

America

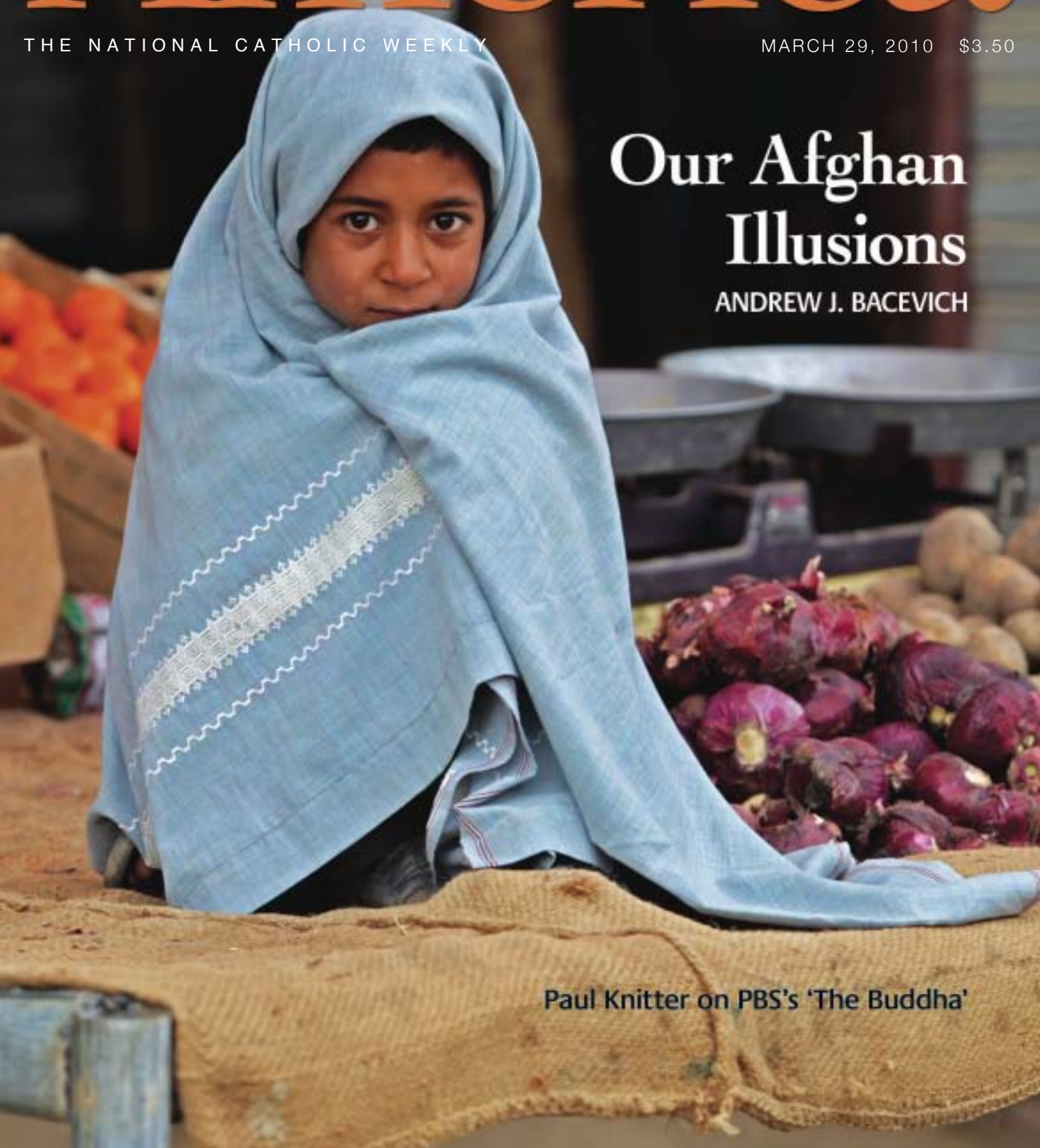
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Our Afghan Illusions

ANDREW J. BACEVICH

Paul Knitter on PBS's 'The Buddha'



OF MANY THINGS

My love for the Southwest did not occur at first sight. In fact, my first views of the region were startling; from an airplane I saw the red rock cliffs of New Mexico, a stark contrast to the lush greenery of New England to which I was accustomed. The landscape looked bare, almost sad. I mourned the luxurious, rolling grassy hills of the Berkshires, the blue-gray water of the Rhode Island coast, these flourishes of nature that were so familiar. By comparison, the Southwest seemed stripped-down, possessing only what it needed. But I would have to get used to it, as this region would be my home for the next year.

I was headed to St. Michaels, Ariz., a town on the Navajo reservation, with three fellow volunteers. We were recent college graduates and through the Mercy Volunteer Corps, an organization run by the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, we had signed on as full-time volunteers to teach at a school for students with special needs.

M.V.C. volunteer communities are supposed to live lives founded on the principles of simple living, community, spirituality and social justice. Of course, we arrived with our own personal interpretations of these terms, but we did our best to move forward together. Our aim was to be conscious of one another within our shared home, to hold one another accountable for the choices we made, to support one another in the process and to be truly present and loving. It was not easy.

We each lived on \$100 a month, so we had to strip away some material things that we clung to before. As members of a small community, we took seriously our responsibility to one another, knowing our lifestyle meant more than simply being roommates. Sometimes living in community meant making dinner when I wasn't hungry or cleaning when I hadn't made a mess. But at other times, it meant sharing

evening prayer, going to Mass together or using our shared car to provide rides for neighbors.

As time went on, I began to recognize the lessons I was learning from community life in the desert landscape. On a day trip to the Grand Canyon one November weekend, when our attempted hike was thwarted by steep, ice-covered switchback trails, our lack of coordination and a line of pushy mules, we slid our way along the trail back to the rim of the canyon. We stood taking in the view, which left us in silence. Together, we were content to just be still, at the edge of the red and gold rock, as the canyon seemed to catch fire at sundown. I felt at once dwarfed by the sight and made stronger by it; it made me feel a part of something so much larger than myself.

The welcoming spirit of the Navajo people also made our transition to the simple life of a volunteer easier. We attended a dinner one evening at a co-worker's home, a trailer amid burnt-orange rock formations. As the sky turned blue-black, dozens of people gathered outside around a few native dancers wearing traditional clothing and colorful shawls and pounding the earth with quiet footsteps.

I sat on the dusty ground just beyond the pool of light in which the dancers moved, listening to songs sung in Navajo to the beat of a drum. I didn't understand the words, but each beat sounded to me like a heartbeat, a call to love, as I looked up at a sky unimaginably dark and yet bright with stars. And in that moment, I loved the community beside me, the earth below me and the One who created it all. The landscape no longer seemed bare, but full of the evidence of God, whose work I too easily allowed myself to ignore when it did not suit my tastes. I was, finally, truly present. And a passage from Hosea came to mind: "I will lead her into the desert and speak to her heart."

KERRY WEBER

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Lisa Pope

ADVERTISING
Julia Sosa

106 West 56th Street
New York, NY 10019-3803

Ph: 212-581-4640; Fax: 212-399-3596

E-mail: america@americamagazine.org;
letters@americamagazine.org

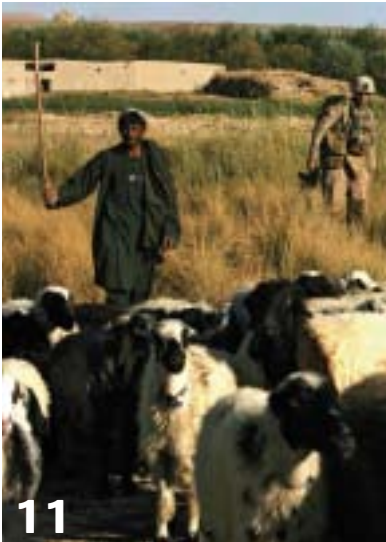
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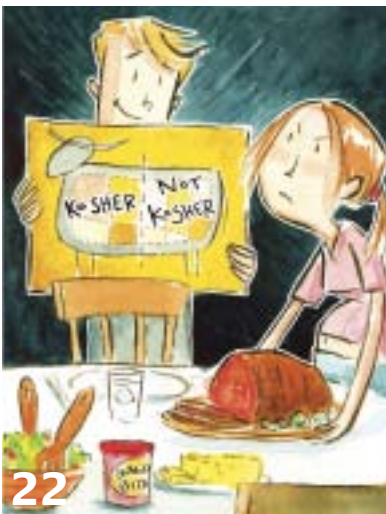
Cover: A boy sits in the market of Karu Chareh in Marja in Helmand Province, southern Afghanistan, in February. Reuters/Goran Tomasevic.

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ON THE WEB

Andrew J. Bacevich, right, discusses the war in Afghanistan on our podcast, and from the archives, the editors on the **fall of Vietnam**. Plus, Carolyn Martin Buscarino reviews NBC's "Parenthood." All at americamagazine.org.



Women and Parents Needed

“We can hypothesize that a greater female presence, not at a subordinate level, would have been able to rip the veil of masculine secrecy that in the past often covered the denunciation of these misdeeds with silence,” wrote Lucetta Scaraffia, an Italian journalist and historian, in a hard-hitting article on sexual abuse by members of the clergy. “Women, in fact, both religious and lay, by nature would have been more likely to defend young people in cases of sexual abuse, allowing the church to avoid the grave damage brought by these sinful acts,” she wrote.

Many commentators (both men and women) have made similar observations since the abuse scandals broke in the United States in 2002. The surprise is that this article appeared in *L’Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican’s semi-official newspaper. Germany and Ireland have lately been convulsed by clergy abuse scandals, and the Vatican is taking note. Scaraffia pointedly used the Italian word *omertà*, usually applied to the Mafia’s rigid code of silence, to describe the secrecy around abuse cases.

The *L’Osservatore* article explicitly called for more women in leadership roles in the church. The inclusion of lay men and women in decision-making roles in local dioceses, archdioceses and in the Vatican would be a way to combat the clerical culture that led to the abuse. Parents, in particular, would have been far less likely to downplay abuses against children. Groupthink is a danger for any organization, including the Catholic Church.

Murdered Journalists

Murder took a heavy toll of journalists last year. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, by December 2009, 71 had been slain worldwide. The committee described the year as the deadliest in over four decades. The previous record of 67 journalists’ deaths was set in 1967, when violence was widespread in Iraq. The Nigerian reporter Bayo Olu, for example, was shot at the front door of his house in a suburb of Lagos. Fellow reporters believe he was killed because he was investigating allegations of fraud in the government’s customs office. Still more recently, on Jan. 8, 2010, Valentín Valdés Espinosa was abducted and found the next morning bound and tortured in Saltillo, Mexico. He had been reporting on a Mexican army drug raid that led to the arrest of a cartel leader. Twenty-nine of the murders took place in a single incident in November in the Philippines, in a politically related ambush of local reporters. The deaths of some two dozen reporters are still under investigation as to whether they

were linked to their reporting.

Besides murders, imprisonment also enters the report’s dark picture. As of Dec. 1, 2009, several governments were holding reporters, editors, bloggers and photojournalists behind bars, with China jailing 26, the most of any nation. Since then Iran has moved to the top of the list. As of February of this year, Iran’s government was holding at least 47 journalists, more than any other country since 1996, and the numbers of journalists jailed in China, Cuba, Eritrea and Myanmar remain high. The C.P.J.’s deputy director has appealed to U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to speak out more forcefully on freedom of the press. Too many intrepid journalists have paid a high price for highlighting human rights abuses that otherwise would have remained hidden behind a blanket of impunity.

Historian’s Progress

Tony Judt is a widely respected historian of Europe whose incisive political analysis appears regularly in *The New York Review of Books*. *Postwar*, his survey of Europe after World War II, demonstrates both scholarly rigor and clear writing, a rare combination of traits. Like any public intellectual worth reading, Judt can also be pugnacious and contrarian, and his criticism of Israel, in particular, has been unflinching.

Judt recently announced that he suffers from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS, a neurological disorder that has left him a quadriplegic. His essay “Night” for the *New York Review* (1/14) chronicled the quick onset of his illness and the “cockroach-like existence” he has been forced to endure in the hours he lies alone in bed, unable to sleep. Judt is unsentimental about his condition. “There is no saving grace in being confined to an iron suit, cold and unforgiving,” he writes. “The pleasures of mental agility are much overstated, inevitably...by those not exclusively dependent on them.”

Nonetheless, one can admire the agility of Judt’s mind without indulging in the romanticism he warns against. That nimble intelligence is on full display in a series of first-person reflections now appearing in the *Review*. Written with the assistance of an aide, who takes dictation, the series covers subjects as diverse as the “bedders” who tidied up after students at the University of Cambridge to the author’s time on a kibbutz in the 1960s. In each essay Judt trains his critical faculties on the circumstances of his own life. The results are remarkable: a memoir grounded in a lifetime of learning, a confession set to the rhythms of history.

Medicaid and Taxes

Medicaid, the health and long-term care coverage program for low-income Americans, faces drastic changes that could have profound consequences for both the old poor and the newly poor. Medicaid is jointly financed by the states and the federal government. In an effort to balance their budgets, states are considering deep cuts into the primary safety net for some of the nation's most vulnerable people, including the elderly and disabled. Among these are formerly middle-class people who have turned to Medicaid for help after losing their jobs and their insurance in the economic downturn. The complex health care bill that is expected to be voted on as this editorial goes to press raises reimbursements but does not adequately address long-term underfunding of Medicaid.

Congress will be considering how best to handle this difficult issue in the weeks ahead, as time runs out for renewal of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, last year's economic recovery legislation, which extended federal stimulus support for state Medicaid programs. The act expires on Dec. 31. In exchange for receiving these funds, states have agreed not to stiffen eligibility requirements. But if the Recovery Act legislation is not extended, deeper cuts in state budgets could cause hundreds of thousands to lose their Medicaid benefits entirely, and eligibility requirements could be tightened. With the 2011 fiscal year beginning this coming July, about half the governors have assumed that fiscal relief may not be forthcoming from the federal government and are consequently proposing draconian cuts.

In a report released in early March, the nonprofit Center on Budget and Policy Priorities cited the example of Arizona's governor, Jan Brewer, who has proposed dropping 310,000 recipients from the state's Medicaid program, including several thousand patients with mental illness. Similarly, the governor of California, Arnold Schwarzenegger, is contemplating slicing a quarter of a million people from that state's program. Both governors, moreover, are also considering complete termination of their states' children's health insurance programs if expanded federal aid is not forthcoming this December. Such a move would end coverage for over a million low-income children if Congress fails to act. Moves of this magnitude would undermine the very concept of state-federal cooperation on which Medicaid is built.

The Budget and Policy report notes that during a recession, as people lose their jobs and private health coverage, the number of people who become eligible for Medicaid

increases greatly. The Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured has found that between June 2008 and June 2009, enrollment grew faster than in any period since the program was created in 1965. Over 3.3 million more people were added in the year between June 2008 and June 2009. Every state had increases in enrollment, and 32 grew twice as fast as in the year before. Sadly, however, at the very time that Medicaid is most needed, states are weighing the possibility of sharp cuts as they struggle to balance their budgets in the face of falling revenues caused by the weak economy.



A number of states have already cut benefits in some areas of service that they formerly provided. Thus Michigan, Nevada and Utah have ended coverage for dental care, for eyeglasses and other ancillary services. Almost 40 states have also reduced or frozen reimbursements for hospitals and nursing homes. Tennessee's governor has gone so far as to cap inpatient hospital reimbursements at \$10,000. Moreover, with Medicaid reimbursement rates already far below those of Medicare, some doctors are refusing to accept more Medicaid patients. Compounding the overall problem, many states have cut their Medicaid administrative staffs, even as the number of applications has increased dramatically.

Because of the recession, the crisis is already at the door. It is clear that without more federal support many states cannot afford to continue the Medicaid they currently offer, which in many cases is already inadequate. How then can health care reform succeed when current proposals require states to accept 15 million more Medicaid recipients by 2019, while full federal support for that expansion will wind down by 2017? A funding formula must be devised that will not only accompany states through this immediate national health emergency but will also establish a credible, long-term structure for Medicaid funding that ensures the program's reliability even during times of economic distress.

An increase in taxes for the wealthy and for corporations is inevitable, and a serious reduction in defense funding must be undertaken to bring the national accounts into balance. Until those politically difficult steps are taken, health care for both poor and middle-class Americans will remain in a state of permanent crisis. In the short term, however, the Recovery Act must be renewed with a view to propping up the Medicaid system.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

MIDDLE EAST

U.S.-Israel Relations Hit Low; Peace Process Derailed Again

The Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in Manhattan might seem a strange place for a human rights protest, but on March 9 some 400 people walked in single file in a slow, silent procession. Holding signs calling for “Justice for Gaza,” the demonstrators were protesting what was taking place inside—a \$1,000-a-plate dinner hosted by the Friends of the Israeli Defense Forces. Inside the Waldorf the event raised \$20 million for I.D.F. veterans while the marchers on the street outside tried to raise awareness of the Gaza blockade. The event’s keynote speaker was the I.D.F. chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi. Ashkenazi was likely also key to discussions just a few avenues away at the United Nations, where Operation Cast Lead, the incursion into the Gaza Strip that he led during December 2008 and early January 2009, was being scrutinized for possible instances of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

For the Waldorf Hotel protesters, with Gaza all but cut off from the free flow of humanitarian supplies like food and medicine, hopes for peace between Israel and Gaza remain more tenuous than ever. The fragility of the situation in the Middle East was underscored by the outbreak of hostilities, not between the Israelis

and Palestinians, but between the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the Obama administration after Vice President



Joe Biden’s ill-fated trip to Israel in early March.

Biden intended his visit to reassert the U.S. commitment to Israeli securi-

HEALTH CARE

Church Leaders Diverge on Reform; C.H.A. Accepts Senate Language

As events moved rapidly toward a conclusion of the yearlong and often discordant national debate over health care reform, ruptures appeared in what had been a unified front among national Catholic leaders. In a statement on March 13, the head of the Catholic Health Association called on House members to pass quickly the Senate-approved health care reform bill, even as the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops reiterated its position that the Senate language on abortion was

unacceptable. A House vote on the health reform legislation was expected by March 20, with Senate and House action by a reconciliation vote to follow on a separate bill containing a set of legislative “fixes.”

In the statement, Carol Keehan, a member of the Daughters of Charity who is president and chief operating officer of the C.H.A., argued that the Senate bill may not be perfect but would still “make the lives of millions more secure, and their coverage more affordable.” Sister Keehan said she

considered the Senate language “an acceptable way to prevent federal funding of abortion.”

In an even more sharply worded divergence from the bishops, the heads of 60 U.S. orders representing 59,000 Catholic sisters signed a letter on March 17 urging passage of the Senate reform package. The sisters called the Senate measures “imperfect” but said: “Despite false claims to the contrary, the Senate bill will not provide taxpayer funding for elective abortions. It will uphold longstanding conscience protections and it will make historic new investments—\$250 million—in support of pregnant women. This is the real pro-life stance, and we as Catholics are all for it.”



Israeli border police confront a group of Palestinian Christians and Muslims during a nonviolent protest in the West Bank village of Beit Jala on March 7.

ty and to jump-start the long-stalled peace negotiations. But his efforts were thwarted by the undiplomatic timing of an Israeli ministry's announcement

of a plan to build 1,600 housing units for Jews in East Jerusalem, where Palestinians hope one day to build the capital of their future state. The gesture appeared deliberately intended to sabotage the "proximity talks" Biden was attempting to orchestrate. If so, it succeeded, as the Palestinian Authority refused to consider even indirect talks with the Netanyahu government.

A red-faced Netanyahu apologized for the timing of the announcement but not its content. Even as his office took pains to project a sense of business as usual, Palestinians and Israeli police squared off under clouds of tear gas in Jerusalem's Old City, U.S. Special Envoy George Mitchell cancelled a planned visit, and Israel's ambassador to the United States, Michael Oren, observed that U.S.-Israeli relations faced their worst crisis in 35 years.

Netanyahu was called on the carpet by an irate Secretary of State Hillary

Clinton, who demanded that the housing ministry's plans be dropped, that an investigation of the apparent provocation be conducted and that the Israelis commit to a meaningful gesture aimed at bringing Palestinians back to the Middle East's increasingly unstable peace table. Netanyahu apparently endured his scolding in silence; he was more voluble and more defiant before the Israeli parliament a few days later when he asserted that construction of Jewish housing in Jerusalem was not a matter open to negotiation.

Gaza observed a grim milestone on March 11, the 1,000th day of the Israeli blockade. The last direct talks between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority were cast aside with the December 2008 launch of Cast Lead, and continuing settlement construction in the West Bank and East Jerusalem presents a profound obstacle to reviving what is left of the peace process.

Just two days earlier the U.S.C.C.B. president, Cardinal Francis George, O.M.I., in a letter to Congress had personally described in detail the bishops' unhappiness with the Senate language about abortion: "Notwithstanding the denials and explanations of its supporters, and unlike the bill approved by the House of Representatives in November," Cardinal George said, "the Senate bill deliberately excludes the language of the Hyde Amendment. It expands federal funding and the role of the federal government in the provision of abortion procedures. It forces all of us to become involved in an act that profoundly violates the conscience of many, the deliberate destruction of

unwanted members of the human family still waiting to be born."

An analysis by Timothy Stoltzfus Jost of the Washington and Lee University School of Law argued that the Senate package could in practice prove more pro-life than the House plan preferred by the bishops. For his part, Jost said U.S.C.C.B.'s continued resistance to the Senate plan "demonstrates a misunderstanding of the Senate procedures that constrain action at this time." The reconciliation process "can

only deal with revenues and outlays of the federal government, which does not include the abortion issue," he said.

"The choice we face, in sum, is the Senate bill or our current health care system," Jost added. "The Senate bill will undoubtedly save many lives through extending insurance coverage to people who cannot afford insurance. It will also in all likelihood make abortion coverage less common than it is now, since people will have to explicitly choose and pay extra for it."



Carol Keehan, D.C.

Arizona Bishops Resist Immigration Bills

The Catholic bishops of Arizona have denounced “punitive” and “costly” legislative proposals that require stricter enforcement of immigration laws by local police. The bishops said the proposals could harm public safety and separate families. “Arizona would become the first state in the nation to codify its own ‘illegal immigration’ law by requiring persons who are here unlawfully in terms of federal law to be charged with trespassing under Arizona law,” said the three bishops who make up the Arizona Catholic Conference in a March 8 statement. The three are Bishops Thomas J. Olmsted of Phoenix, Gerald F. Kicanas of Tucson and James S. Wall of Gallup, N.M., whose diocese includes parts of Arizona. The bishops added that the proposed legislation does not “clearly state that undocumented people who become victims of crimes can come forward without fear of deportation.”

Dissident Priest Released in Vietnam

A dissident Vietnamese priest, the Rev. Nguyen Van Ly, who has spent three years behind bars for pro-democracy efforts and suffered two strokes in detention, was released on March 15 from a prison near Hanoi and driven in an ambulance back to his hometown of Hue, according to his sister, Nguyen Thi Hieu. She said he was in better health than the last time she saw him. Father Nguyen had suffered strokes in July and November and for a time was unable to walk. In 2007 he was sentenced to eight years in prison for disseminating anti-government propaganda during a dramatic trial in which police muzzled him

NEWS BRIEFS

Carl A. Anderson, supreme knight of the Knights of Columbus, called a federal appeals court’s March 11 ruling, which upheld the constitutionality of the phrase “one nation under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance, a “breath of fresh air from a court system that has too often seemed to be almost allergic to public references to God.” • The Archdiocese of Chicago is seeking the canonization of the **Rev. Augustine Tolton**, the first U.S. priest of African descent. • **Grand Sheik Mohammed Sayyid Tantawi**, one of Sunni Islam’s leading clerics and a supporter of Catholic-Muslim dialogue, died of a heart attack March 10 at the age of 81. • In an address on March 12 to the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva, Archbishop **Silvano M. Tomasi** called upon the nations of the world to respect the right of all people to practice religion freely and urged world leaders to punish those who persecute religious minorities. • Cardinal **Seán Brady** of Armagh, Northern Ireland, insisted on March 14 that he would not resign after it was revealed that he failed to report allegations of child abuse by a priest to the police in 1975. • **Rio de Janeiro’s statue of Christ** with outstretched arms is undergoing a \$4.35-million refurbishment to repair damage caused over the years by the elements.



Augustine Tolton

for shouting anti-Communist slogans and accusing Vietnamese officials of practicing “the law of the jungle.” The priest has spent more than 15 years in prison since 1977, according to Freedom Now, a Washington-based law firm that serves as Ly’s international counsel.

Abuse Found in Pope’s Former Diocese

Pope Benedict XVI’s former diocese, the Archdiocese of Munich and Freising, has suspended a priest convicted of sexual abuse in 1986 and accepted the resignation of the Rev. Josef Obermaier, who assigned the priest to his most recent position. The priest, identified as Peter Hullermann, was found to have violated a condition of his reassignment by continuing to

work with youth. The archdiocese said it had no complaints of more offenses by the priest.

The suspension came just three days after the church acknowledged that the pope, then Archbishop Joseph Ratzinger, had responded to accusations of molestation by allowing Hullermann to move to Munich for therapy in 1980. Pope Benedict served as the archbishop of the diocese where the priest later worked and subsequently in Rome as the cardinal in charge of reviewing sexual abuse cases for the Vatican. Yet until the Archdiocese of Munich and Freising announced that Father Hullermann had been suspended on March 15, he had continued to serve in a series of Bavarian parishes for years.

From CNS and other sources.



Unplug Your Kids

Last month the Kaiser Family Foundation released a study packed with truly shocking findings. Americans between the ages of 8 and 18 now spend an average of 7 hours and 38 minutes a day using a computer, video game console, television, cellphone and all manner of handheld electronic devices and digital technology. Fifty-plus hours a week are an awful lot of screen time for anyone, especially impressionable and insecure youngsters.

Many aspects of the report disturb me. Just picturing in my mind's eye millions of adolescents holed up indoors and tethered to flickering gadgets for hours on end makes me sad for the opportunities our youngsters are missing to enjoy the great outdoors, participate in physical exercise and engage in genuine human interaction of the face-to-face variety.

Equally disconcerting is the trend line of tech overuse. Young people's current daily level of electronic consumption exceeds by 77 minutes the average amount in 2004, the last time this social indicator was measured by Kaiser's Program for the Study of Media and Health. I would like to think we have hit the ceiling, but where this trend goes next is anyone's guess. If the upward trajectory were to continue, it is hard to imagine what remaining parts of a well-balanced life will be crowded out by the increasing time our children spend "plugged in."

Last summer in this very space I lamented the losses that over-reliance on cellphones and handheld electronic

devices spell for our society. We are hearing even more about potential public health concerns, such as the dangers associated with distracted drivers and even pedestrians lost in their gadgets. There are deepening social concerns too: the need for protocols governing rude behavior, like interrupting dinner conversations and business meetings to take a call or retrieve one's electronic messages. A municipal official in Danvers, Mass., recently had to propose a ban on texting during meetings of the town's Board of Selectmen out of respect for the people these elected representatives serve. It takes guts to take on cellphone technology, but I am glad someone did.

If society finds creative ways to accommodate such technology so as to avoid the worst violations of safety and politeness, a third set of concerns remains: the spiritual aspect of life. A culture and lifestyle that allow constant interruption erode our ability to develop a habit of prayer and reflection.

As a theological educator, my hunch is that these are especially critical issues for our youth. Young children and adolescents struggle mightily to forge a stable identity, a sense of self that allows them to feel truly comfortable in their own skin and to be open to the transcendent. While a majority of the human race could probably use some remedial work in developing the intangible quality of interiority, youngsters face a particularly uphill battle to clear out time and mental space to be alone with God. Mindfulness and

deliberateness are endangered species in the current age of digital distraction, where buzzing and flashing images envelop us around the clock.

A simple edict will not enforce progress on this front. The best we can hope to accomplish is the fostering of conditions that make it more likely that the youth of today will develop habits of mindfulness that can sprout into a mature spiritual life.

A culture of interruption erodes habits of prayer and reflection.

A good first step would involve debunking the myth of multitasking. The conventional wisdom nowadays is that the practice of splitting one's brain among several simultaneous tasks is somehow desirable, even necessary in today's digital world. Yet growing evidence from the field of

neuroscience suggests that such activity is by no means efficient and in some regards physically impossible. While we persist in believing that we can handle ever greater doses of simultaneous electronic stimulation, the human nervous system exhibits serious limits in its ability to handle interruption and to switch back and forth among tasks without debilitating sensory overload.

Several themes that recur in spiritual literature come into play here: the quest for proper balance, the virtue of temperance, the necessity of addressing self-delusion and even the practice of Christian resistance against corrupt cultural forces. Difficult as it may be for adults to face up to these facts, it is even more imperative that the next generation learn to unplug.

THOMAS MASSARO, S.J., teaches social ethics at the Boston College School of Theology and Ministry, Chestnut Hill, Mass.



PHOTO: REUTERS/ASMAA WAGUIH

An Afghan shepherd guides his sheep away from U.S. Marines on patrol in Helmand Province.



OUR GUIDING ILLUSIONS IN AFGHANISTAN

Déjà Vu in Marja

BY ANDREW J. BACEVICH

In American politics, deficits have suddenly become all the rage. Throughout the presidency of George W. Bush, the federal government hemorrhaged red ink, with no one paying much attention. Upon the election of Barack Obama, however, the rules abruptly changed. As if overnight, Republicans in Congress discovered that theirs is the party of fiscal conservatism. From out of nowhere came the Tea Party movement, providing at least a pretty good imitation of people who are “mad as hell” about a government unable to manage its own affairs and careening toward bankruptcy. Although the administration’s spending plans add more than a trillion dollars *each year* to the national debt, President Obama himself has allowed that this might not be such a good thing—for long. In Washington the sky grows dark with deficit hawks.

But the deficits that plague the United States extend well beyond the realm of fiscal policy. At least as important is a deficit in self-awareness that makes it difficult for policymakers to learn from and avoid repeating past mistakes.

Afghanistan offers a case in point. United States troops are currently engaged in an assault on a reputedly major Taliban stronghold at a place called Marja in southern Afghanistan’s Helmand Province. In the weeks leading up to the offensive, the Americans made no effort to disguise their intentions. “We intend to go in big, strong and fast,” promised the commander of the 2nd Marine Expeditionary Brigade, reflecting the best traditions of his service. Yet what promised to be a big fight has turned out to be more of a hard slog—with the real work still to come.

ANDREW J. BACEVICH is professor of history and international relations at Boston University. His new book, *Washington Rules: America’s Path to Permanent War* (Metropolitan Books), is forthcoming this summer.

Salvage Operation

Once the Marines have defeated or dispersed the enemy, United States officials will dispatch a specially constituted civilian reconstruction team to Marja to rebuild a decrepit irrigation system and cajole Afghan farmers into growing something other than opium poppies, the sale of which sustains the anti-Western insurgency.

“An unstated aim,” reports *The Washington Post*, “is to salvage a project the United States began more than 50 years ago.” Say what?

It turns out that the Marines are not the first Americans to arrive in Marja intent on putting things right. When Dwight D. Eisenhower was president, the Agency for International Development embarked upon a massive agricultural reform project there. The purpose of that project was to persuade nomadic Pashtuns to put down roots in Helmand. Domestication, it was thought, would put the kibosh on Pashtun agitation for an independent homeland, a prospect that the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan both found deeply disconcerting.

That was the idea. With that end in mind, A.I.D. over-

saw the construction of the huge Kajaki Dam and a sprawling irrigation system. It constructed and staffed schools, and, according to the *Post*, it provided each settler with “almost 15 acres of land, two oxen and free seeds.”

Unfortunately, this ambitious effort proved to be a complete bust. The Americans did not understand the local hydrology and did not understand the local populace. The Pashtuns clung stubbornly to their own ideas about agriculture and about life, neither of which conformed to U.S. ideas. “From the beginning,” wrote an A.I.D. analyst in 1973, “the project was plagued with basic cross-cultural misunderstandings and technical miscalculations.” Well

before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, A.I.D. had conceded failure in Marja.

So 50 years on, the United States will now try

again, this time with good intentions—who can doubt that America means well?—backed by bayonets. The development specialists following in the wake of the Marines will no doubt arrive in Marja armed with various “lessons learned” drawn from the errors of their predecessors. Yet these will be lessons of a technical sort. The implicit assumptions informing version 1.0 of this undertaking survive to inform version 2.0—and there lies the problem.

The central assumptions are these: a) that the Pashtun way of life is defective; b) that the Pashtuns know this and yearn for something better; c) that United States officials understand where the problems lie and by mobilizing American resources and skill can repair them; d) that in doing so, the United States will both improve the lives of ordinary people and enhance America’s standing in their eyes and in the eyes of many others.

Little in the record of United States policy in Afghanistan (or elsewhere in the Greater Middle East for that matter) supports these assumptions. In fact, Pashtuns and other Muslims are as interested in preserving their way of life as in changing it—or, if entertaining change, they are insistent that it occur on their own terms. Reforms conjured up by the United States, informed by American perceptions of what is true, right and good, are frequently at odds with what devout Muslims consider to be true, right and good. The upshot is that American do-goodism succeeds neither in improving people’s lives nor in winning their hearts and minds. It serves only to encourage anti-Americanism.

Paving the Road to Modernity

Policymakers in Washington seem unable to grasp this contradiction. Deeply, if unconsciously committed to the imperatives of secularized modernity, they cannot conceive of an alternative nor imagine that others might be inclined to do so.

The marines are not the first Americans to arrive in Marja.

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As they see it, the prerequisites of development (and therefore of a properly functioning society) are plain to see: a free-market economy, the rule of law, respect for individual rights, quality education and gender equality. And for good measure, let's make birth control widely available to avoid an excessive birthrate. What fair-minded person could oppose any of these things, especially when advocated by individuals who endlessly and seemingly sincerely profess their high regard for Islam?

What proponents of modernity cannot (or will not) see is that they are proposing to drive a wedge between religion and politics, consigning each to a separate sphere. Whether wittingly or not, they are thereby launching a direct attack on Islam itself, which insists that the two spheres must be one: Allah governs.

One might speculate that the casual, allocate-the-Lord-an-hour-on-Sunday religiosity to which so many Americans subscribe makes it difficult for us to understand any connection between religion and getting on with the job at hand. We ourselves have consigned God to his rightful place and insist that he stay put.

Seeing themselves as good Christians, or at least as respectful of believers, United States commanders, diplomats and aid workers will not easily understand how the subjects of American beneficence may view the prospect of being dragged into the modern world. What does religion have to do with putting a roof over your head, earning three square meals a day and securing the possibility of a decent life for your kids? To which a Muslim might reply: in my tradition, religion has everything to do with everything.

Shortly after Sept. 11, 2001, the writer Salmon Rushdie published a short essay called "Yes, This Is About Islam." In it he argued that modernizing the Islamic world would require first the "depoliticization" of Islam itself. The "restoration of religion to the sphere of the personal," he con-

tinued, was "the nettle that all Muslim societies must grasp."

If indeed the peoples of the Islamic world are ever to enjoy access to the personal

autonomy and material abundance that the West defines as freedom, Rushdie is probably right. If so, then the operative question reduces to this: Is grasping the nettle something that Muslims must decide of their own volition? Or is it a choice that hard-charging, well-meaning infidels—United States Marines, for instance—can force Muslims to make?

We know what the Marines think. Developments in Marja and elsewhere in Afghanistan will show whether this time around they will get it right—or whether the United States will manage only to dig itself into an even deeper hole. **A**

ON THE WEB

Andrew Bacevich talks about the war in Afghanistan. americamagazine.org/podcast

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The New Vietnam

A Belgian priest revisits a country in transition.

BY GEORGE M. ANDERSON

The World Bank considers Vietnam a success story. At first glance, the claim might seem to be true: The country has reduced by half the number of its citizens living on less than \$2 a day; its commerce is thriving; its cities are rapidly expanding. But the Rev. Francois Houtart says the situation is not that simple.

A Belgian sociologist, writer and one of the most active members of the World Social Forum, Father Houtart is also the founder of the Tri-Continental Centre (known as Cetri), a nongovernmental organization he established in 1976. Based in Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium, Cetri studies the development of North-South relations. Since 1968, Father Houtart has been a frequent traveler to Vietnam. During a recent visit to **America**, he described the dramatic changes that have been taking place in the country since the end of the Vietnam War.

For all the success Vietnam has achieved in the area of individual material progress, Father Houtart said serious problems remain as the country attempts to absorb elements of the capitalist market system without abandoning its ideals of promoting the collective good. The country currently is working toward its goal of becoming a semi-industrialized nation by 2020. However, Father Houtart thinks the introduction of a capitalist market economy—while reducing poverty for some—also has threatened the environment and widened the gap between rich and poor.

Five years ago, the Institute of Sociology in Vietnam asked Father Houtart to come and revise the study of a rural commune in the Red River Delta that he had directed in the 1970s. “The idea was to measure the economic and social changes that have taken place in Vietnam because of the introduction in Vietnam of the market economy,” Father Houtart said. And there are many. “The current situation is one of spectacular growth, especially in the big cities like Hanoi, but also to some degree even in the countryside,” he said.

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




A family takes a rest at home in a floating village in Ho Chi Minh City.

Poverty in Vietnam before the advent of market forces was very different from poverty in some other parts of the developing world because it was poverty with dignity, Father Houtart explained. In general, “everyone had the necessities of life in terms of basics like free education and health care, so a minimum standard of living was assured.” He noted that this was made possible by the socialist system that was already in place in North Vietnam. “But now, with North and South Vietnam united and a primarily market economy, besides the spectacular growth of a minority of the population and the relative economic growth of a substantial

PHOTO: REUTERS

part of the population, you increasingly have a new and deeper kind of poverty.”

Father Houtart observed that the Communist government believed that after the introduction of a market economy, it could control the market forces—both those from within and others from outside in the form of foreign



The introduction of a capitalist economy, while reducing poverty for some, threatens the environment and widens the gap between rich and poor.

investors and multinational companies. “But when you look at what has happened,” he said, “you realize that in great measure...the market is largely controlling the political scene.”

The commerce of Vietnam is booming, Father Houtart said: “Everyone is buying and selling, with new construction visible everywhere, particularly in and around the big cities.” He described the level of construction near Hanoi as so intense that “it amounts to what is almost the rising of another city because of all the new buildings” in what were once sparsely populated outskirts.

In some rural areas, the more fortunate Vietnamese have

built brick houses, a sign of their higher standard of living. The government has established public credit institutions that make low-interest loans to small farmers who organize crop initiatives. Such initiatives are seldom found in Africa and Latin America where the poverty is harsher. Even among the peasants, there is a tradition of self-organizing to collect funds to assist families in need.

Health, Education, Environment

At the same time, Father Houtart said the “logic of the market” has caused negative repercussions affecting matters like health care. “Before, effective medications were produced locally and sold at low cost in village workshops,” he said. “But, now, multinational pharmaceutical companies are bringing their products to the villages, where they are sold at much higher cost. There is less possibility for traditional medicine.” Such an outcome is a reflection of the increasing social distance between portions of the population, a distance caused by the market economy.

Education in Vietnam, especially higher education, also has changed. Father Houtart said the system has become partly privatized, as Western universities and schools establish themselves in the area and cater only to those whose families can afford the tuition. At the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, which has several thousand students at its school in Hanoi, all of the courses are taught in English. Such an education is available only to students from families that have succeeded in the new economic system. Father Houtart spoke of a colleague at the Institute of Sociology whose son won a scholarship to the University of Maine in the United States. “When he came back [to Vietnam] on vacation and visited his high school classmates who were at M.I.T. and other [Vietnamese] institutions of higher education of North American origin, he was shocked to find them speaking English even among themselves,” Father Houtart said. English had become their preferred language.

But foreign influence does not come only from the West. Father Houtart noted that 60 percent of the burgeoning foreign investments in Vietnam are from Asia. Many Japanese, Taiwanese and Korean entrepreneurs have taken advantage of Vietnam’s cheap labor force. But since these entrepreneurs import some of the raw materials they need—steel, plastic and the like—and even manufacture some of what they export, such economic activity is of relatively little value to the Vietnamese economy.

Despite the government’s efforts, corruption among those in authority is rampant. Father Houtart said, “With bribes to the right people, you can construct buildings that may not conform to the required city planning norms.” Another form of corruption is exemplified by the growing presence of foreign intermediaries who are gaining influence, not least in land appropriation, he said: “Officially, the

state owns all the land in Vietnam, but a peasant has a right to its use for a period of years on a contractual basis with the government, perhaps four or five acres; he can even pass it on to his descendants." But, Father Houtart added, a peasant also can sell his right to the use of the land for a number of years specified in the contract. As a city expands, private companies can purchase a peasant's land rights.

Peasants who choose to sell ordinarily receive little financial compensation, only enough to live on for a few years, but the private companies can sell and resell the land at great profit. After exhausting the money they have received, the peasants face the increasingly widespread problem of unemployment that besets Vietnam. Some start work in the new factories, the chemicals from which are creating land and water pollution. "Not long ago, in the southern part of the country, the water pollution killed the fish, and the peasants, in protest, occupied the factory, but little changed," Father Houtart said. "All the rivers of the Red Delta are polluted now, and the fish are diminishing in number."

During his travels, Father Houtart observed the ways in which climate change is beginning to affect Vietnam. The country has 3,000 kilometers of coast and is losing land as the waters rise. The remaining land is damaged by the salt water. Both factors negatively affect rice production. If this contin-

ues, it is estimated that by 2020 the loss will be so great that the country will have to stop exporting rice entirely. Currently, Vietnam is the biggest exporter of rice in the world.

For many companies, disregard for the environment is matched only by disregard for their workers. Father Houtart said that when factory owners (mostly Asians) learn of a movement among workers for higher wages or hear threats of a strike, they attempt to find the leaders and dismiss them.

Yet some labor efforts have succeeded. "In the Province of Vinh Phuc that I visited this past summer," he said, "its vice president told me of a conversation he recently had with the director of a Toyota plant, who spoke of hearing that the workers were preparing to strike for higher wages. Toyota was making big profits because of the low wages. 'But we respect the laws of Vietnam and pay the minimum wage,' the director said to him. The vice president of the province replied, 'It is not possible to live on the minimum wage.' So the director said later that he would increase the pay by 20 percent."

The give-and-take between employers and workers, the rich and the poor, is indicative of Vietnam's struggles as a whole. New solutions give rise to new and different challenges. Vietnam's reactions to these challenges will define the nation it becomes, a nation whose future, for now, remains unclear. **A**

ON THE WEB

Photographs of the Catholic Church
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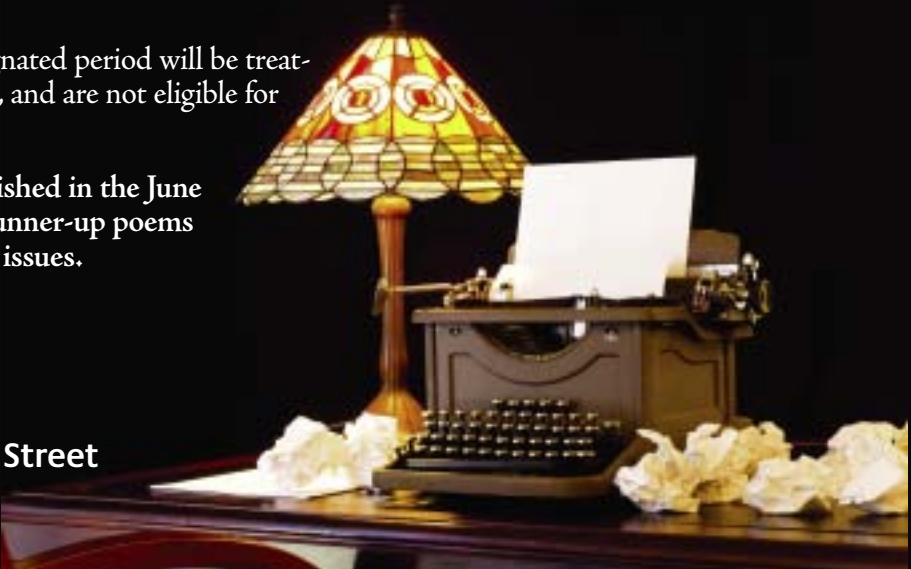
Each entrant is asked to submit only one typed, unpublished poem of 30 lines or fewer that is not under consideration elsewhere. Include contact information on the same page as the poem. Poems will not be returned. Please do not submit poems by e-mail or fax. Submissions must be postmarked between Jan. 1 and March 31.

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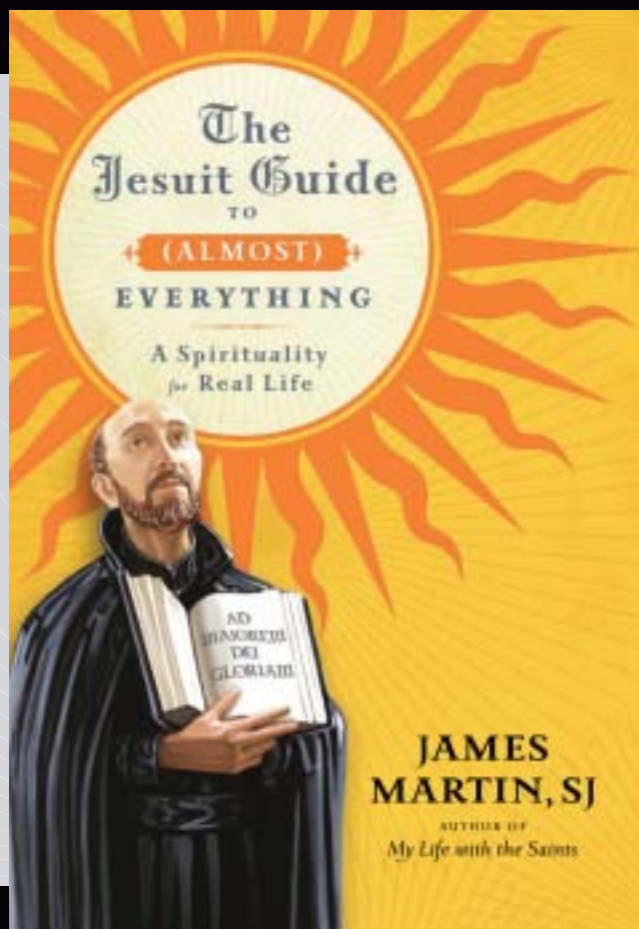
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From the author of *My Life with the Saints*

St. Rafael's Cross

Longing for heaven and the human heart

BY ANN PRENDERGAST

While the Second Vatican Council made clear that the call to holiness is universal and holiness means to be whole, the word *holiness* also suggests separation from the world. Perhaps that is why one's feelings are mixed on encountering a person whose fervor is genuine but seemingly extreme. Such is the case with Rafael Arnáiz Barón, a little-known Spanish Trappist who died at age 27 in April 1938 and was canonized on Oct. 11, 2009. Readers of his brief writings cannot but be struck by the young saint's singular love of the cross. (Quotations are from notes he made on instructions from his spiritual director.)

To savor the Cross...to live sick, unknown, abandoned by all—only you...and on the Cross. How sweet the bitterness, the loneliness, the grief, the pain, wolfed down and swallowed in silence, without help. How sweet the tears shed next to your Cross.

Ah! If I knew how to tell the world where true happiness is! But this the world does not understand, nor can it...because to understand the Cross...one must love it. To love it one must suffer; and not only suffer but love the suffering...In this, Lord, how few follow you to Calvary.

Here is a soul talking to other souls. Many can relate to the saint's candid admission: "I do not know how to pray; I do not know what it is to be good.... I do not have a religious spirit, for I am full of the world." Many of us have similar thoughts. On the one hand, we may be drawn to Christ; on the other, put off. An unwritten popular dictum says it is all right to be religious, but not too religious.

ANN PRENDERGAST, of Conesus, N.Y., is a member of the Genesee Lay Contemplatives, a group affiliated with the Trappist monastery Our Lady of the Genesee, who follow the rule of St. Benedict and live a contemplative life in the world.



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/ANDRISCAM; PHOTO INSET: CNS/PAUL HARING

Paul speaks of the cross as a stumbling block to Jews, but it is a stumbling block to Christians too. Frequently we make an offering of our difficulties, our own cross, but rarely do we look for opportunities to make sacrifices. Something in the embrace of avoidable suffering strikes us as folly. Yet Christ himself tells us to take up our cross: "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me" (Mk 8:34). We know these words but cringe before self-denial and dread suffering. So did Brother María Rafael, as he was known. Just weeks before his death he confided:

I am always beginning and I never see that I do anything. I go on with my easy life, comfortable, and

unmortified...partly (and only partly) because the superiors will not allow me and partly (the major part) because I do not make up my mind, and austerity frightens me.

An Architect Turned Contemplative

Who cannot sympathize with St. Rafael's hesitation, his fear of austerity? He is like us in the immediacy of his response but unlike us in his total embrace of the cross. A biographical note can clarify some of this difference. Rafael was a Jesuit-educated architect, who originally intended to become a monk, but the onset of Type 1 diabetes forced him to withdraw. In December 1937 he re-entered the monastery for the last time as an oblate, a layman who shares in the spiritual life and prayer of the community. There he lived in the infirmary until his death four months later. During this time he noted:

When I left my home, by my own deliberate intent, I left behind a series of treatments that my illness required and I came to embrace a state in which it is impossible to care for so touchy a sickness. I knew perfectly well what awaited me.

Nevertheless...sometimes, poor Br. Rafael, without your being aware of it, you were suffering, seeing yourself deprived of many necessary things, stripped free of the liberty of giving into the weakness of your illness and giving it the remedies that out there in the world you did not lack.

Here we are confronted with the folly of the cross. St. Rafael is set apart from us by his special vocation, but even more by his freely chosen decision to abjure the care available to him for love of the cross of Christ. Even now, 72 years after his death, such a choice unnerves us in our contemplation of the cross. Yet this saint does not evade the quandary that suffering presents:

It is difficult to explain why one loves suffering! But I believe that it can be explained because it is not suffering in itself, but rather as it is in Christ, and whoever loves Christ loves his Cross.

We read St. Rafael's outpourings of soul with contradictory feelings. Still, we can see ourselves in his reflections:

If at times God is not in the soul it is because we do not want him there. We have such an accumulation of

things to do, of distractions, of interests, vain desires, conceit, we have so much world within us, that God distances himself...but all we have to do is want him.

Yet when we read, "there is no merit in desiring nothing when one loves God," we feel like outsiders confronted with a reality we cannot quite grasp. "If we are united in love to his will, we will desire nothing he does not desire...all he might want from us will be to our liking." He tries to explain such an extraordinary turnabout:

Every day I am happier in my complete abandonment into his hands. I see his will even in the most insignificant and tiny things that happen. In everything I find a lesson that serves to make me understand better his mercy toward me. I love his designs with my whole being, and that is enough.

One of St. Rafael's most succinct expressions of love of the cross is this: "Longings for heaven, on the one hand, and a human heart, on the other.... In short, suffering and Cross." He expresses this in a drawing sent to his brother of "a humble lay brother who has chosen the road of truth in the dark night of the world...only the Cross of Christ sheds light on the path of his life." Rafael is this lay brother who looks on the cross with unfaltering love. It is a symbol of the love Christ has for us.

God is in the detached heart, in the silence of prayer, in the voluntary sacrifice to pain, in the emptiness of the world and its creatures. God is in the Cross, and as long as we do not love the Cross, we will not see him, or feel him.... If the world and men knew.... But they will not know; they are very busy in their interests; their hearts are very full of things that are not God.

Strict With Himself

Rafael could be very hard on himself. Two weeks before his death, he found fault with how poorly he served God, his lack of humility, his disposition to follow his own whims. Who cannot identify with Rafael's self-assessment?

My prayer is not good. I neither pray nor meditate nor do my *lectio* well. At work...I hardly work: when I eat and sleep I do nothing else—eat and sleep like a little animal. I cannot go on that way.


What one does is nothing in itself and is worth

We can relate to St. Rafael's candid admission, 'I do not know how to pray.'

nothing; what is of worth is the way in which it is done.... When will you understand that? How stupid you are! When will you understand that virtue is not in eating an onion but in eating an onion for love of God? When will you understand that sanctity is not in doing external things but in the interior intention of any act whatsoever? If you know it, why don't you practice it?

Rafael appeared like a meteor that burned out in the dwindling months of the Spanish Civil War and the charged months that preceded the start of World War II. We too live in calamitous times of wars and a global economic collapse. God's ways are beyond our understanding, but the mystery of God's will and plan for salvation continues to play out in the world. It is no accident that Rafael's impassioned love of the cross should be brought to our attention by his recent canonization. Perhaps Rafael was sent to restore the meaning of the cross to a generation for whom it has become emptied of meaning. He sums up his message of the cross in homage to simplicity:

With Jesus at my side nothing seems difficult to me, and I see more that the road to sanctity is simple. Better still, it seems to me that it consists in continuing to get rid of things instead of collecting them, in slowly boiling down to simplicity instead of becoming complicated with new things. In the measure that we detach ourselves from so much disordered love for creatures and for ourselves, it seems to me that we are getting closer and closer to the only love, the sole desire, the one longing of this life...to true sanctity, which is God.

Perhaps this is St. Rafael's message for us. 



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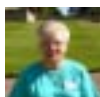
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Kosher Catholics?

BY BRIAN B. PINTER

One of the reasons my wife and I have such a good marriage is that we allow each other small indulgences. These take the edge off the daily grind of stinky diapers and dirty dishes. Jessica appreciates it when I keep our little sons occupied so she can paste family photos in her scrapbook. My special treat is being allowed to watch the evening news in peace.

Yet on a sweltering day in August, as my then-pregnant wife finished preparing dinner in our sixth-floor Bronx apartment, I made a request that I knew would test her saintly tolerance: I strode into the kitchen and announced that I would like to begin keeping kosher.

Jessica looked at the meal she had spent the last hour making—roast beef, baked potato with melted butter and a fresh salad with bacon bits. After an uncomfortable silence, she rolled her eyes and said, “If you insist on starting this interreligious dietary experiment tonight, you’ll be sleeping on the couch!”

Biblical Foundations

The question of Christians observing biblical dietary laws was addressed in the earliest days of the church. According to Acts 15, Peter, Paul, James and John agreed that Gentile converts would not have to follow Jewish laws, specifically circumcision and dietary regulations, in order to become Christians. But considering

the relationship we modern Christians have with the animals we eat, biblical dietary laws might again have a place in our religious observance.

Much of the meat we consume is raised, slaughtered and prepared in the confines of factory farms. The treatment of animal life in these places is torturous, cruel, abusive and inhumane. A cursory search of the Internet will uncover gruesome videos of defenseless chicks having their little beaks clipped with hot scissors, turkeys living in cramped, sweltering, dark coops and cows having their tracheas removed while still conscious.

Our impersonal and often cruel treatment of animals contradicts the responsibility we are given as creatures made in the image and likeness of God, a special status that explicitly obligates us to look after the well-being of other creatures. The Jewish tradition in which our faith is rooted has long interpreted the keeping of dietary restrictions as a reminder of God’s command to exercise “dominion” over the earth and all other living creatures.

The first chapter of the Book of Genesis (1:26) links the affirmation that human beings are created in the image and likeness of God (a concept often referred to as the *imago Dei*) with our stewardship of animal life:

Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth,

and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”

Many theologians have interpreted the *imago Dei* as referring to attributes unique to the human person: the immortal soul, the intellect and our ability to love. Recent biblical scholarship, however, has recovered an additional meaning: a relational dimension. This interpretation underscores that we are able to relate to the Creator in a way not conferred upon other creatures and also that we are to act as God’s viceroys vis-à-vis the nonhuman world.

Genesis 1 stresses the special nature of the relationship between human and animal, strongly suggesting that animals, at least in the mind of the author of this account, are the subjects of our kingly stewardship of creation. In illustrating the singularity of this relationship, many scholars hold that the order of creation in Genesis 1 can be characterized as concentric circles that represent increasing levels of intimacy with God. Humans and animals share the same circle, thus the same level of closeness with the Creator. The two also share the same table: The Creator explicitly tells both that they “have been given every green plant for food” (Gn 1:30). The verse suggests that it is God’s intention that the relationship between humanity and animals not be marked by bloodshed or violence.

Not until Gn 9:3 is the prohibition against eating animal flesh relaxed, though it includes restrictions: One is not to eat the blood of any animal. Blood, in the religious imagination of the ancient Israelites, symbolized the

BRIAN B. PINTER is the director of campus ministry at Regis High School in New York City.

life force they believed belonged solely to God.

The Old Testament adds further boundaries to our use of animals for food by prohibiting their abuse and mandating that we accord them respect and dignity. The Book of Deuteronomy, for instance, forbids the taking of a mother bird along with her young or the boiling of a young goat in its mother's milk. Leviticus commands that no animal be castrated or mutilated. Rabbinical regulations build on these texts by mandating that an animal be slaughtered in a manner that causes it no anxiety or pain. Each precept is grounded in the belief that animals can suffer emotional trauma.

The New Testament also views animals in the context of a relationship with humans that carries ethical imperatives. The theologian Joshua M. Moritz, in his essay "Animals and the Image of God in the Bible and Beyond," notes several instances in which Jesus shows compassion for animals. At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus goes to "be with the wild animals" (Mk 1:13). Moritz argues that the Greek construction of this phrase strongly conveys a positive sense of friendship and companionship.

Other Gospel stories record Jesus teaching that mercy should be extended to animals much as one would to a person. Perhaps the most familiar stories touching on this subject portray Jesus in debates about Sabbath observance: "If one of you has a small animal or an ox that has fallen into a well, will you not immediately pull it out on a Sabbath day?" (Lk 14:5). Such passages suggest that Jesus looked upon animals with gentleness and care, much in keeping with tenets of his ancient biblical faith.

Contemporary Church Teaching

The modern church has also spoken to the issue of animal welfare. A growing body of theological reflection has con-

cluded that ethical treatment of non-human creatures is an issue of justice and mercy. Pope Benedict XVI, when serving as prefect for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, stated, "A sort of industrial use of creatures, so that geese are fed in such a way as to



produce as large a liver as possible, or hens live so packed together that they become just caricatures of birds, this degrading of living creatures to a commodity seems to me in fact to contradict the relationship of mutuality that comes across in the Bible" (*God and the World: A Conversation With Peter Seewald*).

While the Bible describes the relationship between humans and animals as one to be governed by ethical norms, and contemporary theologians explore the moral implications of our use of animal life, little in Catholic piety reminds the faithful of our foundational command to exercise custodianship over other creatures. Judaism, by contrast, has maintained its dietary restrictions, which call to mind this responsibility whenever a Jew sits

down to eat.

According to Rabbi Hayim Halevy Donim, author of an exhaustive guide to Orthodox living entitled *To Be a Jew*, Orthodox theologians have long interpreted dietary regulations as a way of instilling in Jews an aversion to bloodshed and a sensitivity for all living creatures. But while these laws are grounded in solid biblical precepts and convey a spirit of solidarity and respect for animal life, can they play a role in Christian piety?

Granted, for the non-Jew, adherence to kosher laws would be vexing if not impossible. Nonetheless, the observance of some biblically based dietary laws by Catholics might be helpful as a reminder of the care, compassion and mercy God has commanded us to show our fellow, nonhuman creatures. A few simple restrictions—like eating the meat only of animals slaughtered in a humane fashion, abstaining from the mixing of dairy and meat products and making an effort to clean the flesh of blood—might serve to remind us of the life that has been sacrificed for our sustenance.

Christian theology has long recognized that all human beings, because we are created in the image and likeness of God, are deserving of dignity. But our commissioning as the *imago Dei* also calls us to a relationship of care for other creatures, a sacred task we often neglect. The dietary regulations of our ancestors in faith serve to remind God's people of our obligations to our animal companions. The great rabbis have long held that if our relationship with the animal world could be purged of savagery and unnecessary violence, so might our relationship with our fellow human beings. Perhaps there is still a place for those observances in the life of modern-day Christians—even in a Bronx apartment. **A**

BOOKS & CULTURE

TELEVISION | PAUL KNITTER

THE ENLIGHTENED ONE

David Grubin's 'The Buddha' on PBS

If Buddhism ranks among the three most accomplished missionary religions of the world (along with Christianity and Islam), then the filmmaker David Grubin can well be considered a successful contemporary Buddhist apostle. With his two-hour film, **The Buddha** (to be aired on PBS stations on April 7; see local listings), he audibly and engagingly continues to “beat the drum of the Dharma” that

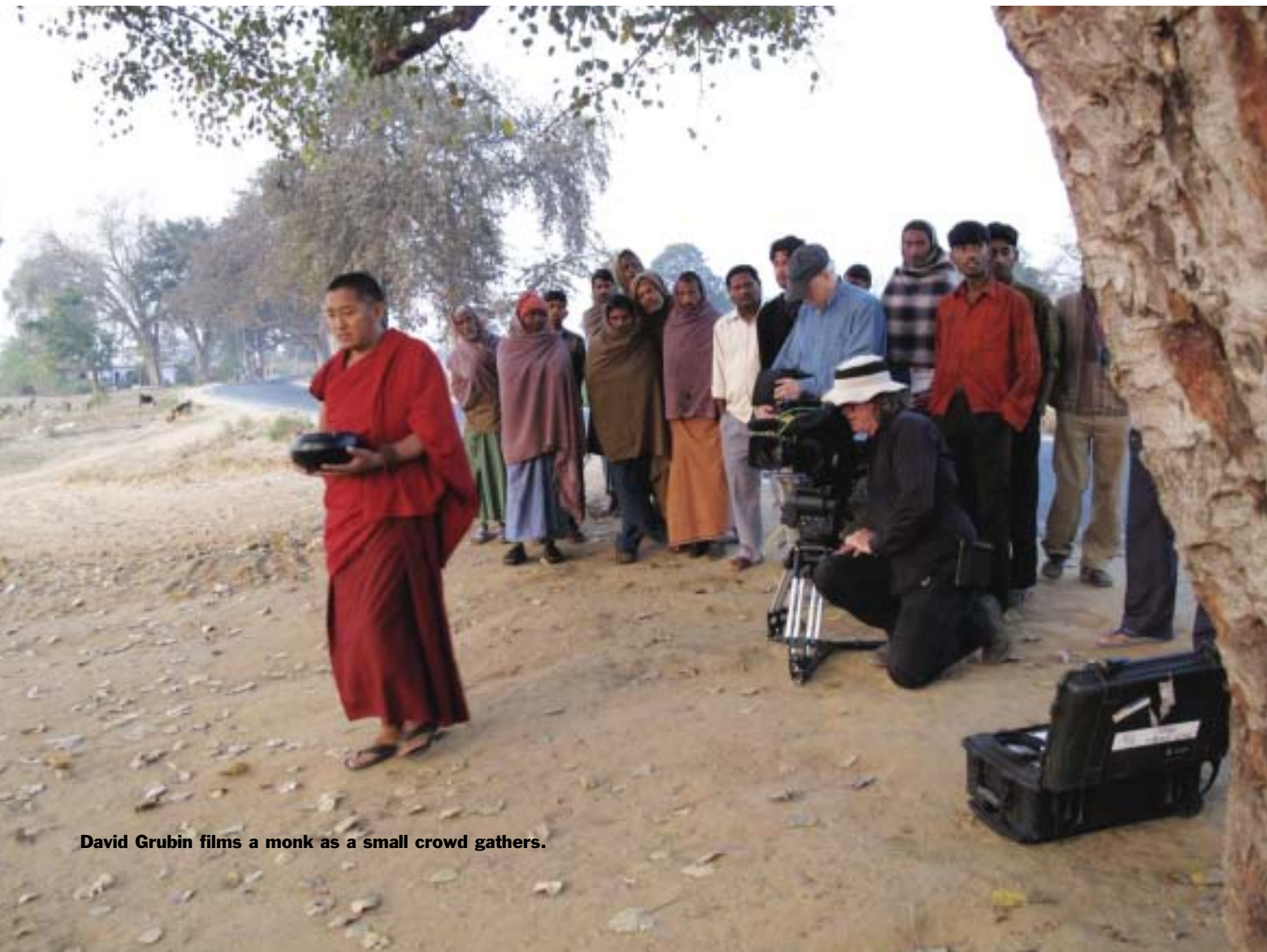
Gautama himself first sounded when he arose after his awakening in the Indian city of Bodhgaya, in Bihar, walked the 200 miles to Saranath (outside of Varanasi) and launched his life as a missionary.

Grubin employs all the standard techniques for this kind of historical, didactic documentary—shots of historic sites from the life of Buddha blend with ancient and modern paint-

ings and sculpture. All of it is given greater color and meaning through interspersed commentary by experts both academic and spiritual.

But Grubin mixes these ingredients beautifully into a smooth, forward-moving flow that is made all the more engaging through modernistic animations, especially for scenes from Buddha's life that stir the artist's imagination—like Buddha's virginal conception announced by a white elephant or the dawning of his enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree.

The star-studded cast of commentators is led by the Dalai Lama and



David Grubin films a monk as a small crowd gathers.

framed by the mellow tones of his devoted disciple, Richard Gere, the film's principal narrator. Among the experts who appear for sound-bite-like lessons or sermonettes are professors (Robert Thurman, Max Moerman, Kenin Trainor), poets (Jane Hirschfield, W. S. Merwin), a therapist (Mark Epstein) and monks and nuns (Venerables Bhaddamanika and Metteyya Sakyaputta). All of them speak not just knowledgeably, but passionately. They, too, are missionaries.

And it all works—not just because of the technical, artistic skills of Grubin and crew and the impassioned wisdom of the commentators, but also because the film is focused on the life and message of the man Gautama of the Sakyamuni who became Gautama Buddha. Viewers are not distracted by the complex differences among the three subsequent schools of Buddhism (Theravada, Mahayana, Vajrayana); they are not taken into the light and dark history of Buddhism's practical extinction in India and expansion throughout Asia or its struggles to inculturate in Europe and the Americas. Only one story is presented: Who was this man? What was his historical context? And what was his message?

Grubin and the commentators point out that the man and his context can be seen only through the mist of myth and miracles. The historical Buddha is even more removed from us than the historical Jesus. But then, with the abandon of conscious second naïveté (if I may allude to the work of Paul Ricoeur), the film embraces the stories of white elephants and devils and dancing girls to show how this man was truly human in his struggles and searchings and mistakes but, at the same time, truly enlightened in what he discovered and how he lived thereafter. Whatever may be the historical uncertainties, there are no doubts

about the efficacy of what this man discovered and taught.

I have seen many a film on Buddha, but few of them have succeeded as well as this one in so lucidly and compellingly presenting the transformative elements of Buddha's dharma. Again and again we hear or see the simplicity and audacity of Buddha's liberating announcement: Everything we need is given to us right now; it is available. All we have to do is open our eyes to it, be mindful of it, not cling to any of it, but let it be and be part of us. Watch life and be aware of life as it happens. Accept it and work with it. Then let it go in gentleness and compassion. How do you know this is true? You'll know it when, in trusting and following Buddha's path, you feel it.

All the commentators make clear that Buddha's message was primarily a call to practice. Try it, he and they tell us; you'll like it. And then you will know. On the basis of practice, you will begin to grasp some of the deeper truths (metaphysical truths) in Buddha's message: the truth of the interconnectedness of everyone and everything; the truth of our nonindividuality (No-self) as we allow ourselves to be carried by and to contribute to this all-encompassing interbeing; the truth of the "natural law" (my

words) of compassion. As one of the commentators puts it: Once you stop centering your feelings on yourself, compassion for all beings arises naturally, spontaneously.

Here, then, is Buddha's "good news": All this is available to all people at all times. As one Zen commentator in the film puts it: It's our Buddha-

WOMAN

He has not much time, maybe minutes.

Maybe minutes.

Yet he catches her eye. She sees the sweat, blood and pus making tracks in the dirt on his face.

Hers were the first eyes he entered and now will be his last.

Against rough wood and iron spikes he shifts up his flesh for air to speak.

She holds her breath to catch his words, "Woman."

His beaten aching body—swaddled in blood—breathes, "Woman

behold your son."

She watches as he shifts his eyes to the young man whose strong arms steady her. "Behold your mother."

Her knees weaken, but her weight is secured in the young man's strength.

In her memory echoes a "yes"

as present and eternal as

the blood that stains her hands, her face, her clothing.

LOUIS TEMPLEMAN

LOUIS TEMPLEMAN *writes from Baker Correctional Institution, Sanderson, Fla.*

nature. And everyone bears it. This is the ground for Buddha's radical social message: The caste system was not, as we hear in the film, "hardwired into the nature of the universe." Even more revolutionary is the fact that women, too, can be enlightened and can join the Sangha, or community.

Some elements in the film will stir scholarly quibbling. Buddha's admission of women to the community was more ambiguous than the film implies. The same is true of the suggested equal standing of laity within the Sangha. And somehow the face of a Shaivite Hindu devotee, trident emblazoned on forehead, was shown as a Buddhist pilgrim at Lumbini, Buddha's birthplace. But these are quibbles. They melt away in the film's overall beauty and power.

For the Christian viewer who engages the film dialogically, stunning, maybe unsettling, similarities abound in the lives of Gautama and Jesus: Buddha's mother was a virgin not just "before" birth but even (as I was taught of Mary in my 1960s theology course at the Pontifical Gregorian University) in birth. The Buddha, too, was severely tempted by the "evil one" before his

public ministry of calling for reform of his given religion. And in the film we hear Buddha's declaration, echoing Jesus in the Gospel of John, "Who sees me, sees the Dharma." Do similar claims about Jesus and Buddha on the part of their followers indicate similar effects in their followers?

For me, and I trust for many fellow Christians, this film can serve as another version of one of the most

fruitful challenges that Buddha offers the followers of Jesus. Gautama's good news (that in our human natures and situation, we are already given all that we need) is perhaps a reminder to repossess what Karl Rahner, S.J., insistently taught: that we live in a "supernatural existential," that our human nature is graced nature. Like Buddha for his disciples, Jesus embodies this for his. To awaken to this is, for Buddhists, to be enlightened; for Christians it is to live the mystical depths of Christianity.

PAUL KNITTER is the Paul Tillich Professor of Theology, World Religions and Culture at Union Theological Seminary, and the author of *No Other Name*. He recently published *Without Buddha I Could Not Be a Christian* (Oneworld, 2009).

ON THE WEB

Carolyn Martin Buscarino reviews NBC's "Parenthood." americamagazine.org/culture

BOOKINGS | ANN M. BEGLEY

RUSSIA'S LITERARY LION

Although he harbored literary ambitions early on, Alexandr Solzhenitsyn, born in 1918, earned a degree in mathematics and physics—a fact that probably prolonged his life. While serving as a captain in the Soviet army during World War II, he was twice decorated for bravery before counterintelligence agents discovered personal letters in which the author wrote disparagingly of Communist leader, Josef Stalin. Found guilty of conspiring against the

state, he was sentenced to eight years in the vast network of Stalin's notorious slave labor compounds—an experience that provided the raw material for his only major work allowed to appear in the Soviet Union: the novel *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (1962), which Premier Nikita Khrushchev himself had authorized as part of his campaign of de-Stalinization. It was an immediate literary and political sensation, cata-

pulting the author onto the center of the world stage.

From hell Solzhenitsyn passed into purgatory. He survived his incarceration, he felt, only because the authorities decided to make use of his scientific knowledge. It was his transfer to a *sharashka*—a government-run prison and research institute, where conditions were much less harsh—that was both his physical and spiritual salvation as well as the source for *In the First Circle* (2009, Harper Perennial), a philosophical and religious novel that has until recently not been available to English-language readers in its complete original and uncensored form. In a desperate effort to get the manuscript past the Soviet censors, the author had made significant changes, including the elimination of nine chapters. This "lightened" version, titled *The First Circle* (1968)—a reference to Dante's *Inferno*, in which the denizens of "the first circle" (the *sharashka*) are spared the torments of the lower realms (the conventional labor camps)—was leaked to the West and published in numerous languages in the 1960s. The unexpurgated edition went to press in English after the author's death in Moscow four months shy of his 90th birthday.

Breaking Silence

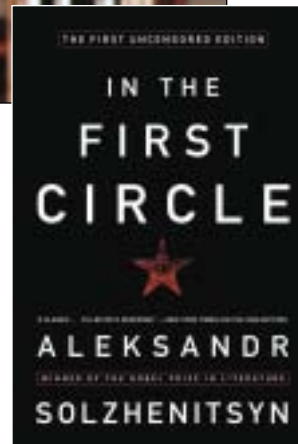
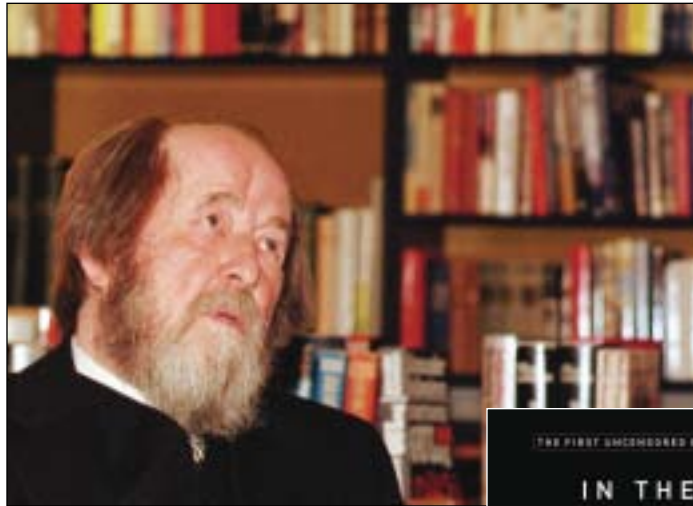
In his fine biography of Solzhenitsyn, *Alexandr Solzhenitsyn: A Century in His Life*, D. M. Thomas points out that the suffering endured by his subject was actually beneficial in that it brought about a dramatic intellectual and spiritual transformation. Without the usual distractions of worldly concerns, there was an abundance of time for intense introspection, for listening to the inner voices and turning to God. The youth who had declared, "I would gladly give my life for Lenin" became a dissident of incredible fearlessness, whose mission it was to break the conspiracy of silence and expose the full horror of Soviet tyranny. As

Dostoyevsky had done a century earlier, Solzhenitsyn blessed his prison for having nourished his soul. Like his literary predecessor, he felt that his sufferings as a prisoner in Siberia had renewed his faith, and he was determined not to permit material pleasures to undermine the grace that had been bestowed on him. "When one's life is stripped down to the bone," he wrote, "one lives the spirit of the Gospels." The once militant atheist returned with humility and joy to the Russian Orthodoxy of his childhood. With justification, Joseph Pearce, author of *Solzhenitsyn: A Soul in Exile*, calls *In the First Circle* "a hymn of praise to the pursuit of truth in the midst of tribulation."

The addition of the preposition "In" to the title subtly shifts the focus from the existence of this level of hell to its occupants. There are changes in the plot. The portraits of some of the major characters—based on real life prototypes—are more fully developed, and new personages are presented along with the politically sensitive questions they raise, such as whether Stalin had served as a double agent for the tsarist secret police and whether the Soviet Union should possess nuclear weapons. Of greater importance is the author's insistence on revealing the flagrant Soviet lies about the actual course of events. And, to be sure, the excised chapters have been reinstated; in one the reader enters the mind of Stalin—a prisoner of his own paranoia—as he considers the possibility of the existence of God.

The novel is, in part, a detective story: A diplomat makes an anonymous phone call to the American embassy, and imprisoned scientists, most notably a linguist and a mathematician, are assigned the task of identifying his

recorded voice. The book, with its huge cast of characters constituting a cross section of Soviet society—though Eleanor Roosevelt makes a cameo appearance—follows in the Russian literary tradition of realism, redolent of



Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky. As in much of Solzhenitsyn's other writings, the narrative is clearly based on the author's own personal experiences during his imprisonment. By compressing the time frame from three years to just four days, the tension inherent in the drama is heightened. One leitmotif is voiced by the hunted diplomat who asks, "If we live in a state of constant fear, can we remain human?"

When Solzhenitsyn completed his prison term, he was exiled "in perpetuity" to Soviet central Asia, where he lived in a mud hut on the edge of a desert. He taught math and physics in a secondary school and began writing prose poems, short stories and plays. Owing to Khrushchev's influence, his sentence of exile was eventually suspended, and he returned to central Russia. When less tolerant regimes rose to power, however, the socially involved writer fell from official favor. Because he was increasingly regarded by the authorities as a dangerous and hostile critic of Soviet society, his suc-

ceeding works were banned, including the novel *The Cancer Ward* (1968), which explores the relationship between the corporeal and spiritual aspects of love while evoking the author's nearly fatal bout with that disease. Whereas Solzhenitsyn's books found an enormous audience abroad, in his own country they had to be circulated in *samizdat* (clandestine, self-published editions). Granted the Nobel Prize for literature in 1970, he refused to attend the awards ceremony because the Communist government would not guarantee his re-entry into Russia.

Writer as Recluse

Following the French publication of probably his best known work, *The Gulag Archipelago* (1974)—a monumental, detailed history of the Soviet prison system and its punitive psychiatric hospitals, in which, according to

the author, some 60 million people were confined during the 20th century—Solzhenitsyn was accused of treason, stripped of his citizenship and expelled from his homeland. He traveled to Stockholm and collected his Nobel Prize.

At a press conference, he warned that upon the breakup of the Soviet system, Russia would have to move toward democracy "cautiously and slowly." Espousing the age-old definition of literature as "delightful instruction," in his Nobel Lecture he identified the artist as one who recognizes above himself a higher power and joyfully works as "a humble apprentice." Opposing the Soviet dictate that writers must serve the state's ideology and eschewing the moral relativism that

permeates modern thought, he maintained that literature should not only criticize but at times even be didactic.

After a sojourn in Zurich, Solzhenitsyn ultimately settled in Cavendish, Vt., with his wife and three sons, where he lived as a recluse, protected from sightseers by neighbors, who posted a sign that read, "No directions to the Solzhenitsyns." Devoting himself to the writing of a massive cycle of historical novels that focus on the revolutionary chaos that spawned Bolshevism—a multi-volume work with the series title *The Red Wheel* (1983-91)—he prayed each morning with his family for Russia. On one of his extremely rare public appearances,

he delivered a controversial and insensitive commencement address at Harvard, criticizing the pop culture of Americans, calling the people who had welcomed him and continued to host him spiritually mediocre, worshipers of materialism and cowardly for being unwilling to die for their ideals—alluding to what he saw as a hasty withdrawal from Vietnam. Unlike his wife and children, Solzhenitsyn never became an American citizen. Upon his arrival in Cavendish, he had told the villagers that when the Russian people were liberated from the Soviet system, he would go home—and so he did, in 1994.

Alexandr Solzhenitsyn left behind

an enormous canon, a truly unique contribution to literature. The first three volumes of an anticipated 30-volume Russian edition of his collected works are already in print. As striking as this canon is, his personal story is even more impressive. Like Pope John Paul II, whom he greatly admired, he helped to bring down one of the worst tyrannies the world has ever witnessed. A self-appointed conscience to the Russian nation, Solzhenitsyn brought to light what had only been whispered about.

ANN M. BEGLEY, an essayist and reviewer, has taught at universities on both east and west coasts.

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Seminars

CARMEL'S QUEST FOR THE LIVING GOD is the theme of the 25th anniversary conference of the annual seminar on Carmelite Spirituality, June 16-20, 2010. Speakers: Camilo Maccise, O.C.D., Fernando Millán Romeral, O.Carm., D. Leckey (Woodstock). Workshops by the Carmelite Forum. Contact: Kathy Guthrie: (574) 284-4636 or kguthrie@saintmarys.edu. Conference at Center for Spirituality, Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, Ind. 46556-5001. See saintmarys.edu/Carmelite-seminar.

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LETTERS

A Life A.M.D.G.

The commentary on the life of John W. Donohue, S.J. (Of Many Things, 3/8) stirred in me fond memories of my freshman year at Canisius High School in 1944-45. We were in the first class to use the “new” school on Delaware Avenue in Buffalo. Our class was special in several ways. It was the largest freshman class in the school’s history, and we were in our own building, not intimidated by the presence of upperclassmen.

Each pupil was assigned to a homeroom. Our homeroom teacher was a young Jesuit scholastic. “Father” Donohue, as we referred to him, taught us religion, Latin and English. He was an excellent teacher who commanded respect. His authority was never questioned. He was also very kindly and never talked down to us or ridiculed our mistakes. The respect he had for us enkindled in our adolescent hearts a respect and love for him. I shall never forget him. When I graduated four years later, he sent me and other classmates from our freshman year homeroom a personal note of congratulations and encouragement to maintain Jesuit ideals in our lives.

Thank you for your respectful remembrance of that wonderful man, who at the beginning of my first day of high school in 1944 wrote on the blackboard “A.M.D.G.” and told us what it meant. His life was “Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam.”

RICHARD M. MATTIMORE
Genview, Ill.

Prison Reform a Pro-life Issue

Re “Administering Justice,” (Editorial, 3/15): One might hope that lack of money would force genuine improvements in the penal systems. While there is some movement in this direction, there is also a lot of resistance. We continue to operate more from a place of punishment and vengeance than one of

correction and maximizing potential.

Legislators are unwilling to risk their real or perceived political futures by advocating for the programs and policies that can, over time, address the needs of the total community. Maybe if the church lived as if it believed this too was an important pro-life issue, we would have more success in changing hearts.

MARY THERESE LEMANEK
Allen Park, Mich.

Sad Commentary

I am pleased that the bishops have come to the defense of John Carr (Signs of the Times, 2/22). Having known John during my years with Catholic Charities, he is one of the shining lights of the national offices of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. But if the bishops had dealt with the narrow politics and intolerance of such groups as Human Life International in the beginning, their un-Christian politics would not have been allowed to infect the church as it has. I have Catholic relatives who have claimed that President Obama is evil and doing the work of the devil, and by inference I am as well, because I voted for Obama. The debacle at Notre Dame when President Obama spoke, the divisiveness and vitriol that the anti-Obama bishops encouraged, are another sign of the bishops falling into the politics of fear and division. It is a sad commentary on a church that its social teaching can claim a rich tradition of love, justice and peace, but in its practice and public deportment it has become an object of ridicule.

STEVE RALL
Lansing, Mich.

The Power of Images

Re “Friendly Persuasion,” by Robert Barron (3/8): Images have stopped wars, and images created change in South Africa. Images are powerful and bring forth conviction. The Berlin Wall coming down, the man in Tiananmen Square standing up to a

tank, the images of war from Vietnam—these images stir up something within us.

Yet the reality of abortion, we do not want to look at. It is too horrible, too unconscionable, too painful. We are not ready to look at the realities. But when we do, then the time will come for change, because the change will come from within, not from someone imposing rules and laws. There will be a conviction that will not go away until true change occurs with the conversion of one’s heart. And this all happens through various images.

So whether we look at a beautiful child within the womb or at a child killed by abortion, it is all about the images. We are not ready to face the realities; we are not ready to look; we are simply not ready for change. The day we allow the images, the realities to imprint on our nation’s soul is the day change will occur.

PATRICK DELORENZO
Saratoga, Calif.

Like Chairs on the Titanic

Re “Welcoming the Roman Missal,” by Bishop Arthur Serratelli (3/1): Some of the new translation may be beautiful. But introducing archaic words like “the gibbet of the cross” is not going to help me pray liturgically. I question the entire undertaking. Just suppose that all the time and money that have gone into the preparation had been directed toward alleviating human misery around the world. The world is falling apart as the economy crumbles, and we are rearranging liturgical chairs on the Titanic deck. If you want real liturgical reform, get the inclusive texts that have been developed and are being used by inclusive intentional communities across the country.

J. PATRICK MAHON
Young Harris, Ga.

Priest Emeritus Too

Like a bishop emeritus, as described by Bishop Emeritus Frank Rodimer,

3/22), a “retired” priest should also be considered emeritus. There should be significant gatherings, well prepared, that he is invited to actively share in, thus maintaining some official relation to the people of God. The term *retired* should probably not be used with regard to priests, nor the term *senior priests*, which usually means nothing.

(REV.) RICHARD T. RODRIGUEZ
Pensacola, Fla.

Sacramental Power

As a hospital chaplain, I eagerly read “Ward Healer,” by Aaron Biller (3/1). I agree 100 percent that listening attentively and talking with patients about their concerns are very important parts of the chaplain’s ministry.

But I do not agree that “patients, nurses and chaplains have ranked talking and listening as the number one

spiritual intervention and need.” And I really believe that neither would Sr. Elaine agree if she were asked directly. Sad to say, nothing was mentioned about the sacrament of the sick.

To me, the most powerful spiritual intervention for a sick person is the anointing for healing. Catholic chaplains are given the most powerful prayers, the sacraments, by Jesus to bring healing to the patient through the power of Christ. And his power to heal is far greater than any listening or comforting words we offer to the patient, as important as they are.

ROGER J. BOURGEOIS, S.M.
Boston, Mass.

Humor and Hope

Kudos to John F. Kavanaugh, S.J. His article “Antidote to Anomie,” (3/15) is so right in pinpointing our present

political dilemma, especially in regard to health care. His sense of humor helps to make the pill go down. And thank you so much, **America**, for helping me to keep up my hope in these troubling times.

JANE VITALE
Pocatello, Idaho

Truth to Power

It was distressing to read in “The Other America,” by Tim Padgett (3/8), about the way the U.S. government [tacitly] supports dictatorial regimes in Latin America and is more interested in giving them military support than in helping the poor.

But it is even more distressing to see how our church has not come out for the poor. My experiences in several countries of Latin America have shown me how the people are people of deep faith, but it is faith in God, Jesus Christ and Mary, and not necessarily in the church. And with good reason.

Too often the church is closely entwined with the ruling class and encourages the wealthy to donate to the poor, but it is not willing to take the second step of changing the structures that keep people in poverty.

The hierarchy, for the most part, has not seen how detrimental such close alliance with the government is for the church. When people rebel against the government, they also rebel against the church, as has been seen for example in the French Revolution, Mexico in the 1920s and the Spanish Civil War. The hierarchical church must remember its prophetic mission of speaking truth to power. I pray that it will.

LUCY FUCHS
Brandon, Fla.

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Beyond Hope

EASTER SUNDAY (C), APRIL 4, 2010

Readings: Acts 10:34-43; Ps 118:1-23; Col 3:1-4; Lk 24:13-35

“We were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel” (Lk 24:21)

Some years ago my mom and I took a trip to the Grand Canyon. We drove from Chicago, stopping along the way whenever something took our fancy. There were chance encounters with people who offered spontaneous kindness and others whose rudeness challenged us not to respond in kind. When we reached our destination—the experience was indescribable—greater than what we could imagine and impossible to capture in words or photos. There were experienced trail-guides and interpretive signs, but what we saw was far beyond what the geological explanations could tell. We sat gazing in hushed awe. Words would do a disservice to the immense beauty that engulfed us.

In a similar fashion, no words are capable of expressing what happened to Jesus at Easter or what happened to the first disciples who experienced him as resurrected. The only adequate response is contemplative awe, yet we need to try to say something of what this experience means for us.

In the Gospel story today, two of Jesus’ disciples are talking and debating as they walk away from Jerusalem, the place of pain and confusion, trying to make meaning of it all. They are struggling to see how to make sense but cannot yet do so. As Jesus joins

them, he first elicits from them their own interpretation. They retell what they experienced of Jesus as “a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people,” and they recount the truth of his brutal murder. They speak of what their hopes were, but these now seem dashed. They tell about what some of the women experienced at the tomb and their interpretation that Jesus was alive. Others went to see for themselves and found the tomb empty, but they did not see him alive, as the women had.

Different disciples are at different stages in their journey with and toward the risen one, each seeing something different and each needing to interpret it in their own words.

It is remarkable that Jesus does not immediately interpret for Cleopas and his companion what their journey with him means. Then, as now, Jesus first asks his disciples to try to say what they (or we) have experienced and how we understand what has happened. This first step takes us only part of the way.

To go the next step on the journey it is necessary to turn to the Scriptures—the official guidebook, if you will—which help to unravel the meaning. Immersing ourselves in the whole story, from Moses through all the prophets, we understand a little more of Jesus’

prophetic life and mission. We see, too, how we are asked to conform our own lives to this journey of prophetically embodying good news for the most vulnerable, being prepared to accept its cost. Essential for this journey is the abiding presence of the risen Jesus. As did those first disciples we, too, implore him to stay with us. And he does. He continues to open our eyes by unfolding the Scriptures to us and by making himself known in the breaking of the bread.



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- Ask the Risen One to stay with you and to open your eyes.
- Who are the women today who keep vigil in places of death? What visions do they announce?
- How is the risen Christ setting your heart burning within you?

No words adequately express our experience of what it is like to have him risen among us. Resurrected life far exceeds all our hopes and is far more than a happy ending to a tragic story. It is not only what happened to Jesus, but it is already lived by us, whose lives are “hidden with Christ in God,” as Paul says. It is not only the end of a life’s journey, but is tasted already now, all along the way. It is beyond all that we had hoped and even now sets our hearts burning within us.

BARBARA E. REID

BARBARA E. REID, O.P., a member of the Dominican Sisters of Grand Rapids, Mich., is a professor of New Testament studies at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, Ill., where she is vice president and academic dean.

ART: TAD DUNNE



SETON HALL UNIVERSITY'S
MICAH BUSINESS
LEADERSHIP PROJECT

CONTEMPORARY MOVEMENTS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

SATURDAY, APRIL 24, 2010

9:30 A.M. - 3:30 P.M.

Annual Conference sponsored by the **Bernard J. Lonergan Institute**
and the **Micah Institute for Business and the Economy**

Seton Hall University, South Orange, NJ
Science and Technology Amphitheatre and Atrium (McNulty Hall)

DISTINGUISHED GUEST SPEAKERS:

Darlene O'Leary, Ph.D., St. Paul University, Ottawa; John B. Gallagher, Ph.D., Focolare; Elizabeth Garlow, B.S., Focolare;
James T. Milway, C.P.M., B.S., M.B.A., Focolare; Dr. Andrea Bartoli, the Community of Sant' Egidio;
Paul LaChance, Ph.D., College of St. Elizabeth; Father Jack Martin, Haiti Solidarity Network of the Northeast (HSNNE);
Fredrick Fakharzadah, M.D., Centesimus Annus Pro-Pontifice; Dermot Quinn, D.Phil. (Oxon), G.K. Chesterton Institute for Faith & Culture



During his lifetime, the Canadian philosopher-theologian **Bernard Lonergan** (1904-84) wrote about the "pure cycle" of economic activity — the harmonious relationship between production, consumption, finance and a standard of living reflecting the common good. The conference focuses on Lonergan's ideas and how they relate to various movements for justice today: particularly, the **Focolare** movement's "**Economy of Communion**" and the **Community of Sant' Egidio**. The day will end with a panel representing other movements and perspectives on the contemporary challenges to social justice.

Registration fee: \$20, including lunch

To register, or for additional information,
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