

Introduction

A 2005 survey of U.S. Catholics conducted by the Gallup Organization reported that the top three dimensions of the Catholic faith considered “very important” were: helping the poor (84%), belief in Jesus’ resurrection from the dead (84%), and the sacraments, such as the Eucharist (75%). (See *The National Catholic Reporter*, 9/20/2005.) The last three dimensions of the faith estimated as “very important” were: the teaching authority claimed by the Vatican (42%), the Catholic Church’s teaching on the death penalty (35%), and a celibate male clergy (29%). This data confirms the experience of many in pastoral practice and the intuition of the *NTR* Editorial Board that we need to examine the relevance of the church in the contemporary world. Are we known as “the church who cares” or “the church: who cares?”?! In this issue our authors explore a variety of factors and facets that shape any response to this question.

Paul Lakeland, the Aloysius P. Kelly professor of Catholic Studies at Fairfield University, uses the model of a healthy family to explain the kind of accountability, credibility, and authority needed in the church. He also recommends that the church awaken from its amnesia about Trinitarian relationship as a God-given model for ecclesial structures. Then, based on her experience garnered from over one hundred trips to the Rosebud and Pine Ridge reservations to listen carefully as Native Americans share painful experiences of Christian mission efforts, Eleanor Doidge, L.O.B., associate professor of cross-cultural ministry at Catholic Theological Union, invites today’s ministers to engage in “humble listening.” Only then can ministers recover the church’s mission of love for those who suffered and/or continue to suffer from prior church work.

Writing from a Latina perspective, Carmen M. Nanko-Fernández, assistant professor of pastoral ministry at Catholic Theological Union, draws our attention to “care” as a constitutive component of pastoral ministry. Genuine caring requires ministers to exercise an approach of “pastoral hostility,” ministering daily not only to personal needs but challenging systemic injustices as well. In our final thematic article Robert P. Imbelli, associate professor of theology at Boston College, recalls the legacy of Cardinal Bernardin of Chicago and discusses how this legacy lives on today in the lively and productive efforts of the

Common Ground Initiative. This work is careful, intentional, Spirit-guided, and painstaking, but much has been accomplished to bring peace to a divided church and world.

As the first of the non-thematic articles for this issue the editors and publishers are pleased to present this year's winning essay in theological reflection. Kenneth G. Davis, O.F.M. CONV., of St. Meinrad School of Theology, considers the uniqueness of the practice of penance by Hispanic Catholics in the United States. Davis's essay is instructive for those who preach, teach, celebrate, and share the same faith, and he shows the particular place and function of Hispanic religious music, art, and drama, influenced by the Franciscans.

Then moral theologian Paul Wadell of St. Norbert College draws our attention to friendship as formative of Christians who care for others. He claims that one should always be able to turn to friends for affection and affirmation, support and consolation, but *also* for challenge and correction. Our final article has Kenneth R. Overberg, S.J., professor of theology at Xavier University, Cincinnati, discussing Joseph Cardinal Bernardin's consistent ethic of life as the moral framework that now stands as a centerpiece of the moral teachings of the U.S. bishops. He shows how the consistent ethic of life offers us a profound perspective on living a good and holy life and a means for analyzing issues such as the war in Iraq and the 2004 presidential election.

In our *Signs of the Times* column Avis Clendenen and Robert Barry, O.P., address the topic of pastoral care in times of war and take us to places that engage some of the most challenging and painful dimensions of our faith. In such places there is only faith that God is truly present, "in spite of. . . ." During the last three years, as holder of The Erica & Harry John Family Chair in Catholic Ethics at Catholic Theological Union, Thomas A. Nairn, O.F.M., has convened a seminar of ten distinguished moral theologians who have sought to develop further the foundational insights of Joseph Cardinal Bernardin's consistent ethic of life. In the *Keeping Current* column Nairn shares some of the fruits of these discussions. Then *Word and Worship* columnist Audrey Borschel picks up on the many challenges presented to preachers in times of conflict. Does the preacher address what people "want to hear" or what the preacher thinks people "need to hear"? A generous selection of book reviews brings this issue to a close.

These are times of transition for the editorial board. Thus many words of gratitude are in order. First, as the incoming co-editors, Richard E. McCarron and I, Dawn Nothwehr, O.S.F., thank James A. Wallace, C.S.S.R., for his excellent work as co-editor of this journal. On his watch many changes took place, some expected and some not, but his steady hand, faithful heart, and tenacious spirit carried through. Jim is soon off to some well-deserved sabbatical time.

We also bid farewell to three editorial board members: John Burkhard, O.F.M. CONV., now interim president of Washington Theological Union, and, from Catholic Theological Union, Anthony Gittins, C.S.Sp., and James Chukwuma Okoye,

c.S.Sp., who completed their term. Finally, we are in debt to Herbert Anderson, Dianne Bergant, C.S.A., and Jack Welch, O.CARM., for their service as judges for the Prize in Theological Reflection. With their wisdom and expert scrutiny this prize has become one to be sought after.

We welcome our new editorial board members: from Washington Theological Union, Angela Senander, assistant professor of systematic and moral theology, and, from Catholic Theological Union, Carmen M. Nanko-Fernández, assistant professor of pastoral ministry, and Roger Schroeder, S.V.D., associate professor of cross-cultural ministry.

Finally, we have initiated two e-mail addresses for *New Theology Review*. For business concerning book reviews the following address should be used: *ntr-bookreview@ctu.edu*. For electronic submission of articles and business with the co-editors, this address should be used: *ntr-editors@ctu.edu*. We hope these addresses will facilitate making our editorial work more efficient.

Coming in May:

Pastoral Trends

SURVEY — Please Respond

The Editorial Board and the Publisher of the *New Theology Review* need your help!

To continue to serve our readers in the most useful and relevant way possible, we are considering some changes in the format and style of our journal. We are conducting a short electronic survey to gather data for our decisions, and we would appreciate a few moments of your valuable time.

Please go to www.litpress.org/journals/ntr_survey.html to find the survey.

Thank you for your support!