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Introduction

Among the many signs of life and growth in the Church since Vatican II has been the expansion of our understanding of ministry. Within the parish and well beyond its boundaries, men and women seek to bring about the reign of God, transform unjust structures, and allow themselves and their communities to be transformed by coming to know, love, and stand with the other on the margins of church and society. This issue of *New Theology Review* explores some of the signs of the pervasive presence of the Spirit at work in our midst. Such signs are revealed through the unfolding social mission of the Church, the transformative power of pastoral outreach in a committed engagement with those in need, combined with theological reflection, and pastoral presence to persons in the final stages of life.

In our opening article, Maria Riley, who has been actively engaged for over twenty-five years in the social mission of the Church, gives an overview of the rich body of Catholic social teaching. She explores how this teaching is being translated into social action in parishes and institutions addressing domestic and global issues. She grounds all in a spirituality of the reign of God, which calls for a commitment to solidarity, mutuality, and community. Our next two articles by Anthony Gittins, and Joseph Grant with Anne Walter, suggest how theological reflection on concrete experiences of social action, expressed in outreach to the homeless, the materially poor, and refugees, can open up ways for persons and parish communities to discover God's magnetic attraction in the struggle to live meaningful, integrated, and gospel-based lives.

The fourth article on the theme, by psychologist Elizabeth Turner Haase, is a valuable resource for ministers of pastoral care, called to accompany those in the very vulnerable final stages of life, as well as their families and loved ones in their experience of grief and loss. She draws on her experience as a specialist working with issues of death, dying, grief, loss, and trauma to suggest practical skills for beginning and seasoned pastoral caregivers.

Our theme is enriched and complemented by three further articles on topics of pastoral concern. Gilberto Cavazos-G. suggests elements for an inculturated Latino spirituality in the U.S.; Andrew Skotnicki offers insight into the role and

ministry of chaplains in correctional institutions. Finally, Lisa Fullam, one of the finalists in the 2003 theological reflection essay contest, invites us into a rural community in Jamaica, to reflect with her on the challenges and long-term implications of celebrating Sunday worship without presence of a priest.

Our columns and book reviews fill out this issue with news of interesting trends, theological updates, and pastoral challenges, as well as books to enrich our ministry within and beyond the parish.

In closing, we invite you to consider the announcement of the next essay contest in our November 2003 issue. We welcome your participation and encourage you to try your hand at theological reflection on some aspect of pastoral ministry. The editors will look for your article by May 2.

Coming in August:

The Priesthood Today

Blessed Are They Who Hunger for Justice

The Social Mission of the Church

Maria Riley, O.P.

Years of active engagement in the social mission of the Church enrich the author's exploration of its theological foundations, translation of social teaching into social action, and spirituality for those engaged in social ministry.

The social mission of the Church has a rich history, dating back to apostolic times with the institution of the diakonia (Acts: 6:1-6) to serve the needs of the Hellenistic members who complained their widows were slighted when the Hebrews distributed food—the first marginated group in the Christian community. But the theology and the flourishing of the social mission as we know it today is a direct outcome of the Vatican II documents on ecclesiology and the subsequent papal, synodal and episcopal statements that have followed that event. Today a rich body of Catholic social theology exists which informs the social ministries of the People of God.

The Second Vatican Council, opened by Pope John XXIII in 1962, moved the Church out of the defensive stance it had taken toward the world in the wake of the Enlightenment, the Protestant Reformation, the political revolutions that led to the secularized state, and the advent of modernism. The Council leaders had witnessed the destructiveness of modern warfare, the Holocaust, the world polarized by conflicting ideologies, the threat of nuclear war, the emergence of post-colonial nation states in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and a growing

Maria Riley, O.P., an Adrian Dominican, coordinates the Global Women's Project at the Center of Concern in Washington, D.C. The project focuses on economic and social justice for women in the U.S. and abroad.

disparity between the rich and the poor. The council leaders themselves reflected the new reality of a “world church.” In many respects, the council represented the end of one ecclesial era and the beginning of a new era (DeBerri and Hug, 7).

In this article I reflect upon the social mission of the Church that emerged from Vatican II in its theological foundations, its movement from social theology to social action and a spirituality for the social minister. These reflections arise from over twenty-five years of active engagement in the social mission of the Church. They also express the critical dimension of my work as a feminist in search of justice for women in the Church and in society.

Theological Foundations

The new ecclesial era ushered in by the Council was particularly evident in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*), the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*), and the Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity (*Ad Gentes*). These three documents in particular explicate the social mission of the Church through their reflections on the Church as sacrament, the relation between the mission of the Church and the contemporary world, and their definition of the Church as People of God sent to continue Jesus’ work to establish “peace and community” among all humans (Fiorenza, 161–62). The image of the Church as the People of God transforms the traditional passive role of the faithful into an active role in defining and shaping their history in the contemporary world (DeBerri and Hug, 16). For me, the designation of the Church as People of God is a declaration of liberation for the women ministers in the Church. Rather than being obedient daughters of the clerical Church, we are now co-ministers responsible for the flourishing of the Church and society. However, that interpretation was not and still is not fully shared by the institutional Church either in its structures or in the attitudes of many of the ordained.

This ecclesial theology was given further definition at the Vatican Synod (1971) in its statement Justice in the World (*Justitia in Mundo*). The bishops, gathered at the synod, aligned themselves with the liberation dynamic of people to achieve justice in their lives. More definitively, they declared that working to undo unjust systems and structures which contradict God’s plan for the world is central to the Church’s mission of preaching the Gospel. In the words of the document: “Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the gospel, or in other words, of the Church’s mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation” (6).

The bishops made two key statements defining the context of the social mission. First, they recognized that the Church must be just in its own structures if

it is to have credibility in its witness to justice (40), making the Church not only a subject, but also an object of the work for justice. Second, they recognized the Church's right and duty to proclaim justice, but not to offer solutions; that task is the responsibility of the members of the Church as citizens in their various locations (36 and 38) [Walsh and Davies 1991, 269]. The statement on justice in the Church is a further incentive for social ministers, especially women, to continue to raise their voices in advocacy for the recognition of women as fully and equally church in all its ministries and all dimensions of its ministries. The statement takes on even greater meaning for all the laity in light of the recent and painful scandals in the Church.

The responsibility of the People of God within their local settings was further explicated by Pope Paul VI in A Call to Action (*Octogesima Adveniens*, 1971). Paul VI clearly defines the work of social ministries in the social mission of the Church: "It is up to the Christian communities to analyze with objectivity the situation which is proper to their own country, to shed on it the light of the gospel's unalterable words and to draw principles of reflection, norms of judgement and directives for action from the social teaching of the Church" (4). This papal challenge has been taken up by regional and national episcopal conferences, which have developed pastoral letters on a multiplicity of topics, including peace, economic justice, migration, racism, justice and evangelization, development and human rights. A rich body of Catholic social teaching is now available in all the regions of the world.

Pope John Paul II has been a prolific writer of social encyclicals during the twenty-five years of his pontificate. Building on the social teaching of his predecessors, he has brought a contemporary analysis to the question of labor (On Human Work [*Laborem Exercens*] 1981), to authentic development, and to the divisions of a world characterized by the "misereries of underdevelopment" and "inadmissible superdevelopment" (On the Social Concerns of the Church [*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*] 1988, 28). In *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, John Paul II also introduced ecological issues into Catholic social teaching. He used the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of the first social encyclical, On the Reconstruction of the Social Order (*Rerum Novarum* 1891) to review the issues of that document in the light of the historical developments of the latter part of the twentieth century.

This body of official Catholic social teaching has been enriched and deepened by the parallel work of theologians, particularly in the area of political theology

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and liberation theology. Women in the Church have been both heartened and discouraged by different dimensions of Catholic social teaching, such as its call for justice in the Church and its affirmation of human rights and liberation. However, Catholic social teaching also enshrines a subtle form of anthropological dualism regarding gender roles that opens the question as to whether the Church implicitly recognizes two human natures: man's nature as normative and woman's nature. Too often, when Catholic social teaching addresses the question of women in church and society, it includes language on women's "appropriate role" or "according to her nature." Such language is never applied to men nor are any limitations placed on men because of "their nature" (Riley, 988).

Too many Catholics are still unacquainted with this extensive reflection of the Church on the centrality of its social mission to its own identity and to their vocation as baptized Christians to be engaged in this mission. They are often confused when the bishops speak out on issues that are not considered traditionally "religious" such as the U.S. Bishops Pastoral on the Economy (1986). A continuing task that I and all social ministers have engaged in is the faith formation and the engagement of the People of God in its social mission, so that the work for justice is not seen as a special commitment of a few of the faithful, but as central to the Christian life and pastoral work in the service of all.

From Social Theology to Social Action

The evolution of social theology has of necessity involved shifts in the method of doing theology and of engaging in the social ministry of the Church. The Church in the Modern World affirmed the basic Christian belief that God continues to speak in and through human history when it used the biblical language of "reading the signs of the times" (4). God's presence and designs for the world are manifest through these signs. History is no longer just the context for applying natural law principles to social questions, the methodology of earlier Catholic social teaching. History is the place of on-going revelation where one discovers God's design either in its graced presence or sinful absence. One of the critical on-going revelations in my work has been the historical evolution of the global women's movement and the new issues that have come into the context of the social mission as a result, for example, violence against women and the structural causes of women's poverty.

While "reading the signs of the times" language resonates deeply with biblical echoes and signals a shift in the locus for the doing of theology, it lacks precision and direction as a methodology. Liberation theologians, in particular, developed the praxis method for doing theology. Praxis is the action that comes out of reflection and leads back to reflection in the work of the social minister and the social theologian.

The praxis method was popularized as the pastoral cycle of social analysis in the 1980s by Peter Henriot, S.J., and Joseph Holland (*Social Analysis*, 1980). Using the tools of the social sciences and theological reflection, Henriot and Holland provided a framework for praxis that begins with experience, then moves to social analysis through political, economic, social, and cultural lens on the structures that shape that experience. This critical social analysis is judged through theological reflection rooted in the experience of God, the contemplation of Scripture, the application of Catholic social teaching with its contemporary focus on God's preferential option for the poor, and the primacy of love in the work of doing justice. Theological reflection leads to a discernment of the action to be pursued in addressing the injustices embedded in the social structures (Henriot and Holland, 1980).

Locus of Social Ministry

Even a brief overview of the institutions, both official and quasi-official, that engage in the social mission of the Church opens a wide vista on the extensive creativity and dedicated work of the People of God in addressing the social ills of our time at the local, national, and global level. This flourishing of passion and commitment to support people in their struggle for human dignity and a future to believe in followed on the work of Vatican II to situate social mission at the heart of the Church. Due to space limitations, this article will focus primarily on the U.S.

Pope Paul VI established the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace “to awaken in the People of God full awareness of their mission today” (*The Progress of Peoples [Populorum Progressio]* 1967, 5). Identifying the commission as pontifical and locating it in the Vatican was a signal indicating that the “social question has become worldwide” (*The Progress of Peoples*, 3). The pontifical commission was soon supported by diocesan offices or commissions throughout the world. These offices encouraged local parishes to add Social Concerns committees to their parish structure and provided materials for faith formation and for reflection and action on the social conditions of both local and global realities.

In addition to the Justice and Peace Commissions, the traditional institutions, such as Catholic Charities, enlarged their mission of addressing direct social needs to include advocacy to transform the conditions causing these needs. Catholic Charities enlarges the circle of people involved in social ministry at the diocesan and parish level. Catholic Relief Services has gone through a similar evolution in its work with people in need outside the U.S.

A complementary set of social ministry institutions was developed as part of the response by religious communities to Vatican II's call to renewal and to the challenge of the Vatican Synod of 1971 in *Justice in the World*. In fact, it has been observed that without the dedication, personnel and financial resources of religious

communities, particularly women's communities, the justice and peace movement as it is today would not exist. These complementary institutions are local, national, and global in scope. They serve not only their members, but are a resource to parishes and small faith communities as they seek to live out their social mission in the world. They often work in ecumenical and interfaith coalitions, sharing in the richness of the social commitment of other faith traditions. Whereas these institutions were staffed initially by members of the sponsoring religious communities, today the majority of staff is often members of the laity. These institutions offer alternative settings for social ministers to live out their vocation in the social mission of the Church.

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The approach of these alternative social ministry institutions varies with the intent of their founders. For example, NETWORK: A Catholic Social Justice Lobby, founded by religious sisters, is a focal point to facilitate its members' lobbying efforts with the U.S. Congress. It follows such issues as the impact of welfare reform on its recipients, the extension of health care to improve its coverage, economic issues such as trade, and war and peace issues. Its focus is primarily on U.S. domestic issues. Regional and local institutions such as Eighth Day Center in Chicago, Groundwork in Detroit, and the Intercommunity Center of the Northwest in Seattle, focus on local, state and regional issues, which often have national and Federal implications. The Center of Concern in Washington, D.C., addresses the impact of global institutions on global poverty, human rights, women's rights, and development. The arena of work includes the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organizations, transnational corporations and the role of the U.S.

Another approach taken by these complementary institutions is to focus on a particular need of people in poverty, such as homelessness, health care and affordable housing. McAuley Institute, sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy in the Americas, is an example of an effort to ensure affordable housing for people in poverty. Many Catholic hospitals, owned by religious communities, run neighborhood clinics to address the health needs of the uninsured. These examples are but a small representation of the many ways religious communities have provided settings for the People of God to engage in the social mission of the Church.

Both the official and the complementary institutions support the laity in their everyday efforts to bring the social mission into the workplace. This commitment

goes beyond the usual demands of business ethics and focuses on examining financial decisions, methods of production and distribution to reflect a concern for their effect on people, particularly those in poverty, and the environment.

It is clear from these examples that engagement in the social ministries of the Church takes the minister well beyond the traditional settings of pastoral ministry. I have found myself in the halls of power and in urban slums in the U.S., Kenya and India, at United Nations World Conferences and town meetings, confronting government officials and feeding the hungry, at endless committee meetings and alone, often in conflict with family members and colleagues on social and economic issues, sometimes savoring moments of a successful effort to improve people's lives but more often overwhelmed by the political, economic, and social powers arrayed against any social change. The question of how to sustain these ministerial demands and avoid burn-out is a real one. Clearly the minister must be grounded in a spirituality that sustains the vision, the passion, and the energy to continue to seek a world of greater justice and peace for all.

Spirituality for the Social Minister

To sketch the spiritual underpinnings of the work for social justice, I will reflect upon three key elements that have sustained me: the biblical promise of the "reign of God," the Catholic social teaching concept of solidarity, and the necessary support of community.

The biblical message of the "reign of God" is a central metaphor in the life and ministry of Jesus and so it must be in the life and ministry of the People of God. The vision of the reign of God has deep and lyrical roots in the Hebrew Scriptures. The book of Isaiah is replete with the promises of God's care and restoration of Israel from its captivity. Isaiah also continues to call the people of Israel to live the reality of God's mercy and justice in their own lives and promises God's continuing redemption. The prophet promises current peace and prosperity and future salvation. He announces the redemption in both the present time and the future: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the one who brings good tidings, who publishes peace, bearing good news, announcing salvation and saying to Zion, 'Your God is King!' . . . Break out together in song, O ruins of Jerusalem! For the LORD comforts his people, he redeems Jerusalem. The LORD has bared his holy arm in the sight of all the nations; all the ends of the earth will behold the salvation of our God" (Isa 52:8-10). Isaiah is speaking of the Messiah to come, but does the passage not also speak of the social minister? Such lovely passages of promise have fed my spirit over the years.

The reign of God is the central motif of Jesus' ministry. It occurs more than 150 times in the Christian Scriptures, mostly in the Synoptics (Senior, 856). John the Baptist foretells the coming of Jesus by announcing that the reign of God is

at hand and Jesus begins his public ministry proclaiming its arrival: “After John had been arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God: ‘This is the time of fulfillment. The reign of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel’” (Mark 1: 14-15). Jesus also outlined the essential justice dimension of the reign of God and of his ministry when he spoke in the synagogue at Nazareth. Quoting Isaiah, he announced: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.” At the conclusion of the reading Jesus stated: “Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:18-21).

These passages are illustrative of Jesus’ understanding of the reign of God as characterized by forgiveness and mercy and by universal justice and peace. The establishment of this reign will demand not only “the transformation of the human heart but also of the oppressive social structures that dehumanize and exclude the poor and defenseless from participation” in the human community (Senior, 858).

Jesus asserts that “. . . behold, the reign of God is in the midst of you” (Luke 17:20) but he also prays for the coming of God’s reign in the Lord’s Prayer, “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done” and speaks of its final realization at the last judgement which will judge the nations and the people on how they fulfilled the justice demands of the reign of God (Matt 25:31-46).

Jesus’ declarations of the reign of God as both now and in the future, both alive among the People of God and in process of fulfillment, are key points of reflection for social ministers. They point not only to the works of justice that must be done but to the minister’s process in working for justice. The very work for justice must be imbued with justice. The justice and peace institutions, indeed the Church itself, and

the actions of the ministers must exhibit respect for the dignity of people, a strict adherence to the human rights, a context of love, compassion, peace and right relationships. The personal discipline of being a just person is the central asceticism of the social minister.

Hope in the promise of the reign of God is the central activating virtue. I had to come to peace with the fact that I will probably never see the realities for which I labor. What is important, I have learned, is to be an active agent in realiz-

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ing the reign of God, not only in the present time but in the future. Social ministers must work for the “right now” of God’s reign in their place and time and for the full realization of God’s designs for the earth and all the peoples in the end time. Realizing that I am participating in God’s work for justice keeps alive in me the hope that justice will come in God’s time.

A second dimension of my spirituality as a social minister is a commitment to solidarity. The concept of solidarity has a long history in Catholic social thought. Its roots are in the recognition of the unity of the human family and the need to join together to achieve the common good of all. It was first used by labor union movements and adopted into Catholic social teaching as a call to business, labor, and government to work together for the common good. It later was a call for Christians to unite against the rise of Communism. In Europe, solidarity was defined as countries’ systems of social welfare whereby the wealth of the country was distributed to ensure that all had their basic needs fulfilled.

In the encyclical, *On the Social Concerns of the Church*, Pope John Paul II presents a rich and extended reflection on solidarity as a virtue and identifies the demands it makes on people. Those countries and peoples with great wealth have a moral obligation to share with those countries and peoples in need; people in poverty have the obligation to join together in solidarity to seek justice for themselves. It is the evangelical duty of the Church to stand with those in poverty (39–40).

In this age of increasing globalization dominated by economic integration, the demands of solidarity take on even greater reality. The liberation of people from the bonds of poverty and oppression is directly related to the liberation of the affluent from the superficiality of the consumer culture and excessive individualism. The salvation of both those with wealth and those living in poverty is inextricably linked. Solidarity goes beyond a sense of beneficence towards others who are less fortunate, and embraces justice, the right of all to share in the goods of creation. Justice is at the heart of the Christian life. The work for justice and solidarity, is essential to personal and communal salvation.

This understanding of solidarity as mutually salvific saves social ministers from the mistake of assuming a maternal or paternal attitude towards the people

Social ministers must work for the “right now” of God’s reign in their place and time, and for the full realization of God’s designs for the earth and all the peoples in the end time.

they serve. Recognizing the mutual relationship between the servant and the server ensures that the social minister authentically recognizes and affirms the human dignity of each person.

Finally, persons who engage in the social mission of the Church must be embedded in a community of persons who share their passion for justice. I have been blessed over the years with my religious community's commitment to justice and peace, and continuing support of my work. In addition, my colleagues at the Center of Concern work to be mutually supportive and challenging of each other. The challenges are substantive in calling us to probe the issues before us, to search for alternatives, and to shape responses that reflect the full and rich dimensions of the social vision of the Church.

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They also help to keep us in touch with our truest selves. The demands of the ministry are great, the temptations to self-aggrandizement or self-delusion as we walk the halls of power are real, maternalism and paternalism towards those served is destructive, and burn out is all too common. Our staff engagement in reflection and evaluation, not only on the efforts being made and the work being accomplished but also of our development as just persons working in a just institution, is essential to avoid the pitfalls of the work. Also, communities become the carriers of the hope and vision of the ministry and support the minister when that hope and vision falters.

Communities engaged in the social mission of the Church are also places of formation and practica for the next generation of social ministers. They are the context where the social theology of the Church is translated into action for justice and peace. Seasoned social ministers mentor the new ministers through their shared faith, shared wisdom, and shared experience.

Conclusion

The rich theology and praxis of the social mission of the Church is a story still unfolding. But the story needs to be more widely shared, so that the great energy and passion for justice of the whole People of God may be unleashed on the world. The current and future realization of the reign of God will become clearer and more irresistible through the traditional work of feeding the hungry and clothing the naked and the structural work of seeking to eradicate the causes of

hunger and poverty so the peoples of the world may flourish and the context of peace is secure. For the social minister the grace and blessings she discovers in working with others to secure liberation, justice, and peace are rich.

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Searching for Meaning, Struggling for Faith

Theological Reflection and Pastoral Outreach

Anthony J. Gittins, C.S.Sp.

A noted professor of missiology invites believers who are experiencing a sense of emptiness or meaninglessness to enter into a process of exploration, involving theological reflection and a committed engagement with those in need.

Crisis of Meaning, Crisis of Faith

For several decades now, experts and diagnosticians of various stripes have been telling us that we are living between the times, amid paradigm shifts or paradigm breakdowns, and at the beginning of a new era, sometimes named as postmodernity, sometimes confused with globalization, and sometimes simply identified with the new millennium. As a result, many people are left feeling cut loose from their moorings. They are persuaded, or at least informed, that they can never return to previous, or imagined, securities. Many certainly feel as though they have been set adrift, and that they must simply get used to it, or perhaps batten down the hatches and wait for death. The nautical image is stark enough when applied to existential lives; applied to faith lives it becomes utterly bleak.

It is not my present intention to enter the lists; I want simply to acknowledge the fact that fluidity, change, chaos, and, for far too many, meaninglessness, and hopelessness characterize people's worlds of experience, and to take this as a

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point of departure for a reflection about living meaningful, integrated, and gospel-based lives. A point of departure, however—no matter how fixed in time or territory, how clear in mind or memory—is no guarantee of a sure arrival. Nor does it necessarily indicate a clear direction to follow, much less a congenial or easy one. Perhaps that is why so many people feel bogged down, incapable of moving forward with determination, reduced to wandering aimlessly, or even overcome by a sense of futility.

This reflection is offered to anyone struggling with meaning and with faith, with religion and with Church. The operative word here is struggling; those past struggling, becalmed, or in a safe haven, will find nothing of interest here; and I cannot even offer guarantees for those who are struggling. Taking the image of a journey (starting point, progress, orientation), the context of a storm (inclement conditions, with all-enveloping mist or fog), and the life-experience of a person of Christian faith, I have three suggestions. First, storms must not deter us; they are part of the natural and supernatural cycle. Second, lack of clarity about the outcome should not prevent us from setting out and remaining committed; if we imagine life as adventure rather than merely as journey, we will recall that we simply cannot know the outcome in advance, but also that adventures are the very stuff of life. And third, we should be steadfast but sensible: in order to proceed we need both a compass and a compass bearing. It is not enough to set out; we must be at least minimally equipped. The compass in this instance is our faith's magnetic core; the compass bearing is God's magnetic attraction.

I will develop these thoughts using theological reflection as the analogue of an effective compass, and service to homeless people as a metaphorical needle to point us in the right direction. But an expensive compass is of little help unless it can be read, and the needle is not itself the way ahead: it merely orients us and points us in the right direction. Many people have not learned to use a compass that would provide a setting for their life's adventures; and because so many have not discovered life's cardinal point, they do not set out with conviction. So it would be very sad, to the point of tragedy, if we were to rail against the night or spend our lives in futility, when the instruments that could be most useful are actually within our reach.

Theological Reflection

“**W**hen we deliberately incorporate wisdom from our Christian heritage into the process of uncovering *the meanings* in our life-experiences, we are doing theological reflection” (Killen, 46; emphasis added). Psychotherapist Viktor Frankl identified meaninglessness as the greatest malaise of the Western world in the twentieth century, and if anything, the situation continues to deteriorate in the twenty-first. In the so-called First World, it is palpably clear that millions of

people do not know whether life has any meaning at all, or if it has, what that meaning might be. Theological reflection—at least to people of faith, and perhaps by contagion or osmosis spreading more widely in society—can provide an excellent opportunity and a means for making sense of our lives.

But theological reflection can do more than crystallize meaning; it can help to change lives, and not only our own. This is critically important for all who are committed to their own conversion and to serving others. The assertion that “you repent, not by feeling bad but by thinking different[ly]” (Wiebe, 216), is very pointed. Theological reflection changes us precisely by causing us to see, think, and act differently in our daily lives (Killen, 68). Dianne Bergant goes further: it is “aimed at human transformation, *that of the faith community and the world*” (Bergant, 2; emphasis added). These are powerful endorsements.

Some people already do theological reflection but many more do not. Yet everyone *could*; and everyone *should*, if they are seriously committed to finding meaning in their lives by discovering discipleship and living their faith fully. But many Christians seem not to understand discipleship, nor to have an intimate relationship with God. Until they do, their faith cannot reach its potential and they themselves will remain frustrated. So what is theological reflection, and how can it contribute to people’s lives?

It may be that some people do theological reflection without naming it as such. However, what is implicit or informal can often become more intentional and effective. But other people think, or even claim, that they are doing it, though they never develop it in such a way that it contributes to their own spiritual development and conversion. True theological reflection would both turn us within (to focus us on the common treasure-trove of our Christian heritage) and without (to engage with people and situations around us or just beyond our grasp). This turning in and out is not two movements, but a single, integrated process, analogous to breathing in and breathing out; the complete process is essential to life.

Theological reflection is neither spiritual navel-gazing nor naïve and wishful thinking about utopias, but a concerted effort both to engage with processes that will change us, and actually to undertake to change the world. It “enriches and challenges us on our journeys [our adventures] in faith. It invites us to discern God’s presence [our compass bearing] and to move deeply into the world and not away from it” [following the compass bearing] (Killen, 76). More specifically, at issue here is

the artful practice of bringing our lives into conversation with our Christian heritage in a way that nurtures insights for us and for the tradition. We are called to engage our lives and our Christian heritage from a standpoint of exploration, willing to *trust that God is present in our experience* and that our religious tradition has something to give us. (Killen, 142)

When Christians vote with their feet, whether leaving the Church in droves or discovering fundamentalism, there is acute need for understanding and creative dialogue. Many people struggle to find meaning in their own Christian lives and in their engagement with others. Indeed, their restless spirit persuades them that the former actually requires the latter; they feel the need to look beyond themselves and their familiar ecclesial structure (a local parish turned in on itself and dying by degrees) and to start with the needs of the wider world, not to mention the deeper desires of disaffected Christians closer to home. My concern is with both these poles: with the wider world, in terms of needy persons, and with the deeper desires of Christians themselves. It might be expressed as *outreach* and *inreach*.

Outreach moves us toward actual people: a case in point would be particular homeless people in local shelters or subsisting on our streets; we should not merely acknowledge “the homeless” generically, but encounter them in person. *Inreach* might be exemplified in the practice of theological reflection. Together, these two processes may contribute to a rediscovery of personal meaning, assure us that we do not live in vain, and provide the essential social dimension of our Christian lives. Such a combination (and it is not the only possible one) can produce transformation and lead us back to a renewed praxis of ecclesial life, but charged now with a missionary spirit and the capacity both to challenge familiar ecclesial structures and to call local believing communities to conversion.

Becoming Versed in the Art

As with many skills, theological reflection is acquired by practice: one who claimed only to be a theoretician would lack all credibility. Yet some theory is also necessary. Theological reflection requires the cultivation of

the discipline of exploring individual and corporate experience in conversation with the wisdom of a religious heritage. The conversation is a genuine dialogue that seeks to hear from our own beliefs, actions and perspectives, as well as those of the tradition. It respects the integrity of both. Theological reflection therefore may *confirm, challenge, clarify, and expand* how we understand our own experience and how we understand the religious tradition. The outcome is *new truth and meaning for living* (Killen, viii; emphasis added)

There are evidently two prerequisites. The first is a *tradition*: a heritage of accumulated and transmitted wisdom, combining theology with practical and symbolic action. The second is a reservoir of *experience*: both exposure to human encounters and some resulting personal modification, that is, thinking and acting differently. For us, theological reflection will engage with the Judeo-Christian

tradition, the fundamental truths of faith and modes of action that are consistent with the person and teachings of Jesus Christ. And the experience with which it engages is whatever has been motivated by Christian belief and shaped us into greater conformity to Christ. So there will be a significant problem for Christians who are not conversant with the tradition, and for those who, having been brought up as cradle-Catholics and received their religion in grade school, have little or no experience of the practice of mature Christianity: the faith-life of persons living as morally responsible Christian adults. There may be no “problem” for people who pick and choose what to believe or do, but these are unlikely to be attracted to theological reflection as a discipline. But Christians who routinely experience a vague and non-localized sense of emptiness or meaninglessness, and are concerned to acknowledge and address it, may indeed have an authentic “problem” that theological reflection and intentional outreach can assuage and even cure, provided they are serious about both of these practices. There’s the rub.

Many “good Christians” have virtually no pastoral outreach or engagement. Though quite faithful in their religious observances, and always highly law-abiding citizens, they do not realize (in both senses) their baptism’s potential. They have never developed a missionary spirit, an active and intimate prayer life, or a realization that they are called to a developing relationship with God. It is highly likely that without some level of intentional theological reflection they will never reach their potential. Some, deeply rooted in their own certainties and prejudices, simply see no reason to change. Others are so self-assured that they have nothing to learn from their peers, and certainly not from their forebears.

Lines of T. S. Eliot are a helpful stimulus here, and suggest a way forward:

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

(*Little Gidding*, Part 5)

The operative word here is *exploration*. Only if we are willing to move forward into unfamiliar territory, gathering our accumulated experience and the reflection it has generated in us, are we becoming people of wisdom; only when we are pursuing wisdom will we be making authentic discoveries that produce insight that will change our lives. Many Christians fail to explore their faith or God’s faithfulness; and because of timidity or conceit they pass through life, older but no wiser, observing religious conventions but without a deepening faith, a capacity for faith sharing, or an experience of a God who calls, sends, and sustains. Exploration should mark our faith-lives. If it does, we will make discoveries that

will not only illuminate the way ahead but help us understand the significance of the way already traveled.

Explorers cannot anticipate the nature of their discoveries, whether thoughts, feelings, images, questions, or insights. But theological reflection will help us identify and interpret all of these as we review our experience, our actual encounters. This brings us back to the tradition: we may need to marry study of the Christian story with meditation on the call to discipleship. Sadly, many of us are so caught up in the humdrum that we simply cannot find the time and space for discernment, prayer, and gaining insights about God's concern for our apparently petty lives. Or perhaps we lack the imagination to find a different rhythm or take a different path that would stimulate us to pay closer attention to the local details and circumstances of our lives. Theological reflection is perfectly compatible with the routine or humdrum events of our lives, if we make time for it. But a complementary perspective, afforded by deliberately engaging in some "vocational" pursuit, is one that I would like briefly to sketch here.

Homelessness: Scandal on our Doorstep

Signs of sinfulness and selfishness are all around. They should give us pause as we proceed through life, not justifying us in pointing the finger at others, but galvanizing and challenging us to give an account of our Christian stewardship in a bruised and needy world. "Am I my brother's [sister's] keeper?" (Gen 4:9), is Cain's peevish and rhetorical question; Christians must answer with a resounding "Yes!" On the Last Day we will be reminded that whatever we did—or failed to do—for our least significant and most needy brothers and sisters, is the measure of our response to Christ. Christians' social responsibilities are not optional but central to our own lives and those of the broader community. Poor and needy people; men and women in our prisons, hospitals and nursing homes; aged and housebound individuals; homeless, overlooked, forgotten, and abandoned citizens; refugees, undocumented "aliens," and all manner of victims: these are only some of the images or faces of God that we so often ignore or fail to identify. Not only do such people continue to suffer when we overlook them; we ourselves fail to become who we are called to be, unless we explore the edges of our comfortable worlds, make encounters, gain insights, and come to a deeper grasp of the meaning and purpose of our own lives, indelibly marked by baptism and by God's call and commission.

Patricia O'Connell Killen and John de Beer (whom I have intentionally quoted often) illustrate the potential of theological reflection by recounting the story of "Elaine" who worked in a shelter for homeless people. It can shape our own reflections, too. But voluntary work, or pastoral commitment, is virtually unlimited

in shape and scope. The most important thing for would-be Christians is to look for any situation of need, and, taking their courage in both hands, actually offer to help. An element of risk is intrinsic to Christian discipleship, and is perhaps the first thing we must come to terms with. But the way of many Christians is paved only with good intentions, which accounts for our frequent failure to become the People of the Way of Jesus.

“Elaine” acknowledged that she found herself tense and burdened after being at the shelter. But people vary enormously, and it is just as likely that we ourselves could be energized and liberated by such an experience of simple service, and re-committed to the Christian endeavor. Crucially, we should first have an experience, then reflect on it and discern what it might mean and point to; this is

insight, which should lead to renewed praxis. But since experience’s fruit is partly dependent on our own presuppositions, we need to look at our prejudices or certitude, our self-assurance or independence of spirit. To repent by thinking and acting differently is a challenge for us all, but if our attitude is one of exploration or adventure, we will be much more open both to risk and transformation (Killen, 47–51). Then, our encounters will not only take us back to previous personal experience but, integrated with theological reflection, will lead to a re-examination of our religious heritage as a repository of practical wisdom. This is no superficial affair: it requires reading, learning, and prayerful integration, which many people are simply unwilling to invest in their Christian lives.

“Nothing ventured, nothing gained.” Indelible gospel images challenge us to launch out into the deep or to get out of the boat and come to

Jesus across the waves, precisely when we would far prefer to remain in the shallows or hunker down in safety. If, as Christians, we recall that Christ calls in order to send, invites people to come in order to commission them to go, we might be willing to explore the implications of discipleship. We may recall too, that old and insightful comment, that the “problem” with Christians is not the evil they do, individually or corporately, but the good they fail to do. Many of us forget that Jesus said it was not those who say ‘Lord, Lord,’ but those who do God’s will, who will enter God’s Realm. God’s will includes not simply religious observance, but a taste for God’s own justice and a commitment to God’s own poor.

There is hardly a city in the United States in which homelessness is not a serious social problem, certainly for its victims, if not for the citizenship in general.

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And if there were such a city, it would take very little imagination to identify a host of other social problems and needs that Christians are called to address: whatever we do, or do not do, to the least, the forgotten, or the invisible, we do, or fail to do to Christ himself (cf. Matt 25:45).

To approach an unfamiliar social situation where help is needed is to take a step in the direction of our own conversion. Conversion is a process coextensive with life, through which we become transformed or reformed and thus conformed to Christ. It implies change, and the kind of change effected by conversion can only happen if we are willing accomplices. If we say we want to be more Christian, we must also undertake to be changed. If we undertake to be changed, we must also allow for new experiences in our lives. One kind of new experience is a consciously undertaken commitment to needy people.

Assuming we are people of good will, we must, then, discover a “fit” between our good intentions and the legitimate needs of those we hope to serve. Often, we approach others, but only on our own terms: we know beforehand what we are prepared to do. This makes our service more of a program than a discovery procedure, allowing us to take and maintain initiatives ourselves. But authentic ministry demands something rather different: a willingness to meet the needs of others rather than to set and achieve personal goals. This brings us back to the necessity of dialogical service, which requires reflection on the extent to which our outreach reflects the Christian idea of service, or perhaps fails to do so. The overall context for all this is theological reflection.

If we hold to what our Christian faith teaches, then we do not believe in generic creation; there are no people in general, only actual, particular, individuals. Nor is it possible to identify “the poor” or “the homeless”; these are categories, abstractions. Concretely, we can only identify actual people: poor, homeless, or otherwise. We cannot claim to be concerned about, much less for, “the poor,” unless we actually know some real people who fall into that category. Jesus did not simply know about “sinners,” “tax-collectors” or “the poor”: he knew real people, personally, and often by name. To *know about*, is what H. Richard Niebuhr called “outer knowledge,” to distinguish it from to *know*, to have “inner knowledge,” or the knowledge that comes from encounter.

On Judgment Day we will not pass muster by claiming to know about any number of things or problems; we will need to demonstrate that we have actually been acquainted with the grief of grieving people or the poverty of actual

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flesh and blood poor persons, that we have touched and been touched by real lives other than our own, that we have known the inner history of God's actual poor, needy, or insignificant ones, some of whom we too know by name. Outreach to homeless people, or to actual members of any of the other social categories, is the proof that we take Christ and our faith seriously. Theological reflection based on such encounter is the warranty that our outreach is authentic, faith-based, and contributing to our own conversion.

“To Whom Shall We Go?”

Christian living cannot be reduced either to vegetative existence or to assimilation by the surrounding culture; it requires dialogue between our religious tradition and our life's experience. We always begin with the current activity of our lives, but we also remember Socrates' words: "the unexamined life is not worth living." The examined life, however, will result in change: in modification of experience so that it comes into greater conformity with the call of Christ. Commitment to social justice, a preferential option for actual poor persons, is the litmus test of a mature Christian life. A spirit of prudent risk and adventurous exploration might help us respond to our calling, to remain faithful until we rest in the One who is our eternal destination and destiny, and to use the God-given compass of our faith as we seek our true selves, each other, and God.

Theological reflection can help us log and interpret our journeys and keep us on track, whether by commitment to the homeless poor in our neighborhood or to other forgotten, victimized, or abandoned brothers and sisters. But we must reach out. We must go. We must extend the edges of our experience, in order to enrich our theological reflection, and, with God's grace, to renew the face of the earth. This time is now, the place is here, the persons are you and I. Shouldn't we be thinking differently, acting differently, and becoming more committed investors in the Realm of God?

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From Maintenance to Mission

Redefining Parish Identity Through Encounters at the Margins

Joseph Grant and Anne K. Walter

The authors suggest, from experience, how parishes can be transformed through “edge” ministry, leading to friendship with people living on the margins.

The Catholic Herald

Taking the conventional parish as our starting point, we try to identify some of its strengths and weaknesses in order to rediscover a sense of mission, which should be at the heart of our lives of faith. Many parishes and parishioners fail to be what they are called to be, but recovery and renewed vitality are possible, with imagination, clear focus and commitment. Using our experience, others’ wisdom, and some true stories, we look for renewal of structures and lives.

Imagine the following scene: two parolees return to Mass in the inner city “peace and justice” parish, to celebrate and say thanks. Mike speaks for both, addressing the friends who had celebrated their birthdays, invited them “out” to Mass (on day-release), and assisted in finding them employment: “I come here because I feel like a human being. You have given me back my dignity.” Connections, encounters and unlikely friendships are the living proclamation that a parish community has really claimed its identity, mission, and purpose. When the edges of society seep into the conventional church-going center, we are

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turned inside out, transformation takes place, and evangelization of the parish community is bearing fruit.

Where do we North American Catholics go to experience such evangelization, to divest ourselves, pour out our lives, share our resources and direct our communal energy? Theological language describes our parishes as such places of encounter, and mission statements define them as “welcoming, inclusive, sacramental communities”; but really, it is our corporate acts that reveal the true nature of our profession and uncover our operative faith.

A parish bulletin is perhaps the clearest indicator of the vibrancy of Catholic communal life. Designed to stimulate participation and increase involvement in a local community’s faith-life, the bulletin outlines the tasks, priorities and practices that regulate the shared Catholic experience. Upon participating in the taking, blessing, breaking and sharing actions of Eucharist, the discerning communicant picks up the Sunday bulletin with the insightful question: Where do we go from here; how do we live this sacrament; where do we walk in faith together?

Some bulletins offer a more accurate barometer of Catholic faith in context than the pretensions of some of our parish mission statements. The following headlines are typical of Bulletins in middle-income, mid-American Catholic Parishes: “Dynamic Speaker on Socially Responsible Investing”; “Training on New Norms for Extraordinary Eucharistic Ministers”; “Fundraiser Picnic is Huge Success”; “Inauguration of New Baptismal Font: Six Infants Baptized.” Clearly, some things are happening here. But critical things and vital people are missing. In the following pages we do not want to trivialize such expressions of Catholic life but to pursue issues of identity, purpose, and mission. Rather than criticizing common parish activities, we suggest orientations that can lead the faithful beyond the devotional, educational and charitable fare we inevitably encounter at church. We are less concerned with what Catholics do at church, and more with where and how the Church leads Catholics into engagement with the world.

A Crisis of Mistaken Identity

At the conclusion of our theology studies, we were drawn to peripheral ministry in inner city Chicago. Now we find ourselves in more mainstream, formational ministries at parish and diocesan levels. But we bring to these “traditional” ministries an edge, a focus, and an eye fixed on the margins as the locus of Catholic life and the place of transformation. As a married couple in ministry, we struggle constantly to discern our identity and place in the local and larger Catholic Church. Most often we share a common frustration and a sense of dissatisfaction with the insular, self-absorbing nature of parish and diocesan ministry. The word “parochial” has come to represent an outlook or experience that is small-minded and myopic. We believe there is a crisis at the core of Catholic life in this nation, that is neither the tragedy of sexual abuse nor the declining

numbers of priests and religious, but rather a crisis of mistaken identity. Nearly twenty years ago Mark Searle identified the dissolution of Catholic identity in America, noting that American Catholics are becoming more American than Catholic: “In their moral, political and social attitudes Catholics are becoming indistinguishable from the rest of the population” (Searle, 316).

Judging from many parish bulletins, we are not addressing the primary question astute catechumens might ask, namely, what is it we Catholics do together that defines us, marks us, and directs our lives? We seem to have misplaced our mission, misunderstood our reason for being together as a local church, and mistaken our identity and responsibilities as members of the larger human community. We have forgotten who we are and why we have been brought together. This might be due to the overwhelming pressure involved in maintenance, plant management, budget administration, self-regulation and committee coordination. The Gospels make it clear that Jesus did not establish administration committees but created a mobile, inclusive community with a clear mandate to proclaim God’s breaking-in to our world, by freely gathering together with the broken and the overlooked people: “When you have a party, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind [who] cannot pay you back” (Luke 14:13).

So who are we, and who should we be? After our own cathedral in Louisville was opulently refurbished, we went on a hunt, with our children, to locate the poor box, only to discover a painted-over tin plate embedded in a rear column, with neither sign nor indication that it was in use. If we have lost our corporate memory it may be because our Catholic parishes are, as Henri Nouwen might put it, unfamiliar with the face of human suffering and strangers to Christ who is poor. When we locate new churches in convenient suburban security, poor people do not easily find them, and churchgoers inevitably become rather comfortable. Aidan Kavanagh described contemporary parish experience of Eucharist as “a celebration of middle-class values of consumerism, participation in approved groups, and comfort in affluence—politically correct values of joining, meeting, speaking out, affirming individual distinctiveness and creating community as feeling rather than form” (Kavanagh, 102).

The saddest indication of the widespread spiritual inertia in mainstream Catholic congregations is our general disinclination and inability systematically to seek out and befriend poor, lost, lame, and crippled people. From his martyr’s pulpit in San Salvador, Archbishop Romero’s words continue to haunt and unsettle:

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“A church that does not join the poor, in order to speak out from the side of the poor against the injustices committed against them, is not the true Church of Jesus Christ. The poor are the ones who tell us what the world is and what service the Church must offer the world” (Romero, 189).

Un-wholly Communion

Undoubtedly there are communities and individuals with heroic dedication to marginal people, but these seem to be rare exceptions in our parishes and dioceses. Yet every week in our eucharistic celebrations we profess our intention to follow Jesus’ renunciation of the social patterns of having and hoarding, in favor of a radical preference for outcast and oppressed people. But, generally, our

parishes remain scandalously disconnected and dislocated from the very people we claim to welcome and befriend. Some might claim that our parishes are actually filled with spiritually hungry, overworked, and over-busy Catholics who must be served and whose needs must also be met. Robert McAfee Brown identified tension between the middle-class character of North American Christianity and the challenge of God’s preferential option for the poor, which requires some re-ordering and new priorities for North Americans. “It will mean challenging the economic system by which the Church gains its financial support and which provides the means of livelihood for most of its members, including its pastors. It will mean a radical solidarity with segments of society that have seldom if ever been within the walls of the Church” (in Mitchell, 37).

The reality gap between the concerns of conventional parishes (new textbooks, school enrollment, a new roof for the gym) and the daily struggles of refugees, shut-ins, prisoners, hungry and homeless people, is not easily bridged. This

may be due in part to social geography: suburban expansion leaves inner city communities (and some historic churches) depleted and neglected, while suburbanites find themselves in mega-parishes supporting private schools and developing programs to address the needs of overactive families and stressed out teenagers. Contact with marginal or excluded people is often choreographed around Thanksgiving or Christmas, producing the annual glut of giving but little real transformation of either party. Surely our eucharistic celebrations in

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such un-wholly conditions of alienation wreak havoc with the sacramental core of Catholic life. Albert Haase calls us, as a eucharistic people, to become the Bread of Life for others. “We are called to feed others with love, care, compassion, concern and hospitality. This is precisely what we commit ourselves to at each Eucharist. When we say our ‘Amen,’ we accept the challenge. We should think twice before we say it. It should make us shudder” (Haase, 141).

Peripheral Vision

Where is the road to recovery for those large congregations, hobbled by the endless maintenance requirements of parish facilities, school administration, staff, and committee management? Where is recovery for any parish that limits its mission to the campus, serves only its own membership, or welcomes and recognizes only those who gather on Sunday? We suggest that liberation comes from the peripheral vision gained by going out and befriending the fringe people who offer us a spiritually awakening and socially engaging perspective on our mission, identity, and purpose. McAfee Brown pursues this, suggesting that evangelization must proceed “from the periphery to the center,” from the socially marginalized to the centers of power. A century ago saw the opposite movement, when missions moved from the center to the edges. But in future the non-poor of North America must rethink their privileged status in light of the Gospel (in Mitchell, 242–43).

Our goal-oriented culture bids us ignore anything or anyone who might distract or impede us from achievement and personal fulfillment. Yet it is *precisely* by paying attention to peripheral distractions, by being led into kinship with marginal people, that individual Catholics and their communities are exposed to life readjustment and faith reorientation. Here are a few stories of marginal encounters and the ensuing relationships that have adjusted the focus, vision, and mission of members and groups in some Louisville parishes.

Our Neighbors’ Keeper

Founded for impoverished Parisians, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul might have begun to look its age after 150 years of service. But in one parish the St. Vincent de Paul Conference was reborn recently in response to innumerable calls from neighbors whose financial needs were not being met by area agencies. Within months the group grew from four interested people to a dozen, with another few dozen offering regular financial assistance. Word quickly spread that this conference had become a resource for poor neighbors. In addition to weekly home visits, members respond to visitors in need and field a telephone hotline for neighbors in crisis. Sunday liturgy might include a visit from a family served or, at announcement time, a desperate request for help. Parishioners now have a

monthly opportunity to free themselves of some of the weight of possessions by donating to help support this outreach to their parishioner-neighbors.

Visiting and responding to parishioner-neighbors who face catastrophic illness, who live with mental and physical disabilities, and who can find only part-time labor or are unemployed, have shifted the priorities of the parish as a whole. The leadership council recently called for a new outreach that matches interested parish families with an elderly neighbor or family through an “adoption ministry”: such relationships promise to enrich both families as they share the joys and struggles of life with their “new family.” Gandhi’s talisman has become the focusing reflection at parish council meetings where people are invited to “think of the poorest person you have ever met, then ask yourself how your discussion or decision will impact that person.”

This St. Vincent de Paul ministry has challenged an entire community to be its neighbors’ keeper. Peripheral vision drew parishioners into the housing project along the edges of its zip code area and out of itself, refocusing its attention from maintenance to engagement in the world beyond. Opening our stained glass windows to the realities surrounding our churches is a constant Gospel challenge. Encounters with those people whose names we learn, whose hands we shake and whose stories we absorb, will pull us beyond our carefully tended territories and personal edges into compassionate and marginal encounters that transform individual hearts, and even the entire parish community.

Adoption Transformation

Other local parishes have ventured into gospel outreach through their local Catholic Charities Refugee and Migrant Ministry by sponsoring refugee families. One group adopted a family from Somalia that included young parents and four children under the age of four. The father suffers from brittle-bone disease and is confined to a wheelchair. The six-month old baby girl has also inherited the disease and her bones continually fracture—sometimes even as her diapers are changed. Sponsoring families have helped these new arrivals become familiar with Louisville, prepare them for winter, find adequate clothes and furniture, move into housing with wheelchair access, and find a farm where they could slaughter meat for Ramadan. The sponsors, too, were richly blessed: hearing the story of Abraham from a Muslim perspective; sharing baby pictures; dealing with emergencies of health and spirit; watching and admiring how this family learned English from Sesame Street and ESL classes.

Every refugee family welcomed into this community has deeply impressed individual parishioners and through them the wider community. While most of the tasks of sponsorship are carried out by small groups of committed families, heightened awareness affects all. People help with rides, donate cooking utensils and supplies, and organize children’s trips. Stories and encounters are incorporated into prayer, shared at liturgy, and outlined in homilies and parish announce-

ments. The average parish can make a profound impact by welcoming the stranger. It can also allow itself to be deeply touched by kinship with refugees, immigrants, or migrant workers: all it needs is the desire for a new perspective and the courage to be available.

Inner-City Retreat

The seeds of change may germinate in an intentional community within the parish. One group of parishioners, meeting weekly for prayer, expressed dissatisfaction with Catholic youth ministry and its lack of social awareness. A common vision arose from this prayerful dialogue and the group proposed a new parish outreach: a justice-based retreat ministry for youth and young adults that would pass on the Catholic peace and justice heritage to the next generation.

Nearly a fourth of the membership of the parish became involved in this creative process. Their efforts transformed a dilapidated rectory into an inner-city retreat house, and the original small investment of communal funds grew to include grants from local and national foundations. In one year alone, more than thirty retreat groups of various sizes dedicated a day or a weekend to prayerful reflection in the inner city, breaking open the Gospel through encounters with marginal people and pondering the implications of Catholic Social Teaching. By listening to the stories of people living with HIV/AIDS, praying and eating with prisoners, and befriending homeless and mentally handicapped people, young people's minds and hearts were broken open.

Some parishioners visit and share their experience with retreatants; others prepare the vegetarian meals: an experiment in eating simply so that others might simply eat. Sunday petitions include the retreat center's needs, as well as prayers of blessing for the young retreatants sharing Eucharist with the parish community that weekend. Some young people have come back to visit this ministry and this parish with their families, while others have become regular participants in the monthly contemplative dialogue offered to former retreatants.

These are just a few stories that exemplify the grace-filled opportunities our parishes desperately need. Opportunities for life are available, if and when we make our communities available *beyond* the parish center and the confines of our spiritual comfort zone. At a parish gathering someone naively asked, "If Jesus came to our parish, I wonder which committee meeting or church event he would

*Opening our stained
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realities surrounding
our churches is
a constant Gospel
challenge.*

feel most comfortable attending.” The prophets and prophetic teachings of our Church confirm our experience that Christ is most reachable and identifiable among God’s privileged “anawim”—the poor ones. In the recent U.S. Bishops pastoral reflection, we read: “Our parishes and schools must continue to be clear about their identity and mission, and to be beacons of hope and centers of help for poor families and communities” (U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops [USCCB], 422).

From Custodians to Missionaries

The mission of the parish in this country is in danger of being compromised by internal custodial tasks: maintaining parish and school buildings, religious programming, liturgical preparation, sacramental distribution, high-energy after-school entertainment for young people, and so on. A similar crisis facing the nascent Christian community in Jerusalem led to the creation of diaconal ministries. From the outset it was made clear that the Christian assembly is not a retreat from the world. Nor should Christian communities wait for people to come to their door. Being Church necessarily means *being sent out* from Eucharist. We are Church when we receive Eucharist in order to *become* Eucharist. The bishops’ pastoral calls us, not simply to Sunday worship but to live the Gospel and to integrate “homilies, faith formation programs, schools, universities and seminaries” to “reflect Christ’s concern for those in need.” All are called to “affirm our church’s teaching about the obligation to serve others, to overcome structures of sin and to work for greater justice in the world.” The bishops urge everyone, at every level, to “serve and to promote justice for those who are poor” (USCCB, 423).

Marginal encounters reorient lives: they shake up parish priorities and unsettle plans and programs. Reflecting on a personal encounter with a neighbor in desperate need can lead an administration committee to reconsider its planned expenditure on a new church sidewalk. The focus of teen activities shifts when young parishioners develop unlikely (Gospel) friendships with youth of a different culture and when they deepen connections with people who are incarcerated, homeless or disabled. Religious education is no longer an intellectual exercise when our faith communities reflect on our experiences of human need and we invite poor people to become catechists. Adult formation leads to transformation when faith-sharing takes place in less comfortable surroundings and in the company of “edge” people. Sunday Eucharist becomes a potluck when every parishioner brings food for the parish food pantry or for distribution by parishioners through a local community kitchen. Family formation expands the horizon and responsibilities of parenting when it includes prayerful consideration for the local and global needs of children, and encourages the adoption and support of

needy families. Sacramental preparation invites us to be more receptive to God's grace when it is prayerfully conscious of the sorrows, joys and every day struggles of God's people in the wider world.

We become more receptive of God's inbreaking when we are weekly reminded that we *are* the Body of Christ sent out to keep company with sick, incarcerated and homebound people. Likewise, Scripture study forges bonds and trust between people of different cultures and denominations, when Catholics break open God's word with neighbor Christians. Such opportunities challenge us in every facet of parish life to open wide the doors and confidently to move away from the business of serving the needs of the "most" among us—and out into Reign of God ministries-without-boundaries.

Good Neighbors

"[Who] proved himself a neighbor to the man who fell into the brigands' hands?" "The one who took pity on him" he replied. Jesus said to him, "Go, and do the same yourself" (Luke 10:36-37). The questions that mark our faithfulness, questions concerning our identity, purpose and joint mission in the world, can never be answered within the walls, confines and context of a parish campus or in terms of parochial maintenance. If parish activities and gatherings focus primarily on meeting our own needs, our attempts to become community can degenerate into territorial conflicts, increasing the problems and exacerbating the very needs we want to address.

The answers, the liberating responses, lie *beyond* our worship houses. A parish is a living thing, a neighborhood of people, an expanding network of relationships. The voices that point us toward the exit necessarily come from the periphery, from struggling people unencumbered by our theological and liturgical preoccupations. Those who dare heed these cries will be liberated and implicated, astonished, and disturbed out of their complacency. If we are faithful to the social teachings of our Church and follow the example of the witnesses, prophets, and saints, we will recognize that liberation comes to us only through walking the gospel path together.

Liberation comes through intentional forays to the margins, to encounter and visit parishioner-neighbors who are homebound, hospitalized, mentally handicapped, hungry or incarcerated. It also comes through fidelity to covenant partnerships with parishioner-neighbors who are denied access or full membership in our Church, because of social, ethical or sexual credentials. Liberation comes through the kinship that results from adopting new migrant or refugee parishioner-neighbors, and by reaching out to welcome, include and support sister-parish relationships with impoverished church communities. And liberation comes through breaking open all these encounters, pondering the implications and sharing their challenges in prayer, at Eucharist, and at community gatherings: "The Eucharist commits us to the poor. To receive in truth the body

and blood of Christ given up for us we must recognize Christ in the poorest” (*Catechism* §1397).

Thus it is that we rediscover our mission—as buried treasure waiting in the field. Through the praxis of “edge” ministry we reclaim our identity, we reaffirm our purpose, and we know where our communities must go in order to take, bless, break open and share our eucharistic lives. By relocating our corporate lives and identity beyond the church building, we break the life-sapping cycle of maintenance. Religious formation is revitalized when it leads us out of the classroom and into dialogue with those who can broaden and deepen our faith experience. By inviting struggling and broken people into our homes and circles of dialogue, our prayer groups and bible studies are reformed and refocused.

In a vibrant parish community, every would-be member is initiated into ministry and sent out with a clear responsibility to bear witness to what God is doing in the world beyond. The Parish bulletin then becomes a herald of what God has in store for those who risk compassionate involvement in the lives of their neighbors, especially those whom society has overlooked. Can we now envision the parish bulletin that reads more like a gospel manifesto? Its headlines might be more like the following: “Teen Group Makes Retreat with Muslim Refugees”; “Young Mothers Needed to Provide Daycare Assistance for Single Parents”; “Retirees Organize After School Reading Program at Community Center”; “Young Adults to Host Delegates From Sister Parish in Haiti”; “Families Needed for St. Vincent de Paul Home Visits”; “Bible Study Group Gathers at Women’s Penitentiary”; “Joint Parish Picnic with Covenant Churches, at the Shelter for Homeless Families.”

Conclusion

In final analysis we will be judged on our practical ability to recognize and respond to Christ in disguise. In these pages we have tried to indicate some ways to do this, and to stimulate some responses. We conclude with a prayerful adaptation of a familiar text that illustrates the liberation promised us as Church when we re-direct our focus, energies and resources toward the “least” in our midst:

We encounter You, Christ-of-the-margins,
Among those who live on the fringes of our world.
And visiting with You we find that our hunger for meaning is fed,
Our thirst for purpose is satisfied.
We are welcomed and are no longer strangers.
Our dignity is restored, our pain is healed, and we are set free (CrossRoads, 1999).

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Pastoral Care of the Dying

The Art of Being Present

Elizabeth Turner Haase

The author, an experienced psychologist, argues that ministers can learn the art of pastoral care of the dying, if they are willing to face their own losses, shed fears, pray, and practice authentic presence to the other.

Some Scenarios

Not long ago, a very dear friend of mine lay in a hospital bed in Northern Virginia, dying a painful and prolonged death from colon cancer. Two hospital chaplains came to visit her during her stay. Their visits and our experiences with each of them were strikingly different.

The first chaplain was a middle-aged man who came into her room several times. Each time, this sincere man of God hesitated as he entered the room and seemed relieved to find my friend asleep. He spoke briefly but awkwardly with those of us who were visiting her and then hurried out of the room leaving a pamphlet behind. The last time I saw him he expressed disappointment that my friend was always asleep when he came. I suggested that he leave her a note, which he reluctantly agreed to do. Since he had nothing with which to write, I gave him a piece of paper and pen. When my friend awakened, she seemed glad that she did not have to suffer through the discomfort this man exuded even in his note. The pain and discomfort she was already suffering were enough. She did not have the energy to take care of this very earnest chaplain.

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The other chaplain who visited was a warm, solid, elderly woman who always seemed to have time to visit with my friend and with the family members and friends who were visiting her. Interestingly, my friend was either awake or just awakening whenever this woman walked into the room. During her visits, this chaplain did not seem to have an agenda. She appeared to have plenty of time and never seemed rushed. She showed great care, listened intently, joked occasionally and was happy to convey information to the nursing staff if needed. During her visits, my friend shared some of her suffering, her concerns, and her fears. When this chaplain left her room, my friend seemed less anxious and more comfortable.

These two scenarios may seem familiar. Obviously, the second chaplain was more available to my friend and her extended family than the first. Each of her visits was comfortable even when we were talking about very difficult issues. After her visits, calm reigned and the room felt lighter.

What went wrong for the first chaplain, a man who seemed kind and who clearly wanted to help, and returned several times? How did it happen that this woman, who needed solace and understanding as she explored deeply spiritual questions at the end of her life, and this kindly man, who wanted to provide spiritual support, failed to connect?

In reality, this deathbed scene is the norm, not the exception. There are many reasons why pastoral caregivers seem to struggle to listen, stay with, and provide spiritual sustenance to the very ill, the dying and the grieving among us. While there are some who will never be comfortable in the ministry of pastoral care, there are many who can learn to shed their fears and become truly engaged with dying persons and their community.

Pastoral care of the dying is a very important area of ministry, which is greatly needed yet often quite frightening for caregivers. It is a ministry that the general public expects pastoral caregivers to understand, to be experienced in and to cope with well. In my private practice as a psychologist, I see many people who wish they could talk to their minister or their spiritual community about issues of illness, loss, and grief. Many come to me because they feel

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they are not understood or helped in the very place and by the very people from whom they most expect help and understanding.

How is it that the religious often struggle with being with the dying and their families before and after the death? In much of the Western world, we have long ago moved much of the care of the dying out of the hands of family and community and into the hands of hospitals, medical personnel, hospices and eventually funeral homes. A hundred years ago, dying people stayed in their home, and the community, including their church, supported them and their families until death, through the wake and burial, and then in the aftermath. In our increasingly technologically driven world, we have come to a point where large numbers of people die in hospitals where the personnel are overworked, underpaid, short staffed, and overwhelmed (Meyer, 8).

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I began my work with the dying and grieving because I needed to understand these experiences in my own life. Like most young and idealistic caregivers, I was very unsure of my role, convinced that I did not know how to “do it right” even though I wanted deeply to bring comfort and care to people in this stage of their lives.

The first time I was asked to visit a dying person in a hospital, I felt awkward and like a fraud. The patient was a forty-five year old woman who was in the end stages of throat cancer. She was unable to talk but she could hear and she could see. I was so tied up in my own experiences and my own sense of inadequacy that I failed to understand that I needed to simply be present with her in those moments, to give her my unconditional regard and caring without trying to “fix her” or say the “right thing” that would somehow magically make life better. When I left her room, I knew that I had failed to bring

her even my authentic presence. I have never forgotten how out of place and out of control I felt in that situation and how inauthentic I was in those moments.

For many pastoral caregivers, just as for me, the feelings of inadequacy can be overwhelming. These feelings come from many places. We are often not comfortable with our own thoughts about death and dying and we may not have grieved our own losses in life. It is important to understand that when ministers are in the room, it is sometimes as if they are on stage. It is true that people have expectations of pastors and pastoral care providers. One of the expectations that people have is to be heard. Sometimes they hope for advice from a priest or pastoral caregiver, but that is not always true. It is not always true that they

need to be guided. Often they just need someone to accompany them in the final stages of life.

Fears

When we are faced with dying, and have never been taught how to handle it ourselves, it is no wonder that we become fearful and feel ill equipped to cope and be of help. In our fear and lack of understanding, we lose ourselves and we lose sight of the fact that a person who is dying is just that, a *person* like us who is coming to the end of life. This person, like us, lived and loved, celebrated life and made mistakes, has regrets and may still have things to accomplish or complete before death. Often, this person, like us, is afraid—afraid of being alone, afraid of pain and sickness, afraid of weakness and loss of control, and afraid of death itself.

We who are not experiencing our imminent death feel thankful and afraid at the same time. We are thankful that we do not yet have to deal with dying ourselves. At the same time, our fears are many. We know we cannot really know what it is like to die or be dying. We've never actually experienced the process ourselves. Into this place, then, we come as the pastoral caregiver who is expected to bring comfort and solace, while we ourselves may feel awkward and uncomfortable trying to help someone else to cope with the experience.

In our effort to make things better and to bring spiritual sustenance and healing, we often overlook the true plight of the dying person and extended family. As soon as a diagnosis of terminal illness occurs, dying people and those who love them may become objects of sadness, uncertainty, awkwardness and fear. They cease to be just ordinary people we like, dislike, laugh with, struggle with and with whom we share everyday experiences of daily living. Those who are terminally ill report that they feel the barriers between themselves and the rest of their world quite keenly.

A young student nurse who was dying is quoted by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, in her, *Death: The Final Stage of Growth*, as saying, in part,

“I know you feel insecure, don't know what to say, don't know what to do. But please believe me, if you care, you can't go wrong. Just admit that you care. That is really for what we search. WE may ask for whys and wherefores but we don't really expect answers. Don't run away—wait—all I want to know is that there will be someone to hold my hand when I need it. I am afraid. Death may get to be a routine for you, but it is new to me.” (26)

Families experiencing death are afraid for themselves and for those they love. The question why God would allow this to happen may be in their minds and they may put this question to those who minister to them. The pastoral caregiver

who comes into this mix can bring faith, hope, solace, and community at a time when these are in short supply. We are not called on to have all the answers; we are called to bear witness, provide presence and bring spiritual sustenance whether through prayer and exploration of spiritual questions or simply by our very presence alone.

I contrast my experience of awkwardness, the first time I was asked to visit a dying person in a hospital room, with my memories of a chaplain I knew many years ago in Indiana. When I was working as a volunteer in a hospice in Indiana, I watched one of our chaplains go about his daily rounds. With each person, he was warm and caring, and he brought to the room himself, just as he was that day, joking, quiet, occasionally a bit sad, sometimes a bit hurried, but interested and

very present. He was always available to listen, to hear the experience of the person with whom he was engaged, and he was not afraid of silence. He designed prayers for those who wanted them, and read prayers when that seemed more appropriate. If a patient was asleep when he came by, he always had a card to leave, and he wrote a personal note to say “hello” and to say he would return later.

This ability to be comfortable with oneself is essential to the pastoral caregiver. How liberating it is to realize that we do not need to know all the answers! It is crucial that we remember that we are not the only ones in the room at the time of our visit. It is not about us. It is about what we create in the moment together with the dying person or their family and with God.

Prayer and deep spiritual belief are a foundation for most pastoral caregivers. Because it is of such importance to us, we often believe that prayer is all we must bring to the dying and their families. But prayer may not always bring the comfort we wish. At times, remembering and reciting the beloved words may be comforting to us and not to the dying person and family, or vice versa. It is so important, then, for us to

listen, to ask, to be creative and to remember always to focus our attention on the needs of the person and family to whom we are ministering. Asking people if they want to pray and if so, what kind of prayer would be helpful is a way to involve them and ground ourselves. In the words of Charles Meyer, “ask, ask, ask” (Meyer, 45).

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In a lovely, very succinct little book, *A Good Death*, Meyer, a chaplain with many years of experience with the dying, talks about the role of prayer. He says:

“It is extremely important to remember that the purpose of prayer is presence not outcome. If prayer is appropriate, the appropriate prayer is for the presence of the Holy in this situation, to be present with the patient and everyone else with that patient regardless of outcome. It is the presence of the divine that is empowering, assuaging, supporting, reconciling, forgiving and loving.” (46)

Being Present

The ability to be truly present, to bear witness at a time of great anxiety, tumult, anguish and need, is essential to becoming a truly helpful pastoral caregiver. If we are able to be authentic, to be truly ourselves, to reach out to dying people and their families, to hear them as fully as we can and to stay grounded in what we know and what we do not know, we will provide them with spiritual presence.

Being truly present is not easy. Pastoral ministers often ask how this is possible on an ongoing basis or how they can be really present, as chaplains, when they see a patient once or a very few times for short periods. They also wonder again and again how to continue to offer pastoral care without becoming overwhelmed in their ministry. Their questions are not frivolous. Pastors and pastoral caregivers have a tremendous amount of work. In a hospital, they may have a list of ten or thirty people to visit in a day. Some visits will be short and others may be longer, particularly if a conversation is fruitful for the patient. At the same time, the caregiver must learn boundaries. There is a time to stay and a time to leave.

Students often tell me that they feel guilty leaving people who are dying or families in need. It is hard to learn that more time does not always equal better time. There will always be patients and families who want us to stay longer. At the same time, we can learn to say, “I have to go and (if it is true) I will be back.”

Examining Our Own Fears

One of the reasons that many pastors and pastoral caregivers feel afraid and awkward ministering to the dying is that they have little or no experience of, or knowledge about death, dying, and grief. In many pastoral programs, student ministers are not required to take a course in the pastoral care of the dying. When I spoke to a group of Methodist ministers some time ago, I learned that eight out of forty had taken a course to help them prepare for this part of their ministry, which all agreed was a large part of their parish work.

In teaching pastoral care of the dying, I have found that it is crucial that we help our students to deal with their fears. They need to examine closely their

own experiences of illness, death and grief and to begin to grieve any losses they have not completely grieved. If they are unable to do this, those losses often come to the fore when they are providing pastoral care. Then, instead of being present with the person to whom they are ministering, they become caught in their own needs. When we examine our own lives and become as clear as we can be about our own “stuff” in those moments, we become more available to others in their needs.

This is not an easy task. To look at our own “stuff” means that we must be willing to see the easy and the painful. Specifically, we need to look back on our lives and see if there are any experiences of grief or loss, of people close to us dying, of trauma or tragedy. We need to look closely at our own feelings about death. Then, we need to allow ourselves to reflect, over a period of time, to see if we have grieved and allowed ourselves to move on with our lives, or if we are carrying the heavy burden of unresolved grief with us. It is also important to look at how our personal theology has been informed by these losses. From this information, we are better able to walk with and bring solace to those to whom we minister.

As pastoral caregivers who are examining our own feelings about death and grief, it is important that we educate ourselves about the needs of the dying and their families. While we can never know another person’s experience, we can learn something about that experience, and thus avoid panic in the face of what is often normal but quite difficult. From the Wisdom of the Desert come the wise words, “A man who keeps death before his eyes will at all times overcome his cowardice” (Merton, 76).

While I cannot be certain of this, I believe that the two chaplains whose story opened this article had very different experiences in their own lives around death and grief. Whatever these experiences and whatever their knowledge, the second chaplain felt more comfortable with the issues before her, while the first felt quite awkward. While both had the wish and willingness to minister to the dying, they were not equally able to sustain themselves in the presence of difficult issues and feelings. So, remembering their stories, let us look at how we might bear witness to the dying and those around them.

Bearing Witness

What does it mean to “bear witness”? This phrase is repeated frequently in books on the care of the dying. Does it mean that we as caregivers simply visit those who are dying and those who love them without doing anything more? Or does it mean we must engage the process ourselves in some way?

I believe it means the second. To bear witness fully, we must be open to hearing the stories of those to whom we minister, to hear them in the moment, whether they are fully fleshed out and understood or not. We must understand that the story may change in some ways as the person moves towards death. And we must, through our listening and our determination to understand the

story better, be willing to stay in the process no matter how awkward and unhelpful we feel. This requires asking questions, listening patiently to the answers and learning to follow the lead of the patient so that we do not wander to places where we have not been given permission to go. Sometimes it means grappling with spiritual questions that are uncomfortable. At these times, we must somehow be aware of the needs of each patient to whom we minister.

Needs of the Dying

What are the needs of the dying patient? The dying patient needs many things. Over and over they tell us they are afraid they will be forgotten—that they will be left alone because others simply cannot deal with them. The dying often are not asking us to do anything except to be with them. To be alone facing death can be one of the most frightening experiences of our lives. Most dying people know that we do not have the answers because no one really does. But coming to those answers themselves is far easier when they feel less lonely.

During this time, the dying person and family may hurl their anger and hurt at God or they may feel that God supports them throughout. It is important to support either stance or those in between. Often pastoral caregivers become defensive about God, trying to explain that God is indeed with us and that God does not wish us to suffer without reason or reward. This is usually not what dying persons need. Most often, dying persons need to explore their own understanding of why this illness, accident or sudden movement towards death is taking place. As caregivers, we can gently but truly help them to examine their beliefs and to come to an understanding that makes sense to them. At times, we need to be able to stay with a person who never understands and is always angry. Our staying is a reminder that they are not alone. We, who come with our unconditional love, bring the caring and support that assures the dying person that God is present even in these terrible times. The hope is that, over time, the dying and those who love them can accept the well-known words, “To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die. . . .” (Eccles 3:2).

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If ministers of pastoral care are unavailable at these times of dying and death, they fail dying people, their families, and themselves. They risk sending the message that the Church does not care, that it does not have time for those who are at the end of life. People who are dying may feel that they are alone, forgotten, and no longer important. This adds to their sense of loss.

Dying people and their families experience much grief towards the end of life. This is part of the process of dying, and is quite painful. For each one, there is the acknowledgment that this life is coming to an end, and that life will soon change forever. In this process, the pastoral caregiver can be of help. Many times there is unfinished business that can be facilitated, stories that need to be heard, memories that need to be shared, and grief that needs to be witnessed. The pastoral caregiver may be able to facilitate the telling of these stories, the feeling of these emotions and the grieving that accompanies the experience.

Some people, of course, die suddenly and they or their families may need spiritual support at a time of extreme anguish. Often, there is no time to do much more than provide presence and strength, prayer or absolution. At a time of tremendous shock or horror, we should not expect to do more than lend a hand and give our unconditional love and support in whatever way seems most needed. Once again, in this way, we can provide spiritual sustenance.

Self-care

How do we sustain care when people do not die as quickly as they used to, and one or two visits are just not enough? In this increasingly technological world, people often live longer even as they are dying, and there is a greater need for a network of caregivers. One religious person cannot do it alone. There needs to be a team effort so that the pastoral caregiver does not burn out. Family, friends, pastors, and pastoral caregivers can be helped by trained volunteers. In some parishes now, there are programs to support the dying person and family. In hospices and home care programs, pastoral caregivers and chaplains are an integral part of the team.

Pastoral care of dying people and their families can be a tremendously fulfilling calling. At the same time, it can be intense and stressful work. Ministers and pastoral caregivers often burn out because they do not talk about their experiences and share their anxieties and concerns. They can be helped by a group of peers and a “confessor” to whom they can turn when they feel overburdened, uncertain or deeply affected by their experiences (Bowman, 44).

While support from outside ourselves is crucial to this ministry, pastoral caregivers must also continually enrich themselves by their ongoing “discipline of daily meditations and prayer, a practiced imagination and frequent fellowship with the Scriptures” (Imara, 53). Engaging in these forms of spiritual sustenance can help pastoral caregivers to continue to provide the care that so many expect of them.

Conclusion

As I think about the ministry of pastoral care discussed above, I remember the words of Scripture, “There is but a step between me and death” (1 Sam 20:3). It is important that each of us, as pastoral caregivers, never forgets that the mystery of dying and death cannot be fully revealed until we, too, walk this path. In the meantime, if we are willing to walk with people who are dying, and with their families, whatever their path may be and no matter how much they are able to speak in spiritual language, we can be a spiritual presence and a source of hope and comfort to them.

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Cara y Corazón (Face and Heart)

Toward a U.S. Latino Spirituality of Inculturation

Gilberto Cavazos-G., O.F.M.

The author explores the significance of Our Lady of Guadalupe for an inculturated Latino spirituality, and presents the evangelization of culture and the inculturation of spirituality as possible forces for unity and inclusivity.

Many years ago, I had a strange dream that periodically calls me to reflect on who I am as a Mexican-American Catholic. The dream begins in St. Peter's, in Rome. I am watching and at the same time I am entering into the dream as one of thousands of Latinos gathering for the unveiling and blessing of an image of *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe* (Our Lady of Guadalupe). There is an excitement in the air as we gather to have our patroness take her place in the Church. At the same time, we are anxious to see the Holy Father who will bless the image for us. As the dream develops, the pope finally enters the Basilica making his way in procession to the image. A veil is dropped, revealing a magnificent almost life like statue of *la Morenita* (the dark skinned woman). The pope says the prescribed prayer and reaches out for the holy water. As he takes the sprinkler, the statue of the blessed mother begins to hover slightly above its pedestal. Undaunted, the pope begins to sprinkle the image as it begins to fly towards the congregation of Latinos gathered there. The pope hurries after her anxiously trying to get the holy water on the image. The more he chases and sprinkles, the more the blessing lands on the people rather than the statue. Our Lady's statue grows and expands, hovering over the heads of the people. As she gets larger she begins to dissolve into thousands of particles that come to rest on and pene-

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trate the people she blessed. As the dream concludes, the pope is throwing water everywhere and *mi raza* (my people), drenched in blessing, begins to disperse into the world.

I begin with this dream because I believe that it represents a call to a spirituality of inculturation that respects and challenges my people. It is a dream that shows where my people are in the U.S. American Church and where we need to grow, if we are to be blessed and to bless. Before addressing the spirituality of inculturation, I would like to define both culture and spirituality.

Cara y Corazón (Face and Heart): *A Hispanic Look at Culture and Spirituality*

The ancient Nahuatl peoples believed that humans are born without a heart and without a face. It is the job of parents, in collaboration with the rest of the clan, to give the newborn person *cara y corazón* (face and heart). This is an important task. Even today no Mexican or Mexican-American wants to be accused of being *descarado* (faceless/shameless) or *sin corazón* (heartless/cruel). Face and heart of course are symbolic of what makes up an authentically human person. The face is our exterior manifestation. It is who we are, as the world sees us: our traits, our characteristics, and our persona. The heart, on the other hand, is not seen; it is our interior self, our motivation and animator. As with *cara y corazón*, humans are born without culture or spirituality, for neither is given to us by nature. We are, however, born into a certain family in a certain time and place, and belong to a certain people. It is this people to whom God entrusts the work of forming our *cara y corazón*, our culture and spirituality.

We all know what spirituality and culture are. We all have spirituality, just as we all have a culture. They are the air we breathe, the place in which we dwell, the tenor of our relationships and the sound of our calling out to the “other,” who is God and neighbor. Spirituality and culture are living things, they grow and develop just as they mold and shape the people who live them.

Having admitted to the awkwardness of defining spirituality and culture, I will attempt to explain my perspective on both. Besides the Franciscan and Christian formation that I have received in religious life and through study, mine is a perspective formed from the theological musings of my father and the liturgical administration of my mother. Although most of us would be hard-pressed to acknowledge such titles for our parents, in many of our households, our fathers are usually the theologians while our mothers are the priests of the family.

Cara: Culture

According to a secular dictionary, culture can be seen in elitist or inclusive terms. Some definitions given are elitist, referring to culture as those things that

make a person cultured, which is to say educated, refined and debonair, in other words sophisticated and enlightened. It would seem that culture would never be something for the masses, but rather reserved to the educated elite. On the other hand, the dictionary also gives an inclusive definition of culture in which the arts, music, literature and intellectual activity of an individual are replaced with beliefs, folksongs, legends and social behavior of a group of people. In her book *Theories of Culture*, Kathryn Tanner does an excellent job of explaining how the notion of culture has moved from a very elitist understanding to a broader and more inclusive view (3–37). Yet the use of the word culture continues to vacillate between the elitist and inclusive perspectives.

Culture comes from the Latin *cultura* (“tillage”), and *cult*, the past participle stem of *colere* (“to inhabit,” “cultivate”). Culture has everything to do with nurtur-

ance and with growth. An individual cannot be nurtured or grow in a vacuum. The individual will always be nurtured and will grow in relationship with a specific people just as a biological specimen is grown in a culture or nutrient substance with controlled conditions. Certainly I am not saying that a member of a culture has no freedom from said culture. Quite the contrary; as individuals rub shoulders with persons of other cultures they grow and change. Thus, they become agents of change in their own culture. Cultures also grow and change. Speaking from my own reality, I see that Hispanics in the United States of America are constantly in contact with Latin American cultures and other minority cultures. We live as a culture within a majority

Euro-American culture. This constant contact with other cultures or processes of acculturation is changing our own cultures. We have been Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Chileans, or Hondurans, but now from these various Latin American cultures we are developing a Hispanic/Latino culture that is different from our many cultures of origin. At the same time this developing culture is nurturing us in new ways so that we can become a new people along side the other peoples that make up the salad bowl, not melting pot, we call the United States. At the same time we, like other minority cultures, are changing the Euro-American culture that seems to be the majority culture in the United States. Just as Latinos are being anglicized, Euro-Americans are being latinocized.

Returning to the teaching of the ancient Nahautls, culture with all its traditions, customs, and behaviors is what gives a person *cara*. It is that which helps form an individual’s personality and character. For this reason culture cannot be elitist; it must be inclusive. All humans need to belong to a culture if they are to

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cultivate a *cara*. At the same time, given that culture is not an a-historical or an internally consistent whole, it needs all the individuals that make it up. Individual members interacting positively and negatively within and without the group form and shape the culture's *cara*.

Corazón: Spirituality

Spirituality, like its root word (*spiritus, pneuma, ruah*) is hard to grasp. It, like culture, is difficult to define. I once asked a group of Latino theology students to give me a definition of spirituality. Surprisingly, not one of them referred to "spirit" with either a capital "S" or a lower case "s" in their definition. What they did come up with again and again was "relationship," "serenity," and "purpose" in various manifestations of these terms.

A look at a secular dictionary reveals that, like culture, spirituality has an elitist definition and an inclusive definition. Some would consider spirituality as the domain of religion or the official institutional church. "Spirituality" and "spiritual" in this case refer to all that is in contrast to non-religious and worldly, material things. Spirituality, however, is also defined inclusively as all that concerns the spirit and/or soul.

In his book, *Beber en su propio pozo: En el itinerario espiritual de un pueblo*, Gustavo Gutierrez defines spirituality as "a walking in liberty according to the Spirit of love and of life" (49). It is straightforwardly explained as "life in the spirit." The spirit in question is the human spirit touched by and in *conjunto* ("union with" or a "musical group") with the Spirit of God. Spirituality is all about relationship, for no one can live an authentic human life without relating to the "other," with God and neighbor. It is in relationship that we are formed and that we develop who we are. In this way every human person, even outside the Church, has a spirituality. For spirituality is all about relationship, serenity and purpose. It is about those things that all human beings aspire to in order to live an authentic human life. It is about the human spirit or the *corazón* being formed as it cries out for fullness and completion.

Spirituality, then, is the *corazón* that motivates a person's actions. It is that which stirs us up and enlivens us in moments of excitement. It is that which sustains us and keeps us alive in times of trouble. Spirituality is that which helps us to relate to God and to each other, for the agent of all relationships is the

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spirit. An individual's spirit relates to that of another and in that relating both spirits are touched and changed. As Hispanics meet and share faith with Latin Americans and Euro-Americans, their spirits are growing and their *corazones* are being formed. A new Latino spirituality is being born through this process of inculturation.

The Need for Inculturation in Christian Spirituality

I have no memory of the pre-Vatican II Church, but I have often heard it said that prior to Vatican II the Church was European, specifically Roman in its culture. Since Vatican II however, the Church has become consistently more "catholic" (*Gaudium et spes* 42; 53) through a post-modern respect for culture and an evangelical process of inculturation. Inculturation has become a much talked about way of evangelization.

You will be hard pressed to find inculturation in most secular dictionaries. It is a Christian word. It is a composite of the words "enculturation" and "incarnation." Basically, it is a way in which Jesus and by extension his Church are incarnated in a certain culture. It has become a part of our way of looking at the world around us, and, as such, it is changing our spirituality. As a Latino, I view inculturation as a dialogue animated by the Holy Spirit. It is sitting down *cara a cara* (face to face), and conversing with the *corazón* (heart) of a people. This dialogue must be a mutual exchange and, as such, if spirituality is about relationship between spirits, then it is moved and altered by the exchange. As John Paul II attests in *Redemptoris missio*: "Through inculturation the Church makes the Gospel incarnate in different cultures and at the same time introduces peoples, together with their cultures, into her own community. She transmits to them her own values and, at the same time, takes the good elements that already exist in them, thus renewing them from within. Through inculturation the Church, for her part, becomes a more intelligible sign of what she is, and a more effective instrument of mission" (*RM*, 52).

I noted earlier that my dream ended with *mi raza*, the Latino people, leaving the Basilica and going back to the world. They had been drenched in God's blessing and it was only natural that they take this blessing out of the church and onto the streets. A spirituality of inculturation can do no less than this. When the eternal Word took on our flesh, it had to do so in a specific time and place. Christ entered our history through the Incarnation and like all children underwent a process of enculturation. He did not deem his equality with God something to be grasped at, rather he took on the culture of a first century Palestinian Jew and, as such, he took God's blessing out into the streets and fields of Galilee and Judea.

My work with the *Comunidades de Base* (CEB, Ecclesial Base Communities) led me to an interesting understanding of Luke's Gospel (Luke 2:41-52). Without specifically saying so, the CEB members spoke of Jesus as being inculturated by his Mother and her husband. When he was a child, he was lost in the Temple, where he conversed with the religious authorities of his day. When Mary questioned why he did this, he mentioned that he was about his "Father's business." Latino parents in the CEBs like to point out that *José y María* took Jesus back home with them. There he "grew in wisdom and age and grace," quietly taking on the cultural values of his people. When Jesus appears again in the Gospel story at the age of thirty, He is still about his "Father's business." Yet something has changed. He is no longer lost in a Temple, caught up with institutional Judaism. Quite the contrary, he has taken his blessing to the streets. The culture given him by his parents and kinsfolk has challenged his spirituality, and, throughout his ministry, his spirituality will challenge that same culture.

Explaining the Dream

Returning to my dream, I see in it a spirituality of inculturation at work in a variety of ways. First, I am a Mexican-American Latino, and, as such, it is only natural that the vehicle for God's intervention would be both Guadalupe and the institutional Church. My dream begins with a statue of Guadalupe awaiting its dedication in the Basilica of St. Peter. The Basilica is a frequent reminder of official Catholicism. It is in the Vatican, and is where the Pope has his seat. Latino Catholics have a love for and mistrust of the institutional Church that is not always understood by non-Latinos. Our culture was painfully birthed with the evangelization efforts of the Spanish Church in America. It was born of a clash of cultures and the Spanish rape of indigenous tribes. In all that pain and violence, the official Church represented by friars and priests both defended and abused the native. Throughout our history, our culture slowly developed, meeting a new Church when the United States invaded our land. Once again, the Church of the conqueror both defended and abused us depending on the religious or priest that came to us. For the most part the U.S. Catholic Church has all but ignored us for over 150 years and in many ways continues to do so. Hispanics are culturally Catholic. Thus, the Church seems to take for granted that we are Catholic and that we will always be Catholic. It is no wonder that we have ambivalent feelings toward the institutional Church.

In my dream the institutional Church has decided to take Guadalupe into itself, placing her upon a pedestal and thus taming her wild spirit. By Euro-American standards, Guadalupe is not a decent virgin. She hangs out at bars and barrios. You will see her on the dashboards of buses, cars and semi-trailers. She is painted on walls in the projects and tattooed on the arms, legs and backs of

many a *pachuco* (hoodlum). She is a wild woman. At the time of the Spanish Conquest she appeared at Tepeyac where Tonantzin, the Nahuatl mother goddess had once had her shrine. She incarnated the Gospel into an indigenous culture that was dying and into a *mestizo* (mixed blood) culture that was being born. She took the bastard children of *la chingada* (“the raped woman”) and made them the children of God. It is no wonder that as a people, *la raza* is very Marian. Throughout all of Latin America, Mary, in various manifestations, has helped the Church to inculturate the Gospel message and to bring indigenous and *mestizo* peoples into the loving arms of God the Father.

Spiritually, Guadalupe is the symbol of who we are as Latino Catholics. She is *la morenita* who has taken on our colored flesh, much like the Logos took on

Jewish culture. As a result Marian devotion is a powerful yet external manifestation of Latino spirituality. I am not talking here of the transplanted European Marian devotion centered on praying the rosary, but rather the native Marian devotion centered on relationship. Maria is our mother; she loves us and walks with us. She cries with us and she struggles at our side. She is the virgin of the *Fiat*, the woman of the *Magnificat*, the concerned guest at Cana, and the sorrowful mother at the foot of the cross. She is also the princess on Tepeyac, and the symbol on many banners of liberation.

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As my dream continued I saw the pope attempt to bless the statue of Guadalupe. The statue, like the woman it portrayed, refused to stay put. It flew off its pedestal with the pope running after it sprinkling water left and right. But *la bendición* (“the blessing”) never landed on the statue; instead it landed on us, the Latinos gathered for the celebration. The statue of Guadalupe challenged both the institutional Church and the popular Church. The institutional Church in the person of the pope was challenged to run after her, to go where she went and to extend blessing to her children. The popular Church or the faith community was challenged to look beyond the trappings of our tradition and see Guadalupe deep within us. Look at our *cara*, look into our eyes and you will see that Guadalupe is our *corazón*. We are Guadalupe and Guadalupe is us. In this way the Gospel is inculturated in our land and in our people.

The Hispanic/Latino Challenge

In 1531, Guadalupe met Juan Diego on a hilltop. She sent him to ask the Church to build a *templo* (temple) on Tepeyac: to move from the center of power to the margins. Today, Mexicans and Mexican-Americans offer Guadalupe as the

corazón of our people. We offer her as a Marian meeting place that takes the children of our struggle and empowers them as children of God. We offer her, for, as the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts teaches us, where Mary is, there too is the Spirit of God. With Guadalupe and other Latin-American *virgencitas* (Madonnas), we Latino Catholics are called to a mission *ad gentes* (to peoples) that is directed to all the peoples of the United States, to the peoples at the margins and at the center.

At the Margins

Latinos are in many ways a group of various marginalized peoples. Yet as my dream ends we are a people drenched in blessing. Ours is a blessing of inculturation. A blessing that challenges Christian spirituality to do as Jesus did in his incarnation, that is to deny itself and embrace the world rather than flee from it. It is time to come back in from the desert, to come down the mountain and inculturate the Gospel by evangelizing all cultures. Speaking as a *Tejano* (Latino Texan), I realize that *la raza* has spent a long time in the desert. For almost 125 years we lived in an ecclesial wasteland left to nurture and sustain our brand of Latino spirituality. Our *abuelitas, tias* and *curanderos* (grandmothers, aunts and native-healers) became the lay ministers that kept us Catholic and Christian. Without knowing it, we were slowly inculturating the Spanish and Mexican spiritualities of our ancestors for the reality of the United States. The Spirit blew in our midst with the coming of Vatican II and the civil rights movements of the 1960s and '70s. We began to come back from the desert, to come down the mountain. We have a slowly increasing representation in ecclesial hierarchy and religious life. We are finally producing our own theologians. These advances, however, should not blind us to the call of Guadalupe. We come to the institutional Church as Juan Diego once did to call it from the center of power. We invite it to come to the margins, to a spirituality of inculturation.

We do this primarily by evangelizing our own culture and inculturating our own spirituality. We are especially called to purge ourselves theologically, socially and politically of any divisions that keep us from uniting as Latinos, Hispanics, Mestizos or whatever we choose to call ourselves. This does not mean forgetting our national origins, this means placing the wealth of our native traditions, customs, symbols and archetypes at the service of all.

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At the center

I cannot pretend to speak for all Latinos. In my limited experience as a Latino theologian I realize that I have much to learn about the various cultures that make up the Latino reality. According to the 2000 census, we are now the largest minority group in the United States, numbering well over 35 million people (12.5 percent of the U.S. population). We come from many different cultures, yet, I believe that we share a similar *cara y corazón*, each one with its own integrity. There is a variety of ways in which we can join together to invite the center to conversion, the center being the majority culture of the United States. We need to challenge it, not as we did in the days of the brown berets, when we were angry because of years of oppression. Rather, it is essential that we heal the wounds of the past and forgive the United States for the harm it has caused our nations of origin while, at the same time, calling it to task for injustices committed. We come to the center out of the realization that the dominant Euro-American culture has little objectivity when it comes to self-analysis. It needs us and other minority cultures to question it and challenge it to grow. The center must relate to the margin. An axle will never move unless it has spokes that come and go from the margin of the wheel.

In Conclusion

Our long struggle to inculturate our spirituality has developed in us a spirituality of inculturation that we can share with the other cultures that are at the margins of the U. S. dominant culture. Evangelization of the center is done by inviting the many marginalized and central cultures around us into relationship and conversation. History teaches us that this is not easy because there is no such thing as a truly Christian culture. Yet, every culture and every people has the seeds of the Logos. We must learn to discover, nurture and care for these seeds in our Latino cultures and the other cultures around us. Our spirituality can become a road map that will help other cultures look at their stories, symbols and archetypes as a way to nourish and sustain their own spirituality in an innovative manner.

The spirituality of inculturation is closely associated with incarnational spirituality. Both attest to the goodness of creation, especially of the human creature. Both affirm the generous love of God for His people. Yet, while incarnational spirituality focuses on the people as the whole human race, the spirituality of inculturation recognizes that the human race is made up of various peoples with a countless number of ever changing cultures. It attempts to bring cultures into relationship with each other and help them evolve into cultures that are expressing what we are and what we want to become. These cultures will in turn continue to form the *cara y corazón* of each individual member so that each one, compelled by God's Spirit, will develop an ever more Christian *persona*.

My dream challenges the Latino Catholic to be at peace with the institutional Church. But it also challenges the institutional Church not to domesticate us, but to pay us heed as members of one body. Ours is a spirituality that goes deep into life and it cannot be contained in Basilicas or statues. We are Guadalupe!

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The Prison Chaplain and the Mission of the Church

Andrew Skotnicki, O.Carm.

The author explores the role of the chaplain in a correctional institution, against the background of a sociology of prison, an analysis of the current state of American corrections, and a theology of Church in the penal context.

In an ideal sense, the aim of the prison chaplain is to participate fully in the Evangelical mission of the Church: to proclaim the Gospel to every creature. Specifically, this would entail the pastoral care of the incarcerated as well as assuming the role of advocate for the implementation of justice on their behalf. A corollary of this advocacy would be the continued effort to inform, inspire, and direct the resources of the Church in pursuit of these ministerial goals.

These guidelines suggest several areas of concern that require further development. First, one must have a sense of what ministerial limits and content inform pastoral care in the penal context. Also, advocacy requires a set of objectives reflective of the contemporary correctional experience and commensurate with the social teaching of the Church. Furthermore, the goals must be accompanied at each level with practical guidelines for their implementation and fulfillment. How are pastoral and educational goals to be attained? How does one carry out the work of advocacy?

There is, however, a task even more fundamental than those already presented; one might call it an interpretive one: before chaplains can embrace, and call the Church to embrace, the mission so described, before the shape of their ministerial goals can be defined, they must first determine the effect the correctional institution in which they work has had on the very way they conceive life within the penal context. Given the nature of “total institutions,” where an external author-

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ity regulates every phase of the residents' lives, it is entirely possible, maybe even probable, that the goals that guide ministry in the correctional milieu are more a reflection of the current state of contemporary corrections than they are of the goals enunciated by the Church.

This paper attempts to address some of the ramifications of this interpretive question for those who minister to the incarcerated. It first provides a sociology of the prison and its effect on the identity of those who work there. Complementing this presentation is a brief synopsis of the current state of American corrections. Next, the paper utilizes insights from contemporary sociology and virtue ethics to offer an antidote to the subtle conscription of the allegiance of the chaplain to the designs of the contemporary prison. Finally, an organizational strategy is presented that addresses not only the current state of corrections but also presents a "theology of Church" in the penal context.

Ministry in a Total Institution

Erving Goffman (1961) speaks of the reassembled self of the inmate in a total institution such as the prison. The rituals of the "stripping of the self" and the form of "civic death" of prolonged confinement are familiar to all who have studied or, better, spent an appreciable amount of time within a correctional facility. These rituals of abasement begin with the shaming ritual of the trial and the formal sentencing to imprisonment. They precipitate the radical curtailing or severing of one's primary social relationships, the replacement of one's name with an institutional number, the humiliation of being on display, frequent searches, often public, and the orientation into a rigidly binomial world where the staff of the institution is given virtually total authority over people who have been stigmatized with guilt and inferiority.

This shedding of one's social skin is hastened by three structural practices that reinforce the reorientation of the self (Goffman, 1961, 53–55). The first is the institutional language requirement. One cannot communicate with one's peers, nor with the custodial and treatment staff, until one learns the contours of the language appropriate to the institution: the grammar of confinement and its communicative rules. Second, those within the institution learn to employ what Goffman calls "secondary adjustments," ways to work within the constraints of the system in order to minimize the sense of loss and maximize the few privileges possible while confined. Third, one becomes quickly aware of the internal code of ethics that obtains within the penal environment. These moral sanctions are enforced through formal and informal mechanisms of control. Preeminent among these disciplinary norms is the taboo against betrayal. Loyalty to one's peers is maintained through an internal principle of honor that, in virtually all instances, cannot be violated without devastating consequences.

Goffman (1961, 61–65) contends that in the face of this institutional ethos inmates have four options: they can engage in what he calls "situational withdrawal,"

retreating from all interaction with others save the inescapable requirements demanded by the custodial staff. Another possible approach is intransigence; the detainee rebels openly against attempts to shape behavior in light of institutional goals. One might recall the character played by Paul Newman in the film *Cool Hand Luke*. A third option is what might be termed “colonization” or “institutionalization.” As Goffman expresses it, “the sampling of the outside world provided by the establishment is taken by the inmate as the whole, and a stable, relatively contented existence is built up out of the maximum satisfactions procurable within the institution” (1961, 62). In other words, one masters the secondary adjustments available within the penal context and lives as comfortably as the extreme conditions will allow. The character “Red,” played by Morgan Freeman in *The Shawshank Redemption*, comes to mind. Finally, inmates can undergo a conversion, not the religious type, but a total acceptance of the correctional philosophy of the “keepers” and their view of the “kept”; in other words, the oppressed assume the values and worldview of those who oppress them.

There has been a growing interest among criminologists in the effect of the prison experience on chaplains (Sundt and Cullen, 1998a, Sundt and Cullen, 1998b). Chaplains represent an intriguing area of study for observers of organizational behavior because their motivation, presumably, in accepting the challenge of ministry to the confined is directed by a set of goals not defined by the departments of corrections but by religious belief and commitment. Their task is to minister to the inmates, to win their confidence in order to create the conditions for conversion and a continued commitment to the way of life appropriate for the converted. At the same time, they work under the auspices of the correctional institution and must adhere to its rules and daily regimen, the primary one being the maintenance of security.

Much has been made of the role of conflict inherent in this seemingly contradictory set of requirements (Hepburn and Albonetti, 1980, Kelliher, 1972). What I want to explore is the degree to which the exposure of chaplains to the culture of the jail or prison makes them susceptible to a refashioning of the self in some degree similar to that experienced by the inmate. Also, like the inmate, the chaplain would then find the most appropriate response (withdrawal, intransigence, colonization, or conversion) to daily life and labor within the total institution.

Ministry, of course, can be practiced in a number of ways in the penal environment. However, for the full-time chaplain, the need to create an institutional identity is very strong. This requirement exists if for no other reason than the need to navigate successfully the various strata of bureaucracy. The chaplain must establish and maintain a ministry in the face of institutional needs and the various personalities who oversee operations within the facility.

In the course of these activities, however mundane and innocent they may appear, there is a dynamic interchange between actions and self-understanding. One moves about the compound instinctually, writes memos and discusses

policy with administrators without critical awareness, naturally follows protocol. All of this “normal” interaction changes imperceptibly the way chaplains perceive themselves and what they do (Berger and Luckman, 1966, 72–73).

To the degree that chaplains are present in a full time commitment to a particular facility, and to the degree that repeated action helps forge an awareness of the self in that role, chaplains will learn to express themselves in terms of the institutional discourse unless careful attempts are made to resist. One of the most innocent and yet effective ways of intuiting this language occurs because chaplains must translate their thoughts and feelings, their interpretation of daily occurrences, into a vocabulary recognizable by the institutional staff. To some degree, all translations distort the experience being conveyed, particularly if it is an experience that requires religious metaphors and a particular tradition’s theological ethic to be conveyed authentically (Berger and Luckman, 1966, 26). Some examples would be changing the religious tone of a request to please the personality of the guard, or using “jailhouse” slang to describe an event.

Language both reflects and creates reality, and the day-to-day interchange between chaplains and staff has a way of binding the conversation partners into a well-defined world of meaning. The more conversation takes place, the more the institutional reality and its basic assumptions are reinforced. This also is true of written communications: the endless memoranda, notices, and morale-building signs to which chaplains are exposed on a daily basis.

It was noted that the incarcerated offender seeks to utilize the secondary adjustments available within the institution in order to minimize the constraints of a harsh environment. Chaplains often make similar adjustments. They learn to circumvent the bureaucracy in order to better accomplish their ministerial goals. Many chaplains learn which officers and staff members are cooperative, how to skirt formal regulations in order to maintain the consistency and integrity of programs and religious services. Part of this practical orientation is learned through mastering the institutional language, part is due to the role that the chaplain maintains within the penal environment. That role has clearly defined privileges and responsibilities and places the chaplains, often despite their stated intentions, within the web of interlocking functions that continually reinforce institutional identity (Berger and Luckman, 1966, 77).

While it is possible, as I will discuss, to avoid coming under the ideological spell of the prevailing institutional philosophy, it is by no means easily accom-

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plished. Statements like the following, made by a prison chaplain at Riker's Island in New York City, seem too casual in elevating the chaplain's role above the "bloody" compromises that mark life in virtually all correctional facilities: "I have not been hired here to make the place run, with responsibilities for surveillance, administration, or even control. In this place full of rules, constraints, answers that often come too quickly, I have the good fortune to be a priest" (Raphael, 1990, 23–24). The author does not give proper cognisance to the fact that he is not a generic priest but a priest in *that* institution, and maintains his role there through a web of activities that are highly symbolic and that require some level of compromise with the prison and its activities of surveillance, administration, and control.

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a priest."*

If the communicative network, secondary adjustments, and complementary roles of the penal environment serve to reorient the self, it is largely due to the internal code of ethics that is maintained and reinforced through the institution's language and social structure. Whatever else one might say about the moral tone of the prison, it is founded upon the tension created by detaining people recognized as dangerous, and doing so against their will.

Evidence reveals that chaplains cannot easily escape the moral influence of an institution of confinement. A recent national survey of prison chaplains found that "the vast majority of chaplains (more than 90 percent) reported that helping inmates to adjust to prison and preparing them for a successful return to society were important or very important goals of their work" (Sundt, Dammer, and Cullen, 13). Another study remarked that the value of aiding in prison ad-

justment "may be considered a custodial task" inasmuch as it suggests "that chaplains may help to manage inmates" (Sundt and Cullen, 1998a, 288).

In helping the inmate to adapt to confinement, chaplains to some degree reproduce the fundamental divide between inmates and supervisory personnel. It is this uneasy separation and the undercurrent of coercion pulsing through it that give rise to the moral taboo governing betrayal of the institution by identifying too strongly with the incarcerated. While there are clearly degrees of resistance on the part of chaplains to becoming agents of law enforcement, the barrier between staff and inmate is still a formidable one to cross for chaplains who are linked by communicative bonds and inter-connected role performance with their fellow employees.

A corollary moral position is enunciated by Goffman (1961, 84) in his remark that those who administer the prison automatically cast a wary and judgmental eye on all who are brought there for confinement, that “entrance is *prima facie* evidence that one must be the kind of person the institution was set up to handle.” In such a moral atmosphere, where a large and threatening population must be controlled and the aims of the institution defended, the practical task for the staff is often to “find a crime that will fit the punishment” (Ibid., 85).

Recent guidelines from the Federal Bureau of Prisons reveal the extent to which the mission of the Church is subordinated to institutional priorities, not only of security, but of a particular approach to religion that seeks to avoid giving offense to any religious body. The bureau concludes that the pastor within the institution must balance the role of prophet with the role of “manager of cultural diversity.” The guidelines with regard to worship spaces reveal that they be “neutral in design” so that “any religious group would feel comfortable and not be affronted by the symbols of other faith groups” (Beckford and Gilliat, 1998, 176, 184). Such an outlook, in which the revelation so foundational to a faith tradition is subordinated to goals such as diversity that are seen as morally more appropriate, can lead to a diminished appreciation for the value of the particularity of a religious calling and, perhaps, of the message that is preached. One recent study lends credence to this insight in reporting that “chaplains, whatever their faith, are less likely to see themselves as members of a majority or minority community in prison. . . . They are there as staff chaplains, not as ‘imams’ or ‘rabbis’ or ‘priests’” (Ibid., 199).

The reorientation of the self that occurs in a total institution such as the prison must be taken into account as we seek to analyze the mission of the chaplain. One article on chaplains concluded that their role is complex and calls on them to balance “the biblical call to minister to inmates with the need to function in an island of social control” (Sundt and Cullen, 1998a, 293). It is precisely this inherent compromise with security needs that must be addressed lest the call to engage in the mission of the Church become confused with the distorted and contradictory logic that currently governs the American correctional experience.

Contemporary Correctional Ideology

Not only are chaplains highly susceptible to the internal codes that regulate institutional thought and behavior, they are equally subject to the temptation to interpret their religious message employing those same moral convictions. The philosophy governing criminal justice in America is deeply troubling not only in its effects, particularly on the poor and on members of racial minorities, but in the contradictory assumptions that underlie it. Gone are the days when rehabilitation was the governing logic of the penal system. Although every institution is different and features its own internal sociology, the contemporary emphases on

retribution, incapacitation, and management of risk routinely supersede rehabilitative concerns (Garland, 2001, 8).

These emphases are by no means adjusted harmoniously but exist in a contradictory tension. The values of incapacitation and exaggerated penal exile are largely the result of a populist revolt against the criminological experts. There has been a growing movement on the part of political leaders to listen to the wisdom of the public, the common sense morality of law-abiding citizens, and their angry backlash against criminal predators featuring an unprecedented concern with the victim (Ibid., 9). In this view, the criminal and victim exist in a “zero sum” relationship; one cannot be favored without denigrating the other. It has contributed to skyrocketing prison budgets, harsh penalties, and an expansive increase in the penal population.

On the other hand, there has been a revolution in the courts and in the importation of an actuarial methodology into penal circles that increasingly seeks low cost, community-based forms of segregation and control formulated according to the determinants of risk (Feeley and Simon, 1992). What these two emphases, punitive harm and risk management, share in common is a reliance on social control and, as the statistics reveal, a particular penchant to measure risk and dangerousness in racial and economic terms. As the U.S. Catholic Bishops (2000, 9–10) remarked in their millennial statement on penal reform, current American crime control amounts to little more than a war on the poor.

Given the prevailing correctional philosophy, and allowing for the subtle ways that the moral universe of the prison shapes the consciousness of the chaplain, it is legitimate to suspect that ministerial activities, educational programs, and the political horizon of the chaplain can be adversely affected. One piece of evidence to suggest as much comes from a national survey in which chaplains, who have historically been among the strongest proponents of rehabilitation, showed themselves far more supportive of incapacitation as the primary justification for imprisonment (Sundt and Cullen, 1998b, 22–23).

Resisting the Total Institution

In an enclosed world like the prison, penal employees and chaplains, no less than the inmates, exhibit patterns of behavior, habitual sets of responses, that can be likened to one of the four models of response described by Goffman (1961): situational withdrawal, intransigence, colonization, and conversion. Each response represents the tension between the external social world and the “institutional world” (Ibid., 65). An example of conversion, where chaplains come to perceive and value themselves as they are viewed from the perspective of the prevailing institutional philosophy, is revealed in the words of this minister: “Worship services and religious studies . . . reduce the number of inmates who

must be supervised by housing area staff because inmates are being supervised by the chaplains.” He then added, “When custody staff and chaplains work together as members of an inmate management team . . . correctional facilities will be safer, more secure, and more orderly” (Cook, 1994, 63, 64).

An opposing example from the possible range of responses is found in these words of a former penal administrator: “The prison chaplain, perhaps unwittingly at first, becomes an organ of control and oppression . . . serving the state, frequently in opposition to Christian precepts. . . . Thus the mantle of Christianity masks and protects the prison from criticism—at the expense, more often than not, of the very people the chaplain is ostensibly engaged to serve” (Murton, 1979, 11).

What Goffman has uncovered in his research echoes themes commonly addressed in theological ethics, particularly among those who emphasize an ethic of virtue or character. As one well known Christian ethicist has expressed it: “The language the agent uses to describe his behavior, to himself and to others, is not uniquely his; it is ours” (Hauerwas, 1979, 21). No one speaks a private language and so one’s moral perspective cannot be extracted from one’s primary conversation partners, those whose moral horizon most resembles one’s own. This underscores the difficulty of the work of prison chaplains. Their own ministerial efficiency is usually dependent on the need to work effectively and cooperatively with those who, as it were, hold the keys to the institution. Yet the subtle and consistent exposure to the regimen and communicative network of the institution leads to a “colonization” or “conversion” where the dominant goals of penal harm and risk management can invade and reconfigure their moral horizon.

One can derive similar insights from a sociological perspective. Peter Berger (1969, 45–47) argues that meaning and motivation are intimately related to the ability to create and sustain a moral universe that is consistent and that can conceptualize all that occurs within its own linguistic and moral framework. If chaplains cannot sustain the integrity of the religious message in the face of competing explanations, in this case, reality as presented within the penal system, then the truth of their preaching has been severely compromised. In effect, despite what is said in chapel, God is not the ultimate source of value and authority, the department of corrections is.

Some evidence of this colonization of religious language by an alternative language is revealed in a study of the counseling techniques of prison chaplains in

*[C]urrent American
crime control
amounts to little
more than a war on
the poor.*

New York State. The authors of the study report: “we found that none of the respondent’s descriptions of typical counseling sessions with inmates could be classified as exclusively religious in content . . . we found that 16 chaplains . . . described typical counseling sessions that did not include any mention of religious or spiritual issues and activities” (Sundt, Dammer, and Cullen, 16).

If, therefore, a chaplain is to resist the refashioning of the self, and the rewriting of the “good news” in the words of the total institution, then a conscious and deliberate effort of “intransigence” or “selective withdrawal” must be made. It appears that this protection of, or reconstituting of, a religious explanation of reality offers the only alternative, short of withdrawing from daily ministry, to the colonizing effects of the penal environment. Perhaps the geographical metaphor of an island best conveys what the chaplain must seek to establish. Goffman (1961, 69) writes that every total institution is “a dead sea in which little islands of vivid, encapturing activity appear.” In effect, that island must be the Church, for only within the *ecclesia* can the Christian life be made plausible and conversion to the gospel be effectively maintained.

Several criminologists (Cullen, Sundt, and Wozniac, 2000) have taken note of the importance of this idea for the chaplaincy. They have called for the creation of what they term the “virtuous prison”; it is analogous to the metaphor of the island used by Goffman. It illumines a restorative vision of justice, where inmates face their victims, make restitution, and engage in habitual activities that seek to inculcate virtue. Most importantly for this study, the authors insist that it is contingent on forming a “social consensus about shared values.” Not only do they lend credence to the basic insights of virtue ethics, they provide some direction and alternative to the dilemma faced daily by chaplains who seek religious conversion as their end rather than “inmate management.”

Strategies for Mission

The goal of full participation in pastoral care, education, and advocacy must be seen in light of the vision presented in the last section. It is essential that the chaplain seek to create a symbolically coherent space in which the vision of the gospel can be maintained as an explanation more compelling than that provided in the institutional language of harm, incapacitation, and control of the poor.

In such an “island,” ministry and preaching can have a more penetrating effect because what is being communicated in the religious text is reinforced by the symbols and daily language of those in the community. Having established an *ecclesia*, chaplains and those to whom they minister can engage in the work of translation of all that occurs within the institution into the common language that the adherents share. All explanations then “point back” to the “paramount reality” of God as interpreted within the community’s story (Berger and Luckman, 1966, 21, 26).

Ministry in this context would embrace the staff and correctional officers in a much more compelling way than the formation of instrumental relationships for the purpose of facilitating ministerial goals, or worse, engaging in daily institutional conversation without recognizing its impact on one's own moral perspective. The task of the chaplain would be to seek the conversion of the officers and treatment personnel who interact regularly with the chapel and its functions in order that there might be fuller coherence between the language of faith and the experience within the carceral environment. As the authors of the study on the virtuous prison contend, correctional officers are "integral" to the mission of creating a virtuous community (Cullen, Sundt, and Wozniac, 2000, 25).

The mission of the chaplain also requires that he or she have ready access to the resources of the Church to support the work of ministry, education, and advocacy. As compelling and necessary as the *ecclesia* within the prison may be, it must forge links to the wider body of believers and the collective influence that they can exert to sustain programs of ministry and renewal.

The ability of chaplains to fully participate in the mission of the Church cannot be realized until the idea of service to the prisoner is placed within a different interpretive framework. Such a perspective would need to include an appreciation for the transformative power of the total institution of the prison, the particular way that language carries moral meaning and forms social identity, the specific contours of the contemporary vision of the architects of the penal system, and, most importantly, the need to engage in "selective withdrawal" from the penal ethos in order to foster a virtuous environment where an explanation of reality and the meaning of the universe, based on the Gospel, is consistently spoken and actively constructed.

Chaplains must not only make a conscious decision as to whether they are primarily servants of the administration or the prisoners; they must ask themselves which God they are serving and in which language God is speaking.

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Why Ordination Matters

A Reflection from Jamaica

Lisa Fullam

The author considers the long-term effects of celebrating Sunday worship without a priest in a rural community in Jamaica. The impact of separating pastoral ministry from sacramental celebration is poignantly voiced, along with some of the ramifications of the present policy on ordination to the priesthood.

“The grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you.”

“And also with you.”

Another Sunday morning in rural Jamaica, with a congregation that has now gone more than a year without a full-time priest. I am here for the summer, helping around the parish. Today we will sing praise to God who brings us together; we will be fed by the word of God; and we will share the body and blood of the Lord. But since I am a woman, and therefore not ordained, we cannot celebrate Mass here today. In this Communion service I will give the people what I can: assurance that God is on their side and that Christ is present in our assembly and in our proclamation, and, then, the leftovers of Eucharistic bread broken in another celebration.

Some people see the issue of the ordination of women and married men as primarily a first-world issue. They may express the question of ordination as a declaration of the equal human dignity of women and men, or as a matter of the right to equal consideration of all who are called to minister in the Church. Those arguments matter, but they miss the questions at stake for my congregation this morning. How do services like this affect the relationship of ministry to the sacramental life of the Church? What does it mean to be a people who gather for

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the Eucharist when Communion services, rather than Mass, become the norm? What becomes of evangelical effort when the Church is not allowed to provide priests for its people? Not extending ordination to include women and married men sends a message of unconcern for the pastoral needs of third-world Catholics, and the needs of marginalized people in the first world. The question of ordination of women and married men, if we see it from the viewpoint of the third world, becomes a question about what it means to live and pray as Catholics.

***Ministers, but not Priests;
Ministry, but not Sacraments***

“**T**he gospel of the Lord.”

“Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.”

In this church community, we have plenty of ministers; what we are short of is priests. A sister of St. Joseph is our parish administrator, and skillfully manages the day-to-day operations of our six churches. Another sister helps with programming and religious education, in addition to maintaining the four schools connected to our parish. A gifted lay associate runs prayer groups and leads services regularly. We have a priest who is available for one or two Masses on two Sundays a month for all six churches, and provides other sacraments as he is able. Two deacons are assigned here as well, and we are blessed with a number of lay people who serve the community generously. Several parishioners bring Communion to the sick, others teach children the faith, and others run a weekly meal program for the indigent. The ministries of parishioners are fostered here, and the people respond with great generosity of heart.

The real lack here is not ministry, but the sacraments, especially Eucharist and reconciliation. In predominantly non-Catholic cultures such as Jamaica, the effect is to marginalize the Mass and penance in the faith lives of the people. When ministers cannot celebrate the sacraments, pastoral care is divorced from sacramental practice. The person who counsels you cannot absolve you. The person who prepares you to marry cannot preside at the wedding. The person who cares for you as you lie dying cannot anoint you, and the person who comforts your family at your death cannot preside at your funeral Mass. Sacraments are powerful integrating symbols of grace, true encounters with the Lord. A “supply” priest or deacon can provide the sacraments that mark important transitions in people’s lives, but my congregants go hungry for the “sacraments of sustenance,” the more regular avenues of grace by which Catholics are fed and helped to stay on the right path. After all, once people are baptized into the faith, they have to be nourished in it, just as infants need not only to be brought into the world, but also lovingly raised in it. The Catholic sacramental imagination is

nourished preeminently in the regular practice of these repeatable sacraments, and it is these that become rare when priests are in short supply.

Not being allowed to have Mass together constrains our response to the day's gospel. Jesus speaks of the nature of the kingdom of God being like yeast almost lost in the huge measure of flour, like wheat struggling among thorns, or like a mustard seed in all its insignificance becoming a great tree. In Jamaica I can see the depth of meaning of this gospel: in a land torn by poverty and violence, people are living lives of great faith. They answer the call to transform the world from within with courageous devotion that humbles me. When the people respond with "Praise the Lord!" to this or that phrase in my homily, my heart is full of gratitude for their witness, their challenge to me to see the treasure hidden in the field, to discern the pearl of great price. These are sacramental images; the kingdom is communicated in images that are concrete, specific, and ordinary, like bread and wine.

In response to this gospel, what we should share together is the whole transformative dance of the Mass, the whole prayer by which the capacity of the ordinary elements to bear Christ is revealed to the people through their presence, just as, analogously, the people bear Christ to the community beyond the Church gathered here and speak the presence of Christ to my spirit by their lives. Today I lead the community in prayer and I preach, but we cannot complete the natural sequence of Word and Eucharist. We share communion, truly the body of Christ, but we lose the sense of the presence of the kingdom of God incipient in *this* community, because Eucharist comes to us from some other community gathered previously. This service remains an echo of another celebration; my ministry is hamstrung in its incompleteness.

The liturgical norms of the Church affirm the central role of the Mass: "The celebration of Mass . . . is for the universal and the local Church as well as for each person the center of the whole Christian life" (GIRM I, 1). Services other than this are clearly second-order services: "Sacramental communion received during Mass is the more perfect participation in the eucharistic celebration. The eucharistic sign is expressed more clearly when the faithful receive the body of the Lord from the same sacrifice after the communion of the priest" (Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, 13). John Paul II echoed this in his apostolic exhortation *Dies Domini*, saying that parish communities are encouraged to gather on Sunday "even without a priest, . . . Yet the objective must always remain the celebration of the Sacrifice of the Mass, the one way in which the Passover of

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sacramental practice.*

the Lord becomes truly present, the only full realization of the Eucharistic assembly. . . ." (no. 53). We agree, but we are cut off from this sacramental center. When I set up the altar before Mass, I lay a stole across one side of the altar to symbolize the connection of this celebration to the priesthood of the Church. The unworn stole is a reminder that we worship in unity with the Church. It also announces that we have been left priestless by decisions of the Church leadership; the unworn stole speaks of both our unity and our abandonment.

A second effect of divorcing pastoral ministry from celebrating the sacraments is more subtle. In a worldwide church, universality is sustained by ensuring some minimal common theological training for clergy. The Council of Trent realized the need for an educated clergy to provide some degree of doctrinal

unity. Why is this important? Most basically, doctrine is the formal expression of a people's encounter with the risen Lord. The task of theology is to reflect, codify, and unify the wisdom of the people of God who have experienced salvation in Jesus Christ. Catholic theology at its best is a beautiful reflection of a particular vision of God, a truth we believe can be communicated to all people by reason of our creation by the same loving God. As Catholics, we emphasize grace while acknowledging sin; we pray with bread and wine perfected by grace into a real encounter with Christ; we affirm reason as well as revelation and tradition; we believe that God's mercy is never ending; we commit ourselves to working in the world to help bring about its transformation; and we look to the day when we all will joyfully celebrate being brought out of darkness into the marvelous light of the kingdom of God.

*When the
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and the educated
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authorization,
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message of Catholic
worship is blurred.*

The purpose of theological training for clergy is to help them transmit with integrity this Church's vision of salvation in Christ. The minister of the Gospel is not a teacher of dry formulations about God, but, in our tradition, more like the servant who invested his master's money into the business of the world and rejoiced with him over a tenfold return on the original treasure. Theological training for clergy helps to hold us together as a worldwide communion, constituted by a shared vision of God who is alive and active in the world.

But the Church at present makes no distinction between me, with my doctorate in theology, and a new convert just learning the tradition. We are equally non-ordained. The Church has no mechanism by which to distinguish ministerial or

theological competency except by ordination. The effect is that, in priest-deprived regions, anyone can minister. This leads to doctrinal drift and a degree of moral and theological confusion even within parishes, sown by ministers without appropriate training. When the under-educated and the educated speak with equal authorization, the distinctive message of Catholic worship is blurred. The Pentecostal and Seventh Day Adventist churches that flourish here in Jamaica preach a rigid personal morality devoid of any social dimension beyond the need for personal acts of charity; the “Jesus-only” churches among them vociferously deny the Trinity. The Seventh Day churches try to scare our people with the notion that if we do not worship on Saturday, we will be damned. I speak with the authority of a well-trained Catholic, but everybody knows that my Church does not officially sanction my ministry. The diaconate is helpful in this regard: deacons are recognized as having a degree of authority. But they also are not priests, and Catholics here don’t see deacons as speaking for the Church in the way that priests do. In this theological maelstrom, the Catholic Church will not authorize its ministers to speak in its name. By withholding full authorization of its ministers, the Church damages its own ability to speak its message clearly. The result is a doctrinal muddle that fails to provide our people with a cogent vision of Catholic Christianity, and stills the voice of Catholics to Christians of other traditions. Denying priestly ordination to women and married men impairs the evangelical efficacy of the Church in non-Catholic or secular cultures.

In sum, the pastoral effect of the Church’s restrictive ordination policy in the Jamaican context is devastating. Ministry is divorced from sacramental signs, the people are cut off from regular sacramental worship, an ill-prepared ministerial class is fostered, and the evangelical mission of the Church to Catholics and the broader culture is weakened.

Is This a Mass or a Communion Service?

“Lift up your hearts.”

“We lift them up to the Lord.”

“Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.”

“It is right to give God thanks and praise.”

For the second half of the service, I use a Communion service text that is not particularly well-written, but maintains the sung responses of the Mass: the Holy, Holy, Holy, the consecration acclamation (now renamed a thanksgiving,) and the doxology with its great Amen. I am of two minds about this practice. It is true that a text that parallels the Mass risks blurring the distinction between the two forms of celebration. The rubrics take great care not to confuse the two

kinds of liturgy: “Nothing that is proper to the Mass, particularly the presentation of the gifts and the Eucharistic Prayer, is to be inserted into the celebration” (*Directory for Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest*, 35). This morning I have already greeted the congregation with words reminiscent of Paul’s letters, but in a form which is typically spoken only by priests. I began with this greeting merely to effect what the words plainly convey, a formal wish that we might enter into worship under the guidance of God’s grace. I also sit in the presider’s chair, which is forbidden on grounds that I might be confused with a priest, sex and garb notwithstanding. This kind of distinction might make some sense where the presider sits enthroned during the liturgy, but hardly here, where the presider’s chair is a white plastic lawn chair stuck off to one side of the altar. I sit in the

presider’s chair because otherwise I would have to share a chair with a choir member or sit in the congregation. The presider’s chair is the least conspicuous place for me to sit.

*Sharing
pre-consecrated
hosts risks a static
understanding
of Eucharist.*

Communion services should not resemble the Mass too closely because of the essential difference in theological meaning between the two types of liturgy. A Communion service necessarily dodges the starkly beautiful present-tense of the words of institution, spoken directly to the gathered people in the name of Christ: “This is my body . . . This is the cup of my blood . . . given for you and for all. . . .” The Mass makes clear what sharing pre-consecrated elements cannot: that the action of Christ in the Last Supper is not an

event limited to the past, or to some other group of people, but is an expression of an on-going encounter with Christ who comes to be with us here and now as we pray. We, however, lose not only the sense of this particular community being called into the presence of Christ, but the knowledge that Christ comes to us in this moment. Sharing pre-consecrated hosts risks a static understanding of Eucharist, and the sacramental sign can be diminished into a mere memorial. We also risk a magical understanding of Eucharist, in which some mysterious change in the elements has taken place out of our sight. In the Mass, the host is raised in the sight of the people as the words of institution are spoken. The change that is effected is not hidden away, but displayed directly before us, calling us to witness to the transparency of nature to grace. A Communion service, because it does not include the words of institution, downplays the startling immediacy of transubstantiation.

The risk of confusing this kind of service with the Mass is real, but too sharp a distinction between this service and a Mass has its own difficulties. Mass is the

norm for Catholic Sunday worship; one obvious effect of offering services that are structured very differently from the Mass is that the people are reminded again that they cannot celebrate Mass. Attendance declines for these “secondary” services, and the prayer life of the community suffers as a result. Second, maintaining parallelism with the Mass helps with catechesis. Mass is celebrated in each of our churches only monthly at best. If the congregational responses are not similar to the other Sundays, catechumens and children have a difficult time learning the pattern of the Mass. Third, a “standard” Communion service goes almost directly from the prayers of the faithful to the Lord’s Prayer before Communion. In the heavily Pentecostal culture where I am now, Communion is a distinctively Catholic practice; using the standard Communion service serves to de-emphasize the Eucharist, and exacerbates the marginalization of sacraments in the life of the community. A prayer shaped more closely like a Eucharistic Prayer allows us to recollect ourselves before receiving, so that Communion will not seem like a liturgical afterthought. Again, the problem rests with ordination policy. If the ministers in this community were ordained, there would be no debates about the structure of the service. We would simply celebrate the Mass with the whole Church, the whole communion of saints across space and time.

Now Is the Acceptable Time

Some say that the priest shortage should not be the impetus for a change in ordination policy; rather, the Church should ordain women and married men, or continue not to, because it is theologically right to do so. This opens the door for endless wrangling about the tradition of priesthood: why the Twelve were all male, whether women can image Christ as perfectly as men (and, if not, whether women can be redeemed by a savior ontologically unlike them). But theological questions are not all of equal significance, and these questions are not the heart of the matter. To allow these arguments to continue to delay any reform of ordination policy betrays a first-world perspective, where people may go church-shopping for better preaching or livelier music, and where Mass is easy to come by.

In Jamaica, as in thousands of other places, the problem is more basic, closer to the Church’s very meaning: the people are denied access to the sacraments. The situation is urgent, and is likely to worsen if current demographic trends continue. In light of this crisis in Catholic sacramental life, church leaders should hear first the foundational commands of the Lord to the Church: “Do this in memory of me” and “Feed my sheep.” As John Paul II wrote: “Because the faithful are obliged to attend Mass unless there is a grave impediment, pastors have the corresponding duty to offer to everyone the real possibility of fulfilling the precept” (49). The dignity of Catholic Christians demands that the Church recognize

the priestly gifts of women and married men so that the faithful may worship the Lord in the way most fitting to people baptized and confirmed in this tradition, instead of restricting them to second-order celebrations.

In the first world the same message of second-class status is often communicated to prisoners, the sick, and the elderly in nursing homes, when ministers offer Communion services because no priest is available to celebrate Mass. The message to these people is clear: the leadership of the Church will not ordain people who could minister to them, and so they are kept from fully celebrating the sacraments. The already-marginalized are thus further cut off from the life of the Church.

In Jamaica this affects our policy regarding burial practices as well. A staunch church member may be buried with a funeral Mass, which requires coordination

with our already-overburdened priest. Other members may be buried by the deacons or lay staff. The Church's refusal to ordain those who could minister to its people results in varying degrees of hurt feelings on the part of the families of the dead. And it is certainly a missed evangelical opportunity to share the solemn beauty of the Mass with the wider community. Burying the dead is a corporal work of mercy, a gesture of Christian hospitality to the grieving survivors, and the very last situation in which the Church should show preferential treatment to some members over others.

So, while some people attempt to cast ordination questions as the fussing of first-world liberals, in fact the issue of ordination of women and married men is far more a concern in the third world and among the marginalized in the first world. They are being denied full participation in the Church, in life, and even in the rituals surrounding death.

It is incorrect to confuse this situation with a decline in vocations to sacramental priesthood. When numbers of priests began to decline, the faithful prayed for priestly vocations, and God, always gracious, responded with loving abundance. Divinity schools and seminaries are full of Catholics willing to devote their lives to the service of God's faithful. They are male and female, some called to celibacy, others not. Many of my classmates from divinity school are now full-time ministers in parishes, college campuses, high schools, and missions. Their ministries are inspired and inspiring, as they face the double challenge of ministering to Catholics without being able to provide the sacraments,

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in an institutional Church that refuses to recognize their ministry fully. The shortage of sacramental ministers does not reflect God's stinginess in calling people to that life, nor any reluctance on the part of those called to respond. The ministers are here, we are capable and willing, and we wait for our pastors, the bishops, to send us forth.

“Did Not Our Hearts Burn Within Us?”

“**T**he body of Christ.”
“Amen.”

As I distribute communion in Jamaica, I experience perhaps what the Twelve experienced in their time with Jesus in Galilee. My parishioners come forward and meet the Lord in the sacrament we share, and in the depths of their eyes I see the faith that is the past and future of the Church. I am blessed to stand on this holy ground. I also feel like the disciples traveling to Emmaus who remarked to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us?” I deeply regret the present situation. And still we gather. We are not yet a post-eucharistic Church. After Communion, fortified by this meeting with the risen Christ who is with us always, we cross ourselves and go out to the world in peace, to love and serve the Lord and one another. Thanks be to God.

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NTR

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Robert Schreiter, C.P.P.S.

Would Ending Celibacy Make a Difference in the Number of Priests?

With the publication of petitions by diocesan clergy last year, calling for a reconsideration of obligatory celibacy as a requirement for the diocesan clergy, a number of bishops stated that lifting the requirement of celibacy would not make a difference in the number of priests in the Catholic Church. They point to a number of Protestant denominations who, in spite of having married men and also women in the clergy, still suffer a shortfall in the ministry. How much of a difference would ending obligatory celibacy make? Is there anything we can learn from the experience of Protestant clergy in the United States?

In the denominations that require theological training prior to ordination, it is indeed true that some of the mainline denominations are experiencing shortages. It has not been the case with the Episcopal Church, largely because their liturgical tradition attracts former Roman Catholics as well as others to the ranks of the clergy. But for many of the others, it is indeed the case. There are three factors that seem to contribute to this.

First, denominations with many small rural congregations have the situation that

the congregation cannot support a full-time minister. To have to cobble together several congregations, or hold additional employment in order to care for a family, has led to fewer ordination candidates interested in this kind of ministry. Rural congregations in denominations such as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America usually provide the first call to a pastor, i.e., the first site of employment after graduating from the seminary. As the rural population in the Midwest, the heartland of Lutheranism, continues to dwindle, fewer congregations can afford a full-time pastor. Consequently, candidates are not attracted to them.

Second, salaries for full-time ministers can fall short of family needs. This is exacerbated in the first years of ministry by the debt load that many seminary graduates carry from their master of divinity degrees. At one time, denominations provided generous support for seminary students. Since the late 1970s, that support has largely disappeared. The salary one gets as a parish minister in many denominations does not match the level of education the minister has achieved and had to pay for. This problem is heightened further by

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the fact that sometimes the pay of ministers was partially in kind. Thus, for many years, the United Methodist Church provided a manse for the pastor and his or her family to live in. While this seems to be good at first glance, it carries a problem. By not owning their own home, ministers lose equity against which they can borrow in order, say, to send their children to college. Given the demands that middle class living lays on couples and their families today, this situation becomes a real problem. The Orthodox priests face the same problems. They often have small congregations, and many of the Orthodox churches do not have a tradition of giving, since the state took care of the Church in the old country. Many Orthodox priests have to hold down a second job to support their families.

The third issue is status. Serving as Christian clergy in the United States does not give one the status it once did. A number of factors seem to be at play in this. One obvious factor that has driven down status has been scandal: the scandals around televangelists in the 1980s and early 1990s, and the sexual abuse scandal among Roman Catholic clergy. How much secularization is a factor in the declining status of clergy remains hard to gauge. Church attendance has fallen somewhat in recent years, although it is still far higher than in other secularized countries, including Canada, our neighbor to the north. Most of the mainline Protestant denominations have been posting declining numbers each year for the past two decades, with little periods of leveling off or rising from time to time. The nondenominational megachurches continue to grow in size. The Roman Catholic Church does as well, although immigration seems to be the major cause of this.

Another, more neuralgic factor appears to be influencing lower numbers of clergy in mainline Protestant denominations. Over

the past forty years, nearly all of them have admitted women into their ministry. Indeed, in their seminaries, women have for some years constituted half or more than half of all seminary students. The fact that the number of male students has therefore drastically declined, and the total number of clergy has declined, even given the dramatic increase in the number of women being ordained, only underscores that things are changing.

That women are entering the ministry in these numbers may also explain the decline in status in another way. Other professions in American life, such as elementary school teaching, librarianship, and (at an earlier date) nursing were, in the nineteenth century, primarily male occupations. Sociologists have theorized that, as a profession becomes filled with more and more women, the number of men entering the profession declines. The profession becomes, following the old saw, women's work. This may be a factor also in the lower status that ministry now has. It illustrates how patriarchy is hard to eradicate in American society.

So where does this leave the Roman Catholic discussion about ministry? First, the average size of Catholic parishes is considerably greater than that of Protestant congregations. And Catholics tend to be more urban and suburban dwellers than rural, as is the case with a number of the larger Protestant denominations. Thus, having a parish large enough to support a resident pastor should generally not be a problem.

But the salary issue, now felt in many Protestant settings, is likely to be even greater among Catholics. Catholics can look to an historical lesson in their own tradition. Thirty years ago, it became apparent that the Catholic school system would have to change dramatically when it lost its teaching corps of low-paid women

religious. Even today, when adjustments have been made, Catholic school teachers still make considerably less than their colleagues in public schools. Many young Catholics begin with great idealism to teach in Catholic schools, but discover at some point that they cannot support their families, and have to seek employment in better-paying positions. Were the obligatory celibacy rule to be lifted, a parallel pattern might develop in parishes. Priests would not be able to support themselves and their families on the salaries given, or would decide to seek non-parochial employment as their families reached college age. Catholics do not support their church financially at anywhere near the same per capita level as do their Protestant counterparts. Funding would have to become a major part of any discussion moving toward a different configuration of the clergy.

What about the status question? According to statistics from CARA, the research agency based at Georgetown University, women make up 63 percent of all lay ministers in the Catholic Church today. If a feminization of the ministry role is setting in for Catholics, would this have a negative effect on the numbers—men and women—that could be recruited to the ministry?

The question is not easily answered. The same statistics show that 72 percent of the candidates in lay ministry formation programs are forty years of age or older. This would seem to replicate the picture in Protestant circles, where the largest numbers of women continue to come from middle age or second-career cohorts. The advantage of having older people in ministry is the wealth of experience they bring. But certain ministries, such as youth ministry, might be harder to sustain.

No one can predict the future. What should be clear is that lifting obligatory celibacy for priests will not of itself solve the problem of a shortage of parish priests in the United States. For that to happen, significant other things will have to happen as well. It will require thinking how funding of these positions will take place. And it will have to grapple with the unsavory problem of preventing the feminization of professions that has happened elsewhere, if the Church wants to keep a significant cohort of men in the ministry. That more women would be attracted would be a great advantage. But if the number of men who enter the ministry drops dramatically, we may simply reverse the gender problems we have now.

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KEEPING CURRENT

MORAL THEOLOGY

Kevin O'Neil

Prolonging Life or Prolonging Death? The Use of Medically Assisted Nutrition and Hydration

The history of bioethics often recounts the sufferings of individuals and their families and how their particular medico-moral dilemma pushed the medical and bioethical community to deeper reflection. The story of medically assisted nutrition and hydration in the United States will be marked in bioethics by names like Nancy Beth Cruzan (1980s), Hugh Finn (1990s), Terry Schiavo (2000s) and others who were all diagnosed as persons in a persistent vegetative state. Some trauma deprived their brains of oxygen and left them with no upper brain function and unable to swallow.

Debates about the nature of the persistent vegetative state, among other things, revolve around the nature of the condition itself and the possibility of recovery, the determination of death, and the moral obligation to offer nutrition and hydration, especially when surgery is required to provide them.

If some studies report that there are documented cases of people recovering at

least partially from a persistent vegetative state, others assert that no such case has ever truly been verified. While some associate death with the absence of upper brain function, others argue that the functioning of the lower brain is sufficient to declare a person alive and to warrant the best of medical care. Some people argue that the use of nutrition and hydration is always morally obligatory because it is ordinary care of a patient. Others consider nutrition and hydration a medical treatment that should be used according to the same criteria that govern other medical interventions.

In this brief column I cannot respond to all of these issues but intend to offer the current teaching of the Church on the final point raised here, that is, the nature of nutrition and hydration and the moral obligation to use it. In doing so I will note the values that the Church is attempting to uphold in its teaching and the reasons why it argues as it does. Of course, nutrition and hydration are recommended in instances other than the persistent vegetative state.

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I will point out how particular circumstances may warrant different judgments as to the moral obligation to use nutrition and hydration.

Two principal documents serve as reference points for this topic. The first comes from Pope John Paul II, an address to participants at an international congress in Rome on “Life-Sustaining Treatments and the Vegetative State: Scientific Advances and Ethical Dilemmas,” on March 20, 2004. A second document, “Nutrition and Hydration: Moral and Pastoral Reflections” was drafted by the Pro-life Activities Committee of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in a 1992. The Pope’s address is the most authoritative statement on this matter. While offering guidance for making critical judgments about continuing or withdrawing nutrition and hydration, neither his speech nor other texts of Catholic Church doctrine offer a definitive moral teaching on this matter.

What is the nature of nutrition and hydration? Pope John Paul asserts in his address that nutrition and hydration are “natural means” of providing food and water, that their use should be considered “ordinary and proportionate,” and consequently “morally obligatory.” It is interesting to note that the criteria that the Pope uses to judge whether ordinary care is necessary are those used to judge whether medical treatment is morally necessary, that is, whether its use is proportionate to the good to be gained. The Pope makes the judgment, it seems, that being alive even in a persistent vegetative state is to be preferred to death. Why would the Pope make such an unequivocal statement regarding the use of nutrition and hydration for patients in a persistent vegetative state?

Pope John Paul has three major concerns: the dignity of the person, his or her health, and the value of human life itself. He fears that often judgments about the

quality of life of persons in a persistent vegetative state lead to a devaluing of them as persons, a disrespect for their dignity, even that people suffering from this condition (although lack of awareness of self raises a question of one’s capacity to suffer) might be viewed as disposable. He cautions that the very language that we use, “persistent vegetative state,” might suggest that a person’s dignity is lessened, implying that this patient is now a “vegetable” or an “animal.”

Aware that the persistent vegetative state is not fully understood in the scientific community, he urges full ordinary and medical care in case a patient could return to health. Concerns for the health of the patient warrant patience and care.

Regarding human life, the Pope’s position is coherent with what might be called the Church’s consistent concern to protect human life from conception to natural death. In cases where some people question the existence of human life, for example, the status of a fertilized egg or a person with partial brain death, Church teaching takes the “safer” and “stricter” stance so that human life is protected.

Yet, are there times, even for a person in a persistent vegetative state, when withholding or withdrawing nutrition and hydration would be morally acceptable? The Pope suggests that this decision would be justified if nutrition and hydration no longer served their twofold purpose: providing nutrition and alleviating suffering.

Regarding persistent vegetative state patients, it seems clear that the Pope has taken this unequivocal stance out of a desire to protect the dignity of the patient and out of a fear that a more nuanced approach on this issue could contribute to attitudes that cheapen human life and undermine the good of the person.

What of the use of nutrition and hydration in cases apart from the persistent

vegetative state? Employing criteria for judgments about the use of medical treatment, as the Pope does, we can note the following position of the 1992 text from the Pro-Life Committee of the United States bishops. It argues for a presumption in favor of the use of medically assisted nutrition and hydration for patients who need it. Yet, one is not morally obliged to use or continue to use medically assisted nutrition and hydration in all cases.

Why speak of a presumption in favor of nutrition and hydration? Once again, as stewards of the good of creation, we are responsible for the life and health of ourselves and others. However, as valuable as human life is for us, the Catholic Tradition does not present it as an absolute good. We are disciples of Jesus who offered his life that we might have life; we venerate martyrs who suffered death rather than renounce their faith. So, life is a fundamental but not an absolute good in our tradition.

When might it be morally acceptable to withhold or remove medical treatment, particularly nutrition and hydration? The teaching states that medical treatment may be withheld or withdrawn, nutrition and hydration included, when it no longer offers a reasonable hope of benefit for the patient. “Out of respect for the dignity of the human person, we are obliged to preserve our own lives, and help others preserve theirs, by the use of means that have a reasonable hope of sustaining life without imposing unreasonable burdens on those we seek to help, that is, on the patient and his or her family and community” (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2278; “Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services,” #57).

The document encourages a benefit/burden analysis as a way toward making a judgment of conscience. We are to weigh the benefits that medical treatment promises against the burdens that it presents. In

the past we spoke of ordinary and extraordinary means. Current documents address proportionate and disproportionate means. “Proportionate means are those that in the judgment of the patient offer a reasonable hope of benefit and do not entail an excessive burden or impose excessive expense on the family or the community” (“Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services,” #56; cf. “Declaration on Euthanasia,” section IV). Disproportionate means, by contrast, “do not offer a reasonable hope of benefit or entail an excessive burden, or impose excessive expense on the family or the community” (“Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services,” # 57). This analysis takes place bearing in mind not only the good of the patient but also the good of those with whom the patient is in relationship. Notice the final words of the above quotation: excessive expense on the family or the community. A fourth value, then is to be included: the relationships of the patient.

There is no question that nutrition and hydration, food and water, are basic human needs and, in most circumstances, would be seen as ordinary care of a patient. However, there are situations where the use of nutrition and hydration might well offer no reasonable hope for a patient and indeed pose a burden; in fact there are instances where nutrition and hydration cannot be absorbed by the patient and prolong the dying process. Thus, one must proceed on a case by case basis with a presumption in favor of nutrition and hydration as a starting point.

A key question regarding withholding or withdrawing nutrition and hydration is, “What am I trying to do by this action?” If our response is that we are withholding or withdrawing nutrition and hydration in order to kill a patient, then our action is morally wrong. The Pope argues in his address that removing nutrition and hydra-

tion from a person in a persistent vegetative state is the equivalent of euthanasia by omission. If, however, our intention is to withdraw nutrition and hydration because continuing its use poses no benefit to the patient and imposes a burden on the patient as well as his or her family, we may proceed. The Pro-Life Activities Committee statement puts it this way: "We reject any omission of nutrition and hydration intended to cause a patient's death. We hold for a presumption in favor of providing medically assisted nutrition and hydration to patients who need it, which presumption would yield in cases where such procedures have no medically reasonable hope of sustaining life or pose excessive risks or burdens." The reader will note quite readily that the judgment of the morality of this particular action, then, rests principally on the intention of the person making the judgment.

In the final analysis, decisions regarding withholding and/or withdrawing medical treatment, nutrition and hydration in particular, must take into account at least four values which may appear to conflict with one another in caring for a loved one at the end of life: the value of human life itself, the dignity of the person, the health of the patient, and good of the patient as a person in relationship; more specifically respect for the various relationships and obligations between the patient, his or her family, and the wider community.

One may err by treating these goods independently of one another: choosing to preserve life at all costs, no matter the burden to patient or family; more particularly, seeking physical health at the expense of spiritual and psychic health. As mentioned earlier, in some cases medically assisted nutrition and hydration unnecessarily prolongs the dying process, burdening the patient and his or her family; finally, one must be cautious about making a judg-

ment to withhold or withdraw treatment because a family or community does not wish to be burdened with the care of a loved one. A responsible exercise of freedom will hold these goods in tension and move toward a responsible judgment that respects all these goods while recognizing human limitations.

Life and death decisions are never easy. Many of us would prefer to have someone make the decision for us in order to relieve us of the responsibility for such a weighty decision for a loved one. Similarly, many think it would be easier if the Church's teaching left no doubt as to how to proceed in an issue as complex both medically and morally as withholding or withdrawing nutrition and hydration. The Pro-Life Activities Committee recognizes this complexity when it remarks on the content of its own statement:

These principles do not provide clear and final answers to all moral questions that arise as individuals make difficult decisions. Catholic moral theologians may differ on how best to apply moral principles to some questions not explicitly resolved by the Church's teaching authority. Likewise, we understand that those who must make serious health care decisions for themselves or for others face a complexity of issues, circumstances, thoughts, and emotions in each unique case. . . .

We realize that such guidance is not final, because there are many unresolved medical and ethical questions related to these issues, and the continuing development of medical technology will necessitate ongoing reflection.

Pastoral ministers may help people in the process of the formation of conscience by

assisting them in obtaining clear information about the medical situation of their loved one and bringing a thorough familiarity with the teaching of the Church to any

pastoral encounter. In this way we may be a valuable resource to family members as they make crucial emotional decisions about the life and care of their loved one.

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WORD AND WORSHIP

Kevin W. Irwin

Liturgical Spirituality Is an Ecclesial Spirituality

The thesis of this article is that liturgy should be seen as integral to and integrating of the spiritual lives of all Christians, but in particular for pastoral ministers—ordained, religious, and lay. All liturgy is pastoral in that it is always celebrated with and for the church as part of its pastoral mission and life, and all liturgy should reflect ongoing pastoral care and the sustaining of relationships between parish leaders with the parishioners they serve.

Recently Ordained Priests

Two recent publications about the ordained priesthood help to frame this assessment of the impact which the reformed liturgy has had and can have on ministerial spirituality. The first is Dean Hoge's study of newly ordained priests, entitled *The First Five Years of the Priesthood* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2002). When listing sources of satisfaction among those polled, Hoge writes that "clearly the greatest satisfactions for priests come from what might be called the 'big three': administering the sacraments, presiding over the liturgy, and preaching the Word" (22). In addition to being sources of satisfaction for those ordained fewer than five years, he continues, "past research has

found the same" for priests ordained longer. This finding can be read as a confirmation of the Liturgy Constitution's oft cited assertion (no. 10) that "the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the fountain from which all her power flows."

However, a caution is placed over this apparent rosy picture when the recently ordained are asked about sources of polarization in their seminary training. Two causes for polarization are liturgy and the nature of the priesthood. "Seminary faculty report a growing polarization of students along ideological lines. The main battlefields are the nature of the priesthood, liturgy, devotions, and adherence to orthodoxy" (3–4). And after ordination "the main problems reported by happy priests—those who were certain that they will remain in the priesthood—are too much work and too much polarization among the priests over ecclesiology and ministry" (39). Interestingly, it was the recently ordained diocesan priests (as distinguished from the religious) who were the most insistent "that ordination confers on the priest a new status that makes him essentially different from the laity, that a

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priest should see himself as a ‘man set apart’ by God, and that it is essential to emphasize the distinction between priests and laity. . . .” (27).

Such language raises difficulties with some of those who are ordained longer. Specifically, those ordained in the 1960s and 1970s react to an emphasis on the “essential difference” between the lay and ordained members of the Church. My own assessment is that what is called “cultic” language and a language about priesthood as men “set apart” need not be so polarizing, given what the Council said about ordination and the role of the baptized in the celebration of the liturgy, especially the Eucharist. With regard to ordination, the Constitution on the Church states: “Though they differ from one another in essence and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are nonetheless interrelated. Each of them in its own special way is a participation in the one priesthood of Christ” (no. 10). This teaching has been reasserted regularly since the Council and is a hallmark of the theology of ordination articulated by Pope John Paul II.

In addition, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy clearly asserts that “Christ’s faithful . . . should not be there [at the liturgy] as strangers or silent spectators . . . they should give thanks to God . . . by offering the Immaculate Victim, not only through the hands of the priest, but also with him, [and] they should learn to offer themselves too” (no. 48). The fact that the revised General Instruction on the Roman Missal refers specifically to the “baptismal priesthood” and the role of the baptized as active participants in the liturgy, along with the ordained bishop or priest, reflects both this essential distinction and at the same time calls for each to participate in enacting the liturgy. That all share in Christ’s unique

high priesthood and that this high priesthood is what makes the liturgy what it is would seem to be the real point at issue theologically and pastorally.

That the priest acts *in persona Christi Capitis*—that is, in the person of Christ the Head [of the Church]—is clearly noted in our theological and, especially, our contemporary magisterial tradition. That it has received particular emphasis in recent papal teaching is also clear. That it presumes the priest to act *in persona ecclesiae*—that is, in the person of the Church—is clearly illustrated in almost all of the words the priest speaks at liturgy. In fact all liturgical prayer is both christological (“we ask this through Christ our Lord”) and ecclesiological (“we ask . . . we pray . . . we come to you Father . . .”). When the christological and the ecclesiological are put in relationship with one another, then a less polarizing understanding of liturgy and the nature of the priesthood can emerge. If, in fact, American priests of all ages attest to the importance of presiding and preaching, then, could not an appreciation of what these tasks involve in terms of both Christology and ecclesiology, among other things, offer a way to bridge the perceived gap between the recently ordained and all others?

Diocesan Priestly Spirituality

The second recent publication that helps put the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy into perspective today is *Quickening the Fire in Our Midst* by George Aschenbrenner, S.J. (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2002). Subtitled “the challenge of diocesan priestly spirituality,” this book reflects decades of work that the author has engaged in with diocesan bishops, priests, deacons, and seminarians. Clearly, Aschenbrenner wants to urge diocesan priests toward deepening their personal interior lives. Tried and true practices are recast for the diocesan priest

(e.g., the particular examen, 166–97) with a keen awareness of their apostolic ministry in and for the church. Throughout, his stated aim is clear: “to root the many aspects of diocesan priesthood in a spirituality that does not create a clerical superiority but does reveal the beauty and distinctiveness of the diocesan priesthood in relation to all other types of Christian identity and service in the church” (xix). Aschenbrenner is very clear about the need for priests to develop an interior life and that any kind of functionalism in diocesan ministry can lead to living the fallacy that “work is my prayer.” He is very realistic in assessing the many demands made on diocesan priests and is utterly sympathetic to the pressures they face daily in their ministry.

Aschenbrenner devotes chapter 5 to “the priest as leader of prayer.” In it he describes the role that the celebration of the sacraments and the praying of the Liturgy of the Hours has in the priest’s spiritual life. He readily admits that the hours, when prayed on one’s own, is a very different experience than when prayed in common, e.g., when the diocesan priest is in formation in a seminary, or when prayed as a mainstay of the liturgical prayer of monks, mendicants, etc. He describes the responsibility that the priest has to pray for and “in the name of the church,” especially through the hours. This reflects the traditional admonition given to priests trained before Vatican II, that their recitation of the (then) breviary was an act of intercessory prayer for the whole Church and that the priest had a particular responsibility for it.

At the same time, one needs to recall the “sea change” ushered in with the Liturgy Constitution’s assertion (nos. 26–27) that “liturgical services are not private functions, but are celebrations of the Church, which is the ‘sacrament of unity,’ namely,

a holy people united and organized under their bishops.” “It is to be stressed that whenever rites, according to their specific nature, make provision for communal celebration involving the presence and active participation of the faithful, this way of celebrating them is to be preferred, as far as possible, to a celebration that is individual and quasi-private.” Certainly this vision has not been implemented in any universal way for the Liturgy of the Hours, despite the fact that the General Instruction on the Liturgy of the Hours (nos. 7, 9, 20, 21, 23) presumes its communal celebration, even daily, in parish churches. Not a few parish ministers experience a “disconnect” between their personal praying of the hours and communal celebrations, with the latter preferred as an expression of the church at prayer. Intercession on behalf of the Church through the hours is always a characteristic of this liturgical prayer. When the hours are celebrated in common, this is more clearly expressed and experienced. (It is something of a paradox that the hours, which was envisioned to be the daily staple of liturgical prayer for the whole Church, in addition to the Eucharist, in effect has become the liturgical prayer used on special occasions, e.g., Vesper services weekly in Advent, Lent, etc.)

The (Whole) Church At Prayer

The key liturgical and theological point here is that all acts of liturgy are the privileged prayer of the whole church and that, when pastoral ministers preside and preach in these contexts, there is a harmony experienced and expressed about prayer, work, and spirituality. Has the fundamental shift in understanding liturgy and liturgical prayer as inspired by the Liturgy Constitution, that is, from praying for the Church to praying with the Church, been accomplished? There are important theo-

logical, ministerial, and spiritual themes that derive from this post Vatican II shift in how one appreciates the liturgy.

Both liturgy and preaching (sources of priests' satisfaction) presume that the priest is committed to and works with the parish community. These "cultic" functions presume relatedness to a number of people and what the liturgy does is to articulate and shape those relationships. Aschenbrenner is particularly helpful when he addresses the importance of prayer, in addition to the liturgy, to deepen the priest's personal relationship to God. Indeed any "summit and source" needs a firm base. That part of this base is ongoing personal prayer is clear. But, in addition, I would argue that another part of the base which liturgy presumes is a set of relationships that the liturgy articulates. These include relatedness to God, the diocesan bishop, other priests, other church ministers, and the parishioners one serves. This is the context in which the liturgy is celebrated.

There is a real difference when the liturgical rites revised after Vatican II speak about what a "priest" does and what the responsibilities of the "pastor/parish priest" are. This latter term is commonly cited and is the preferred way of looking at what liturgy and sacraments do in terms of building up the Church. For example, the General Instruction on Christian Initiation asserts that "it is the duty of pastors to assist the bishop in the instruction and baptism of adults entrusted to their care. . . ." (no. 13). The rite of infant baptism speaks of the role of the "parish priest (pastor)" in helping to prepare parents for the baptism of their child (no. 8). The rite of marriage states that "as far as possible the pastor himself or the one he delegates to assist at the marriage should celebrate the Mass . . ." (no. 72). The rite for the anointing of the sick speaks of the duty of "priests, particularly parish priests

(pastors) . . ." (no. 35) when caring for their sick parishioners. The General Instruction on the Roman Missal states that "pastors . . . should take into account the many and diverse circumstances of those who are present at a liturgical celebration. . . ." (no. 385).

Each of these documents also speaks about other "offices and ministries" in the church, which adds another dimension to the presumed pastoral relationships which the liturgy articulates and celebrates. Among the things that one can derive from these assertions is that the liturgy is about enacting the saving mysteries of Christ with and among the people. And that this "summit and source" of priestly satisfaction has a great deal to do with his pastoral ministry outside the liturgy. Another of the bases for appreciating the liturgy as the "summit and source" of the Church's activity is found in the day in, day out pastoral encounters which themselves are part and parcel of parish life. They are certainly part and parcel of what the liturgy as the saving act of Christ is all about.

Liturgy in Context

Some of these daily encounters concern education and formation in the faith. One need only reflect on the phenomenon of the Rite for the Christian Initiation of Adults with its stages of evangelization, catechumenate, immediate preparation for sacramental initiation, and mystagogy as providing the proper ecclesial and pastoral context for the celebration of the rites of initiation themselves. When parish staffs, including the pastor, and those engaged in the process of instructing and working with candidates in the catechumenate celebrate sacramental initiation at the Easter vigil, they are keenly aware of the sets of relationships reflected in and by that celebration of the liturgy. Similarly, when parish staffs, the pastors, and other ministers

regularly visit the sick and dying and then come to the celebration of the funerals of those to whom they ministered in life, they cannot help but experience the presumed sense of relationship that the funeral liturgy presupposes. Ongoing pastoral care is part of the presumed base on which the liturgy as “summit and source” is founded.

It seems to me that a true, pastoral spirituality revolves around liturgy and ecclesiology. These are intrinsically connected. Liturgy as the Church’s prayer is truly expressed in its fullness when it is celebrated by the whole church at liturgical prayer. In this connection, ecclesiology is the theological category for our pastoral thesis, that liturgy articulates and deepens sets of relationships: to God, to the bishop, to the ordained, to those who

collaborate in ministry, to one’s parishioners, and to the whole church throughout the world. Given this way of appreciating the role of liturgy in the spiritual life, the emphasis that some recently ordained place on specific role definition need not mean exalted status and apart-ness. In fact, if understood in the traditional way described here, it may well be a true key to the identity of the parish priest/pastor in that presiding and preaching always involve pastoral relationships. If relationships and relatedness to others are at the heart of the priestly life, then presiding and preaching deserve to be among the highest sources of “satisfaction” for the priest, simply because they derive from and support the life of the Church for whose service the priest is ordained.

NTR

BOOK REVIEWS

**Justice, Jesus, and the Jews:
A Proposal for Jewish-Christian
Relations.** By Michael L. Cook, S.J.
Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2003.
Pages, xii + 127. Paper, \$14.95.

*Reviewed by Anthony J. Tambasco
Georgetown University*

This study makes a helpful contribution to the growing literature on Jewish-Christian dialogue by focusing on the historical Jesus as the bridge between Jews and Christians, especially by his renewing fidelity to Israel's covenant through the exercise of justice. Cook does not address rabbinic Judaism and Gentile Christianity as they took shape after the "parting of the ways," but dwells rather on the earlier Jewish Jesus of history who both carries forward the traditions of Israel and lays the foundations for any future Christian theology.

The book has three chapters, the first on methodological issues in Jewish-Christian dialogue, the second on the origins and the promise of Israel's covenant and the response of fidelity and justice, the third on Jesus' preaching and effecting of the justice of the reign of God as covenant renewal and the reconstitution and restoration of Israel. This is essentially a biblical study. Cook, who is a systematic theologian at Gonzaga University, is very well read in the field and draws on recent biblical scholarship to present his thesis. Two traits in the work highlight his competence: ample footnotes that are often summaries of other studies or syntheses of present

issues or debates, and generous quotations from biblical scholars to make many of the points in the book.

The first chapter makes important qualifications to show that the New Testament need not be judged anti-Semitic and need not be read as superseding Judaism. The chapter is especially helpful in highlighting two points among other suggested conditions for dialogue. One is that concentration on the historical Jesus is not inconsequential to Christology, but reflects very Jewish concerns, and may avoid the pitfalls of dialogue from the developed and more polarized theologies of rabbinic Judaism and orthodox Christianity. The second is that both parties must be conscious of that "other" in the dialogue who is poor and oppressed from the underside of history. Finally, this chapter is a strong reminder that Christian historical-critical biblical interpretation is quite different from rabbinic reading of Scripture and both need to be respected.

Chapter 2 roots the dialogue in the election of Abraham, highlighted by the binding of Isaac, and the structural and systemic liberation of Abraham's kin in the Exodus. This establishes a covenant with Israel in kinship and as a contrast society and calls for mutual obligations of fidelity and justice. Important in this chapter is the biblical definition of justice as more than a legal term. It is fidelity to covenant, more specifically God's revelation of what is right and God's saving activity to achieve it. Chapter 3 stresses that Jesus takes up this definition in his

proclamation of the Kingdom of God, speaking to Israel's yearning to return to the ideals of the early history and to achieve the hopes contained in Torah for a people who were still in a kind of continued exile under foreign powers. Cook maintains that this kingdom preaching is a deepening of the Torah and not its abrogation. It made radically inclusive the boundaries of God's saving justice, constituting a renewed vision of Israel and a restored people prepared to receive all the nations.

This study skirts the thornier issues of Jewish-Christian dialogue but provides material for substantial interaction. Because of the brevity of some of the syntheses, the implications of some points in the book may be lost on those not already acquainted with the topics. On the other hand, the book is a good presentation of a number of important biblical studies and, through its footnotes, offers opportunity for further exploration.

The Call to Holiness. By Richard Gula. New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2003. Pages, v + 226. Paper, \$16.95

Reviewed by James Keating
Pontifical College Josephinum

Richard Gula has written another fine and accessible book in the field of moral-spiritual theology. With this work Gula moves forward the emerging literature on morality and spirituality by producing a seamless work rather than a book that looks toward integrating morals and spirituality. By seamless I mean that Gula is not looking at the possibility of integrating spirituality and morality in this book, he is achieving it. In his approach to moral-spiritual living Gula begins with foundational explorations around the unifying question, "What should we do [morals] be-

cause of who we are [spirituality]?" (35); or more theologically explicit, "Who should we be and how should we live if we believe that God loves us and that we love God?" (37). For the author, spirituality is not separate from moral living and the discernment of virtuous acts, it is "the well spring of moral life . . . morality arises from, rather than generates, spirituality" (37). Morality is the public face of spirituality; morality and spirituality function in a "critical-dialogical relationship" (39). What is refreshing about the move Gula and others are making is that all method, themes, and discernment of action are placed in a matrix of "the Word, . . . the great mysteries of faith, and . . . the experience of the people" (60). With these elements, especially the first two, moral theology as a meditative and academic discipline joins the roots of a community's love for God with the fruit of that love in holy action (62).

Since this work is considered a precursor to his *The Good Life*, Gula spends a significant amount of space in chapters 3 and 4 on Christian anthropology and the importance of how one imagines God. These two explorations become significant because both our understanding of who we are as human persons and who we believe God to be influence the "content, tone and quality of our spirituality and moral life" (107). In the section on the human person, he focuses his meditations upon such themes as spirit, soul, emotion, imagination and body. Under his section on emotion Gula places the reality of mysticism. He writes: "To retrieve the affective dimension of the moral life is to reclaim its mystical side. Mystical is a perfectly apt word, but it has acquired the unfortunate connotation of being a rare, strange experience. . . . The mystical refers to the affective dimension of our lives" (80). I do not disagree that the mystical in some quarters has been relegated to

the strange, but I am not sure that the use of the affective category alone can sustain the “normalizing” of the mystical in itself. Is the mystical equated with the affective? I would prefer to understand the mystical in the context of the moral as a *commitment* to live the Christian *mysteries and be transformed by them*. This saves us from narrowing the mystical to only the affective. The author’s comments on the nature of God and our image of God clearly articulate Gula’s concern that the Church not revert back to any notion of God as Law giver. Following Rahner, God is seen to be at the deepest dimensions of all experience.

The book concludes with a long section on formative practices that develop moral and spiritual character. These practices include prayer, eucharistic worship, and biblical meditation. He also includes very helpful shorter sections on conversion, discernment, and discipleship. As a revisionist theologian, Gula is careful not to isolate acts from circumstances and contexts in moral living, but instead, rightly emphasizes character development. The development of character, however, does depend upon the consistent choosing of morally right actions. Like morality and spirituality, acts and character cannot be separated. Gula obviously knows this or he would not spend the time he does on articulating and analyzing practices that form character. It would seem to me, however, that any fears about isolating moral acts from their contexts can be put to rest not by muting the importance of moral acts, but by simply underscoring that all freely chosen acts must conform to what is morally true. In a person’s love of the truth, which is proven by enacting the dictates of conscience, one will become the person of character so rightly prized by Gula. As with most of his recent books, this work is written in the popular/pastoral vein. Along with other

texts in fundamental moral theology, seminarians and graduate students in pastoral ministry can profitably read this book. It would make a nice addition to any seminar class in morals and spirituality, or a parish study text on moral formation.

A Wounded Innocence: Sketches for a Theology of Art. By Alejandro García-Rivera. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2003. Pages, xiii + 139. Paper, \$14.95.

Reviewed by Amanda Quantz
Catholic Theological Union

A Wounded Innocence by Alejandro García-Rivera offers a creative theological reflection on the question: “What would happen if we took the visual seriously in theology” (x)? The author explores the history, value and function of art as well as Christianity’s natural relationship with devotional images. Throughout the book he considers concrete examples from Scripture, literature, and visual art. In a chapter on atonement and the imitation of Christ, he writes: “The very invitation of the risen Jesus to touch his wounds, after all, is profoundly aesthetic” (93).

García-Rivera’s brief yet rich analysis operates on two distinct levels: it examines the communicative power of an array of religious objects and also offers some suggestions about the nature of religious art that leads believers to a vision of the holy. The book’s clear, illustrative language as well as the range of topics and perspectives offered makes it suitable for students, professional theologians, artists, ministers and the interested lay reader. The images discussed could even be adapted as source material for retreats, workshops or theological reflection groups. The author is fully aware that the text lacks a systematic organization, noting: “For it is not in preci-

sion where a wounded innocence is to be known but in the grace of a religious insight" (122).

The text bears some methodological similarities to Andrew Greeley's *The Catholic Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000). Greeley's dialogue partner is the enchanted world in which Catholics live. García-Rivera takes humanity's "wounded innocence" as his starting point for exploring the Christian's relationship to beauty. He sees the Church as a body of prayerful, undeniably weakened yet hopeful believers who seek authenticity before God. The author demonstrates that, in humanity's pursuit of the ultimate, beauty is an important gift in becoming open to reconciliation with God. Our awesome, noble challenge is to find the beauty we need in order to love (4). Salvation, he implies, is the fruit of love.

The book moves freely between discussions of the form and function of images and their significance as prayer objects. Each chapter focuses on an image, such as "The Wounded Hunter" at Lascaux, "The Dog, the Cat and the Mouse" from the hagiography of St. Martin de Porres, and The Vietnam Veterans' Memorial in Washington, D.C. In addition to these pieces, which García-Rivera considers to be devotional objects, he designates several authors and artists as his dialogue partners. Through his reflections on the images and the wisdom of his teachers García-Rivera concludes that religious art is fundamentally that which guides the faithful towards an encounter with God.

The book is full of unassuming questions, such as: "When does the stuff of our ordinary lives become something sacred" (37)? By leaving these questions open-ended García-Rivera creates a hospitable environment through which the reader can apply his or her own experience of faith, art and the created world. The author's

skillful use of the power of suggestion is one of the book's most appealing features. By offering his thoughts on humanity's relationship to beauty, García-Rivera has produced a courageous and timely theological experiment that takes Christian images seriously. It is a valuable resource for anyone working to integrate his or her spiritual theology with imaginative prayer and the pursuit of art.

**A Presence That Disturbs:
A Call to Radical Discipleship.**

By Anthony J. Gittins. Liguori, Mo.:
Liguori/Triumph, 2002. Pages, xx + 171.
Paper, \$16.95.

Reviewed by Kathleen H. Brown
Washington Theological Union

Anthony Gittins is a social and theological anthropologist who brings that perspective to bear in this moving, powerful and, indeed, "disturbing" call to a new and deeper understanding of who we are as disciples of Christ. The ruins of Tinturn Abbey depicted on the cover are a metaphor for the confusion and brokenness of our world, yet in the words of the poet Wordsworth, those very ruins hold a "presence that disturbs." Amidst those ruins, we must rediscover a reason for living and become who we are called to be. The book puts language on that disturbing presence, that restless longing. It also articulates our call as disciples to become a "presence that disturbs."

Early in the book, Gittins cites three aphorisms of Viktor Frankl: to live we must choose; to love we must encounter; to grow we must suffer. The book calls us to choose discipleship and, in so doing, to genuinely encounter the world. The encounter is dangerous because it will ask us to look for the presence of the Spirit in

unexpected places, to listen to voices we might otherwise ignore. The encounter might also involve suffering. The encounter is difficult because, as Gittins points out, “A characteristic human flaw is the inability to think one’s thinking is wrong.” The book calls us, as individuals and as a Church, to change our thinking. Gittins challenges us to hear the voice of the Spirit in the voices of women, children, the poor, and the other Christian churches, and to consider our failure to do so as resisting the Spirit. This is an invitation, Gittins says, to have our lives disturbed and rearranged, but also an invitation to find new meaning in them.

The book includes an intriguing discussion of leadership styles and forms of community. Anyone who is part of—or has a vested interest in—church leadership will find the scope of those discussions both challenging and helpful. Gittins’ treatment of social polarities and the cultural grid is perhaps a little belabored, but it is an effective way of presenting an integrated view of faith and culture.

Gittins challenges Christians to “stand up and be counted, to galvanize themselves, to take the missionary dimension of their lives seriously, and to live up to their common baptism.” The book is indeed disturbing, meant to move the comfortable out of their complacency, to challenge us to become a “presence that disturbs” in the world. That challenge is not for the faint of heart, and not for those whom Gittins describes as people who “seem only to scrape through childhood and adolescence with little or no sense of their own identity or potential.” All of us experience the disturbing presence of God; not everyone is ready to be a disturbing presence. The appeal of the images of “God as Sugar Daddy” and “God as Relentless Pursuer,” rightfully portrayed by Gittins as inadequate, is, I suspect, because of the needs of

people whose faith and/or personal identity is weak. To be sure, Gittins is correct in reminding us how easy it is to get stuck there, but for many those images of God are a necessary first step on the journey of discipleship. It is for the sake of those among us who still struggle with identity and worth that I wish Gittins had developed more fully a point that he makes in the introduction: the God who disturbs and sends us on mission “both stabilizes and destabilizes, comforts and discomforts.” The same God who disturbs us also loves us gently, generously, and unconditionally.

Gittins writes that “when a people no longer have the courage to undergo the pain required to choose the future over the past, then their institutions are compromised and their civilization is on its last legs.” Gittins challenges us as a Church to have the courage to choose the future over the past. The book is a call to those who search for greater meaning in life, who are strong enough in faith and personal identity to be “mentors and midwives” in the world. For those who sense a call to do more, to go deeper, who feel that vague restlessness that is part of the yearning for meaning, the book is well worth reading.

The Asian Synod: Texts and Commentaries. Compiled and edited by Peter C. Phan. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2002. Pages, xvi + 352. Hardcover, \$60.00.

Reviewed by Paul L. Varuvel
Christ the King Seminary

The Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Asia, the Asian Synod for short, which met in Rome, April 19–May 14, 1998, to discuss the theme “Jesus Christ the Savior and his mission of love and service in Asia” was clearly a peak experience for

the Church in that vast continent. Peter C. Phan, a prominent Vietnamese-American theologian, who is also a past president of the Catholic Theological Society of America, has done a timely service by compiling and editing some of the texts and commentaries pertaining to the Asian Synod. The fascinating story of the Asian Synod has been narrated with great vigor by Thomas C. Fox of the *National Catholic Reporter*, the correspondents of *The Tablet* and several Asian theologians. In the book under review Phan advances this narrative by his perceptive comments and reflections. His book is best complemented by Thomas C. Fox's *Pentecost in Asia: A New Way of Being Church*.

Phan's book is divided into three parts besides containing an Introduction and an Appendix. The Introduction situates the Asian Synod in its historical and ecclesial context. The Appendix contains John Paul II's post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*. Part I presents texts pertaining to the preparatory phase of the Synod. Part II contains some interventions by the participants, reports of some discussion groups, synodal propositions submitted to the Pope, and a message to the people of Asia. Part III consists of essays by seven theologians from Asia on the future of Asian Christianity.

Evidently, the story of the Asian Synod cannot be told adequately by a compilation of selected texts and commentaries alone. The Synod was first and foremost an "event" that energized the local churches of Asia from the moment the Christian communities began discussing the *Lineamenta* (Outline of the Synod topic). It surely was a "moment of special grace" (John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia*, #3) that enabled the participants from disparate regions such as the recently emerged Central Asian Republics, the Far East, South Asia and West Asia (Middle East) to share their life ex-

periences and pastoral concerns in formal or informal settings. Gradually, there emerged a common Asian perspective that had earlier been spelt out by the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) at its First Plenary Assembly held in Taipei in 1974. The Church in Asia is called to fulfill its mission through a "triple dialogue": a dialogue with the cultures of Asia, a dialogue with the religions of Asia, and a dialogue with the peoples of Asia, especially the poor. This surely is a liberation perspective enriched by the immediate context of Asia where the powerful presence of ancient cultures and religions is an immense challenge and unique opportunity to reshape and present anew a vision of Christianity deeply rooted in the Asian soil. The quest for a legitimate autonomy of the local churches became another important focus of the synod.

Asian languages are so varied and diverse that names of persons and places could easily be misspelled. This reviewer detected the following incorrect spellings of personal names: Bortolasso (vii, for Bortolaso), Mundaban (vi, for Mundadan), Remigius Peter (vii, for Peter Remigius), Gispert-Saucil (52, for Gispert-Sauch). Some of the misspelled place names are: Bijnur (110, for Bijnor), Kumabakonam (vii, for Kumbakonam), Rafanea (vii, for Ratanea), Bantoe-Lagawe (vi, for Bantoc-Lagawe). A future edition of the book will certainly correct these lapses.

Phan acknowledges that space did not allow a full publication of the synod's official documents, all the interventions of participants, and all the reports of group discussions (6). This omission is largely compensated for by the compiler's incisive introductions and comments. This book will prove immensely helpful to persons interested in world-theology to become acquainted with the depth and breadth of the theological and pastoral engagement of

the Church in Asia. Writing in the 1970s, Walbert Buehlmann spoke of “The Coming of the Third Church.” One can readily agree with Phan that the “Asian Synod marked the coming of age of the Asian Churches” (xi).

A Daring Promise: A Spirituality of Christian Marriage. By Richard R. Gaillardetz. New York: Crossroad, 2002. Pages, 143. Paper, \$16.95.

Reviewed by **Timothy P. Muldoon**
Mount Aloysius College

Perhaps the best measure of my esteem for Richard Gaillardetz’s slim volume on the spirituality of Christian marriage is my regret that, near the end of a semester teaching a theology course on marriage, I do not have the time to add the book to my syllabus. I want my students to read this book.

The literature dealing with marriage from the perspectives of Christian theology and spirituality is copious. The particular strength of Gaillardetz’s volume, however, is its accessibility to a population which lacks a systematic religious vocabulary about not only marriage, but also of intimacy, love, and sexuality. As a married father of four young boys, Gaillardetz the theologian and Gaillardetz the dad come together to render a highly readable book.

Many theological treatments of marriage situate it within the broader tradition of the sacraments—all well and good for those who understand what sacraments are. For those who do not, however, it is necessary to speak of marriage in more fundamental terms, such as those arising out of the common experience of longing for interpersonal communion, with God and with one another.

Chapter 1 begins with this framework, articulating a spirituality of communion and how this fundamental theological anthropology shapes further discussion of human intimacy. What I find compelling about this chapter is Gaillardetz’s insistence on situating an authentic Christian spirituality of marriage on four fundamental doctrinal claims: the phenomenon of desire; the incarnation; the paschal mystery; and the divine trinity. This insistence grounds Gaillardetz’s writing firmly within a long history of Christian reflection, but perhaps more compellingly it offers a sound theological foundation for the practical, experiential exploration which follows. He walks a delicate balance between abstract theological concepts, on one hand, and *ad hoc* pop psychology, on the other.

This balance is especially difficult in writings on marriage. Historically, Christian (especially Catholic, and to some extent also Orthodox) reflections on marriage have tended toward the abstract and conceptual. More recently, there has been something of a “romantic” idealistic turn in spiritual reflections on marriage—the writings of Pope John Paul II are no exception—such that few could see in them concrete examples of wisdom drawn from everyday living. On the other extreme are the many works which draw liberally from anecdotal evidence on married life, but which fail to engage the theological tradition, and thus lack a sense of how marriage understood as a vocation arises out of the fundamental desire to respond, at the deepest level, to the ways divine grace enables us to respond to God’s own invitation to discipleship.

In his four ensuing chapters on communion, conversion, sexuality, and parenting (respectively), Gaillardetz explores the implications of the principles he outlines early in the book. I found his chapter on conversion particularly compelling, his

chapter on sexuality less so. The former illustrates the ascetical nature of marriage, responding to the “second class” status assigned to this Christian vocation by those who chose celibacy. Marriage, he rightly asserts, is a constant call to embrace the paschal mystery in our quotidian acts of sacrifice.

The chapter on sexuality is sound, drawing from biblical and magisterial sources, and points ultimately to the thesis that sexuality must be integrated into the life of a marriage. While I found the discussion to be well articulated, I would have appreciated more exploration of what that integration means in terms of the spiritual life. Instead, Gaillardetz spends a good part of the chapter responding (intelligently) to the post-*Humanae Vitae* debate on contraception. To be sure, this debate is important, but in my experience it is more important to offer those considering marriage (and those already married) a chance

to address questions of sexuality in the larger scope of sacramental performance—that is, as a privileged place wherein the married couple ritually enacts their particular, peculiar interpersonal dynamic through physical exchange. Young people desperately need a nuanced, thoughtful reflection on the spirituality of sex.

I strongly recommend this book for three audiences: college students taking courses on the theology or spirituality of Christian marriage; pastoral leaders in pre-Cana or Engaged Encounter programs, to make available to couples to whom they minister; and mentor couples who work with younger engaged or married couples. The questions for reflection and discussion at the end of each chapter will provide ample resources in group settings. Kudos to Richard Gaillardetz for producing a book that will make a positive impact on the way couples think about marriage in the economy of the Christian life.