

C21 Resources

IN THIS ISSUE

A Time for Hope

Hope can seem to be both fragile—"the thing with feathers that perches in the soul," as Emily Dickinson called it—and yet persistent—"it sings the tune without the words, and never stops at all."

The Catechism offers a delicate web of explanations to unfold the meaning of this virtue. Hope is rooted in the aspiration to hold onto our faith and in the desire for happiness that God has placed in the heart of everyone.

It takes as its model Abraham, who trusted in God's promise against all expectation. Hope unfolds in Jesus' proclamation of the beatitudes as a description of the Kingdom that God is creating. And it finds its guarantee in the salvific death and resurrection of Jesus.

Christian hope is thus both an act of steadfastness, of holding on against odds or appearances, and a surrender, a giving in to that power, God's power, so much greater than our own. "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering," the Letter to the Hebrews urges, "for he who promised is faithful."

What better virtue to ponder during this difficult season in the life of the American Catholic Church, as it seeks to move beyond the crisis that has engulfed it? Thus this fifth issue of *C21 Resources* offers reflections and personal stories by a range of Catholic writers suggesting reasons for hope.

The Editors

The Virtue of Hope

BY DONALD DEMARCO

In Pope John Paul II's *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, published in 1994, the Holy Father speaks of the importance of hope in the context of "crossing the threshold of the new millennium." He indicates that these "crossings" imply a measure of difficulty as well as a need for purification.

"Good" hope, to use St. Paul's qualifying adjective, must be distinguished from the many false hopes that surround us daily and are a constant source of temptation. We hope for wealth, beauty, fame, success, and a comfortable life. But these are

largely vanities. They will not furnish us with what satisfies our deepest longing. They are transitory; we are immortal.

The Holy Father reminds us that good hope—or true hope—directs us to our final goal which gives ultimate meaning and value to everything that is part of our lives. Therefore, as he goes on to say,

In this new millennium, Christians are called to prepare for the Great Jubilee by renewing their hope in the definitive coming of the Kingdom of God, preparing for it daily in their hearts, in the Christian community to which they belong, in their particular social context, and in world history itself.

Hope is about that which is ultimate—God—but it is not unrelated to the events that make up the substance of our lives. Indeed, hope transfigures them precisely because it relates them to their ultimate meaning. Hope is ultimate and immanent. But it is also essential, for no human being can endure its opposite—despair.

In his great poem, *The Divine Comedy*, Dante penned what may be his most celebrated line when he inscribed over the entranceway to the infernal kingdom these words: "All hope abandon, ye who enter here" (*Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch'entrate*). The immediate meaning, that hell is a place of absolute finality where hope is no longer possible, is clear enough.

But there is a subtler and perhaps more important meaning that

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The Virtue of Hope

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pertains not to the inhabitants of hell but to those whose final destinies have not yet been determined. This slightly veiled meaning informs people about how they can book passage to hell. For if hell is a place without hope, then by living without hope one is preparing for eternal tenancy in hell. When we live without hope, we take on the hopeless condition of hell, and at the same time make it our logical destiny. What we need, therefore, is an endless hope so that our lives do not come to a hopeless end.

It Takes Work

The fact that hope is essential to man by no means makes it easy to acquire. The hope of which John Paul writes in both *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* and *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, also published in 1994, is something we must attain, secure, and purify through considerable difficulty.

One of the stormiest, if not the stormiest, cape in the world is the Capes of Good Hope, located near the southern tip of Africa where the powerful currents of the Atlantic and Indian Oceans converge. When Portuguese navigator Bartolomeu Dias discovered this cape in 1488, he called it, fittingly, the Cape of Storms. Later, King John II of Portugal renamed it "Cape of Good Hope" in anticipation of finding a sea route to India. Vasco da Gama later proved the king right when he sailed around the cape and discovered the long-sought passage to India.

In this narrative, history and symbolism come together. The hope of finding a sea route to India was eventually fulfilled because hope had been kept alive. This is the historical fact. But added to this is the symbolism that the hope was a good hope inasmuch as it was forged in a climate of difficulty. The stormy cape provided the crucible in which hope was tested and purified so that it could emerge as "good hope."

Woody Allen once remarked that "marriage is the loss of hope." If he meant that marriage brings about the loss of vain and unprofitable illusion, he is correct. But disillusionment is not the same as the loss of hope. We

often do not grasp real hope until its impostor has been dashed by disappointment. The disillusionment that often occurs within marriage is not the death of hope if through it the couple learns to accept the lack of perfection in each other and embraces the demands of true love.

Real hope is not crushed by disappointment. In fact, it is in difficulty that hope often is born. As Chesterton said, "As long as matters are really hopeful, hope is a mere flattery or platitude; it is when everything is hopeless that hope begins to be a strength at all. Like all the Christian virtues, it is as unreasonable as it is indispensable."

Good hope offers us realism, patience and the courage to go forward.

Good hope, therefore, has the qualities of realism, courage, patience, and the willingness to embrace difficulties. By contrast, what we might describe as "easy hope" lacks these virtuous qualities and is merely a wish for better things that has the aura of vanity or fantasy.

Hope is ultimate and immanent, essential and difficult, natural and supernatural. It may well be compared, as the Pontiff states, citing St. Paul, with a mother in labor, for the mother, anticipating the birth of her child, incorporates all of these elements. The whole world is groaning under the weight of vanity. It is yearning to give birth to everlasting life and to share in the glorification of the sons of God. As the Holy Father reminds us, ours is "a time of great trial, but also of great hope."

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Dateline: Colorado Springs

Hopeful signs in one congregation

BY MELISSA MUSICK NUSSBAUM

The Catholic Church in Colorado Springs usually flies under the radar. We are a small diocese, carved out of Denver's archdiocese in the 1980s, with a tradition of strong lay leadership. We are a diocese of soldiers and peace activists, and our cathedral's long association with the Marian House Soup Kitchen next door means that the bishop's Church is also the parish for the Catholic homeless. It is my parish, too. We are welcome there, all of us. We are not one in politics, but politics doesn't call us together. We are called by Christ, in whom we *are* one.

When I gather Sunday mornings with other parishioners at St. Mary's, it is the least American hour of my week. Like all the American women I know, I take my purse everywhere. When I pick up my son at school and bring cash for a sports fee. When I stop to fill the car with gas and buy a gallon of milk. But at Mass there's nothing to buy. I walk there, hands open and outstretched, like a beggar.

I'm not trading dollars for services; what's offered on the altar isn't for sale. At Mass, I bow. Americans don't bow. We walk tall through our lives, erect, unbending, Gary Cooper at high noon. But at Mass, I bend and bow, kneeling like a servant, on my knees like a slave. Not an American moment, but a Catholic moment, one in an unbroken chain of moments, Sunday after Sunday, from first-century Jerusalem to twenty-first century Colorado Springs.

So it was a surprise to find ourselves in the national news, interviewed by reporters looking for that most American invention, the sound bite,

about that most American ritual, voting. Republican? Democrat? Angry? Happy? The bishop, yes or no? Communicated or ex? We are talking about our bishop's latest statement barring prochoice politicians and even voters from Communion, but neither exclusively nor primarily.

All Are Welcome

Most of my life is broken into divisions of property and occupation and memberships. Who can buy here, work here, belong here? My vote is an exercise in further division. No politician runs on the Catholic ticket or holds herself accountable only to Catholics. One question we're asking is based on the compromise that is politics: What if both candidates are proabortion? Which vote endangers one's immortal soul? We've learned at St. Mary's that Communion gathers up these broken shards and makes us whole. No one is preferred; all receive from the

one loaf, pray the same prayers, sing the same songs, make the same confession of sin. There is one cup in my parish: one cup for the soldiers shipping out for Iraq and one cup for the activists indicted for trespassing on military property. The mayor doesn't live in a shelter, but he kneels in St. Mary's with those who do. The man who supports school vouchers shares the sign of peace with the teachers' union member who opposes him. The Republican nurse stops after Mass to tell my ailing Democrat mother that she will come by her house to help next week. And, from what I see on Sundays, we are still walking together, singing together on the way to Communion.

In a city where the Bijou Community protests the military downtown every Friday as soldiers from Fort Carson pass by, we've had to learn the lesson of every family—how to get along despite our differences. We at St. Mary's don't talk much

about these differences, the same differences discussed endlessly on television and in the newspapers. It is not because they don't matter, but because they simply matter less than who we are and what brings us together, the work we have been given to do: to be the Body of Christ, fed by the Body of Christ, rooted in the heart of Christ and his Church, going out in the world to be Christ for the world.

We have to learn to care for one another and to pray with one another, learn together to care for the sick and to clothe the naked, to welcome the stranger, and to feed the hungry. This is the work of our lives, the work that will take a lifetime to learn. Our bishop, Michael Sheridan, has raised an important question: How should American Catholics vote? Catholics who say one's baptism can mean little or nothing in public life need to reconsider what happens in those waters. But there are, I believe, questions prior to the bishop's. Namely:

How does a Catholic live? Pray? Marry? Raise children? Make a home? Care for the widow and the orphan, the elderly and the unborn? See the face of Christ in all its distressing disguises? These are not peculiarly American questions, but they are Catholic ones, and we at St. Mary's, those of us who gather at God's generous table, are still learning to live the answers. We are like the Ephesians under John the Apostle. St. Jerome says John preached only one sermon, "My children, love one another." Elders went to him pleading for a new lesson. He listened, saying, "Of course, but first we must learn this one."

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Servant Leadership

To survive the present moment, the Church's leaders need to become its servants

BY CARL KOCH

After the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, Southwest Airlines was the only airline that made a profit, kept all its workers on the job and actually adhered to its full flight schedule. The next year, while other airlines cut thousands of jobs, Southwest hired thousands and for each of those jobs had more applicants per opening than Harvard had for its freshman class. One of the key factors in Southwest's success is that servant-leaders guide it. At this critical time in the Church, bishops and other Church leaders could learn many lessons from Southwest Airlines and other companies committed to servant leadership.

The present, defining moment offers the Catholic community an array of choices. How the community

responds will determine whether the Church can regain its moral authority and heal the wounds. The course of action taken by Church leaders will reveal their character and test their courage and wisdom. Their decisions will shape the future of each leader, and also the future of the Church community.

James Autry, past president of the Meredith Group and author of *The Servant-Leader* (2001), rightly claims that the old covenant in business is dead: If you do a good job and work hard for a company, you will have a job and that company will look after your interests. Those days in the business world are gone.

The scandals in the Church have done the same thing to the covenant that faithful members once had with their leadership: If you pay, pray and obey, you will be ministered to with competence, respect and trust and guided on the way of salvation. The

behavior of bishops and other Church leaders has virtually destroyed this covenant.

Whether in business or in the Church, all leadership is about building relationships, and the key to all successful relationships is trust. The old paradigm of leadership in which the bishops were formed creates stress and fear rather than trust. Instead of focusing his attention on parishioners, a pastor keeps looking over his shoulder to see what his bishop wants, and too many bishops hold a finger in the air to see how the winds are blowing from Rome.

In a growing number of organizations, this old paradigm is being replaced, and for good reasons. Supervisors were looking over their shoulders at the middle managers instead of helping employees do their jobs well. As a consequence, the people most essential to making a business successful—the customers—were poorly served.

The companies known for excellent service, great value and loyal customers and employees replace the pyramidal paradigm with a circle. The president empowers, supports and provides resources for the vice presidents, who do the same for the managers, all the way to the employees who serve the customers.

Leadership that emphasizes service first has come to be called servant leadership. Jack Lowe, CEO of TDIndustries, an employee-owned construction company, remarks, "Trustworthiness, which requires character and competence, can only flourish with leadership that trusts, supports and encourages. At TDIndustries, we call that servant leadership."

Servant leadership has its roots in Jesus, the Gospels and the early Church, a church that collectively called forth its leaders. In his letter *On Social Concern* (1987), Pope John Paul II wrote that "all systems of government are challenged to evaluate themselves in light of Gospel values." "All systems of government" should include Church government.

In this conversion moment, bishops should look to Southwest Airlines, Toro, TDIndustries and other companies that have adopted servant leadership. Robert Greenleaf, in his book, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (1977), describes a servant-leader: "The servant-leader is servant first.... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead."

The servant-leader makes "sure that other people's highest priority

needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or, at least, not be further deprived?"

Robert Bennett, formerly head of the Church's National Review Board for the Protection of Children and Young People, pointed out that servant leadership is not the style of most bishops: "An individual bishop is virtually an absolute power; they are virtually unaccountable. I think that this is a major cause of the problem. The exercise of authority without accountability is not servant leadership; it is tyranny."

Any Church leader needs to ask: How would Jesus lead? His answer is consistent: "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the last and the servant of all"; "I am among you as one who serves"; "The greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves." Or consider the Gospel of John: Jesus washes the disciples' feet and says, "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you." If bishops or anyone else are to lead as Jesus led, they must become servant-leaders.

Servant as Prophet

The word servant in these Gospel passages refers to the "Suffering Servant" passages in Isaiah and means "slave of the king," a close advisor and confidant of the ruler, someone with great responsibility. This servant must be a prophet and a healer. So Jesus and anyone claiming to lead in his name hold responsibility and intimacy with God and must be prophetic voices and healers of the community. Only service and sacrifice will lead to the moral credibility and trust essential for leadership.

Servant leadership is hardly the model of leadership fostered in the Church, especially in clerical circles. Even the lexicon used for leadership betrays it as monarchical and militaristic, a leadership style for feudal times, when the masses were illiterate peasants. We still call cardinals "princes of the Church," and some still live in palaces. Secrecy shrouds Vatican and diocesan finances and

the byzantine method of selecting bishops.

Our times invite Church leaders to develop the 10 characteristics of a Jesus-like servant-leader described by Greenleaf: listening, empathy, awareness, healing, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, commitment to the growth of people, building community and stewardship. This list would be an excellent foundation for the formation of priests, bishops and lay leaders for the Church. Let me comment on just three of the 10 characteristics.

1. Listening. To help people become freer, wiser and more autonomous, a leader must understand them—through attentive listening. Ann McGee-Cooper, a management consultant for many servant leadership companies, including Southwest Airlines, remarked, "The servant-leader works to build a solid foundation of shared goals by listening deeply to understand the needs and concerns of others."

When Southwest Airlines entered negotiations with its pilots' union, Jim Parker, the C.E.O., sat at the table. One of the pilots remarked, "The biggest complaint in the industry is that management doesn't listen to employees. But you can't say that at Southwest. The top guy is in the room." Servant-leaders know that the success of their organization depends on trusting relationships built on a foundation of respectful listening.

The epistle attributed to St. James admonishes, "My beloved, let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak" (1:19). This is sound advice for anyone in leadership, whether bishop or C.E.O., pastoral associate or salesperson. Every seminarian and lay leader should have to complete training in attentive listening, and new bishops should take refresher courses. If Church leaders listened better, perhaps there would have been no need to create Voice of the Faithful and Call to Action.

2. Persuasion. Larry Spears, director of the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, says servant leaders persuade "rather than using one's position of authority, in making decisions within an organization. The servant-leader seeks to convince others, rather than coerce compliance.... The servant-leader is effective at building consensus with-

in groups." Servant-leaders invite people into dialogue and discernment because they realize that more good can happen in an organization with the willing commitment of all organizational members. James MacGregor Burns put this point succinctly: "Leadership mobilizes, naked power coerces."

In 1991, on the 100th anniversary of Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, Pope John Paul II declared, "The Catholic Church values democratic systems that ensure the participation of citizens." But how many times have bishops reminded dissenting voices that the Church is not a democracy? How many dioceses have fought bitter wars against unionization? How many priests have been exiled to the diocesan equivalent of Siberia because they raised discomfiting questions?

While condemning violence against women, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops concluded: "Domestic violence is any kind of behavior that a person uses to control an intimate partner through fear and intimidation." But Church leaders have often used fear and intimidation to destroy perceived opponents, even the most faithful.

3. Stewardship. This arguably includes all of the other nine characteristics of a servant-leader. In his book *Stewardship* (1993), Peter Block says: "Stewardship is...the willingness to be accountable for the well-being of the larger organization by operating in service, rather than in control, of those around us. Stated simply, it is accountability without control or compliance.... Stewardship is the choice for service. We serve best through partnership, rather than patriarchy."

Servant-leaders give account and expect to be held accountable, because this is part of a trust relationship. Sometimes the only way an account is given to the people by bishops is at the point of a court order. Without open disclosure of information and involvement of the people of God in Church governance, no Church leader can claim to be an accountable steward.

In addition, stewards empower others because they realize their interdependence with all humanity, all God's creatures and the holy earth. Ken Melrose, the president of Toro, unselfconsciously names Jesus as his

model for leadership. One of his core beliefs is: "The leader's role is to create an environment...of trust [that] leads to more risk-taking, innovation, and creativity. The empowerment to solve problems produces better solutions." By empowering employees, Melrose brought Toro back from near collapse to strength. Empowerment is something that many Church leaders could learn from Toro and Southwest.

All Are Called

We need to reclaim the Church of Matthew 18. Michael Crosby, in *The Dysfunctional Church* (1991), describes how Matthew 16 took center stage: "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church...I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven." This passage propped up the old paradigm of leadership. Certainly Peter was a key figure in the early Church, but so were Mary Magdalene and James, Paul and Lydia: those gathered in Jesus' name—in the Church of Matthew 18.

In Matthew 18:18-20, Jesus tells his followers: "Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.... For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." Clearly, Jesus empowers the assembled believers: women and men, old and young, poor and rich.

Crosby concludes: "When, for the sake of tradition, Peter's power to bind and loose is absolutized in a way that subordinates the power of the other members of the Church, the word of God itself can be nullified in order to preserve abusive power patterns in the institutionalized Church."

Now is the time for servant-leadership in the image of Jesus to re-emerge in the body of Christ, to be formed in all who aspire to leadership. But all who would aspire to lead first come as servants. And may servant-leaders remember to "be not afraid." Jesus goes before us.

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Among Clergy, Signs of a Strong Morale

For all the wounds and trauma, survey finds Catholic priests satisfied with their calling

BY STEPHEN J. ROSSETTI

In the wake of the sexual abuse crisis, more than a few people, including priests, are convinced that the morale of priests is bad. In a letter dated Dec. 12, 2003, 69 priests of the Archdiocese of New York wrote to Cardinal Edward Egan, “We need to tell you again what you already know; the morale of the New York presbyterate is at an all-time low.” Such sentiments have surfaced in other dioceses as well.

Given the pounding that priests have taken in the media over the last couple of years, low morale would not be surprising. In addition to reporting the sexual deviances of a few priests over the past 50 years, the media at times have intimated that the priesthood itself is dysfunctional and prone to sexual problems and that priests are poorly prepared, living in an unhealthy clerical environment, stunted by celibacy, and generally in bad shape. No wonder people are saying priests’ morale is bad.

But is it really? To collect data on morale, I passed out a written survey at nine diocesan convocations of clergy between September 2003 and January 2004. Two more dioceses mailed the survey to their priests in February and March of 2004. The dioceses surveyed ranged from coast to coast and included some of those hardest hit by the crisis.

A total of 834 priests responded, 725 diocesan priests and 109 religious priests, the latter ministering in the dioceses. The total represented about 64 percent of all priests in the 11 dioceses. Since this study was conducted after the media crisis had waned in most areas, it should provide a good sampling of how priests are feeling in the wake of the crisis.

Satisfaction Is Strong and Consistent

In this survey, the priests were given a statement, “Overall, I am happy as a priest.” Of the 834 priests, 92 percent either agreed or strongly

agreed. Only 6 percent were thinking of leaving the priesthood. When asked if they would do it all over again and join the priesthood, 83 percent said yes. These are very positive results.

Priestly satisfaction rates in previous surveys have also been high. A pre-crisis study of over 1,200 priests in 2001 was sponsored by the National Federation of Priests’ Councils (*“Evolving Visions of the Priesthood”*, Liturgical Press, 2003). The results were similar: only 5 percent reported they were thinking of leaving the priesthood; 88 percent said they would choose priesthood again; and 94 percent said they were currently either very happy or pretty happy.

Priests like doing what priests do. Their lives are filled with sacraments, preaching and being with people, and they find that intensely rewarding. This was true before the crisis; it was true during the crisis; and it is true after the crisis.

In the midst of the crisis, *The Los Angeles Times* conducted its own survey of 1,854 priests, which it published on Oct. 20 and 21, 2002. At that time, 91 percent of the priests were satisfied with the “way your life as a priest is going these days,” and 90 percent said they would do it all over again.

In the pre-crisis N.F.P.C. study, when asked more specifically about what they found of “great importance” as a source of priestly satisfaction, 90 percent endorsed “joy of administering the sacraments and presiding over liturgy,” 80 percent endorsed “satisfaction of preaching the word,” and 67 percent endorsed

“opportunity to work with many people and be a part of their lives.” In my own post-crisis survey, 92 percent of the priests endorsed the statement, “Overall, I feel fulfilled ministering as a priest.”

In short, priests like doing what priests do and find great satisfaction in it. Their lives are filled with sacraments, preaching and being with the people; and they find it intensely rewarding. This was true before the crisis; it was true during the crisis; and it is true after the crisis.

Since morale is a subjective personal perspective, I asked the priests directly to rate their own morale. Given the statement, “My morale is good,” a strong 83 percent of the

While the crisis has not caused a large majority of priests to say that their own morale is bad, it has been a source of pain for priests in general and for some in particular, and it has surfaced issues that negatively affect morale. What are some of these painful issues for today’s priests?

Relationship with Authority

Much of the recent criticism has focused on bishops. The priests surveyed were given the statement: “The Church crisis has negatively affected my view of Church leadership.” Fifty-three percent agreed. Clearly, the crisis has hurt priests’ perceptions of Church leadership in general. But when speaking about their own bishops, the results were strongly positive. Three-quarters said, “I have a good relationship with my bishop” 66 percent “approve of the way my bishop is leading the diocese” and 75 percent agree with the statement, “Overall, I am satisfied with my bishop.” In assessing approval rates for people in authority, such percentages are high. For example, in a recent CNN poll of 5,000 adult workers in the United States, only 43 percent reported that they were “happy with their current boss.”

On the other hand, only 26 percent of surveyed priests believed that “priests with allegations of abuse are being treated fairly by the Church,” and only 43 percent believe that they will be dealt with fairly if they are accused of misconduct. As one priest said, “I am one phone call away from the rest of my life being over.” Whether this is an accurate perception or not, it is important, because it threatens the bond of trust between bishop and priest.

Vocations, Workload and Morale

Any discussion of priestly morale today ought to take into account the concerns priests have about being overloaded with work. Ministry has always been a kind of “bottomless pit.” But this bottomless pit has

become even more threatening with the recent declining numbers of priests and increasing numbers of Catholics. When given the statement, "I feel overwhelmed with the amount of work I have to do," 45 percent of the priests agreed.

But priests are still strong supporters of vocations. When given the personal statement, "If I had a nephew, I would encourage him to become a priest," 74 percent of the priests sampled agreed. And 74 percent said they actively encourage prospects to become priests. This is another strong sign of positive morale. People who are negative about their vocations are unlikely to encourage others to follow in their footsteps. In surveys done by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 78 percent of the newly ordained report that

*Nevertheless,
almost half of priests
report feeling
overwhelmed with
the amount of work
they have to do.*

before they entered the seminary, a priest had directly asked them to consider priesthood. This direct encouragement of vocations by priests is an important vocational tool.

Some in the public believe that priestly morale is bad and that the life of a priest is lonely and unfulfilling. This negative perception certainly has a detrimental influence on vocations. But surveys of morale suggest that this perception is not true. I suspect that priestly satisfaction rates are as high as in any profession, if not higher. For example, in the previously cited CNN poll of 5,000 Americans, only 63 percent said they were "happy with their current job," as opposed to 90 percent of the priests in the diocesan surveys, who said they were happy in their current ministry. Perhaps one of the most needed vocational tools is to get the word out about how satisfied our priests are.

When asked if they believe their

lives and ministries as priests make a difference in the world, 90 percent said yes. When given the statement, "I am committed to the ministry of the Catholic Church," the response was almost unanimous: 96 percent said yes. In the end, our priests believe that their lives are well spent and make a difference in other people's lives. Many of our young people are looking for just such a life. They want their lives to matter, and they would be blessed to be introduced to a life of priestly service.

Celibacy and Morale

Mandatory celibacy has long been named as a sore spot in priestly morale. Only slightly more than half in this current survey, 55 percent, endorsed the statement, "I support the requirement that priests live a celibate life." But only a small portion of the priests sampled, 17 percent, indicated that they would marry if given the chance. And 70 percent said, "Celibacy has been a positive experience for me." Thus, when assessing their own celibate lives, a clear majority remain appreciative and contented. Imagine giving the following statement to married couples throughout the United States: "Marriage has been a positive experience for me." Would 70 percent say yes?

The overall morale of priests in this country is high. Priests themselves say that their own morale is good. And these high rates of satisfaction have been consistent over several years and different surveys. The priesthood is a rewarding life that offers much satisfaction. At the end of the day, priests know from their own experience that their lives and ministry make a difference in the world.

This is not to say that our priests are not facing serious challenges. Many feel overwhelmed with the amount of work. Also, in the wake of the crisis, some priests believe they are now being viewed with suspicion. Priests report having a good personal relationship with their own bishops, and a strong majority approve of their leadership. But most priests do not trust the current process for dealing with allegations of sexual abuse.

Despite all that has happened, these men are resilient and are proud to be priests today.

There is one other factor that might help to account for the enduring

satisfaction and happiness of our priests. In this survey, 95 percent professed to have a "personal relationship with God (or Jesus) that is nourishing to me." We are blessed to have such strong men of faith serving the people of God.

Rev. Stephen J. Rossetti, president of

St. Luke Institute in Silver Spring, Md., is a psychologist and a consultant to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' committee on child sexual abuse.

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Choosing Hope

For Elie Wiesel

BY MARY ENDA HUGHES, S.S.N.D.

But the reality of God
is love
which is the reason for the miracles
that we keep wanting,
so now in the after-time
let the small ones happen
and not escape our knowing
despite the shattered cities
and the weeping seas
that somehow
we will hear the stars
come out
as well as see them,
for then the lovely
Spirit Wind that takes us
despite the shattered cities
and the weeping seas
revealing sudden love
in broken places
will not be lost
will not be lost in us
in case
there are no words
in the silence
of a still
possible
brand new
world

Sister Mary Enda Hughes is a poet who lives in Boston.

The Priceless Gift of the Priesthood

BY WILLIAM P. LEAHY, S.J.

I love being a priest. To be a priest is to be given a precious gift and invited to serve people and work for the greater glory of God in a special way. I realize that such convictions may strike some as inconceivable in today's world, but they are true for me and for so many men who have chosen to minister as priests in the Catholic Church.

I am a Jesuit priest because of the grace of God, not because I have earned or merited such a vocation. When I review my life, I see evidence

I felt God drawing me toward the priesthood, not as a duty, but as a personal invitation I wanted to accept.

of grace and freedom, freedom as defined by the Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner: "the power to decide about oneself and to actualize oneself."

Ever since I can remember, there has been a sense that I would someday be a priest. I recall a moment in Iowa when I was 7 or 8. My brothers, sisters, and I were talking about what we would be when we grew up. I said that I wanted to be a farmer or a baseball player, but privately I told my mother that I thought I would be a priest.

That early desire for the priesthood has always been with me, not as something oppressive or robbing me of my freedom but as an invitation. I entered the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits) because I wanted to, because I felt God drawing me to it. Nothing in the years since has ever made me want to change my mind.

Ordination was not a time when I was plagued with doubts or apprehensions. Rather, after listening to myself, my deepest desires, and

examining the pattern of my life, I believe I freely and positively chose to be ordained, obviously not knowing all that would be asked of me as a Jesuit priest but at the same time trusting in God's grace.

So much of the grace and freedom that I believe is part of my life has come to me through my fellow Jesuits. They have profoundly influenced me, and I owe them a tremendous debt.

I have never met a finer group of men, and they have given me far more than I deserve or have a right to expect. I have been privileged to know a great number of excellent priests, men who are deeply human and generous. The quality and commitment of their lives speak so eloquently to me about priesthood. They do not promote themselves or continually tell you about their latest achievements and insights. Instead, they have a self-possession and simplicity about them. They do not seek for themselves, but give to others. They are ministers in every sense of the word.

The Gospel of Matthew urges, "The gift you have received, give as a gift." These words apply to the priesthood. It is a gift, a grace to be used prudently and wisely, of course, but nonetheless one that does not allow for holding back or refusing to get involved with the human situation.

To be a priest requires living a life marked by faith, integrity, and service, and it offers the possibility for doing so much good and for helping make God more present in our world.

One day this winter I visited the parents of a recent graduate of Boston College whose son, like 20 other alumni of our university, was killed in the attack on the World Trade Center.

In grief and pride they told stories about their son, and showed me photographs, awards, and diplomas that chronicled his young life.

They were speaking to me, I knew, as the president of the institution their son had loved but also as a priest. They asked if I would like to go upstairs and see their son's bedroom, which they had kept exactly as he had left it. Perhaps they would have asked the same of the president

of Harvard University or Stanford University. Perhaps not. But as a priest I was glad to be there to offer whatever comfort I could.

Such moments have been part of my life as a priest, and as a result I feel truly blessed by God.

I do not deny that there have been times of suffering and sorrow in my life. Like so many others, I feel betrayed and saddened by the shameful incidents of sexual misconduct committed by some priests, so devastating and harmful, especially to children and their families.

But I trust that God and his people will sustain me and my fellow priests, now and in the future, and that my vocation, with all of its gifts, will never cease to be the wonderfully fulfilling experience that it is for me today.

Rev. William P. Leahy, S.J., is the president of Boston College.

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‘Why I am Still Catholic’

A converted explains what sustains him in a troubled Church

BY RICHARD K. TAYLOR

I was raised in the Quaker faith and became a Catholic in 1982 at age 49. For the first time in these subsequent 22 years, many longstanding Catholic friends are telling me they are seriously considering leaving the Church. Others say they are hanging on by their fingernails. Most of these friends are active in their local parishes. They serve as eucharistic ministers, lectors or soup kitchen volunteers. These are faithful people who are grieving over a Church they love.

They say it is very hard, even heart-wrenching, to be Catholic these days. Everywhere they turn, there are painful realities that undercut their commitment to the Church: sex abuse scandals. Bishop cover-ups. Retrogressive changes in the liturgy. The fading hope that women’s leadership gifts can ever be expressed in ordination. The lowly status of the laity, whose talents, intelligence and experience are largely disdained by the hierarchy. The Church, these longtime Catholics say, treats them like children.

So they ask themselves: Why do I stay? Why am I still Catholic? When I try to answer this question for myself, I find that I am troubled and often outraged by the same things that alienate my Catholic friends. For now, though, the basic answer is that so far as I can discern, this is where God calls me to be. I believe that the good, the true and the beautiful in the Catholic Church still far outweigh the bad, the false and the ugly.

Here is my inventory of the good.

First and foremost, I find enormous goodness in my local parish, St. Vincent de Paul in Philadelphia. (I’m sure many Catholics would say the same about their own parishes.) In spite of our many human failings, this is a place where people of faith really are trying to be disciples of Christ and to love God and one

another. We practice collaborative ministry between laity and the ordained. At times in our spirited liturgy, it is as if we are catching glimpses of the radiant Church as the living Christ meant it to be.

I find that goodness and beauty in the small “c” (universality) of my parish and of Catholicism in general. Like no other Church, Catholicism embraces people of all cultures, races, ages, classes and nationalities. I know that some parishes are mostly one race, but rarely are they one class. I’m blessed to see this in my own inner-city parish. When we gather for worship, I watch young and old, whites, blacks, Latinos, Asians and people of various other ethnicities reverently coming together. The homeless, released prison inmates and persons with mental and physical disabilities are welcomed, along with people who are well-off. People of all sexual orientations praise God together. I know that this wonderful universality will happen again and again, “24/7,” as the Mass is celebrated around the world.

I love the sacraments, and I love the Mass. I can’t imagine my life without the ability on any day to join my brothers and sisters—along with the angels and saints and choirs of heaven—in praising and thanking God. I can’t imagine not being nurtured by the body and blood of Christ.

Not Only Mass

The Mass is central, but it is only part of the immense spiritual richness of Catholicism that I treasure. In addition to the liturgy we have the lives of the saints and mystics, the great prayer traditions, devotion to Mary, spiritual direction, the multiplicity of retreat centers, the wonderful books on spirituality—all have helped me enormously in my spiritual journey. Where would I be without them?

In addition, I value the priesthood and vowed religious life. That is a big step for a person raised in eastern seaboard Quakerism, which is

entirely lay-led and has no ordained clergy. But some of the finest, most dedicated and, yes, holy people I have ever met are priests and nuns. As much as I may be appalled by what a few clerics do, it is priests and sisters who, again and again, have shown me the face of Christ.

When I’m not reacting negatively to some pronouncement that seems absurd, I also appreciate the existence of the teaching magisterium of the Church. For all its human faults, heavy-handedness and sometimes arrogance, I believe it is largely responsible (along with the Holy Spirit) for upholding the truth that is in Christ. The magisterium helps keep us on track. It helps hold us together and contain our tensions, rather than splitting us apart, as has happened so often in Christian history. It helps us honor Jesus’ prayer “that they may all be one” (John 17:21).

I find tremendous goodness in the centuries-old tradition of Catholic social teaching, which Pope John Paul II and others before him have articulated so well. I love its affirmation of human dignity, social justice and the common good, its protection of the unborn, its linkage of faith with works, and the wisdom it gives about how to transform the world to be more like the reign of God. I know of no other religious body that has the depth of Catholic social teaching.

And it’s not just talk. Every year I go to a conference organized by the U.S. Catholic Conference, the bishops’ administrative arm. Social action directors and community activists—500 or more priests and vowed religious and lay people—come together with bishops and other Catholic leaders to learn about each other’s work for peace, justice and the integrity of creation. They represent tens of thousands of other Catholics from their home dioceses with the same commitment. My friend Jim Wallis, a Protestant leader and editor of *Sojourners Magazine*,

says that such organized Catholic efforts represent the most powerful lobby for justice and peace in this whole country.

The preferential love for the poor, so central to Catholic social teaching, also finds expression in hundreds of Catholic hospitals and thousands of Catholic social service agencies throughout the country. My own inner-city parish has over 20 ministries, mostly run by lay people. In our services to the homeless and marginalized, it sometimes seems as though Jesus himself were coming directly to us in what Blessed Mother Teresa called “the distressing disguise of the poor.”

Christ as Anchor

Many years before becoming Catholic, I “accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior,” as our evangelical friends would say. For me, a deeply lodged anchor of my Catholicism is the absolutely central place it gives to Jesus Christ. Every time we meet, we not only reaffirm our faith in Christ but are nourished and challenged, by Word and Eucharist, to live out our Christian faith in daily life.

At times the Church has expressed its faith in horrendous ways. At times it has taught untenable things, like supporting slavery or demeaning Jews. On occasion, it still supports the untenable (for example, its teaching against contraception and women’s ordination). But at its best, it has never wavered in upholding its core belief in Jesus Christ. At its best, it has held Jesus before humanity, not only theologically but embodied in Christ-filled human beings who take up their cross and follow him. Catholicism is a marvelously, unambiguously Christ-centered faith. I find that very good, true and beautiful.

Many of my disheartened friends may find it hard to believe that in spite of the rigid directives often sent from Rome, the Catholic Church is amazingly open to positive change. The Mass is now in the vernacular, not in

‘Why I Choose to Stay’

A woman tells of the hope and ‘tough grace’ that impels her to remain

BY CHRISTINE SCHENK

Latin, as it had been for centuries before. Biblical scholarship, which had been rejected for so long, is now accepted. The laity is affirmed as having a baptismal dignity equal to that of priests. The Church no longer sees itself as the one and only path to salvation. The Church has confessed its mistake in holding the Jewish people responsible for Christ's death and, in this pope, is reaching out to repair the breach between Judaism and Christianity. All these positive changes have occurred just in the last 50 years.

Worth Struggling For

These reforms make me believe that the injustices in which the Church is involved today can and will be changed. As Rev. Martin Luther King affirmed, “the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.” Already, out of the sexual abuse scandals have come not only creative groups like Voice of the Faithful but books, conferences and prophetic voices calling for a profound transformation so that the Church can more nearly be like the community of Jesus' vision. I think a Church like that is worth struggling and sacrificing to help bring about.

Many of my questioning Catholic friends feel deep anger toward the Church along with despair that it will ever change. I don't think anger against injustice is a bad thing. St. Augustine said:

Hope has two lovely daughters: Anger and Courage.

Anger that things are not what they ought to be;

Courage to make them what they might be.

If we stop with anger, we'll be frustrated and tempted to withdraw. We need courage, I think, to make the Church what it might be. And prayer. And love.

Richard K. Taylor is a grandfather of nine children and an active member of St. Vincent de Paul Church in Philadelphia. In the 1960s, he worked on staff for Martin Luther King, Jr.

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People sometimes ask me why I stay in the Catholic Church since there seems to be no future for women in ministerial roles. With the current papal administration firmly rejecting any talk of women priests, even to the point of invoking infallibility, hope for Women's equality in Church decisionmaking seems bleak indeed. And it isn't only documents such as *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* that suppress women's perspectives. New requirements listed by the *General Instruction on the Roman Missal* restricting when lay people may preach effectively silence women ministers' proclamation of the good news in parishes small and large even though many pastors have encouraged them to preach.

Punitive actions taken by individual bishops and the Vatican against women like Sister Carmel McEnroy, Sister Barbara Fiand, Rev. Mary Ramerman, Sister Joan Chittister and others who seek to keep the conversation open have sent a chilling message to loyal Catholic women and men who serve the Church: Don't tell us what you really think, or you could lose your job. You could be excommunicated.

With winds like these blowing through Catholicism, why would any self-respecting woman want to stay? And why would any responsible parent want their daughters and sons to learn the ways of God in such an openly sexist institution?

The short answer is grace. Tough grace. Not the cheap, sappy, sweet variety that some associate with the term. This tough grace takes God at God's own liberating Word and fully expects Jesus' Spirit to finally break down those brittle hierarchical walls surrounding our contemporary Vatican Jericho. Only this time, the person blowing the horn is not only a solitary Joshua, but hundreds of thousands of Catholic men and women who know their full giftedness for making real

the liberating and inclusive practice of Jesus.

These women and men won't leave because they refuse to allow the institution of Catholicism, a source of so much good in their own lives, in their communities and in the world, to succumb to its own demons. But how to work for Jesus' inclusive practice in an institution whose leaders would rather silence you than speak to you? How to work in an institution that chooses secrecy, blindly protecting priest sex abusers rather than address factors such as the dramatic decline in priests and rampant clericalism among bureaucratic decision-makers?

Women Fill a Gap

A closer look at some statistics about Catholic infrastructures, both in the United States and worldwide, may provide some perspective. According to the recently released *Annuario Pontificio*, at the end of 2001 there were 1.06 billion Catholics in the world but only 405,067 priests. The Church's mission is being carried out by 2,813,252 catechists, 792,317 professed nuns, 139,078 lay missionaries, 54,970 religious brothers who are not priests, 31,512 members of secular institutes, 29,204 permanent deacons and 4,649 bishops. To my knowledge, the *Annuario Pontificio* has not included gender in its demographics of catechists, lay missionaries and members of secular institutes. However, if only 50% of these were women (which is probably a low estimate), we see that of the 4,270,049 people serving in the apostolate worldwide (including bishops, priests and deacons), at least 2,284,238 people or 54% of the total are women.

As of 2002, there were 44,874 priests in the United States, a 24 percent decline from 1965. But the “ministry gap” widened as the number of Catholics actually increased by 27% from 46.6 to 62.2 million in 2002. According to a recent U.S. Bishops' Conference study, 27% of

U.S. parishes are without a resident priest, there are more priests older than 90 than younger than 30, and, for the foreseeable future, ordinations will lag far behind priests who resign, retire or die.

While priests become increasingly scarce, we have an abundance of women ministers. Over 82% of all paid lay ministers (which some estimate number as many as 100,000) are women. Another 35,000 women serve as Catholic chaplains (85% of the total), not to mention the tens of thousands of female parish religious educators, Catholic school teachers and pastoral musicians.

We are talking about a lot of people here...as in female people serving the Catholic Church. As in female people whose gifts are underutilized, whose perspectives are not sought, who are excluded from decision-making from Vatican offices to many parish committees. These faithful women ministers form a vast intertwined network that undergirds the Church's mission from Auckland to Zambia. If for no other reason than survival, these female ministers have developed excellent working relationships with Catholic men, including priests, deacons and lay leaders.

To turn to the academy for a moment, we must recognize the remarkable contribution of contemporary female theologians, biblical scholars and liturgists such as Rosemary Ruether, Monika Hellwig, Elizabeth Schussler-Fiorenza, Phyllis Trible, Sandra Schneiders, Elizabeth Johnson, Barbara Reid, Jane Schaberg, Mary Collins, Diana Hayes, Catherine LaCugna, Miriam Therese Winter, Jeannette Rodriguez, Mary R. Thompson, Elaine Pagels, Mary Catherine Hilkert, Anne Carr, Catharina Halkes, Florence Gilman, Bonnie Thurston, Lisa Sowle Cahill, Ida Raming, Diane Bergant, Phyllis Zagano, Joan Nuth, Margaret Mitchell, Margaret Farley, Joan Chittister, Pheme Perkins and myriad others who for the first time in

history, are turning a female lens toward biblical study and Catholic theology.

These new insights are providing wonderfully fresh understandings of how radically inclusive is the God of Abraham (and Sarah), Isaac (and Rebecca), Jacob (and Rachel). And that God is rightly imaged not only as “He” but also as “She Who Is” in Beth Johnson’s seminal work on God in feminine metaphor. For the first time, women and men are discovering there were women disciples in Jesus’ Galilean entourage. For the first time, women experience themselves as equally called and chosen to proclaim the good news of Jesus’ victory over sin and death as did Mary of Magdala on that first Easter morning.

But to return to my earlier question: How to work for Jesus’ inclusive practice in an institution whose leaders would rather silence you than speak to you?

For the past seven years, I have been privileged to work with more than 8,000 parish-based Catholics including lay leaders of small faith communities, spirituality, justice and adult education groups, women min-

isters, Catholic teachers, sisters, priests, deacons and even the occasional Catholic bishop. These women and men took (and often creatively adapted) resources developed and distributed by our dedicated FutureChurch cadre of writers and staffers. They sponsored innumerable workshops, educational programs and prayer services about the inclusive practice of Jesus. In the past five years, they have involved more than 80,000 people worldwide in an estimated 1,500 celebrations of the feast of St. Mary of Magdala and sponsored monthly prayer and study groups using our Celebrating Women Witnesses resources which contain essays and prayer services written by experts about women who resisted patriarchal values of their time because of belief in Jesus. Our project partners, Call to Action and its 41 regional networks, have given our work an entree in many places it otherwise would not have had.

I myself have given many parish scripture workshops on Jesus’ inclusive practice, providing a sort of “Scripture 101” orientation to invariably fascinated adult Catholics. I met hundreds

of Catholic people hungry for contemporary biblical scholarship and hungry for an adult understanding of and relationship to Jesus Christ—a Jesus whom they now understand much better because they see with new eyes the historical context of his life and death. Even more, they ask and discover what the power of his resurrection might mean for them, for women, for oppressed minorities and for the Church.

The End Is the Beginning

One of my favorite poets, T.S. Eliot, once wrote: “in my end is my beginning.” In the end, the future of women in our Church is inextricably entwined both with their beginnings (where coequal leadership flourished for the first three centuries) and with the future of the Church as institution. Women are the Church as well as men, so I would say their future as Church is assured. The Catholic Church as an institution, however, has no future at all without ongoing recourse to the saving mystery of Jesus Christ, whose own Spirit will free us from the demons of sexism, clericalism, apathy and despair.

In the end, the question for us today may be the same one posed by Jesus to his first disciples: “Who do you say that I am?” If our response continues along the chauvinist lines of recent Vatican pronouncements, I would say there is not much of a future for women or men in the Church, let alone for Christianity. But it will not be so. Our witness to the inclusive practice of Jesus, in the power of the Spirit, will shape our future much more than any decree from any Vatican bureaucrat.

Jesus’ real name was Yeshua, Aramaic for Joshua. I think I hear some walls creaking right now.

Christine Schenk has master’s degrees in midwifery and theology. She is director of FutureChurch, a coalition of parish-based Catholics seeking full participation of all Catholics in the life of the Church. It advocates opening ordination to all called to it by God and the people of God.

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Lourdes Diary

BY JAMES MARTIN, S.J.

PART ONE: DONNING THE BLACK CASSOCK

Here’s something you don’t hear every day from a Jesuit,” I said to a friend living in a Jesuit residence at Fordham University. “I’m here to pick up a cassock for my trip to Lourdes.”

The pilgrimage to Fordham was in preparation for a seven-day pilgrimage to the little town in the French Pyrenees where the Virgin Mary appeared to the 14-year-old Bernadette Soubirous in 1858. Two years ago, a friend who is a member of the Order of Malta began encour-

aging me to join the knights and dames on their annual trip to Lourdes. And though I have a great devotion to St. Bernadette and had just read Ruth Harris’s excellent study, *Lourdes: Body and Spirit in a Secular Age*, I turned down his kind invitation. Too busy, I said.

But last summer he called while I was directing a retreat, a time when one naturally feels more open and free. This time, he invited me in earnest, along with two Jesuit friends, to work as chaplains on the next trip. “Sure,” I said. “Sign us up.”

Finding companions was easy. Two friends, Brian, a priest who works at a retreat house, and George, who would be ordained a month after our trip, signed on immediately.

Wednesday, April 28

The Order of Malta has asked us

to meet them at Baltimore-Washington Airport three hours before our 7:00 p.m. charter flight, which will fly directly to Tarbes airport, a few kilometers away from Lourdes. We are greeted by a sea of people, mostly middle-aged or elderly, some wearing silver medals dangling from red ribbons denoting the number of pilgrimages they have made. Scattered in the crowd are men and women in wheelchairs or looking painfully thin. Other couples cradle children obviously suffering from either illness or birth defects. These are, as I already know from Ruth Harris’ book, the malades, the sick, the main reason for the journey. Their trips have been paid for by the order—a wonderful act of charity. Everyone, including the malades, boards the plane cheerfully.

The flight begins unlike any I’ve been on, with a bishop leading us in

the Rosary. The in-flight movie, not surprisingly, is “The Song of Bernadette,” which I had not seen for many years. It corresponds reasonably well to the original story of the apparitions at Lourdes, though it stints on the natural toughness of Bernadette Soubirous. In Lourdes, Ruth Harris points out that Bernadette assiduously turned down pleas to imitate the physical actions of the Virgin (like making the Sign of the Cross) and, more famously, refused to accept gifts, despite her appalling poverty. Far from compromising her image, such toughness makes her in reality a more convincing saint than does the film’s portrayal.

Thursday, April 29

We land after a long flight, a sleepless one for me. The bus ride from the airport, through a rainy

countryside studded with tall poplars, is full of lively conversation, and we quickly arrive at our lodgings, the Hotel Saint-Sauveur. It looks as if all the hotels and shops at Lourdes boast religious names, and it is startling to see a shop selling tacky souvenirs named after Charles de Foucauld, who lived in extreme poverty in the desert or, worse, a knickknack shop huddled under a sign that reads “L’Immaculée Conception.” After lunch our group (perhaps 250 of us) processes to Mass in what will become our usual formation: the malades, seated in small hand-pulled carts, are in front, accompanied by companions, followed by the rest of us.

A letter we received prior to departure said: “Your cassock can be worn anywhere at anytime. It will be useful for the Mass in the Grotto ...and of course during all the processions....” Rather than risk giving offense, Brian, George and I have scrounged up some Jesuit cassocks, and we decide to wear them today. Far from an embarrassment, as I had expected, the black cassock somehow feels right in Lourdes. As we cross the square in front of the basilica, I notice brown-robed Franciscans, white-robed Dominicans and even a black-and-white Trappist. While the plain Roman collar makes me feel priestly, the cassock helps me to feel very Jesuit.

After Mass in the ornate basilica, someone suggests a visit to the Grotto, which I had mistakenly assumed was far off. But the Church is built directly atop the rocky outcropping, and when I go around the corner, passing huge racks of candles for sale, I am shocked to come upon it. In Bernadette’s time Massabielle (the word in the local patois means “old stone”) was where pigs came to forage and garbage washed ashore from the Gave River. Now, under the massive bulk of the gray Church, is the site familiar from holy cards and reproductions in local churches: sinuous gray rocks hover over a plain altar, before which stands a huge iron candelabra. In the small niche where the apparitions occurred, a statue of the Virgin is surrounded by the words spoken to Bernadette on March 25, 1858: “Que soy era Immaculada Concepciou.”

The area before the Grotto is marked off by signs requesting

silence, and as I approach I am drawn to the obvious peace: serenity seems to radiate from Massabielle. Hundreds of people are gathered before the space—malades in their blue carts, a Polish priest with a group of pilgrims praying the Rosary and a young backpacker in jeans kneeling on the ground. Many stand in line to walk through the Grotto. Joining them, I run my hand over the smooth wet rock and am astonished to spy the spring uncovered by Bernadette. I am filled with wonder at being here. As I pass beneath the Virgin’s statue, I notice a host of tiny flowering plants of marvelous variety under her feet, and think of medieval tapestries.

Dogtired after dinner, I wander over to the Grotto. Purchasing two candles, I pray for my family. I place the tapers among an array of candles huddled under a metal shed, whose wall bears the inscription, “This flame continues my prayer.”

Nearby, pilgrims are congregating in time for the evening Rosary procession. In a short time thousands of people light their small white candles and begin walking together as an announcer declaims the prayers and mysteries of the Rosary in French, English, Spanish, Italian, Polish and German. Slowly we process around the huge oval pavement before the basilica. After the first decade, the crowd begins to sing the “Lourdes Hymn.”

As the first Ave Maria is sung over the square, tens of thousands of pilgrims lift their orange-flamed candles in unison, and I am overcome by this profession of faith: malades and the able-bodied, of all ages, from across the world. It seems a vision of what the world could be.

Friday, April 30

By now, Brian, George and I have

met many members of the Order of Malta, as well as many of the malades. The term here is not pejorative. “We’re all malades in one way or another,” says a bishop on pilgrimage with us.

The range of illnesses they live with is stunning: cancer, AIDS, Lyme disease, dementia, birth defects. At lunch, I sit with a couple from Philadelphia. The woman suffers from a disease I have never heard of, which has left her, in her late 30’s, unable to walk easily and prone to a host of painful physical ailments. She and her husband are aware of the seriousness of her condition, but they are consistently friendly, happy and solicitous, and I like them immediately.

“Oh, I’m fine,” she says. “I’ve been laughing since I got here. So many funny things have happened!” As we process to Mass, Brian and George quietly describe the conditions faced by other malades they have met.

Lourdes, of course,

is famous for its healing waters, though nothing in the words of Mary to St. Bernadette suggests this. (She merely said, “Go drink of the spring and bathe yourself there.”) The short paperback guide we receive wisely counsels against expecting physical healings. As we would discover, spiritual healing is the more common outcome for pilgrims. But I pray for actual physical healing for the malades anyway, especially the ones I know, here and at home.

In the afternoon, our group goes to the Stations of the Cross located on the side of a steep hill. The life-sized figures are painted a lurid gold. The knights and dames assist many of the malades along the rocky terrain in a cold drizzle. We are handed a small booklet called *Everyone’s Way of the Cross*, and I groan inwardly, expecting banal sentiments. But I am wrong. If the writing is

simple, the prayers strike me as powerful, particularly as I notice a frail man helped over the slippery ground by his companion. “Lord, I know what you are telling me,” says the text for the Fourth Station. “To watch the pain of those we love is harder than to bear our own.”

Tonight’s Rosary procession is as moving as last night’s, if this is possible. Somehow, in the midst of this huge crowd, Brian, George and I are spotted by one of the officials of the Domaine that is, the sprawling area surrounding the Grotto and the basilica. “Vous êtes prêtres?” he asks. “Are you priests?” When I nod, he pulls us through the crowd to the steps of the basilica. There we join other priests who gaze out at the enormous throng, just then raising their voices in the “Lourdes Hymn” in the damp night air.

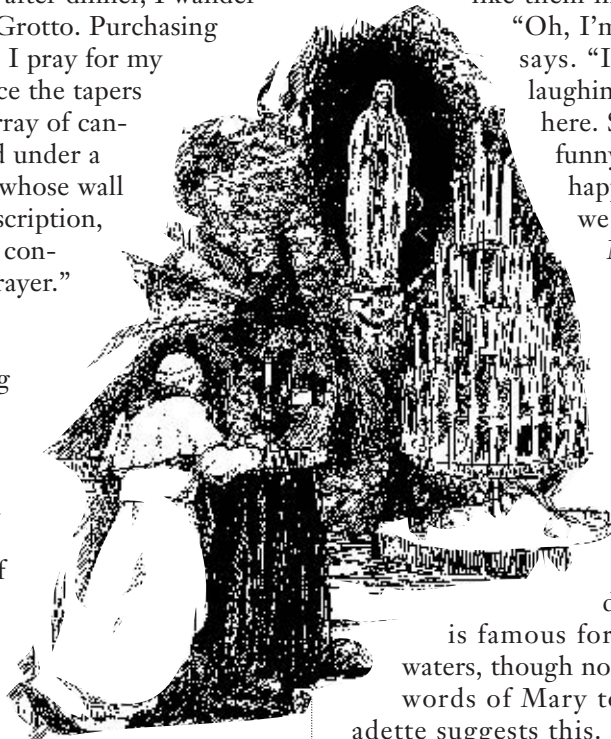
An English priest turns to me and says, “The universal Church looks well tonight, doesn’t it?”

PART TWO: GROTTO AT MASSABIEILLE

Saturday, May 1

This morning I am waiting for a turn at the baths here in Lourdes. On long wooden benches under a stone portico sit the malades, the sick, along with their companions and other pilgrims. Flanking me are two men from our pilgrimage with the Order of Malta. One, a fortyish red-haired man, is strangely quiet. Later I learn that he is suffering from a form of dementia brought on by Lyme disease. His caring wife suffers greatly. Carved in the stone wall are the Virgin’s words to St. Bernadette: “Go drink of the spring and bathe yourself there.” Every few minutes the Ave Maria is sung in another language.

After an hour, the three of us are called into a small room surrounded by blue-and-white-striped curtains. Once inside, we strip to our undershorts and wait patiently on flimsy plastic chairs. From the other side of another curtain I hear the splashing of someone entering the bath, and in a few seconds he emerges with a wide grin. As I wonder if the legend



that Lourdes water dries off “miraculously” is true, another curtain parts. A smiling attendant invites me inside: “Mon père.”

Inside a small chamber three men stand around a sunken stone bath. My high-school French comes in handy and we chat amiably. One volunteer points to a wooden peg and, after I hang up my undershorts, he quickly wraps a cold wet towel around my waist. (“I think they kept them in the freezer for us,” says one of the malades at lunch.) Another carefully guides me to the lip of the bath and asks me to pray for the healing I need. When I cross myself they bow their heads and pray along with me.

Two of them gently take my arm and lead me down the steps into the bath, where the water is cold, but no colder than a swimming pool. “Asseyez-vous,” one says, and I sit down as they hold my arms. Here, praying in this dimly lit room, in this spring water, held by two kind people, I feel entirely separated from the rest of life. And then—whoosh—they stand me up and point to a statue of Mary, whose feet I kiss. Then I’m handed a quick drink of water from a pitcher.

As a volunteer shakes my hand, another asks for a blessing. So, wearing only a towel, I bless the men, who kneel on the wet stone floor and cross themselves. “The first time you’ve blessed someone without your clothes?” asks one, and we laugh.

I dress quickly and rush over to the Grotto at Massabielle where our group is celebrating Mass. And, yes, the water dries from my skin immediately.

Sunday, May 2

A gargantuan Church, called the Basilica of St. Pius X, was built underground in 1958 near the Grotto of Massabielle, where the apparitions took place. It seats 25,000 people but can hold 30,000. The concrete structure would resemble an enormous oval parking lot were it not for huge portraits of saints, perhaps 10 feet high, that line the walls. One banner reads “Bienheureux John XXIII.” The French word for “blessed” means, literally, “well-happy” and seems a far better one than our own. In the morning our group processes

to the underground Church for a solemn Mass for the Order of Malta, whose members are gathered in Lourdes for their annual visit.

There are scores of priests in the sacristy, dozens of bishops, and even three cardinals. The entrance procession, which makes its way through tens of thousands of malades, companions, knights, dames, pilgrims, students and everybody else, is almost alarmingly joyful. High above the floor, mammoth screens show the words of the hymn, which, now in English, now in French, now in Italian, now in Spanish, now in German, are taken up by the throng. At Communion time I am handed a gold ciborium brimming with hosts and am pointed to a young Italian guard who carries a yellow flag. He has a girlfriend in America, he explains, and maybe she could call you if she needs to talk? Flag aloft, he leads me into a sea of people who engulf me and stretch out their hands for Communion, as if it’s the most important thing in the world, which of course it is.

Later on, walking with a Franciscan priest, I am asked by a French pilgrim to hear a confession. So we sit on a stone bench in the sun, and when we have finished, I look up. A little line has formed. An Italian man sits down next. Before giving a penance, I tell him that while I might not understand everything he is saying, God does.

Monday, May 3

At 6:30 this morning, a group of us leave for the house of St. Bernadette Soubirous. Her house is called the cachot because it had been a jail before her destitute family had moved in. In René Laurentin’s biography *Bernadette of Lourdes*, he notes that in this dank, four-by-four-meter hovel, two beds served six people.

Before we arrive, a sister has arranged the cachot for Mass, which will be celebrated by Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, of Washington, D.C., who has joined our group for a few days. Because of the room’s size, only the malades and their companions can fit, along with the cardinal, another priest, myself and the two Jesuit friends who have come with me to Lourdes: one a deacon, one a priest. As the Mass begins, 30 people, many of them

seriously ill, turn their expectant faces to the cardinal. He puts them at their ease instantly, and says that we all feel like sardines, and not to worry about standing up during the Mass, since sardines don’t have to. Everyone laughs. Yesterday, the cardinal led a huge eucharistic procession near the Grotto. It is a marvel to see a priest who can preach both to thousands and to a handful of people. He offers a short, moving homily on the meaning of suffering, and I think of the incongruity of it all: we are here because of a poor 14-year-old girl.



On a rainy afternoon, I spend a few hours in a vaguely Gothic building with a white-and-blue sign out front: Confessions. Before the building is a statue of St. John Vianney kneeling. In a narrow hallway, people sit placidly on benches outside doors that announce confessions in English, Spanish, French, Dutch, German and Italian. There are more Germans than anyone else. Every few minutes someone pops into my English cubicle and asks hopefully, “Deutsch?”

Tuesday, May 4

Tomorrow we will return to the States, so I decide to return to the baths today. Inside is a gregarious attendant I have met before, and with a broad smile he shouts out, “Mon ami!” Amazingly, the other volunteer spies my cassock and says, “You are a Jesuit? Then you know my family.” When I look confused, he says, “I am Polish and my name is Kostka.” So I am helped into the bath by mon ami and a member of the family of St. Stanislaus Kostka, one of my Jesuit heroes.

In the afternoon, brushing my teeth in the hotel bathroom, I think that if Mary were to appear today, it would probably be in a place as

unlikely as a bathroom. After all, the original apparitions at Lourdes occurred in a filthy place where pigs came to forage. When I enter the lobby, an elderly man from our group asks to speak with me about something that happened to him in the baths this morning.

This rational and sensible Catholic has come to Lourdes after a long illness. (I’ve changed some of the details here, but not the essentials.) Through tears he says that after visiting the baths, he was in the men’s bathroom and heard a woman’s voice say, in a few words, that his sins were forgiven. The bathroom was entirely empty, and there are obviously no women anywhere near the men’s baths at Lourdes.

Before coming to Lourdes, he had prayed for this grace. Despite a recent confession, he still felt the weight of his sins. In response, I tell him that there are many ways that God communicates with us—through insights, emotions, memories—and that while people rarely report this type of experience, it is not unheard of. Something similar represented a pivotal event in Mother Teresa’s life. He is surprised when I say that I was just thinking that a bathroom wouldn’t be such a bad place for a religious experience. And though it’s unexpected, it makes sense: a grace received in a clear and distinct way while on pilgrimage. Besides, I say, your sins really are forgiven.

“What did the voice sound like?” I ask. “Oh,” he says, “very peaceful.”

Early the next morning, before our flight home, I make a final visit to the Grotto. Even before dawn, there is a Mass being celebrated, and pilgrims are already here, kneeling before the space, running their hands over the rock, praying the Rosary and hoping for healing, as they have been doing since 1858.

An orange sun rises over the basilica, and the bells chime the first clear notes of the “Lourdes Hymn” as I cross the square.

Rev. James Martin, S.J., is an associate editor of America and editor of Awake My Soul: Contemporary Catholics on Traditional Devotions.

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A Radical Message for the People of God

BY COLLEEN CARROLL CAMPBELL

Like so many other teachings of the Second Vatican Council, the central lessons of the second chapter of *Lumen Gentium* have been widely misunderstood and caricatured. Catholics seeking to remake the mystical body of Christ into a representative democracy have seized on this chapter's description of the Church as "the People of God." That description, they say, justifies a radical rethinking of the Catholic faith.

In one respect, at least, they are right.

The teachings of Chapter Two, "On the People of God," are radical—in the best sense of the word. To be radical is to return to one's roots; to get back to basics and revisit one's foundations. *Lumen Gentium* (LG) is indeed a radical document, and its second chapter contains some of its most radical truths. Those truths do not repudiate the hierarchy of the Church or its doctrines. Rather, they challenge all Catholics to embrace their specific roles in the Church and use their talents to make Christ known and loved in the world.

After exploring the mystery of the Church in Chapter One, the Council Fathers turn their attention in Chapter Two to the Church's human and communal dimensions. They open with a Scripture reference, then offer this striking summary of God's salvific plan:

God, however, does not make men holy and save them merely as individuals, without bond or link between one another. Rather has it pleased him to bring men together as one people, a people which acknowledges him in truth and serves him in holiness (no. 9).

This truth—that God saves us as a family—is radical. It calls us back to the Old Testament roots of our faith, where the Lord called the Jewish people His own. And it reminds us of our New Testament roots, where Jesus calls all of us to

show our love for God by loving and serving our neighbors.

The Council fathers expand on this truth throughout the chapter, as they explain the origins and the nature of the People of God. Jesus Christ, they write, has instituted a New Covenant through His blood. He has established His people as "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people... who in times past were not a people, but are now the people of God" (LG, no. 9).

This communion does not yet include all mankind, yet "[a]ll men are called to belong to the new

ability (LG, nos. 13, 17).

These radical teachings are liberating and challenging. Yet the splendor of these truths has been dimmed in the eyes of many orthodox Catholics, who have seen others use these teachings to justify liturgical abuses, a disregard for doctrine, and a disdain for the Magisterium. Though *Lumen Gentium* unequivocally affirms the teaching authority of the Pope and the bishops, many dissenting theologians and Catholics with a "progressive" agenda have argued that the Church's communal nature demands a leveling of its hierarchy and majority votes on everything from women's

the equal dignity of all people, and their leadership constitutes only one part of the Church's mission. Lay people also have a mission: to grow in holiness and spread the Gospel to their families and communities. The People of God must work together for the glory of God, as the Council fathers urged: "Each individual part contributes through its special gifts to the good of the other parts and of the whole Church."

Such unity and cooperation is a far cry from the rancor and division we see in so many corners of the American Church today, where power struggles and ideological battles have fractured faith communities and damaged our Christian witness. Rather than working to humbly serve the Body of Christ and bring the Good News to the world, many Catholics have spent the past four decades wrestling against Church teachings and railing against the hierarchy. As a result, evangelization and religious education have been woefully neglected. An entire generation of Catholics has grown up without a firm grounding in the faith. And the culture has grown more hostile to Catholic moral teachings, which so few Catholics explain, defend, or even understand.

Pope John Paul II, recognizing this problem, has spent his prophetic pontificate sowing the seeds of a New Evangelization. Again and again, he has called Catholics to join him in bringing the Gospel to the ends of the earth—and to their own backyard. His invitation echoes the Great Commission at the end of Matthew's Gospel, and the radical truths proclaimed in this chapter, which reminds us that we all have a responsibility to spread the faith. As St. Paul says, and the Council fathers repeat, "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!"

Both the Holy Father and the Council fathers place special emphasis on the role of lay Catholics in this new evangelization. In the second chapter of *Lumen Gentium*, the Council fathers remind readers of the importance of passing on the faith within the family, which they

God does not make men holy and save them merely as individuals. Rather, God saves us as a family. While this 'family' does not yet include all mankind, Vatican II reminds us that, nevertheless, all are called to belong to this new People of God. 'Though there are many nations, there is but one People of God.'

People of God...though there are many nations there is but one People of God, which takes its citizens from every race, making them citizens of a kingdom which is of a heavenly rather than of an earthly nature" (LG, no. 13).

Here again is a foundational truth of our faith: We are all equal in dignity before God. With that equality comes responsibility: All of us, whether priests, religious, or lay people, have a duty to proclaim the Gospel and serve the Church. The Church is "made up of different peoples" and "composed of various ranks," yet "[t]he obligation of spreading the faith is imposed on every disciple of Christ, according to his or her

ordination to the morality of abortion.

After all, they say, we are the People of God. We are the Church. And there must be no divisions between us, no differentiation of roles, no decisions without the consent of the "governed."

Faithful Catholics rightly object to this unbiblical view of the Church. Both Scripture and Tradition affirm that Jesus established His Church on the rock of Peter, to whom He gave the keys to His kingdom. The Pope and the bishops, as successors to Peter and the apostles, have the God-given authority to interpret Scripture, establish doctrine, and guide the People of God.

Their authority in no way diminishes

call “the domestic Church”: In it parents should, by their word and example, be the first preachers of the faith to their children; they should encourage them in the vocation which is proper to each of them, fostering with special care vocation to a sacred state (LG, no. 11).

Our families are fertile ground for the new evangelization. So are our neighborhoods, our workplaces, and our towns and cities. No place or situation is exempt from the call of Christ to spread the Gospel. We need not always use grand gestures or elegant words: The most powerful witness often comes in the form of “small things done with great love,” as Mother Teresa said. Our lives overflow with opportunities to do these small things—whether we are driving through rush-hour traffic, chatting with colleagues at the water cooler, or nursing a baby in the middle of the night. However humble our circumstances may be, they offer us opportunities to perform acts of love that build up the Body of Christ.

The Lord has called us to participate in His plan of salvation, by witnessing to His love in the world. His call may lead us to grand undertakings in the public eye or to unseen sacrifices in the confines of our own homes. No matter where we are called to proclaim Christ, we should heed St. Paul’s advice to the Philippians:

Have this mind among yourselves, which was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross (Phil. 2:5-8).

Jesus has freed us with the truth that we are the adopted sons and daughters of God, equal in dignity with one another and bound together by His love. Our proper response to that freedom and equality is not a power grab or a fixation on Church politics, but humility, gratitude, and service. The People of God owe thanks to the Council Fathers for reminding us of that radical truth. Maybe now, after 40 years of turmoil, we are ready to live it.

Colleen Carroll Campbell is a former speechwriter to President George W. Bush and author of The New Faithful: Why Young Adults Are Embracing Christian Orthodoxy (Loyola Press, 2002).

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CHECK OUT
THE CALENDAR
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IN THE
21ST CENTURY



The Church in the 21st Century plans lectures, panel discussions, and other events at Boston College this spring. Keep track of these, and view video and audio recordings of past events by visiting our Web site, www.bc.edu/church21.

The Infinity of Now

If we tire of the day-to-day grind, it may be because we are only half present

BY DANIEL O’LEARY

At 84, Samuel Beckett was asked about the possibility of his retirement. “What!” he exclaimed, “Me?

Retire? Never—not with the fire in me now!” Not all of us are that lucky. In my travels, I meet teachers and priests for whom the original vision of their vocation has all but disappeared. There seems to be a universal kind of ennui, a deep-seated sense of pressure, that is driving people to retire as soon as possible. Equally worrying, whether it has to do with increasing bureaucracy, target-setting or appraisals, the very soul seems to have dropped out of the world of work for many.

How do we restore a new energy to our lives by finding a lost balance and poise? Is there a way of building into our days a ground, a centre, and a reminder of what is at the heart of all our endeavours, something that would provide a context and a balance against which to measure and nurture our energies? An extraordinary thing is that it isn’t really the amount of work we do that wears us out. Burn-out has more to do with the absence of enthusiasm and dedication. When we work with a passion, everything changes. When our heart is in our work, the work itself becomes a kind of extension of our hearts. Taking pride in what we do transforms the weariness.

Empty Monday faces behind wet windscreens inching their grim way along the A64 into Leeds. The work that awaited was already destroying them. And then I saw him, as I see him almost every day. On the verge of the soulless carriageway, his face is beautiful with attention. He is holding the details of his day against an infinite

horizon. Like a mother to her baby or a cellist to her instrument, like a painter to his canvas or a priest to his altar; the litter picker, with meticulous dedication, stoops carefully to renew the face of the earth.

When I go back to Ireland I’m always struck by the Angelus broadcast on television. It is a valiant effort to recover a kind of timing and fine-tuning of the way we are present to whatever we are doing at that moment. At twelve and at six, the bells are tolled. During the pealing, workers from a variety of professions are depicted as lifting their heads and pausing for the length of a few breaths. You sense they have shifted their awareness to another place. They have moved, for a moment, inside themselves, drawn to a horizon deep within their own soul. It does not seem to be so much a distraction as a way of living more fully in the present moment, of being more present and devoted to the immediate work of their hands and eyes.

St. Benedict told his monks to hold pots and pans in the kitchen with the same respect and reverence as chalices are held at the altar.

I had a similar awareness when I joined the Benedictine monks at Pluscarden near Aberdeen for six weeks some years ago. The regularity of the relentless bells calling

them from working to praying, and back again, was such a grounding habit. It felt as though both exercises were being connected; that their sources, in the deep centre of each monk's being, were now revealed as equal aspects of the same transcending presence. Thus graced and graceful, this "physical mindfulness" would dissolve the edges between their work and their meditation, as they repeatedly recovered the rhythm and the seasons of their days and nights, their bodies and souls.

There is a story that I love which illustrates the grace of this awareness. Two men were building a wall—long and high—one at each end. When asked what he was doing, the first brickie replied that, for a start, he had no interest whatever in his work. A wall is a wall is a wall. He was bored and listless. Brick after brick, day after day, month after month. He longed for Fridays; he hated Mondays. With no interest or involvement, his work was slowly killing him.

"I'm creating a cathedral," murmured the other man. "This is the South Wall of it. I've seen the plans. It will be such a beautiful building. I can't believe I'm part of it. When I watch the young children playing around here, I can see them and their own children, worshipping in this holy and lovely place for the

decades of their lives."

When talking to parents, teachers and priests, I often tell this story. It transforms the way we see things. It is what the Incarnation has revealed. It is what the Sacraments are for. It is why God created the world—so that we would one day tumble to the amazing reality that lies beneath what we too often term as "ordinary".

*When our heart is in
our work, the work
becomes a kind of
extension of our hearts.*

That is why the story about the two workmen is called "The Infinite Horizon." There is an infinite horizon to every single, routine, menial task we perform. The heavens reverberate to the least of our whispers or acts of love.

The men in the monasteries lay down their tools and obediently and beautifully walk away from their fields, desks, and benches, only so

as to return to them filled with more reverence and wonder. St. Benedict, for instance, kept reminding his cellarer to hold his pots and pans in the kitchen with the same respect and reverence as the chalices and ciboria are held at the altar.

The Angelus rings out over the countryside of Ireland, not to distract the people from their daily labor into a more heavenly reality. It rings out only so that the forgetful eyes of their souls can be reminded of the treasures of grace at their fingertips. As the Prophet said, beyond the boredom and pain, work has a divine dignity around it. It is love made visible. This is what the Eucharist accomplishes for us each Sunday. It parts the veils and reveals to us that the liturgy of the Church serves only the liturgy of Life, that all work is holy work; that the sacred place we search for is the very ground on which we stand. That every bush is a burning bush.

In his book *Crossing the Unknown Sea*, David Whyte suggests that what opened the heart of Moses was not hearing God's voice from the bush saying "You are standing on holy ground," but the moment he looked down and realised not only that he stood in God's presence, but that he had been standing in that presence all his life. Every step of his life had

been on holy ground.

It is Moses in the desert, fallen to his knees before the lit bush. It is the man throwing away his shoes, as if to enter heaven and finding himself astonished, opened at last, fallen in love with solid ground.

Whyte goes on to observe that the antidote to exhaustion is not necessarily rest. The antidote, he claims, is wholeheartedness. We often get so tired because of the gap between our true powers and the work we do, between the possibilities we sense and the opportunities we have. In other words we are not really present to what we are doing. "You are only half here," he writes, "and half here will kill you after a while." He offers a delightful metaphor when he comments on a Rilke poem about the awkward way a swan walks until it is transformed once it sinks down into its element, allowing the flowing water to reveal the true harmony it always carried.

Rev. Daniel O'Leary is a parish priest of St. Wilfrid's Church in the North Yorkshire town of Ripon, England.

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Contributing Publications

America, the national Catholic weekly magazine, has been published since 1909 by Jesuits in the United States for thinking Catholics and those who want to know what Catholics are thinking. It has published dozens of articles, analyses, and commentaries on the sexual-abuse crisis in the Church and its aftermath since 2002. *America* is online at www.americamagazine.org. Subscribe via the Web site or call 1-800-627-9533.

Established in 1924, *Commonweal* is an independent journal of opinion edited by lay Catholics. It has a special interest in religion (Catholic and otherwise), politics, war and peace issues, and culture. Along with articles on current events, *Commonweal* regularly reviews books, plays, films, and television. It is published 22 times per year. Its goal is "to bring a distinctively Catholic perspective to bear on the issues

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National Catholic Reporter is an independent newsweekly that reports on serious issues important to thinking Catholics and is a venue for open and honest discussion of those issues. Founded in 1964, *National Catholic Reporter* features articles and essays on topics including spirituality, human rights, living the Catholic faith, social justice, and liturgy. It is published by the National Catholic Reporter Publishing Co., which also publishes *Celebration*, a 48-page, monthly liturgy planning resource used by 8000 worship communities. Subscriptions to both may be ordered at www.ncronline.org

Lay Witness is the flagship publication of the group Catholics United for the Faith,

Inc. Featuring articles written by leaders in the Catholic Church, each issue of *Lay Witness* keeps you informed on current events in the Church and the Holy Father's intentions for the month, and provides formation through biblical and catechetical articles with real-life applications for everyday Catholics. For more information, go to laywitness@cuf.org or call Catholics United for the Faith, Steubenville, Ohio, 800-693-2484.

The American Catholic is an independent, lay-administered Catholic periodical that participates in the gospel mission of the Church by searching for connections between faith and life and by providing a forum for grassroots expression by the people of God. Progressive and open in editorial content, *The American Catholic* strives to be faithful to the teachings of Jesus, the spirit of Vatican II and the

principles of democracy. It is published by a nonprofit organization in Farmington, Connecticut. *The American Catholic* appears nine times a year. A one-year subscription is \$25. For more information, go to www.taonline.org

The Tablet, one of the oldest Catholic weeklies, is an independent Catholic newspaper and journal of opinion that has been published weekly since 1840. Produced in London, England, and read by Catholics around the world, it has been owned by a nonprofit foundation for the last 29 years. "Readers can be confident that *The Tablet* will be a paper of progressive, but responsible Catholic thinking, a place where orthodoxy is at home but ideas are welcome," writes the editor, Catherine Pepinster. Subscriptions, which cost \$59 US for the first six months, then \$148 US for the year, can be ordered at

Countless Small Victories

Maryknoll lay missionaries touch lives and are transformed

BY RANDY YOUNG

At a time of great turmoil within the U.S. Catholic Church, a determined group of people has carved out an enviable record of achievement in some of the most challenged regions of the world. Maryknoll Lay Missioners—131 people in 17 countries—is the Church's largest and fastest-growing lay mission group in the United States today.

Driven by a sense of faith, purpose and community, these missionaries are affecting the quality of life for people in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Their work is resulting in measurable improvements in health care, education, the environment, human rights and economic development in a host of third-world enclaves. At the same time, members of the lay missionaries are transforming their own lives, often dedicating themselves to helping the extremely needy in areas within the United States, like the South Bronx and Appalachia, once they have finished their Maryknoll assignments overseas.

"Lay missionaries are putting into practice the dream of the Second Vatican Council that the whole Church should be 'missionary'—lay men and women working alongside priests, brothers and sisters in a powerful spirit of unity and global outreach," says Joseph Healey, M.M., who has served with Maryknoll in East Africa for 33 years.

Maryknoll's Unique Role

The partnership did not develop overnight. The Maryknoll lay mission program was created in 1975 as part of the 90-year-old Maryknoll organization. Today that movement includes the Maryknoll Society (priests and brothers), the Maryknoll Congregation (sisters), the Maryknoll Lay Missioners and the Maryknoll Affiliates.

Maryknoll holds a unique place in the Catholic Church: it became one

of the first missionary groups to send young Catholic families overseas for extended periods of service. The lay missionaries brought their skills and the Gospel of compassion and love, quietly compiling a record of success wherever they went. In 1994 the Vatican directed the growing lay missionaries organization to become autonomous and self-supporting. Since that time, the Maryknoll Lay Missioners have been working to build a base of financial support and are now largely dependent on contributions from private individuals to fund their work. Their agenda brings the missionaries face-to-face with some of society's most impoverished members in marginalized areas around the globe—areas that often have no potable water, electricity or plumbing. Maryknoll's lay missionaries not only confront, but openly embrace this challenge. "Our fundamental work is to serve the poor," says Gerry Lee, co-director of Maryknoll Lay Missioners, "and the way we do it is by living with, working with, and totally immersing ourselves in the lives of needy people." Maryknoll Lay Missioners agree to serve one tour of three-and-a-half years, renewable every three years thereafter. Two-thirds of the missionaries serve for more than one tour, and about a third for more than 10 years. They range in age from 24 to over 65, and about half have school-age children in tow.

Living the Mission

Gerry Lee and his wife, Patti McKenna, along with their four- and five-year-old daughters, left a comfortable life in suburban Boston in the summer of 1984 to become members of the Maryknoll Lay Missioners. Like all new members, they first received four months of theological and cross-cultural training at Maryknoll's headquarters in Ossining, N.Y. That was followed by another eight months of language training and cultural orientation in Cochabamba, Bolivia. Their initial assignment was Caracas, Venezuela,

where they became members of a makeshift refugee village set up by the government for citizens who had lost their homes in landslides (a common occurrence during the country's rainy season). "We lived in a barrio on the edge of the city with no running water," Gerry remembers. "It was a difficult adjustment for us at first, but our neighbors were a real inspiration, and we soon became vital members of their small Christian community."

Gerry called on his background in ministry (he holds a master of divinity degree), working with an existing team of Maryknoll priests and lay missionaries to set up a small Christian community



in the barrio. At the same time, he began pressing for greater civil and human rights for its inhabitants, who often found themselves under the heavy thumb of the government. Gerry also found time among his multiple projects to teach photography to a group of youths. They eventually got involved in video and today, as young adults, run a small Church radio station. Patti drew on her training as an early childhood teacher to help establish a modest elementary school to be run by parents of the children. She chose to focus on nutrition and health care education, training

people to become knowledgeable in these critical fields. (She later became a nurse practitioner herself.) "We learned so much from the people we were with for 10 years in South America," notes Patti. "It allowed us to bring back to our parish in the United States a totally different perspective on ourselves as citizens, and as Catholics." Kim and Patti LaMothe found their work as missionaries in East Timor—which gained its independence from Indonesia in 1999 amid a wave of violence—to be a transforming experience. "I deliberately chose a helping profession as a young woman," says Patti, a teacher, "but didn't realize the full impact of that choice until I began working with marginalized societies around the world." Patti currently teaches English as a second language to teachers and health care workers in East Timor, as well as to two high school classes, while her husband Kim's carpentry skills are also in great demand. Patti's real passion, though, is running a mobile library that brings books and educational materials to youngsters in 10 primary schools. "When I see the eyes of students and teachers light up, I know I'm in the right place," she says with enthusiasm.

Marj Humphrey would not trade places with anyone else. This indomitable lay missionary is helping to ease the intense sadness and suffering of children left orphaned by AIDS in Africa. Based in Kitale, a rural town of 50,000 in northwestern Kenya, Marj runs a small clinic and school assistance program for orphans, meeting their basic education and nutrition needs. As the AIDS epidemic continues to destroy African families, "we're discovering more and more children raising children," Marj observes. "Our mission is to bring a message of hope to the families, and especially the children, affected by AIDS."

In her own ministry, Dr. Susan Nagele brought desperately needed medical care to as many as 120 people

a day in a village in southern Sudan, an African country ravaged by famine, starvation, disease, civil war and slavery. As a family physician and Maryknoll lay missionary, Dr. Nagele decided nearly 20 years ago to pass up the amenities of the modern world to live with and care for people whose greatest preoccupation is day-to-day survival. "I've come here because this is where God wants me to be," Dr. Nagele told ABC's "Nightline" as part of a special story the network prepared in 1999 on this extraordinary woman. "I've had a lot given to me, and I want to be able to give some of it back."

Clearly, the success of Maryknoll is measured one small victory at a time through the work of missionaries like Dr. Nagele, Marj, Kim and Patty. Others, like Phil Dahl-Bredine, are at the helm of ongoing projects with

Maryknoll's core strength, over the years, has been the dedication of its people.

the potential to benefit vast groups of people. Phil, for example, is teaching reforestation skills and practices to residents of Oaxaca, a mountainous region of Mexico that was stripped of its soil by over-farming but is now making a comeback.

David Rodriguez is exercising his ministry by working with small coffee farmers in the backwaters of Bolivia and Venezuela. He is helping these campesinos—who are barely able to survive because of the fierce global competitive pricing of coffee—to bring in additional income by diversifying their crops. It is a job for which David is well suited: he was one of 11 children raised in a mud-and-palm-thatched house in a poor village of farmers and fishermen in eastern Venezuela.

"In my 19 years as a Maryknoll missionary, I've worked alongside some remarkable people," he says.

"What's really impressed me, though, is how most of them left very good jobs and homes in the United States to live with the poor in forgotten corners of the world. I've seen their lives transformed, and I've seen their children become young men and women with incredible generosity of spirit. This has had a tremendous impact on my own life."

Indeed, the core strength of Maryknoll over the years has been the intense dedication and faith of its people. This is reinforced, says co-director Gerry Lee, by the fact that Maryknoll has the longest-term members of any lay mission group today. "We encourage people to come for three years or for 30 years," he elaborates. "They know that if they choose a life of service, we will support them—as well as their families—in every way we can."

Because the number of applicants, all of whom are rigorously screened, is so great, Maryknoll Lay Missioners are preparing to add a second category of missionaries to accommodate the growing demand for its services overseas.

Many of these new recruits will be embarking on a lifelong journey, as evidenced by the over 400 lay people who have served with Maryknoll over the years and whose spirit of service translated into continued work with the poor, the sick and the needy even when their Maryknoll tours ended. Kip Hargrave is a perfect example. When he and his wife, Terry, returned to the United States after working with families in desolate regions of Bolivia, he turned his sights to helping poor immigrants and migrant workers in inner-city Rochester.

"Most members of the Maryknoll Lay Missioners come back to careers they left behind in the states, but they come back in a very changed way," points out Gerry. "They've touched the lives of countless numbers of people overseas, but just as importantly, they've transformed their own lives by reaching a level of human fulfillment that few others on this earth will ever know."

Randy Young is a freelance writer living in New Jersey.

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Parish Practice

A mantra for all mothers

BY JULIETTE LANGE

It was halfway through the eighth chapter of C.S. Lewis' *The Magician's Nephew*, which I was reading with Lydia, my eight-year-old, that I became hooked. It is the bit when Aslan—the lion, king, and creator—sings Narnia into being:

In the darkness something was happening at last. A voice had begun to sing. It was very far away and Digory found it hard to decide from what direction it was coming... There were no words. There was hardly even a tune. But it was, beyond comparison, the most beautiful noise he had ever heard. It was so beautiful he could hardly bear it.

It reminded me of the Hindu legend that recounts how God created the earth by sounding it—a sounding which continues to hold it in being. It spoke to me, too, of my experience in meditation.

Meditation—often associated with Buddhism and Hinduism—is also an ancient Christian practice: the repetition of one word, a mantra. You concentrate on that one sound—not its meaning—in order to still the mind. There are moments when there is only sound; only rest; an experience of love, wholeness, gift. But in general—while aware of guarding against wanting success or even progress in the practice—just keeping the sound present for half an hour and watching the movement of the mind is a tiny experience of detachment, a holding of your preoccupations at arm's length, a tiny look away from yourself. It is a moment quiet enough to turn to God and—as Mother Teresa put it—"to listen to God listening to me."

It is easy to think this ancient practice is reserved for wise, far-away Buddhist monks or cloistered nuns who have chosen a path that excludes care for a family. How can meditation be of help in the life of a

full-time mother, at home often ridiculously busy, with the dullest chores and sometimes feeling quite isolated, cut off and left behind by the outside "grown-up" world? But it is. Being at home full-time is a privilege: your timetable is mostly your own to organize. The baby goes down to sleep; rather than do some more clearing up, some more ironing, a window opens for a moment of prayer, beginning with the "Our Father" and then moving to the mantra.

For years, I "sounded" it and followed it. Now it seems rather that it is a matter of joining myself to it—a shift of attention away from the inner chatter to the almighty resonance, the Aslan roar, forever there, but usually masked by the din of my own voice.

The meditation over, you take into the day a truth known. An ordinary moment revealed in truth as vibrant and sacred. A truth that follows you as you strap the baby into the car and set off for the weekly shop, or when you pop into the local shopping centre before you pick up the children from school. A little stillness; a pause; a place where everything around you sings the same song—the silence of cut flowers on the table, the twitter of birds in the garden, but also the untidy heap of clean clothes to be folded, the clatter of the dishwasher and the hum of the computer in the corner.

You find that this truth extends to all those other mums pushing their buggies and coping with petulant toddlers; to the retired ladies; to the older schoolchildren conspicuously out of class for a couple of hours—to that world, in short, that is out and about while most are at work. You criss-cross them, silent yourself but bathed in that hubbub, happy and light-hearted in a great sense of connectedness with all these people you do not know yet whom you love as you mill about with them in this very ordinary way. You share with them, as they rush through all those

things to do and places to be, the great business that is life, sustained and held in being by the breath of God.

The 9 a.m. Monday Mass kicks it all off. In schools and offices, the rest of the world settles down to desks; but a handful of us collect in the side chapel. Some are on their way to work, others on their way home from a night shift. There is a heavily pregnant woman; another, like myself, with a baby still young enough not to disrupt; Sir Ann, the parish nun, ever encouraging, smiling and kind; Mary, who organizes the soup run. And nods from others you recognise in the life of the parish and in whose smile you sense a deep spiritual wealth.

Together, with our warm priest, we pray, wrapped by the silence, by the presence, by the song. We pray for the Church, for the world, for

our schools and teachers, for our sick. Our prayers, all the more powerful for our being there together, are important: they make a difference—it is hard to know how, but they do—to the desk-bound world. Half an hour later we disperse, each to our day, our own busyness.

It is the search for God in prayer that transforms motherhood—in the home and in the community—into a royal spiritual path. It always frightens me to see how quickly, without it, that sense of gift, that joy in the everyday, is covered up by the grey-ness of life.

A mother needs an interior life, not least for the sake of her children. How can a mother teach her children that the meaninglessness of the modern world is not all there is if she is not living beyond it herself? Who else will teach them?

Nothing stays the same for long.

Patterns of the day will shift again and we're on to another phase. Horrors thrust at us from our radios and television screens on the one hand; frustrations and often crushing anxieties met within the everyday on the other. There is another type of roar from a different kind of animal that often seems impossible, even irresponsible, to ignore. But just when it threatens to engulf you, you remember the discipline and sit. The sounding is often terribly faint—the mind is a crowded place—but the mantra, the song, remains a steady call to joy. Later, at the school gate, when you meet your children, it comes to you then that what they need most from you is that you enjoy them and that you live to the full the sheer fun that it is to be their mother.

“Consider the ravens,” Jesus tells his disciples in Luke 12. “They

neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds!” How wonderfully reassuring is this reminder of the balm of the natural world, its cycles so evident in the rolling seasons, and the awareness of the privilege of your own motherhood as part of that ever-repeating miracle—a role that is yours alone, and yet so universal that your everyday tasks, banal in their repetition, reach into the past and far into the future to include all mothers and all mothering. The fleeting “now” of my motherhood, I realise in meditating, is an eternal matter.

Juliette Lange is a mother of four and writer who lives in London, England.

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Hope's Deep Roots

An essence so vital that neither failure nor disappointment can stop it

BY PAT MARRIN

Hope is the thing with feathers,” Emily Dickinson reminded us. I presume she meant that there is something fragile about hope, because it is necessarily about things that are not here yet. We nourish hope, cooperate with it, nudge it forward by trusting in it, going with it.

“Despite the facts,” someone a bit more hard-edged once said, “we are still hopeful.” The prophet Isaiah witnessed what appeared to be the collapse of God’s promise to protect his people from destruction. Yet, even as the prophet pondered the fallen tree, he saw renewal sprout from the severed stump. Below ground, the roots of the promise were firm and deep. Keep hope alive, he urged a broken, dispirited people heading into exile.

There is a liturgical season devoted to hope, Advent. But Advent has an

apocalyptic tone as well: For the future to come, the present needs to get out of the way. Breakthrough entails breakdown, especially when needed change has been blocked, stalled, resisted. Hope is the energy that opens doors, pushes ahead in spite of resistance. Hope tells us where the energy of time and history is going, how to let go of things that don’t work any more and go there, regroup.

Let me voice one hope I have about the Church. Vatican II marked a miraculous and startling revolution in the identity and direction of the Catholic Church. It was not about doctrine or mission, but about identity—ecclesiology, the very nature and structure of the Church.

The recovery of the liturgical life of the primitive Church, a renewed understanding of sacraments as active encounters with God through Jesus Christ, a recapturing of the gospel of divine life, the centrality of baptism and the recognition of the

dignity and charismatic empowerment of every member of the Church—all of this flowed into the new ecclesiology.

It was, as has often been remarked, the work of the Holy Spirit. And despite foot dragging by those who move as deliberately as Civil War re-enactors, and despite what may be a very long “last hurrah,” by restorationists in high places, the substructures of the renewal are in place, unstoppable, the only future God is offering us. I rejoice in this thing with feathers called the Holy Spirit.

Where do I find hope? Hope does not mean avoiding the truth. Taking the long view of history, even the apparent destruction of the dream does not prevent the prophet from seeing deeply. Cut off at ground level, the stump will sprout. The hidden roots will supply life to the recovered shoot. The promise will prevail even against cataclysm and loss. Our Church and our nation, both in their own spheres, have deep

roots. These can survive even the apparent and temporary felling of great promise.

Because I have hope, I will work to create the future I believe must come. The essence of hope is that even failure and postponement cannot prevent this future. Dorothy Day once said that, in the end, beauty will conquer the world. I am nourished by her example, her hard work, her willingness to endure the long loneliness that leads to love in community in the worst of times. I hear hope whispering in the flutter of wings. Something wonderful is about to happen, and it has feathers.

Pat Marrin is the editor of Celebration, an ecumenical worship resource and sister publication of National Catholic Reporter.

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Blue

Watching the colors under my wife's paintbrush

BY BRIAN DOYLE

The most interesting and powerful sentence ever said to me was terse and spoken on a hill over the sea by a slight, stunning woman: Yes, she said, firmly, and off we went to be married.

Since then I have become a student of her taut sentences, which are always riveting. *I like to do the dishes because it's order amid disorder*, that was one of my favorites, and *If beavers are smart, we should be worried*, which absorbed me for weeks, and *Strong emotion is the only defense against dangerous complacency*, which is true, and *Color stole my heart*, which is revelatory, but lately it is her sentences having to do with her paintings that fascinate me, two in particular, both having to do with the color



blue. *The bluer they got, the longer they got*, she said of the legs of a child in one of her paintings, a remark I chewed on for a long time, and then, airily, *I used to be into yellow but lately I've been into blue*, which made me think of blue as a riff, a country, a meal.

So much more than a color, blue—a mood, a music, a tonal sadness,

oceanic, riverine, airy, the color of carefree and of holy cloaks, the true color of blood and curses, the color of the calm Jewish teenager who held in her dewy womb a son, an Idea, a death foretold, a murder she would be forced to watch, craning her neck to watch him sag and bleed, one of a thousand crucifixions that foul afternoon, one of a billion since, and how many millions of mothers have wept over the pale bodies of their dead children?

She was a child herself when the vision came and her belly filled with mystery, and who she was really, deep in her heart, is as lost now as her husband's character, the two of them long ago turned to symbol, their blood leached away and replaced with legend.

But she bore that Child and loved him dearly, and the wonder-weave of her patience comes untorn through the years; so it is that when we think of the holiness of women and mothers we think of her, wrapped in her blue cloak, smiling against loss and horror and death, and against those savage inevitable wounds we so often whisper not to Him but to her, and isn't that odd and wonderful? that so often so many so desperately dream of a calm Jewish girl whose whole life was a river of yes?

Turquoise, cobalt, cerulean, ultramarine, azure, cyanine, hyacinth, indigo, smalt, wistaria: I watch the blues under my wife's paintbrush, I savor the high-beam blue flash of her eyes, I listen, I watch the cat-grace of women and girls, I think of the Jewish girl, I think holy holy holy holy holy.

Brian Doyle is the editor of Portland Magazine at the University of Portland, in Oregon. He is the author of five books, including Leaping: Revelations & Epiphanies and Spirited Men.

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Making Capital

BY PAUL MARIANI

I cannot in conscience spend time on poetry, neither have I the inducements and inspirations that make others compose. Feeling, love in particular, is the great moving power and spring of verse and the only person that I am in love with seldom, especially now, stirs my heart sensibly and when he does I cannot always 'make capital' of it, it would be a sacrilege to do so. Then again I have of myself made verse so laborious.

- Gerard Manley Hopkins in a letter to Robert Bridges, February 1879

For six weeks I've tried lassoing the wind
and come up with nada, zip & zero. Oh, I know
what moved me then, what sweet whisperings to the mind,
but could not make those protean shapes sit still, though

God knows I've tried. Sunday Mass. The eight.
My wife there next to me, thinking her own deep
thoughts. Congealed light on the pews, cold as Fate,
candles guttering, half the parishioners half asleep.

And the priest up at the pulpit, embellishing a story taken
from one of those Chicken Soup series for the soul.
I kept glancing left, then down, then right. Forsaken
the place, as if the Good News had dropped down some black hole,

paralyzed by what the papers had been screaming now
of scandal, indifferent to whatever the poor priest had to say.
Then, suddenly, up there at the altar, I caught a shadow
stirring, as if struggling up the hill under the heaving sway

of thornwood. Young Isaac, carrying kindling for a fire,
branches his shaken father had ordered him to fetch.
The figure trembled in the ether, then gave way to yet another,
whose wrists they'd roped to a wooden crossbeam (poor wretch),

as he too stumbled toward the distant rise. But what
had this to do with where I found myself? Everything,
I guess. Or nothing. Depending on the view. True, the rot
of the beholder went deep, deep, but deeper went the blessing:

the thought that God had spared the first from death, but not
the other, who among the trees had begged his father not to drink
the cup. All that history in a blink, as the one went on to populate
a nation, while the other—nailed to that wood—rose from the stink

of death, promising to lift us with him. I looked around
the Church, knowing what I know of death: the death of mother,
father, friends, the death of promise, of vision run aground,
death of self, of all we might have been, death of that ideal other,

the bitter end of all. Nada, zip...Except for that loop in time, when
something gave: a blip of light across the mind's dark eye, if you
can call it that. But what, if not a good man going under? Then
struggling to raise himself again, bent on doing what he had to do.

Paul Mariani is professor of English at Boston College and the poetry editor of America magazine.

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Refracting the Light

Glimmers of hope seen in the broad spectrum of young adult Catholics

BY MARY ANNE REESE

They are married, single, divorced and of every nationality and ethnic group. Their ranks include professionals, laborers, students, military and immigrants. Some are straight, some gay, some are parents and some have disabilities. The common ground is that they are Catholic young adults, defined by the U.S. bishops as men and women between the ages of 18 and 39. They also have in common an abundance of gifts, energy and heart.

In their 1977 pastoral letter *Sons and Daughters of the Light*, the U.S. bishops stated strongly that the Church wants and needs a stronger connection with young adult Catholics. So the question becomes: Who are these Catholic young adults? And how can the Church best minister to and with them?

Several years ago, when I started the Archdiocese of Cincinnati's young adult ministry, I asked Eric Styles, a 24-year-old college senior, what the Church should understand about his generation. He pushed back his long dreadlocks and responded: "Just know that we're not all the same. And our generation has many gifts to offer the Church."

Since then, hundreds of young adult Catholics who have crossed my path have confirmed Eric's observations. Young adult lifestyles, motivations and spiritualities cover a broad spectrum, with distinct colors as well as subtle nuances and shades. To make such breadth more manageable, I have developed a framework of eight groups into which I believe most Catholic young adults fall.

This framework, of course, has limitations. It is based on observation and experience rather than hard science. Each individual is unique and to some extent defies categorization, and many individuals fit into more than one group. These descriptions

are not mutually exclusive; and some important factors, like race, ethnicity and socio-economic status, are not developed here. Nonetheless, I have found this framework helpful for understanding young adults and for developing ministry with them.

The Church in Mission

This group is primarily motivated by the image of Jesus who directs us to wash one another's feet. Oriented to service since their 8th-grade

confirmation and work that "makes a difference" often draws concern from parents and others whose emphasis is financial security.

Gifts: This group works tirelessly to meet needs and to do what needs to be done, without expecting to change the world immediately. They work seamlessly alongside those who are much older and younger, since service ministries are often multigenerational.

As a result of people deciding to marry later (if at all) and the growing

they often turn to university and other singles-friendly parishes. Therefore this group makes great efforts toward tolerance and inclusion.

Gifts: The Church in Search devotes time and energy to community-building and ministry. A majority of them lead and regularly participate in regional young adult groups and weekend retreats.

The Church Youthful

Each year high schools produce a large number of young adults who have come through youth ministry programs. Many go on to college and are served by Newman Centers, touching base with their parishes during breaks and summers.

"Church Youthful" people fall into the age range 18 to 23, and they are accustomed to having ministry built around their own schedules. The campus 10 p.m. Mass is one example. These young adults grew up in a Church that served as an extended family.

Challenges: Parishes as well as youth and campus ministries could serve the Church Youthful by guiding them from a Church in which ministry was focused on their lifestyle and was even done for them to a place of ever greater responsibility and leadership.

Gifts: The Church Youthful brings unlimited energy and a can-do attitude to the community. They have the physical stamina to lead all-night junior high lock-ins or construct booths for the parish festival. They see opportunities rather than limitations, and their enthusiasm is infectious.

The Church Apologist

The "Church Apologist" group is especially filled with awe for the transcendent God, and its members are dedicated to personal prayer, learning and spreading fervor for Catholicism among Catholics and non-Catholics alike. Colleen Carroll explores their faith in her recent book *The New Faithful: Why Young Adults*

Young adult Catholics are motivated by the image of Jesus directing us to wash one another's feet. Oriented to service since 8th-grade confirmation, they have carried this passion through their high school and college years. Many have immersed themselves in service projects or long-term volunteer programs like the Jesuit Volunteer Corps.

confirmation, members of this group have carried this passion through their high school and college years. Many have immersed themselves in service projects or in long-term volunteer programs like the Jesuit Volunteer Corps. Demographers call this segment the millennial generation, whose first wave is now graduating from college. The book *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation*, by Neil Howe and William Strauss, profiles this group in detail.

Challenges: Members of the "Church in Mission" meet the challenge of making countercultural choices in our consumption-driven society. Their preference for volun-

teerism and work that "makes a difference" often draws concern from parents and others whose emphasis is financial security. This group is often drawn to the Church as a place to find friends with similar values, potential partners, and activities to fill their calendars.

Challenges: Young adults in the "Church in Search" embrace mainstream Catholic spirituality, but because of their single status they have difficulty finding a home in the average family-oriented parish, and

Are Embracing Christian Orthodoxy.

To counterbalance the often murky standards of our culture, members of the Church Apologist take comfort in the clarity of the new catechism and the teaching of Pope John Paul II. They see Christianity in combat with evil in the world and their language evokes military imagery, speaking of prayer warriors and soldiers of Christ. Their prayer centers on traditional devotions like eucharistic adoration and the rosary.

Challenges: Church Apologist people can experience tension within less traditional families and faith communities because of their views and the vigor with which they promote them.

Gifts: These young adults are highly motivated and capable of seeking out the many spiritual resources available to them, like Steubenville programs, Youth 2000 and membership in movements like Opus Dei or traditional religious communities. With their wholehearted dedication, the ministries they create can grow and become self-sustaining over the long haul.

The Church Devotional

Because of outward similarities and their preference for traditional piety, it is easy to confuse young adults of the “Church Devotional” with those of the Church Apologist. The two groups differ, however, in several respects. First, the Church Devotional is less attuned to internal Church politics; they therefore seem surprised that their prayer practices would cause some to label them “conservative.” Second, they are less interested in drawing others into their particular spirituality or belief system. Many immigrants, particularly Asians and Hispanics, fit into these two groups.

Challenges: The Church Devotional is less inclined than the Church Apologist to join traditional movements, and they often look to parishes and regional ministries to help them learn about and share their faith. “Theology on Tap,” a popular program that brings presenters into local bars to interact with young adults on matters of faith and Church, helps meet the social and educational needs of this group.

Gifts: Church Devotional people have a deep desire to grow closer to Jesus. They are well read and open

to different ideas and to new methods of prayer. Members of this group make committed leaders and participants, especially for retreats and catechetical events.

The Church Busy

The “Church Busy” consists mainly of young professionals, married couples and young parents, whose days and nights are filled with career, travel, family and civic and social commitments. While they value their Catholicism, they are unlikely to attend events that take up an entire weekend or to participate in regional gatherings. Their Church involvement is usually limited to parish ministries that occur on Sunday.

They may also engage in short-term ministries, like marriage and baptismal preparation or support groups for mothers.

Challenges: Not surprisingly, the biggest challenge to ministry with this group is time. For this reason, it is best to offer them focused programs or short-term projects. The Church Busy needs to feel supported and affirmed in both their workplace and marriage and parenthood as an aspect of ministerial life.

Gifts: The Church can benefit from tapping the experience and competence these young adults are developing in other realms.

They may not wear all-black or sport tattoos, but many in this group embrace liberal values, politics and spirituality with an artistic expression. The “Church Creative” is educated and well read, and likely to frequent art films, alternative concert venues or peace demonstrations. Tom Beaudoin wrote much about this group in *Virtual Faith: The Irreverent Spiritual Quest of Generation X*.

The Church Creative values prayer and contact with God, and these young adults are known for treating parish and even denominational boundaries with fluidity—worshiping at a Mass one week, a Buddhist temple the next and a nondenominational megachurch the third. They value independent thinking, and might be heard quoting papal pronouncements about the death penalty or debt relief on one hand while questioning teaching about homosexuality or women’s ordination on the other. In my area, a number of African-American Catholics fall into this group, sometimes blending in

elements from African culture or the Baptist tradition as they inhabit urban neighborhoods in a creative class environment. In fact, the Church Creative is most comfortable in multicultural and university parishes.

Challenges: The Church Creative is like other groups: they are busy, with time and choices spread out among creative outlets and other responsibilities. The broad pastoral tent of our Church must be maintained so it can respond to the differences and questions this group brings.

Gifts: Not surprisingly, the Church Creative develops ministry programs and prayer services that are artistic and innovative. Additionally, they are in a position to invite to the Church similar young people who are unchurched, alienated or seeking a spiritual connection.

The Church Disconnected

A final group of young adults that poses a challenge to ministry is the “Church Disconnected.” This group grew up Catholic and may even have graduated from Catholic high school or college, but for a variety of reasons—or no discernable reason at all—they are now distant from the Church. It is difficult to draw firm conclusions about why they are disconnected or how to reach out to them. Some are focused on advancement at work, while others are busy building intimate relationships or hanging out with friends. Some are put off by Church teaching; others simply find services boring and the institution irrelevant.

Church leaders, parents and grandparents often wring their hands over what to do about the Church Disconnected. One pat response is, “They’ll come back when their first child is baptized.” Tom Beaudoin is skeptical about this laissez-faire approach, however, because nondenominational megachurches now actively reach out to them. Whether they will return to Catholicism is an open question.

The Church Disconnected is mission territory—a fertile field for carrying out Christ’s commission to spread the Good News. Heeding that call, Jesuits of the Chicago Province are actively responding. Charis Ministries retreats, which boasts several hundred participants in its first three years, targets recent alumni of local Catholic high schools and

universities. They are encouraged to come, “whether your faith life is confused, conflicted, committed or anywhere in between.” The peer-led retreat then offers a chance to step back from the stresses of modern life and “sort out what you believe.”

James Joyce once characterized the spirit of the Church thus: “Here comes everybody.” He could have been talking about the broad spectrum of today’s young adult Catholics, with the wide variety of spiritualities, gifts and challenges they present to ministry. From as far back as the days of 1 Corinthians 12, we have known that different people and groups possess certain gifts to benefit the whole body of Christ. Just as the Dominicans claim the gift of preaching and the Sisters of Mercy service, each of these Catholic young adult groups brings unique riches to the faith community—riches to be mined, polished and put to good use.

Furthermore, in addition to capitalizing on their own gifts, the young people in each group can grow and develop through exposure to the complementary charisms of the others. For example, the “Church in Mission” can find rest in the contemplative stillness of the “Church Devotional,” who can in turn touch a unique face of Christ through Christian service.

The task of inviting, welcoming and ministering with such a broad spectrum of young people may seem daunting. The U.S. bishops’ young adult ministry pastoral begins by apologizing for past failures in this area, and others have proposed that Church communities make “a preferential option for the young.” Many national and local efforts are underway to develop young adult ministry, but the roads and the road maps at this stage are still under construction. Still, this much is clear: the Church needs all its “sons and daughters of the light” to show forth the glory of the rainbow.

Mary Anne Reese is the coordinator of young adult ministry for the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, Ohio, as well as a writer and lawyer. She is the author of Doing What Comes Naturally: Jobs, Career and Vocation, a young adult guide to discernment.

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A Hope for His Bishops

John Paul II urges Church leaders to be 'more open to collaboration with all'

The following is excerpted from a papal address on September 11, 2004 to the bishops of Pennsylvania and New Jersey on their annual visit to report to Rome. Among the topics that Pope John Paul II discussed in his fraternal welcome was a concern that the American bishops had earlier voiced about a "crisis of confidence" in their leadership following the clergy abuse scandal. The pope told them to have faith in the authority of their office, as teachers of the faith, but also to build hope among the people of God by practicing a more authentically collaborative style of leadership in their respective dioceses.

Today our considerations turn to the *munus regendi*, the power of governance by which the successors of the apostles have been set apart by the Holy Spirit as guardians of the flock and shepherds of the Church of God. As the Church's constant tradition attests, this apostolic authority is a form of *service to the body of Christ*. As such, it can only be inspired by and modeled on the self-sacrificing love of the Lord, who came among us as a servant (cf. *Mark* 10:45) and, after stooping to wash the feet of his disciples, commanded them to do as he had done (cf. *John* 13:15).

The existence of an unequivocal right and duty of governance entrusted to the successors of the apostles is *an essential part of the Church's divinely willed constitution* (cf. *Lumen Gentium*). As a ministerial power, given for building up the body of Christ, this *sacra potestas* must be seen as one of the hierarchical gifts bestowed upon the Church by her divine founder, and thus a constitutive element of that sacred tradition which contains everything passed down from the apostles as a means of preserving and fostering the holiness and faith of the People of God. History amply demonstrates that the firm and sage exercise of this apostolic authority, particularly in moments of crisis, has

enabled the Church to preserve her integrity, independence and fidelity to the Gospel in the face of threats from within and without.

Be Models of Holiness

Building on the rich reflection on the episcopal *munus regendi* occasioned by the Council, and in light of the challenges of the new evangelization, the recent synod of bishops insisted on the urgent need to recover a fuller and more authentically "apostolic" understanding of the episcopal office. The bishop is above all a *witness*, a *teacher* and *model of holiness*, as well as a prudent administrator of the Church's goods. The *sacred power* that he legitimately exercises should be rooted in the *moral authority* of a life completely shaped by his sacramental sharing in Christ's consecration and mission. Indeed, "all that the Bishop says and does must reveal the authority of Christ's word and his way of acting" (*Pastores Gregis*). As a result, "a renewed appreciation of the bishop's authority will not be expressed by external signs, but by an ever deeper understanding of the theological, spiritual and moral significance of this ministry, founded on the charism of apostolicity." Bishops need to be esteemed as successors of the apostles not only in authority and sacred power, but above all by their apostolic life and witness.

In our meetings, many of you have expressed your concern about the crisis of confidence in the Church's leadership provoked by the recent sexual abuse scandals, the general call for accountability in the Church's governance on every level and the relations between bishops, clergy and the lay faithful. I am convinced that today, as at every critical moment in her history, the Church will find the resources for an authentic self-renewal in the wisdom, vision and zeal of Bishops outstanding for their holiness. The Church is only authentically "re-formed" when she

returns to her origins in a conscious reappropriation of the apostolic tradition and a purifying re-evaluation of her institutions in the light of the Gospel.

In the present circumstances of the Church in America, this will entail a spiritual discernment and critique of certain styles of governance which, even in the name of a legitimate concern for good "administration" and responsible oversight, can run the risk of distancing the pastor from the members of his flock, and obscuring his image as their father and brother in Christ.

In this regard, the synod of bishops acknowledged the need today for each bishop to develop "a pastoral style which is ever more open to collaboration with all" (*Pastores Gregis*), grounded in a clear understanding of the relationship between the ministerial priesthood and the common priesthood of the baptized (*Lumen Gentium*). While the bishop himself remains responsible for the authoritative decisions which he is called to make in the exercise of his pastoral governance, ecclesial communion also "presupposes the participation of every category of the faithful, inasmuch as they share responsibility for the good of the particular Church which they themselves form." Within a sound ecclesiology of communion, a commitment to creating better structures of participation, consultation and shared responsibility should not be misunderstood as a concession to a secular "democratic" model of governance, but as an intrinsic requirement of the exercise of episcopal authority and a necessary means of strengthening that authority.

The exercise of the *munus regendi* is directed both to gathering the flock in the visible unity of a single profession of faith lived in the sacramental communion of the Church and to guiding that flock, in the diversity of its gifts and callings, towards a common goal: the proclamation of the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

Every act of ecclesiastical governance, consequently, must be aimed at fostering communion and mission. In view, then, of their common purpose and aim, the three munera of teaching, sanctifying and ruling are clearly inseparable and interpenetrating: "when the Bishop teaches, he also sanctifies and governs the People of God; when he sanctifies, he also teaches and governs; when he governs, he teaches and sanctifies" (*Pastores Gregis*, 9; cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 20, 27).

The Impetus to Renewal

Experience shows that when priority is mainly given to outward stability, the impetus to personal conversion, ecclesial renewal and missionary zeal can be lost and a false sense of security can ensue. The painful period of self-examination provoked by the events of the past two years will bear spiritual fruit only if it leads the whole Catholic community in America to a deeper understanding of the Church's authentic nature and mission, and a more intense commitment to making the Church in your country reflect, in every aspect of her life, the light of Christ's grace and truth.

Here I can only state once more my profound conviction that the documents of the Second Vatican Council need to be carefully studied and taken to heart by all the faithful, since these normative texts of the Magisterium offer the basis for a genuine ecclesial renewal in obedience to the will of Christ and in conformity with the Church's apostolic tradition.

Excerpted from the papal text posted at www.Adoremus.org, the Web site of the Society for the Renewal of the Sacred Liturgy, a private nonprofit group that works with the Vatican and many Catholic organizations. Its aim is to "rediscover and restore the beauty, the holiness, the power" of the Church's liturgical tradition.

Theology on Tap

Providing nourishing soul food to young Catholic appetites

BY PHYLLIS M. HANLON

On the surface, the scene is not unusual—a group of young men and women laughing and talking in an informal setting while munching snacks and sipping beer. Dig a little deeper, however, and you will find that a unique objective unites these individuals. A burning hunger, not for physical nourishment or socialization, but rather for spiritual fulfillment has drawn these young adults together. Born out of a need for programs specifically geared toward 20- and 30-somethings who feel disconnected from the Church, Theology on Tap attempts to bring straight talk about faith issues and how they relate to everyday living to this spiritually starved generation.

In 1981, the Rev. John Cusick, director of young adult ministry in Chicago, created Theology on Tap in an effort to strengthen the tenuous thread that holds young adults to the Church and to minister to the unique, mature needs of people beyond high school. Cusick identifies a chasm between the teen years and middle age and feels that Theology on Tap can bridge that gap and provide a positive experience of the Catholic Church—its traditions, practices, beliefs and spirituality—for the young adult generation.

Believing that “good ministry doesn’t happen, but is planned,” Cusick wrote a 100-page manual that explains how to deliver the Theology on Tap program, including suggestions for speakers, topics, venues and format. According to Cusick, all the details have been well thought out; some might seem insignificant, but on closer inspection they reflect an underlying ideological position. Every aspect of the program attempts to convey a positive, welcoming attitude toward young adult Catholics. With such careful attention to detail, the program communicates to the young adult that he or she is important to the life of the Catholic

community, notes Cusick.

The program runs in four-week sessions, although the structure and venues vary. Meetings can be held in any location that will accommodate a small-to medium-size group of adults. The Chicago groups generally gather in a parish hall, where food and beverages can be served. Refreshments range from simple appetizers to full-course meals or themed buffets. “We have a parish in one of the older Italian neighborhoods that has created a café with lights, tables, waiters and music,” says Cusick. “It’s become a happening.” Attendance at Theology on Tap ranges anywhere from 15 to 150, depending on the caliber of the speaker, the appeal of the topic, the amount of advertising and the time of year.

As expected, certain topics tend to draw larger crowds. Cusick notes that this generation as a whole struggles with developing and maintaining quality relationships in their lives. Issues surrounding spirituality and relationships naturally top the list of favorites. Subjects relating to Scripture and how it applies to everyday life usually attract higher numbers. In most cases, he reports, the meetings are populated with individuals who have an unabashed curiosity about all things Catholic.

Organized much like a traditional adult education class, Theology on Tap sessions include socialization, presentation, input, a short break, discussion and conversation, and a question-and-answer period. Even though the time frame should not exceed two hours, flexibility is important. “We encourage parishes not to throw anybody out because oftentimes good conversation only begins when formality ends,” says Cusick.

In seeking speakers, two criteria are key: the potential speaker must have something of value to say and must have a passion for the topic. “These are young adults who are looking for substance and we try to communicate that effectively. We are constantly staying in tune with the young adult generation. When you

stay close to your people, what you try to do is offer them response to their needs in their style,” says Cusick. “What we’ve attempted to do is showcase, through our speakers, the leadership of the Catholic Church.” Chicago has what they call a “faculty” comprising close to 90 speakers, including clergy, laity and young adult peers. The number of speakers in programs in other parts of the country varies according to specific need and availability.

Forty-nine parishes and campuses in the archdiocese of Chicago currently host Theology on Tap. Of the five dioceses involved in the program, Cusick notes that 160 churches offer 368 nights of input for young adults with a total of 96 speakers. Nationwide, 381 parishes and organizations in 44 states, and parishes in three other countries, have asked permission to host Theology on Tap, according to Cusick. “This is the most extensive outreach to young adults anywhere in the nation,” he says. This overwhelmingly positive response “continues to validate both what secular and religious data say about this generation,” notes Cusick. Some of the Theology on Tap programs around the country are based on the original concept but are not registered as official hosts of the programs.

Annunciata Parish in the Archdiocese of Chicago has been involved with Theology on Tap for the last four years. James Taylor, who served as co-host for one of those years, sought to connect with his faith on a different level and felt that the program enabled him to accomplish that goal. Noting that everyone faces a different set of issues in life, Taylor says this program provides a forum for open discussions of faith issues and how to apply them realistically on an individual basis. “You can connect to faith in a real way that is appropriate to the time of your life,” Taylor says. The interactive format seems more like a dialogue, according to Taylor, than a lecture.

Unlike Chicago’s parish approach,

Massachusetts adopted a diocesan-run Theology on Tap program in January 2003, when the Diocese of Worcester launched its first session. According to Sister Betty Paul, director of youth ministry for the diocese, her office had been seeking effective ways to reach the young adult community, and this program offered an ideal “adult faith formation opportunity.” After purchasing the training manual and working out the details, meetings were scheduled at a centrally located downtown restaurant to attract young adults from surrounding towns. “We don’t have a lot of parishes with 20 to 25 young adults. If we did, the parish could run its own program,” says Sister Paul. This particular for-

For many, the interactive format seems more like a dialogue than a lecture.

mat has proven successful, judging by attendance numbers and feedback.

Some young adults find their way into Theology on Tap indirectly. Chris Horner was a full-time pastoral assistant and deeply involved in parish activities in the Archdiocese of St. Louis several years ago when he learned of the program. He and other members of a local prayer group began to attend meetings and found the experience educational as well as energizing and uplifting. Attendees were similar in age and level of spirituality, which enhanced the overall experience, according to Horner.

At St. Leo’s parish in Oakland, Calif., Michael Fitzgerald was drawn to the concept of Theology on Tap through his involvement with the Church’s adult Christian initiation program. Originally intended to provide candidates with a positive experience, Theology on Tap has created a bridge between secular

recreation and more religious activities for many individuals both inside and outside the parish, according to Fitzgerald. In this particular program, the parish keeps two goals in mind. "We want to present topics in Catholic theology and thought," says Fitzgerald, "and to engage a young adult audience in an exchange of ideas on faith." Fitzgerald, along with Natalie Ackerman, a first-grade teacher at the parish school and Rev. Thomas Scirghi, S.J., a professor of liturgy at the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, Calif., hope to draw young adults back into the active practice of their Catholic faith. "Typically, Theology on Tap has more than just a positive influential effect on an audience that might be wandering around in their spiritual journey," says Fitzgerald.

In addition to helping coordinate the program, Father Scirghi offers his services as speaker. He presents easy-to-understand analogies between Catholic practices and symbols and everyday living at Theology on Tap

sessions. He hopes that attendees will learn something that will help nourish their own lives in the Church. "We are opening them up to what I like to think is the richness and the variety of the Church's teaching," says Father Scirghi. Having worked with young professionals in Boston, New York and Oakland, Father Scirghi acknowledges their superior academic capacity, but he finds their understanding of the Church and its tradition limited. "These people are asking for more, for a deeper understanding, especially as they marry and then have children. They want to pass something on."

Natalie Ackerman cites the community-building feature of Theology on Tap as one of its most beneficial aspects. "It's a very welcoming setting, and melts away those structured feelings," she says.

For the 26-year-old publicist Nicole Quigley, moving to Washington, D.C. from her small hometown presented a challenge in many ways, particularly when it came to her

faith. Searching for connection to other young Catholics, she heard about Theology on Tap from friends. After attending a couple of meetings, she felt she had found a way to regenerate that link. "Theology on Tap meetings keep your faith on your mind during the work week, rather than just focusing on God on Sundays," she says. The opportunity to socialize with other young Catholics in this setting also appealed to Quigley. "You work in a secular world. It's good to connect with others who think like you do." More important, she sees the program as a positive response on the Church's part to the needs of young people. "Theology on Tap reinforces the pope's focus on youth. It's a good way to complement his vision," Quigley says.

Although the wisdom, expertise and knowledge of all parishioners is important, Cusick emphasizes the need for input from younger members of the parish. "The backbone of Catholic parish life 30 to 35 years

ago was people 25 to 40. Oftentimes today, the age group 25 to 40 is missing," Cusick says. "As a Church, we have to learn to regenerate parish life and Church life."

Even though the program has existed for 23 years, Cusick notes that success takes time. "Too often we adopt the American mindset that it's got to be perfect and feel good right from the first moment. To me, this is like building blocks," he says.

As the Catholic Church continues the process of maintaining strong ties with all generations in the global community, Theology on Tap is delivering a healthy dose of spiritual sustenance for young adult appetites.

Phyllis M. Hanlon is a freelance writer whose work has been published in a variety of business, medical, academic, general interest and religious publications.

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