America

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The Other America

TIM PADGETT

Books on the Bible

DANIEL J. HARRINGTON

OF MANY THINGS

One of the great members of our editorial staff, one of the great Jesuits and one of the greatest men I've ever known died on Feb. 17, Ash Wednesday, at age 92. John W. Donohue, S.J., joined **America** as an associate editor with the April 1, 1972, issue and retired after the issue of June 25, 2007. It is difficult to convey how much he meant to the editors and staff here over those many years.

When John arrived, the editor in chief, Donald Campion, S.J., informed readers (in this column) that John "did his doctorate in education at Yale, taught at Fordham University, was the first dean of its much-admired Thomas More College [for women] and has written several books. You will shortly catch a further glimpse of his editorial hand at work in a special issue on the increasingly critical topic of religious education."

That "editorial hand" helped **America** for 35 years in scores of unsigned editorials, as well as frequent signed articles, essays and reviews. He was among the best of writers: clear, erudite, gracious, witty—and frequently surprising.

One example: When Christopher Hitchens launched an attack on Mother Teresa in his book *The Missionary Position*, John told me he planned to respond. "Good," I said. "Show them how perfect the saints were!" John did the opposite in an article published in May 13, 1995, called "Holy Terrors," which reminded readers that many of the saints were far from perfect, offering a litany of "difficult" saints, like the irascible St. Jerome. John quoted one of his teachers, who said of the "vehement" St. Cyril of Alexandria: "We don't know anything about the last 10 years of Cyril's life. Those must have been the years in which he became a saint." In a few pages, John politely refuted Hitchens, informed readers and, incidentally, changed the way I looked at sanctity. It was a brilliant piece.

John was what religious men and women call a "living rule." Were the Society of Jesus ever to lose its *Constitutions*, we would need only look to him to see how our life should be lived. He was devoted to "Our Lord," as he invariably said, to the Eucharist and to the church. A man of ascetical routine, he rose each day at dawn to celebrate Mass. On Saturdays he walked (less rapidly as the years passed) to St. Patrick's Cathedral to hear confessions. He lived his vows with the seriousness and joy they deserve.

Somehow, he combined austerity with humility and humor. When I was a Jesuit scholastic (John called me "Mister" in the old style until the day of my ordination), I dropped by his spartan room. On his bed, I noticed an alarmingly old bedspread: a thin candlewick fabric—frayed, faded, ancient. "Father," I said, "I think it's time for a new bedspread." "Mister," he said, "That *is* the new bedspread."

We loved John not so much for his lucid writing, his vast wisdom, or his unflagging industry, but for him. John was unfailingly polite, refreshingly mild and very witty. "I have to do an editorial on Bosnia," he said one day in the mid-1990s about that complex topic. "What are you going to say?" I asked. "As little as possible." Mostly, to use an underappreciated word, he was kind. John was one of the kindest people I've ever met and so one of the saintliest.

The engine of his remarkable life was his faith. His was an open, expansive and deeply traditional piety. In John's last hours on earth, as he lay in his bed in the infirmary, a Jesuit read to him the close of the Anima Christi: "In the hour of my death, call me. And bid me come to Thee, that with all Thy saints I may praise Thee, for ever and ever."

Ever the man of tradition, John W. Donohue, S.J., answered with words from the Rite of Ordination that summed up his long service to Our Lord: "I am ready and willing."

JAMES MARTIN, S.J.

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Cover: Supporters of ousted Honduran President Manuel Zelaya wave flags while blocking a street in Tegucigalpa on Nov. 30, 2009. Reuters/Edgard Garrido

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All at americamagazine.org.

The Unsweetened Truth

With the aim of reducing childhood obesity, first lady Michelle Obama is working to ensure that sugary drinks are no longer served or sold in schools. Such beverages (whether sweetened with sucrose, glucose or high-fructose corn syrup) may not be addictive and when consumed sparingly pose few health risks. But despite an abundance of no-calorie alternatives, including flavored waters, Americans choose sugary drinks as their single major source of calories (7 percent of total daily calories for adults, up to 10 percent for children and teenagers). These beverages contribute to two dangerous and expensive national health problems: childhood obesity and diabetes.

In theory, government intervention should not be necessary. Parental guidance could have prevented this problem and could still solve it. But parents, forced to compete with producers and advertisers that market sweetened drinks to children, no longer hold sway. Nor have parents or public health advocates organized effectively to demand that producers reduce the sugars per serving or stop marketing to kids. Michelle Obama's leadership might ignite such actions.

Meanwhile, the rates of obesity and diabetes among children are rising. With the health of the nation at stake and the escalating costs of health care borne by all taxpayers, government should intervene now by taxing sugary drinks. Though it would not single-handedly solve either problem, a tax would make parents and teenagers aware of what they eat and drink, and it would cause a decline in consumption. Some reduction of childhood obesity and diabetes would inevitably follow. The tax could be revisited in 10 years and its effects examined scientifically. Such a tax could deliver enormous benefits to society at minimal cost. And the billions the tax would raise should be spent solely on health care for children.

Turtles at Risk

Marine turtles around the world are facing extinction. Half a dozen species are listed as endangered. The situation is especially grim in the Pacific, where the number of leatherbacks is diminishing. The same is true of the green turtle in the Caribbean. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora lists endangered turtle species, and international trade in them is forbidden in the 166 member countries. Nevertheless, illicit trade in marine turtles is rampant. Fishing fleets take a further toll, trapping turtles in their nets, where they drown.

In some regions, though, conservation efforts have paid off. In the Gulf of Mexico, three decades of efforts have led to a slow comeback of the ridley turtle. While no easy solution exists, greater efforts to halt illegal trade in turtles through Traffic, the monitoring arm of the Wildlife Fund and the International Union for Conservation of Nature, would be at least a move in the right direction. The danger of extinction confronting turtles threatens many other species as well, including birds, plants and land-based animals like leopards. With human activities playing a larger and larger role in once isolated areas of sea and land, protections for threatened species are more needed than ever.

Swift-Boating the Church?

A small but vocal contingent of Catholic conservatives are calling for a "tea party" style revolution within the church in an effort to root out the dissent they see lurking within the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Catholic Campaign for Human Development. The insertion of hyperpartisan, "Swift boat" style politics into an internal church dialogue that should be characterized by mutual respect and charity is probably the last thing the already discordant church in the United States needs.

In recent weeks a campaign of insinuation and guilt by association has been directed at the leadership of the U.S.C.C.B. and the Catholic Campaign. Hostility to the C.C.H.D.'s agenda has been longstanding within certain Catholic circles. What is new about these Web-based assaults is the attacks on specific individuals on the U.S.C.C.B. staff and the complete absorption of secular society's noxious style of political mudslinging as a legitimate form of criticism within the church.

The ultimate goal of these attacks appears to be to discredit or intimidate employees perceived to be "liberal" Catholics; abortion has proved a handy rhetorical cudgel. Many actors in this drama appear intent on twisting clear church teaching on prudential judgment with an eye on the next election cycle. The irony is that the organizations leading the assault on the bishops' staff are attacking the very people who have contributed the most to the pro-life cause in recent months with their efforts on behalf of the Stupak amendment in the health care reform negotiations.

The toxic quality of the nation's political partisanship is clear in the gridlock it promotes, a source of frustration for all sides. Partisan bickering is a poor model for Christian interrelations from either a practical or spiritual perspective. If our faith does not require us to treat each other with basic civility and kindness, then what is it good for?

Behind Closed Doors

Domestic violence in the United States is rising, and the recession may be partly to blame. Before the recession's effects began to be felt, domestic violence had been falling nationwide. With the jobless rate holding at 10 percent, however, the resultant economic stress on abusive partners has led to dangerous forms of intimate partner violence in situations already marked by a pattern of abuse. In Philadelphia last year, for example, at least 35 women were killed by current or former partners, nearly double the 2008 rate. For victims, home is not a safe haven. Domestic violence affects all members of a household, including the elderly and children. The American Psychological Association reports that the witnessing by a child of abuse of a parent, for example, can be a factor in transmitting violent behavior from one generation to another. But women bear the brunt of domestic violence. The National Census of Domestic Violence Services notes that domestic violence is the number one cause of injury for women between the ages of 15 and 44, at all income levels and educational backgrounds.

In May 2009 the Mary Kay Ash Charitable Foundation released the results of a nationwide survey, which found that since September 2008, three out of four domestic violence shelters reported an increase in the number of women seeking protection. The data cite the economic downturn as a major reason for the increase. Those seeking assistance at the 600 shelters in the survey reported the major reasons: financial stress and job loss. The largest number of women seeking protection was in the South, followed by the Midwest, the Northeast and the West.

It comes as a double blow to women that just when increasing numbers of them are requesting protection and help, the economic downturn has brought cuts in the very programs created to assist them. California, for instance, which has the highest rate of emergency calls of any state, cut from its budget $2 million earmarked for domestic violence. According to the National Organization for Women, legal services for victims of violence have been cut in that state by 62 percent. Such services include obtaining orders of protection, an important component in protecting a woman from an abusive partner. The Illinois legislature has reduced by three-fourths its financing for domestic violence initiatives; shelters, sexual-assault and other social service programs have laid off staff members and reduced their hours of service. On the federal level, a key funding source, the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act, saw its budget slashed in 2008 by $2.1 million.

The situation for undocumented immigrant women is particularly difficult because of their heightened vulnerability. These women know that if they contact the police for protection, they risk deportation once their undocumented status becomes known. Male abusers who are citizens sometimes use such fears to their own advantage, to hold their partners in bondage by threatening to denounce them. Although domestic violence cuts across all ethnic, racial, religious and socioeconomic lines, women who are in the United States illegally face added risks. And they can also be easily deterred from reporting the abuse by a limited command of English, isolated living situations and inadequate access to public transportation.

Domestic violence tends to take place behind closed doors, and it is difficult to know its full extent. In their 1992 pastoral letter, "When I Called for Help: A Pastoral Response to Domestic Violence Against Women," the U.S. Catholic bishops spoke of the abuse as "often shrouded in silence." As a consequence, many cases of domestic violence go unreported, and it is difficult to collect accurate data. They also point out that women may stay with abusive men from two fears: loss of their children and an inability to support them. The fears are not unfounded, especially in times of high unemployment.

State budget cuts can literally make a life-or-death difference to victims of domestic violence if shelters can no longer offer them space. At the very least, the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act should be re-authorized and given added funding; it is the only federal program that supports local domestic violence shelters and programs nationwide. A related federal law, The Violence Against Women Act, which was first passed in 1994, comes up for reauthorization in September 2011. It is a positive sign that the Senate approved $444 million in funding for the V.A.W.A. for the 2010 fiscal year, which could make up for some local funding shortfalls. Grants are administered by an office within the Justice Department, the Office on Violence Against Women.

Budget struggles notwithstanding, the government should exercise special care before cutting services for victims of domestic violence. Their very lives may depend on them.

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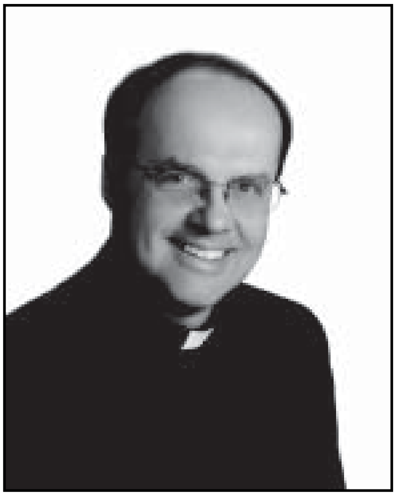

Fr. Felix Just, S.J., Ph.D.
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About Your Presenter

Fr. Felix Just, S.J., Ph.D. is the Director of Biblical Education at the Loyola Institute for Spirituality in Orange, CA. He is also the Academic Coordinator of the Lay Ecclesial Ministry Program and the Deacon Formation Program for the Diocese of Las Vegas. After receiving his Ph.D. in New Testament Studies from Yale University, he taught at Loyola Marymount University (Los Angeles), the University of San Francisco, and the University of Santa Clara. He is past director of the Center for Religion and Spirituality at LMU. He regularly teaches courses, gives many public lectures, and often leads biblically based days of prayer, parish missions, and weekend or weeklong retreats. He maintains an internationally recognized website of "Catholic Resources" (http://catholic-resources.org).

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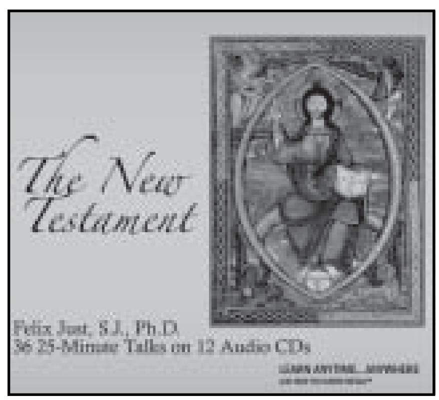

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HUNGER

Advocates Seek to End Market Gambling With Food Prices

Children walk past sacks of rice in a market in Manila, Philippines, at the height of the food crisis in 2008.

Two years ago riots erupted in at least 15 developing countries over the cost of basic foods like rice, flour and corn. Frustrated by rapidly rising prices, demonstrators torched vehicles and clashed with police in a series of violent confrontations across Africa, Asia, South America and the Caribbean.

The rioting came as commodity prices peaked at the end of 2007 and the beginning of 2008, and the cost of wheat, corn, rice and soybeans more than doubled. Many forces were at work driving up the price of food—drought, increasing demand, conversion of cropland to biofuel production and skyrocketing costs of transport fuels among them. But one less scrutinized component of the crisis was the role of commodity market speculation as traders scurried out of a collapsing U.S. derivatives market into safer bets in foodstuffs.

Recognizing such speculative forces as a threat to the lives of poor people around the world, more than 450 faith-based, business and labor organizations have banded together in a campaign called Stop Gambling on Hunger. "We can't let our world food and energy prices be determined by the whims of investors," said David Kane, a staff member at the Maryknoll Office of Global Concerns in Washington, one of the leading voices on the issue. "It's affecting the most vulnerable people around the world." The coalition has been pushing legislation to reintroduce limits on speculative positions and in general put pressure on the Commodity Futures Trading Commission to better police trading activity related to food and energy commodities.

In testimony before Congress, Dave Andrews, a Holy Cross brother who is the senior representative at the coalition member Food and Water Watch, said he often cites the statements of Pope Benedict XVI, who has repeatedly spoken on the special vulnerability of the world's poor to global market forces. In "Caritas in Veritate," the pope said access to sufficient food and water resources is a human right and directly chastened the "speculative use of financial resources that yields to the temptation of seeking only short-term profit." But in Brother Andrews's view advocates need to move the issue out of Washington and into the home districts of members of Congress to improve awareness of the often hard-to-understand issue.

One unlikely voice for change has been Michael Masters, a hedge fund manager who worries over the excessive volatility speculative runs promote on commodity prices. "Should asset allocation decisions trump human rights?" he asked. "If a bunch of financial investors drive up the price of food, then people die. If people can't eat, then there's something wrong in the free market."

Masters would like to see reforms that would restore controls over commodity markets that had been in place since the Great Depression but were abandoned in recent surges of political enthusiasm for market deregulation. Masters also has brought his concerns to Congress, testifying several times on the need for reforms. One reform measure, the Derivatives Market Manipulation Prevention Act of 2009, introduced by Senator Maria Cantwell, Democrat of Washington, would make it possible for federal regulators to investigate and crack down on market manipulators more effectively. Masters reported that while some in Congress appear to hear his concerns, there are still loud voices saying free markets should rule the day. "We're not trying to reinvent the wheel," he said. "Just put in the limits that worked for 50 years. It's only when we got rid of the limits that you've seen much more volatility than we've ever seen in history."

WASHINGTON D.C.

Catholic Leaders Urge Health Care Reform

As the head of the Catholic Health Association expressed hope that President Barack Obama's meeting on health care, planned for Feb. 25, would "move health care reform closer to completion," the leaders of a group of Catholic physicians called on Congress to scrap the current legislative proposals and start over.

"The American people are tired of partisan bickering and want lawmakers to find common ground toward creating a stronger, more equitable health care system," said Carol Keehan, of the Daughters of Charity, who is president of the C.H.A. "The current window of opportunity is small, which is why we encourage summit participants and other key leaders to move from argument and misinformation to consensus and collaboration—now," she said in a statement on Feb. 23. Other Catholic leaders joined Sister Keehan's call for urgent action on health care. Morna Murray, president of Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good, joined leaders of other faith groups in a Feb. 23 letter calling on Congress to "complete this task now."

"Human beings are suffering as a result of skyrocketing health care costs, ever-escalating premiums, and draconian choices between paying the rent and taking a sick child to the doctor. This is not hyperbole or rhetoric. This is the shameful reality today for millions of American families, senior citizens and children."

But the president and executive director of the Catholic Medical Association said in an open letter to President Obama and members of Congress on Feb. 23 that "the most responsible course of action" at this time would be "to pause, reflect and then begin the legislative process anew, working in a more deliberate and bipartisan manner."

"It is more important that health care reform be done right than to finish the legislative process by a date certain," said Leonard P. Rybak, M.D., president, and John F. Brehany, executive director of the association of U.S. Catholic physicians.

The summit meeting scheduled for Feb. 25 is intended to bring together key members of Congress from both parties and government officials to seek a bipartisan resolution on health care. The president unveiled an 11-page proposal on Feb. 22 that combined some elements of the House and Senate reform measures but was silent on two issues of concern to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops: continuation of the Hyde Amendment, which prohibits the use of federal money to fund abortion and access to health care for U.S. immigrants. The White House communications director, Dan Pfeiffer, said the proposal was an "opening bid" for the health care meeting and that the language on abortion in the Senate bill was what the White House would be using. The U.S. bishops have already dismissed the Senate language on abortion as deficient.

A poll released on Feb. 23 by the Kaiser Family Foundation found the nation evenly split on current health reform legislation, with 43 percent in favor and 43 percent opposed. Asked what they think Congress should do now about health reform, 32 percent said lawmakers should "move soon to pass the comprehensive legislation" already passed by the House and Senate; 22 percent said they should stop working on it now and take it up later this year; 20 percent said they should "pass a few provisions where there is broad agreement"; and 19 percent said they should stop working on health care reform this year.

An uninsured patient is measured during a health checkup at a Venice, Calif., clinic.

U.S. Must Get Religion

If the United States is to engage the world in a more effective way, it must broaden its view of the role of religion in other countries beyond terrorism and counterterrorism strategies, a new report concluded. Released Feb. 23 by the Chicago Council of Global Affairs, "Engaging Religious Communities Abroad: A New Imperative for U.S. Foreign Policy" called for mandatory training on the role of religion in world affairs for U.S. government and diplomatic officials and recommended that the president clarify that the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment does not prohibit U.S. officials from working with religious communities abroad. In the process of engaging religious communities, the report urged that the United States work more closely with schools, hospitals, social services, relief and development and human rights programs sponsored by religious organizations. "While these activities may appear to be nonpolitical, in the aggregate they have a powerful influence over peoples' lives and loyalties," the report said.

NEWS BRIEFS

Drought-stricken cattle in Kenya

appealed to Australia's Foreign Minister Stephen Smith on Feb. 18 for urgent help in finding 50 Thai orphans, ages 10 to 14, feared abducted by sex traffickers. ✦ Even as world leaders hesitate to enact strong measures on climate change, Bishop **Peter Kihara Kariuki** of drought-afflicted Marsabit, Kenya, said his diocese has been struggling with the "deadly effects of global warming for years now." ✦ Nineteen Catholic scholars asked Pope Benedict XVI to slow the **sainthood cause of Pope Pius XII** in a Feb. 16 letter, arguing that more research needs to be done on the World War II-era pontiff. ✦ The former head of the Canadian Forces chaplain branch, Msgr. **Roger Bazin**, was charged with sexual assault on Feb. 19 based on allegations of incidents that occurred 38 years ago. ✦ Protests and outbreaks of violence across India followed the publication of a picture depicting **Jesus holding a cigarette** and a bottle of beer in a textbook for use among schoolchildren across the subcontinent. ✦ **Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Washington** closed its 80-year-old foster care and public adoption program on Feb. 1 to avoid licensing same-sex couples as foster or adoptive parents in compliance with a new district ordinance.

NATO Apologizes for Afghan Civilian Deaths

In a video distributed Feb. 23, the top NATO commander in Afghanistan, Gen. Stanley McChrystal, apologized for 27 civilian deaths that occurred after U.S. forces attacked a convoy of Afghan civilians that had been mistaken for insurgents. The Christian Science Monitor reported that it was the coalition's deadliest mistake in six months. While public apologies by NATO have come to seem almost commonplace—this was just one of half a dozen in February and the second by McChrystal himself—the push to admit mistakes and apologize is unprecedented in NATO's nine-year intervention in Afghanistan. But it does reflect McChrystal's new strategy that prioritizes winning over the population. "I have instituted a thorough investigation to prevent this from happening again," he said. "I pledge to strengthen our efforts to regain your trust to build a brighter future for all Afghans. Most importantly, I express my deepest, heartfelt condolences to the victims and their families. We all share in their grief and will keep them in our thoughts and prayers."

Earthquake Prompts Haitian Debt Relief

The years-long effort by such organizations as the Jubilee USA Network and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops to relieve Haiti of its $1 billion debt got a boost on Feb. 5, when Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner announced that the United States would work to see that the impoverished Caribbean nation's indebtedness was forgiven. Dominique Strauss-Kahn, managing director of the International Monetary Fund, said on Jan. 20 that the I.M.F. would discuss with donors ways to "delete all the Haitian debt." The actions are significant because Haiti must focus all of its financial resources toward recovery and rebuilding large segments of the country that were destroyed during the earthquake on Jan. 12.

Archbishop **Barry Hickey** of Perth

From CNS and other sources.

MARYANN CUSIMANO LOVE

The Defense Dilemma

As I write this, our second blizzard this week has sidelined even the snowplows. I was supposed to be giving a speech in sunny Florida but moved to Plan B. Instead we are listening to endless silly jokes from our kids, and I am reading a good drama: the Quadrennial Defense Review and the federal budget.

The Q.D.R. is mandated by Congress to set the military's strategic direction for the next four years. Its simple prose masks the battle of competing interests that goes into it and its implementation. This Q.D.R. could be renamed "Plan B." A funny thing happened on the way to U.S. military domination: After the cold war and the first Persian Gulf war, other countries did not want to fight the U.S. military conventionally anymore.

U.S. forces fight insurgents and terrorists while rebuilding states and providing humanitarian and disaster relief, but these missions are largely not the traditional tasks the troops were trained or equipped for—namely, conventional war against peer militaries. As Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates notes, "We have learned through painful experience that the wars we fight are rarely the wars we plan."

This promising Q.D.R. tries to change that, moving military strategy toward current threats and nontraditional operations. It stresses conflict prevention, including bolstering the capacity of others; working with allies and international institutions; working with civilians; carrying out what are called Stabilization, Security, Transition and Reconstruction operations; and securing materials for weapons of mass destruction through an expansion of the successful Cooperative Threat Reduction program. For the first time, the Q.D.R. officially recognizes climate change as a security threat because of the instabilities it can cause. The plan also focuses on the care of military personnel and their families.

The problem is the mismatch between this strategic document and the budget. The dirty secrets of increased U.S. military spending since the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, are that military spending is much higher than most Americans are aware and that most of that money does not go toward fighting terrorism or the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan but is wasted on unnecessary pork-barrel spending.

> Military spending is much higher than most Americans are aware.

U.S. defense spending is now over a trillion dollars, almost a third of the budget, more than military spending in the rest of the world combined and more than our adversaries spend by many orders of magnitude. Yet that spending is not focused on the threats we currently face, but goes to expensive legacy military platforms and weapons programs (especially by the Air Force and Navy, despite the fact that neither Al Qaeda nor the Taliban has an air force or a navy). Those purchases are made on a "credit card," with money borrowed from other countries.

Lives are on the line in these spending decisions. As Secretary Gates notes, every dollar spent on the futuristic "quixotic pursuit of high-tech equipment" is not available for today's needs: body armor, armored tanks, care of our wounded veterans and a host of domestic needs. Who opposes this shift to Plan B to "prevail in today's wars?" The "iron triangles" do: defense contracters, Congressional representatives and military services that profit from military spending on equipment we do not need for conflicts that do not exist.

Faux fiscal conservatives moralize against government deficit spending to get the economy moving again while hypocritically using the Pentagon budget as an inefficient government jobs program. This program does not create products, services or skills that benefit the civilian population and economy at large. And they deceive the American public into believing that this spending is somehow necessary in the fight against terrorists.

Members of Congress want defense dollars for their districts; defense companies want taxpayer money; the military services want expensive military platforms not used in warfare. As long as we shift the burden of this spending to future generations, the United States is not forced to make hard choices and give up our illusion that spending money we do not have on military hardware we don't use somehow makes the U.S. homeland safer. As Pope Benedict XVI, among others, has noted, economic decisions are moral decisions.

MARYANN CUSIMANO LOVE, *during her sabbatical from The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., is a fellow at the Commission on International Religious Freedom.*

THE DRAMA IN HONDURAS DEPICTS CENTRAL AMERICA'S CONTINUING MISERIES.

The Other America

BY TIM PADGETT

PHOTO: REUTERS/EDGARD GARRIDO

Next month marks the 20th anniversary of what was supposed to be a hopeful new beginning for Central America. In an election watched worldwide as part of the climax of the cold war, Violeta Chamorro dethroned the Nicaraguan president at the time, Daniel Ortega, and his Marxist Sandinistas on April 25, 1990. The vote also ended Nicaragua's decade-long contra war and brought down the curtain on Washington's controversial involvement in the bloody Central American conflicts of the 1980s.

Afterward, I traveled to the countryside to watch rebels exchange their rifles for bags of beans and rice. I did not realize then how little recovery aid the United States would be giving Nicaragua and the region beyond those postwar party favors—how little compared with the billions of dollars in military aid the United States had just doled out.

Nor did I realize what a disappointing role my own Catholic Church would play in Central America's healing. Leftist liberation theology had certainly become too politicized in the region,

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Supporters of the ousted Honduran president, Manuel Zelaya, huddle together as police block the road near the Nicaraguan border at El Arenal in July 2009.

but it was supplanted by a church culture guided less by the memory of sensible progressives like Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero, who had been assassinated in 1980, than by the right-wing agenda of Nicaragua's Cardinal Miguel Obando y Bravo.

If I had realized all that back then, I would be less surprised and less saddened by what I am seeing in Central America today.

For starters, Ortega is Nicaragua's president again. He was elected in 2006 largely because, 16 years after Chamorro's U.S.-backed victory, most Nicaraguans were still living under grinding poverty. Ortega today is the same mumbling, authoritarian incompetent he was 20 years ago, but this time he has tightened his hold on power. Last October loyal Supreme Court justices lifted the Nicaraguan Constitution's one-term limit for presidents and let him run again in 2011.

As for the rest of Central America, it is arguably a more dangerous place today than it was when right-wing death squads and left-wing guerrillas ravaged the isthmus a generation ago. Thanks largely to corrupt justice systems, the region has one of the world's highest homicide rates: 80,000 murders in the past six years, more than the 75,000 people killed in El Salvador's horrific 1980-1992 civil war. Guatemala has even had to cancel daylight saving time because the dark mornings are a boon to armed thugs. Other indicators are equally dismal. Only sub-Saharan Africa has a worse regional literacy rate than does Central America—just one reason why Central America also has an average 47 percent poverty rate, 10 points higher than the average of Latin America as a whole.

Going Backward

Just as troubling is what happened last June 28 in Honduras, a country still recovering from the cataclysmic floods of Hurricane Mitch in 1998. A military coup, the kind of banana-republic scourge we thought had gone the way of the cold war, toppled a democratically elected president and showed how fragile the fledgling democracies of Central America still are.

Central America is still wrestling with the institutional backwardness and epic inequality that led to the conflicts of the 1980s. This time a different bogeyman spooks the right and incites the left. Back then it was Cuba's communist leader, Fidel Castro. Today it is Venezuela's socialist president, Hugo Chávez.

Honduras's President Manuel Zelaya had forged an alliance with Chávez, which Zelaya's foes feared would usher authoritarian socialism into Honduras. A wealthy rancher turned leftist, Zelaya was a middling leader at best; but he did seek to improve conditions for the 70 percent of Hondurans who live in poverty, and he riled the elite with measures like minimum-wage hikes. Still, as many Latin American leaders are prone to do, Zelaya put populism before constitutionalism, defying a Supreme Court order last June not to hold a referendum on whether a constitutional reform assembly should be convened. His opponents could have tried him for that breach, won a conviction, thrown him out and then basked in global applause for their working democratic institutions. Instead, they let soldiers exile Zelaya at gunpoint in his pajamas—then looked shocked when all they heard were global boos.

The coup leaders insisted the events of June 28 did not represent a coup at all. In the hours before the military whisked Zelaya off to Costa Rica, they claimed, Congress had already removed him from office for attempting by his referendum to eliminate Honduras's one-term limit for presidents. They brandished Article 239 of the Constitution, which states that any president who tries to alter the charter to allow re-election shall automatically forfeit the office.

The problem is, Zelaya's proposed nonbinding plebiscite never mentioned re-election. It would just have surveyed voters on whether a constitutional assembly should be held. So the re-election pretext, born more from fears about Chávez than an examination of the facts, does not hold up well. Legally Zelaya was still president when the troops came banging on his door and Congress was crowning the head of the Congress, Roberto Micheletti, as his successor.

The Obama administration at first condemned the Honduran putsch and imposed economic and political sanctions. But in the end it backed down and became one of the few nations to recognize the results of a new presidential election held by the coup government in November. The winner, Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo, took office on Jan. 27. Yet even Lobo, in a conversation at his opulent home outside Tegucigalpa, recently conceded that in the past two decades "Central America has actually gone backward. We have an utter lack of vision about who we are and how to order ourselves."

Given how long and how deeply the United States was engaged in Central America, that is hardly a legacy of which Americans can be proud. It may not have been the responsibility of the United States to make a new Switzerland of Central America, but ever since its Mayan glory faded a millennium ago, this region has been most famous for natural and political catastrophe. In light of the role the Reagan administration played in stoking the internecine carnage there, the United States had an obligation to do more than walk away after the combatants received their beans and rice.

Such neglect tends to diminish America's moral standing as the lantern of New World ideals like democracy and opportunity, if the nations we rub shoulders with are left in the shadows. Pragmatically, the result threatens U.S. national interests. Unable these past 20 years to climb out of a hole

ON THE WEB

A slideshow documenting the political crisis in Honduras.
americamagazine.org/slideshow

the United States helped it dig, Central America has become violent new turf for drug cartels, its volatility a driver of illegal immigration in the United States.

Lessons From a Coup

The Honduras situation should be a wake-up call. On the plus side, free markets and democratic elections are the norm today in Central America. But the coup that deposed Zelaya, which was backed by the handful of families that control the Honduran economy, is a stark reminder that life after elections in 21st-century Central America looks almost as dysfunctional as it did in the 20th and that the region's capitalist order still serves a narrow elite. "The millionaires who run things here still have no interest in preparing people for development," says Juan José Osorio, owner of a small jewelry shop in downtown Tegucigalpa. "You know, education, bank credit, basic things like that. I really don't think they're all that interested in development, period."

Micheletti, a member of Zelaya's Liberal Party, is a devout Catholic who claimed to be guided by God. But after replacing Zelaya, he turned out to be the same sort of autocrat he accused Chávez of being. Micheletti thumbed his nose at international calls to step down, then suspended civil liberties and shut down opposition media after Zelaya sneaked back into Honduras in September and holed up in the Brazilian embassy in Tegucigalpa. Micheletti also played the card that Latin American coup leaders have used for decades: a disingenuous insistence that a new presidential election would supersede the coup, wipe the slate clean and move the country forward. Lobo, who supported amnesty for both Zelaya and the army bosses who ousted him, agrees with Micheletti: "Hondurans," he says, "want to move on."

The success of the Honduran coup and the United States' tacit approval of it have moved Central America backward. The coup arose from and could now exacerbate the region's age-old institutional vacuum: the powers that be had too little faith in the rule of law to resolve Honduras's political crisis, so they had the army take care of it for them. Around Latin America, including neighboring Guatemala, there are unreformed military chiefs and other putsch-prone forces that can only be encouraged by what they have seen Micheletti get away with. They are also heartened that U.S. Latin America policy appears to be under the thumb of conservative Republicans in Congress, many of whom still believe that coups are an acceptable form of regime change and who pushed Obama to ease up on Micheletti.

Flimsy rule of law also stacks the deck against the social reforms Zelaya was pushing. With no reliable judicial systems to keep the economic and social playing fields level, Central America's six Spanish-speaking countries are still dominated by monopolies, if not outright oligarchies. The 14 coffee-baron clans that used to run El Salvador still control its

business sector to an extent that would make Bill Gates blush. A clique of monopolists does the same in Honduras.

I recently visited Adolfo Facussé, a Honduran textile tycoon, at his palatial family compound overlooking Tegucigalpa. Facussé dismissed the charge that Central American elites resist development because it threatens their feudal comfort. "The idea that the business elite here want people to stay poor is absurd," he said, noting the schools and microcredit projects his foundation funds. Still, he acknowledged that "Zelaya was right about the need to better redistribute wealth. He just went about it the wrong way." When I asked him what the right way is, Facussé only said: "This crisis has had a great impact on the country. Honduras can't be the same after this, I promise you."

Initiative?

A "show of initiative" is the public relations line the Honduran upper classes are using at the moment. It is similar to what Central America's plutocrats said at the end of the 1980s. Lobo insists it is sincere and claims he has moved his conservative National Party toward the center to "base our policies more on Christian humanism and the needs of the human being." His "platform for common good" includes broader access to education, more social investment and anti-corruption measures.

Those initiatives would be helpful, considering that one in three Honduran children under the age of 5 suffers chronic malnutrition. That statistic is even more disgraceful in Guatemala, where half of all children under 5 go hungry. It is little better in other Central American countries, like Panama, where a growing number of rural toddlers have died of malnutrition in recent years.

The United States ought to assist Central America's development beyond free elections and free trade. Judicial reform is as urgent as anti-poverty aid. The World Bank has spent $15 million over the past five years to help modernize Honduras's judicial system, but much more is required, like more microcredit. Banks and investors in the region rarely make loans and capital available to the small- and medium-sized businesses that employ most of the workforce. Less polarized politics also would be welcome, like the more moderate liberalism of El Salvador's President Mauricio Funes and the more socially conscious conservatism that Lobo is promising in Honduras.

Honduras's Cardinal Oscar Rodríguez Maradiaga has championed such remedies. But like Micheletti and the coup leaders, the cardinal let his fear of Chávez cloud his civic judgment when he essentially absolved the coup. It is one more reason supporters of the region will not be celebrating Central America's revival next month. Instead, they will not be asking how the past 20 years were squandered like so many bags of beans and rice. A

God Is Ready

Are you?

BY JAMES MARTIN

When I entered the Jesuit novitiate, I was baffled about what it meant to have a "relationship" with God. We novices heard about that a great deal, and I was stumped: What was I supposed to do to relate to God? What did that mean?

My biggest misconception was that I would have to change before approaching God. Like many beginners in the spiritual life, I felt that I wasn't worthy to approach God. So I felt foolish trying to pray. I confessed this to the assistant novice director. "What do I need to do before I can relate to God?" I asked.

"Nothing," he said. "God meets you where you are."

That was a liberating insight. Even though God is always calling us to constant conversion and growth, and even though we are imperfect and sometimes sinful people, God loves us as we are now. As the Indian Jesuit Anthony de Mello said, "You don't have to change for God to love you." This is one of the main insights of the First Week of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola: We are loved even in our imperfections.

The Christian can see this most clearly in the New Testament. Jesus often calls people to conversion, to cease sinning, to change their lives, but he does not wait until they have done so before meeting them. He enters into relationship with them as he finds them. He meets them where they are and as they are.

But there is another way of understanding this. Not only does God desire to be in relationship with you now, but God's way of relating to you often depends on where you are in your life.

So if you find meaning primarily through relationships, this is how God may want to meet you. Look for God through friendship. Just the other day a man who comes to me for spiritual direction said that he was having a hard time being grateful. When I asked where he most found God, his face brightened and he said, "My children!"

God can meet us anywhere. One of my closest Jesuit friends is a prison chaplain named George, who has recently started giving the Spiritual Exercises to inmates in a Boston jail. Not long ago, one inmate told George that he was about to punch a guy in the face when he suddenly felt God was giving him "some time" to reconsider. Here was God meeting an inmate in his prison cell.

God also meets you in ways that you can understand, in ways that are meaningful to you. Sometimes God speaks to you in a manner that is so personal, so tailored to the circumstances of your life that it is nearly impossible to explain it to others.

Félicité's Bird

One of my favorite instances of this in fiction is in Gustave Flaubert's luminous short story "A Simple Heart," written in 1877, which tells the tale of a poor servant named Félicité.

For many years Félicité, a good-hearted young woman, patiently bears up under her grim employer, the imperious Madame Aubain. At one point in the story, Madame Aubain gives her servant a brightly colored parrot named Loulou, really the only extraordinary thing that Félicité has ever owned. (This is the eponymous bird in

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/ROBERT ADRIAN ALTMAN

JAMES MARTIN, S.J., *is culture editor of* ***America****. This article is an edited excerpt from his new book* The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything *(HarperOne).*

Julian Barnes's popular book *Flaubert's Parrot*.)

Then disaster strikes: her beloved Loulou dies. In desperation, Félicité sends the bird to a taxidermist, who stuffs him. When the bird is returned, Félicité sets it atop a large wardrobe with other holy relics that she keeps. "Every morning," writes Flaubert, "as she awoke she saw him by the first light of day, and then would recall the days gone by and the smallest details of unimportant events, without sorrow, quite serenely."

After her mistress dies, Félicité grows old and retreats into a simple life of piety. "Many years passed," writes Flaubert. Finally, at the moment of her own death, Félicité is given a strange and beautiful vision: "[W]hen she breathed her last breath she thought she saw in the heavens as they opened a gigantic parrot, hovering over her head."

God comes to us in ways we can understand.

In the Beauty of the Lilies

Here is an example from my own life: At one point in my Jesuit training, I spent two years working in Nairobi, Kenya, working with the Jesuit Refugee Service. There I helped East African refugees who had settled in the city start small businesses to support themselves. At the beginning of my stay, cut off from friends and family in the States, I felt a crushing loneliness. After a few months of hard work, I also came down with mononucleosis, which required two months of recuperation. So it was a trying time.

Happily, I worked with some generous people, including Uta, a German Lutheran lay volunteer with extensive experience in refugee work in Southeast Asia. After I had recovered from my illness, our work flourished: Uta and I helped some refugees set up about 20 businesses, including tailoring shops, several small restaurants, a bakery and even a little chicken farm. Uta and I also started a small shop that sold the refugee handicrafts. It was located in a sprawling slum in Nairobi.

It was a remarkable turnaround—from lying on my bed, exhausted, wondering why I had come here, anguished that I would have to return home, puzzled over what I could ever accomplish, to busily working with refugees from all over East Africa, managing a shop buzzing with activity and realizing that this was the happiest and freest I had ever felt. Many days were difficult. But many days I thought, "I can't believe how much I love this work!"

One day I was walking home from our shop. The long brown path started at a nearby church on the edge of the slum, which was perched on a hill that overlooked a broad valley. From there the bumpy path descended through a thicket of floppy-leaved banana trees, thick ficus trees, orange day lilies, tall cow grass and cornfields. On the way into the valley I passed people silently working in their plots of land, who looked up and called out to me as I passed. Brilliantly colored, iridescent sunbirds sang from the tips of tall grasses. At the bottom of the valley was a little river, and I crossed a flimsy bridge to get to the other side.

When I climbed the opposite side of the hill, I turned to look back. Though it was around five in the afternoon, the equatorial sun blazed down on the green valley, illuminating the long brown path, the tiny river, the people, the banana tree, flowers and grass.

Quite suddenly I was overwhelmed with happiness. I'm happy to be here, I thought. After some loneliness, some illness and some doubts, I felt that I was exactly where I was supposed to be.

It was a surprising experience. Here was God speaking to me where I was—physically, emotionally and mentally—and offering what I needed on that day.

What was it, precisely? A feeling of clarity? Of longing? Of exaltation? It's hard to say, even today. Perhaps all of those things. But it was especially meaningful to me where I was at the time.

Any Time, Anywhere

God speaks to us in ways we can understand. God began to communicate with St. Ignatius during his long recuperation after sustaining injuries in a battle, when he was vulnerable and more open to listening. With me, on that day in Nairobi, God spoke to me through the view of that little valley.

God can also meet you at any time, no matter how confused your life may seem. You do not have to have a perfectly organized daily life to experience God. Your spiritual house does not need to be tidy for God to enter.

In the Gospels, for example, Jesus often meets people in the midst of their work: Peter mending his nets by the seashore, Matthew sitting at his tax collector's booth. But just as often Jesus encounters people when they are at their absolute worst: an adulterous woman about to be stoned, a woman who has been sick for many years, a possessed man not even in his right mind. In each of these situations God said to these busy, stressed-out, worried, frightened people, "I'm ready to meet you if you're ready to meet me."

If God meets you where you are, then where you are is a place to meet God. You do not have to wait until your life settles down, or the kids move out of the house, or you have found that perfect apartment, or you recover from that long illness. You do not have to wait until you've overcome your sinful patterns or are more "religious" or can pray "better." You do not have to wait for any of that.

God is ready now. A

ON THE WEB
James Martin, S.J., talks about Ignatian spirituality.
americamagazine.org/podcast

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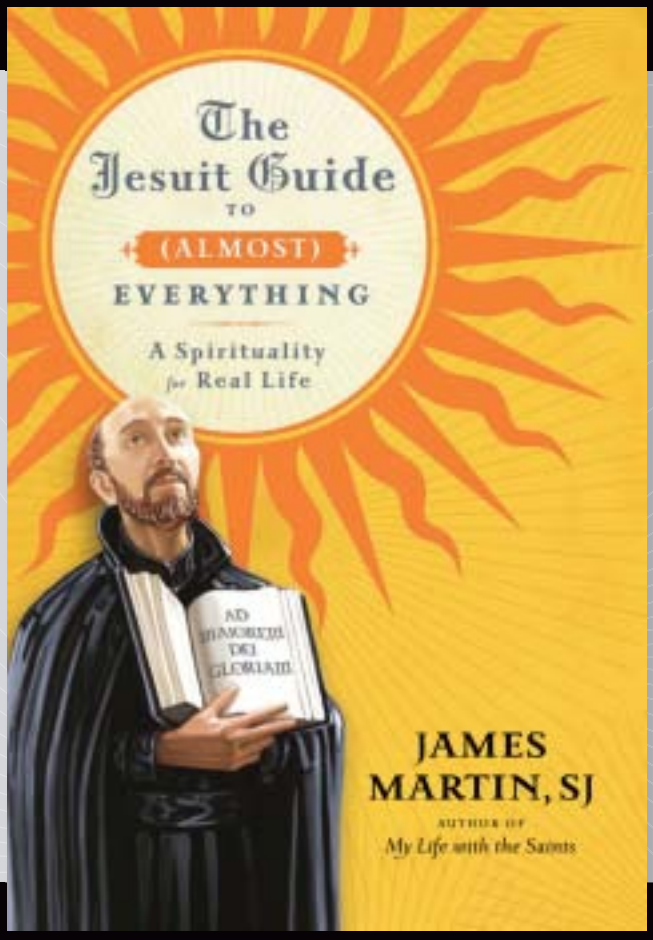

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From the author of *My Life with the Saints*

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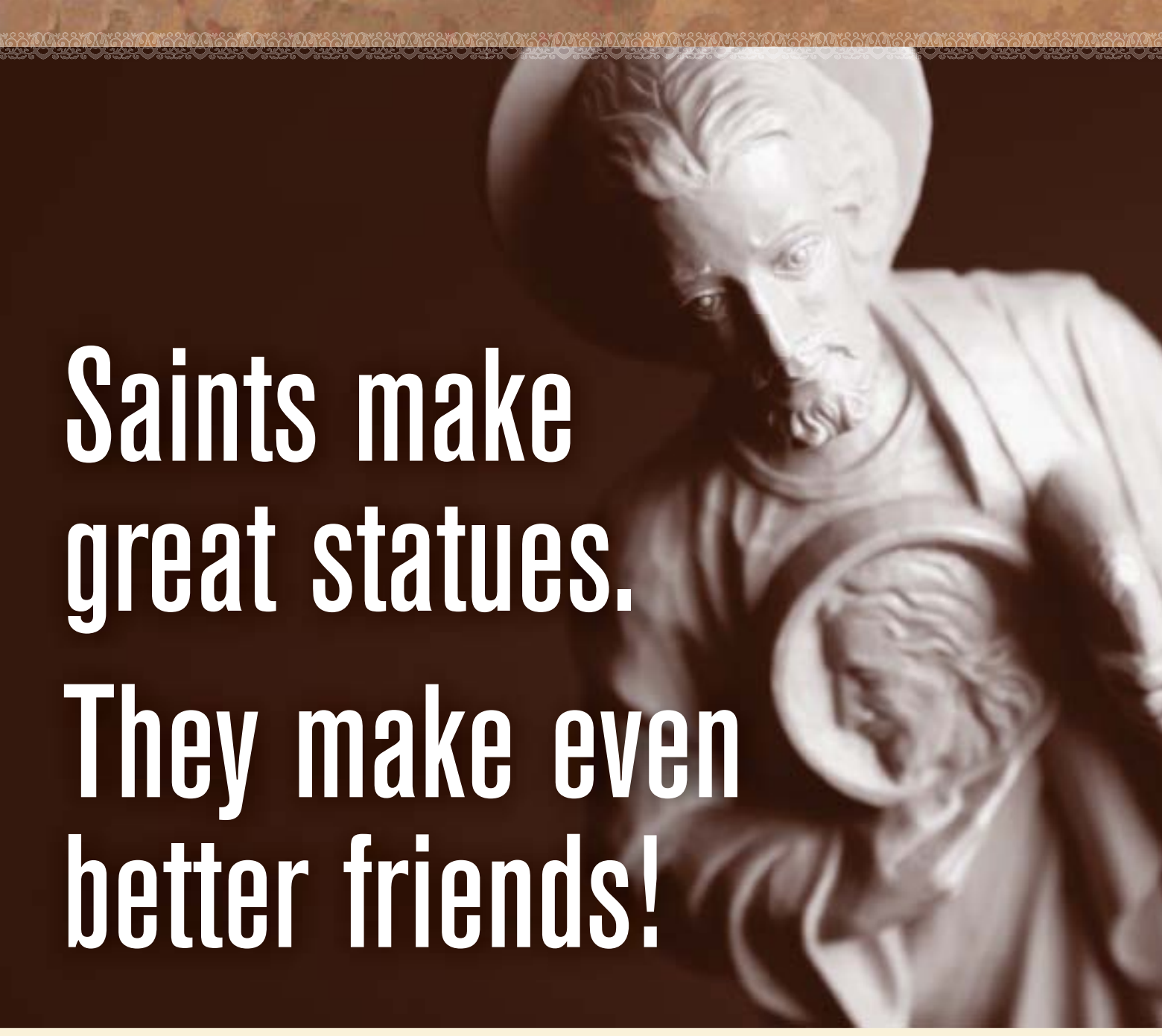

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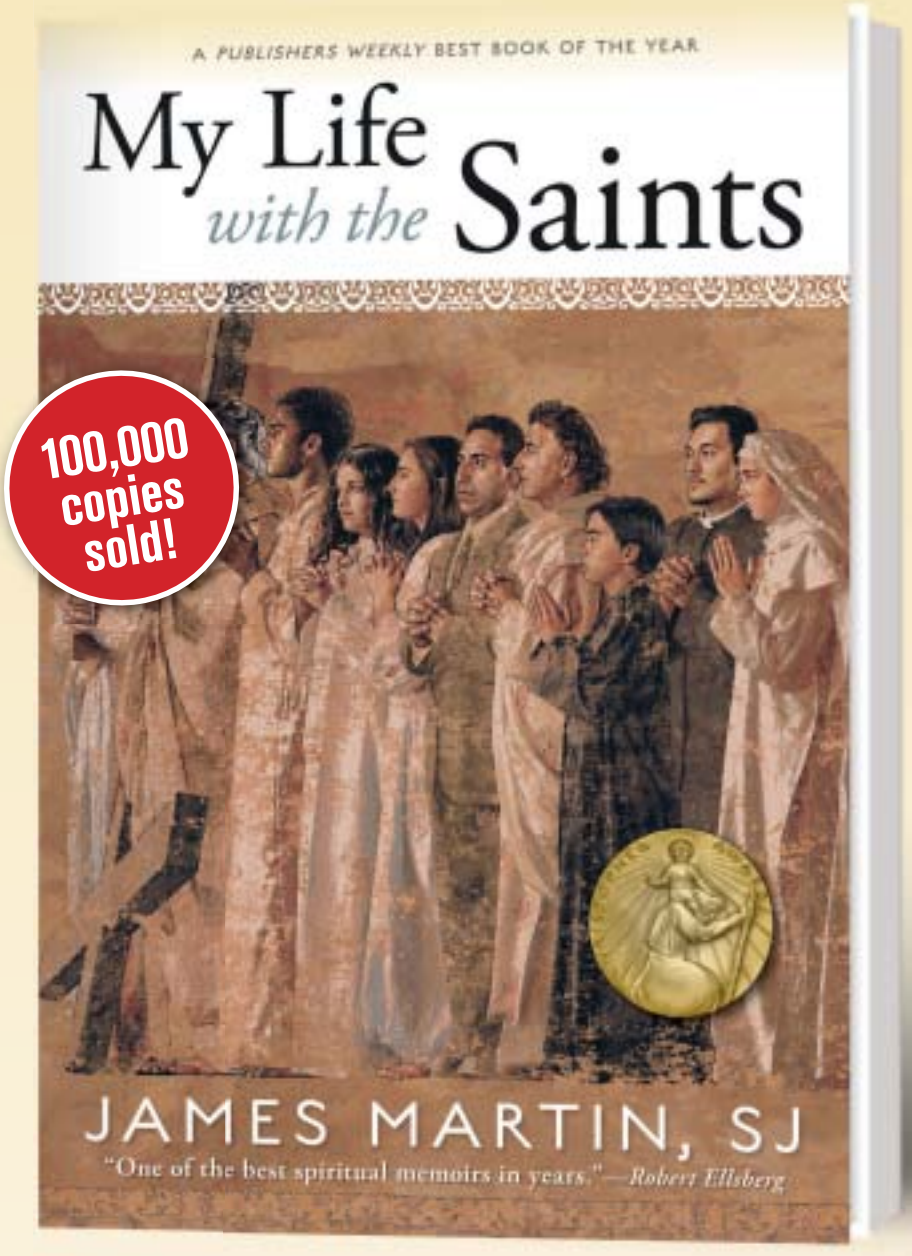
With the resources shown at right, you too can get to know those plaster saints as personal friends. And as you journey with Joseph, Peter, Therese of Lisieux, and others, you'll discover the saints' most significant and perhaps overlooked message: that God loves us—and can use us—just as we are.



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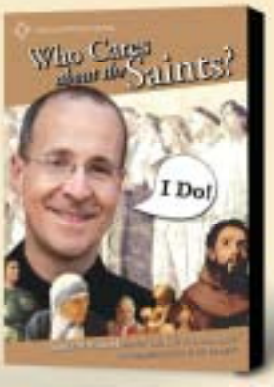

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Goodwill Offering

After my father's death, his socks and shirts seemed sacred.

BY VALERIE SCHULTZ

Although none of us had ever met the man, we all wore C.H.J.Jr.'s dress shirts that summer. Made of high-quality white, brushed cotton, each one featured French cuffs, a small collar and a classy, dark-blue monogram (from which we learned the original owner's initials) over the left breast. My brother worked at a secondhand clothing store and had picked up a dozen or so of the shirts for $2.

It was the 1970s, and we were college students home for the summer. The shirts hung loosely on our skinny, hippie frames and looked just right over bathing suits, jeans or cutoffs. They were so comfortable and, at the same time, so establishment, uptight. I mean, monograms! But even while we lived in them, we mocked them. We joked about the idea of C.H.J.Jr.'s family cleaning out his closet after his death and donating his expensive, conformist shirts to Goodwill Industries. If C.H.J.Jr. could see his Republican shirts now, we laughed, on braless girls and longhaired boys, he would roll in his grave.

Thirty years later, I am assaulted by guilt over the cavalier way we treated C.H.J.Jr.'s effects. The pain was especially sharp recently as I sorted through my dad's clothes two weeks after his death. I treated as sacred his socks, his pants, his shoes. I folded with reverence his trademark sport shirts—short-sleeved and banded at

the bottom—of which I found enough to clothe an entire floor of retirement home residents.

After my siblings plucked their memories from my dad's belongings, I brought home much of what was left, because I am the donor of the family. I am good at this kind of redistribution, and I am certain my dad would approve of our giving away his belongings. He could not stand to waste anything. I sorted through his military history books, his old pairs of glasses, his clothes—and then spent a day dropping off items at the public library, the Lions Club eyeglass-donation box at the optometrist and, finally, the state prison where I work.

The Catholic inmates there have established their own internal St. Vincent de Paul Society, which outfits the newly released—especially those of little means or with no families—with "dress outs," or decent clothes to wear into the free world. My dad had donated an armful of his sports coats to this good cause before his illness took over. He was tickled by the idea and certain that his wardrobe would help the parolees land a good job. I pictured each newly released man wearing one of dad's banded sport shirts: homeboys in Republican wear, turning over a new leaf, breathing free.

Today I wonder if C.H.J.Jr.'s family donated his things in haste, anxious after the funeral to get back to normal life (although I understand now that life will never be quite normal again when you are fatherless). I wonder if any of C.H.J.Jr.'s kids did with their father's clothes what I did: rolled up one shirt, the one my dad was wearing the day the hospice workers came to set him up with a hospital bed and morphine, which was the day before he died, and put it in my suitcase before leaving my mother's house. I could not quite put that last trace of his scent in the laundry. It is still unpacked.

When I was 20, I wore and washed my C.H.J.Jr. shirt until it was tattered and finally ripped into nothing. Had it survived, I hope I would now put it on with a different, humbler attitude. I hope I would honor C.H.J.Jr.'s life, unknown to me, appreciate his good taste in fabric and breathe a small prayer that his children and grandchildren are comforted by the thought of C.H.J.Jr. watching out for them from above.

But I might not, just as an ex-con probably would not think to bless the original owner of his funky new parole shirt. Then again, he just might. It is not a lot, that little breath of faith. But it helps. A

ART: RICK PARKER

VALERIE SCHULTZ, *who lives in Tehachapi, Calif., is an occasional contributor to* ***America.***

IDEAS | ROBERT BARRON

FRIENDLY PERSUASION

Lessons on social change, from Newman to 'Juno'

Did you ever wonder: How does a culture change its mind? What makes an entire people repudiate a position once held with blithe certainty? The question has long intrigued me.

Two great examples of this kind of transition are the seismic shifts that occurred in the United States in regard to slavery and civil rights. In the 18th century, both in Europe and America, most decent, rational people held that slavery was defensible. Even well-educated, thoughtful commentators—relying on the arguments of Aristotle, the witness of the Bible and uncontested tradition—argued that slavery was a positive feature of civil society. And as recently as the middle of the last century, many upstanding, pious and intelligent people felt that the segregation of the races, bolstered by Jim Crow laws throughout the South and by informal customs in the North, was a legitimate social arrangement. But now, it is fair to say, only mad people would hold that slavery or segregation is good. Today these practices cause revulsion in the hearts of rational people.

But how did such changes occur?

Rational argument played a role. Regarding slavery, one need only consult the arguments offered by Fra Bartolomé de las Casas in the lecture halls of 16th-century Europe, or the speeches of William Wilberforce in 18th-century England, or the polemical writings of the 19th-century American abolitionists. And in regard to civil rights, Frederick Douglass, W. E. B. Dubois, Booker T. Washington and the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. advanced vigorous arguments in speeches and books against the practice of segregation. But the fact that these rational arguments were in play

PHOTO: REUTERS/MOLLY RILEY

for decades before social change occurred demonstrates that they alone were not the sufficient or even primary reason for the changes.

Other factors were clearly operative. Would slavery have become repugnant to the American conscience without the personal witness of John Brown and the songs and paintings presenting him as a romantic hero? Without the face of Dred Scott, as captured by early photographers? Without the heroism of the all-black Massachusetts 54th volunteer regiment? Without Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*? Didn't Lincoln himself bear witness to the power of imagination to change the course of public affairs when he greeted Stowe with the words, "So you're the little lady who started this great war!"

More recently, would segregation have struck the American mind as morally reprehensible without the televised scenes of black protesters knocked to the ground by water hoses and threatened by snarling police dogs? The courage of Rosa Parks? The photograph of Dr. King being pelted with rocks while marching in Chicago? Or the image of King as he lay bleeding on the balcony of the Lorraine Hotel in Memphis?

All these, which appealed to the imagination and the heart, had at least as much influence on the decision-making process as rational argument.

In his late-career masterpiece *The Grammar of Assent*, John Henry Newman proposed a nuanced and textured account of the act of coming to assent. Formal inference (the Aristotelian syllogism in its various forms) played a key role but by no means the decisive one. Alongside strict argument, there was what he called "informal inference." By this he meant that whole range of instinct, intuition, feel, hunch, half-formed argument and unconscious motivation. John Locke had opined that the quality of assent must be commensurate with the quality of the inferential support that one was able to muster for it. Newman countered that the mind simply does not work that way. Very often we give full assent to propositions for which there is no clinching argument. The reason is that the nonrational is not necessarily the irrational.

This nuanced analysis might prove helpful in our consideration of the culture's attitude toward abortion. To be clear: I am convinced by the arguments that thoughtful people have introduced against abortion. Furthermore, I am convinced that 100 years from now (sooner, I hope), only mad people will think that partial-birth abortion—to give the most extreme example—is a practice that should be protected by law.

Although we should continue to formulate arguments, these will never be enough to change the mind of the culture. In line with Newman's principles, we must rely on various visual, visceral and imaginative means. I think, for example, that the pro-life marches on Washington for the anniversary of Roe v. Wade—at which the vast majority of participants are under the age of 30—have been extraordinarily effective at convincing the country that the future might not belong to the pro-choicers. The prevalence of ultrasound images of unborn children have made the pro-life position more persuasive to more people than have 30 years of arguments. As archbishop of New York, Cardinal Edward Egan once issued a letter on abortion in which he cogently presented the position of the Catholic Church. Along with the letter, he included a photograph of an unborn child at 20 weeks

ON THE WEB
Jake Martin, S.J., on the troubling rise of snark.
americamagazine.org/culture

of development, as human in appearance as any newborn infant. Several times in the course of the letter, he urged the reader simply to "look at that picture."

Two years ago, the movie "Juno" inspired a great deal of commentary, not only because it was beautifully written and acted, but because it presented a young woman who decided not to end her problem pregnancy by abortion. In one of the film's pivotal scenes, Juno approaches an abortion clinic to terminate her pregnancy and runs into one of her classmates, a simple but earnest girl who is demonstrating there. As Juno brushes by, her classmate says, "Your baby has fingernails!" Once inside the somewhat squalid clinic, Juno begins to notice the fingernails of the people who surround her, and she leaves the place.

What happened to Juno through this encounter? She did not consider a new argument. Instead, she made a connection at a visual, visceral level, and her mind changed.

John Henry Newman, Harriet Beecher Stowe and "Juno," among others, have much to teach about changing the minds of individuals and the collective mind of a culture. It takes arguments, to be sure, but it requires much more—deft and clever use of those things that appeal to the eyes, the imagination and the gut.

REV. ROBERT BARRON *holds the Francis Cardinal George Chair of Faith and Culture at the University of St. Mary of the Lake/ Mundelein Seminary in Mundelein, Ill.*

BOOKS ON THE BIBLE | DANIEL J. HARRINGTON

INTERSECTIONS

Exploring where Judaism and Christianity meet

An intersection is a junction where one road crosses another. This year's annual survey of books on the Bible focuses mostly on some recent publications that explore intersections between Judaism and Christianity, both in antiquity and today. They remind us of the Jewish roots of Christianity as well as the divergent paths they have taken.

The Ten Commandments found in both Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 stand alongside the Lord's Prayer and the Sermon on the Mount as among the most beloved and influential passages in the Christian Bible. Martin Luther claimed that "those who know the Ten Commandments perfectly know the entire Scriptures." In *The Ten Commandments* (Westminster John Knox), Patrick D. Miller, emeritus professor of Old Testament Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary and author of *The Religion of Ancient Israel* (2000), seeks not only to provide a fresh reading of each commandment in its original context but also to lay out the trajectory of its movement and place in the Bible as a whole.

An experienced teacher and distinguished scholar, Miller brings to this task extraordinary philological and historical learning as well as wide knowledge of the Bible, love of theology and pastoral sensitivity. In dealing with each commandment he tries to get at its fundamental meaning, present context, resonances and reflections in other parts of the Old Testament, its place in the New Testament and how it might be preached and applied today. An appendix deals with the ethics of the Ten Commandments. Miller's remarkable ability to link the Ten Commandments to other parts of the Bible and to bring them alive as representing the Bible in miniature gives substance to Luther's claim and shows how they can serve as a fruitful entry point in developing a comprehensive biblical theology and an authentically biblical spirituality.

"Agrarianism" is a way of thinking and ordering life in community that is based on the health of the land and of living creatures. In *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible* (Cambridge Univ. Press), Ellen F. Davis, a professor of Bible and practical theology at Duke Divinity School, explores the agrarian mindset of the biblical writers by bringing Israel's Scriptures into sustained conversation with the works of contemporary agrarian writers like Wendell Berry. She is convinced that only a thorough understanding of how ancient Israel represents the human place in the created order can enable Christians to delineate a responsible vision of what participation in the renewal of creation might mean.

Davis first considers the visions of Isaiah and Jeremiah about the unmaking of the created order through human sinfulness and shows how the concerns of modern agrarians can illumine our reading of biblical texts. Next she focuses on key passages, chiefly from the Torah, that focus on creation, manna, eating and land care, and covenantal economics. Then she develops insights from the agrarian prophets Amos and Hosea and the wisdom books and explores the potential of urban agrarianism today in the light of various Old Testament texts. Davis concludes that in its character of hopefulness tempered by sad experience, the biblical conversation is a good match for our contemporary agrarian conversation and an indispensable resource for enriching it. This is biblical theology at its best.

In *Stones and Stories: An Introduction to Archaeology and the Bible* (Fortress), Don C. Benjamin, who teaches biblical and Near Eastern studies at Arizona State University,

offers a masterful description of how Near Eastern archaeologists listen to the evidence, what they hear and what difference it makes for understanding the Bible. His hope is that archaeology and biblical studies may once more be partners in a conversation that will be better informed and more modest than it has been in the past, especially with regard to what each discipline can contribute and can expect from the other.

With particular attention to Old Testament texts, Benjamin organizes his presentation with reference to five approaches that have developed over the years. At each point he explains the approach, illustrates its value with discussions of specific sites and discoveries and indicates how various biblical passages can be illuminated by archaeology. Benjamin offers a timely and nonpolemical invitation to archaeologists and biblical scholars to resume working together in a more respectful and fruitful dialogue. His handbook (which can serve as a textbook) is enriched by many photographs and other illustrations, text-boxes, references to Web sites, summaries, questions for discussion, a list of universities where this kind of archaeology can be studied, a glossary of terms and an extensive annotated bibliography.

In *Back to Masada* (Israel Exploration Society), Amnon Ben-Tor offers a splendid illustration of what biblical archaeology can and should be. Masada was the last outpost in the First Jewish Revolt against the Romans in A.D. 73 (or 74). Before that it had been built up by Herod the Great on an elaborate scale in the late first century B.C. as a combination of vacation facility and fortress. The site was excavated in the mid-1960s by the famous Israeli scholar Yigael Yadin and has become the second most popular tourist attraction in Israel (after Jerusalem), drawing more than half a million visitors each year.

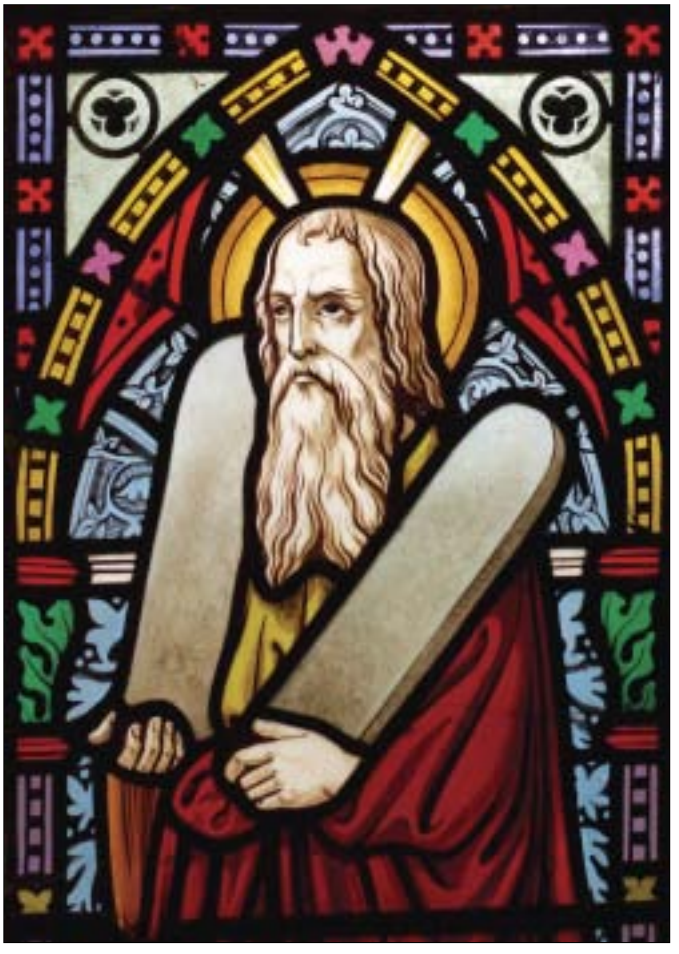

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/SYBILLE YATES

Yadin produced a popular book on Masada in 1966, and the results of the excavations have been published thus far in eight massive volumes with contributions by many of the top Israeli archaeologists trained by Yadin. Ben-Tor, now the Yigael Yadin emeritus professor of archaeology at the Hebrew University, who describes his own work with Yadin at Masada from 1963 to 1965 as "the best years of my life," has synthesized for the general public the contents of those highly technical reports. After describing the phases in the settlement of Masada, Ben-Tor provides a guided tour of the various buildings and other installments at Masada, considers the finds (pottery, written materials, coins, etc.), discusses the final battle for Masada with reference to the artifacts discovered there, notes the reuse of the site by Christian monks in the Byzantine period and evaluates the relevance of the excavations for assessing the "Masada myth" in its ancient and modern forms.

A distinguished archaeologist in his own right, Ben-Tor has performed a great service by making accessible the scientific reports on the Masada excavation for the general public. The close relationship of the more than 250 beautifully produced photographs and other illustrations with the main text makes this volume a perfect introduction to the "nitty-gritty" of archaeology and to the material culture of Israel in the first century (and thus of Jesus and the Gospels).

One of the most prominent developments in biblical studies over the past 30 years has been "the Third Quest of the Historical Jesus." Although this quest has taken many forms, one of its characteristics has been a renewed interest in and respect for the Jewishness of Jesus. In his massive synthesis of Jesus research, Craig S. Keener, professor of New Testament at Palmer Theological Seminary of Eastern University in Pennsylvania, gives particular attention to Jewish sources and is especially concerned to situate Jesus within the context of Judaism.

In *The Historical Jesus of the Gospels* (Eerdmans), Keener investigates how much we can know about Jesus from the best sources available and offers examples of how these sources can pro-

vide us more adequate information about Jesus than many scholars think we have. After surveying the disparate views about Jesus that have developed in recent years, he considers the character of the canonical Gospels and their value as historical sources. Then he reflects on what we can learn about Jesus' life, teachings, death and resurrection from the best sources. Keener concludes that on the whole there is much we can know about Jesus historically, and that the first-century Gospels preserved by the church remain by far the best sources for this information.

Keener's work is thorough, believing and balanced. His familiarity with the pertinent ancient texts and modern scholarship is very impressive. More than half of his almost 900-page book is devoted to appendices, endnotes, bibliography and indices. At several points Keener recalls his own conversion from atheism to Christianity, a refreshing feature at a time when the reverse journey is more often highlighted. In describing and evaluating the views of other scholars, Keener is fair and polite, and his own views on Jesus and the Gospels reflect mainline biblical scholarship and are compatible with the Christian theological tradition.

In his review of modern Pauline research, entitled *Approaches to Paul: A Student's Guide to Recent Scholarship* (Fortress), Magnus Zetterholm, associate professor of New Testament studies at Lund University in Sweden, focuses on Paul's relationship to Judaism. After an introduction to what the New Testament says about Paul's life and apostolic activity, Zetterholm traces the emergence of the "standard view" of Paul in 19th-century German Protestantism. Basic to this view were a negative understanding of Judaism as a religion of "works righteousness" and the Lutheran doctrine of justification by faith alone. This paradigm continued well into the 20th century and still has

many supporters today. Under the influence of Krister Stendahl, E. P. Sanders, James Dunn and N. T. Wright, however, there has developed what has come to be called "the new perspective" on Paul, one that situates Paul more accurately in the complex and varied context of first-century Judaism and rejects reading Paul through the spectacles of Luther's theological problems. This development has in turn inspired both spirited defenses of the traditional Protestant position as well as even more radical readings of Paul from a variety of perspectives (philosophical, postcolonial, feminist, interdisciplinary). Zetterholm provides a fair and lively presentation of some important aspects of modern Pauline studies. His guide can and should be read and appreciated by anyone interested in the apostle Paul and in modern biblical scholarship. He argues persuasively that trying to understand Paul as part of first-century Judaism, rather than in conflict with Judaism, is a better perspective when searching for the historical Paul.

In *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision* (InterVarsity Press Academic), N. T. Wright, Anglican bishop of Durham, England, offers a passionate and stimulating treatment of the core of Paul's theology. As a proponent of the "new perspective" on Paul, Wright has been attacked by some more conservative Protestant exegetes and theologians for failing to give sufficient attention to the doctrine of justification by faith. His book is both an engaging exploration of Paul's theology and a lively defense of his own approach to what in some circles is regarded as the heart of Christian doctrine.

The first part of the book develops Wright's approach to justification according to Paul, while the second part offers exegetical analyses of pertinent passages in Galatians and Romans, as well as other letters. Wright has established a well-deserved reputation as one of the best biblical theologians of our time. In this volume he demonstrates how the new perspective not only situates Paul more securely in first-century Judaism but also greatly enriches and enlivens our appreciation of Paul's theological achievements.

Wright contends that Paul's statements about justification have been read in a too narrow and excessively individualistic context, especially under the influence of Martin Luther. He maintains that while justification is an element in Paul's theology, it has to be understood in the wider biblical framework of covenant, Christology, the law court and eschatology. He regards the covenant as God's plan for humankind unfolded in his promises to Abraham that he would become the father of many nations, reaching its pivotal moment in Jesus' death and resurrection, and thus opened up to all peoples as we await the full manifestation of God's kingdom. In this framework the legal metaphor of justification means God's validation of the status of those who are in Christ and who trust and believe in God's covenant. The "faith of Christ" is primarily the trust and fidelity that Jesus showed as God's Son in response to his Father's plan.

Whether Judaism in the time of Jesus and Paul was a missionary religion has long been a topic of intense debate among biblical scholars, with learned monographs arguing either side of the question. In *Crossing Over Sea and Land: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period* (Hendrickson), Michael F. Bird, tutor in New Testament at Highland Theological College in Dingwall, Scotland, explores the nature of early Jewish proselytizing activity among Gentiles and its significance for the origin and development of Christian missionary activity. He cuts a middle path through the dispute and may well have solved the problem.

Taking his title from Mt 23:15, Bird contends that while Second

Temple Judaism attracted proselytes and facilitated the conversion of Gentiles, it was not self-consciously missionary, since the role of Israel, the Torah and the synagogue was never directed unequivocally toward Gentile recruitment. He bases his position on an analysis of ancient sources pertaining to Jewish missionary activity in Palestine and the Diaspora, as well as evidence from the New Testament and early Christianity. In a 20-page appendix he assembles the major ancient primary sources on Gentile conversion and Jewish missionary activity. He also provides abundant bibliographical information pertaining to the topic. A rising star in New Testament studies, Bird displays a talent for using literary and historical analysis of biblical texts to illumine important theological topics.

For those in search of a holistic and comprehensive approach to biblical interpretation and theology, Scott W. Hahn's *Covenant and Communion: The Biblical Theology of Pope Benedict XVI* (Brazos) will be very helpful. Hahn, who teaches at St. Vincent Seminary in Latrobe, Pa., and the Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio, contends that more than any other theologian of his time Pope Benedict XVI has articulated a biblical theology that synthesizes modern scientific methods with the theological hermeneutic of spiritual exegesis. He describes Benedict as less a systematic thinker than a symphonic thinker, and observes that his writings are usually composed like a polyphonic melody from many different strains—scriptural, historical, literary, liturgical and patristic.

Drawing heavily on direct quotations from the pope's many writings, Hahn discusses Benedict's theological project, his critique of biblical criticism, the hermeneutics of faith, the spiritual science of theology, the inner unity of revelation, the theology of the divine economy, mystagogy and the transformation of sacrifice, the cosmic liturgy and the beauty and necessity of the theologian's task. Catholic readers will find in Benedict's views and practice echoes of the many excellent documents about biblical interpretation that have emanated from the Vatican in recent years. They will appreciate especially the pope's insistence in declaring indispensable the historical critical method (properly understood) and come to understand better the place of the "spiritual sense" in the process of biblical exegesis. Benedict's approach to Scripture can be especially useful in helping us to find the unity and spiritual dynamism amidst the diversity in the Christian Bible and in the history of its interpretation.

DANIEL J. HARRINGTON, S.J., *is professor of New Testament and editor of New Testament Abstracts at Boston College School of Theology and Ministry.*

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LETTERS

Justifiable Anger

Re "Bishops Respond to Attacks on John Carr" (Signs of the Times, 2/22): Maybe I should not write anything because I am too angry right now at the person or persons who would do this to John Carr. He has kept the faith. I just hope he hasn't finished the course. He gives credibility to the U.S.C.C.B. in a way no other person could. He is a defender of the bishops always, and he does not have a heretical bone in his body. He is an articulate, intelligent voice for the bishops and for the church. Those who have accused him of having an agenda of his own do not know John Carr. That he has a strong social conscience there is no doubt, but it is a Catholic social conscience.

JAMES E. O'LEARY
Corpus Christi, Tex.

Connecting to the Spirit

"Feed Your Spirit," by Rabbi Allen Maller (2/15), was excellent. I would like our Catholic homilists to share his approach to fasting. There is almost no teaching to the general Catholic population about fasting. It is most often linked with the "woe is me" approach to penitence. Ancient cultures seem to have appreciated the fast as a means of remaining connected to their corporal and spiritual selves. Our own native American cultures practiced the fast in a variety of ways and learned, it would seem, a meaningful connection to a spirit greater than themselves. Thank you, Rabbi Maller.

FRANK HUBER
Grand Junction, Colo.

Sacred Space

What a wonderful story about Sister Elaine ("Ward Healer," by Aaron Biller, 3/1)! I have been a board-certified chaplain with the National Association of Catholic Chaplains for 15 years and have had the privilege of

serving in health care ministry in a variety of settings and locations.

The unique aspect of this ministry is that every day chaplains are invited onto holy ground, into truly sacred space. Health care provides a special "leveling of the human family" like no other. While many chaplains are like Sister Elaine, vowed religious, the vast majority of N.A.C.C. certified chaplains are lay women and men professionally trained and educated for this special ministry.

Truly this formally recognized ministry within our church is a practical incarnation of the call to ministry that the Second Vatican Council embodied.

LARRY EHREN
Cerritos, Calif.

Living Out the Gospel

Your story about Sister Elaine is truly inspiring. Having had some opportunities to join with others in hospital settings for prayer and reflection, I am aware of how impromptu moments of prayer with them integrate a sense of urgency and intimacy. It is humbling to be invited to join others when they are perhaps most fearful of the future, and to rely on the Holy Spirit to provide the words of encouragement and hope. For Sister Elaine to provide that support for so many years is remarkable. What a tribute to living out the Gospel in her life!

JIM GROGAN
Mount Laurel, N.J.

Lifting All Boats

Re "Recession Drives Surge of Poverty in Suburbs" (Signs of the Times, 3/1): The primary cause of homelessness is lack of a decent job and lack of any job security. But while we are in this current recession/depression we are rapidly cutting huge holes in the safety net. Angry, struggling homeowners and low-wage workers rant against those who are supported by welfare, who are recent immigrants and who are most vulnerable to the present eco-

nomic instability.

We must stop the selfishness and reach out as one united community of believers to lift all boats and take special care of those who are injured the most. If we can't be true to each other in the worst of times, how will we play nice when the good times ever come back?

MIKE EVANS
Anderson, Calif.

Spread Your Enthusiasm

Re "Of Many Things," by James Martin, S.J. (3/1): I couldn't agree more with your comments on enthusiasm for our faith. Funny thing about enthusiasm; it's contagious!

BILL HAYS
Worcester, Mass.

Less Than Enthusiastic

Bishop Serratelli ("Welcoming the Roman Missal," 3/1) writes that "we bishops hope pastors and the faithful will join us in seizing this opportunity with enthusiasm." As a long-time priest I "seize this opportunity" to sympathize with Bishop Serratelli and others who work for the company, as they struggle to defend a translation that is simply awful. I am sure they know this, but of course they cannot speak on the record.

The whole new Missal should be trashed and a new one constructed, one that is the result of thorough consultation, without secrecy and without the usual power and control issues, and that is composed by our best and brightest. But before the new Missal is shelved, its progenitor, *Liturgiam Authenticam*, with its countless mistakes and assumptions, should be confined somewhere deep in the Vatican secret archives.

JAN LARSON
North Bend, Wash.

A Wake-up Call

Re "A Debt to the Future" (Editorial, 3/1): There is a simple way for Congress to hear from the American people. Require that all government bond sales be limited to purchase by United States citizens. I think that would provide a wake-up call.

JOHN McSHANE
Westminster, Calif.

Slashes and Cuts

How do we reduce our debt? First, stop spending! Stop creating more federal agencies (do we still need a Rural Electrification Agency?) and fiefs like special czars. President Obama is spending like a drunken sailor, especially to reward favored special interest groups. Eliminate all earmarks and cut federal programs and agencies that no longer serve the purpose for which they were created.

A statutory commission is no better than President Obama's task force, which is nothing more than a cover to raise taxes. We need leaders who lead and who listen to the people. It all has to go through them anyway.

How to prevent inflation? Increase productivity by cutting all the monstrous red tape and regulations that are strangling the private sector. The wealth that has been created in this country did not come from government. It was created by free people and entrepreneurs. Elect leaders who understand this.

JIM COLLINS
Farmington Hills, Mich.

Another Candidate

The lay Catholics mentioned in both "Venerabile Subito!" (Current Comment, 12/14) and Letters (1/18) are indeed worthy of consideration for canonization. There is, however, one outstanding lay woman omitted. Mary Virginia Merrick (1866-1955), who founded the Christ Child Society in 1887.

This organization continues today with many chapters and hundreds of members. It has helped thousands of poor children with settlement houses for after-school activities, summer camps and Christmas gifts. Ms. Merrick was years ahead of her time in seeing a social need and responding, doing so from her wheelchair, having become an invalid at 17 years of age. This incapacity never hindered her efforts to bring about what we now call "no child left behind."

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One Capital Exception

Re "Moral Convictions," by Emily Brennan (Books and Culture, 2/22): In the earliest years of "Law & Order," several of the cast would welcome my students to the set on Pier 23. Especially generous with their time were Steven Hill and Michael Moriarty. Hill, who played the D.A., Adam Schiff, spoke of his faith; his religious observances sometimes kept him off the set. Moriarty (A.D.A. Ben Stone) treated us with great respect and provided insight into the challenges of developing characters in the series.

"Law & Order" remains one of the few television series to sustain my interest. No doubt its moral convictions add to my appreciation. There is, however, one exception: the frequently expressed desire for the death penalty, especially by Jack McCoy (Sam Waterston), who plays the Manhattan district attorney. That position is a far cry from that of the recently retired Manhattan D.A. Robert Morgenthau, a stalwart opponent of capital punishment.

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Claiming Our Inheritance

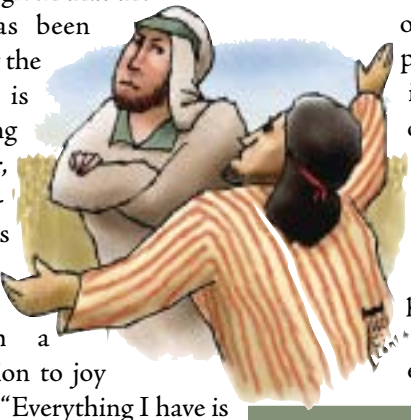
FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT (C), MARCH 14, 2010

Readings: Jos 5:9-12; Ps 23:1-6; 2 Cor 5:17-21; Lk 15:1-3, 11-32

"Everything I have is yours" (Lk 15:32)

One often hears of bitter disputes among siblings when it comes time to divide up the inheritance left by their parents. The parable Jesus tells begins on a shocking note—the younger brother demands his share before the father is even dead! The older brother stands there mute as the father, without a word of protest, gives each son his share. The elder brother's objections come later, when his brother returns home and the former fears his own portion will be jeopardized. Both sons display a sense of entitlement. They have calculated what they have coming to them and they are making sure they collect all of it. This is not a poor family. They have cattle and means to put on a feast. The father has a fine robe, sandals and a ring to put on his son's finger.

When the father hands over his considerable wealth to his sons, one would think they would be happy. But both end up miserable. The younger one squanders everything, while the older one hoards it all, not spending even a little bit to entertain his friends. Both complain about what they have not been given. The younger son, after using up all he had inherited, lowers his sights and would be satisfied with the slop fed to the swine, "but nobody gave him anything." The elder son complains bitterly to his father: "You never gave me even a young goat to feast on with my friends." This accusation is puzzling, given that the son already has been given everything the father has. It is equally surprising that the father, instead of angrily dismissing his son's baseless accusations, responds with a renewed invitation to joy and a reminder: "Everything I have is yours"—already! But something has died in both sons. Their greed and jealousy have blinded them to the overflowing abundance that is theirs.



The first son has come back to life. He has hit rock bottom, believes he no longer deserves to be called *son*, and acknowledges the wrong he has done his father and the whole community. What has brought him back to life is not his own coming to his senses and his own efforts to return to the source of his heritage. Rather, it is the father's unfailing love, as he seeks him out and flings open his arms, wrapping him in a mantle of forgiveness that resurrects in him the response of love and joy and gratitude, along with the sure knowledge that all is given freely and totally. This heritage cannot be earned and it is never depleted, even by our most egregious misuses.

As a figure of the divine, the father offers a gift of reconciliation that shatters the too-narrow vision of children vying for a bigger piece of the pie, when all along the whole of the inheritance is offered to each and all, with no bounds. This gift begins a process of healing that expands our puny estimation of our inheritance and opens our capacity to be transformed by the giver, enlarging our capacity to pass on that heritage to others.

Paul talks about this process as a "new creation." The One who created an ever-expanding universe is ever drawing us deeper into the divine embrace, so as to extend that heritage outward in ever-widening circles. The question that is left unanswered at the end of the Gospel parable is whether or not the older son can accept the inheritance being offered him. The father will not give up on this son, who is filled with joyless resentment as he calculates what is owed him. The source of grace and compassion will wait as long as it takes for transformative love to do its recreative work.

BARBARA E. REID

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- Talk with God about what is dead in you that longs to come to life again.
- What inheritance does God want you to claim right now?
- Ask Christ to help you let go any resentment toward others with whom you share this inheritance.

ART: TAD DUNNE

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