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The Road to Disarmament

GERARD POWERS • STEPHEN M. COLECCHI

What the U.S. Bishops Have Learned

BLASE CUPICH

OF MANY THINGS

The e-mail message was serious and required a thoughtful response. I decided not to reply right away but to return to it when I had more time to think. But I never did. I was busy, yes, but there were other reasons for my reluctance.

The message concerned the sexual abuse crisis, a subject Catholics are all too familiar with these days. My friend wanted to know how I, a new father whose adopted daughter was just baptized, was dealing with the slew of media reports issuing from Europe. What makes you and your family stay, he asked?

The question was addressed to me as a friend, but also as an editor at a respected Catholic magazine. "I am looking to **America** and people like you to help make sense of all this," he wrote.

My colleagues and I are keenly aware of the special responsibility we bear in this time of crisis. In editorial meetings and casual conversations, we dissect the latest news reports, weighing how to respond. In our most recent editorials, "Pilgrim Church, Part I" and "Pilgrim Church, Part II" (5/10 and 17), we have tried to provide encouragement to our fellow Catholics while also looking at church structures that need reform.

Yet I feel obliged to distinguish my personal response to the crisis from our institutional response. As an editor, I have done my due diligence: I have followed the news reports and contributed to group discussions. Yet when I leave the office, when I sit at home or in the pew, I find myself tuning out when the subject of the abuse crisis is raised. When friends ask about it, I give a brief answer or don't respond at all.

This is not new. In 2002 I worked at a newspaper in Connecticut when the scandal erupted in Boston. Because of my knowledge of the church, I was pulled from my regular beat to cover the emerging crisis. My first assignment was to a parish where two priests had been removed from ministry for suspected

abuse. Reporting the story was a brutal exercise. The parish priests, and many parishioners, declined to talk to me. In the evenings I would return home mentally exhausted, loath to revisit the subject. I was relieved several weeks later to return to my small-town beat.

I have great respect for the journalists who reported on the sexual abuse crisis, especially those Catholic journalists who continued to follow the story even when national media attention flagged. Yet for me it proved to be a grueling endeavor. The latest round of media reports have stirred in me the same unease that first surfaced eight years ago.

What are the reasons for my discontent? At the newspaper my unhappiness was easy enough to explain: here I was, a committed Catholic, assigned to investigate the church. The cognitive and emotional dissonance was only natural. Today I am proud to work at a magazine that seeks to serve the church and can play a productive role in guiding it through the crisis. And yet the urge to "tune out the scandal" is still strong. The malaise persists.

I think I know why. In so many ways the church has been a life-affirming force in my life—never more than over the last year, as my wife and I pursued adoption. That process revealed to me the deep ways in which we are all brothers and sisters in Christ. It has been difficult for me to reconcile that singular moment of grace with the crisis of 2010. For professional reasons, I am obligated to read about the church's failures and endure the invective of its critics; but when I can, I look away.

Some have reacted to the crisis with anger, others by leaping to the church's defense. Still others blame the media. I change the channel. It is not a response I am especially proud of. I wish I had the passion of my crusading colleagues. Yet I know I am not alone. We all deal with trauma in different ways.

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Cover: A Ukrainian worker cuts apart the booster of an SS-19 nuclear missile in 1999. Reuters file photo.

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Latinos, Unite!

The best outcome, though unintended, of the harsh new immigration bill passed by the Arizona legislature last month might be to rally Latinos in support of comprehensive immigration reform.

The law that Gov. Jan Brewer signed in April goes into effect in 90 days. It requires police and sheriffs to check the immigration status of individuals they reasonably deem suspicious, demand proof of citizenship (a valid driver's license, passport or green card, for example) and make arrests if proof is lacking. It allows citizens to file lawsuits for lax enforcement but prohibits citizens from creating sanctuaries to limit the reach of the law. Latinos are not explicitly mentioned, but they make up 30 percent of Arizona's population and are by far its largest immigrant group. It is estimated that some 450,000 illegal immigrants live in the state.

The new law could be short-lived. Already President Obama has instructed the U.S. Department of Justice to scrutinize it for violations regarding racial profiling and civil rights. Others, including the mayor of Phoenix, Phil Gordon, are challenging its constitutionality in the courts. Clarence Dupnik, sheriff of Pima County, Ariz., called the law racist and said he would not enforce it.

Meanwhile, the law's intrusive overreach may give Latino activists the impetus they need to build their organizations. All Hispanics in Arizona, most of whom are U.S. citizens, will be subject to police suspicion, pullovers and carding. They too will always have to carry identification as a precaution. That could bring native-born Latinos into common cause with the foreign-born—both legal and illegal.

Activist Latino voters in Arizona could join Latinos in other states to lead the debate not merely to repeal this law, but to pass federal immigration reform. A strong national Latino electorate could press Congress to act—if not this year, then next.

Damas de Blanco

The Damas de Blanco, Ladies in White, continue processing with gladiolas after Sunday Mass in Havana in peaceful protest against the incarceration of relatives during the so-called Black Spring in mid-March 2003. Cuban state security agents rounded up human rights activists, journalists and other free-speech advocates. Seventy-five received sentences of up to 28 years. Over 50 remain imprisoned.

In recognition of their peaceful protest, in 2005 the Damas received the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of

Thought, but the Cuban government barred the group's leaders from attending the award ceremony in France. This past March, to commemorate the seventh anniversary of the arrests, the Damas processed not only on Sundays, but also on each of the seven days of that week, chanting, "Libertad! Libertad!" Cuban police again harassed and beat several, as a shrill mob cried, "Fidel! Fidel!" One of the Damas, Reyna Tamayo, is the mother of Orlando Zapata Tamayo, a 42-year-old human rights activist. After a hunger strike to demand the release of those still held, he died in prison in February. This spring his mother received especially rough treatment at the hands of the police. "They dragged me, they beat me. I am all bruised," she said afterward.

Cuba has made huge strides in literacy and medical care in the past half-century. The ongoing repression of dissent and denial of such basic human rights as freedom of speech, however, remain a blot on its achievements. Hopes that Raul Castro might effect needed changes have not been realized, and the brothers Castro continue their repressive rule.

Alternative Energy Horizons

Even as a toxic tide from the blowout of a British Petroleum oil rig drifted closer to Gulf states' beaches, fisheries and fragile marsh ecosystems, official approval was finally granted for what will eventually become the nation's first off-shore wind farm. Cape Wind will be a complex of 130 turbines in the Atlantic Ocean off Cape Cod in Massachusetts. Challenged by nature preservationists, the proposal had been in limbo for nine years.

When completed, the project will generate 468 megawatts of electricity, about the output of a medium-sized coal-fired plant and enough to power 200,000 Massachusetts homes. The reduction of carbon dioxide emissions promised by the grid represents the equivalent of taking 175,000 cars off the road. Such tapping of Atlantic winds may one day prove an important part of an overall national strategy to reduce dependence on fossil fuels. Similar wind farms are planned for other locations along the East Coast and on the Great Lakes. Europe has been building such off-shore, clean-energy powerhouses for 20 years now, and China is already constructing its first off Shanghai.

The aesthetic harm of such energy innovation is real, but the loss of a beautiful view pales in comparison to the threat to human life and ecosystems now posed by our current reliance on fossil fuel. To paraphrase one environmentalist: No one will ever have to clean up after a nasty wind spill.

Pilgrim People, Part II

Our pilgrim church, “at once holy and always in need of purification,” must constantly follow “the path of penance and renewal” (“Constitution on the Church,” No. 8). As in the United States eight years ago, in Ireland, Germany, India, and in Rome, steps are now being taken to institute strict accountability for the sexual abuse of minors. But direct efforts to correct and prevent abuse of minors are only the most obvious part of a larger healing needed in the church. The less obvious part is the reform of structures of church governance that turned a deaf ear for so long to the victims and repeatedly disparaged bishops who were seeking remedies to the problems haunting their dioceses. At all levels, right down to the parish, much of the church has proven deficient in its ability to listen and interact with adult believers. But at the center of the present crisis are found members of the Roman Curia.

The Latin word *curia* means both administration, as in a government apparatus, and court, as in a company of hangers-on whose life revolves around flattery and the favor of a ruler. Pope Benedict made a good start on responding to the Irish scandals, but that promising beginning was upended by the misguided statements of others in the Vatican. For weeks we witnessed the hard issues of sexual abuse being dodged while elderly and retired Curial officials, prodded by the press, made the red herring of Pope Benedict’s possible past mistakes the focus of their attention. Intelligent leadership was obscured by a black cloud of flattery. As it turned out, some of these same prelates stood at the very heart of the crisis, accepting payments from friends, like the disgraced Marcial Maciel, and offering high-level support to bishops for stonewalling civil authorities. What appeared to be vigorous emotional support for the pope turned out to be smokescreens for their own unconscionable actions. In those trying weeks, we witnessed the Vatican at its worst—as the last Renaissance court.

Beyond taking responsibility for the crisis of sexual abuse of minors by clerics, the renewal of the church must include the reform of the Roman Curia proposed by the Second Vatican Council and begun by Pope Paul VI. The interpersonal and institutional practices that blocked proper handling of abuse cases must be rooted out. Many American bishops can testify to their frustration in their attempts to get support from Vatican offices for disciplining offenders. Along with the victims, many bishops have suffered because of this. Favoritism and personal influence can

never be wholly eliminated, but they can be held in check. Institutional reform is not the most elevated religious activity, but it is religiously necessary; and it is precisely the kind of endeavor for which God blesses us with the gift of wisdom.

To begin with, a system that effectively grants favored individuals virtual life-tenure as heads of offices must be ended. There must be term limits for senior officials and rotation back to regular pastoral roles for secretaries and prefects of congregations, as there are for ministers in secular governments and for major religious superiors. (In 1967, Paul VI tried to set five-year terms, with the possibility of one renewal.) In addition, communication and interaction between Vatican offices need to be improved. Crises occur, we are told, because communication within the Vatican itself is “broken.” To stimulate the needed give-and-take will require overcoming a culture in which major offices function as baronies immune to influence from others. Interagency committees, protocols for inter-office consultation and coordination would help; but recruitment of personnel with listening skills and readiness to cooperate with others, not just their superiors, are equally necessary, as are leaders who encourage open communication both with their peers and their subordinates.

Likewise, two-way communications must open up between bishops and the Holy See. In an age of globalization, centralized church government has a special role to play, but overcentralization was a contributing factor to the dysfunction that has prolonged this crisis for more than two decades. Curial officials expected deference and bishops gave it. Centralization will be healthy only insofar as there is genuine subsidiarity within the church, with dioceses and bishops’ conferences able to carry on their pastoral activities without undue intrusion from favored cliques and individuals in Rome.

Finally, the council called for laymen and laywomen to be given greater voice and to take greater part in church affairs. Diocesan pastoral councils, presbyteral councils and parish councils must have a say in the running of their local communities. Pastors or bishops who dissolve them or refuse to work with them regularly should be regarded as delinquent. For the good of the whole church, the faithful need to be heard and fully engaged in local church life. Bishops and people, priests and people must act as the one body of Christ.



‘Mary the Survivor’ of Nagasaki Visits Nonproliferation Conference

I’m traveling with the statue of Mary, the survivor of the atomic bomb of Nagasaki,” said Archbishop Joseph Mitsuaki Takami of Nagasaki, Japan, before unlocking a security case and gently revealing its contents, a statue remnant, showing the ruined visage of Mary. “The message of this Mary is to tell the people of the world the absurdity and foolishness of war, militarization and nuclear weapons,” the archbishop told *America*. “Mary is inviting us to work for peace.” (Listen to the interview at www.americamagazine.org.)

The scorched head of Mary is all that remains of a statue that had once graced the main altar of Nagasaki’s Urakami Cathedral before it was destroyed by the atomic bomb, known as Fat Man, on Aug. 9, 1945. The archbishop was an unborn child in his mother’s womb when the second atomic bomb obliterated his hometown in a blast that killed 75,000 people.

Archbishop Takami has accompanied this Mary all around the world this year: to Guernica in Spain, to remember the first victims of the aerial bombing of civilians, and to Rome, where her image “quite moved” Pope Benedict XVI. “This Mary,” said Archbishop Takami, “accompanies all people who suffer from violence, especially the victims of war and conflicts.” On May 2 the archbishop brought Mary, perhaps one of the most compelling artifacts of Nagasaki’s inferno, to St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York, where he concelebrated Mass. Archbishop

Takami, who was in New York to attend the U.N. Review Conference of Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, said he hoped the statue would focus attention on the enormous destructive power and inhumanity of nuclear weapons and on the importance of working toward their elimination. The partial bust depicts a haunting and tortured beauty, the eye sockets black and empty like the eyes of those who gazed into the fury of the initial flash.

“My message in bringing the statue is to ask, through the intercession of Mary, that such weapons no longer be used, that we work for peace,” the archbishop said after a Japanese-language Mass on May 2 for New York’s

Japanese Catholic community at St. John the Evangelist Church. In a letter he wrote with Bishop Joseph Atsumi Misue of Hiroshima for the nonproliferation conference, Archbishop Takami called on world leaders to “take a courageous step toward the total abolition of nuclear weapons.”

“We, as the bishops of the Catholic Church of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan, the only country to have suffered nuclear attacks, demand that the president of the United States, the Japanese government and the leaders of other countries make utmost efforts to abolish nuclear weapons,” the statement reads.

As a first step, the Japanese prelates

called upon U.S. President Barack Obama to establish a policy of “sole purpose,” which would “limit the purpose of retaining nuclear weapons to deterring others from using such weapons only.” The archbishop said the people of Japan support the president’s nuclear disarmament efforts thus far and hoped to see him “concretize” the commitment he made toward nuclear weapons reductions in Prague last month in renewing arms reductions agreements with Russia. Archbishop Takami said the new reduction treaty with Russia was a first step, but that President Obama “should pursue this process toward the total elimination of nuclear weapons.”



Archbishop Takami has more than a purely spiritual or philosophical rationale for seeking the elimination of nuclear weapons. The Nagasaki blast claimed the lives of two of his aunts and his grandmother. A cousin died 14 years after the war from bomb-related illnesses. The archbishop was born on March 6, 1946, and raised in the long shadow cast by Nagasaki's mushroom cloud. "My mother spoke about it, but not so many times," he recalled. "Because she didn't want to speak about it. Her experience was so sad."

Roadside Bombs Strike Iraqi Christians

At least four people died and more than 170 were injured when buses carrying Christian university students were bombed in a roadside attack near the northern Iraqi city of Mosul on May 2. The buses, carrying students from the village of Qaraqosh to a university in Mosul, were struck by an explosion followed by a car bombing. Victims included bystanders. The buses were escorted by Iraqi soldiers, and the bombings occurred between two checkpoints staffed by U.S., Iraqi and Iraqi Kurdish soldiers. "It was a brutal, unprecedented attack. We are shocked, since the victims were not soldiers or militants but just students who were carrying books, pens and their dreams of growing up and serving their own nation," said Bashar Wardu of Irbil, a Redemptorist priest. The minority Christian community "feels unprotected and left at the mercy of extremists," said Father Wardu. Archbishop Georges Casmoussa of Mosul, a Syrian Catholic, said that Christians were ready to call for the United Nations to intervene and help protect them. He said that the injustice against Christians has been met with

"general indifference" by civil and government authorities. Auxiliary Bishop Shlemon Warduni of Baghdad, a Chaldean, said that Iraqi Christians feel at a loss as to how to protect themselves from further attacks. Having a military escort in front and behind the bus convoy was not enough to prevent the attack, he pointed out.

Thai Catholics Try To Bridge Divide

As Thailand's political crisis continues, Catholic university students in Bangkok are taking action to promote peace and prevent further outbreaks of violence. The Catholic University Students Centre of Thailand, based at Xavier Hall, the Jesuits' residence in Bangkok, has been encouraging its members to meet "red-shirts" and their opponents in order to listen to their

views. It has also urged members to join civic peace movements, visit people injured in the protests and to take individual action to promote peace in the country. "The church as an institution cannot get involved directly, but it can and should encourage laypersons to try and help solve the country's problems," said the center's chaplain, Maharsono Probho, S.J. "The center is encouraging students to listen and get as much information as possible from both sides about their grievances and demands." The red-shirts, many of whom are allied to the ousted former premier, Thaksin Shinawatra, have occupied Bangkok's major business and commercial districts for almost two months in an effort to force the government to call snap elections. Clashes with security forces have killed at least 26 people and injured hundreds of others.

From CNS and other sources. CNS photos.

Church Ready to Help in Louisiana

The images of the British Petroleum disaster and a monster oil spill creeping closer to Louisiana have triggered unwanted flashbacks for people whose scars from Hurricane Katrina remain raw. "Today we are crying out, 'Why us, Lord?'" said Tony Fernandez, the former chief criminal deputy sheriff of the St. Bernard Sheriff's Office and chairman of the pastoral council of Our Lady of Prompt Succor Church in Chalmette, La. Fernandez, who operates a marina and figures to be heavily affected by the oil spill, said the church must help hard-working people who cannot protect themselves. "It's been one catastrophic event after another. But our focus is not so much on our sorrow; but it's on what we can do for others." The oil spill threatens the livelihood of 300 fishing families in St. Bernard Parish



John Arnone, pastor of St. Bernard Church, leads fishermen in prayer on May 1 in Hopedale, La.

and another 1,000 in Plaquemines. (In Louisiana civil jurisdictions are called parishes.) Gordon Wadge, co-president and chief executive of Catholic Charities says his agency is gearing up for the test to come. "We are going to be making case management and counseling available," Wadge said. "You also can't underestimate the value of pastoral presence."

Twelve Things the Bishops Have Learned From the Abuse Crisis

BY BLASE CUPICH

The Catholic bishops of the United States have learned many lessons from the sexual abuse crisis. These 12 are among the most important.

1. The injury to victims is deeper than non-victims can imagine. Sexual abuse of minors is crushing precisely because it comes at a stage in their lives when they are vulnerable, tender with enthusiasm, hopeful for the future and eager for friendships based on trust and loyalty.

2. Despite the justified anger felt by victims toward the church, bishops still need to reach out to them as pastors. Meetings with victims can be challenging for all involved, but they also can be a moment of grace and insight.

3. The causes of the clerical sexual abuse are complex, and it is simplistic to reduce them to easy answers. Many factors have been alleged to “explain” this misconduct by clergy, but the fact is that sexual abuse of minors is found in many different circumstances, perpetrated by family members, leaders of youth organizations, doctors, teachers and others. “Easy answers” underestimate how wide the scope of this problem is in our society.

4. Catholics have been hurt by the moral failings of some priests, but they have been hurt and angered even more by bishops who failed to put children first. People expect religious leaders above all to be immediate and forthright in taking a strong stand in the face of evil, such as the harm done

to children and young people by sexual abuse.

5. The counsel of lay people, especially parents, is indispensable in a matter that so deeply affects families. Our capacity to respond to sexual abuse of young people has been bolstered by the insights shared with us by parents as to how to do so effectively.

6. Our priests have a resiliency that future generations will recall with admiration. They have remained committed to their vocation day-in, day-out, despite suffering from the actions of those who have besmirched the priesthood they love. Their steadfastness has built a reservoir of good will with our people and is a major factor in explaining why during this terrible crisis most Catholics in our country remain faithful to the church.

7. The church needs to maintain the mandatory safe environment efforts that have been developed. Experience shows that institutions are not as effective in protecting children if standards are voluntary. Any backsliding on this endangers children first of all, and also the credibility gained through the efforts to eradicate the effects of this scourge. Parishes must be the safest places for a child to be.

8. Bishops need to be mutually accountable in their efforts to protect children and must be willing to participate in transparent, independent audits to demonstrate they are keeping the promises we made. What happens in one place happens to us all.

9. Bishops need to resist the defensiveness that institutions often fall back on in crisis moments. Resorting

to a conspiratorial interpretation of attacks and adopting a “circle the wagons” approach only prolongs a problem and does nothing to settle it or heal the victims.

10. Self-deception is an inherent part of the illness abusers suffer and includes the inclination to diminish the gravity of their behavior and its effects on the individuals abused and on the church at large. Many even manage to convince themselves that they genuinely cared for the children whom they harmed. This makes it almost impossible for them to come to grips with the evil they perpetrated. Claims often made by perpetrators in the past that they were contrite and would stop abusing are never again going to be taken at face value.

11. Our people’s faith is strong and sustains them even in times of challenge. We receive from them a level of emotional and spiritual support that humbles us. Their trust in God sustains not just themselves but us too.

12. Bishops must partner with public authorities by complying with civil laws with respect to reporting allegations of sexual abuse of minors and cooperating with their investigation. All leaders of the community whether religious or secular need to work together to protect children and young people.

The *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, which we bishops adopted in 2002 and renewed twice since, provides direction for our handling the sexual abuse of minors by priests. It can be found on the U.S.C.C.B. Web site at <http://www.usccb.org/ocyp/charter.shtml>.

MOST REV. BLASE CUPICH is chairman of the Committee for Child and Youth Protection of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.



Divided, We Stand

Back in the days when Jesuits in seminary studies had to endure batteries of intimidating oral exams, the traditional advice offered to a quaking scholastic was direct: always distinguish. The board of examiners might try to trick an unsuspecting examinee into affirming or denying a simple thesis that in actuality required large doses of nuance. Remembering to introduce the appropriate distinctions in key categories often supplied the shortcut through the intellectual minefield. This particular pearl of wisdom saved me several times.

Recent events on the national stage lead me to recall this morsel of Jesuit arcana. Especially since the passage of the health care overhaul several weeks ago with nary a Republican vote, many observers have yielded to the temptation to render certain simplistic judgments about the state of our national temper. Has President Obama's success on this pivotal issue unleashed a veritable avalanche of resentment that will prove impossible to rein in? Is the backlash indeed on the verge of cascading into political violence?

A good number of media pundits would have us believe that America is teetering on the brink of a civil war. They cite just enough evidence for concern (Tea Party movement rhetoric, death threats against lawmakers, F.B.I. investigations of the Hutaree group, vandalism on Capitol Hill) that predictions of widespread civil strife being just around the corner have gained some superficial plausibility. But before we buy wholesale into a

"Chicken Little" scenario, it would be wise to recall the lesson about useful distinctions.

We should not equate scattered expressions of frustration with clear and imminent danger to our republic. Watching people blow off steam is not the same as witnessing the opening salvos of a violent revolution. While the nation is not completely free of right-wing extremism, neither is it on the verge of civil chaos. There is nothing humorous about the hate-motivated incidents that do pop up from time to time, but we are hardly witnessing a massive insurgency.

What we are in fact witnessing is a fairly strong bout of partisan divisiveness that has gained some momentum as it ripples outward from the halls of Congress. Millions of people are stepping forward to embrace the antagonistic posture that they are indeed "mad as hell"—angry not just about a new set of health insurance arrangements, but often about a range of recent measures that they interpret as federal overreaching, including elements of the stimulus package and various financial bailouts. This phenomenon of "rage on the right" is anything but new in a nation founded on a tax revolt. It is also worth recalling the rather intense "rage on the left" not so long ago, which often went by the name "Bush bashing."

Just how serious, in the grand scheme of things, is our current fit of temper? I doubt that even latter-day historians will be able to construct a reliable "vitriol index" to adjudicate

such matters. But it is comforting to recall that we have weathered more intense episodes of fractiousness with our national unity intact.

Indeed, it would be surprising if the settlement of a divisive issue like health care reform did not spark a good deal of backlash. From the days of Shays' Rebellion to the tax revolts of recent decades, recurring bouts of antigovernment sentiment have been a

We have weathered more intense episodes with our unity intact.

constant in U.S. politics. Some episodes have rightly induced concern, but the smart money is still riding against predictions of a bloody apocalypse anytime soon.

In the end, the good sense of the American people deserves our deepest confidence.

Displaying the pragmatic centrism that has served our nation so well through its trials, the American populace instinctively accepts compromises and half-loaf solutions as the very staff of politics. In our most laudable political culture, resorting to violence is recognized for what it is: an admission of one's own failures to be patient and creative enough to win support for one's proposals. As long as our democratic system of government remains responsive to demands for the redress of grievances, political legitimacy and stability will be maintained, no matter how incendiary the rhetoric of populist anger might grow.

Sure, there are rifts today, but marking the past will help us distinguish garden-variety partisan bickering from serious threats to our nation.

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PHOTO: ONS/JASON REED, REUTERS

Barack Obama and Dmitry Medvedev sign the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty at Prague Castle, Czech Republic, on April 8.



FINDING OUR WAY ON THE ROAD
TO DISARMAMENT

The Nuclear Ethics Gap

BY GERARD POWERS

Nuclear disarmament has gone mainstream. Nuclear hawks like Henry Kissinger, who derided the U.S. Catholic bishops in 1983 for their naïve and utopian call for an ultimate ban on nuclear weapons, now are inspiring a global chorus of prominent military and political figures—including President Barack Obama—to endorse that very goal. The bishops and other religious leaders were ahead of Kissinger and Obama in calling for nuclear disarmament not just as a moral ideal but as a policy goal, and the bishops continue to offer a moral framework and to advocate for policies in keeping with that goal. But there is a gap in ethical reflection. The moral framework for disarmament that the bishops and the Holy See have developed since the end of the cold war would benefit from deeper reflection by ethicists on the moral issues that arise on the road to nuclear disarmament.

Nuclear disarmament will never be accepted as a moral imperative and will have little traction in policy circles unless people are convinced that it is not a utopian dream but rather a realistic policy objective that can be achieved, and achieved in a way that ensures that the cure (disarmament) is not worse than the disease (deterrence). An abundance of books and high-level reports by nuclear strategists in the past decade have made a convincing case that nuclear abolition is possible and necessary.

The “can” of disarmament is not just about nuclear strategy, however, but also about ethics, and, in particular, moral attitudes. In *The Seventh Decade*, Jonathan Schell describes the “profound fatalism” that has shaped the nuclear debate: “an anxiety or conviction that the bomb, though a human creation, is somehow immune to human control.” This

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fatalism not only denies our moral responsibility but risks replacing the virtue of hope with the sin of despair. Nuclear disarmament requires the development of a “can do” ethic. Nuclear ethicists can complement the strategists by reminding people that although nuclear weapons cannot be disinvited, we still have a moral obligation to ban them.

Deterrence vis-à-vis Disarmament

In their 1983 peace pastoral, “The Challenge of Peace: God’s Promise and Our Response,” the bishops proposed an “interim ethic” whereby nuclear deterrence could be morally acceptable under three conditions: 1) if it is limited to deterring the use of nuclear weapons and not expanded to include nuclear-war fighting strategies or using nuclear weapons to deter against nonnuclear threats (the *sole use* criterion); 2) if the goal is to have enough weapons only to deter nuclear use, not to achieve nuclear superiority (the *sufficiency* criterion); and 3) if deterrence is used as a step toward progressive disarmament (the *disarmament* criterion). This strictly conditioned moral acceptance of deterrence is tied to the bishops’ categorical rejection of nuclear use against civilian populations, opposition to first use and deep skepticism about the morality of a limited retaliatory use. The first two criteria and the analysis of the morality of use constitute a *deterrence ethic* insofar as they define the kind of nuclear deterrent that might be morally acceptable during the interim period before nuclear disarmament is achieved. The third criterion tightly links this deterrence ethic to a *nonnuclear ethic*, one that combines nonproliferation with abolition, such that all countries must do their part both to prevent proliferation and to negotiate a verifiable global ban on nuclear weapons.

The moral status of deterrence and its link to disarmament need to be reconsidered. Nuclear pacifists have long argued that if the church wants disarmament, it must first condemn deterrence. Recent Vatican statements have seemed to do just that. In a talk at Woodstock Theological Center in Washington, D.C., in March 2010, Archbishop Celestino Migliore, the Holy See’s observer at the United Nations, decried the “second nuclear age” (the first being the cold war) when nuclear weapons are proliferating, nuclear terrorism is a threat and nuclear weapons “are no longer just for deterrence but have become entrenched in the military doctrines of the major powers.”

“It is evident,” the archbishop concluded, “that nuclear deterrence is preventing genuine nuclear disarmament. Consequently, *the conditions* that prevailed during the cold war, which gave a basis for the church’s limited toleration of nuclear deterrence, *no longer apply*” [italics in original].

It would be a mistake to interpret this and other Vatican statements as breaking the link between deterrence and disarmament, rejecting the former in order to achieve the lat-

ter. Clearly the conditions for the moral acceptability of deterrence are not being met. Supporters of the status quo in U.S. nuclear policy, in 2010 as in 1983, will find little to comfort them in the bishops’ strict conditions for the moral acceptability of deterrence (see pg. 13).

But criticism of existing nuclear deterrents is not tantamount to condemning nuclear deterrence per se. What the church rejects is the widely held view that nuclear weapons bring security but nuclear disarmament would bring insecurity. In order to counter the idea that nuclear deterrence is an end in itself, church statements have dramatically shifted the emphasis from the need to meet the two conditions of the deterrence ethic (the only realistic objective during the cold war) to the need to embrace a nonnuclear ethic, in line with the third condition. Disarmament has become the primary condition (though not the only one) for the moral acceptability of deterrence, the lens through which other conditions must be viewed.

One implication of this shift is that the disarmament lens refocuses the deterrence debate on how the sole-purpose and sufficiency conditions can contribute to delegitimizing the expansion and modernization of nuclear arsenals and provide a rationale for reducing U.S. and Russian stockpiles to the 100 or so weapons that most experts consider sufficient to deter.

This shift also has implications for the relationship between use and deterrence. If the moral possibility, however remote, of isolated uses of nuclear weapons has been replaced by an unequivocal rejection of any use (in part because use would undermine prospects for disarmament), does that imply that the threat of use is not necessary to deter?

A third issue is how to address the fact that the problem of deterrence is not eliminated by going to zero. Moving to zero could make nuclear weapons even more valuable, more usable and more destabilizing, since keeping a few nuclear weapons or being able to rebuild quickly or reconstitute an arsenal could offer a tremendous strategic advantage. The problem of nuclear terrorism would be reduced but not eliminated with a global ban.

At the low numbers that correspond to the sole purpose and sufficiency conditions, does the case for “existential deterrence” become more credible strategically and offer a morally superior form of deterrence?

The term existential deterrence refers to the theory that if it is known that a country possesses nuclear weapons or can build them, that is enough to deter nuclear use by others. If that theory is correct, it would not be necessary to continue with strategies and doctrines based on a conditional intent to use nuclear weapons in ways that would be indiscriminate or disproportionate. Likewise, in *A World Without Nuclear Weapons*, Sydney Drell and James Goodby argue convincingly that a form of existential deterrence

The U.S. Bishops and the Bomb

BY STEPHEN M. COLECCHI

The letter of the U.S. bishops in 1983, “The Challenge of Peace,” and their follow-up letter in 1993, “The Harvest of Justice Is Sown in Peace,” established the U.S. Catholic bishops as a moral voice on nuclear disarmament. They argued, “The eventual elimination of nuclear weapons is more than a moral ideal; it should be a policy goal.” This vision of a world without nuclear weapons guided and continues to shape their public engagement.

The bishops supported ratification of the Strategic Arms Reduction treaties (Start I and II) between the United States and the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. In the late 90s they lamented the defeat of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in the Senate. The bishops welcomed the 2002 Moscow Treaty between the United States and Russia as a positive step, but called on the United States to do much more.

During the past decade, the conference has opposed federal funding for research on the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator, the Reliable Replacement Warhead and other new nuclear weapons.

Recently, as public debate over nuclear questions has grown, the engagement of the bishops has intensified. At its Deterrence Symposium in July 2009, the U.S. Strategic Command turned to the U.S.C.C.B. to offer moral reflections. At that event Archbishop Edwin O’Brien, a member of the bishops’ Committee on International Justice and Peace, gave a major talk, titled “Nuclear Weapons and Moral Questions: The Path to Zero.” He urged the nuclear powers to “move beyond” deterrence. Subsequently, he joined Global Zero, a group of prominent leaders committed to a nuclear-weapons-free world and addressed their summit meeting in Paris last February.

Last fall Bishop Howard Hubbard, chairman of the bishops’ International Committee, sent the text of Archbishop O’Brien’s July address to every senator and urged each one to take steps toward a nuclear-weapons-free world by ratifying the anticipated Start follow-on treaty and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. At the same time Bishop Hubbard joined other leaders in writing President Obama and endorsing an advertisement in political publications that called for reductions in nuclear weapons. Early this year the bishop teamed up with the Nobel physicist Leon Lederman to write an op-ed piece supporting nuclear disarmament that was published by The Atlanta Journal Constitution. More recently, the conference weighed in on the Nuclear Posture Review, asking President Obama to narrow the purpose of the nuclear arsenal solely to deterring nuclear attack.

In a “swords into plowshares” initiative, the U.S.C.C.B. is promoting the Global Security Priorities Resolution (H.R. 278). The legislation aims to reduce nuclear weapons and directs the savings to strengthen nonproliferation, secure nuclear materials and also improve child nutrition and education in developing countries.

The signing of the new Start Treaty on April 8 in Prague and the possible submission of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty to the Senate next year will undoubtedly elicit more public engagement.

Parish Resources

The U.S.C.C.B. offers the following resources for parishes on nuclear disarmament:

1. Letter from Cardinal Francis George to President Obama welcoming the signing of the new Start treaty between the United States and the Russian Federation and urging members of the U.S. Senate to come together across party lines to ratify it.
2. Action Alert: Inviting Catholics to urge senators to ratify the new Start treaty to verifiably reduce nuclear weapons.
3. Catholic study guide for use with “Nuclear Tipping Point,” a free DVD, based on Catholic social teaching. It is designed to help small groups of adults and mature young people explore issues related to nuclear weapons in the light of their Catholic faith.
4. Background on nuclear arms treaties: explores the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, the new Start treaty, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the church’s activities and teaching related to nuclear weapons.

For U.S.C.C.B. resources on nuclear weapons, go online to: <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/nuclear.shtml>.

STEPHEN M. COLECCHI is the director of the Office of International Justice and Peace of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

would also work once a global ban is in place, since the capacity to reconstitute a nuclear arsenal would deter other countries from doing so.

An existential deterrent based on the ability to rebuild a nuclear arsenal quickly is not without its own problems, however, since a few states would have such a capacity and most would not. The same disparity in capacity arises if powerful countries rely on conventional forces to deter nuclear cheaters. A world in which a few powers dominate because of their capacity to reconstitute their nuclear arsenal and exercise superiority in conventional weaponry would not be acceptable to other countries, would not reduce the incentive for them to obtain or retain a nuclear capacity and could spark a conventional arms race. Therefore, getting the relationship right between nuclear deterrence, nuclear disarmament and conventional disarmament is a key task for ethicists as well as for policymakers.

Constraining Counterproliferation

The invasion of Iraq by the United States in 2003 and its aftermath should have been the death of the misbegotten doctrine of preventive war, but progress toward nuclear disarmament could give the doctrine new life. If the debate over Iran is any indication, the pressure for preventive force against proliferators and cheaters, especially difficult-to-deter “rogue” regimes with ties to terrorists, will likely intensify in a world of few or no nuclear weapons. Calls for an ethic of “disarmament intervention” akin to humanitarian intervention could emerge. In my view preventive force, even at the end stages of disarmament and under U.N. auspices, should continue to be considered an act of aggression that would threaten the international stability that nonproliferation and disarmament are meant to ensure.

Unlike the rejection of preventive force, however, the ethics of missile defense will need to be reconsidered as the world makes progress toward nuclear disarmament. In 1988, the bishops opposed the deployment of missile defenses by the Reagan administration. They were not convinced that the Strategic Defense Initiative, popularly known as Star Wars, would make it possible to supersede deterrence. They were concerned about its feasibility, its negative impact on the stability of deterrence and efforts at arms control, and its disproportionate cost. A different assessment will be needed as the world goes to zero. With no or only a few weapons, missile defense becomes more feasible (assuming further technical progress) and could, in fact, supplant some (not all) forms of nuclear deterrence. As David Cortright and Raimo Väyrynen point out in a recent report in the Adelphi Papers monograph series, if it were shared or under international supervision, missile defense would not be destabilizing and an impediment to disarmament.

A Peacebuilding Ethic

Nuclear abolition is a long-term objective that ultimately is as much about politics as it is about arms control. In that sense, the bishops’ “interim” ethic is less a function of time than context. Nuclear abolition does not require a change in human nature or an end to war. It does require a change in politics: a sustained and united political will and, as the U.S. bishops have consistently said, the development of an ethic of cooperative security and peacebuilding that offers effective alternatives to existing nuclear deterrents and preventive force.

The United States and other nuclear powers must lead by example in disarming. But like politics, problems of proliferation are local. Enforcing the Nonproliferation Treaty will probably be less a factor in stopping the spread of nuclear weapons in the Middle East, for example, than resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and others in the region and making good on a longstanding commitment to negotiate a nuclear-weapons-free zone there.

Failed states will also remain a source of conflict and will pose a serious challenge to achieving and enforcing a global ban. An often-ignored part of the peace pastoral is the bishops’ call for further development of a theology of peace. Much more needs to be done to develop a peacebuilding ethic to match the sophistication of the just war ethic.

The Security-Sovereignty Nexus


A nonnuclear ethic requires a reconsideration of the relationship between sovereignty and security and a redefinition of the rights and responsibilities of sovereignty. If the nuclear “have nots” have to practice an ethic of restraint in forgoing nuclear weapons to protect their national security in the name of the global good, the shift in duties is even more pronounced for the nuclear “haves.” Because of the risks they have imposed on the world by possessing nuclear weapons, the United States and other nuclear powers bear a heavy burden: to take the lead in global peacebuilding. As they pursue nuclear disarmament, they have a special obligation to forgo pretensions of military, political and economic dominance over other nations and, instead, take the lead in building a system of cooperative security that will make a global ban more likely and sustainable.

How would an ethic of cooperative security and responsible engagement for the global good redefine approaches to strengthening international law and international institutions? If a global ban is to be effective, both nuclear and nonnuclear nations will have to give up some of their rights of sovereignty. For one, the potential doubling of nuclear power generation in the next 20 years will fuel

ON THE WEB

An archive of **America's** coverage of nuclear arms control. americamagazine.org/pages

proliferation unless the International Atomic Energy Agency is strengthened and nations agree to much more intrusive inspections, stronger safeguards and tougher sanctions. International measures to verify, enforce and ensure compliance with a ban on nuclear weapons will be even more important. In addition, missile defenses would also have to be shared or put under some common authority. For these and other reasons, the current understanding of the rights of sovereignty and the limits and reach of the authority of the United Nations and other international entities will have to be rethought to make a global ban on nuclear weapons a reality.

Perhaps more than at any other time in the nuclear age, the world is at a critical crossroads: The moral ideal of nuclear abolition is now a realistic long-term policy goal, yet that goal could become unachievable if the world reaches a tipping point in nuclear proliferation. Just as they did with the moral dilemmas of deterrence, Catholic ethicists need to address in a systematic way the moral and strategic challenges involved in going to zero. The end goal is adoption of a nonnuclear ethic whereby any nation that keeps or seeks nuclear weapons would be marginalized as a proliferator. A more sophisticated moral case for nonproliferation and disarmament is essential if the new mainstream support for disarmament is to be sustained over the decades most think necessary for it to become a reality. 

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Family Trees

An expectant mother's cycles of grace

BY ALICE KEARNEY ALWIN

I cannot imagine being eight months pregnant any time but during April. But then again, if I were due during the summer harvest or the autumnal foliage, or pregnant during Advent, like Mary, I would most likely be partial to those seasons and would never consider it could have been otherwise. As it is, my first baby, choosing to be born in June, has grown my belly to full blossom in springtime.

I started a notebook to write about the physical changes of my pregnancy, but ended up writing about the trees. Outside, the natural world has arranged itself into a liturgical procession suitable for a major feast day. The ordo: the crocus acolytes lead in the foythia choir, followed by the shrubbery deacons, azalea to lilac, attending the fat and jolly magnolia, cloaked in the finest fragrant vestments, spun with white golden thread.

There is such a magnolia on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan. It burst into blossom on Easter Monday. Unfortunately, that was a blustery day, and the sweet petals adorning every branch of the tree at 7 a.m. were all blown off and trodden underfoot, browned and composting, 12 hours later. Still, the moment before the winds began, the petals' release saw a magnificent show. And then, as suddenly as it began, it returned into a regular, unremarkable, leafy tree. Magnolia is an ancient and resilient genus; its glory is fleeting, but memorable.

ALICE KEARNEY ALWIN is the spiritual life coordinator at the Marymount School of New York in Manhattan.



Spring in the suburbs is luxurious and sprawling. It rolls in at a controlled pace, seen over kitchen sills and through school bus windows. There are greening lawns and morning dew and robins searching for earthworms. But in the city, spring arrives unannounced on one day, a crazed explosion, a detonated bomb. I cannot deal with it; it's too fast and sudden. Thankfully, as the baby makes my body grow larger, I am unable to rush past anything anymore. I have to stop my life to catch the spring. My gaze is forced up from the grimy streets to the theater happening in the treetops. I can't help but try to stay balanced on my two feet, a witness to this renewal of nature.

During the short days of winter, when the growing baby was putting me to bed on the couch around 8 p.m., the

tiny buds were setting on the branches of these trees. The promise of the springtime blossoms was there all winter, invisible, an inner hidden mystery waiting and longing to blossom, a visible sign of an invisible reality. In the sacraments, God breaks through.

I was born into a sacramental world, and the sacraments have been the ordering principle within which and into which I live. There is a cycle to the church's sacred

moments. The sacraments of initiation, of healing and of vocation can catch us up when we need to be reminded to slow down and witness the blessings of the moment. There is always something to celebrate; even the long stretches of ordinary time are packed with feast days. My pregnancy has been blessed in light of this sacra-

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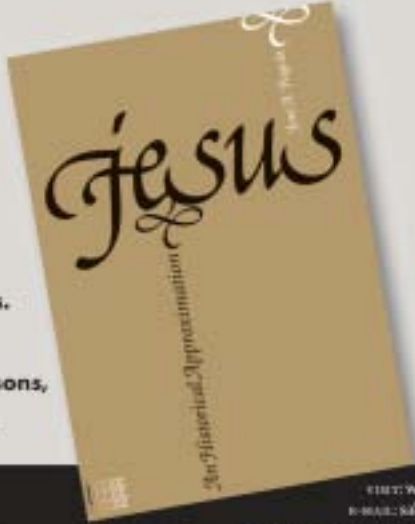
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mental framework, offering me a greater awareness of my location within the liturgical cycle. The cycle of nature is partnered with the cycle of the sacraments, coming around and around year after year with the same mystery and regularity.

The earth, the church, the body are always changing seasons, always showing off in ways that can be appreciated. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J., said, "Purity does not lie in separation from but in deeper penetration into the universe." The experience of being pregnant in spring has been pleasing to my senses: fragrant and sunny and irresistibly optimistic. Feeling the rumbles within my womb, sinking slightly into springy sod, I am reminded that my body is doing what it has been gifted to do. I feel the power of creation passing through me. I am filled with a nature-inspired confidence that my body and my faith will take care of me.

This season is always about more than the fertility rites of springtime. It is Eastertide, the season of the Resurrection, of the ultimate surprise, and of the Ascension. This year I have been thinking of the disciples as expectant parents, nesting in the upper room, being showered with gifts at Pentecost, struggling to set up a proper home, a church awaiting its birth. There is a spirituality of pregnancy within the Acts of the Apostles, which for me has been more instructive reading than any childbirth manual.

These are the reflections of a laboring mother, perhaps even the start of an attempt to construct a theology of maternity. As the trees release their blossoms and spring marches onward toward the summer solstice, my due date creeps closer. Soon I will let go of this child I have been carrying through three of nature's seasons and seven liturgical ones. Next spring, no longer pregnant, I will watch the trees burst forth with blossoms, but with another witness to the Resurrection. **A**

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'HALLELUJAH'

The beautiful, broken song of Leonard Cohen

The Jewish singer-songwriter Leonard Cohen has been mischievously dubbed “the poet laureate of pessimism” and “the godfather of gloom.” He does not write the kind of songs guaranteed to get a party off to a rousing start. Perhaps the melancholic Irishman in me is drawn by the heartbreaking songs produced by his resonant baritone voice, at times indistinguishable from a husky growl.

I've wondered if the Canadian-born

Cohen has some Irish blood. As W. B. Yeats is supposed to have said of a compatriot, “Being Irish, he had an abiding sense of tragedy which sustained him through temporary periods of joy.” During a concert last April in Los Angeles, Cohen made a similar comment. “It’s a long time since I’ve stood up on the stage,” he said. “It’s about 14 or 15 years. I was 60 years old at the time, just a kid with a crazy dream. Since then I’ve taken a lot of

Prozac, Paxil, Welbutrin, Effexor, Ritalin, Focalin. I also turned to a rigorous and profound study of the religions and the philosophies, but cheerfulness kept breaking through.”

Leonard Cohen’s song “Hallelujah,” first released in 1984, attracted little attention at first except from diehard fans. The record company was initially reluctant to release the song. But today things have changed for this gospel-y tune that saunters along with a gentle waltz-like feel. Right now there are about 200 cover versions of the song available in various languages. In February, K. D. Lang gave a mesmerizing performance of “Hallelujah” at the opening ceremony of the Vancouver

Leonard Cohen at the Klimainham Royal Hospital, in Dublin, Ireland on June 14, 2008.



PHOTO: G. CLUSKEY

Winter Olympics. The tragic death of Nodar Kumaritashvili, the 21-year old Georgian luger, a few hours before made the lyrics of the song especially appropriate. A month earlier, a highlight of the Hope for Haiti Telethon was a haunting performance of "Hallelujah" by Justin Timberlake and Matt Morris. In a moment of great tragedy for the Haitian people, the song captured the appropriate mood and, not surprisingly, became the top-selling song from that telethon.

The English singer Alexandra Burke released a cover version of "Hallelujah" as her debut single in December 2008. It raced to the top of

the U.K. charts, became Britain's top-selling song of the year, and made Burke the first British soloist to sell a million singles in her native U.K. Meanwhile, fans of another version of "Hallelujah," by the late Jeff Buckley, campaigned to have his version reach number one. As a result, two versions of the same song occupied the number one and number two slots around Christmas 2008. Earlier that year Buckley's version had powered to the top of the iTunes chart, also thanks to a performance by a competitor on "American Idol."

Many people still regard the Jeff Buckley recording from 1994 as definitive. Buckley succeeded in transforming the gloominess of Cohen's original lament to an uplifting tribute, capturing the beauty and pain of human life. Like Cohen's original rendition, Buckley's version did not achieve instant recognition. It became a hit only several years after his death in 1997, when the song was used in the 2001 film "Shrek."

It was not Leonard Cohen but another singer, John Cale, who came up with the definitive lyrics in 1991. Cale had heard Leonard Cohen perform "Hallelujah" live, but when he asked Cohen for the lyrics, he was surprised to receive 15 different verses. Cohen had been experimenting with so many different lyrics that he had never fixed on one version. Cale went through all the verses and arrived at the version that has since become standard, and which even Cohen himself now tends to follow.

How did a song with so many biblical references (none of which refer to the New Testament) become ubiquitous? How did a lyrical, slow-moving tune become popular

in an era when aggressive percussion and insistent drum-beats power pop songs? Why has the song been used to create atmosphere and mood in the soundtracks of many movies and TV shows? Why can't people get enough of it?

Precisely because it embodies a real and gritty spirituality. It is not afraid to embrace the tragedy of human life. As Cohen sings in "Anthem":

*There is a crack, a crack in
everything
That's how the light gets in.*

There is always a crack, even in the midst of profound suffering. At the beginning of "Hallelujah," King David, the composer of psalms in praise of God, has happily discovered a secret chord with which to give God joy. But soon the king succumbs to temptation:

*Well your faith was strong but you
needed proof
You saw her bathing on the roof
Her beauty and the moonlight
overthrew you.*

The reference to David is mixed up with allusions to Samson and Delilah, as the song goes on to tell how

*She broke your throne and she cut
your hair.*

The power of David and the strength of Samson are cut away; the two are stripped of their facile certainties, and their promising lives topple into the dust. The man who composed songs of praise with such aplomb and the man whose strength was the envy of all, now find themselves in a stark and barren place. When we fall to sin, we wake up to bitterness. We realize that love is not the easy triumph we once imagined it to be:

Love is not a victory march

One Glint in the Eye

The tenderness of snow flaming
from the glass sky, unending delight
on the meadow, forcing the stream,
foraging the cedars and maples,
frosting the few stars left in heaven.

A witchcraft of sorts, a staple
for springs, the purity of what sticks,
a garment of delirium, chastity.

This is how it descends, flying ribbons
and fluttering moths, candles reflecting
the little light left to this evening.

The shadows open and close, my heart
flits to a bird, one glint in the eye
of this storm, lingering over the pond.

LEONARD CIRINO

LEONARD CIRINO, the editor of *Pygmy Forest Press* in Springfield, Ore., has recently published *Chinese Masters* (March Street Press) and *Russian Matinee* (Cedar Hill Publications).

*It's a cold and it's a broken
Hallelujah.*

When we find ourselves in desolation, we ask: How can we stay alive when we have kissed death? Is faith still possible? Has love lost its savor and sweetness? David, Samson and all of us are vulnerable, exposed to the chill of a spiritual wasteland. Yet we need not surrender to despair; instead, we can find our way forward to a new way of hoping and praising God, though one devoid of sugary sweetness and false romanticism. We no longer come before God with full arms, but only with empty hands:

*And even though it all went wrong
I'll stand before the Lord of Song
With nothing on my tongue but
Hallelujah.*

One reason that “Hallelujah” appeals is that it gives voice—and song—to the spiritual hunger of millions who find it difficult or impossible to identify with orthodox expressions of their longings. This song expresses their human fragility and their desire to be released from the shallowness of our age, which offers substandard spiritual fare. They search; they desire to reconnect with the transcendent, even though their search is often handicapped by an astonishing spiritual inarticulateness. The danger is that a lack of spiritual anchors will condemn them to aimless drifting or submersion in the inescapable sameness of a culture for which all forms of spirituality are of equal indifference, a culture not rooted in the definite contours offered by religious faith.

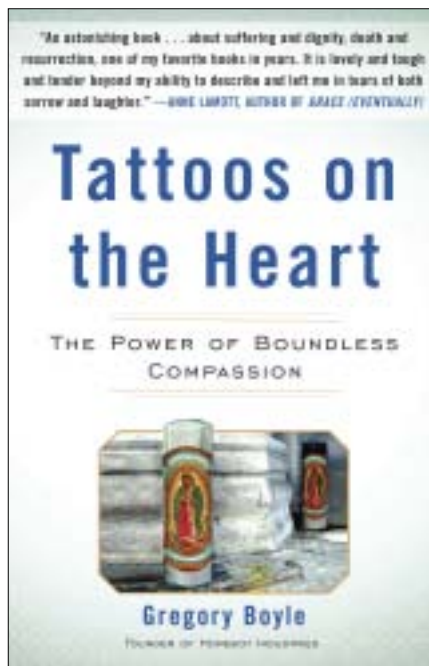
“Hallelujah” does not end with neatly packaged answers. Instead it is content to stay with the rawness of an open wound, though allowing a sliver of hope

to shine through. We can only hope if we can let loss run its course, without giving in to the compulsion to end its discomfort prematurely. There is a beauty in this kind of acceptance, a wisdom hidden in the knowledge that even when we suffer, there is still light. This illumination ennobles us even as we labor to find vindicating words and reasons. There is a transfiguring dimension to our struggles, because our nights are pierced by a divine light. We can learn to recognize hidden springs of water gushing from what seems to be only a desert.

ON THE WEB

Jack McLain, S.J., assesses the zombie craze. americamagazine.org/culture

BOOKS | J. PETER NIXON HOPE FOR ‘HOMIES’



TATTOOS ON THE HEART The Power of Boundless Compassion

By Gregory Boyle
Free Press. 240p \$25

“Nothing stops a bullet like a job” is the motto of Homeboy Industries, the largest gang intervention program

in the United States. Founded in 1986 by Gregory Boyle, a Jesuit priest, Homeboy offers job training, tattoo removal and employment to Los Angeles gang members who are seeking to leave gang life behind. Boyle and his work have been featured in newspapers and magazines across the country.

Leonard Cohen has spoken of the redemptive potential of the word “Hallelujah,” and how it can be a source of inspiration and illumination in a spiritual wasteland: “Regardless of what the impossibility of the situation is, there is a moment when you open your arms and you embrace the thing and you just say ‘Hallelujah! Blessed is the name.’ And you can’t reconcile it any other way except in that position of total surrender, total affirmation.”

THOMAS G. CASEY, S.J., is director of the Cardinal Bea Center for Judaic Studies in Rome and professor of philosophy at the Gregorian University. His most recent book is *Music of Pure Love* (Templegate, 2006).

Boyle—a k a Father Greg, G-Dog, or simply G—has written a new book about his experiences entitled *Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion*. The book is less about Boyle, though, than about his “homies,” the young men and women who come to Homeboy in search of a better life. The result is a set of stories that will stir many emotions. They will leave you dumbfounded at the power of love and compassion to break down high walls built by anger and pain.

Early in the book, we encounter a young gang member named Scappy. Assigned to do community service in Boyle’s parish by his probation officer, Scappy spends his hours snarling at the priest. Five years later, Boyle is

preaching at the funeral of a gang member and suggests that the best way to honor his memory is to embrace peace and forgiveness. Scrappy, a close friend of the deceased, walks to the front of the church to confront Boyle and then stalks out the side door. Three years after that, Scrappy pulls a gun on Boyle when he tries to break up a fight.

When Scrappy walks into Boyle's office years later, the reader can be forgiven for thinking that this is not going to end well. Instead, there is laughter, then tears, then a confession: "I've spent twenty years building a reputation for myself and now I regret that I even have one." Similar words could have been placed on the lips of almost all the gang members whose stories Boyle recounts.

Sometimes, though, even a job can't stop a bullet. Just a few months after Scrappy started work on Homeboy's graffiti removal crew, he was killed while rolling a paintbrush over some graffiti in Boyle Heights.

Too many of Boyle's stories end this way. After a while the reader begins to pray that these young men and women will live to enjoy the fruit of their changed lives. Boyle—who has buried 168 of his homies—no doubt prays that prayer as well. It raises the question asked by many gang members who are considering a change in life, "What's the point of doing good if this can happen to you?"

Boyle agrees that it is a good question, worthy of an answer. He cites Julian of Norwich's observation that life is a struggle to discover that we are "clothed in God's goodness." Once these young men and women make that discovery, nothing can be the same again. "What is death compared to knowing that?" writes Boyle, "No bullet can pierce it."

All too often, though, the greatest risks these young people face come from within, the bad choices made from a set of limited options. Boyle

admits that he sometimes struggles against the despair inherent in "watching the kids you love cooperate in their own demise." Nevertheless, he hopes the reader will "stand in awe of what the poor have to carry rather than stand in judgment at how they carry it."

Despite the fact that Homeboy Industries has been lauded as a national model in its effectiveness, Boyle doubts that what is ultimately a ministry can be assessed in those terms. "I'm not opposed to success," he writes. "I just think we should accept it only if it is a byproduct of our fidelity. If our primary concern is results, we will choose to work only with those who give us good ones."

What is needed, suggests Boyle, is not another set of well-intentioned interventions targeted at "them." Instead, we need a radical commitment to re-weave the bonds of communion that have been eroded by our insistence on drawing lines that exclude: race, class, neighborhood, gang membership. "The margins don't

get erased by simply insisting that the powers-that-be erase them," he writes. Those powers "will only be moved to kinship when they observe it. Only when we see a community where the outcast is valued and appreciated."

Which is why, in the end, *Tattoos on the Heart* is a profound work of theology. More powerfully than any treatise, it reveals a God who "dines with tax collectors and sinners," and leaves the 99 sheep to find the one who has strayed; a God who forms one people from a group of fractious tribes and one church from a motley collection of Jews and Gentiles.

"When the vastness of God meets the restriction of our own humanity, words can't hold it," writes Boyle. "The best we can do is find the moments that rhyme with this expansive heart of God." At Homeboy Industries, it is clear that such moments are far from rare.

J. PETER NIXON is a volunteer with *Kairos Prison Ministry* in Northern California and a graduate of the *Jesuit School of Theology, Berkeley*.

DENISE LARDNER CARMODY IN FAITHFUL SERVICE

A PRIEST'S LIFE

The Calling, the Cost, the Joy

Compiled and edited by Patricia Mitchell

Word Among Us Press. 200p \$11.95 (paperback)

This is a collection of reflections by 29 priests on the origins and meanings of their vocations. I use the plural deliberately because while there is a common theme in these short pieces, each man came to his vocation and finds sustenance in living it in ways that are uniquely his own. The book celebrates priesthood as a gift to the whole church. In their introduction, Patricia

Mitchell and Jeff Smith, the president of The Word Among Us Inc., tell us "we wanted to compile these stories and witnesses to honor the many thousands of priests worldwide who serve us so selflessly." They have succeeded admirably.

Along with the introduction, there is a preface by Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien of Baltimore. The book concludes with the "Letter of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI Proclaiming a Year for Priests." Included among the reflections are two that deserve special mention. The first is an excerpt from a homily given to his priests by Cardinal Joseph

Bernardin the evening before his installation as archbishop of Chicago. It is entitled "My Vision of the Priesthood." The second is the homily Bishop Victor Galeone of the diocese of St. Augustine, Fla., gave to his priests in 2002 as the pedophilia scandal was breaking. Its title is "Celibacy: A Sign of Love for Jesus." Read together these writings portray for me the beauty and the tragedy surrounding today's priestly vocation.

Edited works are often uneven. But—whether because the reflections are brief or, more likely, because of the skill of Patricia Mitchell, who compiled them—these stories are consistently engaging. Some are funny; others poignant. All are worth reading. They tell of men working in missionary lands, in inner cities, in prisons, at ground zero in New York in 2001, doing scholarly research, teaching students in high school and graduate school, preaching and healing in charismatic ministries and suburban parishes. They are men looking back from 15, 30, 50 and more years after ordination. Some belong to religious orders; most are diocesan priests.

Several reflections reveal the deep friendships that these priests share with their brother priests. Some entered the seminary before high school and thus were part of cohorts that grew up together. In those days of large seminary classes, they could be sure that a fair number of them would continue to be nearby after ordination. One man related that his first assignment was to a parish where the pastor regularly invited neighboring priests for dinner. When the young priest was

sent to another parish, he realized how much those dinners had influenced him. So, after calling his mother for some recipes, he began to invite the local clergy to dinner on a weekly basis. He cooked; others cleaned up. They spent the evening together, sharing stories that evoked laughter and sometimes chagrin. Soon they were supporting one another in practical ways: helping with penance services, Forty Hours devotion, etc.

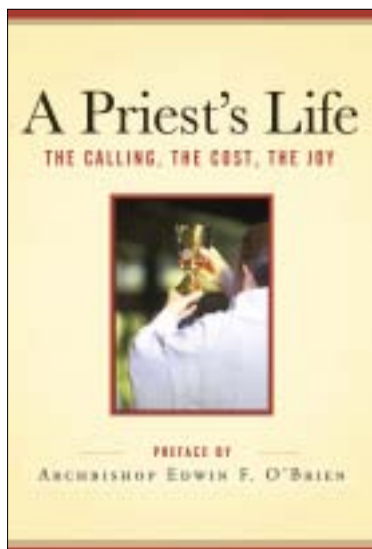
As I read the account, I realized again, sadly, how much has changed. Seminaries today draw far fewer men, and they are older and come from dioceses across the country and around the world. After ordination few can expect to live within "dining" distance of classmates whose friendships will sustain them in their ministries.

As to the potential audience for this book, my first thought was of vocation

directors who might give this paperback to men interested in pursuing a priestly vocation. Then my mind shifted to the audience who would benefit from reading *A Priest's Life*. That audience is wider: all Catholics—and all fair-minded people—who are troubled by the seemingly unstoppable flood of stories of abuse and coverup. What a jolt of courage it is for our souls wearied by sorrow and betrayal to read about the chaplain whose service in Iraq ended when he suffered a brain injury that contributed to his death, or the missionary who shares the poverty of the people he serves, or the retired priest whose bed is his altar where he experiences the joy of "horizontal prayer." For prayer is the common theme that threads through all the stories.

Prayer—sometimes deep, often fleeting, full of pain and grace, but more and more a constant companion—is what makes and keeps them good priests. This perhaps is the lesson they have to teach us.

DENISE LARDNER CARMODY is a professor in the religious studies department at Santa Clara University, California.



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POWER ACROSS THE POND

EUROPE'S PROMISE

Why the European Hope Is the Best Way in an Insecure Age

By Steven Hill

University of California Press. 488p
\$24.95 (paperback)

If we wanted to know what a society and economy molded by Catholic social teaching since *Rerum Novarum* would look like, a sage observer of the church once told me, we would not do badly by observing Western Europe, meaning what some now call Old Europe. The never-Communist West of the Old World underwent a remarkable, if largely peaceful, social and economic revolution after World War II.

Britain introduced its National Health Service in 1948. A year later the American Medical Association and the Republicans definitively killed President Harry Truman's national health insurance plan in a Congressional committee.

In the 1950s West Germany's Christian Democrats introduced *Mitbestimmung* (codetermination) into labor relations. The practice led to the inclusion of workers and unions in private sector decision-making, from the plant floor to the boardroom. Flaws are flagged by observant workers in Mercedes and B.M.W. plants. The workers know their voices will be considered at the highest level and the product will be improved.

In contrast, in the United States, under punishing business campaigns and freewheeling federal encouragement, unionization declined from the postwar era's peak of 32 percent of the workforce to a mere 12.5 percent at present. The curve parallels the widening gap in income and corporate decision-making between workers and executives, a phenomenon to which some experts attribute the collapse in

quality of the U.S. auto industry—not to mention its loss of market share.

Steven Hill, director of the political reform program at the New America Foundation, based in Washington, D.C., is not satisfied with even these disparities. In this beezily written and well-documented book, he argues not only that the Europeans can build cars that are better, made by workers who have a better safety net, and that the vehicles can be more profitably sold (often enough to Americans), but that European public transportation, heating and energy generation systems, from windmills to "smart" buildings, are well on the way to reducing the influence of the combustion engine and pollution.

Indeed, Hill describes what he calls European social capitalism at the outset of *Europe's Promise*, in these glowing words:

Imagine a place where doctors still do house calls, or where everyone has quality, affordable health care and child care is affordable, professional, and widely available. Or where all new parents are paid to stay home and care for their newborns, and receive a monthly stipend for diapers, food, and other daily needs. Or imagine a place where a young person doesn't have to mortgage his or her future by going into debt to pay for a college education. Or where all

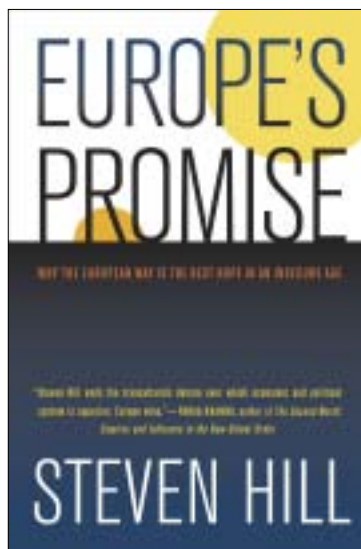
workers receive two months' worth of paid vacation and holidays every year, and paid sick leave, too, as well as generous retirement benefits, and if laid off receive helpful levels of unemployment compensation and job retraining.

Hill ably demolishes a series of common myths concerning differences between Europe and the United States, among them the notion that Europeans are more heavily taxed than Americans and that, all told, Americans are wealthier. You'll have to read the book to get the full-blown story, but here's a teaser: U.S. child and elderly poverty rates, 20 and 23 percent, respectively, are so far above Western Europe's as to match those of Russia and Mexico.

Granted, Europe is not quite paradise. Hill acknowledges the continent's challenges in facing up to racial and national prejudices, especially regarding much-needed immigration. He also nods in the direction of

Europe's below-replacement birth rate. In this case, however, he attempts to argue that Europe's economy will be kept going by productivity gains. In other words, fewer people will make more goods. His reasoning and evidence on this score do not satisfy.

Hill also comes across as something of a Polyanna in his treatment of the European press. As a journalist who has worked in Europe, I am painfully aware of European government restrictions of the press, from the British Defense Advisory notice



ON THE WEB

Clayton Sinyai reports on the state of the U.S. labor movement.
americamagazine.org/podcast

quashing embarrassing stories to the bullying and bribing of reporters in France and Italy. Worse, all European newspapers traditionally hold to an editorial “line,” a point of view dictated by the publisher and enforced by mid-level editors—even in material intended as straight news.

Carried away with his amazement at the circulation figures of European print publications, Hill, a former journalist, does not touch on either of these serious problems.

To anyone wondering whether by 2099 the current era will be viewed as a second “American century,” Hill’s warnings are worth considering. If the competitive advantages he ably enumerates continue to evolve in Europe’s favor, the claim to the century may well cross the Atlantic.

CECILIO MORALES has covered economic policy as a journalist in Washington, D.C., since 1984. He is currently executive editor of the *Employment and Training Reporter*.

America

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Positions

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DIRECTOR OF FAMILY LIFE, Archdiocese of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio. The Archdiocese of Cincinnati is searching for a Director of its Family Life Office. The Director is responsible for visionary leadership, pastoral planning and program development in the areas of family life, marriage and respect for life. The position calls for experienced and collaborative pastoral leadership in family ministry and assists parishes and other archdiocesan offices and institutions in supporting families in all their diversity. The position requires a master's in theology, pastoral studies or other related degree; a minimum of three years' work experience in diocesan, parish or other religious organizational settings, preferably in family min-

istry; and fruitful experience in implementing *A Family Perspective in Church and Society* (U.S.C.C.B., 1998). Must be a participating member of the Catholic community and have ability and experience in writing, public speaking, organization and administration. Salary is commensurate with education and experience. Qualified candidates should send a letter of interest, résumé, salary requirements and application (www.catholiccincinnati.org/files/personnel/pdf/application_for_employment.pdf) to: Bill Hancock, Archdiocese of Cincinnati, Office of Human Resources, 100 East Eighth Street, Cincinnati, OH 45202; or by e-mail to: bhancock@catholiccincinnati.org. Résumés will be accepted until May 31, 2010.

DIRECTOR OF SPIRITUAL LIFE. Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos is an international family with homes caring for over 3,500 orphaned and abandoned children in Latin America and the Caribbean. This position would coordinate the spiritual life (Masses, sacraments, retreats, etc.) in our homes in Central America including: Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Honduras. Since a good part of this ministry is sacramental, we are particularly interested in a priest or permanent deacon. For more information about N.P.H., visit www.nph.org. To apply, please contact the Rev. Phil Cleary at pcleary@nph.org.

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Send letter and résumé by June 15 to Director of Human-Spiritual Formation, Sacred Heart School of Theology, P.O. Box 429, Hales Corners, WI 53130-0429, or to pschuessler@shst.edu.

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either or both. Send a letter of application and curriculum vitae to Our Lady Help of Christians Parish, Newton, Mass., by June 13 to youthminister@ourlady.com

Retreats

WISDOM HOUSE, Litchfield, Conn. Retreats include: May 14-16, Women's AA/Alanon Retreat, Maurice Doody, O.P.; June 11-12, Exploring Catholic Culture—Racism, Tribalism and Xenophobia, Dawn Nothwehr, O.S.F., Ph.D. Summer retreats include Rabbi Rami Shapiro, Barbara Fiand, S.N.D.deN. Contact (860) 567-3163; e-mail: programs@wisdomhouse.org; Web site: www.wisdomhouse.org.

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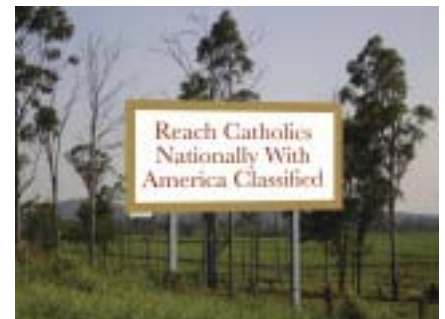
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LETTERS

Compelling and Principled

I was gratified to see the editors of *America* acknowledge (“How Compelling?” 4/12) that the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops opposed the final health care reform bill for a range of reasons, including the law’s lack of “protection of the conscience of health professionals,” its lack of “coverage of undocumented immigrants” and its “possible funding for abortions.” I was even more pleased to see them acknowledge: “All [of these concerns] merit further legislative and legal action as health care reform is implemented.”

But in the very next paragraph, the editors claim it was actually the issue of abortion funding at Community Health Centers that represented “[t]he great stumbling block to [the bishops’] endorsing the bill.” Though this is certainly a major problem with the law, it was not the only deal-breaker. The C.H.C. funding issue first entered the debate late in the process, by which time the bishops had already declared repeatedly—by letters of Dec. 14, Dec. 22, and Jan. 26—that the Senate bill failed to satisfy the bishops’ moral criteria in other ways and should therefore be opposed.

The editors also claim that the concern over abortion funding at C.H.C.’s was based on “[t]enuous legal arguments,” “debatable, technical questions of law” and an inconclusive “tissue of hypotheticals”—all of which the bishops inappropriately elevated to the level of principle. But the legal foundations are far stronger—and far less contested—than the editors suggest.

As the editors note, my office prepared a detailed analysis of the final bill and executive order, explaining the shortcomings of the new law regarding abortion funding—both directly through C.H.C.’s and indirectly through plans that cover abortion—and regarding conscience protection. That document has now been available to the public for about a month, without a single substantive critique in response.

Only one scholar (Prof. Timothy Jost) and one government agency (Health and Human Services) were willing to provide any reasoned basis at all for opposing the numerous analyses of the C.H.C. problem that U.S.C.C.B. offered before the bill passed. Neither Jost nor H.H.S. undermine our analysis. C.H.C. services that receive federal funding are defined by a federal statute that uses broad categories, such as “family planning services.” For over 30 years, courts have consistently read such broad statutory categories to include abortion, and so to require—not just allow,

but require—federal funding for abortion unless Congress passes a statute that expressly excludes abortion from funded services. It is this long line of court cases that created the need for the annual Hyde Amendment, which has since provided that express statutory carve-out for certain federal funds.

But the Hyde Amendment covers only the one large appropriation that Congress makes each year to H.H.S. Hyde does not cover separate appropriations like the health care reform statute’s multiyear appropriation of billions of additional dollars for C.H.C.’s. As a result, courts will require those additional funds to be made available for abortions.

If there were a legally valid way to overcome this statutory problem short of a statutory solution, we would welcome it warmly—but as it is, we see none ourselves and have heard none from others.

The U.S.C.C.B.’s analysis has been careful and sound throughout, and even today it stands substantially

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uncontested on the merits. In this context, it would have been an error of principle to reject that analysis, in favor of last-minute attempts to paper over serious moral problems with the bill. Thankfully, the bishops followed the principled course.

ANTHONY R. PICARELLO JR.
U.S.C.C.B. Office of Media Relations
Washington, D.C.

Thread of Creation

Re “Resurrection Redux,” by Kyle T. Kramer (5/10): I am hanging by a thread to my Catholic faith. The thread that I hang by is my love of creation, the resplendence and faithfulness of spring, the many colors of green, the emergent growth of the spruce outside my window and the earth ministry connection to my parish.

I am an organic farmer in my small acre of suburbia, and your article reminded me of the similarity of liturgical and growing seasons, that both are hopeful symbols of not only God’s presence in creation, but also in history in Christ—ecological and cosmic history. For now, my only religious/spiritual practice is my care for creation (in community) and my willingness for ongoing conversion. Thank you for the timeliness of your article for me.

JANE GIBLIN
Rochester Hills, Mich.

Contagious Smiles

Re “Pilgrim People, Part I” (Editorial, 5/10): You write: “The sisters took me to the back country to meet the very poor.” I just returned from a visit to my sister, a member of Maryknoll, at their motherhouse in Ossining, N.Y., where I felt the joy of these mostly elderly but vibrant women who cheerfully and often laughingly tell their stories of working with the poor all over the world. Their peaceful

smiles after a life of dedicated and often dangerous work with the poor are contagious.

JOHN HENRY, S.J.
Baltimore, Md.

Learning From One Another

Re “Pilgrim People, Part I” (Editorial, 5/10): I made the pilgrimage from Rome to Canterbury 35 years ago. Although I feel the pain of the division, I had discovered that I was more Anglican than Roman in my thinking about church.

I appreciate the Anglican checks and balances on the authority of bishops, our married priesthood and women in holy orders as well as our vowed religious. I regret our lack of a more visible and viable center as in the papacy. We would regard the pope as *primus inter pares* but not as *solus* supreme.

No church is perfect, but I think we have a lot to learn from one another, especially in light of the sexual abuse scandals. Our married and female priesthood and the checks on episcopal power offer effective safeguards against abuse.

(REV.) DON HANDS
Milwaukee Wis.

Who or What Is Illegal?

Re “Bishops Challenge Arizona Law” (Signs of the Times, 5/10): The root cause of border violence on our side and untold murders on the Mexican side is Americans’ desire for illegal drugs. I lived for six years on the Tijuana side of the border. Those who are coming here without documents are hard-working, very good people. Yes, more so on the Mexican side of the border than the U.S. side. We suffer the horrible effects of the American need for illegal drugs. Racial profiling will do nothing to stop the violence and indeed might provoke more violence. A culture of rehabilitat-

ing American addicts would make a difference.

JOHN CURRAN, O.M.I.
Pacoima, Calif.

Quality Control of Bishops

My hat is off to Bishop Blase Cupich “Twelve Things the Bishops Have Learned From the Clergy Sexual Abuse Crisis” (Online 5/10, also in this issue, p. 8) for his honesty and courage. But it is crucial to put in place a system that will minimize the probability that the present situation will repeat itself. Even if all the present guilty parties could receive the punishments they deserve, that will not ensure us for the future. The present system of papal appointment of bishops, which violates ancient church teachings, must go. The church must return to the election of bishops by the clergy and people of each diocese—this time for a defined term. Elections never prevent all problems, God knows, but they are the best way we have to achieve accountability and quality control.

CHARLES MCMAHON
Lafayette Hill, Pa.

Reverse Mission

Re “African Beliefs” (Current Comment, 5/10): I first became aware of African Catholicism while working on schistosomiasis in Kenya 40 years ago. Encountering Catholics in the third world greatly helped me in turning my own faith around. Even more exciting has been encountering members of the Nigerian diaspora since moving to Michigan in 2003. At St. Michael’s (now Transfiguration) Parish we had a vibrant subcommunity of Nigerians. And Nigerian and Kenyan priests are playing an ever increasing role in our archdiocese. This is truly reverse missionary activity. People from sub-Saharan Africa are strengthening our Catholic faith here in the United States. I love it.

RON PELLEY
Allen Park, Mich.

To send a letter to the editor we recommend using the link that appears below articles on America’s Web site, www.americamagazine.org. This allows us to consider your letter for publication in both print and online versions of the magazine. Letters may also be sent to America’s editorial office (address on page 2) or by e-mail to: letters@americamagazine.org.

Breath of God

PENTECOST SUNDAY (C), MAY 23, 2010

Readings: Acts 2:1-11; Ps 104:1-34; 1 Cor 12:3b-13; Jn 14:15-16, 23-26 or Jn 20:19-23

“He breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’” (Jn 20:22)

Following the recent coal mine disaster in West Virginia, many news stories focused on the dangers of mining and the risks miners face, like being trapped below ground without air or exposing themselves to the possibility of an agonizing death from black lung disease. Those who suffer from breathing difficulties recount how terrifying it is not to be able to catch their breath. And as our consciousness rises about air pollution, we become ever more concerned about the quality of our air, knowing that we cannot live without being able to breathe clean air.

Breath is the very symbol of life and has been since ancient times. Indeed, the first creation account in Genesis depicts the life force of the Creator as *ruah*, meaning “breath” or “wind,” which swept over the face of the primordial waters. And in the second account of creation, the first human creature becomes a living being only when the Creator breathes the breath of life into its nostrils (Gn 2:7). At Pentecost, it is this same divine life-force that recreates a frightened group of disciples into bold proclaimers of the Gospel.

The symbols of divine presence described in Acts 2 are familiar from the Old Testament: thundering noise, as God’s manifestation at Sinai; a whirlwind, like that from which God spoke

to Job (Jb 38:1); and flames of fire, such as Moses saw at Mount Horeb (Ex 3:2). As in previous times of critical need, God’s presence is visible and audible, profoundly transforming those who experience it.

The disciples, like anyone who has experienced the death of a loved one, would have felt that something of their own spirit and zest for life had also been snuffed out with Jesus’ death. Huddled together, trying to comfort one another, they were unable to muster any energy for carrying on his mission. Grief and fear had deflated any impetus to continue the movement into which he had drawn them.

In both Gospel choices for today, we have a glimpse of some concrete ways in which the Spirit brings them and us back to life so as to go forth again in mission. In John 14, Jesus is telling his disciples before his passion that he will not leave them alone. He promises to send the Paraclete to be always with them. Only the fourth Evangelist uses this term for the Spirit. It comes from the legal world and connotes one who stands alongside another as an advocate, or as comforter. Not only does the Paraclete teach the disciples and remind them of everything Jesus told them, but this consoling one is as near as one’s own breath. When Jesus speaks to those whom he loves of their oneness with him and with the One who sent him, he speaks of mutual indwelling.



In John 20, the risen Christ breathes on the disciples and infuses them with the Spirit. He unleashes in them the power of the Spirit, who alone can bring peace and joy in the wake of terrifying woundedness. He directs them to open themselves to the gift of the Spirit that allows them to receive and give forgiveness. For it is only through the power of forgiveness that the air can be cleared and all can breathe in the peace for which

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- Focus on your breathing, and as you inhale and exhale, remember the gifts of the Spirit with which you receive and minister.
- What actions can be taken to ensure the availability of clean air for all?
- How does the action of the Spirit make possible forgiveness and understanding among diverse peoples?

we so long and that the Risen One desires to give.

Perhaps it is breath that best signals this intimacy. God, in the person of Jesus and the power of the Spirit, is as close to each and every believer as is our very breath, taken deeply into our lungs thousands of times every day, a constant vivifying force. Just as breath must be exhaled and cannot be kept within, so too, does the Spirit’s power direct us outward to mission, exuding the love, peace and forgiveness we have inhaled from the Living One.

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.

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