

America

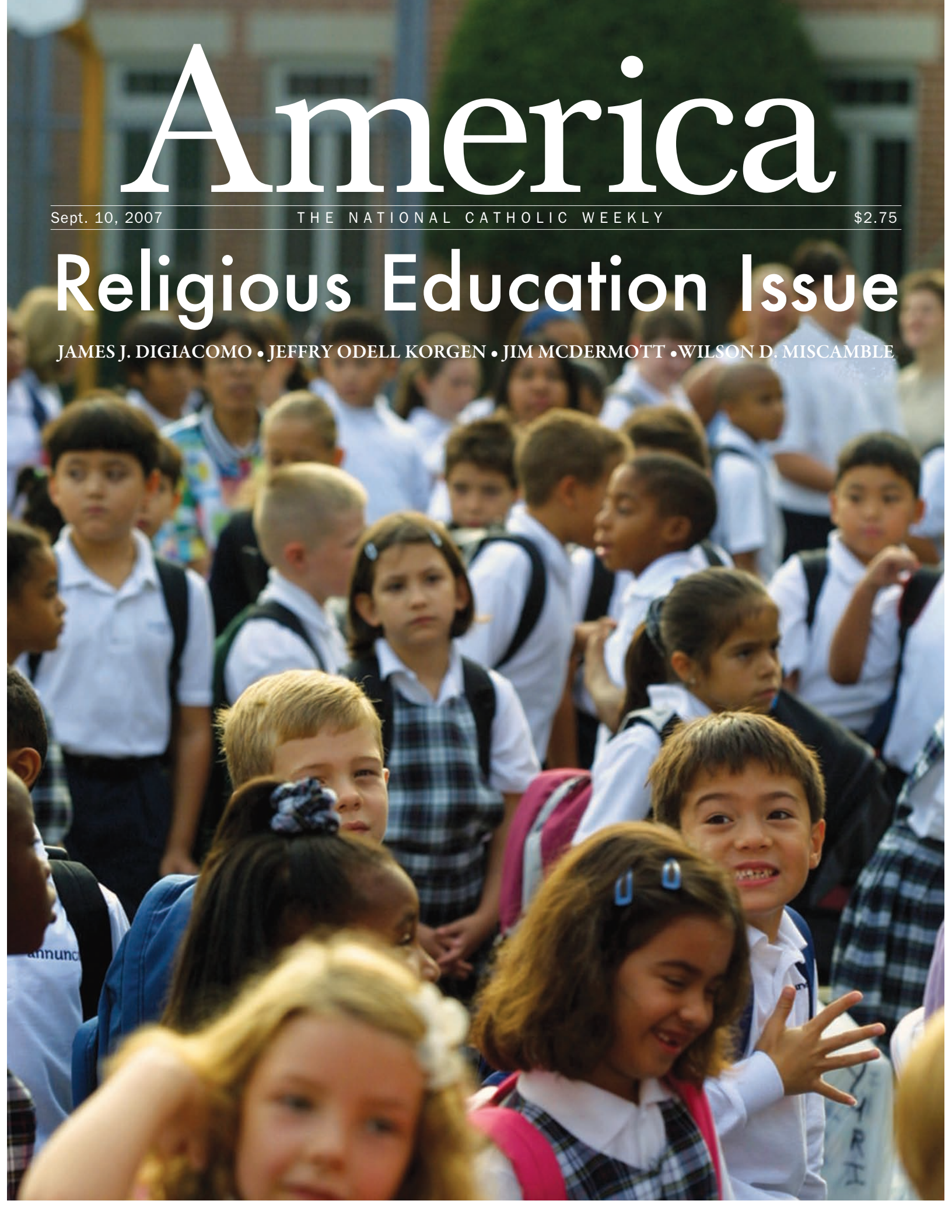
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Religious Education Issue

JAMES J. DIGIACOMO • JEFFRY ODELL KORGEN • JIM MCDERMOTT • WILSON D. MISCAMBLE



BEING FROM CHICAGO, I have a weakness, a flaw really, for casting aspersions upon the Green Bay Packers, a football team from rural Wisconsin whose quarterback is so old they may need to provide him with a walker and an oxygen tent. Sometimes I don't even realize I'm doing it.

I know relatively little, however, about the game of football itself. I'm sure if I were asked to play I would throw even more interceptions than he does.

So last year when someone invited me to the Giants/Bears game at Giants Stadium in New Jersey, I felt excited; but with no Packers to taunt—"Peter Favre could throw better than you!"—I was out of my element.

As play began, my host instructed me to keep my eyes on the center. We tend to watch the quarterback, he explained, because the action unfolds around him. But the movement of the center tells you what the play is. If he moves to the left or right, he's blocking to create a hole—it's a running play.

If he stands his ground, he's defending the quarterback—it's probably a passing play.

A very small detail. But I had to admit, the more I kept my eyes on the center, the more the strategy behind the action emerged.

Not long after that game, I realized I had been taught in school a very similar lesson about the church. As in football, every theological argument, every statement of the church, every reform of practice has a play it's trying to make, a position it's trying to assert. And if you want to see where that play is headed, pay attention to how it talks about doctrine.

"Doctrine"—it's one of those terms just clear enough to make it seem like you don't need to explain it, and fuzzy enough that it can mean whatever you want it to mean. Like "the church" or "war on terror." It certainly refers to the Nicene Creed, our confession of what we believe. But it also can include, and is sometimes used interchangeably with, "the tradition," which itself can refer to the entire body of Christian thought and practice, or selections from that body.

Some approach doctrine like a sculpture, shaped in the early days of the church and then sealed into a final form that the subsequent teaching of the church explains. One's responsibility is to be faith-

ful to that tradition, "to teach what has always been taught." We do not change; we do not develop. We clarify. To do otherwise is to mistake doctrine for still-soft clay and risk destroying the essential: We gave you Michaelangelo's "David," and you turned it into Groucho Marx.

Others look at doctrine like a play by William Shakespeare, a text whose language and story allows, even demands, a variety of interpretations. Just as the life of Jesus allowed for four Gospels, our understanding of creedal terms like "the Father," "one in being with" and "the resurrection of the dead" develops, as new generations come to them with new questions and insights. The practices and presentations of the faith that result can be as different from one another as St. Peter's approach was from St. Paul's.

Interpretation, however, does not allow room for everything. One would be hard pressed to create a satisfactory version of "Romeo and Juliet" in which, instead of killing herself, Juliet just "feels

real bad" about the whole thing. Or can one imagine a

Hamlet unfamiliar with angst?

So, too, theologians' ideas are limited and critiqued by the Creed itself and by the tradition (however they conceive of it). People may argue whether "truly human" allows for the possibility that Jesus was ever tempted to sin. Say he looked human but had the mind of God, and you've gone too far.

Today authorities draw the English-speaking church "back" to a more literal translation of the Latin text, while liturgists wonder what the heck is a "gibbet"? Scripture passages used to justify church teaching are deemed by others the result not of inspiration but of historical accident. And scholars continue to debate whether the Second Vatican Council represented a significant development—that is, change—in church teachings, or was in continuity with all that had come before.

In many ways, these debates come down to that one issue: change or continuity. Does the speaker believe that doctrine develops over time—or must it remain as constant as the Packers' poor chances of a playoff berth? It is a useful signal to pay attention to. Much as in football, how one begins has a lot to do with where one ends up.

Jim McDermott, S.J.

Of Many Things

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Cover photo Students wait to enter Annunciation School in Washington, D.C., Sept. 3, 2002. CNS photo by Martin Lueders

26



Articles

Educating for a Living Faith **12**
James J. DiGiacomo

What does it mean to go for the gold?

Forgiveness Unbound **19**
Jeffry Odell Korgen

Reconciliation education is helping Rwanda to heal after the genocide.

The Faculty ‘Problem’ **26**
Wilson D. Miscamble

How can Catholic identity be preserved in higher education?

Giving Back **29**
Jim McDermott

An interview with a new school president

Current Comment **4**

Editorial Keeping Children Healthy **5**

Signs of the Times **6**

Reflection Place **11**

Less Is More *Margaret Silf*

Of Other Things **32**

Woman of Peace *George M. Anderson*

Faith in Focus **35**

Praying in the Wild *Gerald W. Schlabach*

Book Reviews **38**

Mission Al Jazeera; At Large and at Small; High Society

Poem **43**

In the Event of a Fire *Joseph Capista*

Letters **45**

The Word **47**

Lost Souls *Daniel J. Harrington*



35

Who Lost Iraq?

As Congress and the White House prepare for the assessment due on Sept. 15 of the situation in Iraq, an article in the current issue of *Foreign Affairs* merits their attention. James Dobbins, a former assistant secretary of state, asks, “Who Lost Iraq?” Mr. Dobbins argues that responsibility for this defeat of U.S. policy is not restricted to the White House and those neo-conservative ideologues who sought to overthrow Saddam Hussein prior to 9/11. Congress, including its Democratic leadership, failed to debate properly the wisdom of a pre-emptive invasion. Military planning for the invasion and its aftermath, led by General Tommy R. Franks under Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, proved woefully inadequate. Individuals and institutions in the U.S. media have also admitted that their coverage of Iraq was inadequate and amounted to “marketing the war.”

Mr. Dobbins argues that the lessons to be learned from the Iraq “debacle” include the retirement of pre-emptive war as a proclaimed doctrine of national security. While the United States has not hesitated to employ force in the past without waiting to be struck first, as Dobbins points out, making pre-emption a doctrine of national security impedes international diplomacy. Furthermore, the promotion of democracy and nation-building remain worthy goals, but they must be pursued with greater realism. In the future, he adds, U.S. voters should insist on leaders who will “foster debate and welcome disciplined dissent” instead of insisting on ideological loyalty. Finally, the struggle against international terrorism should be recognized as a continuing police action that will depend on international cooperation and shared intelligence.

Replay It, Sam

In football, the technology of the instant replay has served fans, teams and referees well. It not only solves disputes, disclosing the occasional “bad call,” but it confirms the good ones.

These days video technology has begun to amplify public discussion of all sorts, thanks to the invention of YouTube (www.YouTube.com), the Google-owned online repository of viewer-donated videos. As sponsor with CNN of a debate among Democratic candidates, YouTube has already contributed to U.S. politics in the first national electoral campaign since its online debut in February 2005. But will YouTube serve the public over the long haul by improving fairness and accuracy?

It could. As long as a video is authentic, it has the virtue of being “denial-proof.” It shows actual words, facial

expressions and gestures and lets viewers hear, see and assess for themselves what a public figure said, precisely how and in what context. Video can be stored and used for comparison, like the recent YouTube footage of Dick Cheney explaining on C-Span in 1994 why the United States should not invade Iraq “all alone” or set up a “U.S. occupation” or “take down Saddam” and asking, “What are you going to put in its place?” Content matters.

What matters more is how much judgment a YouTube viewer brings to the Internet. It is one thing to watch a politician utter an irritable remark or express a jumbled policy position, but another to know how much weight to assign it. What else has that politician said and done that deserves voter consideration but is not served up on YouTube? Even inconsistency can be attributed to many things—a change of mind, of heart, of circumstance, of maturity—none of them necessarily negative. As to whether YouTube will improve the political process, the play may still be too close to call.

Guns and Chocolate

Millions of dollars from cocoa revenues funded both sides of the 2002-3 conflict in the Côte d’Ivoire, according to a new report by Global Witness. The Côte d’Ivoire is the world’s largest supplier of cocoa for the global chocolate industry. The report, *Hot Chocolate*, contends that the government and the rebel group Forces Nouvelles spent at least \$118 million in support of the conflict. The conflict resulted in thousands of civilian deaths and the displacement of hundreds of thousands more.

The civil war ended with a peace agreement and the government’s assuming control of the south, where most of the cocoa production takes place. The country, however, “remains fragile and deeply divided,” the report observes, adding that just as the cocoa trade financed the war, it still benefits corrupt interests within the Forces Nouvelles and the government itself. Those who have tried to expose the abuses have been threatened and attacked. One journalist, Guy-André Kieffer, disappeared; and a French lawyer auditing the cocoa sector for the European Union was abducted and later freed. Because of a lack of transparency and what the report terms “a culture of impunity,” corruption goes on. And companies, including American multinationals like Archer Daniels Midland, “continue to trade without appearing to question...the misuse of taxes...they pay to the government.” Overall, the report serves as yet another example of how a natural resource, like the so-called blood diamonds of Sierra Leone, can contribute to armed conflict.

Keeping Children Healthy

SICK CHILDREN ARE A NIGHTMARE for any family. But if the president's 2008 budget is accepted without substantially increased funding for the State Children's Health Insurance Program, or S-chip, millions of children will lack needed medical care when illness strikes. Created 10 years ago as a federal-state partnership, S-chip must be reauthorized by Sept. 30 for the next five years. Its proven success—it now covers six million children—leaves little doubt that reauthorization will be forthcoming. The question, however, is at what level of federal aid. This aspect of the situation is especially important, because some nine million children are still uninsured. Over six million of these, because of their low-income status, are eligible for, but not yet covered by, either S-chip or Medicaid. Some families simply do not know of the program or are reluctant to apply.

S-chip complements Medicaid by providing health insurance for children in families not poor enough to be eligible for Medicaid, but too poor to afford private insurance, which for a family of four can easily cost \$10,000 or more a year. Currently, under S-chip, most states provide health insurance to children in families with incomes of at least 200 percent of the federal poverty line. President Bush, unfortunately, wants to restrict S-chip eligibility to that low level. He proposes an inadequate increase of \$5 billion a year between 2008 and 2012. This amount would entail a loss of coverage even for 1.4 million needy children already enrolled, with nothing added for others who are also eligible because of their families' low-income status.

Some states have used the flexibility they now enjoy under S-chip to raise the eligibility levels well above the 200 percent cut-off line that the administration wants to establish. New Jersey, for instance, where the cost of living is one of the highest in the nation, covers children in households with incomes at 350 percent of the poverty level. And the New York State Legislature recently proposed an increase to 400 percent of the poverty line. But in mid-August, the president set stricter limits on household income, requiring states to prove that they have enrolled 95 percent of children below the 200 percent limit before expanding eligibility to higher-income work-

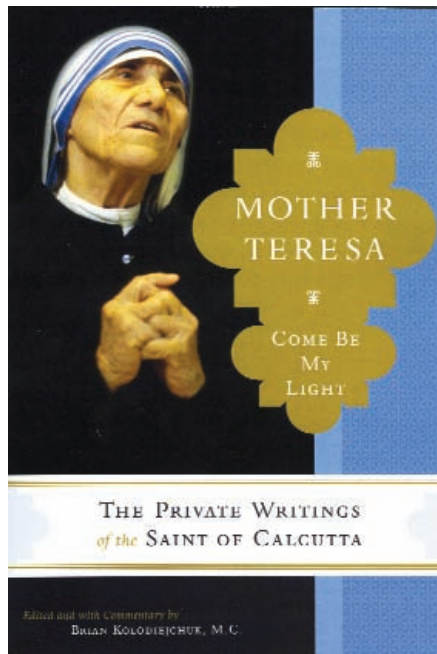
ing poor families. No state meets this standard, and health advocates see such a level of participation as virtually impossible. New York's Gov. Eliot Spitzer and others, like Senator Edward Kennedy (Democrat of Massachusetts) have said that they will challenge the new federal rules.

Congress, to its credit, promised \$50 billion in its budget resolution in March to cover more children under S-chip and Medicaid. Both houses of Congress passed bills in early August that represent a move in the right direction—enough to cover four to five million children as yet uncovered and to ensure that those currently covered under S-chip would retain their coverage.

THE HOUSE BILL IS THE MORE GENEROUS of the two. It would increase spending over the next five years by the full \$50 billion Congress promised. The Senate bill is more modest but still offers much more than the administration. Congress now faces the task of reaching a compromise before the Sept. 30 deadline. Both legislative measures would pay for the increase in S-chip funding by raising the tax on tobacco. Some advocates, like Edwin Park, a senior fellow at the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, have pointed out that linking it with other means-tested programs, like free or reduced-price school lunches or food stamps, could make it easier for low-income children to benefit from S-chip as well. Eligibility for food stamps, for example, could automatically mean eligibility for S-chip. The so-called "express lane approach," he added, is a provision of both the new House and Senate bills.

The president has threatened to veto any measures that exceed his inadequate \$5 billion annual increase or give states the funds and tools they need to enroll more children, a position that falls well short of the goal of reaching the nine million children who still lack health care coverage. At least \$50 billion over the next five years is what must be forthcoming. With the cost of the Iraq war running to \$200 billion a year, and with ongoing tax cuts for the wealthiest placed ahead of the needs of low- and middle-income Americans, it is not surprising that important domestic programs like S-chip are being squeezed in ways that are bound to hurt the most vulnerable among us. Congress should be ready to override any veto aimed at derailing the increased funding needed for S-chip.

New Book Illustrates Mother Teresa's Strength



Vatican officials said a new book that recounts in detail Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta's long "crisis of faith" illustrates her spiritual strength in the face of doubt. "This is a figure who had moments of uncertainty and discouragement, experiencing the classic dark night that God gives to chosen people in order to forge them on the road to holiness," said Cardinal Julian Herranz of Spain, a member of the Congregation for Saints' Causes. "These moments of crisis felt by great saints are normal and in line with the church's tradition," Cardinal Herranz said Aug. 26.

The letters are being published in English in the forthcoming book *Mother Teresa: Come Be My Light*, edited by Brian Kolodiejchuk, a priest of the Missionaries of Charity order founded by Mother Teresa and the postulator of her cause for canonization.

Raniero Cantalamessa, the Capuchin priest who is preacher of the papal household, told Vatican Radio that what distinguished Mother Teresa's "dark night" was that it apparently continued throughout her life and was not a preparation for a new spiritual stage as was the case with other saints.

From CNS and other sources. CNS photos.

Progress Made Toward Code for Evangelization

In many parts of the world, church authorities look disapprovingly on conversion from one Christian denomination to another as "sheep thievery." Now the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the World Council of Churches have announced progress in discussions on a common code for evangelization. The World Evangelical Alliance has also indicated it will support the project, a significant development given the centrality of evangelizing activity in the life of the evangelical churches.

Premised on the right to religious freedom, the proposed code would strike a balance between that liberty and the right to explain and promote one's belief. According to a World Council of

Churches report, the discussants agree that "Freedom of religion connotes the freedom, without any obstruction, to practice one's own faith, freedom to propagate the teachings of one's faith to people of one's own and other faiths, and also the freedom to embrace another faith out of one's own free choice."

The proposals reject illegitimate means of evangelization, commonly referred to as proselytizing. These include taking advantage of "vulnerable" people, like children and disabled persons, and not employing humanitarian aid to recruit converts.

The project was first announced in May 2006. Formal drafting of an accord will begin in October. The project is expected to be completed in 2010.

Causes Not Confronted, Says Book on Abuse

The bishop who developed the Australian Catholic Church's protocols for dealing with cases of sexual abuse of minors by members of the clergy says the church is failing victims and not confronting the systemic causes of sexual abuse and making changes that will make ministries healthier places.

In a new book, *Confronting Power and Sex in the Catholic Church*, Bishop Geoffrey Robinson, 70, a retired auxiliary bishop of Sydney, writes, "I am convinced that if the pope had spoken clearly at the beginning of the revelations, inviting victims to come forward so that the whole truth, however terrible, might be known and confronted, and firmly directing that all members of the church should respond with openness, humility, honesty and compassion, consistently putting victims before the good name of the church, the entire response of the church would have been far better. Even now I cannot see evidence that a true confrontation of the problem is occurring," the bishop wrote; "the staff of those clinical facilities specially set up for the treatment of priests and religious who have offended against minors have not been asked by Roman authorities for their findings on the causes of abuse."

Timor Leaders Dismayed by Rapes and Arson

Officials of the Diocese of Baucau have expressed dismay over the rape of girls at a convent school and the burning of church property following the announcement of the appointment of East Timor's new prime minister. The Rev. Francisco Pinheiro da Silva, vicar general of the Baucau Diocese, told the Asian church news agency UCA News that unidentified men raped about nine girls—one of them only 8 years old and the others 15 to 17—at around 2 a.m. Aug. 10 in the Salesian-run convent school in Baucau. "Indications show that the brutality and immoral actions were done by Fretilin supporters," said Father da Silva, referring to the former ruling party. The British news agency Reuters reported Aug. 13 that police arrested a 16-year-old male on suspicion that he raped an 11-year-old student at an orphanage attached to the convent. Father da Silva told UCA News Aug. 13 there have also been attacks on church and public buildings. On Aug. 7-9, the offices of the diocese, the Caritas aid agency and the U.S. bishops' Catholic Relief Services and a Catholic-run kindergarten were burned down, he said in a telephone interview.

Table Talk: Pope Shares Pastoral Ideas With Italian Priests

In a wide-ranging conversation with the priests of Belluno-Feltre and Treviso, Pope Benedict XVI shared his thoughts on pastoring in today's sprawling parishes where people live out their lives in a post-modern culture. The exchange took place July 24; the Vatican Press made an English translation available in late August. We reproduce here some selected remarks.

On today's parish. [The priest] should be the one who holds the essential reins himself but can also rely on collaborators. I believe that this is one of the important and positive results of the Council: the co-responsibility of the entire parish, for the parish priest is no longer the only one to animate everything. Since we all form a parish together, we must all collaborate and help so that the parish priest is not left on his own, mainly as a coordinator, but truly discovers that he is a pastor who is backed up in these common tasks in which, together, the parish lives and is fulfilled.

On post-conciliar turmoil. The great legacy of the council, which opened up a new road, endures; it is still a magna carta of the Church's journey, very essential and fundamental.... A postconciliar period is almost always very difficult. The important Council of Nicea—which for us really is the foundation of our faith; in fact, we confess the faith formulated at Nicea—did not lead to a situation of reconciliation and unity as Constantine, who organized this great council, had hoped. It was followed instead by a truly chaotic situation of infighting.

It seems to me very important that our eyes are now open and can see all that is positive which developed in the period subsequent to the council: in the renewal of the liturgy, in the synods, the Roman synods, the universal synods, the diocesan synods, the parish structures, in collaboration, in the new responsibility of lay people, in the great intercultural and inter-

continental coresponsibility, in a new experience of the church's catholicity, of the unanimity that grows in humility and yet is the true hope of the world. Thus, I think we have to rediscover the council's great legacy. It is not a spirit reconstructed from texts but consists of the great council texts themselves, reinterpreted today with the experiences we have had which have borne fruit in so many movements and so many new religious communities.

On evolution. I see in Germany, but also in the United States, a somewhat fierce debate raging between so-called creationism and evolutionism, presented as though they were mutually exclusive alternatives: those who believe in the Creator would not be able to conceive of evolution, and those who instead support evolution would have to exclude God. This antithesis is absurd because, on the one hand, there are so many scientific proofs in favour of evolution which appears to be a reality we can see and which enriches our knowledge of life and being as such. But on the other, the doctrine of evolution does not answer every query, especially the great philosophical question: where does

everything come from? And how did everything start which ultimately led to man? I believe this is of the utmost importance. This is what I wanted to say in my lecture at Regensburg: that reason should be more open, that it should indeed perceive these facts but also realize that they are not enough to explain all of reality.

On interreligious dialogue. Our dialogue cannot move on suddenly to the great mysteries of faith, although Muslims have a certain knowledge of Christ that denies his divinity but at least recognizes him as a great prophet. They love Our Lady. These are consequently elements that we have in common, even in faith, and are starting points for dialogue. A perception of fundamental understanding on the values we should live is practical, feasible and above all necessary. Here too, we have a treasure in common, because Muslims come from the religion of Abraham, reinterpreted and relived in ways to be studied and to which we should finally respond. Yet the great substantial experience of the Ten Commandments is present, and this seems to me a point that requires further investigation.



Pope Benedict XVI admires the scenery in Lorenzago di Cadore, Italy, July 23, 2007.

Specialized Youth Ministry in Mexico

Noe Ruiz, 27, teaches elementary school in Saltillo, Coahuila's state capital, about 200 miles south of the Texas border at Laredo. Like many in northern Mexico, Ruiz is Catholic and actively practices his faith. Unlike many in his hometown, he is openly gay and coordinates a gay Catholic youth group, which operates with the blessing of the local diocese and serves 40 young people. But it has not always been easy, he said. "The environment here in Saltillo is very traditional," Ruiz said, although he added that attitudes were softening. Ruiz said Comunidad San Elredo is the only gay Catholic youth group in Mexico.

While accepted within the diocese, Ruiz acknowledged some unease among Catholics in other parts of the country. "The church in Mexico is very conservative," he said. "At the moment we're being supported [locally], but there are many people who disagree with us." Last January, Ruiz's home state of Coahuila passed Mexico's first civil union law, extending legal benefits to same-sex couples. The issue divided

Catholic leaders across Mexico and in Coahuila, which is served by three dioceses.

Lay Ministry Traditional and Radically New

One of the "top three or four most important ministerial shifts" in the last 2,000 years has been the "emergence of lay ecclesial ministry over the past 40 years," said Edward P. Hahnenberg, assistant professor of theology at Jesuit-run Xavier University in Cincinnati. He said it was on "a historical par with—and in fact may even eclipse—the changes to the church brought about by the rise of communal forms of monasticism in the fifth century, the birth of mendicant orders in the 13th century, or the explosion of women's religious communities in the 19th century."

Hahnenberg, who is also a theological adviser to the bishops, put the development of lay ecclesial ministry within a broad historical context as being both "traditional and radically new." He was one of the keynote speakers at the National Symposium on Lay Ecclesial Ministry, held July 31-Aug. 3 at St. John's University in Collegeville.

Lasallians Address Teacher Shortage



A depiction of St. John Baptist de La Salle, patron saint of teachers, in contemporary times, by Michael O'Neill McGrath, O.S.F.S.

The Midwest province of the Christian Brothers has begun a program to combat the growing shortage of male teachers. The province offers the Lasallian Teacher Immersion Program at universities run by the religious community to provide male college students with classroom teaching experience and opportunities to serve those in need while earning college credit. The program "is, in many ways, a return to our original mission," said Patrick Conway, F.S.C., the province's director of formation and director of the teacher immersion program.

St. John Baptist de La Salle began his educational mission in the late 1600s with a teacher-training program, preparing laymen to serve the church as teachers, explained Brother Patrick, a long-time educator and former university vice president. "This is my 35th year in education. One thing I've noticed is the shrinking pool of male teachers, particularly as related to theology and religion teachers," he told the St. Louis Review, the archdiocesan newspaper. "In the United States today, 19 percent of all Catholic school teachers are men. In public schools it's 21 percent...and 40 percent of children are growing up without a biological father in the house. Couple those things together and there is a real need."

Yankee Legend Rizzuto Supported School for Blind

The legendary New York Yankees player Phil Rizzuto, who died Aug. 14 at age 89, will be remembered for many things, not the least of which will be the amount of money he raised for St. Joseph's School for the Blind in Jersey City, N.J., a private Catholic institution founded and sponsored by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace. He raised more than \$2 million through his work organizing celebrity golf tournaments as well as through his own family's donations. As a result of Rizzuto's generous charity work, the school opened a new two-story, 75,000-square-foot facility in Jersey City Feb. 20. The school previously used facilities that had been in place since the 1920s. St. Joseph's held its 17th annual golf outing Aug. 20; the event was dedicated to the Yankee great's memory and his work to support the school.



Ed Lucas(left) and Phil Rizzuto



Less Is More

‘When you go down into the depths of the canyon at dawn, you can meet the creator at work.’

THE PLANE touched down in Las Vegas. Neither my friend nor I had much of a clue about camping; so along with the tent, the sleeping bags and the backpacks, we had with us all kinds of things that “might come in useful.” We could hardly move beyond the carousel. In fact that Hercules transporter you may have noticed laboring across the skies might well have been us!

Along with a mountain of things both needful and needless, however, we were carrying something that was weightless and invisible: an enormous enthusiasm about our trek into the deserts of Arizona and Utah and a belief that this was going to be a spiritual, as well as a physical, journey, in which the silence of the desert would speak to our hearts. And as we struggled to get ourselves and our bags to the car rental center, the first message was already coming through loud and clear: look at the lilies; they don’t carry all this stuff around for a rainy day, and they manage to bloom very effectively. How about slimming down a bit?

The story came to mind of the large lady who assured her best friend that “inside this overweight individual there is a slim person trying to get out!” “Just the one?” queried the friend in a triumph of honesty over diplomacy. I wondered what slim sliver of wisdom might be buried in the obesity of our baggage, both outer and inner, as we hit the road for canyon country and ate up the miles along Route 66. In the deeper layers of my mind, I think, a

question was taking shape: What does the core of my being look like when all the flab is removed? Not that I entered upon this adventure with any such issue in mind. My sole conscious intention was to enjoy the journey and explore some magnificent landscape. Only now can I begin to hear the resonances of what the desert sands were whispering in my heart.

In peak summer temperatures, a descent into the Grand Canyon is not to be contemplated, unless you have hooves. At 110 degrees and rising, walking is not an option for most mortals. But Bryce National Park is another matter. There, in the magical pre-dawn hours, it was entirely possible to walk down deep into the canyon and watch the rising sun set the hoodoos alight, as if with an inner fire.

Perhaps it was that inner fire that dropped the first hints of who we really are, in the core of our being. The hoodoos are so amazingly beautiful not because they have acquired layers of grandeur through the passage of time, but because they have lost so much. Their beauty is revealed because they have suffered eons of erosion, as the biting winds and the flash floods have stripped them down to their essential core, revealing every nuance of color and grain. When you go down into the depths of the canyon at dawn, you can meet the creator at work and tune in to the great paradox that creation and destruction are the yin and yang of the mighty power of unfolding life.

Might our personal diminishment also have the potential to reveal a deeper beauty that we never guessed was there? I reflected on some people I know, whose lives seem to suggest that this is so. At the nadir of their experience, perhaps in terminal illness or in the throes of some tragic event or extreme pain, they shine with

an inner, transfiguring light. Communities and nations, too, often reveal the heart of their humanity only when they face impossible odds together.

A story is told of a young girl who had a good singing voice. Wondering whether she should embark on professional voice training, her parents asked a musician friend to give her an informal audition. When she had sung for him, he considered his verdict. “She sings beautifully,” he said at last. “When her heart has been broken, she will sing sublimely.”

The hoodoos tell the same story. These pinnacles and arches are beautiful. When they have suffered the lashings of wind and water for countless millennia, they become sublime. In every rock a work of breathtaking wonder is locked up. Only hardship and erosion, or the sculptor’s cruel chisel, can release it. What is locked up inside me, inside you, inside the “other” we perhaps ignore or even despise? And do we desire to sing our heart’s pure song more deeply than we fear the heartbreak that sets it free?

It seems to be that the “more” that God’s dream always holds out to us, is only discovered when the suffocating layers of the “less” are stripped away—the comforts and conveniences at the surface levels of life. We would usually do anything to avoid this stripping, and yet the result will be the gradual emergence of the unique and eternal beauty of who we truly are.

So why do our diminishment and sufferings never feel life-giving? Maybe it is a matter of time. I once heard it said that miracles are merely a question of time. We do not regard it as a miracle when the rain waters the vine and the vine produces the grape and the grape yields the wine. We only see the miracle when it is speeded up, at Cana for example. The desert teaches you that the miracle of your own becoming cannot be rushed.

We shed a lot of ballast on our trip to the Southwest. When we got back to Vegas, our bags had slimmed down, but our hearts had expanded. The desert, like God, refuses to let us be less than we are, and will wait for as long as it takes. In divine mathematics, addition happens through subtraction, and less is always more.

Margaret Silf

MARGARET SILF lives in Staffordshire, England. Her latest books are *Companions of Christ: Ignatian Spirituality for Everyday Living* and the Catholic Press Association award-winning *The Gift of Prayer*.



ART BY MICHAEL ALTMAN

What does it mean to go for the gold?

Educating for a Living Faith

— BY JAMES J. DIGIACOMO —

FUTURE GENERATIONS OF CATHOLICS could call our era “the bad old days.” Or they might look back on this troubled chapter of church history and conclude that while Catholic adults suffered from many religious ailments, apathy about handing on the faith, at least, was not one of them. As evidence they can point to a healthy movement, going on right now, to address the troubling religious illiteracy of our young people. Why are teenagers so ignorant of the faith into which they were born and so uninvolved in the life of the Catholic community? Specifically, what can Catholic schools do to contribute to understanding, engagement and vitality among a generation that seems to be slipping away from us? To find

JAMES J. DIGIACOMO, S.J., is the author of many books on religious education and youth ministry.

the answers, we will have to address a whole other list of questions: What should we be offering students, both Catholic and not Catholic? What would we consider success in religious nurture and development? What can we realistically hope to achieve? What of the religious dimension of the whole school? What are our limitations? Can they be overcome? How?

Go for the Gold

A good way to start is by thinking of the process of religious education as a contest in which medals are awarded in recognition of different levels of achievement. Students come to us from different religious backgrounds and with various levels of religious receptivity. Think of our success in reaching them as deserving of gold, silver and bronze medals.

Gold. In working with Catholic students, the highest achievement is turning out well-informed, convinced young believers who identify with the faith community and participate in the sacramental life of the church. Besides being well informed and observant, they aspire to a life influenced by Christian values. This includes moral sensitivity and a developing social conscience.

For non-Catholic students, the goals are necessarily different. One is that they take seriously the religious dimension of life. The school's religious instruction and activities support and encourage commitment to their own religious tradition. They have an understanding and appreciation of the religious traditions and points of view of the Catholic community. They show signs of growth in moral maturity and practice.

Silver. Although not convinced of or practicing their faith, students are religiously literate. They know what well-informed Catholics and other Christians believe and stand for, and why it is important to them. All students should know what authentic religion is, though they do not feel ready to take an active part. They want to lead morally responsible lives.

Bronze. Students are unresponsive to religious insights or concerns and have a basically secular outlook on life. Yet they take moral questions seriously, care about justice and are learning how to form their conscience. They recognize the impoverishment of much of what passes for moral discourse in society at large. They are building resistance to materialism and consumerism, and they aspire to something better.

The descriptions above overlap and blend into one another. They are not exhaustive, but may help us form realistic expectations and assessments of our efforts at religious instruction and formation. We must always go for the gold. When we fall short, we must acknowledge it as a failure, even if no one is to blame.

Educational Consumerism

Some might call this description "not-so-great expectations," but let's be realistic. More and more of the young people who enroll in Catholic schools come for reasons other than religious development. Research has shown repeatedly that the religious illiteracy and tepidity of the young are usually a reflection of their parents' spiritual mediocrity. Often parental motivation in seeking a Catholic school education for their children has little or nothing to do with religion or even learning itself. And for many students, education is not about exploring and questioning, enjoying learning and taking pride and satisfaction in accomplishments. It is about getting good marks, excelling in sports, padding college applications and cheating compulsively in desperation to gain admission to colleges that guarantee success. It's not what you know, but how high up you go.

This is education's peculiar brand of consumerism, where the product must be purchased at any cost, including the loss of honesty, integrity, curiosity and culture. Education is not about becoming a cultivated human being, but about getting what you need in order to elbow a place at the common trough of conspicuous consumption. Most disturbing of all, many parents buy uncritically into much of this scramble for upward mobility. The school's faculty and administration may have problems, too. They may be tempted to measure the school's success solely by which colleges their graduates attend, not by what kinds of persons they become. In such an environment, religious formation can hardly be expected to exert much impact.

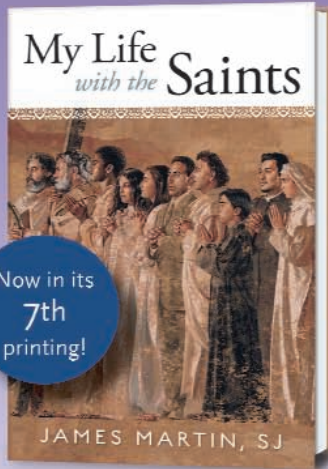
These are daunting obstacles to everyone committed to educating young people for a living faith. They do not condemn us to failure; but if we do not confront them honestly, we will be tempted to settle for a bland kind of religious identity that employs the terminology of traditional Catholic institutions but does little to implement its ideals.

Aiming Higher

How can we overcome these limitations? What should we offer students in religion classes and campus ministry? What kind of support do such activities need from the whole scholastic environment within which they operate?

The content and style of religious instruction have gone through many stages in the last 50 years. We went from rote catechism recitation to the "balloon books" of the 1960s and '70s that replaced the plastic Jesus with the friendly Jesus, whose main job was to assure all that God does not make junk and to shore up their positive self-image by telling them that God loved them just the way they were and would not want them to change a thing. Fear was out, love was in, and both were soon replaced by boredom. The transcendent God who offers answers to questions of ultimate meaning yielded to a benevolent deity who provoked

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mostly yawns from youngsters who got tired of being told to be nice to one another.

Into this theological rice paddy strode the alarmed bishops, who tried to restore order by making lists of doctrines and teachings and pointing out errors and inaccuracies. This brought some clarity to the enterprise, though not without some of the usual authoritarian stifling of creativity. But it left undone the task that only educators themselves can accomplish (outside of the home)—teachers must start from a sophisticated sensitivity to the psychological needs and capacities of the young, then offer them a presentation of the Christian message that is not only orthodox but also challenging and inspirational. Don't play catechetical "Jeopardy." Instead, help students ask religious questions before offering them the answers to the deepest questions we can put to human life. Young people, growing up in a dominant culture that discourages serious religious searching, need a lot of help. If the questions do not mean anything to them, why should the answers?

Creative Tension

While exploring religious questions with young people, teachers must preserve a creative tension among some basic aspects of Christian belief and practice. God must be presented not only as creator, lord and judge, but also as friend, lover and companion. Jesus must be presented not only as comforting and affirming, but also as challenging and demanding. Christian living must be presented as involving both the carrying of the cross and the sharing in the joy of the risen Christ. One-sided emphases in these areas tend to produce religious styles that are either grim or flabby.

This creative tension has a particular relevance in campus ministry, especially in the conduct of retreats. In the years preceding the Second Vatican Council, most retreats were characterized by an individual kind of piety that stressed acknowledging guilt and seeking conversion, especially through the sacrament of confession. The years following the council saw a healthy, new stress on the communitarian dimensions of prayer and celebration. Several different forms of group retreats evolved that did much to improve the quality of personal relationships among the participants, often affecting positively the life of the school. Some of these retreats, which inspire a vibrant fervor and quiet enthusiasm, are still among the best things happening in Catholic schools.

Retreats present educators with the challenge of maintaining a creative tension. The communitarian, face-to-face experiences of interpersonal relating can sometimes become so effectively horizontal that the vertical dimension of religious discourse all but disappears. God-talk can lose its place, and after a while it is all about us and not about God. Students can begin to look on retreats simply as an experi-

ence of making friends. How about making friends with and getting close to God? One possible indication of progress on that point is whether students go to Mass where the congregation is not made up of their peers.

Another part of school life that can enhance the Catholic dimension is the program of service projects in which students serve the poor and the needy. This is one of the positive developments that arose in the postconciliar era. Faith became a matter not just of words but also of deeds, and much good continues to be done by and for the young. But even here a word of caution is in order. What exactly does “Christian service” mean to the girls and boys involved? Does it mean any more to them than it does to their peers in public schools? Of course, good deeds have a value of their own, but here we are considering formal education. Catholic school students need to engage in guided reflection on the meaning of their service, or they may simply be engaging in secular humanism without any faith dimension. That does much for others, but it could do more for the students. Service becomes a learning experience when students reflect on the sources of people’s neediness. Does the need come from unjust social structures and insensitive public policies?

Confronting the Culture

All these efforts at promoting a living faith must be complemented by a hard look at opposing aspects of the surrounding culture. Help young people to be “culture smart”—make them intentionally aware of the contradictions and tensions between mass culture and what the school stands for; offer them a level of sophistication not available elsewhere; help them recognize those elements of the dominant culture that seek to manipulate them. Consumerism is not just about buying things. It is a whole worldview, a way of perceiving and dealing with reality. It defines the human person in terms of material things owned and consumed. Explain how advertising, the machine that powers consumerism, plays on our fear of not being loved, and then promises us that we will be loved if we buy something.

Speak frankly about one of the greatest obstacles to conversion and moral sensitivity: comfort. People who are comfortable don’t want to hear criticism of the status quo. They label as “do-gooders” or “bleeding hearts” or “fuzzy liberals” anyone who has the temerity to suggest that this is not the best of all possible worlds. Clearly offer an alternative vision of life, one that is designed not to soothe students but to wake them up.

Some people equate serious religious education with dogmatism and the restriction of intellectual freedom. But education for a living faith, as proposed here, is just the opposite. It promotes critical intelligence and rational commitment. The best weapon against mindless herd behavior is

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the human mind. Don't just teach kids how to make Web sites; teach them how to think. Encourage them to ask questions and demand explanations. At a time when critical thinking is discouraged in both church and state, employ one of the most underused words in education: why. Why can't this country provide health insurance for its citizens, when many other countries do? Why are we the last industrialized country to resort to capital punishment? Why can't women be priests? Why are Americans divided on issues like abortion and assisted suicide? Many of us came to adulthood after years of schooling. We learned all kinds of skills except how to raise our hands and ask "Why? How do we know that?" It is time to break new ground, but watch out. If you let students ask questions, you had better know the answers.

A Pervasive Environment

Teachers, campus ministers and service program directors are the adults who explicitly carry the school's religious dimension. But can they do it all by themselves? There is a temptation, already yielded to by many Catholic school communities, to do just that. We have all heard the argument: "Who ever heard of Catholic math?" But it doesn't work that way. Older Catholic school graduates who speak positively of the religious formation they received, look back on it as something they absorbed throughout the school day. Subjects like history, English and social studies

had a Catholic flavor that was pervasive without being intrusive. They were encouraged to see Christianity as a distinctive way of life, and they got the impression that the adults around them had bought into it. Today, if faculty members and administrators are not Catholic or not interested in the religious dimension of the school, the term "Catholic atmosphere" can become little more than a vague abstraction.

And the most important adults—the parents—must be addressed, too. They may be the hardest to reach, but we have to try. Parents-night activities, which usually involve questions of scholastic achievement and college placement, could make a little room for discussing levels of religious involvement and development.

The "bad times" are not going to go away very soon, but we can nudge our young people along a day at a time. And one of the best ways is by making an investment in the future they represent in our Catholic schools and communities. How? By going for the gold. Stop tiptoeing around issues and impress upon students the difference between cultural Catholicism and the real thing. Tell them that being a genuine Catholic includes free and committed participation in the life of a believing and worshiping community. Those who accept it will contribute to a newly vibrant church. Those who leave the church will at least know what it is that they have left. A

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The author, right, interviews Drocella Nyirakaromba, far left, with help from Gloriosa Uwimpuhwe, center. Both women are genocide survivors.

Forgiveness Unbound

Reconciliation education is helping Rwanda to heal.

BY JEFFRY ODELL KORGEN

IT IS THE GREATEST STORY OF FORGIVENESS never heard—the untold saga of the church-led reconciliation that has occurred since the Rwandan genocide. Many Catholics in the United States are familiar with the basic outlines of the genocide. Between April and June 1994, the world sat virtually silent while almost a million ethnic Tutsi and moderate Hutu were slaughtered by the Rwandan army, paramilitary groups and ordinary citizens,

JEFFRY ODELL KORGEN is secretary of the Roundtable Association of Diocesan Social Action Directors at the National Pastoral Life Center in New York City. His book *Solidarity Will Transform the World: Stories of Hope From Catholic Relief Services* (Orbis, 2007) includes in-depth interviews with both perpetrators of genocide and the Rwandans who have forgiven them.

goaded by an extremist Hutu government.

Few Americans know what has happened in Rwanda in the years since the killing ended. A decade of church-led social analysis, Scripture study and examination of conscience has yielded a social miracle and illuminated the boundless power of Christian forgiveness.

During the genocide the church's record was mixed. Despite official Catholic opposition to the ethnic violence, some church leaders were prominent among the killers. Most notorious among the *genocidaires*, as they are called, was the Rev. Athanase Seromba, who was convicted last year of genocide and extermination by the United Nations International Tribunal for Rwanda. At the height of the violence, Father Seromba encouraged 2,000 of his Tutsi parishioners to seek refuge within the church, then ordered

PHOTO COURTESY OF AUTHOR

a bulldozer to demolish the building, crushing all of them inside. The rubble has been left undisturbed as a memorial. Accounts of similar atrocities, committed by a small number of clergy and religious, stand alongside accounts of others' heroism and self-sacrifice, leaving observers with a mixed impression of the church's role.

Since then, however, the church in Rwanda has rebounded through a process of self-examination and national reconciliation rooted in preparations for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000. Working with Catholic Relief Services (which lost five staff members in the genocide), the Rwandan bishops organized a jubilee synod, to involve all levels of the church, in the 20,000 base communities that make up the church in Rwanda. Each one of these groups of 25 families took up the question of the role of ethnicity in the Rwandan genocide. Participants at all levels of the population were encouraged to tell the truth. The conversations broke the silence, and parishioners began to speak of the unspeakable.

A Different Path

In 2001, Archbishop Thaddée Ntihinyurwa asked the diocesan justice and peace commissions to begin implementing the synod's conclusions, chief among them being the necessity of truth-telling, public confession and requests for forgiveness. In this, Rwanda took a different path than

South Africa, which had developed a secular Truth and Reconciliation Commission headed by Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The secular commission held hearings aimed at airing the truth and recommended amnesty for those who came forward. In Rwanda, the church organized a massive program of Scripture study and reconciliation ministry, led by parish justice and peace commissions.

The Diocese of Kibungo asked Théophile Rwemalika, justice and peace coordinator for the Diocese of Kibungo, to work with Catholic Relief Services to train diocesan staff members, key parish leaders and base community animators in community trauma healing, conflict management, Catholic social teaching and human rights. Over the past five years, 3,000 leaders have been trained in the diocese and 20,000 nationwide. After parish peace and justice commission members complete the C.R.S. peacebuilding training, they seek out newly released prisoners (who are typically freed in groups of 40,000 at a time) to encourage them to confess their crimes and ask forgiveness of survivors.

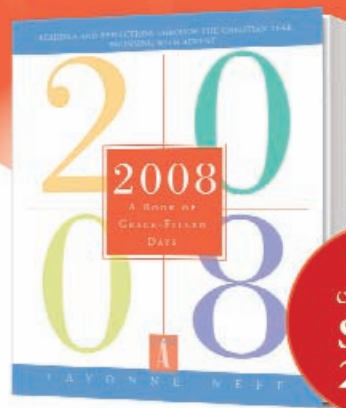
Commission members also lead examinations of conscience within their own base communities and encourage neighbors and friends to come clean about their conduct during the genocide. As I traveled throughout Rwanda interviewing 200 local justice and peace commission members in March, 2006, I heard the same story in each parish. Men confessed brutal killings and looting. Women admit-

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ted pointing out Tutsi, turning away frightened neighbors who sought refuge and looting. Each described a moment of moral clarity, experienced while reflecting on Scripture, that compelled them to confess. All reported twice asking for forgiveness: once in public and once in the homes of survivors. Peace and justice commission leaders told stories of supporting killers by accompanying them to survivors' homes. Most of those petitioned granted forgiveness.

Théophile explained that the training also supports the Rwandan judicial policy of trying the ringleaders of the genocide and those who committed sex crimes in its federal courts and at the United Nations' genocide tribunal in Arusha, Tanzania. Ordinary Rwandans who participated in the killings are now (since 2004) tried in local courts called Gacaca (Ga-CHA-cha), whose focus is reconciliation.

Forgiving the Unforgivable

Some people, like Justin Ndagijimana, have personally forgiven as many as eight others. When asked how many family members he lost in the genocide, Justin could not count the number precisely. He said: "I lost my wife, a child, my dad and my mom, my sisters, my niece and my nephews, my uncles and aunts. I can't remember how many; I think it was around 65 relatives."

Justin was well aware that far more than the eight people who confessed killed his family and looted his property.

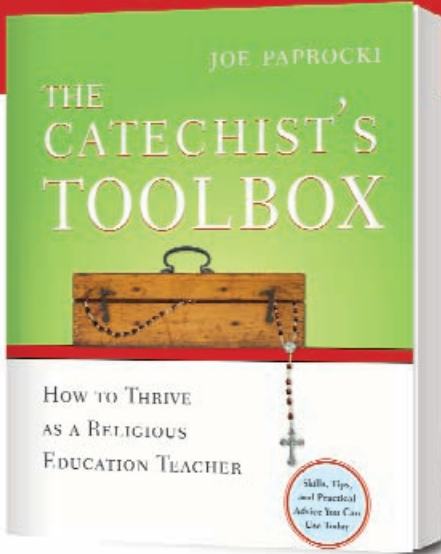
But he preferred to discuss the eight forgiven, not those who remain cloaked in anonymity. He explained why he forgave the man sitting across from him, Kanchan Baragata:

Because Kanchan confessed his crimes, and because the word of God says the one who doesn't give pardon will not be pardoned, I forgave him. I also felt that it was not his will to kill. It was animal; it was Satan, who pushed him to kill. Since then we've become friends. We meet in the bar and share beer. I gave him pardon, but I do not know what the court will decide. I would like the court to set him free, but I can't control their decision.

Justin conveyed a number of elements of postgenocide forgiveness in his statement. First, Kanchan confessed his crimes, providing details and the names of his accomplices, elements crucial both to survivors' sense of closure and to bringing other killers to justice.

Second, Justin allowed himself to be converted by Scripture. When he paraphrased Matt 6:15, he confessed that he, too, is a sinner in need of God's forgiveness; how he forgives others on earth affects his own salvation. Third, Justin believes Kanchan surrendered his will: to authorities, to the mob of killers, even to Satan. If survivors believe that killers were not architects of the genocide, did not enjoy

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killing their relatives and are truly remorseful, it is much easier for them to forgive than if one or more of these conditions is not met.

Finally, Justin maintains a relationship with the killer. For Justin and many of the others I met in Rwanda, forgiveness is not a one-time Hollywood moment. To be sure, there are flashes of intense drama, such as when the words "I forgive you" are first spoken. But a wealth of conversion leads up to the instant of forgiveness and, to be lasting, the forgiveness must be ongoing. If Rwanda is to become a country of Rwandans, rather than Hutu and Tutsi, actions like Justin's sharing a beer with his family's killers are essential elements of nation-building.

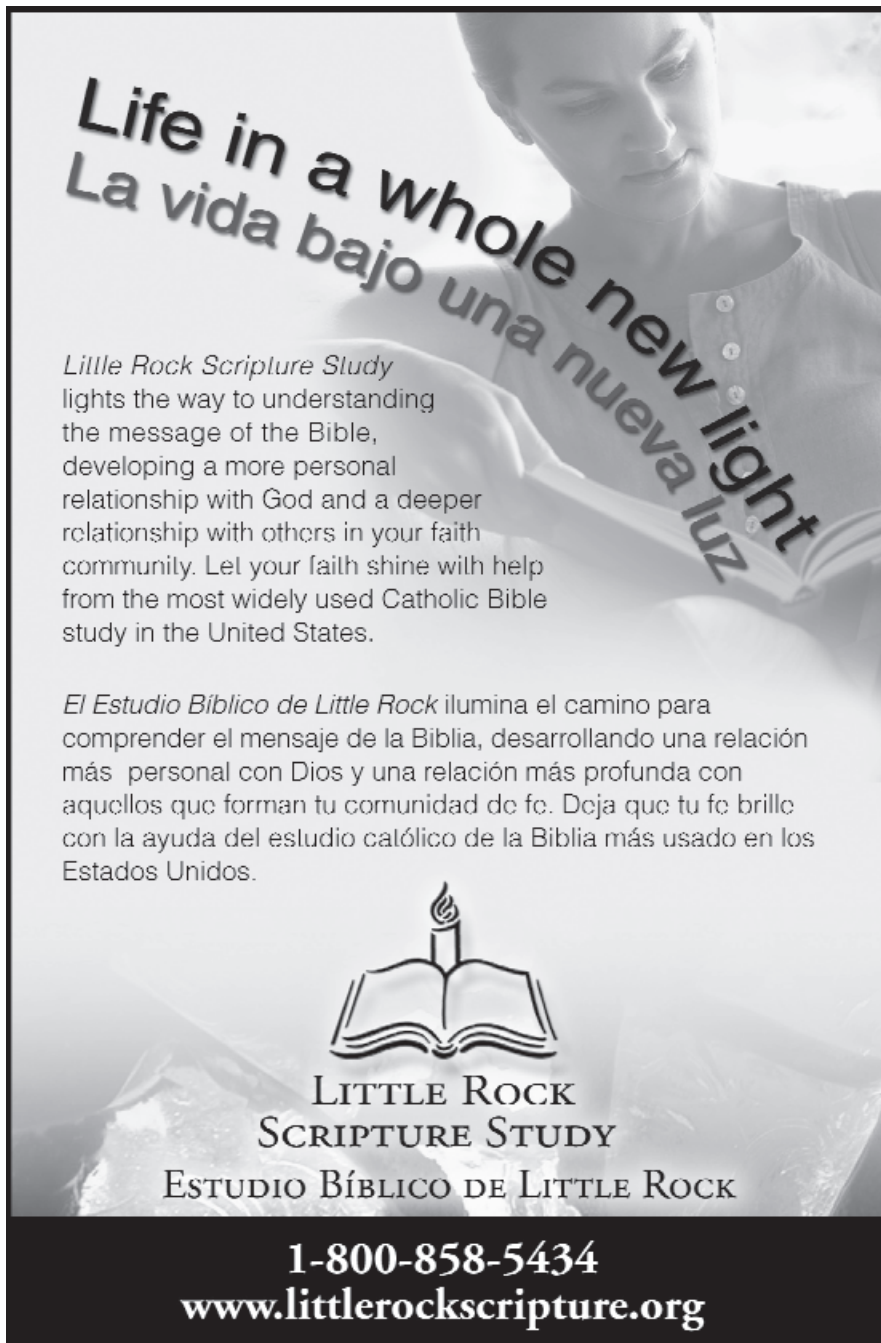
Justice on the Grass

Justin's story is also linked to the local Gacaca courts and the hundreds of thousands of cases that face these local tribunals. Gacaca literally means "justice on the grass." Gacaca was the judicial system of precolonial Rwanda. "Persons of great integrity" were elected to administer what typically amounted to a small claims court. Even for criminal offenses, fines and what we now call restorative justice were emphasized over imprisonment. Rwanda's new government brought the Gacaca courts back in 2004, after the success of a two-year pilot project, in order to try a backlog of 800,000 cases relating to the 1994 genocide.

The judges encourage ordinary Rwandans to confess any crimes they might have committed during the genocide and to ask pardon of survivors publicly. When confessions are not forthcoming, the judges ask neighbors seated on the grass before them to tell what they know: "Where was this person during the genocide?" "Who knows what happened to the home of this man?" "Who killed this young woman's parents?"

Throughout Rwanda, hundreds of women and men trained by C.R.S. have been elected judges. Nationwide, C.R.S.-Rwanda estimates that 80 percent of judges in the Gacaca process are members of a parish justice and peace commission. Each of the seven parish groups with whom I met included between two and seven judges. All of them reported that their participation in the training and peacebuilding ministries enhanced their standing in the community as reconcilers and contributed to their election. The judges also noted that the C.R.S. peacebuilding training augmented the government's training for new Gacaca judges, which includes topics like the history of Gacaca, the various categories of crimes and the importance of impartiality.


A handful of genocide survivors have said that the church's peacemaking efforts and the Gacaca process let the killers off too easily; those who committed genocide are not truly held accountable for their actions. If the killers say the right words, they are rewarded with light sentences and reintegrated into the community. I felt a moment of sympa-



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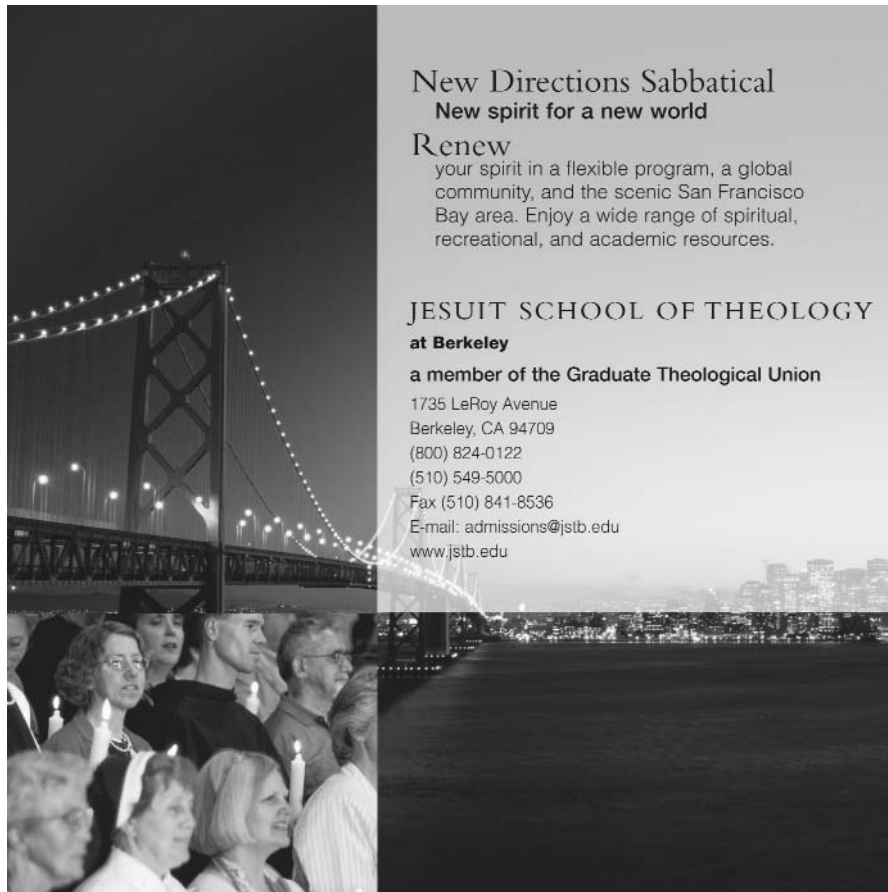
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thy for this view when I asked a killer from Kirehe Parish why he beat two little girls to death with a stick. “Bad governance,” he replied. It was as if I had inquired why the road from Kigali to Kirehe was in such sorry shape. “Bad governance”—it sounded rehearsed, as if he had learned that certain words, when repeated like an incantation, could unlock a prison door.

The encounter left me wondering about culpability. In a way, everyone we spoke to blamed the former government for the genocide. The government developed the plan and gave the orders. So among a people accustomed to blind obedience, where did public obligations end and personal responsibility begin? Didn’t German soldiers after World War II say “I was just following orders”? Couldn’t they have said “bad governance” just as glibly?

I shared my questions with Gloriosa Uwimpuhwe and Joseph Muyango of C.R.S.-Rwanda, both of whom insisted that those who abuse the reconciliation process are a small minority. The Gacaca courts have added momentum to the church’s peacebuilding work, not corrupted it, they argued, noting that the base community process includes careful study of the root causes of genocide. To my surprise, at the end of the visit, the man in Kirehe was the only person whose sincerity I doubted. The 200 others (and thousands I did not meet) stood beside him as an inspiring counterexample, witnessing through their honesty and courage to the boundless power of Christian forgiveness. Rwanda has endured the unspeakable. Strong faith communities and the imaginative power of Scripture are helping its people to speak at last of these horrors and of the hopes they have for a new nation founded upon reconciliation and solidarity. It is a story of hope that invites further study and replication among other traumatized peoples. **A**




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The Faculty ‘Problem’

How can Catholic identity be preserved?

BY WILSON D. MISCAMBLE

CATHOLIC UNIVERSITIES in the United States possess a certain Potemkin Village quality. While their buildings are quite real, what goes on within them has increasingly lost its distinctive content and come to resemble what occurs in secular institutions of higher learning. Students emerge from Catholic schools rather unfamiliar with the riches of the Catholic intellectual tradition and with their imaginations untouched by a religious sensibility. This reality is painstakingly revealed in *Catholic Higher Education* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2006) by Melanie Morey and John Piderit, S.J., who predict that “a crisis is looming within American Catholic higher education.” It will be increasingly difficult to maintain even a Catholic facade in the academic life of these institutions.

Morey, Piderit and other thoughtful commentators argue that if Catholic universities are to navigate successfully through the difficult challenges of the moment, they must confront the fundamental issue of faculty composition and address the need to recruit a committed Catholic faculty. Is this possible? Or is the day too far gone when an institution might renew its religiously based mission by hiring faculty members who will support and sustain it?

WILSON D. MISCAMBLE, C.S.C., is professor of history at the University of Notre Dame. His book *From Roosevelt to Truman: Potsdam, Hiroshima, and the Cold War* (Cambridge Univ. Press) was published in September 2006.

At the Tipping Point?

An examination of the present situation at the University of Notre Dame suggests that the tipping point is at hand—a parlous situation that assuredly is replicated in all the major Catholic universities. Dramatic action will be required to secure the school’s Catholic identity. If even Notre Dame, with its abundant resources and its storied role in Catholic education, fails in this effort, one must wonder who can succeed. Some specific details illustrate the nature of the crisis as it exists at Notre Dame.

Notre Dame’s mission statement draws upon *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* and rightly declares that the “Catholic identity of the University depends upon...the continuing presence of a predominant number of Catholic intellectuals” on the faculty. Nonetheless, the last three decades have seen a dramatic decline in the number of Catholic faculty members.



A statue of Holy Cross Father Edward Sorin, founder of the University of Notre Dame, is pictured on the campus in Notre Dame, Ind.

CNS PHOTO BY KAREN CALLAWAY

The figure as of 2006 was 53 percent, which is somewhat inflated by those who answered “Catholic” on the faculty questionnaire but for whom the practice of the faith appears nominal at best.

The prospects for the immediate future clearly worry senior administrators. Notre Dame’s provost, Thomas Burish, has explained: “When the prospective rate of Catholic retirements is plotted against the contemporary rate of Catholic hires as a constant, it is clear that soon Notre Dame will no longer have the predominant number of Catholic faculty members whom we require.”

In Catholic universities, as in their secular peers, the academic department constitutes the key entity where hiring decisions are made. Today at Notre Dame, however, few departments conscientiously and enthusiastically support the mission statement’s call for a predominant number of Catholic faculty; the theology department and the law school are notable and honorable exceptions.

In some departments, a person who tries to raise the issue in a serious way risks being marginalized. Professor Kevin Hart, a brilliant Catholic intellectual and the editor of the journal *Religion and Literature*, dared to do this in the English department. Hart objected to the appointment of a candidate he thought incompatible with the Catholic mission of the university and found himself roundly criticized for his intervention.

The issue can still be raised in the department I know best, the history department; yet that guarantees little, as is evident from the results of its recent hirings. There are now 32 members of the history department; only 12 are Catholic. This past year we hired three additional faculty members, only one of whom is Catholic. This is hardly the way to maintain a predominant number of Catholic intellectuals. In fact, we hired in exactly the reverse proportion needed. As it moves into the future, Notre Dame must hire at least two-thirds Catholic faculty simply to arrest the decline that ultimately puts at risk its identity as a Catholic school.

One sometimes hears that the root of the problem is not in the departmental hiring process, but rather that it is a “supply” problem: there just are not enough really good Catholic scholars out there. A corollary is that all the really smart Catholics have gone into law or medicine or business. But should we accept the supply-side argument? Forgive me for being a little skeptical. The Rev. Andrew Greeley’s careful research since the 1960s put to rest the canards that Catholics were anti-intellectual, overly materialistic, academically inferior and not well represented in graduate schools. He demonstrated that plenty of Catholics have pursued academic careers across a wide range of disciplines. Catholic scholars there are aplenty.

But implicitly the further claim is made that these schol-

ars just are not good enough, given the present aspirations of universities like Notre Dame. Not enough of these scholars have the right academic pedigree—they have not received the imprimatur of an elite graduate school (the Ivy League, Chicago, Berkeley or Stanford, with an occasional stoop down to Michigan); they have not won the prominent fellowships or published with the prestige presses. Perhaps there is something to this argument. Certainly a focus on the criteria of academic pedigree and prestige narrows the available pool, but forgive my further skepticism. I am familiar with too many cases in which an able Catholic did not obtain a position here.

The Cambridge Cases

My skepticism was especially heightened from a particular episode in 1999-2000, when the history department investigated the possibility of appointing the distinguished British Catholic intellectual Eamon Duffy. Duffy, who teaches at the University of Cambridge, is the author of—among other works—a landmark book, *The Stripping of the Altars*, which reframed how scholars have viewed the English Reformation. He is a historian of the first rank, known well on both sides of the Atlantic. His appointment would have done much to raise the reputation of Notre Dame’s history department.

Yet no offer was made to Eamon Duffy, so we do not know whether he would have come to northern Indiana. Colleagues worried about the “fit” (always a useful concern if you want to block something) and about the conditions of his employment, given that he would have done some significant teaching in Notre Dame’s London program. But strikingly, there was concern that Eamon Duffy was too much of a “Catholic apologist” and that he engaged in discussion of contemporary church issues, especially in the pages of the British liberal Catholic magazine, *The Tablet*. His tone was deemed rather on the “polemical side” (Duffy dared to think that Queen Elizabeth I has a few things for which to answer). The depth of Duffy’s faith commitment and the impact of it on his scholarly work and his intellectual commitments bothered certain people. So Eamon Duffy continues his teaching at Cambridge today, much to Notre Dame’s loss.

Just a year or so before Eamon Duffy’s appointment was considered, an appointment was made at Notre Dame of another Cambridge academic, this one in the English department. Professor Jill Mann was appointed for a five-year term to occupy an endowed chair each spring semester. Mann, a distinguished scholar and Chaucer specialist, served as president of the New Chaucer Society, where she gave a presidential address entitled “Chaucer and Atheism.” As she blithely revealed in the opening paragraph of her address, the “atheism” to which she referred was her own.

Notably, she appeared to want her atheism to have a major impact on her scholarly work.

Professor Mann recognized the importance of religion (both in medieval times and our own), but her intellectual suppositions were quite at odds with a Catholic worldview. Toward the conclusion of her address she said: "If you believe, as I do, that 'there's nobody here but us chickens,' then you also believe that there is no predetermined or transcendental truth. I agree with Richard Rorty and Stanley Fish that truth is not something we discover but something we make." For her, "the dangerous people...are not those who say that there is no absolute truth, but those who say there is, and that they know what it is." Perhaps she was unfamiliar with John Paul II's *Veritatis Splendor*; and presumably she might have found amusing—or even dangerous—the declaration in *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* that "it is the honor and responsibility of a Catholic university to consecrate itself without reserve to the cause of truth."

Professor Mann's views may have troubled some of those who approved her hire, just as they did a few hardy souls in the English department who were overwhelmingly outvoted. But the chance to make a notable appointment that would increase Notre Dame's visibility among its secular peers won out. Hiring an individual who might in certain ways undermine the school's true mission took a back seat to the payoffs in terms of academic prestige and reputation. Appointments like Mann's suggest that prestige trumps Catholic mission in the hiring process.

Needed Action

Occasionally, of course, fine appointments are made. A recent press release proudly announced the appointment of Professor William Evans, a noted economist from the University of Maryland. But no press release advised that the aforementioned Kevin Hart of the English department had decided to leave Notre Dame for the University of Virginia. Notre Dame will need many more appointments like that of Evans, while still retaining scholars like Hart, if it is to forge a faculty truly supportive of its identity as a Catholic university.

The matter of hiring Catholic faculty has been of concern at Notre Dame for some time. The Rev. Robert Sullivan, of the history department and the Erasmus Institute, now heads an effort to identify able Catholic scholars. He also heads an ad hoc committee on recruiting outstanding Catholic faculty members, appointed by Provost Burish.

One of the charges for this committee is to identify "the best practices for hiring Catholic faculty members." One can only hope and pray for the success of these endeavors.

It must be understood, however, that this is not a matter that can be massaged by minor measures. The temptation for administrators is to hope that a little adjustment here and a bit of tinkering there might improve the situation without stirring faculty opposition. Settling for minor measures in the present circumstances, however, indicates a complicity in the secularization process. A major change in the hiring process is required, and the need for it must be approved at the level of the board of trustees and implemented with courageous leadership, whatever faculty resistance it generates.

If the seemingly inevitable downward trend in the Catholic percentage of the faculty is to be arrested and reversed, a major board decision calling for two-thirds of all future appointments to be committed Catholic scholars is essential. This would require very different ways of hiring from the department-based procedures of today. The university would need to engage in what might be termed strategic hiring or hiring for mission. A recognition that this approach is crucial to its identity could drive the endeavor. It would require Notre Dame (and other schools that want to preserve their Catholic mission and character) to be truly different from their secular "preferred peer" schools. Failure to take such action, however, will lead schools like Notre Dame to merely replicate such secular institutions and to surrender what remains of their distinctiveness. This is surely a sad prospect for those who hoped, with *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, that a Catholic university might constitute "an authentic human community animated by the spirit of Christ." A

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Giving Back

An Interview With Jane Martinez Dowling

BY JIM McDERMOTT

Since graduating from Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., in 1990, **JANE MARTINEZ DOWLING** has been a rising star in New York inner-city education. She has worked as a teacher in the New York City public schools, served as the development director of a Catholic middle school, consulted with and sat on the boards of various educational institutions and foundations and, most recently, served as the executive director of the Student/Sponsor Partners, a \$10-million financial aid and mentoring program that places struggling public middle school students in Catholic schools with the help of sponsors.

A year ago, Ms. Dowling was named president of the Academy of Mount St. Ursula in the Bronx, the oldest continuous Catholic school for girls in New York State, founded by the Ursuline Sisters of the Roman Union in 1855. **JIM McDERMOTT, S.J.**, an associate editor of *America*, talked with her about her experiences of Catholic urban education and her hopes for its future.

HOW DID YOU BECOME INVOLVED in education? My family came from the Dominican Republic, and they never left New York and never bought a house because they were putting all five kids through Catholic school. When I was in seventh grade at St. Jude's, Sister Yliana Hernandez, a Presentation sister, told me I had the capacity to go to a prep school. She informally took five girls and we started doing preparation work to get into one of these independent schools; that was my life in seventh and eighth grade.

The only thing that Sister Yliana asked of us when she put us in the prep program was: When you have the means, which you will, and when you are well educated, which you will be, think back to this community and figure out how you're going to give back.

Fast forward to 1990, my senior year at Georgetown University. I had been accepted at two firms to work as a



Jane Martinez Dowling, center, with Mount St. Ursula's 2006-7 student council officers, left to right: Tara Harrison, Fabiola Pierre-Louis, Enuma Igweatu and Yoo Jin Lee.

paralegal for the summer, but in January during a five-day silent retreat something kept nagging at me, saying that I had to give back. That was the year Teach for America was founded; they came to campus, and I decided to do the program and teach in a New York City public school. I just felt that a couple of people had really invested in me and in my education.

What was it like teaching in the New York City public schools?

It was a totally different experience than I expected. It was right at the cusp of the crack epidemic. I was teaching kindergarten and had two crack babies in my class. The neighborhood was horrendous. The neighborhood was so horrendous that a corner near my school was chosen a few years earlier by Rudy Giuliani and Alfonse D'Amato as the place to stage a drug buy to publicize the problem. The families were great, the kids were great, but it was really impoverished.

It was also interesting doing Teach for America, because I got so ridiculed for being a woman and a woman of color and for believing in all the Roman Catholic doctrine. Most of the people doing it were not only incredibly progressive but almost liberal die-hards asking, How can you believe in the patriarchy of the church and all that stuff?

When my family came here and was navigating New York, the rock of our family was the church—we went to

PHOTO COURTESY OF JANE MARTINEZ DOWLING

Mass every Sunday and said the Rosary at home, and we went to Catholic school. A lot of the people who make those sweeping statements don't know a whole lot about struggle or understand the nuances of what the church does for poor people, what structures it puts in place so that people are able to have the luxury to think about philosophical issues and intellectualize and read and all of those different things. I mean, anybody who's gone through the system here in New York can tell you their grandparents or their great-grandparents probably did not have the luxury to read books or the leisure to talk about societal issues. They worked their tails off so their kids could have those opportunities.

What led you to the Academy of Mount St. Ursula?

I had always been incredibly frustrated with the Jesuits about how much dedication they actually have to the poor, to mission work and to education. Steve Katsouros, S.J., [president of The Loyola School in Manhattan], who is terrific, asked me to be on the board at Loyola. But when I sat down with their board chair, he made it very clear that scholarship money for needy students was not their biggest priority at that point. So I turned it down. I just kept going back to, why don't I do for girls what Sister Yliana did for me? There are a lot of pressures that both young men and young women face, but I think that girls particularly have lots of issues to deal with, like being caregivers to younger brothers and sisters, making choices about sex and drugs and all the issues that exist in inner-city culture. Sometimes all of that comes at the expense of not being a high performer. So I was thinking about starting a Regis for girls. Then when the chairwoman of Mount St. Ursula's board

called, I realized Mount St. Ursula has pretty much been serving that population for a long time.

You just referred to your vision for Mount St. Ursula as a "Regis for girls." Are you thinking of Regis High School, the tuition-free Jesuit prep school in New York City?

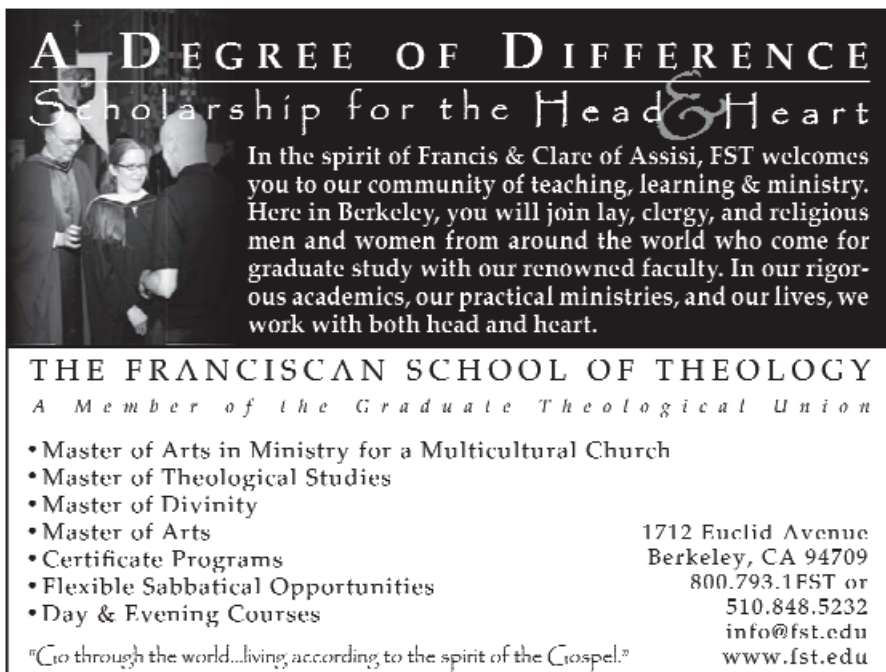
I hesitate to use the term "Regis for girls" in some ways, because what I think a lot of people imagine is that these kids are in the 99th percentile at their local middle school. Our interest is what's happening to the kids who are in that middle school population and have the potential to be very high performing but are falling through the cracks. Experience has shown me that there are kids who were failing miserably in public middle schools simply because they were not in the right environment. At Mount St. Ursula, how do we capture those kids? How do we capture the kids who have a tremendous amount of talent, but because of their circumstances they're not identified as high performing?

The mission of our school is to teach young women of diverse cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds in the Ursuline tradition, to prepare them academically to go to college and ultimately to serve their communities, the larger community and their church—to be leaders. In Jesuit circles the phrase is "people for others"; here we talk about *serviam*, "I will serve." How will you serve your community? How will you serve those who are less fortunate?

Fifty-two percent of our students rank below the poverty level; 40 percent are from single-parent homes. The tuition is \$5,500, plus \$475 in fees, and 152 of our 397 girls, 38 percent, receive some form of financial aid.

While Mount St. Ursula has always had a principal to lead the school and a development team, it has never before had a president. You are the school's first president. Is it challenging?

"Much will be required of the person entrusted with much"—I bear that on my shoulders all the time. But I think I've surrendered a little bit to the idea that this is what I'm supposed to do, and somehow it's going to work out. It may not work out precisely the way I want it to, but it's just a palpable feeling I have that it's going to happen. You can certainly plan, you can put the pieces in place to form a professional, not-for-profit organizational leadership framework, but at the end of the day, there's a little bit of surrender. I have faith that if I work really hard, God will carry through this task and it will happen. **A**



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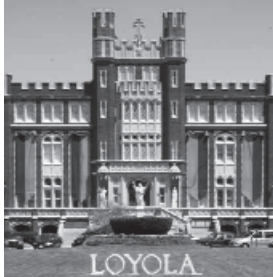
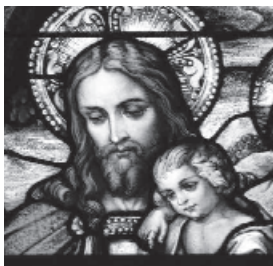
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The Loyola Institute for Ministry is pleased to announce the arrival of **THOMAS F. RYAN, PH.D.** as its new director

Dr. Ryan comes to the Institute from St. Thomas University in Miami where he chaired the Religious Studies Department and was twice awarded "Professor of the Year" honors. His scholarly interests include the history of spirituality and biblical interpretation, and he is the author of *Thomas Aquinas as Reader of the Psalms*.

A New Orleans native, he is happy to be coming home and is passionate about the rebuilding of one of America's great cities. He has lived in the New York City Catholic Worker and New Orleans Hope House communities.

Dr. Ryan received his B.A. and Ph.D. in theology from the University of Notre Dame and his M.A.R. from Yale University Divinity School. He has taught in the Loyola Institute for Ministry extension and on-campus programs.



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Woman of Peace

The radical witness of Anne Montgomery

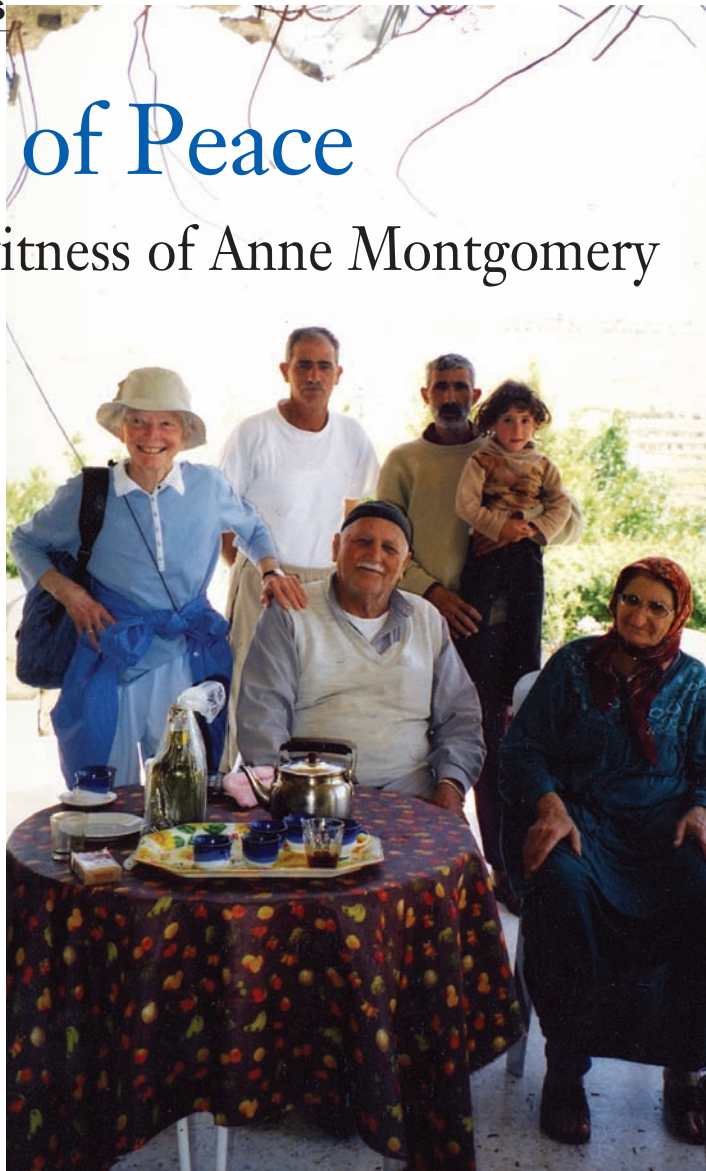
BY GEORGE M. ANDERSON

‘WHATEVER YOU DO, do quickly.” Spoken two

decades ago, these words of Anne Montgomery’s provincial superior to her were both a sign of support and an acknowledgment of advancing age. Now 80 years old, 60 of them lived as a member of the Religious of the Sacred Heart, Sister Montgomery has traveled to some of the most violence-ridden parts of the world as a witness to Gospel nonviolence: Iraq, Israel (Hebron), Croatia (Sarajevo) and even Cuba, where in December 2005 she took part in a Witness Against Torture group that made a pilgrimage to Guantánamo to protest the treatment of the prisoners there. During a visit to America House, Montgomery spoke of her beliefs as a peace activist. “We’re meant to be in places of conflict,” she said. The “we” refers to her role as a member of Christian Peacemaker Teams and to her participation in half a dozen Plowshares actions.

Yet this octogenarian of slight build began her life as a nun by teaching at Sacred Heart schools. It was only after age 50 that Montgomery began to respond actively to the contrast between the huge sums spent on weapons and the scant resources devoted to assisting poor people. Working with dropouts at a street academy in Albany, N.Y., she saw the con-

GEORGE M. ANDERSON, S.J., is an associate editor of *America*.



Anne Montgomery, R.S.C.J., far left, with a Palestinian family.

nection clearly. But before that, while tutoring in the Spanish Harlem section of New York City and teaching at one of her congregation’s schools, she had sensed it. She came to a turning point in 1977, when she heard the Jesuit peace activist Daniel Berrigan speak at a prayer gathering. “He challenged us to become active,” she said. His admonition led her to take part in her first act of civil resistance during the United Nations session on nuclear disarmament.

The introduction to antiwar, peaceful civil disobedience, which involved no court trials, led to her leafleting in front of the Riverside Research Institute, an organization with ties to arms manufacturers. But as she became more involved in the

peace movement, Montgomery received an invitation to take part in what she termed a more risky action at a General Electric plant in Pennsylvania that was making parts for nuclear warheads. Other peace activists already engaged in keeping a vigil there had noticed the plant’s low level of security. When asked if she would be interested in the action being planned, she replied that she “would think about it.” Months later, at a faith and justice retreat, Daniel Berrigan’s brother Phil raised the question again. During her retreat in the summer of 1980, Montgomery “made an act of faith,” she explained; “[I said] to myself that if I ever got my hands on part of a nuclear weapon, the only thing to do would be to try to dismantle it.”

During a final gathering before the action, the group settled on its name, Plowshares—based on the Scripture verse, “they shall beat their swords into plowshares” (Isa 2:4). The phrase became the spiritual core not only of that action, but of subsequent actions at other sites in the years that followed. Each was a symbolic undertaking, Montgomery observed, and once it has occurred, “you pray and simply wait to be found and arrested.” The quiet waiting to be discovered by security officers shows the group’s desire, she said, to take personal responsibility for their actions. The initial action in Pennsylvania took place as the workers’ shifts were changing, which allowed the group to

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ANNE MONTGOMERY

enter a testing room without seeming in any way threatening. In many Plowshares actions, she observed, "You feel the doors in the facility somehow swing open and you go in. It's amazing," she added, implying that faith in God's providence played a role. Her participation in such actions has led to several years behind bars.

In 1990, when sanctions were imposed on Iraq, Montgomery heard about an international peace team preparing to travel there. "We all knew that war was coming and that the United States would go ahead with it no matter what," Montgomery said. She was invited to become part of the Gulf Peace Team, whose purpose was to serve as "a nonviolent presence between two armies" on the border of Saudi Arabia and Iraq. The team arrived in Baghdad on the feast of the Epiphany, and since some members wanted to attend Mass, their Iraqi "minder" took them to a nearby Catholic church. Prayer and the sacraments have always been a central part of Montgomery's witnessing to peace efforts. "Then we traveled to a point within two kilometers of the Saudi border," she said, "where the Iraqi government lent us a neutral camp-

ing space that had once been a stopping place on the road to Mecca." The team itself was composed of people from all over the world, including two Japanese.

Ten days later, when they heard bombers flying overhead during the night, "we raced outside our tents with blankets



At a market in Hebron

wrapped around us: we knew the war had begun." At that point, food was running low and the Iraqi border guards themselves were reduced to boiling grass. After another 10 days, the group was bussed back into Baghdad and lodged in a hotel with other internationals. "There was no

electricity, so we had to crawl up the stairs in the dark," Montgomery said. The bombs fell close by and nightly trips to the basement were a matter of course when the air raid sirens sounded. After a few days, they were taken into Jordan, where Montgomery remained for a week before returning to New York.

What did she discover through this initial trip to Iraq, a war-afflicted nation to which she has since returned many times? The experience, she explained, taught her that supporting nonviolent peace teams abroad was like the flip side of the coin to the Plowshares actions in the United States. Here, she observed, "you enflame Isaiah's call to disarm, which I believe is our responsibility as Americans." The experiences in Iraq, on the other hand, taught her "how much it meant to the Iraqi people for us to be with them at the other end of the guns," she said, noting that ordinary Iraqis sometimes told her that they valued the presence of Westerners "who cared about the Iraqi people and who didn't want the war." Earlier, she had joined the Christian Peace Maker team in Hebron on the West Bank and spent a number of years working with

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them there. At that time she visited Iraq often to work against the embargo that, she said, had resulted in the death of many children because of the lack of medical and other essential supplies.

In May 2003, after the second Persian Gulf war, Montgomery joined the Christian Peacemaker Team in Baghdad, which focused on helping families find where their relatives were being held in American coalition detention camps. A group of Muslims approached the team and requested training help for a Muslim peace team. Some Muslims had already begun on their own to initiate nonviolent actions in their work for reconciliation. Some were women, who said, "This is the first time we women have been able to take leadership in this kind of undertaking." The relationship with Muslim peace activists has continued for years.

Montgomery had the support of her provincial superior when she first began peace activities that could and did result in arrest. But what about the rest of the sisters in her congregation? "They were shocked after the first Plowshares action at the General Electric plant," she answered, "so I was asked to prepare a message for them explaining why I had taken part in it, knowing that jail time would be inevitable." The response of the other sisters in her congregation was—and has continued to be—very supportive.

Through decades of peace work, prayer remains a constant source of strength for Montgomery. Although her preferred form is zen-style meditation, she has adapted easily to the prayer styles used by the teams in Palestine and Iraq. The Christian Peacemaker Team, she said, includes people from several denominations (Mennonite, Quaker, other Protestant groups and Catholics), representing a variety of perspectives. "But we always gathered for prayer in the morning, with one or another of the group arranging it," Montgomery said. For the thousands of miles Montgomery has traveled over decades in her witness for peace, she observed that the journey primarily has been inward. Visiting places of conflict and oppression, she said, "has taken me more deeply into the reality of how God is present in the world, which helps us to hope in the midst of all the suffering. The most we can do," she added, "is to say, 'we are here,' and try to share our hope." **A**

Praying in the Wild

Amid bears, grief and danger, a man finds peace.

BY GERALD W. SCHLABACH

WHILE CAMPING in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in north-east Minnesota last fall, which I regularly do, I had my first encounter with a bear. Black bears are shy, but a dry summer had left few berries, and previous messy campers had advertised the area as a promising place to stave off a bear's autumn hunger. A bear, its persistence overcoming shyness, visited our campsite four times in two nights. My brother and I repelled it with banging pans and bright flashlights, then moved across the lake, but I may never again slumber quite so easily in the wild.

Three weeks later, the wild edge of the northland took three of my loved ones in a freakish boating accident on Lake Superior, off the coast of Michigan's upper peninsula. My father-in-law, a self-supported pastor, woodsman and fisherman in the U.P. for 50 years, died of hypothermia on the capsized boat while doing what he loved, but also with grief, having just watched his oldest son drown in an unsuccessful attempt to save his wife.

Alone Again in the Wilderness

Now, nine months later, I am back in the wilderness, this time alone. I canoe, fish, read and pray parts of the Liturgy of Hours. Suddenly, the end-of-day prayers and psalms of compline resonate with the crispness of unexpected sounds from the darkening woods, which press closer as the light wanes slowly in the northern sky.

In monasteries where I sometimes join in the daily office as a Benedictine oblate, gathering with the community to pray compline is optional these days. One

sometimes hears the announcement, "Compline will be prayed privately tonight." Even where the prayers of compline continue, however, its language may not mean quite so much when prayed by the light of electric bulbs powered from the industrial grid. In monasteries on the frontiers of medieval Europe, "terrors of the night" and dangers "prowling in the darkness" (Ps 91) were more than poetic metaphors. Wild animals and marauders alike made fervent the prayer that God would set "a guard around us while we sleep."

Though I have camped in the Boundary Waters area numerous times, my first trip into the wilderness since looking a bear in the eye was also my first-ever solo trip. I knew I needed time away, alone, to process the low-grade grief that had accumulated in previous months. In addition to the loss of loved ones had come a dispiriting acceleration of other pains and tragedies—the messy divorce of a close friend, a brother-in-law unjustly imprisoned, parents straining to assist even as they age and, finally, my own 18-year-old son suddenly being diagnosed with cancer



SHUTTERSTOCK PHOTO OF MINNESOTA FOREST BY JULY FLOWER

GERALD W. SCHLABACH is associate professor of theology at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minn.

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(he has since become a cancer survivor). Beyond a vague hope for perspective, I was not sure how to do this processing.

Facing Fears

In hindsight, I needed to face my fears. Or better: I needed to live—to really live, with all the mindfulness that the simple but unaccustomed tasks of wilderness life require—while attentive to the dangers inherent in the human condition, dangers that had been there all along. After all, one probably faces far less danger from wildlife, storm or exposure in the wilderness than from traffic accidents while commuting in an urban area. When steel and plastic or concrete and drywall encase us, we think we are secure only because we have come to take their respective dangers for granted. And this is not even to begin calculating the long-term effect of toxins and global warming, or dealing with illusions of military and economic security.

Still, such rational recognition of the insecurity inherent in our human condition does not necessarily plumb the visceral parts of our being. Every evening as the sunlight recedes and the so-called witching hour approaches, the solitude I have sought in the wilderness turns to a drab, aching loneliness. But it is also the time for compline, at first simply because the prayer is prescribed, and then because I notice.

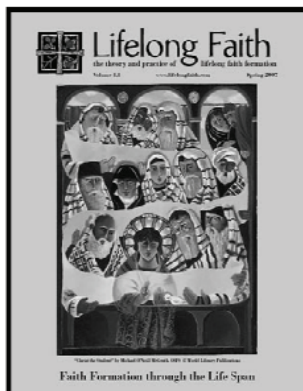
A Wise Juxtaposition

What a strange juxtaposition, yet wise! During compline I pray for both security and a peaceful death. This is not in itself contradictory, because eventually to die a peaceful death is to have slept through many nights secure. And yet the phrase introduces a certain shadow. To pray, "Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit," may literally express nothing but trust in God, but in fact it also recalls the hour of Jesus' own death. Then the *Nunc Dimittis* of Simeon, from Luke 2, draws the prospect of death still closer, and indeed embraces it: "Lord, let your servant now die in peace, for you have kept your promise."

In the totality of compline, then, we simultaneously pray, "Keep me sheltered" and "I am ready to depart"—strange but truthful. Every evening involves a certain surrender, no doubt. In the wilderness it becomes more obvious that once we are

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asleep, with senses muted, dangers could come too quickly for response. Still, one cannot sleep at all without the biological surrender of relaxation, relinquishing hold, giving up control.

Yet somehow all this is compatible with taking precautions. Having met my bear, I follow the rules I have learned from rangers and wilderness guides all the more carefully now. In fact I have added a few of my own. I wear a bell so that I startle no creature at close range, and I keep a small but powerful horn always within reach. I pack my food more religiously than ever in a bear-proof container and do my best to leave fewer scents. After all, I really do not want to die soon.

Insofar as anyone can know one's own thoughts, I think my reasons have more to do with others than myself. I would not want to leave my wife and sons in the lurch. I have projects on my desk that have far more to do with a sense of calling than with career advancement, and I hope not to leave them undone. When the remote possibility of dying alone in the wilderness comes to mind, my worst foreboding has less to do with pain than with not being able to say goodbye.

So I really can pray simultaneously that I am ready to depart, even as I pray for security through the night. Off the grid, away from the glow of electric light bulbs, it makes perfect sense. Spiritual and indeed psychological health require some such combination, everywhere, always. Encased in illusions of security, we usually just do not notice.

But in the fall of 2006 I entered the compline of life. Intellectually I have long known that life is fragile. In my scholarly work, I have often made use of a poignant sentence from Book IV of Augustine's *City of God*: "The only joy to be attained [in the earthly city] had the fragile brilliance of glass, a joy outweighed by the fear that it may be shattered in a moment." But this was mainly intellectual, until grief taught me otherwise. My grief has been not only for my loved ones, after all, but for the loss of my 50-year-old yet still-innocent self, who thought he could generally assume that life goes on.

Compline has become more than a pious comfort. It has become a perfectly obvious way of life. And death. All at once. For really, whether we notice or not, we are always praying in the wild. **A**

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**Build a Bridge, Seek the Truth,
Change the World**

By Josh Rushing with Sean Elder
Palgrave Macmillan. 256p \$24.95
ISBN 1403979057

Why is a 14-year veteran U.S. Marine officer, a Texan, working for Al Jazeera, the so-called terrorist network?

Jazeera is not the mouthpiece of Al Qaeda, as U.S. propaganda claims. It is the only nongovernmental 24-hour news network to reach the Arab world, and its cutting-edge technology allows it to be viewed by 100 million people all over the world, which means that it is aired mostly to a non-Arabic audience.

Al Jazeera English (www.aljazeera.net/English), first launched on Nov. 15, 2006, is viewed by people who can speak English as their first, second or third language. The network is very popular in Europe but not widely available in the United States, except on the Internet.

Al Jazeera does not worry about its news content being “fair and balanced” as much as it tries to “speak truth to power.” In other words, the network seeks to remake the international news paradigm by presenting stories from the perspective of the developing world, the poor countries, instead of from the perspective of the wealthy nations only, as the BBC does. Josh Rushing (a reporter for Al Jazeera who now lives in Washington, D.C.) likens Al Jazeera to “David standing up to the Goliath of the Western world.”

Al Jazeera also takes on controversial issues that most of its viewers have not heard about—including homosexuality, women’s rights and critiques of the Koran and policy initiatives in the Middle East. It invites Israelis to speak more than any other network in the world outside of Israel. The network is not without its critics—from all sides of the political spectrum—but it appreciates such assessments as a validation of its credibility.

The network was created and is supported by Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, emir of Qatar. Located on a small peninsula on the northeastern coast of

Saudi Arabia (population 841,000) Qatar is one of the most liberal countries of the Arab world. The emir is one of the richest men, too, and he is trying to win the power game against his rival, Saudi Arabia, through Al Jazeera. He also played the power card by giving the Americans permission to build a base in Qatar for the U.S. Central Command.

How did Rushing become a reporter for Al Jazeera? After finishing high school, Rushing enlisted in the Marines and then earned his bachelor’s degree from the University of Texas in classical civilization and ancient history. He subsequently served as a Hollywood military movie consultant and also as a consultant for the television show “JAG.”

Before the war in Iraq began, Rushing, then a lieutenant, was assigned to the headquarters of CentCom, in Doha, Qatar. CentCom is responsible for all military matters in the region from Sudan to Kazakhstan, including Iraq, Afghanistan and Iran. A curious fellow, Rushing excitedly took on his task as media spokesman by studying Arabic as well as the culture of the Middle East. This work helped him to form relationships with journalists from Al Jazeera, one of several news outlets he had been assigned to serve.

It was not long, however, before he realized that the military had not planned its media strategy for the war. Worse yet, the military did not know much about Al Jazeera or the negative sentiments against the United States that pervaded the region.

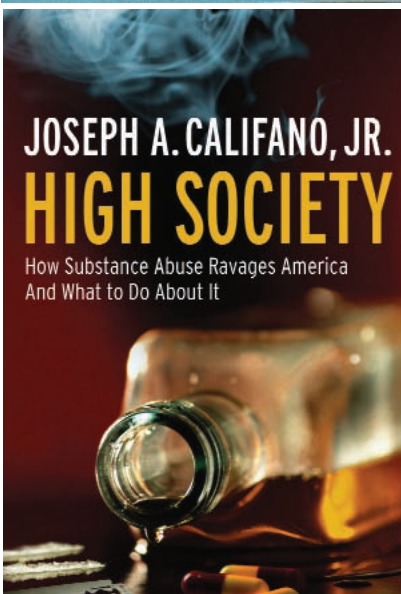
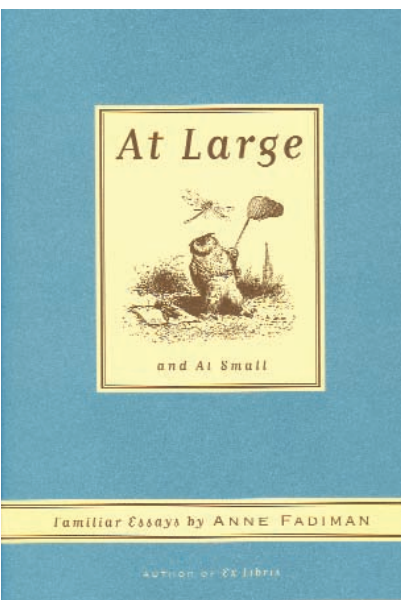
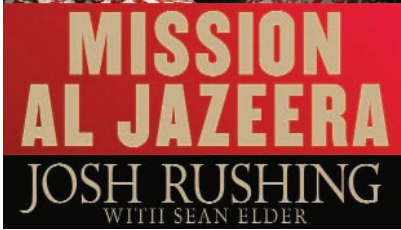
“Al Jazeera offered us a chance to engage the ideologies that fueled 9/11,” said Rushing, who tried to convince senior

The Reviewers

Olga Bonfiglio is a professor at Kalamazoo College and the author of *Heroes of a Different Stripe: How One Town Responded to the War in Iraq*.

Ann Begley, an essayist and reviewer, has taught at universities on both the east and the west coast.

James R. Kelly is an emeritus professor in the department of sociology at Fordham University, New York.



officers to pay attention to Al Jazeera in order to convey America's purpose in the region and the larger war on terrorism. His ideas for "building this information bridge" were not only brushed aside; he was even called a traitor. Eventually Rushing also found out that the military would process news from Iraq through the Bush administration's political handlers, who pursued a "public relations" effort.

Public affairs and public relations are vastly different, Rushing explains. Public affairs is designed to inform the public about what is going on, while public relations explains the reasoning behind the decisions. P.R. is akin to propaganda. So instead of being the "constitutional watch dog" that he had been trained to be, Rushing was pressed to be a P.R. flack "promoting the whims of politicians." And while he claims he was never directly ordered to lie, it was clear to him that he was expected to follow a script.

Rushing's brief service in the war took an unexpected turn after he inadvertently and unknowingly became the main character in an independent documentary called "Control Room," which reports how the United States was perceived internationally in its war with Iraq. Although Rushing at first believed in the cause of the war and that it could serve a greater good, the film portrays him as a changed marine with a conscience. He speaks about his empathy for dead Iraqis, his view of the war and his growing skepticism when he learned that the world saw America's action in Iraq as "naked aggression."

His appearance in "Control Room" did not win him any favors with the Pentagon, and he—and his wife—were silenced from speaking to the press. Once the film became more popular and he more famous, Rushing understood that his career with the Marines was over, so in August 2004 he resigned his commission. Later the opportunity to work for Al Jazeera opened up as a consequence of his appearance in the film.

Rushing's goal in working for Al Jazeera is to help Americans discover the Middle Eastern point of view, especially since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, proved that the United States could no longer afford to isolate itself from the rest of the world. He says that America—and its leaders—must realize that other

people's perceptions of our country matter, especially since we are a global political and economic power; and he confesses that he is "dumbfounded" that most Americans still are neither interested in nor knowledgeable about the Arab world.

This book will be an eye-opener for readers, as they watch a gung-ho marine stationed at the command center of a war being transformed into a correspondent for Al Jazeera. It reads quickly and clearly and provides yet another eyewitness testimony about how the war in Iraq has been waged.

Olga Bonfiglio

Loving the World

At Large and at Small

Familiar Essays

By Anne Fadiman

Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 240p \$22

ISBN 9780374106621

In terms of prestige, Joseph Epstein observes, "literary forms, like stocks, rise and fall." Although it has a long and hon-

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ored history, the essay, pioneered by Montaigne, was little more than a penny stock; but now it seems to be thriving in a bull market, owing, no doubt, to some of its distinguished practitioners.

A former columnist for *Civilization*, the Library of Congress publication, a staff writer for *Life* magazine and an editor of *The American Scholar* for seven years, Anne Fadiman burst upon the literary scene with the release of her deeply poignant and memorable debut book, *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and*

the Collision of Two Cultures. This engrossing, well-documented case study of a young refugee girl who was stricken with epilepsy was followed by a collection of well-crafted essays, *Ex Libris: Confessions of a Common Reader*, which chronicles the author's lifelong appreciation and profound knowledge of literature.

In *At Large and At Small*, Fadiman, the recipient of a plethora of awards and currently the Francis Nonfiction Writer-In-Residence at Yale, returns with humor and erudition to a genre she favors: the familiar essay, which reached the peak of its

popularity in early 19th-century England. Recognized for both its intellectual breadth and its miniaturist observance of mundane experiences, the hallmark of this form, she explains elsewhere, is that it is autobiographical but also deals with the world at large. The title echoes the name of the column that began each issue of *The Scholar*—in which 11 of these essays first appeared—and is meant to suggest, as the author puts it, that “my interests are presbyopic (‘at large’) but my focus remains myopic (‘at small’).” Fadiman insists that she is but a “common reader,” nothing more than “an enthusiastic amateur, not a scholar.” Yet her essays are filled with little-known facts that have been meticulously researched. In addition, this slim volume is replete with notes and an extensive bibliography.

Virtually all authors can be detected in their work, no matter how hard they strive to conceal themselves in the shadows. In familiar essays, where the first-person-singular is glaringly present and all attempts at camouflage are abandoned, writers step boldly forward into the light, making it clear that they wish to be seen and heard. Here, as in much of her work, Fadiman, owing largely to a colloquial and easy style, transforms the reader into something like a soul mate. With casual bonhomie and a great deal of wit, exuding charm and intimacy, she ruminates on 12 passionately considered subjects: from collecting butterflies as a child to her “addiction” to ice cream and coffee, from her penchant for staying up late at night to the culture wars. Whatever the professed topic—be it Charles Lamb, Samuel Taylor Coleridge or the Arctic explorer Vilhjalmur Stefansson—clearly embedded in each essay is the author, eager to reveal herself, to share with us her point of view.

Digression is a main characteristic of this form. The essayist begins usually with a personal reference, then meanders casually from one related subject to another, the rambling reflections leading finally to an unanticipated destination. A memory of her father's preoccupation with the daily mail delivery, for example, inspires interesting comments on the history of the postage stamp, which in turn provokes thoughts on the pros and cons of e-mail.

We move placidly through the collection with a smile on our lips and an occasional guffaw until the last piece, which

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reads like a short story and reveals the author's panache for adventure: an account of a whitewater rafting trip on the Green River that ended tragically, placing in relief the fragility of life and the writer's discovery that she "was the sort of person who, instead of weeping or shouting or praying during a crisis, thought about something from a textbook"—in this case, the flayed skin of St. Bartholomew as portrayed in the Sistine Chapel (H. W. Janson's *History of Art*) which she could not help but compare to the shirtless torso, "pale and undulating," of the drowning boy whose boot had become wedged between two rocks. Fadiman's seemingly effortless prose, a fluent mix of the profound and the buoyant, is captivating, elegant and thought-provoking. An exceedingly enjoyable literary stylist, her metaphors are arresting.

The portrait of the writer that emerges is that of a brilliant, lifelong bibliophile with a wry sense of humor and an overwhelming compulsion to write—especially about that most delicious of subjects, her own personal experiences and distinct way of viewing the world. A self-described "loquacious workaholic," she suggests that her character, "a blend of narcissism and curiosity," is perhaps oddly suited to this particular genre. Clifton Fadiman, the author's father, once remarked, she notes, that few women write familiar essays because "the form does not attract them." Well, it attracts Anne Fadiman. For this, let us be grateful. Though we may not always agree with her, it's great fun to be in her company.

Ann Begley

Top Priority: Addiction

High Society

How Substance Abuse Ravages America and What to Do About It

By Joseph A. Califano Jr.

Public Affairs. 239p \$26.95

ISBN 9781586483357

Joseph A. Califano was Lyndon Baines Johnson's chief domestic aide in the mid-1960s and 10 years later (the last) secretary of health, education and welfare, until July

1979, after President Jimmy Carter's famous "malaise" speech. In his acknowledgement for this new book, he mentions his Jesuit formation (he uses that phrase) at Brooklyn Prep and the College of the Holy Cross and then Harvard Law School as he gives an account of the arduous work required to obtain philanthropic support for the 1992 founding of the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University.

High Society similarly reflects this Brooklyn-born, well-connected D.C. lawyer and Democratic Party insider's

jury-swaying powers of persuasion. He tells us that the problem of substance abuse and addiction is more than an epidemic, that it is a pandemic so severe that it requires "a substance abuse Manhattan Project," a National Institute on Addiction (combining the current Institutes on Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse and Drug Abuse), and that "the United States should put this issue at the top of its foreign policy agenda, along with trade, nuclear proliferation, and terrorism." This lawyer has the facts, a plethora of them. The book closes with a



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46-page index and "Source Notes" (including the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, National Institute on Drug Abuse, AMA and CASA, to mention less than a third of them), which make Califano's stirring address to the jury of public opinion a veritable encyclopedia of social science drug research.

The numbers are indeed sobering. Here are a few: The overall direct costs of smoking and alcohol abuse—including health care, crime, lost productivity, disability and social welfare for affected people like abused children and those who lose parents—is now approaching a trillion dollars annually. The appendix, "Diseases/Conditions Attributable to Substance Abuse," lists 85 disease categories, then the substance and its "population attributable risk," that is, the percentage of a given illness that could be prevented if the use of the substance were eliminated. Some examples: alcohol and smoking are responsible for 80 percent of the incidents of esophageal cancer, smoking for 88 percent of male (74 percent of female) lung cancer, smoking and cocaine for 41 percent of spontaneous abortions. For reformers and voters, Califano documents both the mega-lobbying monies of the tobacco and alcohol industries and their subtle courting of the young. Almost half of high school students admit drinking in the past month, and of those who drink, 67 percent of the boys and 61 percent of the girls binge drink. Califano is attuned to the gender differences involved in substance abuse and the current corporate efforts to appeal to girls and minorities.

In a chapter entitled "Follow the Tobacco and Alcohol Money," Califano calculates that underage drinking is a key to the profitability of the alcohol industry not merely because young drinkers are a source of almost a fifth of its revenues but because they also become the adult dependent drinkers who are the source of at least another 20 percent of industry profits. Califano informs parents, many of whom remain willfully blind to teenage substance abuse, that a child who gets through age 21 without smoking, using illegal drugs or abusing alcohol is virtually certain never to do so.

In the Event of a Fire

All of them. Broken-bottle kids from Butte
 mineshafts or the offspring of Ravalli gun-runners
 or those taken into state custody after a Kalispell
 chemical home-explosion—while their P.O.'s
 slogged through intake paper-work, I sat each kid
 down to watch the shelter's fire safety video.
 State regulation. They listened to burn victims
 with Bronx inflections describe apartments
 blackened by smoke, describe waking and thinking
 someone smeared pepper in their eyeballs, roach-
 sprayed their noses. And the children squirmed
 as these folks told of losing everything—heirlooms,
 siblings, the smooth symmetrical contours of their
 own faces—all erased while they lay dreaming.
 For a couple days, the new kids were always cupcakes.
 But the battered ones eventually punched somebody
 or the shy survivors of incest lashed out at shower time;
 familiar roles, usual disasters. Dutifully, I charted
 their behavior, arithmetized actions and consequences
 like those elusive proofs from my college logic
 class when I was bent on making things make sense.
 One graveyard shift wildfire singed the gulch,
 its hot scent lacing the town's dreams with broken
 clocks and kerosene. A light shone in the fire tower
 where some soul kept vigil. On rounds, I found the boys
 had cracked a window and while they escaped
 into sleep, ash drifted through the bedroom, delicate
 grey remnants fleeing some smoldering violence.
 It settled soundlessly on their cigarette-scarred arms
 and choke-cherry faces. No, they did not wake.

Joseph Capista

JOSEPH J. CAPISTA, a member of the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, lives in Baltimore and teaches English at a Catholic high school. This poem is one of three runners-up in the 2007 Foley Poetry Contest.

In these sections he also says some cogent things about treating substance addiction as a disease in terms of public policy while not avoiding the topic of personal responsibility. “True, individuals who inhale their first joint, swallow their first drink, snort their first line of cocaine, or pop their first pill are certainly responsible and can be held accountable for their conduct. If they had never experimented in the first place, they wouldn’t have gotten hooked or become abusers. But most people who make that first choice do so at an age when they are not capable of appreciating the consequences of their choice.”

There is much more in this encyclopedic lawyer’s brief than alcohol and smoking. His data and analyses deal with heroin, cocaine, crack-cocaine, the designer drugs of the 1990s (ecstasy, methamphetamines); the frighteningly wide misuse of over-the-counter allergy drugs and prescription drugs like Ritalin and Adderall; the relationship between polydrug abusers (that is, most addicts) and marijuana as a “gateway drug”; cross-cultural experiences of other nations’ efforts at decriminalization (unsuccessful, in his eyes); the research on 12-step programs like Alcoholics Anonymous and the fierce internal debates about the “best” substance abuse treatments.

From a social policy point of view, I found the most compelling points in the section “shoveling up money,” in which Califano powerfully calls attention to the fact that to pay for the messes in personal lives and families and society caused by substance abuse, out of every tax dollar spent in this domain we give 96 cents for more police, judges, emergency rooms, social workers and, especially, jails, instead of vastly increasing the amount (4 cents) we give for prevention and treatment.

While Califano includes several references to the role of religion and the faith communities, it is mostly in terms of the positive impact of religious belief and participation on addict recovery. What is also needed is a religious-cultural-anthropological reflection on why we are in this area—as in military spending and economic inequality—“number one” in the world.

James R. Kelly

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Integrity Requires Candor

America's Current Comment "Conversion/Covenant" (8/13) seems to me to stress unduly the difference between the prayer "for conversion of the Jews" in the 1962 Missal, and the prayer in the 1970 Missal for the Jewish people, "the first to hear the Word of God, that they may continue to grow in the love of his name and in faithfulness to his covenant."

Your argument suggests that the issue comes down to choosing between the view that the covenant with the Jewish people is not revoked, or that their salvation requires their formal conversion to Christianity. St. Paul, in Romans 9–11, made quite clear his view (also endorsed by John Paul II) that the covenant with the Jewish people, far from being revoked, is the same covenant that reaches its goal or purpose (*telos*) in Christ. For this reason Paul can even refer to the church as "the Israel of God" (Gal 6:16). According to Paul, the covenant that Jesus renews is one and the same covenant as that made with Abraham and Moses. In praying "for the conversion of Jews" (or of anyone else for that matter) Christians are praying that they may come to benefit from full faithfulness to God's covenant.

Your statement that "The 1970 Missal underscores the distinction between salvation and conversion in the case of the Jews," seems to me misleading if it implies that the distinction does not similarly apply to all human beings. The Second Vatican Council taught that "Christ died for all (Rom 8:32), and since all human beings are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being associated in a way known to God, with the paschal mystery" (*Gaudium et Spes*, No. 22). In other words, salvation is certainly possible for all human beings "in a way known

to God" without formal conversion, but if salvation is achieved it is only through the paschal mystery, the grace of Jesus Christ.

Your suggestion that supplanting the conversion text with the one in the 1970 Missal is certainly a good one if it helps Catholic-Jewish relations, but the integrity of our Catholic faith requires that we also proclaim our belief that all salvation is through Jesus Christ. I think our Jewish elder brothers in faith surely deserve that candor from us.

Vincent M. Cooke, S.J.
Buffalo, N.Y.

Always Treasures

I am always weeks if not months behind in reading my **America** issues; but I never, ever throw them away without reading them, as I always find treasures in each issue, no matter how dated.

So it was that I was just reading the April 2 issue with its wonderful article on joy, humor and laughter in the spiritual life, "The Most Infallible Sign," by James Martin, S.J. A joy it was to read, too! It reminded me that I have for some time wondered if it might be possible to create a collection of humorous prayers. I have exactly two in my collection at the moment, which I would like to share with you. Perhaps asking readers of **America** to share other examples would make a delightful future feature. It certainly would delight me!

I found this one on the bulletin board of an ultra-Orthodox rabbi in Jerusalem with whom I had worked on a study-abroad program there. (I have no idea who the original author was.) "Dear God: So far today, I've done all right. I haven't gossiped, haven't lost my temper, haven't been greedy, grumpy, nasty, selfish or over-indulgent. I'm very thankful for that. But in a few minutes, I'm going to get out of bed, and from then on, I'm going to need a lot more help. Amen!"

The second is one that has been widely circulated. "Dear God: Please help me to be as good a person as my dog

thinks I am! Amen."

Keep laughing, and keep publishing such consistently entertaining, educating and enlightening work in **America!**

Kathy Schatzberg
Centerville, Mass.

Humility and Sincerity

Your May 21 issue had two articles about the alarming statistics regarding the sacrament of penance. I am back in the United States after almost a half-century as a missionary in Brazil, and I have strongly felt the meager number of confessions. At my last place in Brazil we had Perpetual Help novena devotions all day every Wednesday. We filled the church 13 times each week, and there are confessions all day. The line almost never stopped. And the penitents oozed with humility and sincerity. The priest confessor gets more grace from hearing these confessions than the penitent does from confessing. One of the priorities of Redemptorist missionaries is hearing confessions, after the heart of St. Alphonsus Ligouri, our founder. Great work, and I miss it here. Let's pray for our U.S. Catholics, that they return to an appreciation of this great sacrament.

Gerard Oberle, C.Ss.R.
Newark, N.J.

Nourishing Manna

As a longtime and enthusiastic reader of **America**, I would like to applaud the profound and so wise article entitled "Accessible Holiness," by William J. O'Malley, S.J., (7/30). It was solid spiritual nourishment—manna from heaven.

(Rev.) Maurice Chase
Los Angeles, Calif.

Clashing Symbols

The Rev. Andrew Greeley's remarks about the nonsense spoken to berate "secularization" as the cause of the evils that appear to undermine the church in contemporary Ireland are funny and refreshing. I would have loved (and loathed, I suspect) to have been a fly in

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someone's soup at that university dinner. Had the conversation become too unbearable, I might have taken comfort in the knowledge that I stood a good chance of not making it past the first course!

Progress in various fields, especially in education, and the prosperity that eventually came has changed Ireland. The ending of the conflict in the north has also contributed to a fundamentally changed environment throughout the country, to such an extent that the community that understands itself as the Catholic Church in Ireland simply finds itself in a new era.

For over 10 years, I have been a member of a team of laypeople and priests that conducts parish missions. Missions in Ireland now are often part of a wider celebration in the life of a parish, like the centenary of the building of the parish church. During such celebrations a parish will hold any number of different events, but it is always striking to hear parishioners explain that they envision a mission or a novena as the element that celebrates the tradition of prayer and worship in the community.

It is also notable how eager people participating in a mission are to talk and turn over the questions they have regarding their faith and handing it on. Some of the most worthwhile and enjoyable moments for me personally in any mission have been the town hall-style meetings that take place apart from the mission liturgies, in which the conversation (at which we are supposed to be so good in Ireland) airs and articulates what people are holding in their hearts. It is always possible for these conversations to veer toward the morose, as Father Greeley experienced, but because they are integrally part of the evangelizing work of the mission itself, we try to keep sight of the faith and hope and love that have us discussing things in the first place. The key here is that people might appreciate in themselves the grace of encouragement. If nothing else, these meetings may fulfill what Father Greeley wishes would happen more often, that we "shut up and listen."

To paraphrase one of our patriots, the development of Ireland and its people has allowed us to take our place more confidently among the nations of

the world. We have not become Shangri-La, though. Challenges remain, but we have the means and the ability now to address them. Our task will be to engage our means, our ability and our will.

In the epilogue to his book *Clashing Symbols*, Michael Paul Gallagher, S.J., speaks of encountering young people in Rome. He says, "I imagine them lonely in surprising ways; I sense them drifting on the surface of themselves; I picture them, spiritually, as uncalled, unawakened, unreached by the Truth." He goes on to say that if his musings on Roman youth are too pessimistic, then, like St. Paul before the Areopagus, he must wait until his eyes are opened and he can see "the signs of searching beyond the appearances." In a sense the Irish church is approaching an Areopagus of its own. We are called before the bar of true faith and right religion, and we will have to give an account of the hope that is in us. Moreover, unless we exercise the imagination of St. Paul and recognize the Spirit moving in the lives of the gentiles, our hearing will fall short.

*Paschal Scallon, C.M.
Belfast, Northern Ireland*


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Lost Souls

Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C), Sept. 16, 2007

Readings: Exod 32:7-11, 13-14; Ps 51:3-4, 12-13, 17, 19; 1 Tim 1:12-17; Luke 15:1-32 (or 15:1-10)

“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Tim 1:15)

A “LOST SOUL” IS SOMEONE who seems adrift morally, spiritually, intellectually and emotionally. Such a person may be lost to drugs, alcohol, ambition, greed, gambling, sexual promiscuity or the “pragmatic” mentality that shows no respect for human life and measures everything only in economic or material terms. Some lost souls may be dear to you—a spouse, a child, a parent or a friend. It is painful and frustrating to watch someone you love be lost. Perhaps you feel lost yourself—through unemployment, sickness, depression, the death of a loved one or some failure. There are many lost souls in our world today.

Today’s Scripture readings remind us that there is hope for lost souls. The readings also remind us that God actively seeks out the lost, wants their repentance and rejoices when the lost are found. The Pharisees and scribes (devout persons of their day) needed to learn this important lesson about the character of God. They (and we) need to learn that God is not a disinterested observer of human affairs. Rather, God is for the lost and is actively involved in their restoration; God’s attitude is best reflected in the teaching and behavior of Jesus.

Luke 15 contains three parables about finding something that has been lost: a lost sheep, a lost coin and a lost son. The third parable (usually called the story of the prodigal son)—the longest, most beautiful and most memorable of the three—was read on the Fourth Sunday of Lent this year (Am. 3/12/07). For that reason I will focus here on the first two parables.

The primary audience for these parables was the Pharisees and scribes. The Pharisees were very religious persons devoted to safeguarding the tradition and practice of their people, while the scribes

were experts in the Scriptures and religious laws—the theologians and lawyers of their day. Their complaint about Jesus was that this “good” teacher spent too much time and energy on “bad” people. Tax collectors were suspected of dishonesty and disloyalty, and “sinners” by their occupations and lifestyles showed disregard for the essentials of Jewish life.

In response to just such complaints Jesus tells three parables about the “lost.” The first two are twins, one featuring a man and the other a woman and having the same structure and message. Suppose

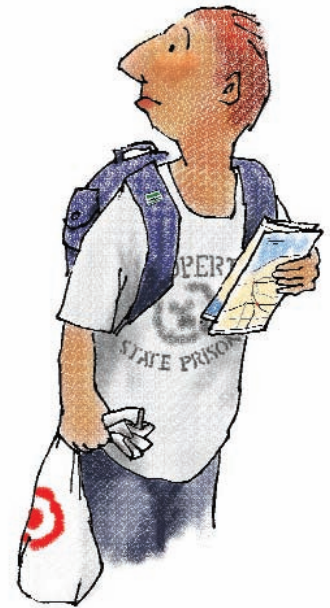
Praying With Scripture

- Have you ever felt “lost”? What was the problem? How was it resolved?
- Is there anyone in your life who fits the description of a lost soul? Can you do anything about it?
- What characteristics of God emerge from today’s readings?

a shepherd has 100 sheep, and one of them becomes lost. What will the shepherd do? He will search for the one lost sheep until he finds it. When he finds it, he will rejoice and invite his friends to share his joy. Suppose a woman with ten coins (or ten \$100 bills) loses one in her house. She will search for the lost coin (or \$100 bill) until she finds it. When she finds it, she will rejoice and invite her neighbors to share her joy.

In terms of structure, the major figure in both parables searches for what was lost, finds it and rejoices. The theological application is the same for both. This dynamic takes place with God whenever a sinner repents. In his concern for seeking out the lost souls of his own time and place, Jesus was reflecting God’s own concern for the lost and God’s own joy over repentant sinners.

The surprising feature in these parables is the active role played by God (and



Jesus) in seeking out the lost. Just as the shepherd actively seeks out the lost sheep and the woman actively seeks out the lost coin, so God (and Jesus) actively seeks out the lost. God and Jesus really care for the lost and want their return. We the devout need to hear this message. And if and when we ever are or feel lost, we need to recall Jesus’ parables about the lost and respond positively to God’s offer of mercy.

Today’s reading from Exodus 32 is an example of God’s mercy toward sinners. When the exodus generation commits the sin of idolatry, Moses intercedes and appeals for God’s mercy toward a sinful people. God relents and shows mercy to sinners. In the excerpts from Psalm 51, the lost soul, identified in the heading as David “after his affair with Bathsheba,” prays, “Have mercy on me, God, in your goodness.” In the midst of Paul’s testimony about his own sins in opposing the early Christian movement and his experience of God’s mercy and forgiveness, there is an already traditional confession of faith: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

These readings all point to the mercy of God and God’s willingness to forgive sinners. In seeking out lost souls of his time and our time, Jesus is the agent and reflection of God’s mercy. Jesus shows that God never gives up on the lost, and so we must not give up on God, ourselves and the lost souls among us.

Daniel J. Harrington

ART BY TAD DUNNE

DANIEL J. HARRINGTON, S.J., is professor of New Testament at Weston Jesuit School of Theology in Cambridge, Mass.