

# NTR

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Seeking God in All Things:  
Theology and Spiritual Direction.**

By William Reiser, S.J. Collegeville, MN:  
Liturgical Press, 2004. Pages, xii + 172.  
Paper, \$19.95.

*Reviewed by Nancy Eggert  
Washington Theological Union*

Is it possible for a Christian to be a spiritual director for a person who is not Christian? What makes spiritual direction distinctively Christian? William Reiser implicitly addresses these questions in this short volume on the contemporary practice of spiritual direction. Although the author contends that his concern is not how one goes about giving direction, the book evidences his encounter with many of today's popular, if misguided, concepts of the spiritual life.

William Reiser, S.J., is professor of theology at Holy Cross College, staff member of the Center for Religious Development, Cambridge, offering programs in spiritual direction, and a resident of Casa Santa Maria, ministering to Worcester's Hispanic community. In this accessible and readable work Father Reiser explores the theologies underlying Christian spiritual direction.

Reiser's thesis is that a spiritual director is not a religiously neutral observer (11). Every human being has a unique set of filters or categories through which incoming information is perceived and interpreted (5). A Christian spiritual director will observe the presence and action of God in human life and history from a particular

perspective and from an imagination conditioned by the gospel narratives (5). Reiser argues that although we may not be conscious of the assumptions underlying our unique array of filters and categories, that is, our theologies, directors should be cognizant of them.

The author identifies four distinctive foundation stones of Christian spiritual direction. Three are stated as theologies: a theology of revelation, a theology of the church, and a theological anthropology. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Reiser states: "spiritual direction presupposes . . . that the [director] has grasped in its totality the sacred narrative of Christian faith that comes to us in the Gospels. . . . [Directors] need to know what the story of Jesus is—and is not—about" (5).

The author's reflections are loosely organized into seven chapters and a fifteen-page introduction. (A bibliography, a scriptural index, and an index of names are included.) Chapter 1 explores the manner and means of divine revelation in everyday life. Chapter 2 implicitly critiques popular images of God's activity while discussing contrasting biblical images (e.g., "Behind some of our God-talk lies the mistaken assumption that God has already worked out the basic plan of our lives . . .") (34). Chapter 3 addresses the question, "Where do holy desires come from?"

Chapters 4 and 5 analyze the distinctiveness of the Christian religious experience without attempting to present a comparative theology or denigrating other religious

journeys. Chapter 6, "The Incarnation as a Starting Point for Spiritual Direction," continues the discussion of Christian distinctiveness and identifies solidarity with the victim as an essential element of Christian discipleship. This chapter delves into Reiser's underlying question, no doubt arising from his ministry to the poor, of whether spiritual direction today is really an activity of the social and religious elite. The author provocatively asks: "Can the poor who walk with God 'direct' us who are privileged?" (130).

Chapter 7 directly asks: "Should Christian spirituality move beyond Jesus?" and explores the question raised in the introduction, that is, whether a Christian can be a spiritual director for one who is not Christian (7). The postscript identifies the tension Christian spiritual directors experience between the sovereignty of each individual's interior space and the Christian belief that "the Spirit is irreversibly the Spirit of Jesus."

This book belongs in the library of every spiritual director, but would also be of general interest for its insights into the distinctiveness of Christian ministry.

**Parish Ministry in a Hispanic Community.** By Charles W. Dahm. New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2004. Pages, 296. Paper, \$22.95.

*Reviewed by Barbara E. Reid, O.P.  
Catholic Theological Union*

This book is a must for anyone interested in Hispanic ministry in the U.S. Since there is hardly a parish in the U.S. not blessed with a Hispanic presence, that means this book should be of interest to all ministers. Father Chuck Dahm, a Dominican priest, brings more than four decades

of pastoral experience and wisdom to his writing. As a newly ordained priest in the 1960s, he first served in Bolivia and then completed a doctorate in political science. For the past nineteen years he has ministered as pastor of St. Pius V Parish in the neighborhood of Pilsen in Chicago, where ninety percent of the population is Hispanic and more than seventy percent live below the poverty line.

Dahm's book describes how the parish has moved and grown as it has changed from a predominantly Euro-American parish in the 1960s and 1970s to a parish of mostly Mexican Catholics, with more than 4,000 families currently registered and many more who find a ready welcome. Dahm not only describes his experience, but also reflects theologically on this in conversation with the literature on Hispanic theology and pastoral praxis.

In the first chapter, "A Mexican Church in the United States," Dahm sets the stage for the reader to understand the present profile of the parish, by sketching a brief history of Mexicans in what became the United States, and then tells about the first Mexican immigrants who came to Chicago and to Pilsen. In the subsequent nine chapters he describes the various ways in which Mexican culture and faith have transformed St. Pius V parish and how the parish has responded to the new ministerial challenges.

In Chapter Two, Dahm profiles the challenges faced by Mexican immigrant families with regard to housing, education, language learning, immigration status, work, health care, parenting, threats from gangs, and domestic violence. He highlights not only the challenges, but the grace and strength inherent in Mexican culture, faith, and family structure.

The third chapter focuses on community-building as the central force and predominant theme in the preaching, teaching, and

daily life of the parish. Dahm describes the ways in which the ministerial organization has been built and how unity is forged amid diversity through fiestas, dances, shared meals, tithing, and parish days of reflection. This theme continues in Chapter Four as he examines the development and impact of Christian base communities within the parish. He also describes their response to non-Catholic proselytizing and their own missionary efforts with door-to-door evangelization, street Masses, and celebrations.

Chapter Five tells how the sacraments are celebrated in ways that incorporate values from Mexican culture and faith. Dahm gives primary attention to Eucharist, then to baptism, marriage rituals and attitudes about divorce and annulment, brief treatments of Confirmation (in the context of RCIA), reconciliation, and the sacramental celebration of death. He does not write about any of the parishioners being called to ordination but throughout the book he describes at length all of the various ministries that both professional and volunteer staff exercise.

Chapter Six continues the thread from the previous chapter, as it examines the sacramental dynamic that permeates all of life as the divine is encountered and celebrated daily in Mexican culture. Dahm highlights popular religious practices that sanctify personal, family, and community life throughout the year, in particular, the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, *posadas* and *pastorelas* at Christmas, the *Via Crucis Viviente* on Good Friday, *Día de los Muertos* in November. The celebration of *quinceañeras*, the role of saints and spirits, and religious practices of the family and home also are elaborated.

In chapters seven and eight, Dahm details the parish's vibrant teaching and social ministries, respectively. Catechesis is lectionary-based, with the Bible at the

heart of the teaching and preaching. With a population whose average age is twenty-one, the parish has worked both at ministry to youth and at empowering youth as ministers. The parish school also plays a vital role in the educational ministry. Like most inner-city parishes, St. Pius is a general service center for every kind of need: food, shelter and clothing, health care, legal aid, counseling, and general life skills.

The missionary mandate of Jesus to work to establish God's reign of justice, peace, and love on earth is the focus of chapter nine, "Transforming the Neighborhood." Dahm first describes some of the obstacles to community involvement, such as the notion that the kingdom of God is in heaven or that suffering and poverty are the "cross" that one must accept to "pay" for sins. He then tells how the parish has tried to overcome these obstacles as they have worked at community organizing and economic development. In the final chapter, Dahm describes some of the elements of the rich spirituality that emerges from the Mexican immigrant experience, and the ecclesiology that undergird this spirituality. He minces no words in naming some of the forces that threaten the heart of Hispanic parishes, such as excessive control by central authorities, repression of lay ministries, and "the exaltation of an autocratic, arrogant, and even lazy priesthood" (291). His observations about the need for respect for people's culture and to work to enhance its strengths are applicable to any parish, not only Hispanic ones.

Dahm's glimpses of the vibrant faith of parish life offer hope and challenge. The heart-wrenching stories of the suffering of newly arrived immigrants are a touching reminder to the whole church of our constant need to attend to justice and peace ministries that reach to the roots of systems that create inequities. When U.S. news

reports focus on concerns about the dangers that new immigrants pose to this country, Dahm reminds us of the gifts they bring to us. Dahm's descriptions of St. Pius' successes in the development of a vibrant faith community offer much to the wider church in the U.S., particularly regarding the creation, support, and guidance of new lay ecclesial ministries. Also notable is the attention that is given to confronting domestic violence and *machismo* at St. Pius V and to empowering women. In this book Dahm rightly reminds us that Hispanic ministry is not solely about attending to the particular needs of Hispanic communities, but that Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans have much to contribute to the creation of the new ecclesiologies and spiritualities that are taking shape in the wider church. As this reviewer has witnessed first-hand, Dahm and the staff at St. Pius V are doing something right, from which we all can learn.

**The Ministry of Consolers.** By Terence P. Curley. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004. Pages, 95. Paper, \$3.95.

*Reviewed by Susan T. O'Neil  
Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish,  
Cincinnati, Ohio*

Terence P. Curley has written a useful and informative book on grief ministry. It is easy to read and provides opportunities for ministers to reflect on their own loss and spiritual inventory. It takes one through many facets of the grief process and offers helpful suggestions to the grief minister as he or she ministers to the bereaved. Curley reminds us often that there is no time limit for the grief process and that compassionate listening is the key to understanding

what we can do to assist the bereaved in that process.

This book is presented in ten short chapters. In the first chapter, Curley takes a look at many facets that can be of great help in the planning phase of a grief ministry. He also presents questions for ministers to consider in discerning their readiness for and their place in a grief ministry.

Chapter two presents three phases of grief: separation, transition, and reorganization as well as a possible time frame for these phases. Yet, Curley stresses that there is no one-size-fits-all time limit for grief. Everyone experiences grief in their own way and in their own time. Helpful 'dos and don'ts' for the minister are also suggested in this chapter, which can serve as a guide for better ways of bringing healing and hope for the bereaved.

In chapter three we are reminded that an essential part of grief ministry is spiritual guidance. Assisting the bereaved in developing a more spiritual relationship with God is the greatest gift we can offer in this ministry.

The fourth chapter points out the fact that children are often overlooked during bereavement. Children and adolescents grieve very differently than adults. The more familiar the grief minister becomes with how children and adolescents grieve and their need for honesty and concrete answers to their questions, the more he or she can help.

Chapter five reminds us that when we deal with deep loss and separation, there is a deep need for religious expression. The Psalms provide us with a rich resource in our ministering to those who are suffering the loss of a loved one.

In chapter six, Curley describes the "anniversary affect" and discusses the fact that we really never get over grief, we just learn to cope with it. Holidays, birthdays

and anniversaries of significant events can be a time of deep sorrow as we reflect on the past and experience the present without our loved ones. If this reflective sadness intensifies, the person suffers from this anniversary affect. During these times, the bereaved are very much in need of ministry and the grief minister is a key person in recognizing their need and providing support through this time of crisis.

Chapter seven discusses how journal writing can be helpful throughout the grieving process. Often the bereaved are in turmoil, emotionally and spiritually, during bereavement. Journaling is a tool, allowing the bereaved to express painful thoughts and feelings in written form, thus relieving them from some of the stress they are experiencing.

The need for an awareness of how teenagers grieve and what is most helpful as they confront loss is discussed in chapter eight. Because their needs are complex and they don't always express what is bothering them, it is very difficult for the grief minister to relate to a bereaved teenager.

Chapter nine discusses the fact that when the grief minister meets with the family to plan the funeral liturgy, it often sets the tone for the bereaved going through the grieving process. "It is a significant moment for ministry which colors the expression of grief in the context of faith," he writes.

The important role of grief minister as compassionate listener is discussed in chapter ten. Active listening means listening to both what is said, what is not said, and nonverbal communication. Active listening is a gift that allows the bereaved to feel that they have been heard.

Curley stresses the fact that all ministry requires ongoing support and formation because "it is the life of the Church and that what we do is done as a representative of the believing community." Understand-

ing and living our spiritual beliefs surrounding death, learning to pray with Scripture during times of grief, being educated about the grief process, listening-skills training, role playing, and a strong support system for ministers, are all necessary to develop strong ministers of consolation. When a grief minister is well formed they can be a reflection of the One who gives us all consolation and hope.

This book and the bibliography provided is a helpful resource for all caring ministries that deal with grief of any kind.

**Comparisons: Sabah Local Culture and the Bible.** By Peter Phelan.

Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. Malaysia: Key Colour, 2005. Pages, 215. Paper np.

*Reviewed by*

**Brother Jeffrey Gros, F.S.C.**

*Memphis Theological Seminary*

Enculturation studies have produced a great volume of theoretical literature and some impressive anthropological and area studies. Pastorally, some of the most interesting studies are those which emerge from the most particular and local of situations in which the Gospel interacts with cultures quite removed from the classical centers of Christianity. This volume is a fascinating set of brief parallels between the mythologies, rituals, and narratives of tribal cultures in the East Malaysian province of Sabah in Borneo, with similar themes, stories, or rites of the Christian scriptures, especially the Old Testament.

The tribal peoples of Sabah, especially the Kadazandusun and Murut, are relatively recent Christians, many of whom have come to Christianity since the Second World War. Islam, the state religion of

Malaysia, and the Chinese Buddhism of the coastal commercial classes did not penetrate into the interior tribal groups in Borneo. Therefore, many of the traditions of these peoples are still remembered, though on the verge of being lost as the older generations are beginning to die out.

The author of this volume, a skilled educator and veteran of decades of work among these peoples, has spent much of his life in surfacing stories, by having his students listen to their grandparents, some of whom were and are priests and priestesses of the tribal religions. The bulk of the book samples a single page of tribal lore with a parallel page of biblical text or narrative. Theological themes, like the concept of God, sources of evil, sacrifice, death, and the like, are treated, illustrating continuity between these pre-Christian views and Christianity, or contrasting them when they are incompatible.

Another larger set of selections touches on cosmological realities: the sky, sea, world, and so forth; while others focus on animals, anatomical details, human interaction, and elements of the domestic environment. Some of the most engaging parallels recount rituals, like the pouring of blood or the erection of stone monuments, or stories embodying legends and myths that inform the life of the people.

The final section of the book includes selections from church documents, theological and symbolic reflections on culture and education, and some further suggestions for how to utilize these comparisons in education and mission.

This volume will be most useful for Christian preachers and teachers in Borneo, providing a rich reservoir for illustrating biblical teaching, connecting the Gospel with the heritage of these indigenous peoples and providing bridges between the generations and between the Christian and non-Christian tribal peoples. However, it is

also a rich source of reflection on the process of cultural interaction, analysis, and adaptation itself. In due course, when a more systematic theology of and for these peoples is formulated, the sorts of resources accumulated in this volume will be a rich avenue into these understandings of the world.

For a culture that is rapidly losing its memory, and which does not have historical written records, this work will be an important contribution to the record of a passing world and a link from that worldview to the emerging new forms of Christianity to which it will contribute. The very project of accumulating these stories, reflections, and views of reality is an enriching exercise for a younger generation whose world has been shaped by Christianity and by the contemporary, globalized media culture whose uniformity can so easily mute and erase the particularity of a communal past.

**From Maintenance to Mission:  
Evangelization and the Revitalization  
of the Parish.** By Robert S. Rivers, C.S.P.

New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2005.  
Pages, xiv+ 268. Paper, \$22.95.

*Reviewed by Susan M. Timoney, S.T.D.*  
*Vice President, EPS Network,*  
*Washington, D.C.*

Evangelization—Pope John XXIII called it the purpose of the Second Vatican Council. His successor, Paul VI, identified it as the essential mission of the Church, the very reason for her existence. John Paul II dedicated his long pontificate to a “new evangelization” for a new millennium. Yet, for most Catholics, “evangelization” is considered not a “Catholic thing,” let alone an identity or vocation! But the good news is

that the problem is more semantics than concept.

If you ask an active Catholic about the challenges the Church faces in spreading the Gospel, they will point to the growing number of inactive Catholics, the challenges of raising children in the faith, the need for vibrant parish liturgies, and the lack of confidence and knowledge to answer questions about the faith posed by co-workers or neighbors. In *From Maintenance to Mission: Evangelization and the Revitalization of the Parish*, the Reverend Robert Rivers makes a compelling case that the failure of Catholics to identify themselves as evangelizers lies in the failure of parishes to look at their missions through the lens of evangelization. Many parishes burdened with maintaining a myriad of ministries directed at the parish's internal life have forgotten the missionary charism of parish ministry. Rivers boldly asserts, however, that parishes are the ideal places to carry out the Church's mission of evangelization. A parish that can tap into its spiritual vitality, call forth men and women for ministry, and direct its activities toward a shared vision, is an evangelizing parish.

In a book that is both educational text and implementation tool, Rivers does theology by exploring the Catholic Church's evangelizing identity through personal experience, examination of Scripture and tradition, and applying it to the contemporary milieu. The implementation tool is found in the 1992 U.S. Bishops' document *Go and Make Disciples*, which outlines the national vision of evangelization and a three-goal strategy for implementation at the parish level. *From Maintenance to Mission* is a text case example of how a church document can be a catalyst for change and not just a volume sitting on a shelf gathering dust. Rivers weaves theology and pastoral practice together as he

outlines how each goal can help a parish focus on its sacramental, educational, and service ministries through an evangelizing lens. In a lively conversational style, he offers a blueprint that is promising, practical, and possible.

Rivers works creatively with Scripture and Vatican II's baptismal trilogy of priest, prophet, and king to examine the shared responsibility of pastor and parishioner for the Church's mission, and to view the three goals of *Go and Make Disciples* in an integral way.

Citing the pastoral challenge of this trilogy that is sometimes dismissed as archaic or unattractive for a collaborative model of ministry, Rivers explores the countercultural and religious significance of the trilogy that suggests a deeply spiritual identity for all baptized disciples. "A priestly self-designation reminds me that in my deepest being, I have a religious identity" (227) and therefore am called to live the faith fully. A prophetic charism calls the baptized to share his or her faith by speaking of the personal experience of God. Of the third category, royal, Rivers writes, "In a world where individuals feel helpless and powerless to bring about the kingdom, thinking of oneself in royal terms reminds us of our power in Christ to change that world" (227). With this foundation, the three goals of *Go and Make Disciples* are broken open with parish ministry in mind.

Those expecting the book to identify parishes that are success models will not find that kind of testimony in this volume. Some readers may hope for a more detailed theological overview, but should be satisfied with the book's endnotes and suggestions for further reading. Parish ministers looking for a source of theological reflection and a process for change for parish councils, evangelization, or mission teams will find this book helpful.

**Before God.** By George W. Stroup.  
Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004.  
Pages, xi + 210. Paper, \$18.00.

Reviewed by **Joseph F. Wimmer, O.S.A.**  
*Washington Theological Union*

As J. B. Green Professor of Theology at Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, Georgia, and popular lecturer to Presbyterian congregations in Tennessee, Alabama, and the South, George W. Stroup presents us with a zealous and thoughtful reflection on spirituality as seen from a Reformed evangelical point of view. In the opening chapter, he offers us many biblical texts that inculcate living in the presence of God, that is, "in a covenant communion with God characterized by gift, calling, and demand" (16). He also lists a number of reasons why so many Christians fail to do so, especially the turn to the human subject of nineteenth and twentieth century theology in response to Kant's critiques, and its emphasis on liberation and feminism. While worrying about anthropological and sociological issues, theologians have often downplayed the personhood and primacy of God. In chapter two, "Jesus Christ the Apple Tree," Stroup notes that unlike Adam and Eve, Jesus was ever faithful in spite of temptation. Though truly human, he is also Emmanuel, God with us, in whom God brings about redemption. Chapters three and four, entitled "Sin" and "Grace" respectively, depend heavily on Augustine, Martin Luther, John Calvin, the Heidelberg Catechism of 1563, and the writings of Karl Barth. Stroup stresses the importance of the Protestant Principle (Paul Tillich's term), that "one lives before God 'solely' by God's grace in Jesus Christ and never by anything that sinners are, have done, can do, or will do" (109).

The proper response to God's unmerited, freely given grace is found in chapter five,

"Gratitude," which manifests itself in obedience, worship, reconciliation, and giving thanks. The sixth and final chapter acknowledges that we experience God's *absence* because the apocalyptic arrival of the messianic age has yet to take place. As pilgrims we are still on a "journey to God" (185), and though we have the gift of the risen Lord and of the Spirit, Christ is still "coming to hand over the kingdom to the Father" (192). In the meantime we live as a new creation in Christ, a "people of faith, hope, and love" (200).

Unfortunately Stroup has almost nothing to say about a theology of creation. The word "creation" is nowhere to be found in his Subject Index. He does write about the "common grace" of God's creation which is seen in "the pear tree that blooms and blushes" (115), but he does not clearly admit that "common grace" is not salvific. *The Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*, edited by Donald K. McKim (1996), defines common grace as "God's universal, nonsaving grace in which blessings are given to humanity for physical sustenance, pleasure, learning, beauty, etc., as expressions of God's goodness. It is particularly contrasted in Reformed theology with God's special or saving grace" (120). It seems that the beauty of creation is basically a temptation to idolatry.

In view of the strong emphasis on Reformed evangelical Christianity in this book, one may wonder about its ecumenical openness. Surprisingly, there are a number of ways in which Stroup demonstrates his desire to speak to all Christians. His conclusions about several key aspects of the historical Jesus, including the complicity of the "crowd" in Pilate's condemnation of Jesus, is bolstered by reference to Catholic authors such as Luke Timothy Johnson, John Meier, and especially Raymond E. Brown. The designation of Genesis 2–3 as a "mythic but true story" about Adam and

Eve (91–92) is in accord with contemporary mainline hermeneutics, and his reflections on the absence of God in terms of postmodern writers such as Jacques Derrida and John D. Caputo (194) demonstrate a courageous willingness to utilize the latest trends in philosophy when they serve his fundamental concerns.

There is much to be learned from this book, especially about the importance of living one's whole life in the presence of God. The precise way in which this is to be accomplished varies according to the different Christian denominations. Stroup shows us dramatically how Reformed congregations ought to do so.

**The “Preferential Option for the Poor” in Catholic Social Thought from John XXIII to John Paul II.**

By Gerald S. Twomey. Roman Catholic Studies, Volume 22. Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2005. Pages, iv + 352. Cloth, \$119.95.

*Reviewed by Angela Senander  
Washington Theological Union*

In *Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility*, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops invited Catholics to consider seven important themes from Catholic social teaching before voting in the 2004 election. One of the seven themes was the preferential option for the poor. This phrase is so common in contemporary Catholic social thought that some might be surprised to learn that it was not part of the tradition half a century ago.

Gerald Twomey examines the development of the term “preferential option for the poor” in his doctoral dissertation in historical theology, which now appears in published form. This dissertation demon-

strates command of the literature with extensive quotations from significant theologians and magisterial statements. The lengthy introduction situates the development of the preferential option for the poor in the context of modern Catholic social teaching and identifies the significance of each word in the phrase.

The first chapter examines the way in which John XXIII laid the groundwork for the development of the preferential option for the poor through his recognition of the need to read the signs of the times and his identification of the Church as the “Church of the poor.” The second chapter focuses on the Second Vatican Council’s pastoral constitution, *Gaudium et spes*, and Paul VI’s encyclical *Populorum progressio*, noting the Eurocentric and optimistic nature of the former document in contrast with the global consciousness and realism of the latter. The third chapter portrays the emergence of liberation theology in Latin America, highlighting the transition from Paul VI’s “integral development” to Gustavo Gutiérrez’s “integral liberation” as well as the contribution of the Latin American Episcopal Conference at Medellín in 1968.

The fourth chapter presents Paul VI’s incorporation of insights from Medellín and liberation theology into his writing in *Octogesima adveniens* and *Evangelii nuntiandi* but also his warning against the use of Marxist social analysis by liberation theologians. Twomey notes the tensions of the 1979 meeting of the Latin American Episcopal Conference at Puebla which both excluded liberation theologians and introduced the term “preferential option for the poor” in a magisterial document. The fifth chapter highlights the tensions between Rome and liberation theologians during the 1980s, which were rooted in a concern that “preferential” might be heard as “exclusive.” Twomey demonstrates John Paul II’s gradual acceptance of the term

“preferential option for the poor.” The sixth chapter concludes the preceding historical narrative with an analytic summary.

The book is organized chronologically with attention to the ecclesial politics that forms and shapes magisterial teaching. The book is more narrative than analytic, providing extensive details with some minor inaccuracies. For instance, the year given for the encyclical *Sollicitudo rei socialis* is 1986 (p. 16) and 1988 (p. 12) as well as the correct year 1987 (p. 263). Because of the implicit nature of the argument, the reader might not hear the author’s argument amidst all of the quotations. These quotations, however, provide a sampling of significant passages and highlight important primary texts that would be helpful for one preparing a presentation on the preferential option for the poor.

I would expect few, if any, ministers to buy this book given its dissertation style and its price of nearly \$120. Doctoral students with an interest in liberation theology and Catholic social teaching would be the primary audience for this book.

**The Ministry of Lectors.** By James A. Wallace, C.Ss.R.: 2nd edition. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004. Pages, vii + 75. Paper, \$3.95.

*Reviewed by William H. Graham and Mary C. Graham*  
*The National Institute for the Word of God*

This compact, yet comprehensive handbook is a real boon to those who seek to understand the depth and breadth of the ministry of lector. Though written for lectors, this guide contains insights and suggestions relevant for all who proclaim scripture in the Liturgy of the Word.

Most books addressed to liturgical readers focus on the skills and techniques of

oral interpretation and communication, touching on bible study and liturgy. In *The Ministry of Lectors*, Father Wallace retains these principles, but places a fundamental importance on the faith and spirituality of the lectors themselves. Their mission is to evangelize “in a unique way by entering into an intimate relationship with the sacred texts so central to the life of the community.”

A professor of homiletics at Washington Theological Union, Father Wallace has extensive experience in education and pastoral communication. He writes as a caring friend and teacher whose intent is to form ministers of the Word who will “move the hearts and feelings of the people” to worship in the liturgy.

The book is divided into three parts:

- I. The Lector – What’s in a Name (Job – Ministry – Vocation)
- II. God’s Word Spoken to Us (Revelation)
- III. God’s Word Spoken Through Us (Witness).

In Parts I and II, after reflecting on the role of lectors, Father Wallace urges them to discover and cherish the Word of God in the Bible and in the liturgy. He calls for a process by which the lector derives personal meaning from the texts through prayer, analysis, contemplation and practice. When reading before the assembly, the lector’s focus is communal, communicating the felt message in its entirety to the listeners. As Father Wallace says, “a text has a voice that speaks to us, and when we read to others it speaks through us.”

Part III concentrates on the spiritual and spoken preparation needed to communicate God’s Word. Spiritual preparation includes prayer, listening, and studying. In study of the text, Father Wallace explains the need to have an understanding of the

cultural, historical, and liturgical dimensions of the text, and of its literary form. Varied literary forms require varied approaches to oral interpretation.

Speaking preparation calls for a concerted effort to proclaim the word in a way that manifests a “warm and living love and knowledge of the Scriptures” (Pope Paul VI). Preparation also acknowledges the importance of the readings being heard and understood. Toward that end, Father Wallace sets forth techniques of interpretation and communication in clear and accessible language, providing exercises that free the voice and body for resonant speech. His examples are appropriate and insightful.

He urges lectors to yield themselves completely to the sacred text. Father Wallace says, “one dies to oneself so that the text might live.” He also quotes Alla Bozarth-Campbell, who defines the ideal interpretation as “the full revelation of whatever experience is inherent in the literature.”

Many lectors with whom we have conducted workshops seem to resist such a concept. They are convinced that to be involved imaginatively in communicating the profound and inspired experience of a writer is to risk artificiality and self-indulgent emotionalism. Their determination is to achieve a negative objective, for example, “I don’t want to be dramatic,” “I don’t want to do too much.” They know what they want to avoid.

Father Wallace gives a clarion call to all who proclaim God’s Word, summoning them to achieve the purpose of their ministry by bearing witness to the truth and value of what they proclaim.

We enthusiastically recommend *The Ministry of Lectors* to all lectors, experienced or inexperienced. We are “old” teachers in the work of proclamation, who find the booklet very helpful. It communicates God’s Word to us.

**A Banqueter’s Guide to the All-Night Soup Kitchen of the Kingdom of God.**

By Patrick T. McCormick. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004. Pages, ix–xii + 147. Paper, \$13.95.

*Reviewed by Angela Senander  
Washington Theological Union*

December 2005 marked the fortieth anniversary of the Second Vatican Council’s *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*. This important contribution to Catholic social teaching has inspired many to recognize injustices as signs of the times contrary to the Gospel. While this final constitution emphasizes that the church exists for the sake of the world and the first constitution, the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, identifies liturgy as the summit and source of the church’s activities, the Council draws little attention to the relationship between the Eucharist and justice. In this book Patrick McCormick, a professor of Christian ethics at Gonzaga University, provides a well-researched and engaging examination of this relationship that is accessible for a general audience.

Four eucharistic references (the Last Supper command to “take and eat,” the Lukan eucharistic phrase “the breaking of the bread,” the Pauline understanding of the “Body of Christ,” and the traditional language of the “sacrifice of the Mass”) provide the book’s basic structure, with a chapter dedicated to each. The first chapter invites people to recognize the Eucharist as a sacrament of eating and drinking. McCormick describes food as necessity, gift, and enjoyment. He then argues that the failure to recognize one’s own hunger contributes to apathy toward the hunger of others, and the failure to recognize food as “the fruit of the earth” and the “work of human hands” leads to injustice toward those whose lives and labor are the source

of food. The second chapter focuses on virtues associated with sharing a meal as a disciple of Jesus. Comparing Jesus' stories and practices regarding meals with the symposium of the Greco-Roman world, McCormick highlights Jesus' hospitality toward the poor and needy, friendship with sinners and outcasts, and service that challenged hierarchies. The third chapter considers the meaning of embodiment, the need to care for suffering bodies and the significance of the relationship between the Eucharist and the church as the Body of Christ. Recognizing divisions within this body, McCormick highlights the need for solidarity with the poor, with women, and with the earth in order to overcome the injustices each has suffered. In the fourth chapter McCormick recalls the stress placed on the relationship between Christ's sacrifice on the cross and the sacrifice of the Mass in the tradition. He suggests that even though sacrifice is no longer the primary metaphor for the Eucharist, the language of sacrifice in the eucharistic prayer still poses challenges for one's understanding of God. McCormick draws on the work of René Girard to understand sacrifice in terms of scapegoating and identifies Jews and women as primary scapegoats in the Christian tradition. McCormick argues: "Scripture reveals a God who opposes scapegoating and stands with the sacrificial victims—indeed, a God who identifies with all of history's scapegoats and becomes the ultimate victim, thus unmasking the diabolical violence that would pass itself off as divine" (123). Each chapter provides a particular lens for examining the relationship between Eucharist and justice.

The book's structure lends itself well to a four-part discussion of Eucharist and justice sponsored by a parish or campus ministry, in which a participant could attend any or all of the sessions. McCormick's

rich use of Scripture passages provides a strong biblical basis for understanding the Eucharist. The personal anecdotes, references to literature and movies, and scientific data about the environment and culture offer a diversity of ways to engage the reader. The occasional descriptions of eucharistic liturgical practices before the Second Vatican Council will serve different purposes for different generations, providing historical perspective for younger generations and recalling memories of the church in the mid-twentieth century for others. Regardless of whether a person's formative years were before, during, or after the Second Vatican Council, the content and style of this book invite meaningful reflection on the relationship between Eucharist and justice.

**Violence in God's Name: Religion in an Age of Conflict.** By Oliver McTernan. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003. Pages, xxii + 192. Paperback, \$20.00.

*Reviewed by Robert Schreiter, C.P.P.S.  
Catholic Theological Union*

The rise of religiously motivated violence and growing linkages between religion and violence have spawned a considerable literature in the past ten years. This book by Oliver McTernan, a Roman Catholic priest and broadcaster for BBC radio, is yet another addition. Besides bringing a long-time association and experience with Pax Christi International, McTernan spent a year in research at the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs at Harvard University, which has a special interest in the role of religion in conflict, in preparation of this book. As a result, his presentation on the topic represents something more nuanced and informative than what has

frequently appeared in recent years. His stated purpose in the book is to bring to bear what his research has taught him on the practitioner's concern for what might be done to intervene in situations of religiously inspired violence in conflict situations.

Chapter One frames the current discussion of religiously inspired violence by looking at three theories of what is causing the upsurge in violence, including Samuel Huntington's now-famous "Clash of Civilizations." Chapter Two takes on the secularist models for defining international relations and shows how such models fail to grasp the religiously inspired violence we see today. Chapter Three traces religion's long, ambivalent relationship to violence, both legitimating and abjuring it. Chapter Four takes three contemporary conflicts (Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka, and Israel and Palestine) and focuses on the religious aspect of each. Chapter Five examines the roles of poverty, tolerance, and leadership in exacerbating and resolving conflicts. McTernan carefully looks at issues of injustice as fueling a turn to fundamentalism and to religiously inspired violence. The final chapter brings his recommendations about how to respond to religious violence.

This book, written from a religious sensibility and well informed about the factors shaping religious violence today, is a good introduction to this pressing problem. McTernan gauges as well as he can to what extent it can be said that religion inspires violence and, basing his conclusions on the data available, proposes that it is far less than many presume. He pleads for greater knowledge and understanding between religious traditions, especially religious leaders. The book's only flaw is the consistent misspelling of a good number of place and personal names, especially Arabic ones.

**Silent Music: The Life, Work, and Thought of St. John of the Cross.**

By Robert A. Herrera. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004. Pages, 165. Paper, \$16.

*Reviewed by Deacon James Keating  
Pontifical College Josephinum*

This book opens with a helpful and historically sweeping summary of how the mystic has been understood over time. The mystic, says Herrera, is the vicar of humanity who in this life enjoys a foretaste of the next. He portrays the mystic as an explorer gifted by God. The mystic has an intimacy connecting him or her to the depths of God's love and the love of neighbor and self in a characteristic way. Everyday life structured by a moral and spiritual purification leads the mystic to the goal of union with God. This way is traveled only by way of grace, a grace which infuses the "elevated life" within the mystic.

The author moves from this overview of what a mystic is to a profound and beautifully written meditation on the legacy of John of the Cross. He places this spiritual biography in the context of the Spanish political and cultural reality bequeathed to John, as well as the streams of Spanish mystical thought that influenced St. John's own way of approaching God. After a brief section on St. John's education, Herrera guides the reader into the mystic's encounter with St. Teresa of Avila and the early foundation of the male branch of the Discalced Carmelite order. There is a brief review of John's suffering at the hands of these "calced" brothers, his imprisonment, escape, the founding of the discalced Carmelites, his further difficulties with religious superiors, his contemplative days at Anabul and Sierra Morena, his final sickness, and sufferings leading to his death.

The author highlights the irreplaceable role of faith in John's life, as evidenced in

his mystical thought. It is faith that guides the spiritual journey through the ascetically active night of leaving sin behind. It is equally faith that gives the person the courage to go through the passive night of God's own movements within the soul, preparing and bringing it into loving union with himself. The soul must be made holy, made like him with whom she seeks union. This way of union, according to John, is narrow; it is faith buttressed by detachment from the ego.

Herrera reviews John's cautious approach to discursive knowledge leading the saint to express himself in image, poetry, and metaphor. John is compared and contrasted to Plotinus with the saint's Christian commitments underscored. He is also put in conversation with Pseudo-Denis especially in the context of the divine darkness theme. The author looks to John to teach the contemporary world a lesson in the benefits of silence, interiority, and self-discipline. If progress toward union with God is to be made one has to pass through night—the denial of unruly appetites in the context of faith. The way to holiness is a progressive

welcoming of uncreated fullness, which cannot enter a soul unless created hunger is expelled. John also insisted that God is more glorified when served without any signs and wonders to motivate the follower. God doesn't reveal anything that can be known through human effort; even still one receives consolations in prayer that leave the disciple to know he or she is deeply loved by God.

Herrera serves up a fine and exquisitely mature summary of John's journey toward union with God. The prose is a delight to read. The insights into John's life and message are truly illuminating, giving the reader many occasions to pause and reflect rather than simply read data. Herrera leads his reader through the core of John's approach to God and leaves the reader wanting to follow—follow all the way to the great *un-making*—the purification of the person by God's own love. This book would be very valuable in a seminar on spirituality or mysticism. It might also assist students in an introductory course on spirituality at a graduate level. Beyond academics, the book should be read to prompt one's own conversion.