

# SAN DIEGO CATHOLIC WORKER



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## Islam will again be addressed at Friday night soup and bread supper

Fr. Ronald Pachence, a professor of religious studies at the University of San Diego, will again address the issue of Islam at the next San Diego Catholic Worker Free Soup and Bread Supper.

This time, Fr. Pachence, who introduced many people to Islam for the first time at a Catholic Worker "souper" in the wake of the Sept. 11 attacks by Al Qaeda, will speak on "Islam ... Revisited," concentrating on what we have learned about Islam since the United States invaded Afghanistan and Iraq more than five years ago. He will emphasize what we as Catholics should know to help us make peace with Islam, a deeply held religious tradition that accepts—as does Christianity—the Old and New Testaments of the Bible.

### Special donation of bowls

As an added attraction, *emptybowls.com*, a nationwide organization of people who hand make ceramic bowls and give them free of charge to charitable groups who feed the hungry, has donated 100 bowls that people can take home. The bowls come courtesy of Ava Torre-Bueno and her fellow potters at Clay Associates of San Diego.

As usual there will be no charge for the food, but those who wish to keep their bowls and can afford to do so will be requested to make a donation of \$10 or \$20 for each bowl, depending on its size. Donations will help the San Diego Catholic Worker provide food and clothing for homeless people and others in need.

Father Pachence, who has taught at USD for 25 years, has a master's degree in religious studies and a doctorate in Roman Catholic studies and world religions from the Catholic University of America. His interest in world religions dates from his post-college experience as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Turkey.

### Islam—a learning experience

Over the past few years most people have become more aware of Islam, its divisions into Sunni and Shia sects, and the various interpretations of the concept of jihad. Fr. Pachence may be able to throw some light on the point that Pope Benedict XVI was making when he addressed scholars in Regensburg, Germany, last September, and explain why Muslims all over the world reacted so strongly to it.

The supper will be held at 6:30 p.m. in Our Lady of Refuge Parish Hall, 4226 Jewell St., in Pacific Beach, April 27; the talk will begin at 7:15 p.m., and will be followed by a discussion and questions from the floor.

The importance of understanding Islam cannot be overestimated if we in the West hope to engage in a serious dialog leading to an appreciation and a respect for the followers of one of the great religious traditions in the world.

### Note to Foreign Readers

The San Diego Catholic Worker is sent to a number of readers abroad. If you are one of these readers and wish to continue receiving it, please let us know. Otherwise we will cross you off our list and discontinue sending it to avoid overseas mailing costs.



## A Pointless War

*We need to stop pretending that there is something sane about continued U.S. involvement in this ruinous war. We keep sending troops into the combat zone and they keep sinking ever deeper into the ancient Middle East sand. To keep sending young people off to die in a war that everybody knows is pointless is criminal.*

—Bob Herbert, NYT, Feb. 12, 2007 (Illustration: Paul Hoppe)

### Abbé Pierre, 1913–2007

## French 'Rag-Picker Priest' had the respect of Dorothy Day, but she also had some reservations

Abbé Pierre, who became a national hero in France because of his concern for homeless people, died in Paris, Jan. 22.

Although he had joined the Capuchin Order in the 1930s, he became a highly decorated member of the resistance against the German occupation of France during World War II. In 1949 he founded the Emmaus Community of war veterans, former convicts and down-and-outs in general who collected any old junk that they could fix and sell.

During a particularly cold spell in the winter of 1954, when nearly 100 people froze to death, many of them homeless, he made a radio appeal for help that touched the heart of the nation. An enormous amount of goodwill resulted in people donating heaters, blankets, overcoats, furniture and money. Emmaus Communities are now found worldwide.

He became known as the "Rag-Picker Priest" and the French people voted him Man of the Year for 17 years in succession, until he asked that he not be considered any longer.

L'Abbé Pierre visited the United States and met with Dorothy Day. Although she admired his life and work (see Dorothy Day Column, page 2), she disagreed with his willingness to work with government. She wrote in the Catholic Worker Newspaper: "This month, a friend talked of my joining with Abbé Pierre and Fidel Castro in the beginnings of a mighty league to fight hunger in the world. In spite of the respect in which I hold

these men, I had to decline, since I could not look upon the state as an aid, as in the case of Abbé Pierre, nor could I look upon armed revolution as an aid, as in the case of Fidel Castro. The message of The Catholic Worker is that simple one for all the rank and file, for the masses: that we have free will, we can make our choice, that our personal responsibility which we exercise is what matters."

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## Finding God's face in the strangest of places, but most of all in the person right beside us

By Denys Horgan

Editor, San Diego Catholic Worker

There was a story in the paper recently about a Florida woman who bought a grilled cheese sandwich on which she thought she saw the face of the Virgin Mary scorched into the bread. She had kept the sandwich for 10 years and eventually sold it on eBay for \$28,000.

The same article (in the Science Section of a national newspaper, of all places) had a color photograph of a cinnamon bun that was the spit and image of Mother Theresa. The article didn't say if it was for sale.

It's a story that seems to repeat itself over and over again. Thirty years ago the religious sisters in a convent in Quebec, Canada, found the face of Christ worn into the soul of the shoe of their chaplain as he lay dead in his coffin. They put it in a shoe box lined with green velvet for display.

### A funny side but revealing

It's okay to see the light side of these stories. Remember Johnny Carson used to have a little old lady on his show every year or so with her most recent collection of famous faces that she found in boxes of potato chips?

Yet, at the same time, they do tell us something about the faith of the people who find these things. They reveal to us a yearning that all of us have to see God, not just after we die, but to try to get a sneak preview of him beforehand. We do seem to have a natural instinct to see the sacred in the profane, even if it's just an optical illusion like the famous face of Christ in the black-and-white photograph purported to have been taken from a plane flying over the Alps.

We have no real idea of what Jesus looked like, except that he probably looked like a typical Jew living in Palestine two thousand years ago. But what a Palestinian Jew looked like then, we cannot be sure today. There is of course the legendary image of Jesus that appeared on the towel that St. Veronica gave him to wipe the blood off his face as he carried his cross to Calvary. Such a cloth was on display in Rome for many centuries and its image may have had a strong influence on the solemn, long-haired, bearded Christ that artists have handed down to us this very today. In the 1960s somebody transformed this image into a picture of Christ with his head thrown back enjoying a good laugh.

### Poets have their way

Poets, with their mystical insights, tend to see Christ all over the place. An Irish poet, Joseph Mary Plunkett, executed for his part in the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin, wrote:

"I see his blood upon the rose,  
And in the stars the glory of his eyes,  
His body gleams amid eternal snows,  
His tears from the skies.

"I see his face in every flower;  
The thunder and the singing of the birds  
Are but his voice—and carven by his power  
Rocks are his written words.

"All pathways by his feet are worn,  
His strong heart stirs the even-beating sea,  
His crown of thorns is twined with every thorn,  
His cross is every tree."

See STRANGE FACES, page 2.

From the Writings

of  
Dorothy  
Day



## Two Peters With Same Idea

When we listened to Abbé Pierre this month and his talk of the need for prophets, to bring to men in power the needs of the poor, to cry out unceasingly for justice, we thought of Peter Maurin.

Peter used to love to quote Eric Gill who said that Jesus Christ came to make the rich poor and the poor holy. As for the destitute, we can only reach them with love and the works of mercy, performed personally, at a sacrifice. You cannot preach to men with empty stomachs.

Because Peter's program called for such practical things as houses of hospitality and farming communes or agronomic universities, we have often forgotten the first point in his program which was the need for clarification of thought, the need to clarify the "theory of revolution." He used to quote Lenin as saying, "there can be no revolution without a theory of revolution." But Peter's was the green revolution, a call for a return to the villages and the land "to make that kind of society where it is easier for men to be good."

### Opposed to race wars

In addition to being opposed to international and civil wars he was opposed to race wars and class wars. He had taken to himself that new constitution that new rule of the Sermon on the Mount, and truly loved his enemies and wanted to do good to all men, including those who injured him or tried to enslave him. He literally believed in overcoming evil with good, hatred with love. He loved the rich as well as the poor, and he wanted to make the rich envy the poor who were so close to Christ, and to try to become closer to them by giving of their means to start these schools, farming communes and agronomic universities. Houses of hospitality are always run by the generosity of the poor who work in them and by the donations of the more comfortably off who send what they can to keep them going. ...

Another one of our mistakes in the past is that we have wanted to be all things, to do all things and while we have learned by doing, we have also learned what we cannot do. We can agitate, we can initiate, we can arouse the conscience but we cannot start a housing project for the destitute as Abbé Pierre has in Paris; or a model village, or an agronomic university either.

### Wisdom of Abbé Pierre

Part of Abbé Pierre's great wisdom is that he limited himself to that most important work of the day, sheltering the harborless, without question, with the love of his fellow poor. He himself had gone out to sleep in the doorways, on the hard pavements, in order to give his bed to a destitute woman and child, and in reward for this folly of love, he had been enabled to arouse the people of France, so that in a brief year, more was accomplished than he had ever been able to accomplish by his seven years in the House of Deputies in Paris. How Peter would have loved his single mindedness, his purity of vision!

We have had many with us who could not find their vocation. There have been the wandering monks that St. Benedict talked of. They want religious life and life in the world. They want to have families and to preach, not teach. They wanted so much, not recognizing it was God Himself they wanted, that they could not develop the talents God gave them, and wander year after year wondering what God wants them to do.

Excerpted from *The Catholic Worker*, May 1965. The writings of Dorothy Day can be read on the Web at <http://www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday>

*Taboos that have nothing to do with sex*

## Need to demythologize the idea of glory in war and examine the evil it inevitably brings about

### WORSHIPPING THE MYTHS OF WORLD WAR II: REFLECTIONS ON AMERICA'S DEDICATION TO WAR

By Edward W. Wood, Jr. Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2006.

#### Review by Bill Pease

When we think about serious taboos, not mere *faux pas*, we tend to have in mind what ancient or primitive societies developed under threat of death. These might have to do with incest, proscribed foods, dishonoring the ancestors. There are, however, taboos in our own society and they no longer have to do with sex or diet. These taboos are correlated with myths cultivated in us from early schooling and through ceremonies and celebrations surrounding us as adults. Edward W. Wood lays a sharpened axe against four of these myths. To some he speaks the unspeakable. The myths he attacks are named in certain popular phrases: "the Good War" (meaning World War II), "the Greatest Generation" (those who fought that war, literally or figuratively on the "home front"), the notion that the United States of America pretty much did it on its own, and finally that war is the ready answer to Evil, which is always hovering out there.

How many books, films, parades, pageants have been put before us to support these established beliefs? The obituary columns are increasingly filled with stories of men, the peak moment of whose lives was their experience of combat in the 1940s. They are among our close relatives and friends. What if these men had instead found honor and fulfillment in such demanding and disciplined alternate service as had recently been applied by the Civilian Conservation Corps or in later times by the Peace Corps?

Who is Edward W. Wood, Jr.? He is an Infantry veteran of the Second World War, recipient of a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star. His wounds were not merely physical. It is his observation that he and many of his comrades have suffered from what was recognized only during the Vietnam War as post-traumatic stress disorder. He knows combat as it is not known in most of the military display that we are presented with. We hear the great march music, not the cries of death. We salute the unfurled red, white and blue and are protected from the red and purple of open wounds. We comfort the widowed women at home and seldom hear of the women

raped by soldiers brutalized by their surreal experience of battle. Our patriotic children are not reminded of the orphans their own age in war-torn countries. As anyone who has gone through military training knows, the life of the enemy (i.e. anyone in enemy territory) is regarded as an obstacle to the fatherland's purposes, not as a trust from God. We were instructed about looking out for the safety of ourselves and of our comrades in arms. We were not given any moral instruction about the lives of others whom we encounter. Chaplains as a rule made themselves present only for ritual and consolation.

It should be said at the outset what does not appear till well along in Wood's book, that he is not a pacifist in the strictest sense. He mentions that it was at least "inevitable" that the U.S. would get into the World War, once political insight failed to forestall it. He would, however, require that wars be entered into by Congressional declaration as stated in our Constitution—and that before reaching that point all the moral and economic risks be fully studied. Gearing up for a war takes some months; there is no reason that some time could not be allotted in advance to measure its costs to determine, first, if it is warranted and then how it should

be prosecuted and contained.

When the United States entered the war following the attack on Pearl Harbor, a deep split occurred in the Catholic Worker movement. Dorothy Day and some of her associates completely refused to participate. Some of the men went to camps for conscientious objectors. Others enlisted or accepted the draft. Only later during the so-called Cold War did the Catholic Worker reunite in the work for peace and against demonizing the other as Enemy.

Wood does not attempt to resolve the issue fully on either side. His chapters do aver that every war is the venue of too many evils to be ever called "good," that every generation is engaged in the work of building up society and is diminished, not ennobled, by going to war, that other nations spent themselves and suffered more in World War II than did our own, and that evils can be demythologized and met in creative, practical ways rather than aggravated by bloody violence.

Pease is a retired college librarian and a volunteer in earlier years with the Catholic Worker in New York and San Diego.

*This book review is presented in memory of the reviewer's recently deceased friend, Rev. Bob McCullagh, who was a conscientious objector during the Second World War. Bob worked on some important and long-lasting service projects while in a c.o. camp, one of which included semi-starvation testing for the benefit of war survivors.*

### STRANGE FACES, continued from page 1.

Gerard Manley Hopkins, the Jesuit poet (1884-89), in one of his infrequent brighter moods, saw the presence of the Creator in everything, but especially diversity:

"Glory be to God for dappled things—  
For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow;  
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;  
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches wings;  
Landscape plotted and pieced—fold, fallow and plough;  
And all trades, their gear and tackle trim.  
All things counter, original, spare, strange  
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)  
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;  
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:  
Praise him" (Pied Beauty).

We can look for Christ anywhere we like and we may find him in many and strange places, but taking the example of the life of Christ is probably our safest bet. We will find the image of God in human beings, for the simple reason we have been made in the image of God, and Christ said "he who knows me, knows the father."

### Who exactly are we looking for?

The problem for many of us is that we start off with an idea of what we think God or Christ, should look like, and many of us see him in all his majesty, with infinite power, seeing and taking note of everything we do, and judging and casting sinners into the fires of hell to burn for all eternity. Some, even all of that, might be true, but it's only a small part of the picture. As far as Christ was concerned, the power of God lies in the strength of his love; he may see all, but only because he is watching over us and looks on us with tender compassion; and his justice is only a sidebar to his infinite mercy. How do we know that? Because that's the kind of person Jesus was.

That's why we spend time with homeless people, and treat them to free lunch and clothing. We're not using them.

We're not doing it to get to heaven. We have already found God when we serve the needy. We're already half-way to heaven when we empty ourselves, turn ourselves inside out, be who we were created to be, in the image of our maker, infinite and unconditional love personified.

During Lent we've had 40 days to contemplate the "dark side" of living our faith; during Holy Week we sink to the depths, if not of despair, at least to its edge; and at Easter we rise again, full of joy and the freedom that belongs to the People of God, who have found him not on the soles of shoes or in corn flakes, but in our neighbor, the person right next to us.

**Loving the enemy is the nucleus of the "Christian revolution," a revolution not based on strategies of economic, political or media power. The revolution of love, a love that does not base itself definitively in human resources, but in the gift of God, that is obtained only and unreservedly in his merciful goodness. Herein lies the novelty of the Gospel, which changes the world without making noise. Herein lies the heroism of the "little ones," who believe in the love of God and spread it even at the cost of life.**

—Benedict XVI, Feb. 18, 2007

# Persistence pays off when opportunity to attend Mass is given to fire-camp workers

By Fr. Gil Gentile S.J.

Fr. Gil is spiritual director of San Diego Catholic Workers

A couple of weeks ago I received a message on my voicemail at work: “Padre, we’re losing souls out here. Please come soon.” It was actually the last in a series of messages that an inmate I’ll call Montes had left for me trying to convince me to celebrate Mass at the La Cima Fire Camp, a California Correction and Rehabilitation facility northeast of Julian on the Sunrise Highway. I had called him back but we’d been playing “phone tag”. Meanwhile, his messages were becoming more urgent.

I must admit that I was resisting, using as my excuses an already busy weekend schedule of Masses and the long, windy trip out there. I had more or less decided to tell Montes that I would not be able to do it when I received the “We’re losing souls out here” message. What moved me to change my mind was not only the urgency of the words themselves but the urgency and pleading tone of his voice. I called back that night, spoke to a correctional officer, Louis Prieto, whom I knew from the Queen of Angels Parish in Alpine and arranged to make the trip on a Saturday night after I’d celebrated the 5:30 Mass there. My strategy was that Alpine was 30 miles closer to the camp than my home and I could pick up all the supplies for the Mass at the church.

## Off the beaten track

It took much longer than I expected to get there—it really is off the beaten track—and so I was not very confident that I would be very willing in the future to make that trip very often, if at all. The camp is in a beautifully rugged setting and I was met by a very enthusiastic Montes who explained to me that technically he was “Inmate Montes,” but that if I didn’t mind, he would like me to call him “Bryan.” From then on he was Bryan.

While Officer Prieto was showing me to the classroom building where we would be celebrating the Mass I could hear the other officer who was on duty making an announcement over the intercom about the Mass. Bryan ran off to the dorm to invite the guys in person. He came back about 5 minutes later and said to me, “This is it.” Thinking that he was referring to the room I said that it would do perfectly fine and then I asked him how long we should wait for the others. He repeated, “This is it.” And I understood what he’d meant the first time he’d said those words. “You mean it’s just the two of us?” I asked with a little more disbelief and disappointment in my voice than I would have liked.

Bryan began to fall all over himself apologizing and explaining and I immediately felt sorry for my disbelief and disappointment and my heart went out to him. “Well, where two or three are gathered in my name...” I quoted, “and there are two of us.” “And Jesus makes three.” he said rather hopefully. “You’re right,” I said, “let’s have Mass.”

## Two—or three—gathered together

Later as I was winding my way back along the private county road that connects this remote camp with the rest of the world I was thinking how, even though it was just the two of us, Jesus certainly did make it three and it was, after all, a glorious Mass. Bryan was devout, appreciative, moved to tears and above all hopeful. He said that he just knew that once word got out that a Catholic priest had finally come to the camp—“the first time ever” as he said—that next time there would be more guys. “Ya’ gotta’ have hope, Padre,” he’d counseled me.

Those words rang in my ears as I negotiated the sharp curves and the ups and downs of the rutted road. I knew from my experience of working in jails and prisons that those who are doing “good time” are those who have hope—hope that they can create a better future for themselves and their families. They know that it won’t necessarily be easy, that it’s going to be a struggle and it will take hard work, but with the grace of God it is possible. At that point in my reverie the hymn “Amazing Grace” came into my mind: “...how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now I’m found... Through many dangers, toils and snares I have already come... and grace will lead me home.”

As we move through Lent towards the celebration of the victory of Jesus over the dangers, toils and snares of life, the victory of God’s “Amazing Grace” in our lives, it can become all too obvious that often we don’t live out that belief and it takes an unexpected, experience like a trip to a California fire camp to celebrate Mass or an unlikely person like inmate Montes—Bryan—to open our eyes to the truth of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Often times it’s something that happens despite ourselves—despite all the trouble we experience or the trouble that we create for ourselves. It happens when we allow hope to take root in our hearts and when we nurture it and allow it to grow.

That day as I was leaving the camp, Bryan took my hand in both of his hands, looked me in the eye and said



## Reflecting on Service

*The Ignatian Volunteer Corps of San Diego has bestowed on Fr. Gilbert Gentile, S.J., the spiritual director of the San Diego Catholic Worker, its Della Strada Award in recognition of his service to the poor and his work educating people for a more just society. The IVC is a nationwide organization that provides opportunities for retired and semiretired people to blend Ignatian spirituality with community service. The San Diego IVC chapter, which has been nurtured by Fr. Gil since its inception in 2000, meets monthly to consider their service in a spiritual context. “These are members of a community of volunteers doing theological reflection and spiritual direction,” Fr. Gil said in an interview in a recent issue of Mission, a magazine published by the Jesuits of California, adding, “It’s an opportunity for us to move into a new way of being Church.” Fr. Gil became a Catholic Worker in 1969 and has spent his ministry as a Jesuit working extensively with poor and marginalized people. He has been on the board of the San Diego Catholic Worker since 1989. The Catholic Worker is especially grateful to Fr. Gil for cooking and serving his delicious gourmet spaghetti and meatball dinner at its fundraiser held in September/October each year. The Della Strada Award is named after the first church used by St. Ignatius and the early Jesuits to serve the urban poor in the center of Rome.*

simply and with great conviction, “I know you’ll be back, padre.” He was right. I went back just the other day—much sooner than I’d planned—after another round of messages from Bryan. This time there were six men and I learned all their names and now they aren’t just faceless “inmates” but brothers in the Lord. And I heard them speak of their faith in God and their regrets and their hopes and their gratitude. It was another beautiful Mass.

Afterwards we shared a box of Thin Mints cookies that I had bought from some girl scouts earlier that day. The cookies were, of course, a great hit and helped to nurture not only our collective sweet tooth but our sense of Christian fellowship as well.

Later Bryan walked me back to my car and said, “I told you we would get more guys once the word got out that you were willing to come all the way out here.” I realized as I began to negotiate the now more familiar road by the light of a full moon on my way back home, that celebrating Mass with these men had the effect of helping them to know that they weren’t forgotten; and not just the men who came to the Mass but, by the grace of God, even the others who just heard about it. It’s a way to nourish that sometimes elusive, sometimes very real Easter hope. And, after all is said and done, Bryan was right when he told me that first visit to the Correction and Rehabilitation Facility at the La Cima Fire Camp, “Ya’ gotta’ have hope, padre!”

You’re right Bryan. You’re so right.

## Day . . . . by . . . . Day . . . .

*A selection of thoughts that readers bring to the attention of the editor from time to time. To submit a thought of your own, please e-mail dhorgan230@earthlink.net*

“Hanging your head like a reed,  
lying down on sackcloth and ashes?  
Is that what you call fasting  
a day acceptable to Yahweh?”

“Is not this the sort of fast that pleases me  
—it is the Lord Yahweh who speaks—  
to break unjust tethers  
and undo the thongs of the yoke,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
and break every yoke  
to share your bread with the hungry,  
and shelter the homeless poor,  
to clothe the man you see naked  
and not turn from your own kin?”

“Then will your light shine like the dawn  
and your wound be quickly healed over.”  
—Isaiah, Ch. 58, vv. 6–8 (8th century BC).



*“Are you the one who is to come, or have we got to wait for someone else?”*

*Jesus answered: “Go back and tell John what you hear and see; the blind see again, and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised to life and the Good News is proclaimed to the poor; and happy is the man who does not lose faith in me.”*

—Matthew, Ch. 11, vv. 3–5 (late 1st century AD).



“For the first time in American history, the executive branch claims authority under the Constitution to set aside laws permanently—including prohibitions on torture and warrantless eavesdropping on Americans. A frightening idea decisively rejected at America’s birth—that a president, like a king, can do no wrong—has reemerged to justify torture and indefinite presidential detention.”

—Frederick A.O. Schwarz and Aziz Z. in Huq in “Unchecked and Unbalanced: Presidential Power in a Time of Terror,” as quoted in New York Times, Feb. 19, 2007.



*“What the delegation found most encouraging from the meeting with President Ahmadinejad was a clear declaration from him that Iran has no intention to acquire or use nuclear weapons, as well as a statement that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can only be solved through political, not military means. He said, ‘I have no reservation about conducting talks with American officials if we see some goodwill.’*

*“We believe it is possible for further dialogue and that there can be a new day in U.S.—Iranian relations. The Iranian government has already built a bridge toward the American people by inviting our delegation to come to Iran. We ask the U.S. government to welcome a similar delegation of Iranian religious leaders to the United States.*

*“As additional steps in building bridges between our nations, we call upon both the U.S. and Iranian governments to:*

- immediately engage in direct, face-to-face talks;
- cease using language that defines the other using “enemy” images; and
- promote more people-to-people exchanges including religious leaders, members of Parliament/Congress, and civil society.”

—from a statement by a group of Christian leaders from United Methodist, Episcopal, Catholic, Baptist, Evangelical, Quaker, and Mennonite traditions who visited Iran earlier this year.

# All the People of God have an obligation and a right to see that victims of clerical sexual abuse are compensated fairly

By Denys Horgan

Editor, San Diego Catholic Worker

Many San Diego Catholics are angry and it is only fair to ask if justice is being served by our Bishop, Robert Brom, filing to have the finances of the diocese reorganized under Chapter 11 of the U.S. Bankruptcy Code.

Some are concerned that the bishop may have taken this unusual step in order to avoid revealing in open court the extent of the abuse of children by priests; or the negligence of bishops who did not deal with those priests despite multiple complaints; or the treatment that people got from the diocese when they finally found the courage, after suffering in silence for many years, to complain or seek redress. The extent of the abuse suffered and the subsequent failure of church authorities to stop it is indeed scandalous, but covering it up is even more so, at least in the eyes of the laity.

There is one very good reason why the names of priests and bishops who abused children sexually should be made public: the release of this information nearly always encourages other victims, people who have been too trauma-

tized to speak about it for years, to finally come forward. This, of course, adds to the list of claims, but the church should be glad of this: we should be glad to discover all the victims of sexual abuse and be eager to console and compensate them for the decades of soul-destroying suffering they have been put through. That's what justice is all about. Filing for bankruptcy does not seem to help.

## What's the alternative?

So, is there an alternative? To find its way out of this mess, we must put the care and compensation of the victims of abuse ahead of every other consideration. Compassion for the victims translated into practical, i.e. financial, terms must come before fear of scandal or financial loss.

We have been told that if all the cases pending against the diocese went to court, the final payout to victims could be as high as \$150 million or even \$200 million. However, we have not been told how much of that would be covered by insurance and how much would be covered by selling off properties that are not essential to running the diocese. Surely there is some fat somewhere that could be trimmed.

Presumably, but we don't really know, the insurance

and the "disposable" assets of the diocese will not be enough to compensate all the victims, so more money will have to be found. We need to remember, however, that this is a debt that the entire diocese has incurred. It is not the bishop's personal debt, it is a debt that all of the one million Catholics in San Diego have incurred. The assets and liabilities that the diocese has disclosed as part of its bankruptcy filing belong to all the people of the diocese. The People of God, as Vatican II calls the community who constitute the diocese bear a responsibility and an obligation to know what the debt is, and to see that it is honored in full. We cannot claim to be the church in good times, and not belong in hard times.

## The laity share the responsibility

The laity—while not as directly responsible for the abuse as some priests and bishops were—cannot bury their heads in the sand. They have a special obligation to insist on seeing justice done. Catholics, unlike many other Christians, have been conditioned over the centuries to relinquish responsibility for the behavior of their clergy. Catholics do not

make their priests and bishops accountable for the services they provide or fail to provide, which is one of the reasons this scandal was able to reach the proportions it did. By not insisting that their leaders be accountable to them, the laity created an environment that made it possible for the abuse of children on such a large scale to occur. To this extent the whole church, all the People of God, were complicit in the abuse, and should therefore be involved in the solution.

If we, the laity, continue to release the hierarchy of accountability to the community, we must accept the consequences, painful and expensive as they have proved to be. If, on the other hand, we wish to face up to our responsibilities, we must insist on the victims being treated with compassion and treated fairly.

This calls for a reformation of lay-hierarchy relationship within the church. The hierarchy must begin listening to the laity and taking them seriously. The laity must also begin to speak up and insist on their voices being heard.

## Listening to the Voice of the Faithful

To this end the Voice of the Faithful, a movement that began in Boston and has spread across the United States, was es-

tablished to provide a prayerful voice, attentive to the Spirit, through which the Faithful can actively participate in the governance and guidance of the Catholic Church. The movement is based on the belief that "the laity has the graced dignity, intelligence, responsibility and obligation to cooperate in Church governance in a meaningful way according to the law and to correct the profound flaws that have been revealed in the human institutional life of our Church. To contact Voices of the Faithful, see [www.voiceofthefaithful.org](http://www.voiceofthefaithful.org), or contact Alice Campanella at [acampanella@votf.org](mailto:acampanella@votf.org).

In the final analysis the question remains: Where will the money to compensate the victims of sexual abuse come from? Who knows? But we will have a much better chance of finding it if we take the advice of St. Gregory the Great to heart and start looking for it together.

*"It is better that scandals arise than that the truth be suppressed."*

—Pope St. Gregory the Great

## No Harm in Asking

The Catholic Worker people who prepare the 100-120 lunches for homeless men and women in Christ Lutheran Church on Cass Street in Pacific Beach every Friday would like to have a new or used Hobart food mixer (You must be dreaming, we can hear you say) and a rice cooker. Both should be commercial grade. If there is somebody out there who can help or give us a line on where we might be able to get either of these kitchen appliances, would he or she please contact Tina DiStefano at (858) 552-0817. It would make life a lot easier for Louis our cook *extraordinaire*.

We are also wondering if there is somebody who knows newspaper layout and AP style, and who is willing to help with the editing and layout of the paper three times a year using InDesign. If so would they please contact Denys Horgan at [dhorgan230@earthlink.net](mailto:dhorgan230@earthlink.net). Many thanks.

## Catholic Worker Meetings Schedules

Please note that SD Catholic Worker meetings are open to the public and held at 6:30 p.m. on the second Monday of every month in the Sacred Heart Parish Hall on Sunset Cliffs Blvd. at Saratoga in Ocean Beach. Next meetings will be held April 9, May 14, June 11, July 9 and August 13.

## Mission Statement

The San Diego Catholic Worker is committed to the following actions that imitate Christ: a call to service, a belief in the human dignity of all, and an interrelationship with a compassionate God and one another.

As Catholic Workers, we struggle to carry out our double mandate: to minister to the needs of society's forgotten people, and to challenge and offer alternatives to the attitudes, institutions and structures that create and perpetuate suffering and violence.

Following Christ's example, we also believe it is our duty to spread the word of our work and provide others with the opportunity to serve.

The San Diego Catholic Worker will achieve its goals by the grace of God and by working together to bring about a world of peace and justice as envisioned by our founders, Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin.

**The San Diego Catholic Worker Newspaper** is published three or four times a year and distributed free of charge to anybody who requests it

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*The San Diego Catholic Worker welcomes everybody and provides services to all, regardless of race, color, creed, religion, ethnicity, national origin, age, handicap, sex, or sexual orientation.*

## San Diego Catholic Worker

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## San Diego Catholic Worker

### Traditional Friday Night

### Free Soup Supper and Discussion

Beginning 6:30 p.m., April 27

Our Lady of Refuge Parish Hall  
4226 Jewell Street, Pacific Beach

## Islam ... Revisited

*What we have learned over the past four years*

### Father Ronald Pachence

*Professor of Religious Studies, University of San Diego*

*Emptybowls.com has donated 100 ceramic hand-made soup bowls to the San Diego Catholic Worker. These bowls will be used for the soup supper and may be taken home. Donations of \$10 or \$20, depending on the size of the bowl, are requested.*

**For information call (619) 298-3755 or e-mail [dhorgan230@earthlink.net](mailto:dhorgan230@earthlink.net)**