had finally come of age and was now advancing toward a new universal truth and happiness, thanks to the linear conquests of science and philosophically trained reason. Marxism and its political expression, Communism, were particularly powerful representatives of a crusading modernity convinced that truth could be contained within one all-inclusive system. The experience of world wars and totalitarian regimes, however, has destroyed the appeal of the old modern systems. The truth uncovered in the postmodern moment will be more local and tentative. Humility has returned as a noetic virtue.

Catholicism has also undergone a certain postmodern unhinging. On the eve of the Second Vatican Council, the neo-Thomism constructed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries still stood in place. In this ambitious philosophical system, every branch of philosophy and every philosophical thesis found a perfect integration and harmonious unity in the system's architectonic structure. One of the great challenges to the dominant system was the *nouvelle théologie*, launched in France in the 1940s. At first glance, a "return to sources" hardly seems subversive. But a study of the sources quickly revealed that Irenaeus's account of the fall differed from Augustine's and that Anselm's theory of the atonement clashed with the Council of Trent's. The Cartesianized Thomism of the seminary manuals was no longer the master reference. Difference, discontinuity and contradiction replaced the unity and harmony of an earlier triumphal system that had carefully hidden its patches and gaps.

Even Pope John Paul II had his postmodern moments. In his encyclical "Fides et Ratio" (1998), the cross stands in judgment on all attempts to construct philosophical systems. "The crucified Son of God is the historic event upon which every attempt of the mind to construct an adequate explanation of the meaning of existence upon merely human argumentation comes to grief. The true keypoint, which challenges every philosophy, is Jesus Christ's death on the cross. It is here that every attempt to reduce the Father's saving plan to purely human logic is doomed to failure."

The true keypoint is Jesus Christ's death on the cross.

The work of philosophical reflection continues vigorously in the church, but it now stands more clearly under the judgment of the cross's sign of contradiction, which in its triumphant suffering exposes the pretentions of our threadbare metaphysical systems.

At its worst, the postmodern moment is a simple reversion to modernity at its most banal: subjectivism ("Here's my story; this is my truth; accept it") and relativism ("This is our story; this is our truth; period"). Such stances of sloth simply exclude critique, repentance and conversion. Doctrine becomes a matter of taste rather than of truth. But in its better episodes, the postmodern moment can point to the religious truth found in cacophony rather than harmony, the unresolved rather than the certain, the jagged rather than the perfect.

JOHN J. CONLEY

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FILM | JOHN ANDERSON

‘AMERICAN’ MADE

David Russell’s scam-tastic journey into this bonko nation

Very few of the many, many movies with “American” in their titles—“Pie,” “Graffiti,” “Psycho,” “Wedding,” “Beauty” and “Werewolf in London” are a few that come to mind—were christened that way for reasons deeply philosophical. Or psychological. Or cosmological. In most cases, the motive was more likely alphabetical. But **American Hustle** is a story that could only happen here. In fact, in a lot of ways, it’s what we’re all about.

The film is the latest from the increasingly virtuosic director David O. Russell, who just a year ago was monopolizing the movie conversation with “Silver Linings Playbook,” a comedy about how love cures mental illness—something a lot of people didn’t seem to notice because the performances were so sound, funny and touching. “Hustle” is not about how love makes your brain better. But it is about perception, and it puts a new spin on the American dream of reinvention—something that has been carried through our national DNA via Jay Gatsby, Charles Foster Kane, Amy Semple MacPherson and Richard Nixon. And no, there’s no point differentiating between the fictional and nonfictional, because in America—and “Hustle”—the point is often that there is no difference at all.

Jennifer Lawrence

The film is also what I would like to call a scam-edy, a mix of jocularity and plot twists, of the type that has powered starry Hollywood vehicles like “The Sting,” movies in which the acting, characters and glamorous patina are so distracting that viewers won’t notice till the end—if they even care—that they’ve had their reality hijacked by a brilliantly constructed con game *about* a brilliantly constructed con game.

That con game is not Abscam, although the dubiously constructed F.B.I. sting operation of the late 1970s and early ’80s provides the skeletal structure for Russell’s movie. He is not religious about it (“Some of this actually happened,” reads the film’s opening title), but the marginal fact-basedness of “American Hustle” does allow him to get away with a lot of fantastic events and more fantastic characters.

Chief among them is Irving Rosenfeld (Christian Bale), the owner of an elaborate, architecturally precarious comb-over (its preparation provides the film’s opening movement, and metaphor) and a paragon of reinvention. Having watched as a child while his father was ruined in business, he has grown up determined never to be a sucker or to give one an even break. He finds his soul mate in Sydney Prosser (Amy Adams), an equally self-made scam artist who shares Irving’s instincts and passions. They bond over Duke Ellington’s 1956 Newport recording of “Jeep’s Blues,” a celebrated performance that mixes soulfulness, sentimentality and a certain blues-based scam artistry by sax man Johnny Hodges in the same precariously balanced way that defines Sydney and Irving: They love each other, but they’re also on the make. And they’re very good.

They’re so good, in fact, that the idea that they could ever get caught requires the biggest suspension of disbelief the viewer has to make. Erecting their phony bank-loan operation on the strength of Irving’s patter and Sydney’s allure—she becomes Lady Edith Greensley, who has “banking connections in London”—they never overreach, unlike Richie DiMaso (Bradley Cooper), an overly ambitious F.B.I. agent who seems to find them out only because he has so little to do and so little direction from his superiors (played with aplomb by Louis C. K. and Alessandro Nivola, who seems to be channeling Christopher Walken). Richie wants to make a name for himself and cuts a deal with Irving: Take down four big-

PHOTOS ON PAGES 36 AND 37.

BOOGIE FRIGHTS. Amy Adams, Bradley Cooper, Jeremy Renner, Christian Bale and Jennifer Lawrence in "American Hustle."

wigs and Sydney won't go to prison. Thus Abscam is born and "American Hustle" set on its rollercoaster track.

Did we mention Irving was married? Yes, to the delightfully unstable Rosalyn (Jennifer Lawrence), a woman whose pretzel logic, wonderfully half-baked by Russell and his co-writer Eric Singer, makes her the biggest con artist in the movie. She's the type who intimidates with unpredictability, inappropriate remarks and a proclivity for setting the kitchen on fire. Irving would seem to be immune to sentiment, but that's part of the con that is his life. He's adopted Rosalyn's son, loves him and allows his wife to use the child as a bludgeon and handcuffs. According to Ms. Lawrence herself, who will surely be nominated for another Oscar this season (she won last time for "Silver Linings Playbook"), Rosalyn does awful things for the best reasons: To keep her marriage together, she'll make Irving miserable and rationalize it till it works.

He, meanwhile, is constructing a scheme by which Richie can take down some congressmen, a con involving New Jersey's freshly minted gambling laws, the as-yet-unrestored Atlantic City and the mayor of nearby Camden, Carmine Polito (Jeremy Renner). Carmine is another hustler whose hair makes a statement, an airborne pompadour in this case, and who, despite a slightly felonious nature, is a good guy; he loves his wife, has a house full of kids and really cares about Camden. Irving really cares about Carmine, and the fact that he has to throw the mayor under the bus to save himself and Sydney adds a note of the tragic to what is otherwise pretty hilarious comedy.

But that's how you make great movies, something Russell is doing with remarkable consistency. The movie-ness of "American Hustle" is a delight—Russell, a student of early American cinema, borrows lavishly from the likes of Frank Capra and Preston Sturgess (Capra's optimism/cosmic justice; Sturgess's absurdist sensibility) and exercises a visual audacity that rivals Martin Scorsese's. The elaborate storyline that underpins "American Hustle" is also Scorsese-like, but similar too is Russell's ability to present us with characters and personalities—Bale, Adams, Lawrence, Cooper—who charm us through the thickets of implausibility that inevitably crop up in a movie so baroquely plotted.

ON THE WEB
America reviews the Oscar contenders.
americamagazine.org/film

As a friend remarked after seeing the film, "'American Hustle' has everything," and this was no idle observation. Few are the films that can be described as profoundly artistic and deliriously entertaining, substantial and soufflé-like. Noble and screwy. It's not the worst way to start a new year.

JOHN ANDERSON *is a film critic for Variety and The Wall Street Journal and a regular contributor to the Arts & Leisure section of The New York Times.New York Times.*

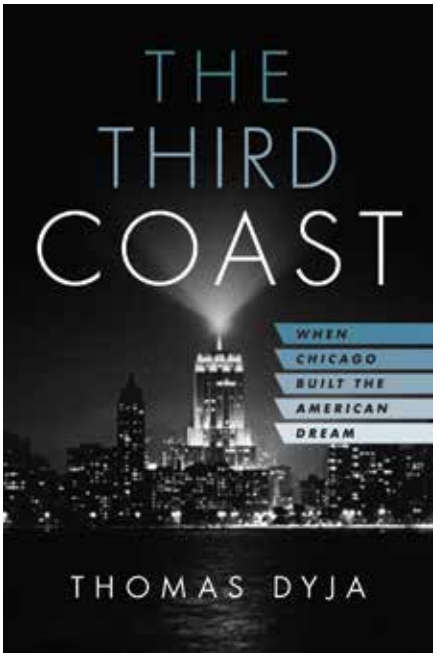
NO SECOND CITY

THE THIRD COAST
When Chicago Built the American Dream

By Thomas Dyja
Penguin Press. 544p $29.95

Thomas Dyja explores the cultural foundations of the "American century" in this engaging, fast-paced and original account of mid-century Chicago. The city was the breeding ground of American modernity from 1930 to 1960, according to Dyja. Chicago was not only the country's railroad and transit center but also the nation's "primary meeting place, market, workshop, and lab." To understand Chicago is to comprehend contemporary America.

Dyja's Chicago is a complex cultural milieu full of artistic and political turbulence, home to a people-oriented aesthetic and an alternative to the gilded culture of New York and the Hollywood glitter of Los Angeles—"the third coast." Dyja reconstructs a racially segregated, ethnically provincial and economically divided cultural landscape before 1940. But this fragmented urbanity bubbled with imagination: the innovative architectural traditions of Louis Sullivan, Daniel Burnham and Frank Lloyd Wright; the rugged realism of Nelson Algren, James Farrell, Richard Wright and others associated with the Works Progress Administration's Writer's Project; the bohemian subculture ensconced in the Dil Pickle Club; the experimental college and Great Books program under the tutelage of Robert Maynard Hutchins and Mortimer Adler at the University of Chicago; the undervalued African-American renaissance fostered by Margaret Taylor Burroughs and the South Side Community Art Center. These disparate cultural communities were held together by the notion of being "regular," a form of modest populism defined by avoiding pretension and snobbery. "Beyond being regular, there was nothing expected of a man," wrote Nelson Algren. "To give more wasn't regular. To give less wasn't straight."



Chicago was the primary stage in the culture wars following World War II. Art and culture became ever more accessible and popular in the information age. But who would control the multiple forms of artistic expression emerging in architecture, music, television, drama and elsewhere? For Dyja, the battle lines were clear: Henry Luce's American Century emphasizing a single mass market culture structured around big business, conformity and universal ideals versus the alternative Century of the Common Man with plebian and dissident traditions harkening back to Walt Whitman.

The final result was never preordained. The utopian vision of democratic access to art had an indigenous appeal in Chicago, particularly in the fiction of Nelson Algren, the politics of Saul Alinsky, the gospel music of Mahalia Jackson, the photography of Harry Callahan and Aaron Suskind, the poetry of Gwendolyn Brooks, the television of Studs Terkel and Burr Tillstrom, the rock-and-roll of Chuck Berry and Bo Diddley (via Chess Records), the blues of Muddy Waters, the drama of Elaine May and Mike Nichols and the Afrofuturism of Sun Ra.

All flourished in the decade following the war. Theirs was a Chicago culture valorizing heterodoxy, improvisation, vernacular, experimentation and play. The connecting glue for much of this cultural fermentation was László Moholy-Nagy, with support from his corporate patron Walter Paepcke. Upon arriving at the Institute of Design, Moholy-Nagy campaigned to demystify and simplify culture. Art was not about a final product; it was a process and a method. Decades before Andy Warhol and Marshall McLuhan, Moholy-Nagy recognized art was reproduction, that the medium was the message. The divide between high and low culture was withering away. Art had to be accessible.

But events in Chicago gave birth to a straightjacket conformity. Mies van der Rohe's International Style became the architectural creature of corporate America. The first "school of television" exemplified by Dave Garroway, Burr Tillstrom and Studs Terkel was sent packing. Ray Kroc opened the initial McDonald's franchise in suburban Des Plaines and launched the fast-food nation. The nuclear fission developed underneath Stagg Field at the University of

ON THE WEB
An archive of articles by
John Courtney Murray, S.J.
americamagazine.org/vantagepoint

Buffalo

For Mark Conway

They have the storm of the century
every winter in Buffalo.

Buffalo is like a pilgrim site for snow.
Buffalo is Capistrano for blizzards.

Think of the word, "snow-bank."
Think of Buffalo as the Federal Reserve.

Imagine Lake Erie as your in-laws
and know how Buffalo feels

every winter during the holidays
when the in-laws drop over.

Why not just say that Buffalo
has been asking for it,

that Buffalo has it coming?
Or why not think of it as

arriving unbidden and unexpected
like love—super-abundant,

borne by flights of angels,
and way beyond deserving.

JOHN RUFF

John Ruff *teaches English at Valparaiso University in Indiana. His poems have appeared in The Seneca Review, Poetry Northwest, River City and Post Road. He formerly served as the poetry editor of The Cresset.*

Chicago became the recipe for nuclear annihilation and mutually assured destruction. The Great Books publications promoted by Robert Maynard Hutchins and Mortimer Adler came to epitomize middlebrow culture. The "sexual revolution" promoted by Hugh Hefner's Playboy magazine proved less than revolutionary.

At times, Dyja oversimplifies the complex rise of the corporate-dominated mass consumer culture of the 20th century. Historians, William Leach and Lizabeth Cohen among them, locate the origins of the modern consumer culture much earlier in chain stores like A&P and Woolworth's, the factories of Henry Ford and General Motors and the department store window displays of L. Frank Baum (author of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*) at Marshall Field's.

John Wanamaker's and other department stores not only introduced the first fashion shows, baby shows, show girls and show rooms, but much of modern art was initially displayed on their floors. Automobile design broke down barriers separating the mechanical and fine arts. Shopping in department stores, retail chains and automobile showrooms by 1930 epitomized the new consumer ethos that rejected the agrarian producerist values of the 19th century.

Dyja nevertheless convincingly demonstrates the far-reaching influence and centrality of Chicago culture in the mid-20th century. The local scene was the national incubator.

But did Chicago after 1960 enter an era of cultural declension and social conformity? Was the people-oriented aesthetic marginalized with the death of Moholy-Nagy in 1949? Did the "third city" die with Walter Paepke in 1960?

I doubt it. Miesian corporatism dominated the Chicago skyline, with Bruce Graham's Sears Tower and John Hancock Center, but the architecture of Walter Netsch, Helmet Jahn and Jeanne Gang represented multiple alternatives. The writers Mike Royko, Garry Wills and Alex Kotlowitz delivered literary punches in the tradition of Algren. The novelists Sara Paretsky, Sandra Cisneros and Saul Bellow resisted easy classification. Few playwrights and screenwriters matched the upsetting ferocity of David Mamet.

Sir Georg Solti, Moholy-Nagy's cousin, arrived in 1969 and reinvigorated the Chicago Symphony Orchestra during the ensuing two decades. Burr Tillstrom and his Kuklapolitan Players were resurrected on Chicago public television at the behest of WTTW Board Chairman Newton N. Minow. The improvisational roster of The Second City defined American comedy by and after the millennium: Alan Alda, Dan Aykroyd, John Belushi, John Candy, Steve Carell, Stephen Colbert, Tina Fey, Bill Murray, Gilda Radnor, Harold Ramis and Joan Rivers, among others. Buddy Guy, in some quarters, personified American blues. A political system dominated by a corrupt machine also produced Paul Douglas, Abner Mikva and Barack Obama.

László Moholy-Nagy lives.

TIMOTHY J. GILFOYLE, *author of* Millennium Park: Creating a Chicago Landmark, A Pickpocket's Tale *and* City of Eros, *teaches history at Loyola University Chicago and is president-elect of the Urban History Association.*

THOMAS J. SHELLEY

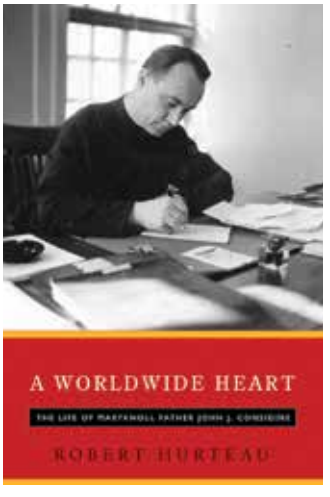
MISSIONARY WITNESS

A WORLDWIDE HEART

The Life of Maryknoll Father John J. Considine

By Robert Hurteau
Orbis Books. 320p $45

During the middle decades of the 20th century, one of the best known Maryknoll priests in the United States was John J. Considine, who was widely admired for his books, lectures and editorial supervision of Maryknoll's superlative mission magazine, The Field Afar. In 1963, Maryknoll's superior, Bishop Raymond Lane, told the cardinal prefect of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith that "Considine has done more...to educate Catholics to the mission idea than any other priest in America." Professor Kenneth Scott Latourette, a devout Baptist and renowned professor of Christian missions at Yale Divinity School, agreed. "Few if any of his generation have made greater contribution to the foreign missions of the American branch of his church," said Latourette. Considine's achievement was all the more remarkable because in his 59 years as a Maryknoll priest, he never spent a day abroad as a missionary.



Considine joined the fledgling Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America (Maryknoll) only four years after its founding in 1911. His superiors quickly recognized his intellectual and organizational talents and sent him to The Catholic University of America for a graduate degree. He spent the next 10 years in Rome, where he made a major contribution to the missionary work of the church by establishing Fides International Service, a press service for the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, which enlisted the services of some 300 missionaries throughout the world.

As a young priest in Rome in the 1920s, during the obscurantist backlash that followed the Modernist crisis, Considine showed considerable courage by presenting a sympathetic image of non-Christian religions in the press releases of Fides. He was also quick to recognize and champion the positive role that anthropology and ethnology could play in enhancing the effectiveness of the missionary apostolate of the church. Considine displayed prudence and finesse as well as courage. "My program," he told Father James A. Walsh, the co-founder of Maryknoll, "consists mainly for the next few months in convincing everybody of my conservatism and doing everything that is not conservative under cover."

Considine interrupted his decade in Rome in 1931–34 to make a 14-month trip to Asia, the Middle East and Central Africa, returning to Rome overland across the Sahara through present-day Mali. He estimated that he covered 52,000 miles on this trip. These "mission study tours" became an integral part of his ministry. Four more trips were to follow, a second visit to Asia and Africa in 1953 and three trips to Latin America in 1945, 1954 and 1955. Each trip produced a book (one of them a best-seller) or at least a series of articles on the missions.

Upon his return to Maryknoll headquarters in Ossining, N.Y., in 1934, Considine devoted his energies to fund-raising and public relations in addition to editing The Field Afar from 1936 to 1960. He also welcomed the opportunity to collaborate with the Jesuit anthropologist J. Franklin Ewing, who had established the Institute of Mission Studies at Fordham University.

A new career opened for Considine in 1960 when the U.S. bishops invited him to become the director of the recently established Latin American Bureau of the National Catholic Welfare Conference. During the eight years of Considine's leadership of L.A.B. he built it from scratch, says his biographer Robert Hurteau. The number of American missionaries in Latin America doubled, despite the fact that the whole enterprise enjoyed only limited support from the U.S. bishops.

Considine's involvement with Latin America also brought him into conflict with the Rev. Ivan Illich, a brilliant but prickly Yugoslav-born priest of the Archdiocese of New York, whose views on evangelization in Latin America were considerably more unconventional than those of Considine. Illich seemed to regard L.A.B. as a form of Yankee imperialism. In 1966 Considine resigned from the board of Illich's Center of Intercultural Formation in Cuernavaca, Mexico. The following year, without mentioning Considine by name, Illich criticized the work of L.A.B. in a provocative article in **America** entitled "The Seamy Side of Charity" (1/21/67).

It has been said that church history is largely the story of the quarrels of good people, and Hurteau views the conflict between Considine and Illich from this perspective, as the probably inevitable clash between a builder of institutions and a born iconoclast.

Although Hurteau's sympathies are with Considine, he is scrupulously fair in judging the motives and assessing the achievements of both men.

Hurteau, a former Maryknoll missioner in Peru and director of the Center for Religion and Spirituality at Marymount Loyola University in Los Angeles, has drawn upon a wide variety of unpublished sources, including Considine's diaries and correspondence, Maryknoll and Vatican archives, and interviews with colleagues and friends of Considine, to produce this first full-length biography of Considine. It is a welcome and much needed addition to the corpus of works on the American Catholic foreign missions. It must be admitted, however, that the wide range of Considine's interests and activities present a daunting challenge for even the most seasoned biographer to achieve a satisfying synthesis of his life and work. One of the strengths of Hurteau's study is that he makes clear that Considine's dedication to Maryknoll did not prevent him from making numerous and valuable contributions to the wider world of the whole missionary apostolate of the church. There are numerous illustrations, an appendix with excerpts from Considine's writings and an extensive bibliography.

MSGR. THOMAS J. SHELLEY, *a priest of the Archdiocese of New York, is professor emeritus of church history at Fordham University.*

JAKE BONAR

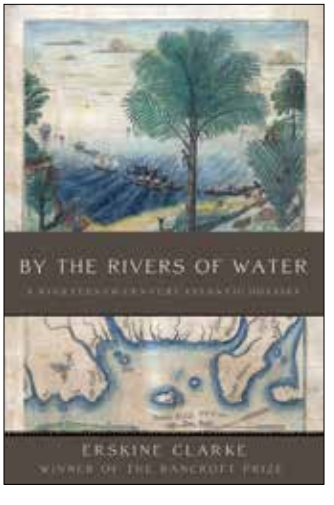
AFRICAN JOURNEY

BY THE RIVERS OF WATER
A Nineteenth-Century Atlantic Odyssey

By Erskine Clarke
Basic Books. 488p $29.99

If Seamus Heaney digs with his pen, Erskine Clarke casts his like an expert fly fisherman. In this book, *By The Rivers of Water*, chapters end with sharp forebodings of what lurks around the next bend. Clarke reels us through the lives of Leighton and Jane Wilson, a married missionary couple who leave their plantation home in Savannah, Ga., to spread the word of Christ in the blossoming African liberation movement. While Leighton and Jane never break with their Southern roots, we see them crash into worlds that shape not only their own consciousness but also the consciousness of the 19th century. Right when we find ourselves comfortable (either after getting over a malaria scare on the Liberian Cape or returning to camp from a trip to the cannibalistic African interior), Clarke casts his line into deeper and darker waters.

The novel begins with an epigraph from Wendell Barry on the troubling relationship between slave and slave-owner: "We cannot be free of each other." Clarke reminds us that in the 19th century, attitudes toward slavery were far from black and white. Southerners had reluctantly accepted that slavery was not going to last forever. The Southern religious wondered not if slaves should be freed, but what was the limit of white responsibility to blacks in their freedom.



One answer to that question was the African Liberation movement. Many whites embraced the movement with an out-of-sight, out-of-mind attitude. African-Americans who thought they could not adapt to their newfound roles of freedom—or that these roles would not be *really* free at all—also found themselves yearning to return to their ancestors' home. Missionaries like the Wilsons are depicted as messengers of God seeking to educate and enlighten these freed slaves.

To missionaries, the movement provides a spark for spreading the word of God to a fresh country. Many American missionaries piggyback the re-colonization movement, building much-needed schools on the outskirts of settlements. On the other hand, men like Benjamin Latrobe, the head of the Maryland Colonization Society, have more devious motives. Latrobe shared the sentiment of thousands of Americans who supported the original back-to-Africa movement as a way to rid America of "inferior" blacks rather than live among them.

Throughout the "Nineteenth-Century Atlantic Odyssey," as the book's subtitle reads, we are introduced to a cast as eclectic and remarkable as that of Homer's *Odyssey*. The book begins looking over the shoulder of Paul, the ex-slave carpenter who follows the Wilsons from their Hutchinson Island plantation to the African Cape towns. The Wilsons are joined by other missionaries, from the promising couple of David White and Helen Wells, who both die within months of landing in Africa, to the skittish and deranged Albert Bushnell, who spends 30 years teaching on the continent.

Often, Clarke's fishing line gets tangled. Leighton is bogged down by bureaucratic red tape laid down by Latrobe and the Maryland Colonization Society. The line snags on Leighton's home life while he is away in Africa, forcing him to make a decision on whether to release his slaves (and be labeled a dirty aboli-

tionist by the community) or keep the slaves working on the far-away plantation (and be labeled a "man-stealer" by those who could have presumably used them). We double back to loosen the knots of tension between native Africans and black settlers. The black settlers look down upon the less civilized Africans, composing a new hierarchy in which the ex-slaves are relieved of their former place at the bottom.

We meet the Grebo people, a barbaric and ritualistic tribe ruled by King Freeman (an ironic name, as he holds hundreds of slaves) who surprises Leighton by his democratic style of ruling. The Grebo are known for their "sassy wood ordeal," a method used to determine guilt in place of a judge or jury. In this trial, the accused is made to drink the juice from bark of indigenous trees. Guilt is discovered if—more likely *when*—the defendant vomits the poisonous mixture, exciting the crowd to the next step of the process: burying the man alive. However, the Grebo also provide us with William Davis, the friendly and Christian-curious man who acts as both translator and friend to Leighton.

Much more cultivated are the Mpongwe, a tribe that Leighton praises for their intellectual ability. While merely surviving was difficult among the Grebo, it is with the Mpongwe that mission work is put to the test. By this point, the readers are immune to scenes of brutal African rituals, drawn-out deaths by malaria and hushed coming-of-age rites in the interior. Instead, we notice that the questions the natives ask about the Gospel are like our own. The Mpongwe King George asks Leighton that if God "is good and just and cares for the actions of men," why do good men die young and evil men live into old age?

When Leighton returns to America, he speaks in packed lecture halls of the profound ability of the Mpongwe, combatting doubters who

believe the African race cannot learn as whites can. We are surprised, though, when Leighton makes no mention of Toko, the heartily playful Mpongwe man whom Leighton adores. Toko regales Leighton with his tribe's creation stories and stays up under the starry African sky talking to Leighton about life and God. He does not mention Toko—who holds his tribal tradition too dear to convert—because he does not "fit the mission narrative that Leighton wanted to convey."

Leighton's work in Liberia produces a mixed bag. While we see him acting as a diplomat between settlers and tribes, erecting schools and even printing books in hard-to-learn tribal tongues, Leighton made another discovery that will haunt him. On an excursion upriver, Leighton stumbles upon the skull of a yet-undiscovered gorilla species, called *njina*. His excitement later turns to frustration as his discovery is twisted by white scientists who tout similarities between the skull and those of African Americans, further perpetuating a theory of inherent dissimilitude between the two races.

The most telling chapter appears away from Africa, away from the coast with "sassy wood ordeals" or Toko and his long-winded jokes. After the American Civil War, conflicts between the Northern and Southern religious are minimized. Both camps realize the importance of foreign mission work as a uniting factor under God. Clarke has shown us what happens when we compete for land: a French fleet bombards African colonies, revenge killings plague tribes, even the Civil War itself acts as a bloody divide between new and even newer nations.

When we return home after our Odyssey, we realize our best work is done not under the flags of nations, but in the name of Christ.

JAKE BONAR, *a senior creative writing major at Canisius College in Buffalo, N.Y., also worked as an editorial intern at* ***America*** *during the summer of 2013.*

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Share Your Bread

FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (A), FEB. 9, 2014

Readings: Is 58:7–10; Ps 112:4–9; 1 Cor 2:1–5; Mt 5:13–16

"Let your light shine before others" (Mt 5:16)

In the midst of a recent arctic freeze in Minnesota, I sent out a tweet: "Best part of a #polarvortex is ability to be in a warm house and to cozy up and enjoy time with the family. Pray for those who are not warm." Someone, known on Twitter as @RiskyLiberal, read my tweet and found it lacking: "Don't pray for them—HELP them! Take some blankets, winter coats, MONEY to your local shelter TODAY."

My initial response was to take to Twitter to defend prayer as a genuine means of help, but as I reflected on the tweet, I had to admit, she (or he) had a point. Prayer is not insignificant for a Christian—indeed it is one of the most powerful spiritual forces for good in the world—but it must be grounded in concrete action, not warm and fuzzy sentiment. I was chastened and responded, "It's a good point! Help must be tangible."

As God's voice, Scripture seems designed to speak to each of us individually in whatever spiritual place we find ourselves. When I went to read the Scripture for this column, it was no surprise to find that the readings for the week spoke directly to my situation. Yet the voice of God was also found in a simple Twitter exchange. Echoes of @RiskyLiberal resonated for me in the readings from the prophet Isaiah.

Isaiah calls on the faithful to "share your bread with the hungry," to "shelter the oppressed and the homeless" and to "clothe the naked when you see them." Only when the people respond to actual human need, says Isaiah, will "light" emerge. Isaiah links God's response to the "call" and "cry," the prayers of the faithful, to their tangible actions for those in need.

At the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus draws on this same prophetic tradition when he says, "You are the salt of the earth" and "You are the light of the world." Who is being addressed? Who is "you"? In both cases, the Greek text uses the plural form for *you*. It is the apostles of Jesus and the other disciples, the members of the nascent church, who are invited to hear these words and to identify with them, and so too are these words addressed to the church today.

We are called to make these words our own, to heed Jesus' call to be what we are intended to be: salt and light for the world. This is Jesus' appeal to the church to live up to its vocation, to bring flavor to the dullness of life, to chase away the darkness with light.

But Jesus warns the church that if it is not fulfilling its mission, if salt is not salty, if light is hidden away and extinguished, then the people of God have lost their purpose, their reason for being. If the church is to live up to its vocation as the "salt of the earth" and as the "light of the world," Jesus says that the church must let its "light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven." It is these good works that make evident the spiritual light of prayer and draw attention not to ourselves but to the transforming power of God.

Jesus outlines these good works throughout the Gospel of Matthew, especially drawing our attention to the corporal works of mercy in Chapter 25. Here, as in Isaiah, Jesus calls us to share bread with the hungry, clothe the naked and meet the needs of the afflicted, including those who are sick or imprisoned.

Certainly, those who are afflicted include those who are suffering from the frigid cold in my neighborhood. Only by responding to these human needs through the good works Jesus calls us to perform will the Christian light "shine before others." Praying for those in need must lead to action on behalf of those in need, for these actions are concrete signs of God's light shining in the world. These actions are proof that prayer is not empty words or cheap empathy, but the active presence of God in individual lives and the church compelling us to transform the darkness with light and the cold with warmth.

JOHN W. MARTENS

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Think of those in need in your community. What is one way you can help those in need more concretely this year?

JOHN W. MARTENS *is an associate professor of theology at the University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minn.*

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