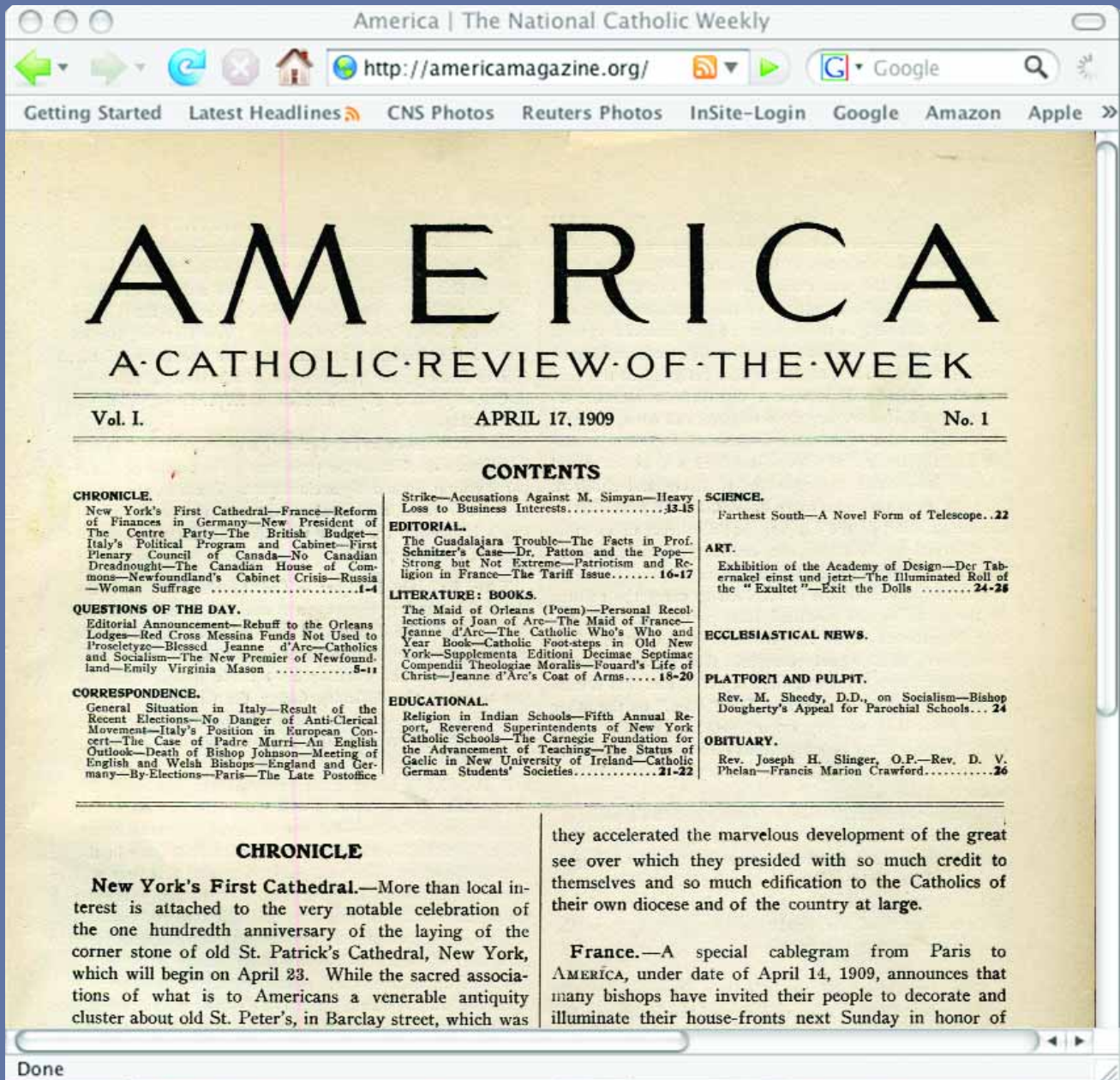


America

April 14, 2008

THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC WEEKLY

\$2.75



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CHRONICLE

New York's First Cathedral.—More than local interest is attached to the very notable celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of the laying of the corner stone of old St. Patrick's Cathedral, New York, which will begin on April 23. While the sacred associations of what is to Americans a venerable antiquity cluster about old St. Peter's, in Barclay street, which was

they accelerated the marvelous development of the great see over which they presided with so much credit to themselves and so much edification to the Catholics of their own diocese and of the country at large.

France.—A special cablegram from Paris to AMERICA, under date of April 14, 1909, announces that many bishops have invited their people to decorate and illuminate their house-fronts next Sunday in honor of

Done

A Century of
Catholic Journalism
Our Centennial Begins

WITH THIS ISSUE **America** begins its 100th year of publication, rounding out a century of service to Catholic intellectual life in the United States. Writing in the inaugural issue, dated April 17, 1909, the magazine's founding editor, John J. Wynne, S.J., wrote that "the object, scope and character of this review are sufficiently indicated in its name..." Father Wynne made clear the magazine's American sensibility as activist as well as intellectual.

He cited the advice of Cardinal John Henry Newman to the founders of *The Month* (1854-2001), the journal of the British Jesuits. Cardinal Newman counseled the need of "a periodical which would induce Catholics to take an intelligent interest in public affairs and not live as a class apart from their fellows of other beliefs." Then he explained: "We are of a people who respect belief but who value action more."

Father Wynne continued, "We are going through a period when the most salutary influences of religion are needed to safeguard the very life and liberty and equal rights of the individual, to maintain the home, to foster honesty and sobriety, and to inculcate reverence for authority, and for the most sacred institutions, civil as well as ecclesiastical. We are more responsible than our non-Catholic fellow citizens for the welfare of thousands of immigrants of our own religion who come to us weekly, and for their amalgamation into the national life. We are responsible also for much of the ignorance of religious truth and for the prejudices which still prevail to a great extent, because satisfied as we are of the security of our own position, we do not take the pains to explain it to others or to dispel their erroneous views."

Father Wynne's assessment of the American Catholic character was astute, from the identification of its activist bent to the failure of ghetto Catholicism to explain itself to the wider world.

In the intervening 100 years, American Catholics have emerged from that ghetto; and the interaction of religion and politics is as vigorous as ever. Despite the disaffections noted in a recent editorial (3/17), American Catholics retain a lively attachment to the church. At the same time, the educational

levels and professional status of the laity have grown enormously, and laypeople play a growing part in running parishes. Nationally, the church's defense of immigrants is once more a neuralgic political issue, and the influx of immigrants from Latin America and Asia is informing its pastoral practice.

In 1909 the United States was just beginning its ascendancy as a world power. Since then the magazine has offered editorial comment on six wars in which this nation has had a direct role. **America** also participated in debates over the Spanish Civil War, the cold war and McCarthyism, birth control, the Contra and other proxy wars in Central America, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the sexual abuse scandal.

In the coming months, we will revisit some of those exchanges as part of our centennial observance. More important, we will look ahead in this election year to a new chapter in American history in a series of articles, under the title "A Closer Look," addressing public policy issues—from climate change to rebuilding the national infrastructure and rethinking national security.

As a writer and editor in the digital age, I still appreciate Father Wynne's complex, flowing sentences. Changes in English style from the Edwardian cadences of **America's** first editor to the brevity and directness of Strunk and White's *Elements of Style*, on which I was trained, are the least of the changes that have marked the magazine's evolution over the last 100 years. I sometimes say that I will be the last of **America's** editors of the print age. The next editor in chief will have to be trained in the new media, more attuned than I am to the busy, visual, interactive world of electronic communications.

Ten years ago the print edition itself began to take on a new look, with color photos and illustrations. Today our Web site is replete with podcasts, slide shows and video clips; and in the course of this anniversary year, the print edition of the magazine will undergo a redesign that will no doubt reflect the growing influence of the Web. These changes in media and formatting are signs that **America** will be entering its second century with renewed energy and imagination.

Drew Christiansen, S.J.

America

Published by Jesuits of the United States

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Customer Service: 1-800-627-9533.

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Cover art A century of **America**: The cover of the first issue, dated April 17, 1909, inside a Web browser.



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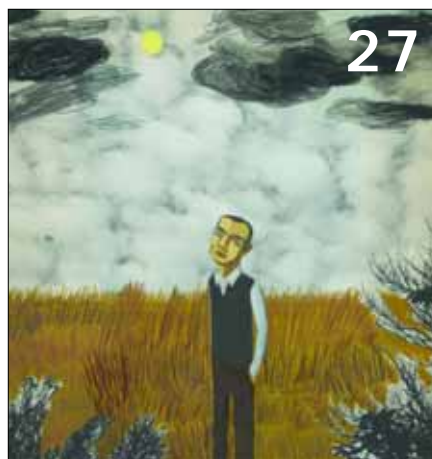
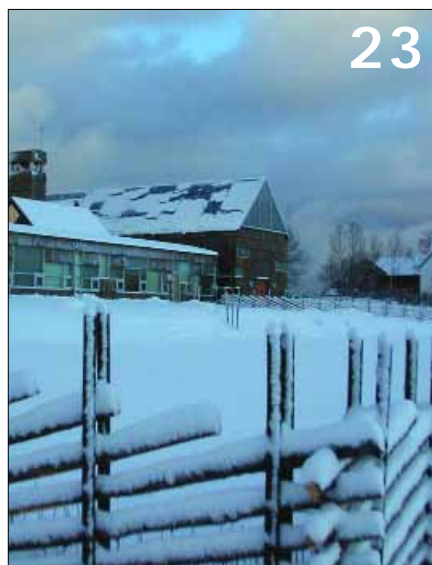
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This week @
America Connects

A roundtable discussion of America's centennial celebration featuring Drew Christiansen, S.J. Plus, Matt Malone, S.J. on "John Adams" and the full text of Fr. Walter Ciszek's "Return From Russia." All at americamagazine.org.

The R Word

Regulation. The word you thought would never cross Republican lips has been uttered by a cabinet-level official. Treasury Secretary Henry M. Paulson Jr. announced March 26 that it is time for “us all to think more broadly about the regulatory and supervisory framework” for financial institutions. Since the Great Depression, the federal government has regulated commercial banks, overseeing their transactions, limiting their activities and establishing reserve requirements. Until now, it has not regulated other financial institutions. Following the Federal Reserve Bank’s recent agreement to back up the purchase of Bear Stearns with a \$30 billion guarantee, fear of a massive financial collapse has forced the administration to propose a comprehensive program to revamp the government’s role in financial markets.

The administration’s plan, announced March 31, would centralize the regulatory activities of five existing agencies in the Federal Reserve Bank. It would establish a new agency to oversee business conduct and consumer protection, and it would set up a Mortgage Guarantee Protection Commission to license mortgage brokers. The program carries out a long-needed overhaul of regulatory structures, making U.S. investment houses more competitive with European ones, and it aims to prevent a repeat of the subprime mortgage crisis. But it does not address the changes in the scale, technology and pacing of financial transactions that make new sorts of regulation so necessary. It was the supposed “creativity” in the design of new securities, together with the lack of supervision, that turned the subprime mortgage crisis into a threat to the global economy. Stimulating greater prudence in the investment business in ways appropriate to today’s global economy will take still more farsighted proposals by Congress and the next administration.

Turmoil in Tibet

Tibetans erupted into protest beginning March 10, the anniversary of Tibet’s unsuccessful 1959 uprising, in reaction to China’s policies toward their land. The 1959 uprising precipitated the Dalai Lama’s flight to India, where he remains in exile with thousands of other Tibetans. The timing of the protests may well have been intended to draw the world’s attention to the Tibetans’ grievances five months before the Olympic Games are to begin in Beijing. China’s constitution guarantees freedom of speech, but that guarantee is belied, for example, by the trial of human rights lawyer Hu Jia on charges of subversion for criticiz-

ing China’s poor human rights record.

China blames the Dalai Lama, Tibet’s spiritual leader and the recipient of the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1989, for fomenting the riots in Tibet’s capital, Lhasa, as well as in Chinese provinces with large Tibetan populations. He himself has called violence suicidal and says the answer lies in dialogue focused on justice. He disagrees with Tibetan activists who call for independence for the province. His own hope is for greater autonomy and respect for Tibetan culture. In an address after Easter Sunday Mass in St. Peter’s Square, Pope Benedict XVI called for peace in strife-torn regions, including Tibet. He urged “solutions that will safeguard peace and the common good.”

Over 130 days, the Olympic torch is being carried on a journey around the world, in what the Beijing Olympics Organizing Committee calls a “Journey of Harmony.” Harmony in Tibet, though, can come only when the Chinese government respects the human rights and the interests of the Tibetan people.

New Planets, New Life?

“My Very Educated Mother Just Showed Us Nine Planets.” Until recently this mnemonic was the way millions of students learned the name and number of the planets and their relative distance from the sun, beginning with M for Mercury and ending with P for Pluto. In August 2006, however, astronomers decided that Pluto was one of 44 dwarf or mini-planets. A loss. But at the same time, scientists continue to discover more exoplanets—planets beyond our solar system.

Since the early 1990s over 277 of these have been discovered orbiting nearby stars (nearby meaning 500 or so light years from our solar system). Do these planets have life on them? Some of them have water and methane, preconditions for life as we know it. Might there be human life? Too early to tell. What about a savior? Back in 1960, L. C. McHugh, S.J., an associate editor of **America**, saw no problem with such considerations. He wrote with amazing foresight, “It is exceedingly probable that billions of planets occupy the ‘golden zones’ of distant suns where temperature and other energy factors favor the emergence of life.” He went further, exploring the possibility of human beings. And he took one additional step. He did “not even find any difficulty in conceiving a thousand incarnations of each or all the Persons of the Trinity.” The universe was recently estimated to be 13.77 billion years old. As exciting scientific exploration of the universe increases, so should the Christian’s appreciation of the Creator.

Press in Peril

FEW INDUSTRIES CAN BOAST that they serve the public good and also post a healthy profit. Yet that is what newspapers in the United States succeeded in doing for much of the last century. Flush with advertising dollars and comfortable atop the media food chain, newspapers managed to please both their investors and their readers, seeing annual growth in the double digits while publishing stories both serious and amusing. Needless to say, this was before the advent of the Internet, a development that has both broadened the reach of print publications and threatened their existence. Today the newspaper industry is in a parlous state, a fact that anyone committed to democratic values cannot afford to ignore.

The problem can be traced in part to Wall Street, where an appetite for ever-increasing returns has driven executives at publicly traded media companies to trim costs. As a result, veteran reporters have been laid off, foreign and national bureaus closed and arts and literary coverage scaled back. Major newspapers like The Washington Post and The Wall Street Journal still produce outstanding journalism, but papers in smaller cities are suffering, and their dimming light has left their home towns much diminished. Without a robust and vigilant press, local governments do not receive the scrutiny they require, and the public lacks the information it needs to make prudent political choices.

The impact of the Internet on the press cannot be overstated. By itself Craigslist, a free online classified service, has put a huge dent in the industry's advertising revenue. The Web is also luring more readers online, where most of the content is free. A 2004 survey from the Carnegie Corporation reported that a paltry 8 percent of readers under 35 said they would rely on a newspaper for their news. The Internet has also changed the newspaper industry in many positive ways, principally by transforming what was once a print product into a multimedia vehicle. On a newspaper's Web site, one can now find audio and video features, as well as participatory blogging communities. It remains to be seen, however, whether these new formats can turn a profit for their parent companies. Web sites have yet to draw the advertising dollars of their print counterparts, and whether they will be able to support the kind of sustained, and expensive, reporting that is the hallmark of good journalism is an open question.

Much will be lost if newspaper companies continue their steady decline. The newsroom has nurtured the careers of influential writers like Seymour M. Hersh, Mark Bowden and Robert Caro. Even in their debilitated state, newspapers still break most major stories and serve as a prime source of information for their radio and television counterparts, not to mention blogs. It is difficult to imagine a blogger or cable news station devoting resources to the sort of investigative reporting The New York Times has just done to uncover a shadowy military contractor selling defective Chinese munitions to the U.S. government for use by the Afghan army. Of course newspapers can be overzealous, even reckless, in pursuit of a story, but they serve as a crucial check on private industry and government, especially during an administration known for secrecy. Editors work to ensure that all stories are properly vetted and sourced, a strict standard that does not always apply to the freewheeling world of online journalism. Along with news and opinion magazines, newspapers provide depth and analysis that is simply unavailable elsewhere.

WHAT CAN BE DONE? Initiatives are already underway. Paul Steiger, former managing editor of The Wall Street Journal, heads a nonprofit group that offers investigative resources to newspapers that cannot afford this pricey form of journalism. Global News Enterprises, a new online venture co-founded by the former Boston Globe reporter Charles Sennott, will bring a similar approach to international reporting. Another field worthy of funding is religion journalism, a beat that is too often neglected and will need financial support as the Christian press continues to struggle.

Adopting these models will require a change of approach from industry executives, who are traditionally wary of using outside resources save The Associated Press. Small newspapers may have to scale back their ambitions, focusing on what they can do best: solid local reporting. The days when midsize American papers could maintain bureaus in London and Paris seem to be over. In time local newspapers may come to resemble smaller niche magazines, like **America**, nonprofit institutions that rely on the generosity of supporters to survive. Wall Street will also have to adjust its expectations. Moderate growth is possible provided there is not pressure to achieve unrealistic financial goals.

Like the medical industry, the newspaper industry can no longer survive by following the free-market model. Nor should it be forced to, if we value the national conversation that a good newspaper helps to foster.

Iraqi Christians 'Undergoing Calvary'

An English bishop asked Catholics in England and Wales to mark the fifth anniversary of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq by praying for the Iraqi Christian community, which is "undergoing its own Calvary." "In the midst of continuing conflict and instability, we should all reflect on the lessons that need to be learned and ask how we can contribute to creating a better future for Iraq," said Bishop Crispian Hollis of Portsmouth, England, chairman of the Department of International Affairs of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. "Above all, we need to remember the people of Iraq as they struggle to rebuild their country," he said March 18. "In particular, we ask you to hold in your prayers the Christian community." He said the plight of Iraqi Christians had been "brought home with terrible force" by the Feb. 29 abduction and murder of Chaldean Archbishop Paulos Faraj Rahho of Mosul, Iraq. "British military personnel, and the chaplains who accompany them, continue to serve with distinction, and they and their families are also in our prayers at this time," he said.

Russian Church Leaders Work for Better Relations

A working group of Russia's Catholic and Orthodox churches has pledged to counter "media provocations" that could damage mutual relations. "Group members stressed the importance of exchanging information—they also noted an improvement of the climate, as shown by mutually friendly statements made about the faithful on each side," said Catholic and Orthodox representatives in a March 28 statement. "The information climate can and should improve even further if unfriendly statements are avoided and if both sides oppose the provocations of certain media which seek to aggravate Orthodox-Catholic ties." The group, chaired by the Rev. Igor Kovalevsky, secretary general of the Russian Catholic bishops' conference, and the Rev. Vsevolod Chaplin, the Russian Orthodox

vice chairman of the external relations department of the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church, released the statement after the meeting in the city of Vladimir. It said Catholic and Orthodox representatives would ensure "maximum openness and interaction" in joint youth work, as well as "constant monitoring" of Catholic orphanages, which previously have been accused of "converting" Russian Orthodox children. The statement added that the six-member working group—launched in 2004 during a visit by Cardinal Walter

Kasper, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity—had acknowledged the "kind mutual relations" existing in Vladimir, where Catholic and Orthodox clergy cooperate on charitable and cultural projects. Interchurch ties have been strained in Russia since a demand was made in early December by Orthodox Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's office for external relations, to downgrade the Catholic Church's four dioceses in Russia.

Vatican Comments on Muslim Convert



Pope Benedict XVI baptizes journalist Magdi Allam at the Easter Vigil in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican on March 22.

When Pope Benedict XVI welcomed into the Catholic Church a Muslim-born journalist who has often been critical of Islam, it was not a sign that the pope accepts everything the journalist believes, said the Vatican spokesman. The Italian journalist, Magdi Allam, "has the right to express his own ideas. They remain his personal opinions without in any way becoming the official expression of the positions of the pope or the Holy See," said Federico Lombardi, S.J. Father Lombardi, the Vatican

spokesman, made his comments March 27 in response to a statement from Aref Ali Nayed, a spokesman for the 138 Muslim scholars who initiated the Common Word dialogue project in October and who established the Catholic-Muslim Forum to promote dialogue with the Vatican in early March. Father Lombardi said baptism is a recognition that the person entering the church "has freely and sincerely accepted the Christian faith in its fundamental articles," as expressed in the Creed.

Saudi King Explores Interreligious Dialogue

The importance of marriage, the family and the values needed to sustain family life can be an appropriate starting point for interreligious dialogue, said Gianfranco Grieco, a Franciscan priest who is an official of the Pontifical Council for the Family. He described as “interesting” the idea of Saudi Arabian King Abdullah Aziz to initiate a dialogue with Muslims, Christians and Jews to defend the family, moral values and the importance of religion.

While Saudi Arabia is a strictly Islamic country in which the public practice of any other faith is illegal, King Abdullah announced March 24 that he had been consulting Muslim religious leaders about the possibility of inviting “all religions to sit together with their brothers, faithfully and sincerely, as we all believe in the same God” to discuss “the crisis all humanity is suffering in the current time.” The institution of the family has been “weakened and dismantled,” a lack of faith and religious practice has spread and “there is a lack of ethics, loyalty and sincerity,” he said.

Health Care Reformers Face Competition

Health care reform must compete for attention from Congress along with the economic recession and the ongoing war in Iraq, said a Catholic Health Association official. “It will be a battle” to keep health care needs for all Americans on the front burner, said Jeff Tieman, director of C.H.A.’s “Covering a Nation” initiative. Tieman spoke March 13 to a group of editors of U.S. and Canadian Catholic publications at the U.S.

Conference of Catholic Bishops headquarters in Washington, D.C. He said C.H.A.’s efforts to reform the health care system in the United States are defined in its newly released reform initiative, “Our Vision for U.S. Health Care.” The document establishes principles for reform and proposes that a reformed system should be “available and accessible to everyone” and should pay “special atten-

Cardinal Keeler Receives Shofar Award



Cardinal William H. Keeler, retired archbishop of Baltimore and an Eagle Scout, received the Shofar Award of the National Jewish Committee on Scouting for helping the committee. He also was cited for his work to promote Christian-Jewish relations. Rabbi Rachmiel Tobesman, a member of the Baltimore Area Council Boy Scout Relationship Committee, presented Cardinal Keeler with the award. “We have more in common than we have differences,” said the rabbi, who also praised the cardinal for his work bringing together scouts of different faiths. The award presentation came at the end of the 62nd annual Archdiocese of Baltimore Scout Mass, celebrated March 2 at St. Mark in Fallston, Md. Scouts of all ages packed the church. The cardinal is a member of the U.S. bishops’ Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs and its Subcommittee on Interreligious Dialogue.

tion to the poor and vulnerable”; be oriented toward health and prevention “with the goal of enhancing the health status of communities”; be “sufficiently and fairly financed”; allocate resources in ways that are “transparent and consensus-driven”; put patients at the center of care, addressing “health needs at all stages of life from conception to natural death”; and deliver care safely and effectively and with the “greatest possible quality.”

Hard to Connect Careers and Church Ministry

Although many young adult Catholics are interested in church ministry, they find it difficult to connect their career plans or talents with available ministries, according to a survey released this year. The survey, “Young Adult Catholics and Their Future in Ministry,” was commissioned by the Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership Project, a joint project involving six national Catholic orga-

nizations and funded by the Lilly Endowment. A preliminary report on the survey of young adult Catholics will be the topic of an upcoming National Ministry Summit April 20-23 in Orlando, Fla. The summit, initially planned for 1,000 participants, recently was expanded to accommodate all who wish to attend. “The waiting list kept growing,” said Christopher Atkins, executive director for the National Association for Lay Ministry, one of the sponsoring groups of the project. He said the interest in discussing the survey’s results shows that it “struck a chord with the people who minister and those who plan for future ministry in the Catholic Church.”

Maryland Legislature to Study Death Penalty

Richard J. Dowling, executive director of the Maryland Catholic Conference, praised the Maryland General Assembly for passing legislation to establish a com-

Signs of the Times

mission that will study the death penalty in Maryland. The Catholic conference is the legislative lobbying arm of Maryland's Catholic bishops. The House of Delegates passed its version of the bill March 21 by a vote of 89 to 48, and the Senate passed its version a day later 32 to 15. The two versions are expected to be reconciled soon, and Gov. Martin J. O'Malley is likely to sign the measure into law, Dowling said. The commission will be made up of people from both sides of the issue, and it is expected to include representatives from the state's religious community. "We're hopeful this commission will help remove the residual doubts about whether our justice system can be best served by repeal of the death penalty," said Dowling. The commission is expected to hold regional hearings, and Dowling said he is "confident people and interests throughout the state will have their say."

Bishop Encourages Catholic Educators

Helping today's youths grow more deeply in their faith is a key role for Catholic educators, Bishop Blase J.

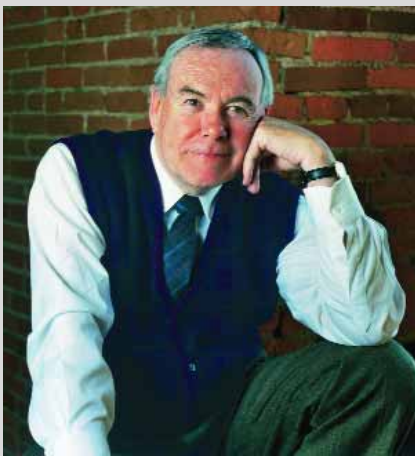
Cupich of Rapid City, S.D., told participants at the annual National Catholic Educational Association convention March 26 in Indianapolis. "How can we pass on the faith in a way that gives the children and grandchildren of today and tomorrow the same experience of God and of Christ and of the church that shapes our hearts?" he asked. The bishop cited a recent study by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life that said 33 percent of all Catholic Americans have left the church. According to the study, 10 percent of all Americans identify themselves as former Catholics while 25 percent of all Americans between 18 and 29 have no religious affiliation. The study showed that those who left the church did so mainly from an apathy "that stems from a lack of knowledge about the faith," Bishop Cupich said. He said this lack is due to the "collapse of the catechetical infrastructure."

Salesians to Increase Outreach to Families

In focusing on the education and evangelization of young people, the Salesians must also increase their outreach to fami-

lies, Pope Benedict XVI said. "Caring for families will not take energy from your work on behalf of the young, but rather will make it more lasting and effective," the pope said March 31 in a meeting with the 233 delegates to the Salesian general chapter. The chapter of the order, which has almost 16,000 members working in 129 countries, opened in Rome March 3 and was scheduled to conclude April 12. Pascual Chávez Villanueva, S.D.B., a Mexican Salesian priest elected March 25 to a second six-year term as superior of the order, told the pope the chapter members had been focusing on ways to strengthen their commitment to the vision of their founder, St. John Bosco, to serve God through educating the young, particularly the poor. The chapter delegates recognize the rapid changes in the world, he said, and know the order must learn to listen to young people and respond to their worries and hopes for the future. Thirty years ago, a Salesian general chapter launched Project Africa to pool worldwide Salesian resources to strengthen the order's presence in Africa; Salesians now work in 42 African countries and have more than 1,200 members, mostly Africans, working on the continent, he said.

Novelist Jon Hassler Dies at 74



A funeral Mass was celebrated March 27 at the Basilica of St. Mary in Minneapolis for Jon Hassler, an award-winning novelist and emeritus professor of fiction at St. John's University in Collegeville, Minn. Hassler died at Methodist Hospital in the Minneapolis suburb of St. Louis

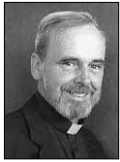
Park on March 20, 10 days shy of his 75th birthday. He had suffered for more than a decade from progressive supranuclear palsy, a rare neurological disorder that causes serious and permanent problems with control of gait and balance. Hassler had graduated from St. John's in 1955 with a bachelor's degree in English. He was writer in residence at the university from 1980 until his retirement in 1997. In a statement, Dietrich Reinhart, O.S.B., president of St. John's, said Hassler was one of the nation's "great storytellers," and his themes were "about our struggles with choices between good and evil in their everyday manifestations."

Professor Hassler had been notified in the week before his death that he had been named the recipient of The Catholic Book Club's Champion Award for 2008 by the editors of **America**.

Building Altar for Papal Mass an 'Awesome' Job

For Deacon Dave Cahoon, working at his St. Joseph's Carpentry Shop on a quiet country road in Poolesville, Md., this year's Holy Week was one like no other. "How awesome is this? It's Holy Thursday, and I'm working on the altar for the Eucharist, for the papal Mass. How awesome is that?" he said, smiling. With a hammer and chisel, the carpenter worked on a long maple board for the base of the altar that Pope Benedict XVI will use for his April 17 Mass at Nationals Park in Washington, D.C. Deacon Cahoon, who has worked as a carpenter for nearly three decades, has fashioned many church and home furnishings over the years at his shop, which includes a sawmill.

From CNS and other sources. CNS photos.



Sharp Words From Another Jeremiah

‘Your own wickedness chastises you,
your own infidelities punish you.’

—Jer. 2:19

BY NOW, Senator Barack Obama’s talk, “A More Perfect Union,” delivered at Philadelphia’s Constitution Center on March 18, has been analyzed to death. For my part, I thought it a politically astute and important speech that merits reading by everyone, even though it will not save Obama’s candidacy. We have become such a soundbite, libelous culture, using snippets of information to attack our political enemies, stoking latent fears and assaulting by innuendo, that the likelihood of the senator’s nomination and election seems slimmer every day.

I have been preoccupied with the preacher whose words necessitated Obama’s speech. The Rev. Jeremiah Wright, the senator’s pastor for 20 years, has been known as a religious leader in Chicago and nationwide for the last two decades, but a recent spate of video snippets has now made him infamous. I have not been able to track down the full text of the sermons that dealt with AIDS or “The United States of White America.” (If he says that AIDS was targeted against blacks by the U.S. government, he has quite foolishly and incorrectly formed his judgment from street talk and unsupported conspiracy theories. If he calls our country “White America,” I would like to know the context and his point.)

I do know the context of the “chickens come home to roost” video that the networks, especially Fox News, have played hundreds of times. It is a sermon that I have read in its entirety. You should too.

JOHN F. KAVANAUGH, S.J., is a professor of philosophy at St. Louis University in St. Louis, Mo.

I started rereading the biblical Book of Jeremiah within days of Wright’s talk, maybe because they shared the name. I love the books of the prophets, splendid testimonies that Judaism in its holy Scripture is unafraid to list God’s indictments against itself. Christians, I suspect, have not been as courageous. We tend to look at the indictments uttered by Jesus as directed against the lords and rulers of his time. But if we were willing to look at Scripture as a living word, we would see that what he said applies to us here and now. And believe me, we would resist much of what he says.

Jeremiah was a reluctant prophet and a rejected one. He spoke truth to power, as they say, not only to his own nation but also to his own religious community. “Your own apostasies are rebuking you” (2:19). Isn’t this a bit like chickens coming home to roost? He called his own people a “degenerate plant and bastard vine,” an adulterer and a whore (2:21, 3:9). He did not exactly damn them, but he promised “disaster from the north, an immense calamity” (4:6), “an end of it once and for all” (4:37). In Chapters 5 and 6, the invasion by enemies was justified. Death will seem preferable to this wicked people (Ch. 8). A country and religion that lies, that is corrupt and incapable of repentance, is fated to become a heap of ruins and an uninhabited wasteland (9:4-11).

I could go on, even through the four “dooms” (what might that word mean?) and disaster of Chapter 15, and especially the “doom” for those who have great possessions but no integrity in Chapter 22.

All this, of course, does not apply to us, our nation, our church. But be wary, friends. The greatest indictment against Israel was their claim that they were suc-

cessful and sinless.

If some blacks think the only terrible sinners in their midst are the white or powerful, they are just plain delusional. If some whites think America is sinless in its impact on the world and its treatment of its poor, they too are delusional.

The problem with much preaching in Christian churches is that we apply the prophetic indignation easily to our enemies, but rarely to ourselves, our church, our nation. But if we think Jeremiah and Jesus are not addressing us, we have nothing to learn from either—at our peril.

Was the Reverend Wright speaking in this tradition when he gave his infamous talk after the evils of 9/11? I think so. His sermon was a commentary on revenge and the violence that returns to those who do violence, especially against the innocent. Wright recounted our national history of killing children, from the Sioux to the Japanese. All just causes, one might sincerely think. But all horrific. And this is where the preacher talked about the “chickens coming home to roost.” As Wright continued, he pointed out that violence and hatred beget violence and hatred.

And then the preacher turned to something that possibly no one is aware of from the YouTube clips. Having been in New Jersey on that September day of “unthinkable acts,” Jeremiah Wright was drawn to examine his own relationship to God, his lack of prayer, his honesty. “Is it real or is it fake? Is it forever or is it for show?”

The full story has been willfully ignored by commentators. “I deny that he is a Christian,” Pat Buchanan said on MSNBC. His is a “crackpot church,” a pundit on Fox News pontificated. Well.

Jeremiah Wright is not another Jeremiah the prophet, nor is he another Jesus. But we should remember this: Jesus himself, if we bother to read the Gospel from the Saturday before Palm Sunday, was condemned as a threat to his nation and religion because of the words he spoke. For this he was executed.

If we cast out from our midst any criticism of our way of life, any indictment of our cherished ideologies, we may be casting out not only the prophets, but also the Savior.

John F. Kavanaugh

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK



Exploitation and immigration policy

Human Bondage

– BY MARY ELLEN DOUGHERTY AND JANE BURKE –

UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS VICTIMIZED by human traffickers are among the most vulnerable of the people affected by U.S. immigration policy. Many of them embark on their journey as hopeful migrants but run up against limits on legal migration and jobs. For the promise of honest work and earnings to share with their families back home, they are willing to risk the unknown to enter this country and stay here. More desperate than dream-ridden, many such migrants have ended up as victims of human trafficking.

MARY ELLEN DOUGHERTY, S.S.N.D., is coordinator of education and outreach for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' program against human trafficking. **JANE BURKE, S.S.N.D.**, former national manager of the Justice for Immigrants program, is a consultant and facilitator at the U.S.C.C.B.

By definition, a victim of human trafficking is one who has been forced, through fraud or other coercive means, into labor or sexual exploitation for commercial purposes. Their labor can take the form of debt bondage, peonage or any work under slave-like conditions. Victims have been forced to work in brothels, factories, farms or even private homes without freedom of movement or adequate wages. Most of them typically work under harsh conditions as well. Seduced or misled by false promises, the victims are often held in place by psychological or physical force or both. Some are coerced by threats to their loved ones in their home country. Such migrants are also captives, unable to move on without great risk.

Once victims of human trafficking are identified as such by U.S. authorities, they become eligible for such government benefits as legal aid, medical care and education, the same benefits available to refugees. But the one benefit they want most, the right to work, is not given them.

Over the course of 20 months, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has facilitated services in the United States for 569 foreign nationals from 69 countries as victims of human trafficking. Of these, 57 percent were victims of exploitation in the workplace, 32 percent were victims of sexual exploitation and 11 percent were victims of both kinds of human trafficking. Although some of the foreign nationals were in the U.S. legally, most were undocumented

and integrally implicated in immigration issues. The U.S.C.C.B. has also served an additional 121 people who are entitled to aid, mostly as spouses or children of victims. Of the total 690 people served, 72 percent are female.

Human trafficking is lucrative for the brokers, who, like traffickers of drugs and weapons, protect their “products” because people are reusable: they can be sold and resold, over and over again.

In the Name of Security

Despite the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, a federal law passed to protect victims, implementation can become blurred when a person’s status as an “undocumented person” trumps the status of “victim.” Societal mantras (like “they broke the law” and “they could be terrorists”) and increasing hostility toward undocumented persons also play a negative role.

Since law enforcement officers are trained primarily to be vigilant about national security, they may treat the human rights of trafficking victims as secondary. In the name of national security, they may detain and deport people who lack legal documents, often without investigating for evidence of human trafficking. At that point the cycle of trafficking may simply begin again. While some well-informed officials do the right thing by victims of trafficking, they are in a minority.



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At the state level, the distinctions between undocumented persons and victims of human trafficking may become even less relevant. People defined as victims by federal law may be treated at the state level as criminals. In the absence of comprehensive federal immigration reform, states have started enacting their own immigration laws. The National Conference of State Legislatures reports that 1,404 measures were introduced in states around the country between January and July 2007.

The Greater Threat

What becomes obscured in all this is that human trafficking itself is a far greater threat to the United States than are the undocumented foreign nationals the traffickers have victimized. And deporting victims simply feeds traffickers, who often operate as part of criminal networks that destabilize an area. Failure to identify the crime of human trafficking is a failure to identify the criminal whose trade in human persons for commercial sex or forced labor demoralizes society as a whole. As the number of victims escalates, so does the crime rate and the real threat to security. Criminalizing the victim is shortsighted at best.

Hidden trades like human trafficking also create an underground economy with its own complex systems of exchange, and this contributes to economic inequity and moral disorder. As Moisés Naím, author of the recent book

Illicit, says, “Supply and demand, risk and return, are trafficking’s primary motivators.” What drives traffickers are “profits and a set of values that is often impervious to moral denunciations.” He adds that what we need are not “moral exhortations” but “honest analysis of the problem.”

This is precisely what has been missing from our national debate on immigration. Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio of Brooklyn noted the lack of progress in his 2007 Labor Day statement:

The debate was truly a case of “more heat than light,” more passion than progress. In my view, sometimes anger trumped wisdom, myths overwhelmed facts, and slogans replaced solutions. After this debate we are a society more divided, a people more confused, and a nation unable to move forward.

Meanwhile, victims of human trafficking, who ought to be protected under U.S. law, are becoming more and more vulnerable as state laws conflict with one another. Without comprehensive immigration reform, state-generated initiatives could lead to continued double jeopardy for immigrants.

The intersection between immigration reform and the human rights of people is a risky one. As a society, we need a civil conversation that will both unite and change us for the better. **A**

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Letter to a Reluctant Atheist

What Sam Harris can learn from the mystics

BY STAFFORD BETTY

AT A RECENT conference of atheists in Washington, D.C., Sam Harris, the author of *The End of Faith* (a 2004 best-seller) and *Letter to a Christian Nation* (2006), surprised his audience. He told the crowd of like-minded secularists that he did not speak of himself as an “atheist” and did not think anyone there should do so either. He gave several reasons. One was that self-proclaimed atheists marginalize themselves as a “cranky subculture.” “As a matter of strategy,” he said, “we have walked into a trap.”

Another reason Harris gave in his address to the Atheist Alliance International last October—the reason that interests me here—was that atheism “seems more or less synonymous with not being interested in what someone like the Buddha or Jesus may have actually experienced...yet these experiences often constitute the most important and transformative moments in a person’s life.”

What Harris had in mind is deep meditation. Having made his “own modest efforts in this area,” he expressed admiration for the person who meditates “for 15 or 18 hours a day, for months or years at a time, in silence, doing nothing else.” Such a person discovers who he really is deep down, below the waterline of his thoughts; he discovers a “universe of mystery,” a place where “selfhood is relaxed” and “negative social emotions such as hatred, envy and spite” are replaced by

STAFFORD BETTY is professor of religious studies at California State University in Bakersfield, Calif.

emotions “such as love and compassion.”

Does this sound like any atheist you ever talked to? Words like these are indistinguishable from those of the most notable spiritual teachers of our time, from Thomas Keating, O.C.S.O., to Eckhart Tolle, author of *The Power of*



Sam Harris, author of *The End of Faith*

Now. What is going on?

Harris went on to say that most atheists pooh-pooh these transformative disciplines “because of their religious associations.” That, he said, is unfortunate; how much better it would be if atheists learned to separate these priceless experiences from the “Iron Age fairy tales” out of which they grow.

What Harris wants to salvage from religion is the timeless mystical spiritual-

ity that has had as its home no other place but religion. Can this be done?

It will not be easy for him. In his talk, Harris dismissed most religious claims as “bad science or bad philosophy.” He also claimed that “religious faith is one of the most perverse misuses of intelligence we have ever devised.” Yet look what it has produced. Caught in a love-hate relationship, Harris is like a collector who loves butterflies but has no use for the caterpillars they come from.

Why Not Construct a Better Theology?

There is a way out of this dilemma. Harris does not have to continue his association with atheism’s other bad boys of the moment: Christopher Hitchens, Richard Dawkins and Daniel Dennett. He does not have to ridicule the traditional theologies with all their ugly potholes. He could decide instead to construct a better theology, one that fits his idea of what God would have to be if Harris were to take the divine seriously.

Harris has kept company with contemplatives, men and women who know how to stop the whirl of their own thoughts and tiptoe into an awareness that completely transcends their own puny egos. Paul Tillich called this the ground of being, and contemporary Buddhist writers, with whom Harris is in particular sympathy, use that phrase too. What does this ground of being feel like? Catholic mystics like Father Keating and Bede Griffiths, O.S.B., conceive of it as a joyous, compassionate, loving, powerful, boundless, light-filled

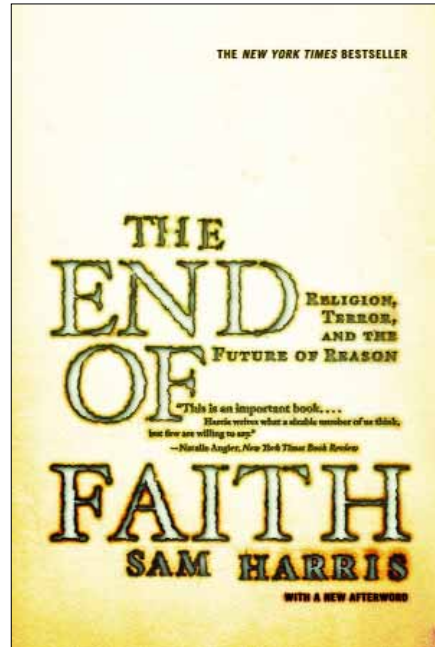
PHOTOS COURTESY OF SAM HARRIS

reality that can be known intimately in the private sanctuary of their own mind. Leading American Buddhist teachers like Surya Das and Thubten Chodron would not disagree.

Faith of a Skeptic

Would Harris object to such a conception? Given his openness to the life of the deep mind (shall we call it the spirit?), I do not see why he should. It avoids the following pitfalls. It does not define God in a way that invites logical problems when we try to square God's existence with evil, and it does not place God on the outskirts of Uranus far removed from the human heart. It does not insist on God's being a person like us, a kind of overgrown superego, but it does not make God into some sort of impersonal energy either. However one defines God in the last analysis, the God we are looking at grows directly out of deep meditative experience. It reserves the first chair for the experienter, not the system-builder. Harris, I believe, would approve.

So why does Sam Harris conclude in *The End of Faith* (W. W. Norton & Company) that "a rational approach to our deepest personal concerns...would



also be the end of faith"? Why not say that it is the beginning of a better, more coherent faith—one that Harris challenges himself and you and me to construct? He understands and profoundly values the experience of the mystic. Why not embroider a theology around it? Instead of joining rank with secularists who have contempt for the life of spirit, why not

become their spiritual teacher and help them develop a new vision? Instead of titling his book *The End of Faith*, why not *The Faith of a Skeptic*?

Sam Harris, like all of us, is a work in progress. If he pays more attention to the hints of a transcendent reality to which deep meditation vibrates, it is possible that his reputation as the country's most obstreperous debunker of religion will give way to something closer to that of the Hebrew prophets. Like them, he has every right to express outrage over the dangerous absurdities that blotch the world's religions. We should be grateful to Harris for doing it so well. The danger for him, though, is that he could be blinded by his own contempt. Harris should know that any effort to bury faith-based religion under godless reason is futile.

Men and women, however learned and sophisticated, will insist on their gods. For most people life without them, and without the possibility of salvation that their gods bring, would be simply unbearable. For that reason as much as any other, faith in them will never become obsolete. What the world needs is not less faith, but better gods. **A**

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Return From Russia

The things that strike you after 24 years in the Soviet Union

BY WALTER CISZEK

MY PLANE LANDED at Idlewild International Airport, at 6:55 A.M. in the gray dawn of October 12, 1963. All during the long flight from Moscow, I had wondered what it would be like to see the United States again after 24 years in the Soviet Union, mostly in Siberia. Yet, as we taxied to the terminal, I forgot all about that; I could think only of my sisters and of the fellow Jesuits I saw waiting to meet me. My throat seemed somehow to grow suddenly tighter; I felt a nervous happiness in the expectancy of that first meeting. I hardly remember much about Idlewild, therefore, except flashing lights in the early dawn, the crowd of reporters and that feeling of joy at being home. It was a long while before I could even begin to sift out my impressions of things here.

Cars, of course. Everybody asks about that, and it's true. You notice them immediately. Moscow streets are busy, but here the streets are crammed with cars—north, south, east and west—cars coming, cars going and block after block of cars standing along the curbs. Not just in the cities, but along the country roads and in small towns, the main streets and the side streets and the alleys seem almost carpeted with cars.

Housing, of course, impressed me tremendously. I don't mean the skyscraper skyline of New York and the block on block of soaring glass, steel and aluminum towers that loom over you as you walk

through the city. Everyone expects that of New York. What struck me, however, was the mile after mile of neat, well-painted and well-kept houses: the big, comfortable farmhouses in the countryside, the trim,



Walter Ciszek, S.J., on his return to the United States in 1963 after decades in Siberia.

sharp rows of "modern" brick and glass homes in every suburb, the solid, sturdy brick houses with their frame front porches in every little town.

Sometimes I still feel uneasy when I visit these homes. The idea that one family should occupy six, seven or eight rooms! I can't shake the feeling that something is wrong...a house that had four rooms was a luxury in Siberia, and even then the "spare" room was usually rented out. I lived in such spare rooms all through my stay in Abakan, sleeping on a little iron bed with boards in place of springs...

Here in America, I've watched mothers in the kitchen after a meal throw away more food, and better food, than I might eat in Russia in half a week. The dogs here eat more meat in a week than I did in a

month. And I simply can't help staring when people leave their plates half full, as they do often in restaurants...

When I say things like this, of course, I am only recounting my impressions, not offering criticisms. Somewhat like a Siberian Rip Van Winkle, I can't help being struck by things in my own country that seem strange and new to me...I don't pretend to judge life in the Soviet Union as compared to life in the United States, or vice versa. I am only recording my surface impressions, the things that struck me when I first returned and continue to startle me from time to time in many little ways....

Just a few weeks ago, for instance, I was struck by the sight of a crucifix on the classroom wall as I talked to the children in St. Ladislaus parish school in Philadelphia. You never see that in Russia. Somehow I suddenly felt strange; I almost felt out of place. I could see in the children's eyes an eagerness and a respect for what I was (not who I was), a priest whom they called "Father." I thought of the Russian children who used to come to me for help with their English lessons. How cautious I had to be with them never to mention God! Here in this classroom, beneath this crucifix, I could tell these children anything, speak to them of anything....

I am an American, happy to be home; but in many ways I am almost a stranger, as you can tell by these initial reactions to America. It may take me a while to feel at home, but I am happy to be back. What sort of picture, though, must others have of us who have no way of finding out the truth? **A**

PHOTO FROM THE AMERICA ARCHIVES

WALTER CISZEK, a Jesuit priest, was arrested by Soviet officials in 1941 and accused of "spying for the Vatican." After time in Moscow's notorious Lubyanka prison, he spent decades at hard labor in Siberia. Released to the United States in exchange for a pair of Soviet agents in 1963, he wrote this reflection for the March 28, 1964, issue of *America*.



Read the full text of this article
at americamagazine.org.

Northern Light

BY SHERYL FRANCES CHEN



IT'S THE WATER. The large windows that flank our sanctuary at Tautra Mariakloster in Norway look directly out on the Trondheim Fjord. Each of the seven of us Cistercian nuns here has felt our primordial connection with the water all around us. Being in our church is like being in a womb, with the waters of life nourishing us.

SHERYL FRANCES CHEN, O.C.S.O., joined Tautra Mariakloster in 2002, a refounded Cistercian monastery in Norway. Her photo-booklet *Tautra Mariakloster* appears under "Nettbutikk" on her Web site, www.mamut.net/sheryl.

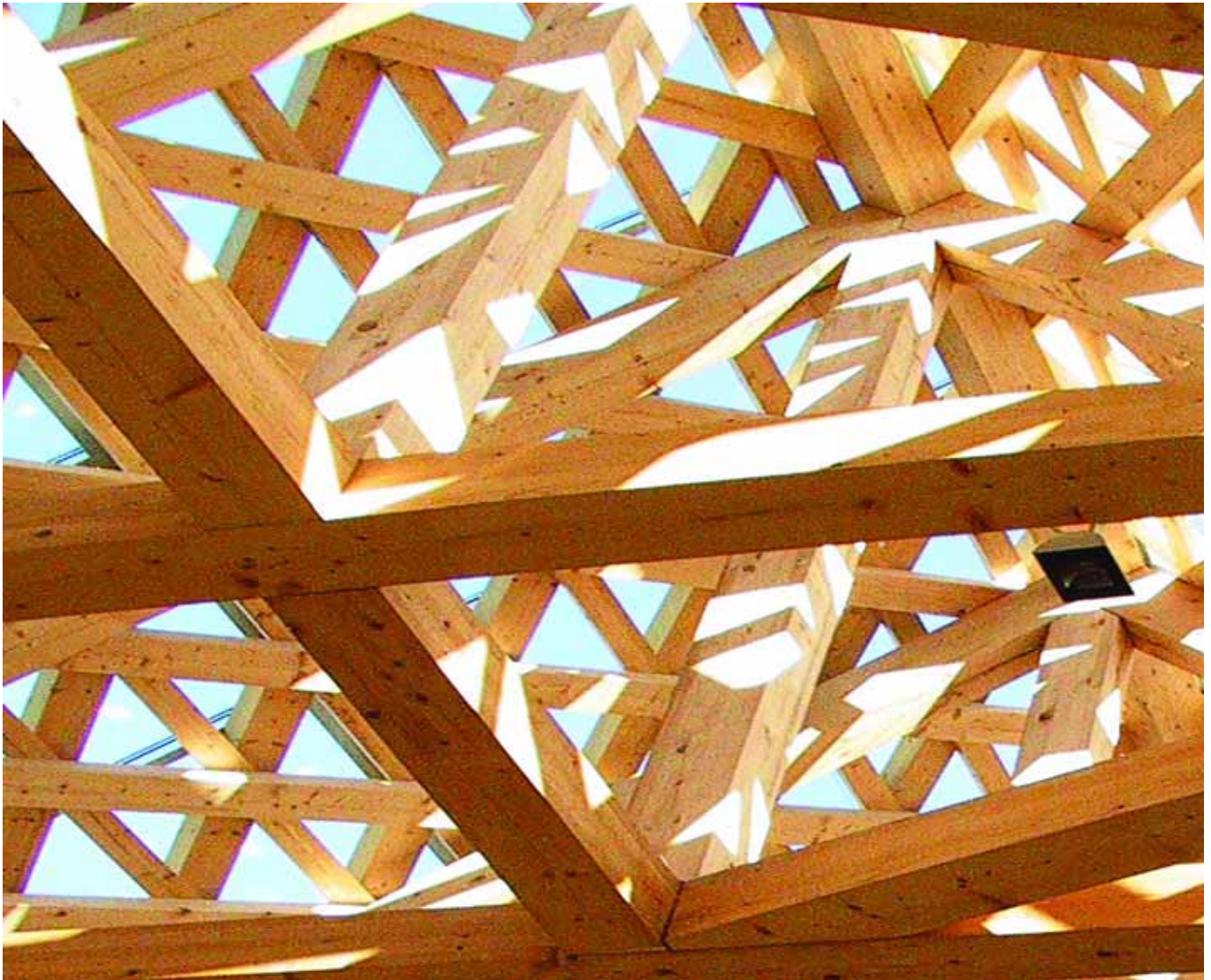
Water, of course, is a reminder of baptism. The fjord in our backyard has a strong and dangerous current. When the first Christians in Norway were baptized by immersion, they probably felt in a profound way the danger of drowning. Pope John Paul II challenged members of religious congregations, at the turn of the millennium, to dare to put out into deep water. There, when the sea is rough, we are reminded of our fragility and how dependent we are on God's mercy and grace for every breath of life.

Being in our church is like being on a ship, an ancient symbol of the church, launching out on the waters of the world.

Our choir stalls utilize the beautiful curve of the prow of a Viking ship. After seven years in a makeshift chapel, we are relieved to be in a monastic choir now; but I recently recalled a quotation I liked as a teenager: "A ship in a harbor is safe, but that is not what a ship is built for."

As contemplative nuns, we are amazed at the interest shown in our new monastery. Over 7,000 people came when we held open house in September 2006; cars come in a steady stream on the weekends; and busloads of tourists come to midday prayer during the week. St. Benedict calls us to both enclosure and hospitality. It may be that our monastic

PHOTOS COURTESY OF AUTHOR



Top: Light streams through the glass roof and beams of Tautra Mariakloster. Bottom left to right: the chapel choir stalls, the courtyard of the monastery, the steeple of the chapel. Opposite page: exterior wall of the monastery.

choir allows us to anchor ourselves in Cistercian life, enabling us to launch into the depths of love by reaching out to those who come here seeking a much greater reality.

The Light

In midsummer we have about 20 hours of daylight. The glass roof of the church creates ever-changing triangular patterns that move across the sanctuary, choir walls, guest pews and floor. It is God at play, the one who sends forth the light, and it goes, who calls it, and it obeys him trembling (Bar 3:33). In the space of one eight-verse stanza of Psalm 119, geometric spotlights move across our bodies and choir books, reminding us of the God who is ever constant, yet ever new.

We have an hour of silent prayer each morning after vigils. During the winter, it is very dark at this time. Our blue-black larvikite altar, four-and-a-half tons of black granite and a symbol of Christ the rock, disappears in the darkness. It is as if one prays through Christ into God's creation outside, because the glass disappears

too. How like Jesus, who is always present, yet often invisible to our eyes.

The stars seem closer in the black velvet of the long winter. Yet they too continue to shine during their watches; God calls them and they say, "Here we are!" And they shine with gladness for him who made them (Bar 3:34).

One late summer afternoon I was struck by the light sparkling through the glass roof and on the beams. It was like being underwater and looking up through the density to see light dancing on the surface. In a sense we are always under water; and when we die, it will be like breaking the surface and coming up into a new reality where we can breathe freely for the first time. The light draws us upward, toward the freedom that is our true home.

The space

The monastery is alive. The laminated wood beams breathe; the changes in temperature cause them to creak and crack. It would be a disturbance to prayer, except for the reminder that whatever grows must change. My breath

is consumed in the greater space; it becomes one with the sighs of the building and the groans of the Spirit.

In the summer, seagulls squabble with one another and make a horrendous racket whenever the sea eagle flies low over the shoreline, threatening to enjoy a smorgasbord of eggs and fledglings. Only a glass wall separates us, which reminds us that it is a battle out there, and our spiritual lives are probably no less a war zone.

In the winter, the space has fewer human and animal sounds. But one hears the rain on the roof, the snow sliding in an avalanche into the gardens, the wind howling and making the reflection of candlelight on the glass reverberate. It is good to be inside, to huddle into one's cowl and settle into prayer, enveloped in soft darkness. It is good to be with Jesus in the clarity of the brightness of new life and fruitfulness; it is equally good to be with Jesus in the obscurity of the off-season, to slow down and consolidate one's interior life-forces, to await a new birth in the eternal cycle of death and resurrection. It is good for us to be here. **A**



When Death Will Not Leave

A husband's journey through grief

BY JAMES R. KELLY

MY WIFE DIED at 5:30 a.m. on an October day more than eight years ago. At her wake, I told her many colleagues from the school where she had taught for over 30 years that the time of her death was fitting, because this was the time she would get up to get ready for school. And after all, dying can be easier than facing students.

For the Irish, making jokes is one of the things you think you should do at wakes, perhaps because laughing together is one of the more direct foreshadowings of heaven. But the line got no laughs. That too is okay, as a failed joke might be a direct foreshadowing of purgatory. The non-joke turned out to be an omen.

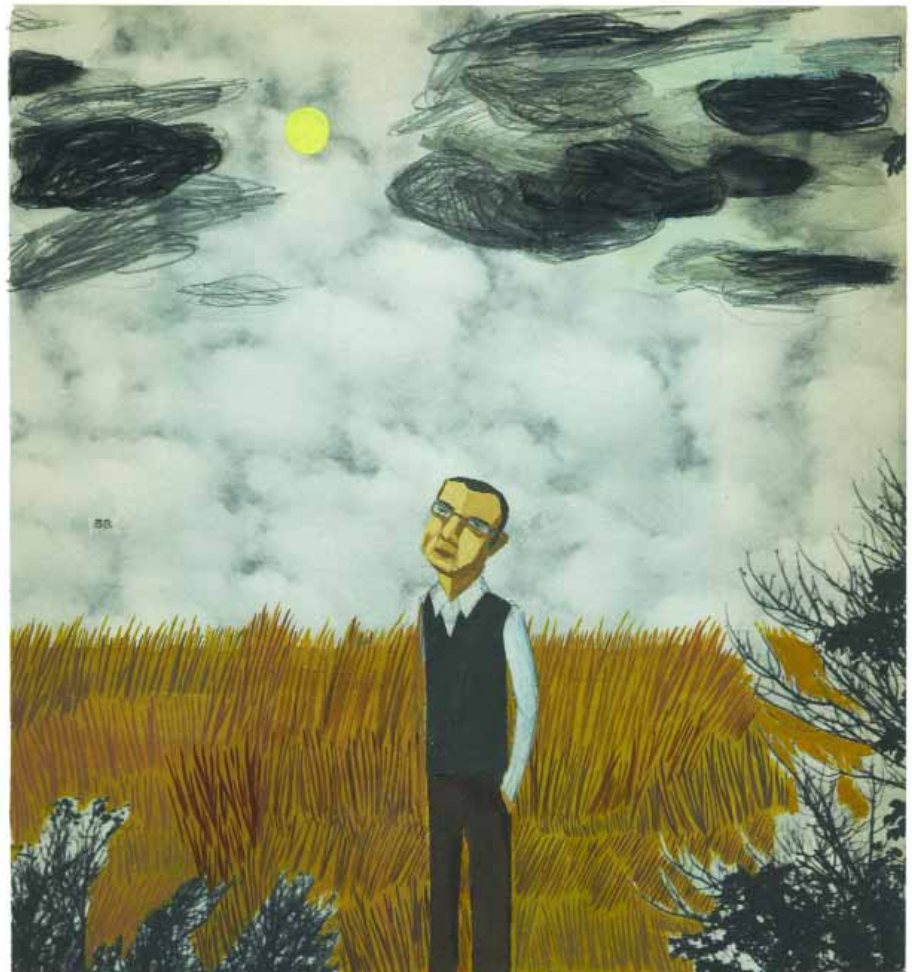
Mary Lou died before her time: before 60, before retirement, before Social Security, before our son finished college, before I told her everything I wanted to say. She died of breast cancer, so we couldn't think of ourselves as being singled out; we were part of a huge statistic (and with health insurance, a less unfortunate part of that statistic). Still, given her utterly responsible habits, she should have been among those many who, at least in the ads, are smilingly, confidently and glamorously not only still alive but—how American—racing for the cure. She always took the recommended yearly Pap test and mammogram. When her cancer was first diagnosed in mid-1990, her doctor congratulated herself on how well Mary Lou's mastectomy had gone. Still, Mary Lou did the maximum: radiation treatment, chemotherapy, drugs like Tamoxifen and Fosamax.

I thought we had left it behind us, and life went on as before: Mary Lou and I

teaching, our son growing into adolescence, Grandpa visiting every Sunday, family events, the Mets losing. It was a shock that day in 1997 when Mary's oncologist told us the annual scan showed some cancer, just a trace, in the lung area. I believed his tone and his message just as I had the first time: "We're here early. Just some radiation and chemo and we'll be fine." But one day a year and a half later Mary awoke to find she couldn't raise her right arm. Twelve hours later in the emergency room, we learned that the cancer had spread to her brain.

Praying Apart and Together

More radiation could only stave off the inevitable, but it made it possible for her to attend our son's high school graduation. Home hospice care followed. During this time a friend asked whether we were planning a trip to Lourdes. This had never occurred to either of us. An attenuated sense of Mary's place in the Catholic understanding of the mystery of providence was not the reason for our inattention. After Sunday Mass at Our Lady of Angels, Mary Lou would always go to the statue of Our Lady to the left of the main



ART BY STEFANIE AUGUSTIN

JAMES R. KELLY is emeritus professor of sociology at Fordham University, Bronx, N.Y.



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Shawnessey Custer

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A spiritual longing for something deeper started Shawnessey’s search that took her to a Benedictine Abbey, her local pastor and finally to Aquinas Institute. A one day visit led her to a Certificate in Spiritual Direction and, with the help of her advisors, teachers and her own discernment, to a Master of Divinity. She’s now a full time lay minister in an active city parish.

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altar and pray. Our son Jim and I would remain in the pew until she finished. From time to time I now go to the same spot and I say, “My prayer is whatever Mary Lou was praying.” It wasn’t that I doubted miracles might happen at Lourdes, but it seemed to me as likely to happen in Brooklyn as in France.

Mary Lou and I both prayed daily but not together, save for one succinct practice. I do not recall how it began—though it was when she was in Stage 4 cancer—but it was simple, and we did it right after breakfast and right before she would soon have to return wearily to bed. It was a couplet from Psalm 95, which often appeared as the response to the psalm on Sunday: “If today you hear his voice, harden not your heart.” It appealed to us for two reasons. The reminder not to harden your heart was always timely, though more necessary for me than for her. But also, and this especially appealed to Mary, it felt right each day to remind ourselves that no matter what our feeble powers of body and mind and spirit, we must listen to what God is asking at that moment. Illnesses, even final ones, do not change the essentials. This snippet of psalm became so important to us that I had it placed on the memorial cards for the wake.

That wake was a long time coming. We fell into a rhythm that I thought would never end. Mary Lou wore a wig and could not eat whole foods; and Häagen-Dazs and Carvel ice cream, formerly weekend treats, were now her daily sustenance. I had a reduced teaching schedule with no departmental obligations, and the two days a week when I was not home, a longtime family friend would stay with her. She was there the morning Mary Lou died.

Implausibility of Faith

One would think that after many months death’s arrival would be no surprise, but even expected deaths bring unexpected reactions. I was shocked by the onrush of cold grief and the abyss of loneliness that followed the blur of the wake, the funeral liturgy, the burial, the gathering back at the house and the task of responding to hundreds of condolences. I was most surprised by what happened to my faith. For a standard Catholic of my generation (and probably a standard Jew and a standard

Muslim), faith is so thoroughly intermeshed with daily life—liturgies, Sunday family Mass, holidays, baptisms, prayers—that even the shock and long siege of cancer is not daunting. But when the quotidian itself is smashed, one's faith can change dramatically. My faith didn't go away, but it shrank, making the safely mysterious now seem wildly implausible—not unbelievable, but implausible. Details that had been part of a grand, sweeping and essentially joyous narrative suddenly required minute inspection, and things that were background suddenly become foreground. I started reading the catechism for things I thought I knew but no longer remembered as specifics. All of a sudden, the specifics mattered. Was Mary judged immediately and sent to heaven (or to purgatory)? What is the relationship between the cosmic last judgment and our particular judgment? If Catholics join their bodies in heaven only after the final judgment, does that mean no heaven—or at least no complete heaven—after the particular judgment? And (though its contribution to hell seemed more obvious) what would the addition of a body bring to heaven, since, as Jesus told the Sadducees, “at the resurrection men and women do not marry; they are like angels in heaven”?

A Note From the Past

Some dreary years later I found a note that Mary Lou had placed in my suitcase before I went off to an annual convention. It was always a trip involving some anxiety about a paper that I was to give; silly now, but a big deal then. The note was short and simple and commonsensical and magical: “Hi sweetheart! Relax! See you soon. Love, Mary.” It soon became the focus of my daily prayer and the start of the end of my depression. Unlike the mental health drugs which cannot cure death and can bring only numbness, Mary's words, which sacramentally had now become a prayer, pushed to the very back of my consciousness all those specific theological implausibilities that arise from a faith unmoored from the anchor of the quotidian. What the catechism says about death now made perfect sense to me: that our afterlife is “beyond all understanding and description” and can only be captured by images, like “wedding feast” or “heavenly Jerusalem.” Or now in a note, found years after a death, saying, “See you soon.” It



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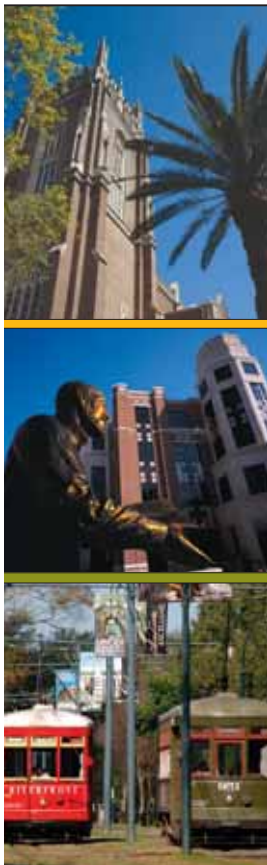
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seemed inharmonious with the universe, a betrayal of creation, that Mary's words could not be true.

And so, I told myself, I should listen to her and relax. Try to be a friend. Go back to losing at tennis. Watch the Mets lose. Believe in her words: "See you soon." I realize that this is a faith born of hope and a hope born of faith rather than anything strictly evidentiary. But making Mary's note a prayer allows me to say once again, "If today you hear his voice, harden not your heart." Without a prayer like this, there could be no worthy life. Death makes a numbed heart inevitable; but numbness must not let itself become a hardened heart, which may be the core definition of death. We are reminded in the catechism that "We cannot be united with God unless we freely choose to love him," with a citation of 1 Jn 3:14-15: "He who does not love remains in death."

A year after finding Mary's note I had the cemetery add to the family gravestone that line from Psalm 95: "If today you hear his voice, harden not your heart." In lieu of a miracle, I had found a sacramental sign. A



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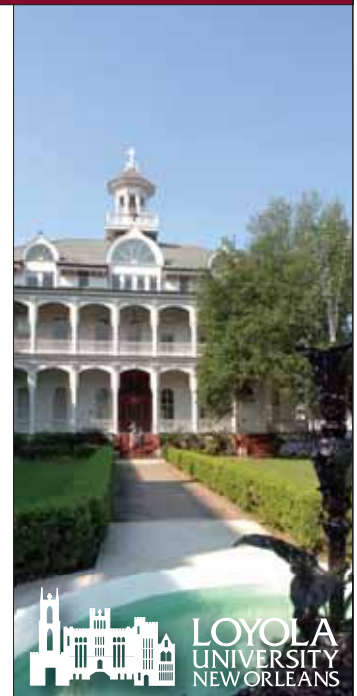
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Consilium Versus Curia

A Challenging Reform Realizing the Vision of the Liturgical Renewal

By Archbishop Piero Marini
Liturgical Press. 205p \$15.95
ISBN 9780814630358

Archbishop Piero Marini served as the leading liturgist of the Holy See for 25 years. As master of papal liturgical ceremonies and as secretary/confidant to Archbishop Annibale Bugnini, the chief architect of the liturgical reform that followed the Second Vatican Council, Marini now presents the inside story of the fierce struggle fought within the Vatican to implement the liturgical restoration overwhelmingly approved by the council fathers. Written with firsthand knowledge, *A Challenging Reform* details the Curia's opposition and its tactics to reverse the direction set by the "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy."

Carefully documented, critically analyzed and candidly presented, Marini's book reflects a historical memory of the clashes and conflicts between the anti-reformists and reformists over the interpretation and implementation of the liturgy constitution. Edited by three well-known liturgical and linguistic scholars—Mark Francis, C.S.V., John Page and Keith Pecklers, S.J.—*A Challenging Reform* is the best single-volume overview of the beginning of the liturgical reform. The first six chapters are devoted to the formative period of the liturgical restoration. The seventh chapter examines the developments after this initial reform (1965-80). The appendix contains the text of seven pivotal documents that are valuable resources for understanding the context of the reform.

To assist in implementing the "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy," Pope Paul VI established a group known as the Consilium. It was international, competent, collegial and productive: it generated reformed liturgical texts. But the Consilium met immediate opposition

from the Congregation for Rites. As Marini notes:

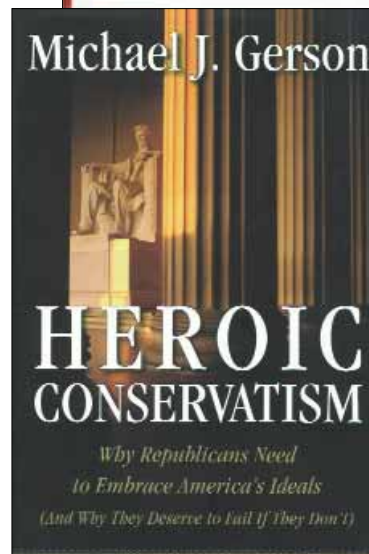
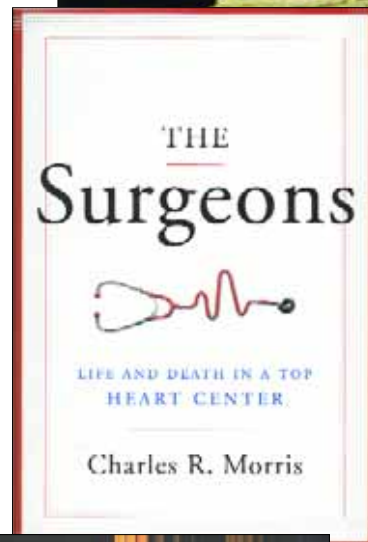
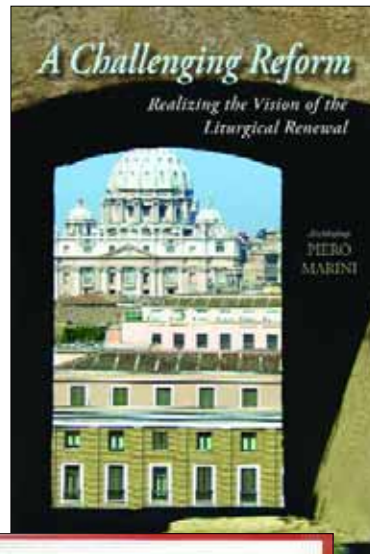
The Consilium and the Congregation for Rites championed two different perspectives. The Consilium remained true to its mission in support of a liturgy open to renewal. The Congregation for Rites was still firmly anchored to a limited tradition since the Council of Trent and not in favor of the broad innovations desired by the Council.

The suspicion and stress encountered by the Consilium in interacting with the congregation point out a basic failure in ecclesiology that persists to this day: a collegial mindset versus a Curial mindset. This was clearly evident at the very beginning of the liturgical reform, when there was strong, strident curial opposition to the conciliar endorsement of the vernacular. The Congregation for Rites sought to limit its use and to deny bishops' conferences the right to approve vernacular texts. The congregation opposed the use of the vernacular for prefaces and eucharistic prayers. Only with the endorsement of Pope Paul VI did the views of the Consilium finally prevail.

The Consilium also experienced a frontal attack from the Curia, with the unprecedented public opposition of

Cardinals Alfredo Ottaviani and Antonio Bacci. Their statements reveal the retrenchments so embedded in the Curia of that time. Marini's book fosters in the reader a new esteem for the liturgical reformers and their efforts to make the liturgy more responsive to pastoral concerns and biblical sources. They paid a personal price for their efforts, but they gave new liturgical life to the universal church.

Archbishop Marini has rendered a great service to the contemporary church and succeeding generations by documenting so clearly the birth pangs of the liturgical reform of Vatican II. He takes us behind the scenes, showing the role played by Cardinal Giacomo Lercaro and



The Reviewers

The Most Rev. Donald W. Trautman, bishop of Erie, Pa., is chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on the Liturgy.

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

Clayton Sinyai is a researcher for the Mid-Atlantic Laborers' Cooperation Trust, Washington, D.C.



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May 16-24: Ignatian Guided Retreat, Edward Salmon, S.J.
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Barbara Radtke Jesus the Christ: Who Do You Say I Am?

SESSION ONE: JUNE 23 – JULY 3

Richard Gaillardetz Foundations of Theology: A Pastoral Perspective
Thomas Groome Sharing Faith in Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry
Richard Gula, SS The Moral Dimension of the Christian Life
Lynn Jarrell, OSU The Church and Its Law
Hosffman Ospino Hispanic Ministry Seminar I: Theological Foundations
Philip Sheldrake Historical Resources for a Contemporary Spirituality

POST-MASTER'S
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SPIRITUALITY: Years
1, 2 & 3 (morning
and afternoon
sessions):
Colleen Griffith
and **Guest Faculty**

JULY 12

Evelyn Underhill Lecture in Spirituality and IREPM Alumni/ae Day
A Spirituality for the Second Half of Life: **Featuring Kathleen Fischer**

SESSION TWO: JULY 7 – JULY 18

James Nickoloff Church of the Poor
& **Gustavo Gutierrez, OP** (*Week One Nickoloff - Week Two Gutierrez and Nickoloff*)
Theresa O'Keefe Practice of Ministry with Youth and Young Adults
Michael Himes Ecclesiology
Daniel Harrington, SJ Introduction to the New Testament
Katharine Doob Sakenfield Introduction to the Old Testament
John Shea, OSA Basic Dimensions of Pastoral Care and Counseling

CONFERENCE WEEK – JULY 7-11: CONTEMPORARY SPIRITUALITY AND TWO-WEEK COURSE – JULY 14-18

Robert Ellsberg The Meaning of Saints (July 7-11) Evening Course 6-9:00 pm
& **Joyce Rupp, OSM** A Spirituality for Our Time (July 14-18) Evening Course 6-9:00 pm

SESSION THREE: JULY 21 – AUGUST 1

John Baldovin, SJ Sacramental/Liturgical Theology
Maryanne Confoy, RSC Toward Effective Christian Ministry in the Twenty-First Century
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the Rev. (later Archbishop) Bugnini in fighting against efforts of the Congregation for Rites to derail the reform. For example, even though the council had restored concelebration in the Western church for wider use, the congregation was still restricting the number of concelebrants and insisting on the use of a metal straw, excluding drinking directly from the chalice.

Thanks to Marini's book, we now appreciate all the more something we often take for granted: the restoration of the vernacular, "noble simplicity" in the rites, concelebration and reformed liturgical books (Roman Missal, Roman Pontifical, Ceremonial of Bishops, Liturgy of the Hours). He gives us a deeper appreciation of the enormous work that led to "full, conscious and active participation"—the prayer of the faithful, the rediscovery of the priesthood of all the faithful, the Novus Ordo and the recognition of various liturgical ministries entrusted to the laity.

All this did not happen without painstaking research and scholarly study, much dialogue and debate, and always countless meetings. This rich liturgical legacy of Vatican II has nourished the church's worship for almost 40 years.

But are we seeing signs today of retrenchment, a return to a liturgical practice and piety from before Vatican II? Do we see signs of a preconciliar mentality, a Curial ecclesiology, influencing the liturgy? Are there parallels between the first days of the renewal and the present time? Marini's book is a wake-up call to contemporary Catholics to sustain the liturgical achievements of the Second Vatican Council so that the past does not repeat itself. Will we learn that lesson of history and imitate those who fought so tirelessly to preserve and hand on the principles of the "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy"?

When the Curia attempted to limit the liturgical reform, there was decisive and strong reaction from episcopal conferences and national liturgical commissions, especially from the French. Analyzing this, Marini writes: "Even during this initial phase of reform, the liturgy was no longer an exclusive preserve of the Roman Curia but belonged to the Church." That remains the goal for the liturgy today. We are indebted to

Archbishop Marini for his chronicle of the events that brought about what is perhaps the most fundamental liturgical reform in the history of the Western church.
Donald W. Trautman

Getting to the Heart of It

The Surgeons

Life and Death in a Top Heart Center

By Charles R. Morris
W. W. Norton & Company. 256p \$24.95
ISBN 9780393065626

Charles Morris has written several acclaimed books—on the Gilded Age, financial crises, the A.A.R.P., I.B.M., the arms race, New York City and the Catholic Church in America. He writes like the best professor you ever had—no dumbing down, presenting complex material in an engaging manner with just the right story at just the right time. If the term “public intellectual” did not exist, it would have to be invented for Morris.

Morris’s latest work, *The Surgeons*, takes on all the key issues—the increasing costs of medical care, the differences between American medical care and that of other Western nations, suggestions for improving American medical care, the roles of the pharmaceutical industry and the F.D.A., the conflicts over the best way to test and measure drugs and medicines and hospitals. But *The Surgeons* deals with these between-a-rock-and-a-hard-place policy issues only after we have met real doctors and their equally real patients.

The focus of the book is the damaged human heart and what heart surgeons do and think while they try to heal it. The setting is the heart and lung surgery division at Columbia-Presbyterian Hospital in New York City, a premier cardiac surgery center and the country’s largest heart transplant center, with nearly 2,000 annual cases—including a 2004 quadruple bypass operation on President Clinton. Morris’s methodology is ethnographic—embedding himself at the hospital’s cardiothoracic ward, listening in on weekly staff “Morbidity and Mortality” sessions, observing about two dozen operations,

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meeting with a cross-section of patients and going on “harvest runs” for organs to be transplanted.

The chief of the heart and lung division, Craig Smith, told the author he “could write about what he saw, good and bad.” Morris did find some things to criticize, but he leaves the hospital about a year later a grateful admirer, not only of the doctors’ awesome surgical skills, but of their humanity—their honesty, courage, stamina and astonishing power of sustained concentration. He finds the expected strong egos, but also deep hearts.

While their training is long and vigorous—after becoming a doctor, a five-year training program in general surgery and then, at a minimum, a two-year residency at the cardiothoracic division—their artistry and visual-tactile intelligence are what impress Morris greatly. After all this science, he writes, the critical operating room decisions come down to what will work with *this* patient, *this* set of coronary arteries, *this* misshapen mitral valve.


Morris begins by embedding the reader in the operation room with himself. We witness up close—Morris writes that

well—the successful work of a great team (surgeon, anesthesiologists, perfusionists, nurses) during a five-hour repair of a certain Mr. Goldfarb’s 70-year-old diseased heart valve. By contrast, soon after this rousing success we meet the ill-fated Erika Maynard, a heartbreakingly beautiful girl of 4 with cardiomyopathy. Her heart muscle cells are slowly dying. This time the team fails. She dies; they grieve. Afterward, the reader accompanies Morris to the Midwest as he learns how her parents deal psychologically and spiritually with the failure of medical science and the dashing of their religious hopes. This prepares the reader for the analysis that follows.

The Surgeons provides a succinct history of heart surgery and heart transplants. Morris notes their increasing safety, even as they are made more available to more and more older and sicker patients. Between 1970 and 1995, there was a 70 percent drop in the rate per 100,000 of death due to heart attack. By the 1980s transplant technology was on the verge of entering mainstream medicine; and there are probably 200,000 Americans walking around today with a functioning organ from someone else’s body (Morris includes information on how to become a donor).

In working on his book, the author discovered that the future holds alternatives to transplants, and that battery-assisted mechanical hearts will soon enter the mainstream. There are also alternatives to heart surgery, with interventionist cardiologists threading catheters, first with tiny balloons, now with stents, to open blocked arteries. Laparoscopic, camera-assisted surgery will soon be joined by robotic surgery. Such escalating medical complexity makes increasing demands on quality control as well as hospital and doctor accountability. Morris believes that patient safety would be better served by replacing the current system of malpractice litigation with a kind of workman’s compensation system based on expert panels.

The policy implications of these mind-boggling medical breakthroughs evoke a different kind of awe. Within 30 years or so, health care spending could consume about 30 percent of America’s G.D.P. Here Morris is a model of non-ideological rational humanness. He recognizes that in the face of rising costs it will



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not be easy to keep alive and make more available the kind of patient-centered care he found at Columbia-Presbyterian. Morris suggests a national medical policy that, while falling short of a single-payer system that he deems politically unfeasible, more fully involves government—especially by way of a more progressive tax, so that our health care rests more on our shared human dignity and less on our ability to pay.

In unison with earlier public intellectuals now regarded as sages—Galen, Aristotle, Maimonides—Morris reminds us that good medicine can flourish only in a good society. *James R. Kelly*

Redeeming the Political Enterprise

Heroic Conservatism

Why Republicans Need to Embrace America's Ideals (And Why They Deserve to Fail if They Don't)

By Michael J. Gerson
HarperOne. 320p \$26.95
 ISBN 9780061349508


The former White House speechwriter Michael Gerson, widely credited with authorship of such George W. Bush catchphrases as “axis of evil” and “the soft bigotry of low expectations,” is no stranger to big ideas. And here he has assumed no small task. In *Heroic Conservatism*, Gerson deploys his winged words and his status as semi-official interpreter of Bush’s political philosophy in a stout effort to rescue his party from a cramped vision of minimal government and low taxes—in favor of a robust pursuit of the common good.

Progressives who cannot conceive of “W” sharing a sentence with “common good”—or “winged words” or “political philosophy,” for that matter—may find in *Heroic Conservatism* a more generous, interesting exposition of the president’s worldview than the one they find in the echo chamber of the liberal blogosphere. But the author’s intended audience is the conservative movement, to whom he declaims:

I am convinced that the bold use of government to serve human rights and dignity is not only a good thing, but a necessary thing. I believe the security of our country depends on idealism abroad—the promotion of liberty and hope as the alternatives to hatred and bitterness. I believe the unity of our country depends on idealism at home—a determination to care for the weak and vulnerable, and to heal racial divisions by the expansion of opportunity. And I

believe my party, the Republican Party, must carry this message of idealism and courage to a tired nation in a pivotal moment, or face a severe judgment of history.

There are those who look at the 2008 Republican presidential contest and see rifts between social and economic conservatives divided by domestic policy, or between realists and neoconservatives divided by foreign policy. For Gerson, “the two intellectually vital movements within the Republican Party



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KEEPING COMPANY IN THE SPIRIT



today are libertarianism and Roman Catholic social thought." The author's intraparty opponents are apt to disparage government by quoting Ronald Reagan's first inaugural to the effect that "government is not the solution to our problem, government is the problem." Gerson, though himself a Protestant, finds in Catholic social teaching not just a subsidiarity that respects the limits of government but also a call to solidarity that can redeem the political enterprise as an agency of the common good.

Do not look to Gerson for the studied syllogisms of the Scholastic, however; *Heroic Conservatism* is the earnest witness of an evangelical. The book is less argument than autobiography, most of it occupied by the tale of Gerson's career in big-time national politics. Because then Governor George W. Bush exhibited a genuine interest in creative political action on behalf of the poor and vulnerable that resonated with Gerson's own sentiments of Christian charity, Gerson leapt at the opportunity to help define the president's new "compassionate conservatism." He was excited to be present at the creation of the Office of Faith-Based Initiatives and

the legislation known as No Child Left Behind, despite the skepticism of small-government purists. "Because the oppression of the weak is an offense against the image of God, politics is an urgent calling," Gerson scolds such doubters. Testify, Michael, testify!

But in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, relatively modest efforts to mend the broken at home were eclipsed by bigger game. Gerson, like Bush, was captivated by the opportunity for political heroism of a higher order: the prospect of changing the course of history by remaking the Middle East in our image as a stronghold of liberal democracy. With Gerson's help, the president would frame the war on terror as a climactic confrontation between good and evil, with the peaceable kingdom but a few years away if Americans had the courage to grasp the opportunity.

Gerson contends that setbacks of the Iraq occupation empowered conservative critics of Bush's ambitious politics, who struck back against the president and his costly agenda—for that matter, against the speechwriter-enabler who had tread so casually on such conservative dogmas as

the rectitude of the free market and the law of unintended consequences. Gerson retired from the White House in 2006 and has taken heavy flak from his Republican colleagues since. In his column "The Real Heroism: Restraint," George F. Will, speaking as the voice of conservative orthodoxy, essentially read Gerson out of Gerson's own movement.

But Gerson's tale is probably less a serious dispute about political ideology than the perennial story of the Christian in politics, who is bound to come to grief trying to reconcile transcendent political ideals with temporal political alignments. It is a story as old as Thomas More and as fresh as Arkansas's Gov. Mike Huckabee—upon whom Will also recently pronounced an anathema for being a bit too compassionate. And it is not confined to one party. One need only recall the fate of the late Gov. Bob Casey of Pennsylvania, famously barred from the 1992 Democratic Convention's speaker list for his pro-life views. As Gerson (a Casey admirer) reminds us, "Christian social teaching is not identical to either political ideology; it stands in judgment of both."

Clayton Sinyai



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Letters

Good Shepherds

Regarding your editorial “Lost Sheep” (3/17): How do we find those lost sheep? And how many more sheep do we lose before we figure out what to do and how to do it? A de-Christianized culture drives us to be even more effective than we have been in the past. We cannot presume that the Eucharist will magically speak for itself and that pabulum from the pulpit will satisfy. In 1982, the U.S. bishops called for a renewal of homiletics.

Most adult education comes through preaching. People in our church are frustrated. All they ask for is a 10-minute homily that inspires and music that hums in their heads on Monday. Can’t we at least do that? We as a church can do better. Whatever it takes to put the message of the Gospel into the words of the people, we should do it. The distant bleating of the sheep drives us to do so.

*Karla Bellinger
Wadsworth, Ohio*

Prodigal Children

I appreciate the insights of your editorial “Lost Sheep” (3/17), but the discussion of “non-denominational” or “unaffiliated” adults misses part of the story of Catholics who wander from their faith. Yes, the Pew Survey is probably right in showing that a sizable number of Americans leave the church of their childhood (or at least allow themselves to become inactive) as they discover the opposite sex, become overwhelmed by their work schedules, discover the wonders of modern science or fall into a sense of isolation. I remember how excited I was as a freshman in college when I first encountered all the wonders of Psychology 101. It had all the answers I could ever want—or at least I thought so for a while. It was years before I found myself back in the Catholic Church.

I also remember looking out at the congregation many years later, as a Catholic priest and the new pastor of a large church in San Diego, and seeing all the gray-haired people sitting in the pews and thinking to myself, “When these people die off, we will cease to exist as a church.” As the years went by, I discovered that new gray-haired people kept

appearing in the congregation.

Your editorial suggests that the percentage of Catholics in the American population has held steady because of the influx of Catholic immigrants. My experience, especially during the special times of Lent, Holy Week and Christmas, tells me that there are other factors at work too, one of which is the large number of Catholics who come home after wandering around, rather like the lost sheep of which you speak.

*(Rev.) Charles Fuld
San Diego, Calif.*

Enough Was Enough

The editorial “Lost Sheep” (3/17) suggested that since roughly half of former Catholics (your term) now describe themselves as “unaffiliated,” the reason for their exodus might simply be apathy: “A number of Catholics, it seems, have left not because they do not believe, but because they do not care.”

I do not think that’s necessarily true. Many who took the Second Vatican Council seriously, and were empowered

and inspired by it, now face a stampede back to the Council of Trent, along with a return to hyperclericalism and the arrogant diminishment of intelligent, committed laypeople at exactly the time when they are most needed. They can be likened to spouses in an abusive marriage; when they finally and sadly leave, it is not because they don’t care but because they care too much. They have been made homeless. Some find a home in another denomination; others will always think of themselves as Catholic but choose not to subject themselves (or their checkbooks) to the control of those who do not have their best interests at heart.

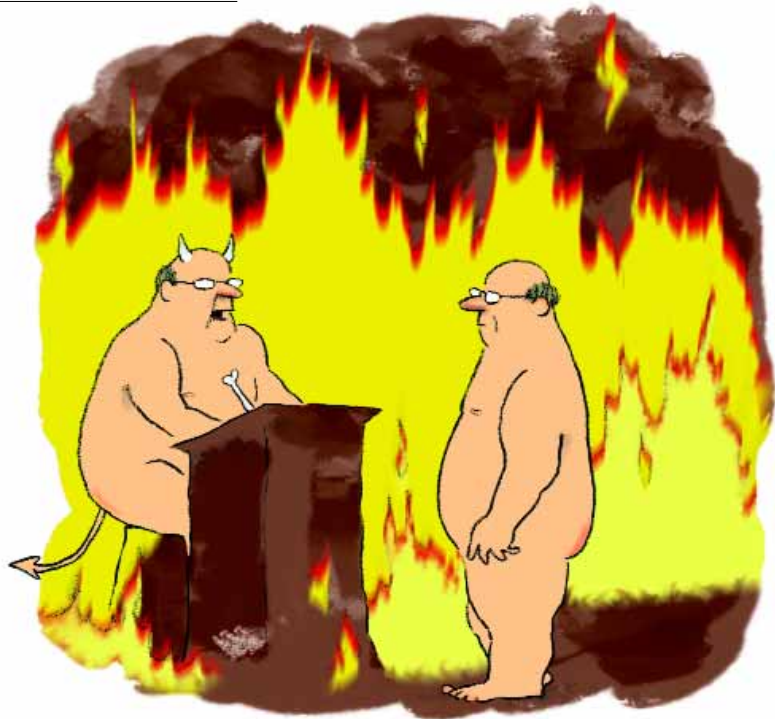
It is not the sheep who are lost.

*M. D. Ridge
Norfolk, Va.*

Ancient Faiths

In “A Federal Solution for Iraq?” (3/3), Richard J. Regan, S.J., discusses the partition of Iraq into three autonomous regions: Sunni Arab, Shiite Arab and Kurd. There is one major problem with this suggestion: These three are not the

without guile



“You look surprised.”

CARTOON BY PAT BYRNES

Letters

only groups within the present-day boundaries of Iraq. There are also Christians, many of whom are not Arabs but descendants of the Assyrians, who still identify themselves as Assyrian. These communities are probably the oldest continuously existing churches in Christendom.

In 2004 a federation of the three dominant ethnic and religious groups might have been possible. Since then the many incidents of Muslims attacking Christians have made it clear to the Christians that they can trust neither Arabs nor Kurds. Half the Christian population has left the country, and churches have been burned and bombed.

We have an obligation to protect Christians and other minority populations in Iraq, since it was our unjustified invasion and destruction of their country that has caused so much suffering and death. The situation now threatens the extinction of these ancient Christian churches and the genocide of their people.

*Elisabeth M. Tellow
New Orleans, La.*

Hidden Treasures

Many thanks to Karen Sue Smith for writing about the spiritual power of art in "Artful Contemplation" (3/3). She likens that power to "music keenly heard." If only fine art and music were known and valued by more of those Catholics who plan our liturgies! Do seminaries have courses in art and music appreciation and history? It seems to me that the church's treasures in the arts are generally unknown and neglected, at least in the United States. I hope to see more articles on this topic.

*Bea Isaak
Oakland, Calif.*

Not So Fast

Reading "A Plea for Civility," by Terry Golway (3/24), I was struck by his praise for William F. Buckley Jr. Am I the only reader of **America** old enough to remember the remarkable televised exchange between Buckley and Gore Vidal at the 1968 Democratic convention, in which Vidal called Buckley a "crypto-Nazi" and Buckley responded by

threatening to punch Vidal in the face?

Why do I find it so hard to see Buckley as a champion of respectful intellectual discourse?

*Richard J. Salvucci
San Antonio, Tex.*

Missing Persons

In "Lessons From an Extraordinary Era" (3/17), Roger Haight, S.J., omitted the two most influential Catholic theologians of the past 50 years: Hans Urs von Balthasar and Joseph Ratzinger.

*(Rev.) Joseph M. Hennessey
Braintree, Mass.*

Cart Before Horse

One of the statements made in "Lessons From an Extraordinary Era" particularly raised my eyebrows. Father Haight suggested at the conclusion of his article that "new times and new theologies call for new forms of spirituality." However, one of the most important lessons that can be taken from the postconciliar church is indeed the opposite of his statement. New spiritualities require theologians to re-examine assumptions and long-held forms of theology. As the church moves forward in its theological journey, we must be ever aware of new organic approaches to God first, rather than new methods by which we might study a seemingly almighty and infinite God.

*Matthew Janeczko
Alexandria, Va.*

Reflecting Tensions

Thank you for publishing the article by Roger Haight, S.J. (3/17). His article includes many of the church theologians who have been silenced or censured by the Vatican; he himself has suffered from this. The tensions reflected in the Vatican's concern for "orthodoxy" and the argument in *Dominus Iesus* against "relativistic theories which seek to justify religious pluralism" could have been explored as well.

*David Jackson
Edinburg, Tex.*

Consumer Choices

While I agree with Daniel Callahan ("Curbing Medical Costs," 3/10) that

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Letters

universal health care would demand a culture change in the United States, I take issue with the characterization of Americans as having a health obsession. If that is the case, how does one explain our overwhelming rates of obesity, promiscuity and substance abuse? As a registered nurse working in acute-care hospitals for three decades, my observation has been that Americans are obsessed with the avoidance of the inconvenience of disease, its symptoms and its impact on their lifestyles. In all the discussions of universal health care, no mention is ever made of the consumers' responsibility for stewardship of health care resources.

Americans have a sense that the health care purse is inexhaustible and that their "right" to health care is limitless. This culture and mind-set will need to undergo a metamorphosis before universal health care can be solvent.

*Barbara Sirovatka
Brookfield, Ill.*

The Cost of Coal

I was glad to read your editorial "King Coal" (3/3), which addressed the issue of mountaintop removal in central Appalachia. This important subject deserves more attention. Mountaintop removal has despoiled some of the most ecologically diverse areas in the world, diverse not just in animal species but in plants that may have a variety of medicinal uses to ease human suffering. Further, mountaintop removal produces huge toxic sludge basins full of mining waste that hover over valleys and hollows. Unless they are cleaned up, they threaten the loss of human lives and additional environmental harm.

Reclaiming the forest and mountains of Central Appalachia will be no easy task. Full reclamation may take years and millions if not billions of dollars, but America needs to be aware that such is

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Letters

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Mary Ciavarrì
Rochester, N.Y.

Poetic License

Your issue of 3/17 contained a real gem in the poem "Old Age," by Sr. Patricia Schnapp, R.S.M. In sharing her gift she gives a lift to our spirits. I have made numerous copies to distribute!

Jeanne B. Dillon
Summit, N.J.

Ordinary People

After reading "Shadows in Prayer," by James Martin, S.J. (3/17), I felt like the biblical character in the Temple saying, "Lord, I am thankful I'm not like them." Maybe those of us who always have some doubts but do not suffer from darkness, dryness, disbelief, depression, desolation and despair are lucky. Maybe not being a saint isn't so bad after all.

P.S. I drink during Lent.

Quentin Sturm
Bryn Mawr, Pa.



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Keeping the Memory of Jesus Alive

Fifth Sunday of Easter (A), April 20, 2008

Readings: Acts 6:1-7; Ps 33:1-2, 4-5, 18-19; 1 Pt 2:4-9; Jn 14:1-12

"Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn 14:9)

IN THE SECOND HALF of the Easter season the main questions are: How can the memory of Jesus be kept alive? and How can the movement begun by Jesus continue after his death and departure? Our chief guide in answering those questions will be excerpts from Jesus' farewell discourses in John 14-17. Their setting is the Last Supper, the night before he died. The departing Jesus instructs his closest followers about how they might preserve his memory and carry on his mission. These instructions remain relevant for the church in every age, and perhaps most especially today.

At the start of Jesus' farewell discourses there is some dialogue. In these dialogues Jesus makes a statement; a disciple offers a comment that reveals a basic misunderstanding; and Jesus takes the occasion to provide positive teaching about himself.

In today's selection from John 14, Jesus first talks about preparing a place for his disciples and about the way that leads to that place. Thomas interrupts to ask, "We do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" Jesus answers that the place is with his heavenly Father, and that he is the way and the truth and the life.

Then it is Philip's turn. He says, "Show us the Father, and that will be enough for us." This is no small request, and there is something awkward, even naïve about it. Yet Philip's request is the occasion for Jesus to express the central and most profound insight in all of John's Gospel: "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father." John's central message is that

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

Jesus is both the revealer and the revelation of God. If we wish to know who God is, what God thinks and what God wants of us, we must attend to Jesus the Word of God.

Because Jesus is God's Word to us, whatever can be known and remembered about Jesus is precious precisely because in coming to know Jesus we come to know God. Our task as believers and as a church is to keep alive the memory of Jesus. We do this by reading and praying the Scriptures, gathering in Jesus' name and celebrating the Eucharist "in memory" of him, handing on the great tradition of Christian faith and living according to his wise teachings. The memory of Jesus lifts up the precious value of human life, says that some actions are wrong, insists on the importance of selfless love and extends that love even to enemies, proclaims that death is not the end of us and affirms that in Jesus love and life have triumphed over hate and death.

Keeping Jesus' memory alive remains one of the great challenges of the Easter season. In this task the institutional church must play a pivotal role. Today's selection from Acts 6 gives a glimpse of how early Christians developed some practical institutions to do this. The occasion is the apparent neglect of Hellenist (Greek-speaking) widows in the early Jerusalem community. To solve the problem, the Twelve see to it that seven Christians with Greek names are appointed (as deacons?) to care for the needs of those widows and others. The incident shows how and why the early church developed social institutions and church offices to keep Jesus' memory alive. The result was that "the word of God continued to spread."

Being part of the church of Jesus Christ imparted to its members a new identity and dignity. The Gentile



ART BY TAD DUNNE

Christians addressed in 1 Peter may well have been social and political outsiders. Nevertheless, Peter applies to them the loftiest titles applied to Israel in the Old Testament. Through their baptism in the name of Jesus they are now "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his [God's] own." Their task is to bear witness to Jesus as the "living stone, rejected by human beings but chosen and precious in the sight of God." Those who were once "no people" are now God's people, commissioned to proclaim how God has called them out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Keeping alive the memory of Jesus is the task of every Christian and of the church as a whole. If we really believe that Jesus is the way and the truth and the life, then we will find fresh and creative ways to keep alive his memory. If we really believe that whoever has seen and heard Jesus has seen and heard the Father, then keeping alive Jesus' memory is the noblest and most important task that any of us can take up and carry out.

Daniel J. Harrington

Praying With Scripture

- What aspects of Jesus' person, teaching and activity are most important for you?
- How do you try to keep Jesus' memory alive?
- How might the church today be more effective in keeping Jesus' memory alive?