



America

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The Quality Of Mercy

PRISONS, FORGIVENESS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE
KATIE ROSE QUANDT • WILLIAM O'BRIEN

The Debut of
'Generation Faith'

OF MANY THINGS

The bell tolled last month for Francois Mourad, a Franciscan priest and hermit, who died on June 23 after soldiers linked to a jihadist group attacked the monastery near Ghassanieh, Syria where he had taken refuge. The Syriac Catholic Archbishop of Hassake-Nisibi told Fides news agency that Father Mourad “sent me several messages which showed he was aware of living in a dangerous situation and was willing to offer his life for peace in Syria and the world.” Father Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Franciscan priest who is head of the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land, told Vatican Radio that Ghassanieh—“like other Christian villages—has been almost completely destroyed and is almost totally abandoned.... The only thing we can do, other than pray for Father Francois and all the victims, is pray that this folly ends soon and that no more weapons are sent to Syria.”

The news of Father Mourad’s murder, frankly, left me despondent: Like Job, I thought, “my soul is weary of my life.” As much as I wish it were otherwise, the truth is that this sort of news is very familiar, almost expected in a way: it is, to borrow a phrase from Evelyn Waugh, merely a blow upon a bruise, just another right uppercut to the soul. And along with Job I find myself wondering whether we’re going to make it. Humankind, I mean.

America’s staff spent the last two weeks crafting this issue’s editorial on the conflict in Syria. It is a thoughtful, well-written and intelligent analysis from a Catholic Christian perspective. And yet it seems so inadequate in light of events. If this were a movie, then the news from Syria would constitute what writers call the “all-is-lost moment,” the scene between pages 75 and 90 of a screenplay when the protagonist is as far away as possible from achieving his or her goal. It’s tempting sometimes to think that life is a perpetual all-is-lost moment. We know in faith, however,

that the all-is-lost moment, as in a good screenplay, is not and cannot be the end of the story. The Lord has already conquered death; the final act is already written.

It’s not always easy to believe that, of course, but stories like Joey Kane’s help. Young Mr. Kane’s account in this issue of his life with Down syndrome is the first in a new series we’re calling “Generation Faith,” articles by high school and college students about the role that faith plays in their increasingly complicated and challenging lives. “Some people,” Joey writes, “may think that I would be treated badly because I have Down syndrome. My experience has not been this way. God tells everyone to treat people equally, and I think that most people act in this way.” Thus a light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.

Elsewhere in this issue, Katie Rose Quandt looks at how faith-based advocacy groups are making headway in their efforts to end the cruel practice of solitary confinement, and William O’Brien discusses the radically transformative power of forgiveness. “Authentic Gospel forgiveness is not innocent piety; it is revolutionary. It betokens the collapse of one form of social order and announces a new one: the reign of God,” Mr. O’Brien writes.

“What moral resources are available for Catholics to discern the best path forward?” the editors ask with regard to Syria. The resources available, of course, are the radical love and forgiveness to which the Gospel testifies, the values exemplified in the lives of Joey Kane and his brother, Matt—the same values for which Father Mourad gave his life and that are captured so well in the prayer he would have surely known by heart: “Make me a channel of your peace/ Where there’s despair in life let me bring hope/ Where there is darkness, only light/ And where there’s sadness, ever joy.”

MATT MALONE, S.J.

America

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Cover: Natalie Rossi, R.S.M., a prison chaplain, prays with a Catholic inmate in solitary confinement at the State Correctional Institution for Women in Cambridge Springs, Pa. CNS photo/Bob Roller

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ON THE WEB

Paul Elie, right, discusses the Catholic Book Club selection, *The Violent Bear It Away*. Plus, Cornelius F. Murphy Jr. writes on the role of the **family in the new evangelization**. All at americamagazine.org.



People Do Change

On May 14, 1985, in Gary, Ind., four teenage girls killed Ruth Pelke, a 78-year-old Bible teacher, stabbing her 33 times while they ransacked the house for cash and jewelry and then stole her car. Three of the four were convicted of murder; one was pregnant, another a young mother. Paula Cooper, 15 when the murder happened, was identified as the main culprit, pled guilty with no plea deal and was sentenced to death.

Indiana legislators later changed the law to make 16 the minimum age for a death penalty but wrote the law to exclude Ms. Cooper. In 1989 the Indiana Supreme Court ruled it unconstitutional to execute someone under 16 and commuted Ms. Cooper's sentence to 60 years. Then Ms. Cooper, whose young life had been a hellish net of abuse, including a near murder within her own family, saw her world change. Roman Catholic groups, Amnesty International, the American Civil Liberties Union and European political organizations made her a symbol of the anti-death-penalty movement. An Italian group gave the United Nations a petition with a million signatures, and in 1987 Pope John Paul II made a plea on her behalf.

Meanwhile, Ms. Cooper earned high school and college degrees, and the Rockville Correctional Facility made her a cook. Bill Pelke, the victim's grandson, became her principal champion. He explained to the local press, "We're supposed to hate the sin but love the sinner." On June 17 Paula Cooper, now 43, was freed from prison, ready to begin her new life. "I just hope that people give me a chance out there," she said, "because people do change."

Leadership Training

"When I was a lad I served a term/ As office boy in an attorney's firm./ I cleaned the windows and scrubbed the floor,/ And polished up the handle on a big front door./ I polished up the handle so care-full-ee/ That now I am the ruler of the Queen's Na-vee!"

Internships have come a long way since the days of Gilbert and Sullivan's "H.M.S. Pinafore." But far enough? Most internships employ students for a short period of time in business, government, journalism, law or other fields to help prepare them for the job world they hope to enter. They also allow the student to ask, "Do I really want to do this the rest of my life?" and the company to ask, "Might we want to hold onto this young person?"

Interns commonly complain about being assigned meaningless tasks; they stuff envelopes, answer phone calls,

get the coffee. Or they learn only general workplace skills like showing up on time, which they could learn doing menial labor for a salary.

Recently several interns sued Fox Searchlight Pictures because they were underpaid or not paid at all. The court ruled in the plaintiffs' favor and said that Fox must remunerate its interns. Fox plans to appeal the decision. The Fair Labor Standards Act stipulates that unpaid internships must be for the benefit of the intern, not the company. Internships must serve as an educational opportunity, including close supervision.

Many universities offer academic internships, ideally an intellectual-work experience, where the student receives course credit and the university has ethical obligations. In these cases, a professor should closely cooperate with the employer and monitor the assignments, which would include research, reflection, written work and evaluation. After all, this young man or woman may someday be "a ruler in the Queen's Navy."

Recognizing Abuse

In today's social media-savvy culture, it is not uncommon to know exactly what one's friends are up to at any given moment. For some young women, however, this can be dangerous. Experts say many young women are at risk of ignoring early warning signs of an abusive relationship, because they brush off a partner's constant texts or inquiries into their whereabouts as part of current social norms.

In a speech earlier this year announcing the Domestic Violence Homicide Prevention Demonstration Initiative, Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr. stated that "on average, three women are murdered every day in this country by a boyfriend, husband, or ex-husband." Safe Horizons, a victims' services agency, reports that "women ages 20 to 24 are at greatest risk of becoming victims of domestic violence." These women also face the pressures of what many call the hookup culture, in which young adults forgo committed relationships for casual encounters. Experts argue that many women ignore signs of abusive behavior and are unwilling to seek outside help because they believe that if a relationship isn't serious, the potential for abuse isn't either. However, relationship status does not define abuse, and young women should not have to tolerate unwanted advances and jealous, obsessive behavior, online or in person.

Many domestic violence cases covered by the media focus largely on the abusers, at times using language that sensationalizes such actions; it is important to remember that it is the victims who need our attention.

Peaceful Intervention

As the death toll nears 100,000 in Syria and millions flee their homes, there seems to be no clear path to peace in the ongoing civil war there. Most commentators agree that any proposal about how to slow or stop the violence in Syria can be little more than a “least worst” option, with little guarantee of success.

The Obama administration, rightly, has been wary of entering the fray militarily. Last month, however, a U.S. intelligence review expressed “high confidence” that the Assad regime had used chemical weapons against opposition forces several times in the past year—crossing the “red line” President Obama identified nearly a year ago. Mr. Obama responded by agreeing to send small arms and ammunition to opposition forces, hoping it would buy time and provide leverage to bring about a negotiated settlement.

The American public, with the justifications offered for the war in Iraq still fresh in memory, should demand clear evidence not only that chemical weapons were used, but by whom. Not everyone is convinced that U.S. intelligence is getting it right this time around. In May a United Nations investigator claimed it was the rebels, not the government, that had used sarin gas. Ban Ki-moon, the U.N. secretary general, continues to call for increased access in Syria in order to conduct a “credible and comprehensive inquiry” into the matter.

What moral resources are available for Catholics to discern the best path forward in this difficult and complex situation? When a government fails to protect its citizens, or worse, perpetrates war crimes, the international community has a responsibility to intervene. This emerging principle in international affairs is known as the responsibility to protect. The intervention, however, need not involve military action. In fact, the Catholic tradition stresses a presumption against using violent force. Before relying on military action, legitimate authorities must search out and try all reasonable nonviolent alternatives.

Why is this? When conflicts escalate through direct or indirect military intervention, the violence can bear bitter fruits: an increasing number of people wounded or killed, increasingly irrational actions by warring factions, crippled public infrastructure resulting in the spread of disease and the planting of seeds of revenge. Instructed by past experience, the public should be skeptical about a nation’s stated reasons for entering a war. War is often justified for selfless, humanitarian reasons, but states typically do not intervene unless there is some compelling self-interest.

So what should be done in Syria? Some Catholics favor the Obama plan to send small arms and ammunition to the opposition. Others support more decisive military intervention, including the creation of safe zones for Syrian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey or the bombing of airfields in Syria that Russia and Iran use to send arms to government forces.

We believe these military options, which can be reasonably defended by people of faith, are the wrong choices at this time. The risks are too great, and there are too many unpredictable factors. Also, U.S. military action would not have U.N. approval, an important benchmark of credibility but not an absolute one because Russia and China will continue to veto any U.S. proposals in the Security Council, irrespective of their merits.

Many believe the choices in Syria are limited to military action (“doing something”) or sitting on the sidelines and letting the death toll climb (“doing nothing”). The United States must reject both options. The question is not if we should intervene, but how.

First, the United States must join the international community by continuing to push for an immediate cease-fire as well as negotiations. Second, the United States should increase its humanitarian investment in the region to \$1.4 billion, comparable to the estimated cost of enforcing a no-fly zone for one year. Syrians face a lack of essential services, including access to fresh water. Save the Children reports that the fighting has left two million young people malnourished, suffering from disease or traumatized. The United States should increase support for effective relief programs of the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross, and should continue to invest in grass-roots organizations committed to strengthening civil society through nonviolent initiatives.

Following Pope Francis’ Easter plea for peace in Syria, Bishop Richard E. Pates of Des Moines, Iowa, and Bishop Gerald F. Kicanas of Tucson, Ariz., on June 19 called for the United States to abandon the military option and redouble efforts toward a negotiated cease-fire. “The introduction of more arms simply increases the lethality of the violence and contributes to the suffering of the Syrian people,” they wrote. There should be robust U.S. involvement in Syria, but it should be peaceful.



A PEACE PROTEST IN ISTANBUL, TURKEY. PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/FULYA ATALAY

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

SUPREME COURT

Justices Issue Seminal Decisions on Marriage, Voting Rights

Two major decisions by the U.S. Supreme Court in the final week of its term left deep divisions among citizens across the country as the court ruled on the neuralgic issues of voting rights and same-sex marriage. On two consecutive days the court invalidated a key part of the Voting Rights Act and overturned the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act. Both decisions were decided by a margin of 5 to 4; both will have profound effects on the exercise of federal power in the years to come.

On June 25 the court overturned the part of the Voting Rights Act that was used to determine which states had to comply with the law's protections for minority voters. On June 26 the court ruled that the federal Defense of Marriage Act, or DOMA, defining marriage as between one man and one woman, is unconstitutional under the due process clause of the Fifth Amendment. In a separate case decided the same day, the court sent back to lower courts a case involving California's Proposition 8, the voter-approved initiative that bars same-sex marriage. The apparent result is that same-sex marriage will again be legal in California.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops released a statement shortly after the court's rulings on the Defense of Marriage Act and Proposition 8.

"Today is a tragic day for marriage and our nation," said Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York, president of the bishops' conference, and Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone of San Francisco, chair of the bishops' Subcommittee for the Promotion and Defense of Marriage. "The Supreme Court has dealt a profound injustice to the American people by striking down in part the federal Defense of Marriage Act. The Court got it wrong. The federal government ought to respect the truth that marriage is the union of one man and one woman, even where states fail to do so."

An editorial on The Jesuit Post Web site sought to address the contrast between the church's teaching on same-sex marriage and the jubilant responses among many to the court's decisions. "We find ourselves in a

very profound tension," the editors wrote. "We understand why so many are rejoicing. At the same time, we recognize the beauty of the Church's understanding of the natural purposes of marriage. And we struggle because we do not know how to hold these two things together. Neither of these are maliciously motivated; neither deserves to be vilified by the other side."

The bishops did not release a statement on the voting rights decision, but the conference has been a strong supporter of the Voting Rights Act since it was first adopted in 1965. "The Catholic bishops are proud of our past leadership role in securing civil rights, including the right to vote," Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio wrote to Congressional leaders in 2006, urging them to renew the act. "Our Conference has continually emphasized the importance of voting

and the right and responsibility of each citizen to vote, and has encouraged dioceses, parishes and other Catholic institutions to participate in non-partisan voting registration efforts."

Assessing the Impact

On the issue of same-sex marriage, neither decision by the court will have the effect of requiring states to honor same-sex marriages from other jurisdictions. But by overturning DOMA, the federal government will have to change how it treats same-sex marriages for purposes ranging from Social Security benefits to taxation, immigration and benefits for military spouses. The June 26 ruling did not address whether a political jurisdiction is required to recognize a same-sex marriage from another jurisdiction.

DOMA had the support of the administrations of Presidents Bill



DOMA DENIED: March file photo of people demonstrating as Supreme Court hears arguments in cases on same-sex marriage



majority in *Shelby County v. Holder*: “Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act is unconstitutional; its formula can no longer be used as a basis for subjecting jurisdictions to pre-clearance,” a process that has been used since the law was first enacted in 1965 to ensure polling places are readily accessible to minority voters. The provisions apply in nine entire states and individual jurisdictions in six other states with a history of discrimination. They have had to obtain advance federal approval of any changes to voting laws or procedures.

Another eight states recognize civil unions or domestic partnerships, with some having overlapping bans on same-sex marriage.

In an interview shortly after the ruling, Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone took issue with the court’s decision on Proposition 8. The archbishop noted that seven million voters in California voted for the proposition and “many of them invested a lot of hard work and a lot of time and lots and lots of money against seemingly insurmountable odds.”

When the state “refused to defend the law,” he said, its proponents hired legal counsel, raised money and invested hard work to defend it. “Now they’re being told that those elected officials charged with the duty of defending the laws of the state can refuse to do their duty simply because they disagree with the law and disenfranchise seven million voters,” he said.

The archbishop pointed out that he has said all along that no matter how the court ruled, “our work remains unchanged. We need to catechize our people about marriage.”

Clinton and George W. Bush and, at first, of President Barack Obama. But in 2011, the Justice Department announced that the attorney general had determined that Section 3 of the law is unconstitutional as applied to legally married same-sex spouses. The administration said federal agencies should continue to enforce the law, but that the government would no longer defend it in court.

In his decision for the majority, Justice Anthony Kennedy criticized DOMA as having “the avowed purpose and practical effect...to impose a disadvantage, a separate status, and so a stigma upon all who enter into same-sex marriages made lawful by the unquestioned authority of the states.” Chief Justice John Roberts wrote a dissent, arguing that the court should not have jurisdiction to rule in the case and that DOMA was constitutional.

Chief Justice Roberts joined the

Voters and the Court

In 32 states, constitutional amendments ban same-sex marriage, while 12 states and the District of Columbia recognize such marriages.



RULED OUT? Attorney, plaintiffs in case against California’s Proposition 8 celebrate with supporters on steps of Supreme Court in Washington on June 26.

Latest H.H.S. Rule Being Studied

The final rules issued on June 28 by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services implementing its mandate that employers provide coverage of contraceptives “will require more careful analysis,” New York Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan said in a statement. The H.H.S. final ruling updates proposed rules the department had issued in February and left open for comment through April. The bishops say the H.H.S. mandate, part of the Affordable Care Act, will require most employers, including religious employers, to provide coverage of contraceptives, sterilization and some abortion-inducing drugs free of charge, even if the employer is morally opposed to such services. It includes an exemption for some religious employers that fit its criteria. Cardinal Dolan said that he appreciated the “five-month extension on implementing the complex proposal,” meaning the government extended its “safe harbor” period to Jan. 1, 2014, protecting employers from immediate government action against them if they fail to comply with the mandate. Before the final rules were released, that period was to end on Aug. 1 of this year.

Pope Names Bank Commission

Pope Francis has created a five-person commission to review the activities and mission of the Vatican bank. The new pontifical commission, which includes two U.S. members, reflects the pope’s desire to ensure the bank’s activities are in harmony with the mission of the universal church and the Apostolic See, said a Vatican communique published June 26. The commission’s aim is “to collect information on the running of the Institute” for the Works of Religion,

NEWS BRIEFS

Three months into his papacy the total number of followers of the pope’s nine Twitter accounts was **more than 6.9 million**. + For the first time the Davenport, Iowa-based **Pacem in Terris Peace and Freedom Award** is being taken overseas, to France, where it will be presented on July 7 to Jean Vanier, founder of L’Arche. + Catholic Relief Services on June 19 named the recipients of its first **Egan Journalism Fellowship**: Lisa Hendey of CatholicMom.com; Kerry Weber, associate editor of **America**; Michelle Bauman of Catholic News Agency/EWTN; and Ron Lajoie of Catholic New York. + Archbishop Michel Cartagey of Niamey, Niger, said on June 9 that **attacks by Islamist rebels** across Africa’s Sahel region are leaving Christian communities “living in anxiety and fear.” + Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore said the statesman Sargent Shriver “was a living example of how **faith enriches public life**” on June 21 at standing-room only Mass opening the second Fortnight for Freedom. + Los Angeles Archbishop Jose H. Gomez marked World Refugee Day on June 20 by asking for U.S. support and resettlement of vulnerable refugee populations across the world, especially those **fleeing the civil war** in Syria.



Lisa Hendey

the formal name of the Vatican bank, and then to present the results to Pope Francis. The commission, which includes Mary Ann Glendon, a Harvard law professor, and Msgr. Peter B. Wells, a top official in the Vatican Secretariat of State, is to have wide and unencumbered access to all “documents, data, information,” the Vatican said.

Brazilian Bishops Support Protests

The Brazilian bishops’ conference announced their support for the massive demonstrations sweeping across South America’s largest nation, but declined to say how the protests might affect World Youth Day activities and the visit of Pope Francis in July. In a document distributed to journalists by Archbishop Raymundo Damasceno Assis of Aparecida, the bishops’ confer-

ence president, the conference declared “its solidarity and support to these demonstrations, as long as they are peaceful, and which have taken to the streets persons of all ages, especially the youth.” Missing from the document was any mention of World Youth Day, set for Rio de Janeiro on July 23 to 28. Archbishop Assis told reporters it was the government’s responsibility to guarantee the safety of the pilgrims. The protests have expanded since the first were organized primarily by student groups in mid-June to protest a 10-cent increase in public transportation fares. Protesters have since expanded the list of grievances with the government to include high taxation rates, decreased government services and attention to massive public projects like stadium construction while vital social needs go unmet.

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Take a Shot

No one will ever make a Hollywood movie about my sports career, which probably looks more like most people's experience than anything we would find on the big screen.

Movies make it seem like you only learn something after an initial defeat or challenge that is eventually overcome by winning a championship. I wouldn't know. I've never won a championship. My years of high school cross country coincided with my school's only four-year championship lacuna. Even my cheering doesn't seem to work; my football-crazed alma mater's last N.C.A.A. championship was won around the time I was potty-trained.

Like millions of others around the world, I was recently glued to my TV set for seven straight games of the N.B.A. finals, watching two teams about as evenly matched as possible. As the back-and-forth series continued, it was hard not to feel like both the Miami Heat and the San Antonio Spurs deserved to win. In the end, however, only one team enjoyed a champagne shower; the other was awarded a somber flight back to Texas.

Before this year started, many expected a different team to hoist the championship trophy. The stars aligned yet again for the Los Angeles Lakers; they assembled four future hall of famers to form a seeming juggernaut. Instead, however, they turned out to be more of a naught, much to the disappointment of Kobe Bryant and much to the pleasure of those of us who cheer for any team playing against the Lakers.

MICHAEL ROSSMANN, S.J., *teaches at Loyola High School in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.*

Bryant has said that a year without a championship is "a wasted year of my life," so he presumably felt that this was a "wasted" year for himself and any player outside of South Florida.

Even if it did not result in a championship, however, "wasted" fails to describe how the Spurs captivated the sports world. Their tremendous effort beautifully demonstrated the potential of the human spirit, even if they—like most of us—were not number one.

Though we might not receive a trophy for it, we can actually learn a lot from partial, personal success in sports or in life, which gives much hope for those of us whose only assist recorded during an N.B.A. game is handing off the remote to a couchmate.

During my junior year of high school, I finished fourth in my main track event in a district meet, thereby just failing to qualify for the state meet. My deep disappointment fed the fire to work harder for the next year, when I finished third and thus met my goal of qualifying for state.

Though I was satisfied, Hollywood doesn't make movies about people who finish third in an obscure event at a regional meet in a forgotten state. According to the standards of Kobe Bryant, it was yet another wasted season. Still, I learned more from that experience of working to achieve a personal goal than I did from calculus that year, at least in terms of knowledge that I have actually retained.

The coach who consoled me after finishing fourth ingrained in our heads the phrase "nothing but my best."

Because of the genetic lottery (and, admittedly, far less time spent in the weight room), I am seven inches shorter and about 100 pounds less buff than LeBron James, the star of the Miami Heat. Though I had childhood dreams of playing in the N.B.A., it soon became apparent that the closest I would ever come would be watching from the upper deck.

My best looks like a complete waste when compared to LeBron James; my best today on the court or the track is also not as quick as it was 10 years ago.

Thankfully, however, we have a God who works with partial successes and even epic failures, a God who doesn't care if we got fourth or third or 403rd. Unlike the N.B.A. players in their late 30's who probably don't have another chance at a championship, we have tomorrow; we have another day to learn from our mistakes and try to do better, whether in sports, relationships or work.

Of course, I want the teams in which I have irrationally invested far too much emotional energy to win championships and am heart-broken whenever they lose. That being said, I'm perfectly fine with joining the 99.9 percent of humanity who are not the best at something, as long as I give my best.

For a few people, like LeBron James, who was voted the best basketball player on the planet for the fourth time this year, his best really is the best. For the rest of us, my best is only my best, but God is O.K. with that.

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We Are One Body

Catholics raise voices against the use of solitary confinement.

BY KATIE ROSE QUANDT

Brian Nelson spent 12 years of his life staring at four concrete walls. “Day after day, all I saw was gray walls,” he writes of his time in solitary confinement at Tamms Correctional Center in Illinois, “and over time my world became the gray box.” While in solitary, Nelson lost 41 pounds, developed severe psychological problems and prayed for death to end his suffering.

Nelson, who was convicted of robbery and murder at the age of 17, understands that crimes bring consequences. But solitary confinement, he says, is more than punishment—it is torture. It is designed to deny human fellowship and strip away human dignity. A devout Catholic, Nelson describes solitary confinement as “just plain cruel and completely against the Catholic Church.” He explains: “In solitary, you have no creation. You have some air, some water and maybe a bug or two. That’s it.”

Prisoners in solitary confinement spend 22 to 24 hours a day in an 8-foot by 10-foot cell in conditions of extreme isolation and sensory deprivation. Some, like Nelson, languish in these tomb-like cells for years or even decades. And in the United States, the practice is far from rare. Although solitary confinement is often thought of as a last resort for the most dangerous criminals, in fact 80,000 prisoners are held in isolation in state and federal prisons across the country on any given day. Many are placed in solitary confinement for nonviolent infractions like possession of contraband or failure to obey an order promptly.

During his years in isolation, Nelson suffered extreme insomnia, was unable to eat, developed blood blisters from his uncontrollable pacing and grew so depressed that at times he lost the will to live. “Every day...I got down on my knees and prayed that I would die in my sleep,” he writes, “yet God’s will was not mine.”

Nelson did what he could to keep sane. “I fought hard with my own mind, and I prayed,” he says. He copied the entire Bible by hand, read hundreds of books on Catholicism and followed the Trappist tradition of praying seven times a day. But it was a struggle to maintain his religious practice amid the isolation. “As Catholics, we should participate in the communion of saints with each other. We

are not supposed to be alone.”

Nelson also faced frequent denials of his religious rights. He was unable to attend Mass and was often denied the chance to receive Communion. He was harassed and placed on suicide watch for fasting or abstaining from meat and sometimes was even denied his Bible, prayer book and rosary. “I did confession at my cell front,” he says. “An officer could hear it. There was a speaker in my cell. They wouldn’t give me privacy. But my soul is more important.”

Catholic Action

The past decade has witnessed an increase in resistance to solitary confinement by human rights and civil liberties groups, mental health advocates, concerned citizens and people of faith, including Catholics.

In 2000 the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops released a statement on crime and criminal justice, calling on Catholics to “insist that punishment has a constructive and rehabilitative purpose.” The bishops stated: “We oppose the increasing use of isolation units, especially in the absence of due process, and the monitoring and professional assessment of the effects of such confinement on the mental health of inmates.”

“We’re opposed to the inhumane treatment of other human beings,” explained Bishop Howard J. Hubbard of Albany, N.Y. He said that although individuals face incarceration because of their own actions, “Once they are in such a facility, we would expect them to be treated in a humane way.... If they are not, the entire community should be concerned with this, not only people whose friends and family members are affected.”

Bishop Hubbard was spurred to action in the late 1990s after speaking with prison chaplains who served isolated prisoners. The chaplains were very concerned about the effect this was having on the prisoners’ social and mental well-being. Bishop Hubbard brought the issue before other Albany-area religious leaders, who worked together to lobby for legislative change and to increase media attention on the issue.

He and his fellow New York bishops discussed solitary confinement in a pastoral statement on criminal justice in 2000, asserting: “The human dignity of inmates is compromised by extended confinement in such units. Rather than

KATIE ROSE QUANDT is a reporter and researcher for *Solitary Watch*.

restoration and rehabilitation, such extended isolation threatens to inflict mental harm on inmates.”

The New York State Catholic Council continues to encourage lawmakers to reconsider the use of prolonged solitary confinement. “In relation to [Special Housing Units], we question the conditions under which they operate, the extent of their use, and the extended length of time of their use,” the group said in a statement. “Our chief concern is loss of human dignity, where punishment overrides concerns for public safety, rehabilitation or restitution.”

The Rev. Richard L. Killmer, a Presbyterian minister and executive director of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture, says the work of Catholic advocates is key to his organization’s mission. The campaign is an interfaith effort, with representatives from more than 300 religious groups, and aims to end U.S.-sponsored torture and the use of prolonged solitary confinement. Reverend Killmer says the Catholic Church is influential in anti-torture work because Catholics tend to be “very concerned with real pain and hurt and brokenness that occurs in the world.”

One of the campaign’s many collaborators is the Oratory Church of St. Boniface, a Catholic parish in Brooklyn, N.Y., that has an active social justice committee. Marion Defeis, C.S.J., one of the committee members, served as a chaplain for 23 years at the Rikers Island



SOLITARY PRAYER: A prison chaplain prays with a Catholic inmate in Cambridge Springs, Pa.

ONS PHOTO/BOB ROLLER

jail complex in New York City. There she saw firsthand the effects of solitary confinement. She says, "I felt it was inhumane, it was brutal, it was a terrible way to treat people." Later, after reading an article distributed by the National Religious Campaign Against Torture that equated solitary confinement with torture, she realized, "I was witnessing torture without calling it that."

Sister Marion brought her concerns to the social justice committee, which began hosting panels on solitary confinement and inviting experts and former prisoners to speak. After hearing firsthand accounts of solitary, she says, people began to understand that this was torture. Solitary confinement "is directly opposed to the way...we are supposed to treat one another," says Sister Marian. "We are inflicting pain unnecessarily. If we believe we are children of God, how can we treat our brothers and sisters that way?"

Voices Heard

The social justice committee at St. Boniface helped the cam-



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paign collect the 500 signatures needed to present a petition to the New York State legislature. But the parish also collaborates with Pax Christi, the Catholic peace organization, other faith communities and secular groups like the New York Civil Liberties Union. Similar collaborative efforts have sprung up in other states and on a national level.

In June 2012 this growing pool of activists had reason to celebrate. In a historic congressional hearing convened by Senator Richard J. Durbin, Democrat of Illinois, a Senate subcommittee for the first time heard testimony on the effects of solitary confine-

ment. Senator Durbin opened the hearing with a call to his senatorial colleagues to visit a prison. He described his own experience of doing so as "an eye opener."

Senator Durbin explained that solitary confinement is no longer used only for the most dangerous prisoners, the "worst of the worst," but for vulnerable groups like immigrants; children; and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender inmates. There has been "an alarming increase in isolation for those who don't really need to be there," he said.

Brian Nelson submitted written testimony for the hearing on the psychological impact of his time in solitary confinement. He described the lasting effects of such treatment. "I am a human being, and every day I still struggle with the trauma from being held in that gray box," he said. "I wake screaming at night. I can't get it out of my head some days. Solitary confinement, in my opinion, is worse than being beaten. That I spent 12 years in such conditions in America is appalling."

Faith-based organizations showed their support for the hearing by holding a nationwide, 24-hour fast. At the end of the fast, Kathy McNeely, director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, shared the experiences of Maryknoll priests and sisters who have undergone "great psychological and physical anguish" in solitary confinement around the world. "Catholic social thought is built on the dignity of the human person. And the person is not only sacred but social," she explained. "According to church teaching all people have a right to and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all.... The practice of solitary confinement undermines this right and duty."

Underlying Issues

Finally released from the "gray box" in 2010, Brian Nelson now works as a paralegal and is a major voice in the growing

'As Catholics, we should participate in the communion of saints with each other. We are not supposed to be alone.'

effort to eliminate prolonged solitary confinement. Along with other advocates, Nelson believes that despite some progress, solitary confinement has yet to take its place as a major domestic human rights concern.

The Rev. Michael Bryant, founder of Welcome Home, a program in Washington, D.C., that helps released individuals reintegrate into society by pairing them with compassionate volunteer mentors, concurs. "It's not a particularly popular issue to the general public, as you might imagine," he says. Father Bryant, who once served as a detention center chaplain, explains that criminal justice is unfortunately "generally not a standard bill of fare from the Sunday pulpit," but this does not have to be the case. In an experiment he conducted for his doctoral thesis, Father Bryant found that when parishioners received just a half-hour overview on criminal justice from a Gospel perspective, their views on prisoners and criminal justice issues changed substantially.

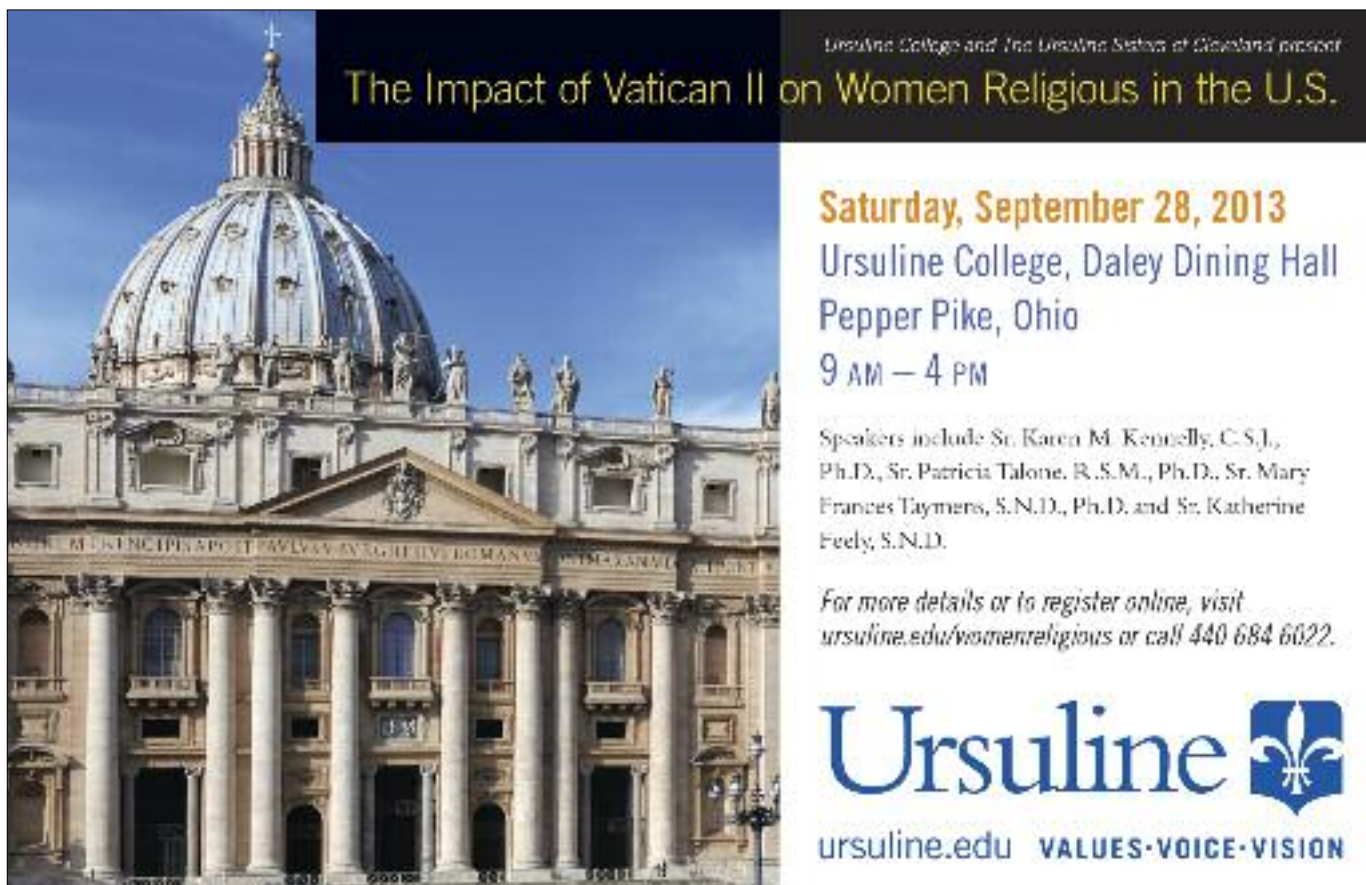
Beyond solitary confinement, Father Bryant identifies many underlying problems in the criminal justice system. "The poor, people of color and low-level drug offenders are overwhelmingly represented in institutions throughout the United States," he explains, and it is also the case that jails and prisons lack sufficient physical and mental support and

skills training for inmates. This contributes to a "societal environment that grooms them for failure."

Charlie Sullivan, co-director of Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants, agrees that the overall prison structure is at the root of the problem. Sullivan accounts for the rise of solitary confinement in terms of carrots and sticks. "Prisons used to use incentives to [encourage prisoners to] follow the rules, like good-time credits," he explains. But over the years, things changed. "They instilled mandatory minimums, cut education, and paroles became rarely granted." Because prisoners now have nothing to gain by following the rules, the authorities rely on sticks alone, and they "just keep building the stick bigger and bigger."

Sullivan believes the practice of solitary confinement will wane when people embrace the full humanity of those in prison. Sullivan and other Catholic advocates are united by the desire to secure humane treatment for this group of people Christ included as "these least brothers of mine" (Mt 25:40). The more than two million Americans in prison are largely invisible to the rest of society, and those in the "gray box" are the most invisible of all. By bearing witness to these forgotten souls, advocates oppose a practice that damages not only those who endure it, but the larger society that allows it to continue. **A**

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Revolutionary Mercy

How Gospel forgiveness challenges our social order

BY WILLIAM O'BRIEN

In my hometown of Philadelphia stands a looming structure: the former Eastern State Penitentiary. It was originally the site of a Quaker experiment to treat offenders in a way that promoted penitence (hence *penitentiary*) rather than simply a place of punishment. Maybe we should go back and take a second look at such a creative effort.

Forgiveness, mercy and reconciliation are arguably at the very heart of our faith and what make us uniquely Christian. We are forgiven through the sacrifice of Jesus; God achieves reconciliation through Christ; and our God is a God of mercy, which is manifested in the ministry of Jesus. Yet there has been little effort to reflect on what forgiveness and mercy would look like as political values. Church people seem content to relegate forgiveness, mercy and reconciliation to spiritual or, at best, interpersonal matters, not to use them as raw materials for public policy.

Yet I can hardly imagine a riper domain or a better fit for faith-based social policy than the criminal justice system. Why, I wonder, would the church not raise its voice to advocate a system that is founded more on mercy and forgiveness than on punishment?

But in fact, many Americans who most fervently identify as Christians and promote Christian values in society are also among the most ardent “law and order” advocates, extremely tough on crime and opposed to any emphasis on rehabilitation. Perhaps at some level, we all intuit an unsettling truth: Radical forgiveness, as

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articulated and practiced by Jesus, might in fact be deeply threatening to the social order.

This notion has grown in me in part because of the famous story in the Gospel of Luke of the woman who anoints the feet of Jesus (7:36–50). This story has long had a deep emotional hold on me for reasons I do not fully understand. Each time I read it the story reveals new textures of meaning to me. It is a richly provocative story, but one often ignored in the pulpit and the pews.

‘Do You See This Woman?’

The story appears to be linked to texts in other Gospels, but Luke’s telling offers very different details. It is a uniquely Lukan story, and it shares some powerful themes and motifs with other Gospel tales found only in Luke, like the parables of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son.

We are told, simply, that Jesus was at supper at the home

of a Pharisee whose name, we eventually learn, is Simon. The sparse details are enough for us to know that this is not a simple church potluck. Simon appears to be a person of some social status and privilege, certainly recognized as a person of religious importance. He is hosting a formal dinner party. Luke reports that Jesus “took his place,” a loaded detail signifying what the New Testament scholars tell us are the cultural and social dynamics inherent in such a gathering: proper protocols, seating arrangements, rituals and sundry assumptions that undergird proprietary roles and relations. It is the very kind of “party” that Jesus—who must have attended several of them—will later address with a scathingly deconstructive agenda (Lk 14:1–24), precisely because he understands the potency of socially defined and



regulated table fellowship.

Luke also drops a few hints that Simon's motives in inviting Jesus are not necessarily benign. Are the mavens of religious sensibility testing this backwoods prophet? (Does he know which fork to use? Are his interpretations of Torah sound?) The Nazarene is given his seating (or reclining) assignment, appropriately positioned among the invited worthies—putting him literally and figuratively in his place.

Enter the uninvited guest. Luke reports her arrival on the scene quite matter-of-factly, but the reader knows right away that a social hand grenade has just been lobbed into Simon's dining room.

For starters, before we learn anything else about her, this woman is violating an all-male social space, especially since she is not bringing a dish to set before the dinner guests. (Jesus will later take on the thorny matter of the "guest list" at formal parties in Lk 14:12–14.) One can imagine that a dutiful servant in the back room is already dialing 911, and it will not be long before we hear the sirens approaching the house.

In addition to the mere social impropriety of her presence, we are told that the woman was known to be a "sinner in the town." The Gospel language is not reflecting a modern judgmentalism but rather a social and cultural reality: The "debt codes" of the times were religious rules applied to persons according to their situations and behaviors in society, formally adjudicated and proclaimed by recognized religious authorities like those at Simon's party. The woman is wearing her cultural equivalent of a scarlet letter. While it is not stated directly, the text insinuates that the nature of the sin may be sexual. (In fact, a few commentators have wryly suggested that some of those at table may have had personal reasons to know of her sinful status.)

Luke ratchets up the scandal factor a few notches by describing the woman's actions toward Jesus: anointing with oil, cleaning his feet with her tears and her free-flowing hair. It is extraordinarily sensual. The unclean sinner, who has already violated the boundaries of her social status, now further fractures good public order by an unseemly public display of affection.

But note the concern of the denizens of that good public order: It is this upstart rabbi who may be acting even more scandalously. This alleged man of God is putting up nary a protest; in fact, he seems to be accepting her shamefully overt sensuality.

Yes, Jesus is receiving her offering, even if it hints of the kind of carnal commerce that might be all she has to offer.

He fully grasps the drama of this moment and the power of what she is doing. As I read this story, I am tempted to say that he is even awed by what is unfolding. This woman, undoubtedly burdened by social oppression, is defying the law and religious propriety, taking an enormous risk, throwing all caution to the wind—because she has been touched by divine love and mercy. I imagine her having stood at the margins of the crowds listening to this prophet and miracle worker from Galilee, hearing a message that is unlike anything she has ever heard before, words that bore into her heart, liberating this captive. So, "when she heard that Jesus was there," she just had to act, consequences be damned.

Authentic Gospel forgiveness is not innocent piety; it is revolutionary.

Between her passionate outpouring and the internal derision of the men, Jesus begins to interpret the scene with a parable. (I imagine the Pharisees saying to themselves: "Oh, no! He is about to tell a story! That usually means trouble.") It

is a parable about debt, with an embarrassingly obvious moral, which he elicits from poor Simon. But, in fact, the parable is not a randomly chosen metaphor. Jesus is very slyly making the connection between what might be termed "economic debt" and "moral debt"—in the same way the two versions of his core prayer of the reign of God speak respectively of God forgiving literal debt and forgiving sin (Mt 6:12 and Lk 11:3). By spinning a yarn about debt relief, he is evoking the ancient covenantal economic vision, with its sabbatical year and jubilee year provisions for periodic debt relief, land redistribution, gleaning and protection for certain classes (recurring themes in Luke's Gospel), and he is shedding light on the moment of excess at hand.

If in fact the woman has turned to prostitution, Jesus is insinuating that her "sin" is likely one from economic necessity: She has defaulted to the sex trade out of painful need for survival, no doubt because she has been impoverished by (undoubtedly male) forces that have victimized and economically marginalized her. This is an old and sad story. For the vast majority of women in every culture who have engaged in the sex trade, it is rarely a choice, and usually a desperate measure of survival, entailing no small measure of social stigma and even deeper marginalization and powerlessness. At the very least, if this party-crashing woman was pushed to such extreme measures, it was because the community failed in its moral obligations to ensure the economic viability of all its members. Was she a neglected widow, forced to earn money on her own in the only way possible to

her? Well, then, these very religious leaders and scribal authorities should have been among the first to call for covenantal protections for her, precisely so that she would not have to experience economic desperation. Instead, they were content to brand her a social sinner and let her live with the oppressive consequences.

Jesus snares Simon in a rhetorical and even theological trap that begins to shift the sands of “religious order.” Having softened them up, he now ropes Simon and the other guests in. In a brilliant tableau of body language, Luke tells us that Jesus speaks to Simon while he is looking intently at the woman. He asks, “Simon, do you see this woman?”

A fairly dumb question, one might say: From the moment she burst into the room, she has sucked up all attention with her appalling behavior. But in fact, Jesus is pushing the point: “Do you see her?” He realizes, sadly, the answer is no; Simon does not see her. Nor do the other guests. They see a sinner. They see a label. They are blinded by a rigid social and religious world of strict rules, order, boundaries, definitions—a world they consider themselves responsible to adjudicate.

What they do not see is a woman, a person experiencing amazing grace that has saved a wretch like her. She is passionate, reckless in her response to a radical grace that has overturned everything for her. She has been freed from oppression not merely by a priestly absolution or a scribal decree, but by love, a love that is profligate, breaking all bounds, bursting out of all theologies and codes (see Lk 4:18–19).

Even Jesus is astonished by what he sees. And he yearns for these very religious men to also see this miracle of grace. Finally, in what could be seen as cruelty but is really poignant sadness, Jesus compares her love with Simon’s failure to enact even the most rudimentary expressions of social hospitality.

Then, his coup de grâce: “Your sins are forgiven.” In this powerful narrative, such a statement is probably not so much Jesus enacting the forgiveness as proclaiming what has already happened—which only serves to further enrage the religious authorities. How dare this no-account country hick declare her sins forgiven, independent of the imprimatur of the religious heavies.

They perceive (here and elsewhere in the Gospels) that Jesus is seeking to usurp their power. But Jesus is simply declaring, in classic evangelistic testimony: Look at what God has done. Look at what divine mercy is capable of doing when it does not have to be channeled and mediated by human systems. Look at some real spiritual power, proven authentic in that it liberates, not oppresses.

“Simon, do you see this woman?” Maybe a variation on

this theme might be: “And do you see what fruit is born of God’s merciful, reckless, passionate love?”

Competing Religions

The more I read this story, the more it strikes me that it ultimately depicts the clash of two radically different religious worlds. Simon’s religious world is one of rules and regulations, of appropriate adherence to clear moral codes and accompanying approbation in cases of violation. Simon’s religion is very moral, with strict and clear standards. It is also formal, rigid, austere and cold. It is primarily legalistic, with appropriate hierarchies of power to adjudicate the laws. It evinces little mercy or love. It eschews relationality.

The woman’s religious world is thunderous and chaotic. When God’s love breaks through, it upsets all social decorum and defies all orderly proceedings. It is profligate, passionate, relational, even sensual. It is not devoid of morality, but it operates by loving mercy to heal the brokenness at the heart of sin. It is a religion of grace and gratitude, of power and fearlessness. It embraces, caresses, pours forth like expensive ointment.

Two religious worlds, two Gods. The more I see this clash in this text, the more I see it at work throughout much of Luke’s Gospel. And make no mistake: It is a clash that

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will cost Jesus dearly and, in time, his followers as well.

A few chapters later, Jesus will weave another tale that is also unique to the Lukan text and also about, to put it simply, mercy. The story we know as the parable of the Prodigal Son (15:11–32) also carries a subversive sting of social scandal that is usually missed in the traditional readings. Perhaps more powerful than the tale of the father's profound mercy is the challenge of the dutiful but disgruntled older son. He is a citizen of the world of Simon the Pharisee—a world of rules and obligations, of proper social and religious order, of clearly delineated moral calculus where obedience is rewarded and iniquity punished. Jesus

challenges the older brother's world with another vision of reckless and socially outrageous mercy.

In a bit of my own personal midrash, I speculate: Could it be that Jesus came away from the encounter not only profoundly moved by the party-crashing woman, but also deeply frustrated with Simon's recalcitrant religiosity? Perhaps Jesus mulled over what it would be like for someone in Simon's social and religious world to be likewise touched by this grace, this love. Maybe he eventually spun the tale of the Prodigal Son as an effort to imagine a person like Simon, cast as the wealthy father, being so liberated by love that he understands and practices the same amazing, rule-breaking, decorum-smashing, socially scandalous mercy and forgiveness.

A real embrace of Gospel mercy and forgiveness would upset the social order. It would overthrow the cold but well-regulated religious and cultural systems of Simon the Pharisee and the morally upright older brother. It is said that we are a Bible-based society—and so we are—but of the Ten Commandments variety. Chaos would ensue if a reckless youth can squander the family fortune on crack and whores, sully the family's good name, make a mockery of all decorum and tradition and hard work and proper living—only to receive a party in return. Like poor Inspector Javert in *Les Misérables*, we might find it utterly impossible to inhabit such a moral world, in which all the clear lines have been blurred and the rules discarded.


Authentic Gospel forgiveness is not innocent piety; it is revolutionary. It betokens the collapse of one form of social order and announces a new one: the reign of God. It proclaims that the structure of human community based primarily on rules and regulations must die, like the grain of seed, to give birth to something new. It belongs to a religion where all commandments are fulfilled in love, a love that defies our efforts to control or manipulate it. It is the expression of a God who lavishes such love on us. In experiencing such forgiveness, we are moved to lavish love on one another.

Are we willing to take the risk and join the revolution? **A**

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Everything I Can Do

Living with Down syndrome

BY JOEY KANE

One special thing about me is that I have Down syndrome. Down syndrome means having an extra chromosome in my body. It's the way I was born. My parents told me that when I was born on Aug. 9, 1995, the doctor looked at my hands and eyes and confirmed that I had Down syndrome. This was not a surprise to my mom and dad because they knew I was going to have Down syndrome. That's because of a test that had been done before I was born.

Having Down syndrome is the same as having a disability. My teacher, Mr. Beall, talks about people having disabilities. He says that it does not matter if you have a learning difference because everyone should be treated the same. Other people think and say I have a disability, but I don't really think of myself as having a disability because I feel I fit in with other people. You should not think that you can get away with stuff just because you have a disability. If you are late to class, you should get detention just like everyone else does.

I have Down syndrome because I think that God wanted me to have it. I didn't decide I wanted to have it. Some people think that because I have Down syndrome I can't do what other people can do. But that is not true. Everyone

can share their talents, even if they have Down syndrome. My theme song is "Anything You Can Do (I Can Do

be treated badly because I have Down syndrome. My experience has not been this way. God tells everyone to treat people equally, and I think that most people act in this way. I don't feel as if people make fun of me or make me feel bad just because I have Down syndrome.

I can do things that other people can do even though I have a disability. I can swim, play basketball, play Ping-Pong, be good at math and give hugs to people. I can go to college, but I need to qualify for accommodations because of my learning disability. I am awesome at prayer because I love people

and I know God loves me. I like sports like football, basketball, baseball and soccer. I love the Notre Dame Fighting Irish, the Gonzaga Bulldogs, the Washington Huskies, the Seahawks and the Mariners.

I can work just like other people. Last summer I worked for the Mariners. My job was handing out items at baseball games. I handed out things like bobble-head dolls, posters, backpacks, trading cards and T-shirts. I got paid minimum wage: \$9.04 an hour, plus I got half-price food. Because I did such a great job, my boss asked me to come back for the 2013 season.

Another job I had was working at Mount St. Vincent's. This is a nursing home where I would talk to people, help them get to places and bring trays of food to them. I also cleared off tables. This job gave me a good chance to make



Better)."

One of the things that makes me different is that I have more trouble at school than other people. It is hard for me to take notes in class. It is hard for me to see the board because I have bad vision. I need more time to take a test because it takes me a long time to read the questions. The small print on tests also causes problems for me. Other things are also hard. It's hard for me to remember my classmates' names. It's hard for me to find the right metro bus to get on. I won't be able to get a driver's license because my vision is not good enough to drive.

Some people say that those with Down syndrome don't have good eye-hand coordination. But when I play X-Box I probably surprise people because I do have good eye-hand coordination.

Some people may think that I would

JOEY KANE is beginning senior year at John F. Kennedy Catholic High School in Burien, Wash.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF GINNY KANE

friends and do service. I think service is what God wants me to do, along with following the commandments.

Also, I had a job watering my neighbors' plants for the whole summer. Twice a week I had to water plants and flowers so that they would not die. I got paid \$5 each time. Someday, I will have a job where I work almost every day. I hope it is for the Mariners. I would like to do something where I am with the team. That way I would get to meet the players.

I might be a teacher someday. I would like to teach little kids because they are cute. I would want to teach math. I don't think that having Down syndrome would be a problem in doing this.

Another way I am the same as other people is that I like food. Maybe I like food more than most other people. I really like pizza, pasta, gold fish, hot dogs, ramen, french fries, hamburgers and milkshakes. If I were a babysitter, I would probably order pizza for the kids and myself.

People can look at me and know that I have Down syndrome. But they don't see me as having Down syndrome. They see me as myself. I can recognize people with Down syndrome. Mostly it is the shape of their face and how they walk. When I look in the mirror I don't see myself as having Down syndrome.

God loves me because God made me. He made me just the way I am, and

he loves me just the way I am. Because I have a good sense of humor, people feel more comfortable around me. Sometimes someone in my class says that he feels embarrassed to be around me. On the other hand, this same person asked me to sit at his table. This is a good example of the way it should be. I should be treated as if I don't have Down syndrome. In fact, I do not even think of Down syndrome as being a disability, but many people think it is.

This is the first time I've really talked about having Down syndrome. I don't tell people because I guess I think people know I'm a good guy even though I have Down syndrome. Not to be cocky, but I'm a popular guy. **A**

A BETTER LIFE

BY MATT KANE

The grandest and most spectacular acts of social justice often seem to occur in foreign lands and involve the improvement and preservation of thousands of lives, but the most meaningful act of social justice in my own life occurred much closer to home. It succeeded in saving the life of only one.

Some 17 years ago my parents were confronted by a physician who wanted to discuss the fate of a soon-to-be-newborn baby. It had recently been discovered that this baby would be born with Down syndrome, and the physician assured my parents that there was still time to abort. Today it is estimated that 60 percent to 90 percent of babies with Down syndrome are aborted, but for my parents this was never an option. My younger brother Joey was born on Aug. 9, 1995.

Reflecting on this act of social justice invokes a reflection on the importance of not only my brother's life, but of the right to life itself. When my parents

chose life for Joey, they knew that many trials and challenges lay ahead, but they were able to embrace the possibility of difficulty and accept whatever God had in store for them. They could not have foreseen the immense love and joy Joey's presence would create in our family and our community in the coming years. Living and growing up with Joey has given me a rare perspective on the value of life. Over the years I have watched him sculpt the very foundation of our family into one of profound patience and tolerance, and he continues to influence the way I interact with others inside and outside the family. He is a testament to the effects of social justice, and I cannot imagine the void that would be left in my own life if my parents had not recognized the value of Joey's.

The invariable aspects of humankind define who we are as a people, but the unique and subtle differences by which we are individually defined make us who we truly are. As I reflect on how much Joey has changed the way I see the world, it saddens me to think of all those whose differences not only cost them their lives, but also the



Matt and Joey Kane

opportunity to change the lives of others. Without diversity our world would be stagnant and our thoughts without purpose, for it is often through our differences that we are able to enrich the lives of those around us. While it is true that my parents' act of social justice saved the life of only one person, it served to transform the lives of countless people in my community, whose world would be a little less bright, less full, were it not for Joey.

MATT KANE, who is beginning senior year at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Ind., is the brother of Joey Kane.

Generation Faith offers high school and college students a space to reflect on the joys and challenges that come with living out their faith in daily life. Submissions should be sent to articles@americamagazine.org, with the subject line "Generation Faith."



Another Diversity

It's my silver anniversary. I just finished my 25th diversity workshop. Obligatory chapel has long since disappeared, but attendance at diversity training has become a command performance in faculty formation.

The workshop followed the usual grooves. PowerPoint graphs flashed the latest statistics on campus ethnic and sexual divisions. The stress on sexual orientation becomes more pronounced with each new edition. Two years ago, the president of Elmhurst College in Illinois proudly announced that his school would be the first to ask questions about sexual orientation on its admission applications.

In truth, this particular workshop was a cut above the others. The animator argued that the fundamental dynamic behind diversity differences on campus was the relationship between majority and minority. In a predominantly female student body, it is the men who feel ignored. On a predominantly Caucasian campus, people of color feel more excluded. With a majority of students nominally Catholic, non-Catholics find the campus ethos more alien. It is the power of numbers, rather than biology, that separates the insiders from the outsiders.

The omissions in our diversity sessions are striking. In the old troika of class, race and gender, class rarely makes an appearance. The gap between wealthy and poorer students has not disappeared. Clothes, cars and spending money remain sturdy tokens of status. Yet for all our attention to

diversity, economic class remains submerged, as if the entire nation had suddenly become middle class. Tuition rates have consistently outrun the inflation rate, but frank discussion of the uneasy campus fusion between Neiman Marcus cardholders and Wal-Mart shoppers seems impolite.

Despite their political charge, diversity programs rarely consider political diversity. At one session, a faculty member suggested that the school should map the partisan affiliation of faculty members: Democrats, Republicans, Others, Independents. If the partisan breakdown did not match the general population's, we might consider the factors behind this pattern of exclusion. An audible gasp broke out. The animator announced that such questions were improper and nervously launched into a discussion of diverse hobbies. (The T'ai Chi enthusiasts dominated.) Despite their penumbra of varied ethnicities and sexualities, many diversity programs seem to serve a monochrome political agenda. Robust political pluralism is unwelcome.

At the Catholic universities where I have taught, religion plays a muted role in our diversity discussions. It is crucial to understand the viewpoints of those who belong to minority religions, but the Catholic identity of the school rarely contributes to how we frame the question of diversity.

The extraordinary ethnic diversity within Catholicism itself seems to be of only modest interest in our instruc-

tion and research. The last workshop I attended was actually an exception in this regard. After discussing sexual orientation on campus, our animator remarked that negotiating the relationship between the school's Catholic mission and questions of sexual orientation represented a challenge. The session recognized that the usual diversity concerns should be treated differently at a Catholic institution precisely because of its Catholicism.

We currently focus intensely on the question of religious identity at Catholic universities, yet when we tease out the implications of this identity for diversity and other programs, our religious mission often dissolves into the cloud of unknowing.

Our religious mission often dissolves into the cloud of unknowing.

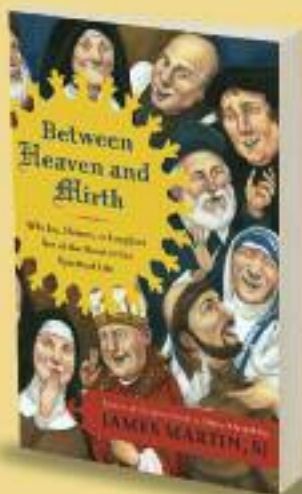
I just received an invitation to what will be my 26th diversity workshop in the fall. The session will certainly continue the good fight against the stubborn traces of racism, sexism and their attendant poisonous stereotypes. I hope it will transcend questions rooted in biological difference and also address questions of economic, political and religious difference through a distinctively Catholic prism. I even dream it will open out into a discussion of our diverse ideas, since the celebration and testing of such dueling ideas through rigorous debate is the very reason for the university's existence. But I suspect that this Platonic diversity workshop is for another day.

JOHN J. CONLEY

JOHN J. CONLEY, S.J., holds the Knott Chair in Philosophy and Theology at Loyola University Maryland in Baltimore, Md.

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BOOKS & CULTURE

ART | LEO J. O'DONOVAN

TRANSCENDENT TRASH

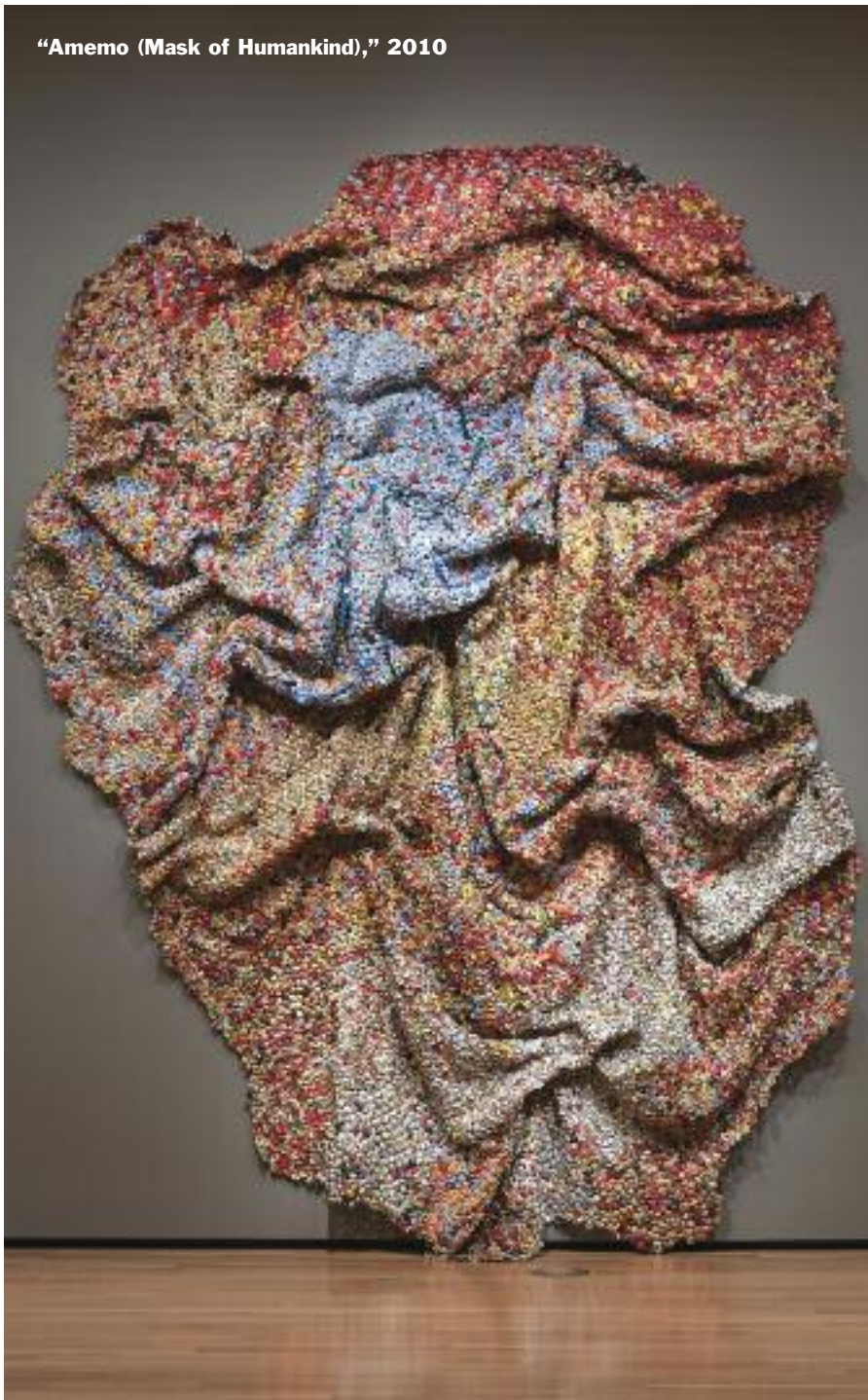
El Anatsui re-imagines found materials.

At the Venice Biennale in 2007 the Ghanaian artist El Anatsui covered the facade of the Palazzo Fortuny with a shimmering metallic veil of gleaming yellow that included open areas revealing the stone behind them. The effect was at once celebratory and transformative, a 16th-century icon “dressed” to look new. The crowds noticed, and so did the critics. The artist’s reputation began to rise rapidly.

That same year the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York acquired a 2006 work by El Anatsui, again a wall piece that fell in folds like a shak-en tapestry, but here with greater density and an opulent palette of red, gold and black. On first seeing it, I had no idea what it really was—except that it was gorgeous. Later I learned the secret of its making and could only surrender to it the more.

El Anatsui was born in Anyako, Ghana, in 1944 and was raised there by his uncle, a Presbyterian minister. His undergraduate and graduate studies at the University of Science and Technology in Kumasi, Ghana, were European-style and focused on Western art. But he also was inspired by Akan adinkra funerary cloth, which uses dyed, pattern-blocked symbols of the traditional notion of *sankofa* (“looking back and picking up”). With the African independence movements of the 1960s and 1970s, the work acquired pan-African resonance. In 1975 he was invited to become a professor of fine arts at the University of Nigeria in Nsukka and has worked there ever since.

Anatsui’s early practice used found materials like old mortars and pestles, in which he felt the laboring hands of generations. He also gathered discarded wood and used a chain saw to shape



“Amemo (Mask of Humankind),” 2010

PHOTOS: ANDREW MCALLISTER, COURTESY OF THE AKRON ART MUSEUM.



Detail of “Amemo (Mask of Humankind),” 2010

it into panels from which he assembled two-dimensional reliefs that can be rearranged as owners or curators choose. The results are generally abstract, as in “Currents,” a 16-panel piece scored in a way that stirs associations with Ellsworth Kelly’s early, randomly assembled cut paper work and later his optical art as well. In subsequent pieces, however, Anatsui more figuratively evokes the themes of ancestors, as in “Seers” (1993/2010), “Motley Crowd” (1998/2010) and “Amewo (People)” (1998/2010). His drawings with charcoal or acrylic on paper reveal an early and continuing concern for medium and process.

A generous selection of this smaller work is included in the Brooklyn Museum’s show, **Gravity and Grace: Monumental Works by El Anatsui**. The exhibition, which originated at the Akron Art Museum, is on view in New York through Aug. 4 and will continue



“Drainpipe,” 2010

Pomp*

for Oscar Christoph's birth

Wax, little moon.
Between toes and forehead,
your fullness remembers itself.

It's still dark in your palms,
darker still in your mouth,
yet there beats and beats

a whole novel
world round
your rolling ears,

your found thumbs,
your warm red
firmament—

an outer-space sound,
a faint father voice,
perhaps a new sky,

an *up* and a *down*. But what
are *up* and *down* and *out*
to all your roundness?

Wax, little moon. Make strong
fists. Send your non-too-solid
glaucous splendor out

with the tide and light
your knowing mouth
gravely.

Airily.
Then loudly,
land and summon us.

***pomp**—Shoshone: unborn child

MURIEL NELSON

MURIEL NELSON's publications include Part Song, winner of the Dorothy Brunsman Poetry Book Prize and Most Wanted, winner of the Byline Chapbook Award.

on to Des Moines and Miami.

Of the more than 30 pieces displayed, nine enormous hanging pieces truly astonish. As if preparing for their majesty, Anatsui first completed a series of works (three are in the show) using discarded tops of Peak milk cans from the Netherlands that he flattened out and sewed together with copper wire to form "blocks" of material that could then be fashioned into long serpentine forms ("Drainpipe," 2010) or cone-like shapes of various sizes (two pieces from 2010, both called "Peak"). From 2004 to 2010 he also worked on a mournful, haunting group of seven "Waste Paper Bags," made from aluminum printing plates on which one can still read parts of articles on political appeals, social analysis or sports. One "bag" has strokes of blood-red paint. Gray and grim, they are reminiscent of works in lead by Anselm Kiefer, yet lighter. The effect is one of a lament over contemporary society, but from an artist who radiates, I am told, an inner tranquility.

Anatsui's breakthrough came utterly by chance. In 2006, on one of his daily walks in Nsukka, he found a sack of discarded aluminum bottle caps outside a liquor distillery. The vivid colors and varying formats suggested new possibilities, and he began what he now calls his "bottle cap" series. The wall hangings that emerged can be dense or diaphanous. By the artist's intention, they can be hung in various ways, folded or tucked, crushed or crumpled as the respective curator chooses. "I don't want to be a dictator," says the artist; rather, he sees himself as "someone who suggests things." And the work communicates at multiple levels: most obviously as a marriage of sculpture and painting, with echoes of classical mosaics as well as the paintings of Gustav Klimt, but also as invocations of alcohol abuse in colonized countries and as meditations on

poverty and frugality.

The Brooklyn installation begins in the high Cantor Gallery with large hanging pieces called collectively "Gli (Wall)" (2010). Three float in the air; two touch and trail on the floor. You see through them to the other pieces and to other visitors. "Walls are meant to block views," says Anatsui—but only the ocular view, not the imaginative view. "Walls reveal more things than they hide." Your view is veiled, but still more enticed.

The still larger Seaver Gallery includes "Inksplash" (2010), an iridescent silver curtain dotted by yellow and orange bottle caps, with three splashes of black, and "Amemo (Mask of Humankind)" (2010), with a darker palette and the bottle caps puckered, giving it a plusher look. Here too are the "Waste Paper Bags" and one of the "Peak" pieces. But the room is dominated by "Gravity and Grace" (2010), whose title comes from Simone Weil's *Gravity and Grace* of 1947, and, directly opposite, "Earth's Skin" (2009), which can suggest either peeling back the earth's crust or providing a protective cover for it. Both are indeed monumental, but the former, in lighter colors, is soft and delicate, whereas the latter, in darker, assertive hues, projects drama and grandeur.

All the while the viewer is beckoned to the final large gallery, with "Ozone Layer" (2010) at its center, a dazzling, delicate veil of silver accented with red. Large passages are as open as lace. Perhaps less ambitious than the grand pieces in the previous gallery, it is nevertheless ravishing in its simplicity. It also sets off beautifully two neighboring reflections on the power of a single color, "Red Block" (2010), folded somewhat like a theater curtain, and "Black Block" (2010), with heavier, sagging folds.

Anatsui's aesthetic is pervasively cosmopolitan and fluid. He speaks of having a nomadic approach, prizing the freedom to move, and is committed to

“the non-fixed form,” art that is by design variable in form and in the way it is displayed. It is both literally and metaphorically about movement, as is shown by numerous video clips that can be watched throughout the gallery from Susan M. Vogel’s film, “Anatsui at Work” (2011). In a remarkable way it also combines monumentality and intimacy. The pieces set the viewer back in marvel but then draw you in to discover how they are made. See here, in “Black Block,” the black shimmers because of the gold script on the Liquor Headmaster caps. And there, “Red Block” has its rich color from the Castello Dark Rum caps. The alchemy is this union of grandeur and detail, of

the sensuous and the solid.

There is of course a “luxury problem” to such intimate immensity. The work needs museum galleries or corporate atriums for display. But the artist, assisted now by a studio of up to 40 people, lets the work determine its own dimension, he says. It is anyone’s guess how long he can continue to be so creative with the bottle cap series. But in almost every example so far he has produced remarkable—if anonymous—images of death and resurrection, taking the trash of everyday life and transforming it into soaring beauty.

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

clear, persuasive and powerful way. She calls Philadelphia, with its 3,500 image-covered walls, “the largest public art gallery in the world,” but she also suggests that it is the largest public book in the world. The murals tell tales of the past—about the injustices, sufferings and struggles of the people of inner-city Philadelphia—but they also speak to these same peoples’ dignity, perseverance and triumphs. Perhaps most of all, these walls express their dreams and aspirations. The murals testify to how people can come together to create beauty. They also underscore in a vivid way our powerful human desire to express ourselves in whatever medium we can.

These stories in paint work on a number of levels: political, moral and social, but also religious. O’Connell is a master at teasing out the religious and theological dimensions of the murals. We are drawn to God through concrete encounters with beauty. O’Connell examines four components of every mural: the socio-historical context in which it is placed, the composition of the mural itself, the particular artist or artists who created it and the perspective of the people who interpret it. She underscores the fact that the murals are not simply the creations of individual artists working out their own particular vision, but also the expression of community aesthetic, spiritual and moral values. As O’Connell puts it, “The beauty of this art lies not only in its content and the reactions it evokes (aesthetics) but also in the types of relationships it fosters among those who create it and those who encounter it (ethics).”

Moral theology is sometimes thought to be boring—preoccupied with how to deal with old rules or refining virtues or dissecting magisterial pronouncements. People who have this impression ought to read O’Connell. She gives us moral theology with a fresh face—culturally engaged with the grass roots rather

BOOKS | STEPHEN J. POPE

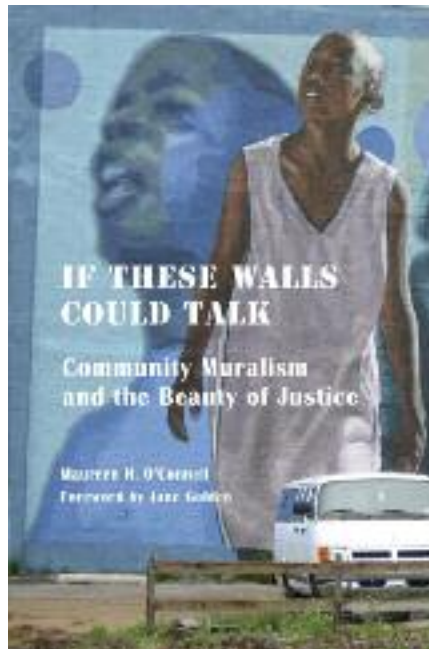
JUST ART

IF THESE WALLS COULD TALK

Community Muralism and the Beauty of Justice

Maureen H. O’Connell
Liturgical Press. 240p \$39.95

Maureen O’Connell is an associate professor of theology at Fordham University, where she teaches courses in Christian social ethics. Readers might conclude from this book, however, that she is part community activist, part art critic and part preacher. This is a fine book that gives broad access to the success story of the Philadelphia Moral Arts Program. About 25 years ago a small group of artists and former graffiti writers initially worked under the Philadelphia Anti-Graffiti Network to paint murals in neighborhoods that had fallen on hard times. Painting was accompanied by clean-up of vacant lots and street corners. Local leaders came to appreciate the way murals could represent the positive values of their neighborhoods,



help communities feel pride and inspire more energetic commitment to social action. As neighborhoods were galvanized, city officials, businesses and churches took the project more seriously.

O’Connell’s *If These Walls Could Talk* shows the power of public art in a

than just with the academy, concerned with the real challenges faced by ordinary people, not text-book hypotheticals imagined by someone trying to get tenure. Each chapter has a special theological theme: truth, peace, hope, forgiveness, healing and piety. Each chapter focuses on specific urban spaces, traces its relevant historical context, examines its characteristic murals and shows how its symbolism speaks from the experience of its creators and admirers.

O'Connell's analysis is pointedly prophetic. It is alert to the ways in which these paintings testify to the suffering of the community while also expressing a community desire to create a better way of life based on justice, self-respect and human dignity. The murals offer a depiction of the people that provides an alternative to the stereotypes maintained by the dominant power culture. O'Connell here draws from the Johann Baptist Metz's notion of "dangerous memories," which challenge both what she calls the "code of whiteness" and the "code of the street."

Part Four, "Prisons: From Degradation to Restoration," is perhaps the most compelling part of the book. This discussion opens with the story of a group of teenagers who shot a boy for refusing to give up his Allen Iverson jersey. Before he died, the victim, Kevin Johnson, refused to call for revenge. He wanted this particular cycle of violence to stop with him. After he died, his mother and some inmates (including one involved in the shooting) worked to create a mural called "Forgiveness" to commemorate his decision. O'Connell writes powerfully about how this mural not only honors Kevin's choice, but also calls the community to take seriously the value of forgiveness. It addresses not only individual agents, but also the larger culture of retaliation that inspires so much violence. O'Connell deftly moves from this story to reflect

on other murals that speak to the urgent need to reform the criminal justice system and to take more seriously the creative possibilities offered by restorative justice.

O'Connell has produced a masterpiece in aesthetics, spirituality and political theology. Reading this book will make you want to spend a week in Philadelphia with a camera in one hand and a journal in the other. It

will help you to see beauty and dignity in unexpected ways. If you take O'Connell seriously she will also help you look in a new way at your own city, and your own neighborhood. If you are committed to "finding God in all things," this book is a must read.

STEPHEN J. POPE is a theology professor at Boston College.

DAVID LEIGH

JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY

DENISE LEVERTOV A Poet's Life

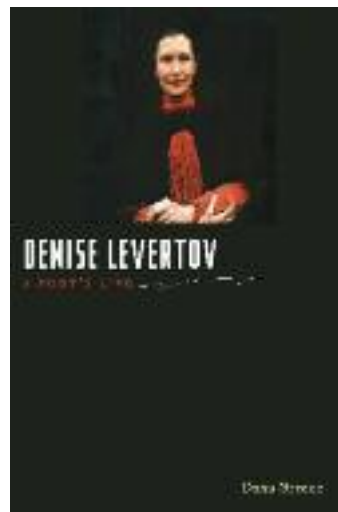
By Dana Greene
University of Illinois Press. 328p \$35

Dana Greene's *Denise Levertov: A Poet's Life*, a biography of Anglo-American poet Denise Levertov's (1923-1997) long and complex journey as a poet, woman and searcher brings alive the writer's lifetime vocation as a "celebrant of Mystery." For Levertov, the life of the imagination was a "form of grace" that led her, as Dana Greene sums it up, "to live with the door of one's life open to the transcendent." This vocation drove Levertov to leave her Russian-Welsh parents in England when she was 23 to work in Europe, where she met Mitch Goodman, an American writer who hastily married her and brought her to New York, where she transformed herself into the leading American woman poet of her generation. When she died in Seattle in 1997, she had published 24 books of poetry, four

books of essays, 25 interviews and earned endless honorary degrees and poetry prizes.

Levertov spent much of her life trying to reconcile in poems and essays the personal conflicts of her families and the social conflicts of the 1960s. Her father, a Jewish Russian emigrant to England who became an Anglican priest, remained a distant and enigmatic presence in Levertov's childhood until his death in 1954; her mother, an ardent Christian unable to understand Denise or her neurotic older sister, alienated both her daughters by her tendency to dominate them. Denise was educated at home by her well-read parents and her own interest in poets, from George Herbert to the Victorians, along with inspiration from reading Rainer Maria Rilke and a letter she received

from T. S. Eliot, to whom she had sent an early poem when she was only 12. Her marriage to Goodman brought together two very different writers who never overcame their rivalries and eventually divorced in 1975, leaving



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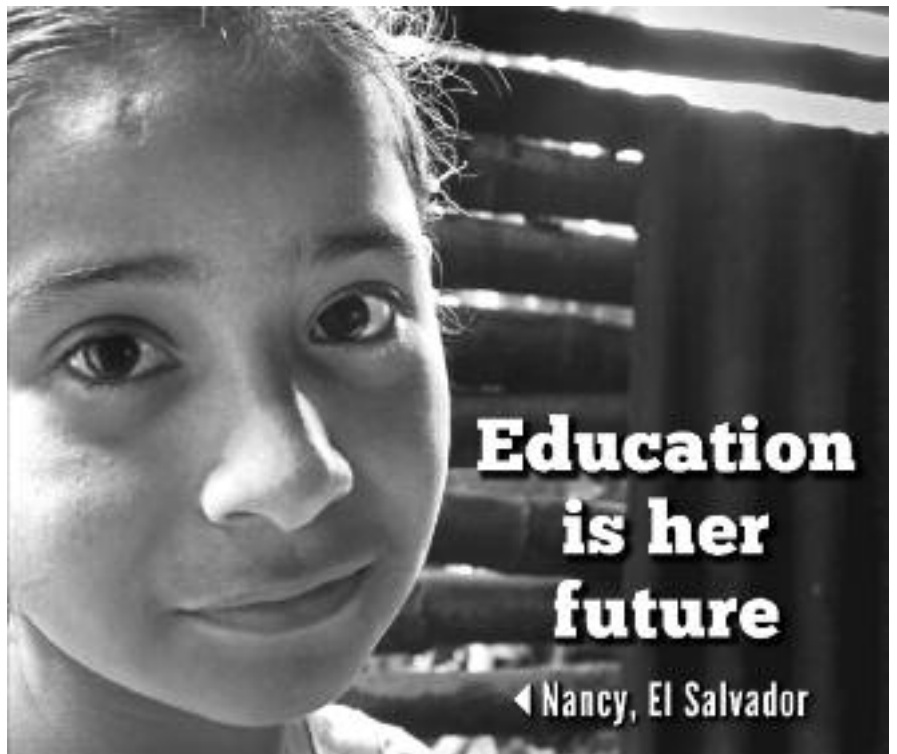
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their conflicted son Nikolai to his own life as an artist.

Greene is at her best in showing how Levertov grew from a young poet of ideals in the Romantic tradition to a poet of “ordinary life” and Americanized language, under the influence of mentors she met around New York—William Carlos Williams, Robert Duncan, Kenneth Rexroth and Muriel Rukeyser. Levertov burst on the poetic scene with five books between 1956 and 1960, a success that alienated her husband, whose war novel was rejected several times before appearing in 1961. The only woman poet anthologized in *New Poets of England and America* in 1962, she moved from writing with “wonder and awe” about her love of life to confronting the conflicts in her personal world and to pursuing “the eternal questions.” After receiving critical praise for a decade, she was surprised to receive mixed reviews of her poetry

of the mid ‘60s, in which she moved into the public poetry of protest against the Vietnam War, environmental degradation and American politics. This poetry also lost her the support of her mentor Robert Duncan, who accused her of self-righteous sloganizing.

After the break-up of her marriage and the end of the war, Levertov found stability in teaching at Tufts University and later at Stanford. But she drifted into a mid-life period of infatuations, self-doubt and loneliness. Out of this, as Greene shows in the most sensitive part of the biography, she “came into a new country” by building new friendships and following “the thread” of her poetry that linked her writing and life to “Mystery.” In the 1980s, she began, like C. S. Lewis before her, to realize that many of her

readers and friends were people of faith—Dorothy Day, Thomas Merton, Eileen Egan, Wendell Berry and many others. At Tufts and Stanford, she began attending religious services and reading spiritual writers. While composing a long poem on the doubting apostle St. Thomas, she migrated from lack of faith to “gratitude for life” and eventually decided “to act as if she believed.” This gradual transformation showed up in her acclaimed book of poems *Oblique Prayers* in 1984.

As she continued reading authors like Julian of Norwich, Pascal, Dom Herder Camara and Basil Pennington, she began to make retreats with Mary Luke Tobin, S.L., Murray Bodo, O.F.M, and others. These led her to seek reconciliation with her family and alienated writers and, eventually, with God. After moving to Seattle in 1989, she decided to learn more about the Catholic Church, which she joined in 1990, finding a home in St. Joseph’s Parish, where two Jesuits and a woman spiritual director helped her as she made the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius.

This spiritual journey also prepared her to witness more explicitly to her faith in her poetry, in particular in meditative poems about Mount Rainier, which she could see from a park on Lake Washington near her house in south Seattle. As Levertov received numerous awards and honorary degrees in her later years, she continued to write essays on poetry, moving from an emphasis on the importance of meshing the meaning with the form of a poem (what she had called ‘organic form’ in an earlier essay) to the importance of expressing her “primary wonder” at the very existence of anything at all, which for her was a sign of divine Mystery.

This movement into Mystery also

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assisted her as she dealt privately with lymphoma in her last years. This final illness, which led her to decline an invitation to become America's poet laureate, evoked a sense in Levertov of the preciousness of her own life (and of that of her ex-husband, who died in Massachusetts in early 1997). In a last interview with *Image* magazine, she affirmed the need for poetry in a computerized era and her own faith and hope in her share in the Resurrection, both of which inspired her to write 40 poems that were published after her death in December 1997.

In this biography, Greene, who has written lives of other spiritual thinkers like Evelyn Underhill and Maisie Ward, shows from Levertov's private diaries and journals the close connection between her personal struggles,

her poetic maturation and her spiritual transformation. As Levertov admitted in an interview around 1982, "My religious faith is at best fragile, but if, in fact, that which I hope is true is true, then I think God's mercy may prevent the annihilation of our planetary life.... I also have strongly the sense of...the first shoots of some different consciousness, of moral evolution." This statement echoes the theme of one of her best poems, "Beginnings," written the same year: "We have only begun to know/ the power that is in us if we would join/ our solitudes in the communion of struggle."

DAVID LEIGH, S.J., is a professor of English at Seattle University, where at his invitation Denise Levertov read her poetry during her last years and where she also received an honorary degree.

MICHAEL M. CANARIS

A SOCIAL CHARACTER

THE LIVES OF ERICH FROMM *Love's Prophet*

By Lawrence J. Friedman
Columbia University Press. 456p \$29.95

Although the once wildly popular writings of Erich Fromm have fallen into desuetude in the 21st century, Fromm remains a relevant figure for anyone interested in the interpenetrating fields of psychoanalysis, cultural criticism, personal spiritual development and civic engagement in domestic and international affairs. For that reason, his thought is eminently worthy of being revisited. At least that is the claim of Lawrence J. Friedman in his new biography, *The Lives of Erich Fromm: Love's Prophet*.

Fromm's remarkable life intersected with a multitude of figures, including the politicians John F. Kennedy and Adlai Stevenson, the Frankfurt

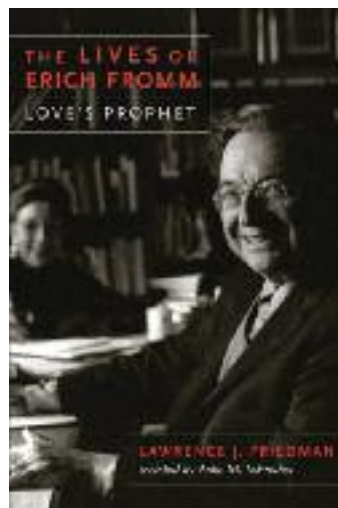
Institute's Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, the cultural commentators Margaret Mead and David Riesman, and the theologians Paul Tillich and Karl Rahner, S.J. A "global citizen" before the term was ubiquitous, the Jewish Fromm spent years living in Germany, America, Mexico and Switzerland, traveling extensively and corresponding with leaders from diverse ideological perspectives. To understand this dynamic and eclectic figure as fully as possible, Friedman, with the help of Anke M. Schreiber, spent nearly a decade researching Fromm's life, works and personal relationships by both

examining primary and secondary sources and interviewing those who knew him best.

One can never plumb the depths of a human heart in its entirety, for as Fromm's beloved Hebrew Scriptures ask pointedly, "Who can understand it?" (Jer 17:9). And yet Friedman does a yeoman's job presenting with dexterity and skill the many "lives" Fromm led.

A reader will likely infer that a book subtitled *Love's Prophet* will not be a scathing critique of the subject's intellectual worldviews and cultural analyses. That would be correct, for Friedman obviously respects his subject. Yet the biography is fair in its critique of Fromm's many personal shortcomings and does not shy away from investigating his character flaws, including the tendency to teeter on the edges of despondency and narcissism, and his notorious sensuality and sexual infidelities. But these efforts are indispensable in crafting an honest portrait of a man with a staggeringly wide range of interests, influences and liaisons, both scholarly and not.

Fromm's reading of Freud through a Marxist lens, which distanced him from orthodox Freudians, led him to argue that latent forces were undoubtedly constitutive of human existence, as both earlier thinkers posited. But for Fromm, these forces were largely social and did not stem exclusively from the repressed biological urges and strict determinism that he had understood Freud to espouse. Where the two perspectives collided, Fromm's allegiance to "socialism" won out against loyalty to his "Freudianism." Thus, though his fluency in Freud's thought was well documented, Fromm's greatest contribu-



tion remains his penetrating commentary on the “social character” of post-World War II humanity.

Fromm was deeply concerned about the present and future state of the human race, but he did not demonstrate the outraged cynicism that characterized parts of Marx’s work, and so was no imbiber of the “opiate of the people” analysis. Though his relationship with institutionalized religion was ambivalent at best, Fromm’s own meditative practices and interpersonal relationships helped him to transcend Marxist areligiosity by crafting and defending what he so famously called “*the art of loving*,” touching millions in the process. He saw both the West’s consumerism and the East’s “conservative State capitalism”—which for him was little more than corruption garbed in socialist trappings—as deleterious to humanity in his lifetime and ever-growing hindrances to love of self, other and humankind.

Love, for Fromm, was not mere sentimentality, but the cultivation of what he came to call biophilia (friendship with life), as distinguished from necrophilia (friendship with death). It was a fulfilling and rational—in his words “sane”—mode of existence that emphasized “being” more than “having.”

Though Friedman does not make this case, it is evident that Fromm can enlighten our interpretation of various current events. The commodification of the human person by rampant consumerism and the resulting isolation has increased exponentially since he first penned his critique. Disarmament, a key concern for Fromm, has become a *cause célèbre* once again, especially where I teach, in the shadow of Newtown. Nativist attitudes about immigration reform, xenophobic obstruction to religious and racial pluralism and fear of the “other,” however that may be defined, were not razed with the concentration camps that so disgusted Fromm. The

message of “love’s prophet” still has much in the contemporary world to address.

There is, however, something slightly paradoxical about the extensive scope of Friedman’s biography. In discussing Fromm’s “lives” so thoroughly, the volume is nearly bursting with intellectual arguments of theorists from widely disparate disciplines, references to multilingual source material and dense, if interconnected, cultural, political and socioeconomic historical analysis. That is not to say the book is not readable and engrossing, for it most certainly is. But it is also somehow categorically non-Frommian.

The subject’s works resonated with millions as somewhat popularized and unexact reflections that could distill or crystalize material by presenting philosophical, sociological and psychological discoveries and theorems for the masses. Friedman is a consummate intellectual biographer, but he could never be mistaken for a popularizer. If anything, by following the seemingly ever-extending tentacles of Fromm’s thought to such lengths, he makes the original contributions *more* complex and worthy of meticulous attention, not easier to master.

One comes away from the biography with a sense he or she knows the subject, a great achievement for any book of this type, but with perhaps more questions about the intellectual undergirding of Fromm’s thought and his sources’ compatibility with one another than when the reader set out on the journey. Perhaps that is exactly Friedman’s intention, to force a type of *ressourcement* and re-engagement with Fromm’s primary writings and their predecessors. If so, he has succeeded, for after reading *Love’s Prophet*, that is where my attention will turn in the coming months.

MICHAEL M. CANARIS teaches in the religious studies department at Fairfield University, Conn., and is on the staff of the Center for Faith and Public Life.

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LITURGICAL PRESS

REPLY ALL

70 Keeping Space Open

Re “Pursuing the Truth in Love,” by Matt Malone, S.J. (6/3): I have been reading **America** for over half a century now. While I appreciate fully your need to state the mission for this age as your predecessors did for theirs, reading your article was a little like reading the documents of the Second Vatican Council. During the council the constant challenge was to keep the ecclesial space open enough to hold all the diversity. On some level the documents reflect this, which leaves them open to factionalism. At a deeper level, if John W. O’Malley, S.J., is correct, there is a linguistic cohesiveness that propelled us into the ever ancient, ever new, which was the future.

I believe **America** has intelligently kept ecclesial space open for diversity all these years, and I look forward to your continuing that tradition for another 50 years. Blogs are more like the public square, where the best we can do is to set the tone by engaging with civility. Some monitoring is inevitable, but readers of **America** are smart enough to recognize and to challenge those who enter the space in bad faith.

CAROL STANTON
Online comment

Underlining Disagreement

On a practical note, one cannot help but wonder what will replace the shortcuts to understanding provided by using the now-banned adjectives *liberal* and *conservative* when discussing ecclesiastical matters. These words, while not always totally precise, are still a handy way to convey a great deal of meaning without having to provide multiple examples of how each person looks at church matters (as well as political issues).

One might also ask precisely what is

BLOG TALK

In his article “Pursuing the Truth in Love” (6/3), Matt Malone, S.J., wrote about the relationship between the church and the political. I will admit here that I was a bit surprised, because I suppose I have often (though not always) seen the magazine as entrenched in the particular American political dialogues that Malone decries. I really appreciate his points in that essay. He is pushing for us to see ourselves foremost as Christians. I say: Bravo.

I’d love to see more serious discussion about how to “be a poor church” alongside questions of contraception and marriage; adoration alongside homeless shelters; love for the Mass alongside love for Scripture. I’d love to see Jimmy Akin speaking right next to, or with, Vince Miller; Sister Helen Prejean alongside Mother Angelica; Scott Hahn alongside Sister Joan Chittister.

meant by the claim that **America** has “said everything” by answering questions with, “We are Christians.” Because, after all, within Christianity itself, even within the Roman Catholic Church, there is no universal agreement on what it means—in the nitty-gritty details—to be Christians. And, although **America** pledges to continue to provide a forum for a “diverse range of faithful, Catholic voices,” the reality is that very often there is little agreement on what the words “faithful Catholic” mean.

Even though it’s possible to censor articles in order to cleanse them of a

Will we do it? Will we have faith in Christ?

JANA BENNETT
Catholicmoraltheology.com

Editor’s Note: This is an excerpt from a longer post on the Catholic Moral Theology blog. See “We are Christians, Not Democrats or Republicans” (5/25).

Matt Malone, S.J., proposes, among other things, that solving the problem of the relationship between the church and the political, “or at least presenting credible solutions to it, is the pre-eminent task of the Catholic media in the United States.”

I think all of us who participate, as Catholics, in “public discourse” should read Father Malone’s piece. I don’t expect that everyone will agree with all he writes, but there’s a whole lot in it for all of us, and each of us, to think about.

RICK GARNETT
Mirrorofjustice.blogs.com

few specific words, it is far harder to address the underlying disagreements within Catholic understanding that have led to using these shorthand words when discussing matters in the church. This article seems to acknowledge the reality of the situation. Unfortunately, banning the use of certain words will not make it go away.

ANNE CHAPMAN
Online comment

A Matter of Obedience?

I applaud your commitment to pursue the truth in love, in particular your commitment to overcome the problem

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of factionalism in the church by no longer using the terms *liberal*, *conservative* or *moderate* when referring to Catholics. Unfortunately, our seminaries, at least ours here in Detroit, are teaching men studying for the priesthood that Catholics are not liberal or conservative; they are merely disobedient or obedient.

ANTHONY CANDO
Grosse Pointe Park, Mich.

Reader Request

This Matt Malone, S.J.—can he be cloned?

(REV.) BRIAN M. RAFFERTY
Baltimore, Md.

Editor's Note: Catholic teaching prohibits human cloning.

Capitalism and Morality

Re "Just Economics," by Stacie Beck (5/6): The members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul strongly believe in capitalism. We do not believe, however, that capitalism, morality and social justice are mutually exclusive. Our view of capitalism does not include exploiting workers through low salaries with the immoral justification that "at least they have a job."

Job creators and innovators are to be praised. In our opinion, however, you cannot justify the practice of paying wages so low that your employees qualify for public aid, while also complaining about budget deficits and the growing government debt, and then wrap it all up in a nice conscience-relieving "bow" in a donation to charity.

A healthy economy, in our view of Catholic social teaching, has the Dow hitting record highs while unemployment and poverty reach record lows. A rising tide must, and can, lift all boats.

SHEILA K. GILBERT
Maryland Heights, Mo.

The author is president of the National Council of the U.S. Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

No Laughing Matter

James Martin, S.J., asks, "How do you

minister to people who are "seriously unstable?" ("In the Land of the Gerasenes" 5/27). He candidly and honestly talks of his frustration, and I thank him for that. But let me assure him the way to handle it is not with sarcasm or mocking humor as in the two examples he cites.

I have been involved in advocating and ministering with and for people with mental illness for over 25 years. Treating people with respect and dignity is fundamental to following Christ, even when we sometimes have to turn the other cheek. In severe cases, people who are having delusions or hearing voices are really experiencing those symptoms. When they feel rejected and unwanted by the church, they feel rejected by God.

The Chicago Archdiocesan Commission on Mental Illness has developed programs and educational material that address the questions raised by Father Martin. These are available free at www.miministry.org. I encourage every church minister to acquaint themselves with these pastoral approaches, as the incidence of

mental illness in our country is one in four people.

(DEACON) TOM LAMBERT
Chicago, Ill.

Jesuit Alumni

As an alumnus of Regis High School and Fordham University and an educator in Jesuit schools for 27-plus years, I offer congratulations on the superb Jesuit education issue (5/13). I was especially pleased to see thoughtful essays by the Brophy College Preparatory alumni Matt Emerson, J. Patrick Hornbeck II and Rob Weinert-Kendt. The Ignatian inspiration to educate people for others, especially in the arts and humanities, shines brightly in their perception. *Ad multos annos!*

JOHN LABONTE
Scottsdale, Ariz.

Aggiornamento

Did someone open the windows at 106 West 56th Street in New York City? I have been reading *America* for over 35 years. The last few issues have been the best. Keep up the good work.

(REV.) JOSEPH M. CORLEY
Darby, Pa.



CARTOON BY HARLEY SCHWADRON

At Your Service

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (C), JULY 21, 2013

Readings: Gn 18:1-10; Ps 15:2-5; Col 1:24-28; Lk 10:38-42

“Sir, please do not go on past your servant” (Gn 18:3)

There is something charming about the account of Abraham serving the three men who suddenly appear at the oaks of Mamre. It is not simply that Abraham offers unbidden hospitality and service, or that they respond to his offer of food with a simple, “Do as you have said,” but that along with the water, bread, curds and milk he also proffers a tender, young calf to eat. The charm is not in the offer itself. Even a city boy knows that though Abraham has given the calf to his servant “who hastened to prepare it,” you cannot slaughter a calf and cook it in a few minutes. Real hospitality takes time. Perhaps in an ancient context, preparing bread from flour and butchering a cow to serve to your guests is the equivalent of a tray of crackers and cold cuts, yet I think we are intended to slow the narrative down and reflect on such involved preparation. Hospitality inherently calls for attention to one’s guests and offering them the best that one has to give. That cannot be rushed.

The ancient world in general revered hospitality; and the Israelites, because of their own sojourn in a foreign land and wandering in the desert, were called upon to show compassion and hospitality to strangers and to protect them from harm (Ex 23:9; Lv 19:33–34). Abraham’s hospitality, perhaps even beyond the call of

ancient hospitality, leads to a blessing from the three men. The text presents these three as mysteriously related to God, whose will they seem to represent, but we also see in Abraham’s behavior the precursor to Jesus’ parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25, in which Jesus says that when caring for those in need—the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger—one is caring for Jesus himself. This links hospitality to the ultimate blessing.

The focus on hospitality never wavered among the Jewish people and continued with the rise of the church. Jesus receives hospitality from two of his friends, Martha and Mary; but as with many of Jesus’ encounters, his response to the hospitality his friends give him challenges us to expand our horizons.

Martha is the more active sister, inviting Jesus in and caring for his physical needs, but she “was distracted by her many tasks” and confronted Jesus, asking, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.”

Jesus acknowledges the goodness in Martha’s hospitality, but points to her sister Mary as the model of hospitality: “There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.”

What is that better part? It is attention to the needs of the guest, the Lord

himself, as Martha has identified Jesus, and that attention can take the form of physical hospitality. But more important, it is attention to whatever one’s guest needs. In this case, attention to Jesus, and not one’s own sense of being slighted by a sister who does not do her fair share of the work, is what truly matters. It is what Abraham offered by pouring out on his guests his undivided attention. Heb 13:2 says that by doing this, he

“entertained angels without knowing it.” Yet here Martha has Jesus with her, and she is more concerned with her needs. If she would focus on Jesus, she would have all that she needs.

It is this subtle final insight, which Jesus offers to Martha, that is at the heart



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Imagine yourself sitting at the feet of Jesus, listening to him. Does anything distract you from offering him your full attention and service?

of an apparently unrelated passage in Colossians in which Paul rejoices “in my sufferings for your sake.” In this passage, Paul says he is “completing what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church.” The greatest hospitality Paul can offer, which any of us can offer, is to invite all to participate in the welcoming of Jesus as his servants, in order “to make the word of God fully known, the mystery that has been hidden throughout the ages and generations but has now been revealed to his saints.” We do so, as Mary did, by focusing on the “better part,” Jesus himself, but serving the stranger, like Abraham, knowing that with the stranger is God.

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

The Innocent

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (C), JULY 28, 2013

Readings: Gn 18:20-32; Ps 138:1-8; Col 2:12-14; Lk 11:1-13

“On the day I called, you answered me” (Ps 138:3)

In every age, evil takes on a new name and a new face: Auschwitz, sexual abuse, Sodom, human trafficking. The personification of God in the Old Testament takes many forms, but goodness remains the same and unchanged: God who loves us and desires relationship with us. In Genesis 18, God is presented as examining the situation in Sodom and Gomorrah, saying: “How great is the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah and how very grave their sin! I must go down and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to me; and if not, I will know.” According to the portrayal of God in Genesis, God does not pre-judge the situation but comes to examine it personally.

The presentation of God as actively involved in many scenes in the Old Testament is not ultimately intended to create a notion of an anthropomorphic God, who literally walks among us, but to heighten the notion of the “personal God” who cares for creation and communicates the divine will to men and women. Yet in the same way, it indicates that human beings are intended to be in conversation with God, to make known the needs and desires of the human heart. As such, God does not simply make known a desire to crush the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, nor does Abraham simply turn meekly away from God, but a conversation is presented to us.

God and Abraham deliberate on the fate of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, with Abraham negotiating on behalf of the soon to be destroyed cities, campaigning on behalf of the people of these cities. Abraham gently pleads his case, arguing downward the number of righteous people required to secure a reprieve for the notorious cities. Abraham asks that if only a few righteous people could be found, say 10: “Far be it from you to do such a thing, to make the innocent die with the guilty so that the innocent and the guilty would be treated alike! Should not the judge of all the world act with justice?”

As Genesis presents the interaction, God is prepared to be swayed and is persuaded by the intercessions of Abraham, accepting his pleas on behalf of the hoped-for righteous in Sodom and Gomorrah. The evocative scene points to the truth of the claim made by the great Jewish medieval philosopher Moses Maimonides, that God will never turn from a promise of mercy, but will rescind a promise of punishment. It points, that is, to the (inter-)personal nature of God, the justness of God, and the desire to turn from justice and offer mercy, if only the guilty turn away from sin and toward God.

Not only is God open to the intercessions of Abraham, we learn from Jesus in Luke 11 that God desires all of our intercessions, and even more our

perseverance in prayer. God does not desire the death of any person—whether guilty or innocent—but wants us to turn our desires to God’s kingdom and orient our wills to God’s. We pray for the coming of the kingdom, for the perseverance to seek God at all times, night and day, and for the wisdom to know that “if you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” God desires that we, like Abraham, intercede with God, for this indicates our desire to claim our relationship with God and deepen it according to the contours of God’s ways and being.

At the heart of God’s way and being is the hope that we all find ourselves among the innocent, that we reject the false splendor of the guilty, a way of life

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Reflect on Abraham’s discussions with God. Do you bring all of your requests, pleas and appeals to God?

suffused with sin, which is finally all that needs to be destroyed. If it was us God wanted to destroy, it could have been done long ago, in any way, for numerous reasons, but God desires us in relationship and life. It is for this reason that Colossians tells us that “even when you were dead in transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, he brought you to life along with him, having forgiven us all our transgressions; obliterating the bond against us, with its legal claims, which was opposed to us, he also removed it from our midst, nailing it to the cross.” Let the guilt go; God wants us to be the innocent. **JOHN W. MARTENS**



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