



The Witness

Volume 76 • Number 11 • November 1993

The communion of saints

Schooling the spirit

THANK YOU FOR THE THOUGHTFUL discussion of the role and place of education in the lives of Christians. As a parent I worry about what my child is exposed to in public schools, yet am committed to public education as a principle. Within this tension your magazine helped me and my wife look at the whole educational process from different points of view (which helped us in clarifying our own).

I appreciate the opportunity that The Witness affords Christians seeking to live faithfully and act justly for this type of dialogue. Keep up the good work!

T. Scott Allen
Social Missioner,
Episcopal Diocese of Bethlehem
Bethlehem, PA

SOMETIMES YOUR MAGAZINE makes me "hoppin" mad, but it never fails to make me think! I especially like the poetry — think you have too many articles on homosexuality even though I have other family members who are gay and too many articles on women's ordination even though I favor that!

I am president of a family-owned dental supply company in Illinois and struggle with day-to-day issues like how to make a profit in

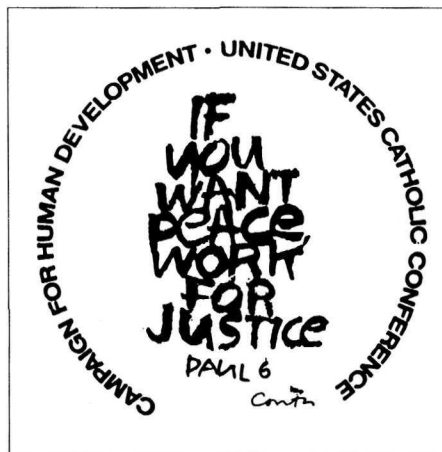
spite of mounting competition, how to find and keep good employees, how to deal with employees who cannot be understood by my customers who cannot understand "Black dialect," customers who can call and will call the other four companies in town when they are found with that problem, etc.

I have a father who is 83 and well-to-do and an aunt who is 80 and practically on welfare. I have four grown sons — one divorced trying to cope with a daughter who lives with the ex-wife hundreds of miles away, another son who is schizophrenic, a son who is living with a woman and trying to support her and her adorable 7-year-old daughter on a \$5/hour auto mechanics job and a son who is single and managing well.

My life is full of many issues, not to mention the flood, gang violence in St. Louis and a small church community trying to survive.

Patricia Rudloff
Edwardsville, IL

AFTER READING EVERY WORD written by Colman McCarthy (who describes himself as an "unstubborn Catholic") published in the September issue, I find it rather strange that he omitted any reference to what I show you and your readers below...



James Heermanc,
Eugene, OR

[Ed. note: Colman McCarthy didn't write the profile. It was written *about* him.]

THANKS FOR THE PROVOCATIVE reflective writing — much of which challenges me to praise God that you are doing the work you do!

Carol Rouillard Wolff
Portland, OR

THE SEPTEMBER ISSUE is a great issue.

Catherine Nichols
Middlebury, VT

RE: YOUR ARTICLE, *From Waco to Baghdad*: I feel you have omitted a very basic cause of Viet Nam through to Bosnia Herzegovina.

The Jewish community, here and abroad, has blamed the U.S. for "allowing" the mas-

sacre of Jews during World War II. Publications have repeated over and over that the U.S. could have prevented these deaths; that we knew about the camps and did nothing about them; that we failed to bomb the railroads that brought the victims to the gas chambers. I remember a romance during my early post World War II college days between a Jewish man and a Roman Catholic woman; the romance could not overcome his feelings that all non-Jews were responsible for the death of his grandmother during the War.

The U.S. community, as a whole, has accepted this blame. Therefore all someone has to do to obtain a consent to intervention, bombing, *et. al.* is to equate a post-World War II situation to that of the Jewish people living under the Hitler regime. Our sense of mission causes our knee-jerk response: we must save the Vietnamese from the Russian Communists; we must now save the Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina or WE ARE TO BLAME FOR ANY RESULTING ATROCITIES AND WE ACCEPT THAT BLAME. Our faculties have been paralyzed by guilt.

Our heads can be played with, have been played with, and will continue to be played with until we can come to terms with what happened during World War II and the extent of our involvement and moral responsibility. Are we and the Jewish community ready for this?

C. Maury C. Knight
Englewood, NJ

Classifieds

Classifieds will run in *The Witness* beginning in January, 1994.

A section of the classifieds will be titled "Cloud of Witnesses" and will provide space for photos or tributes on the anniversaries of the deaths, ordinations, acts of conscience, arrests, whatever.

The cost will be 75 cents a word or \$30 an inch whichever is less. Payment must accompany submissions. Deadline is the 15th of the month, two months prior to publication. For instance, an item received January 15th, will run in the March issue. If you wish to include a photograph we can run them at half-column width, if you prefer.

Letters

A letter from a gay bishop

News has spread rapidly that Otis Charles, 67, the retired Bishop of Utah and former dean of the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Mass., has disclosed that he is a gay man, the first Episcopal Church bishop to do so publically. The following is excerpted from the letter Charles sent his brother and sister bishops this past September:

For the past several months, I have openly communicated with my family and with growing numbers of my colleagues and friends that I am a gay man. While in many ways I would have preferred that this communication remain a personal and private one, I am well aware that ... that could not long be the case. Out of respect for the collegiality of the House [of Bishops] and for our personal relationship, as well as to avoid conjecture, I want to communicate with you directly.

For 45 years, I struggled with my sexual identity. In the isolation and darkness, I felt that there must be something wrong with me. I turned to others for help. I prayed with all my heart to be healed. Nothing changed. I was still me, pulled apart inside by feelings I schooled myself to believe were unnatural.

Then God did a marvelous and wonderful work in my life. God led me to Agnes Sanford. God led me to ask Agnes Sanford to pray with me for my healing — to pray that I might be delivered and God heard my prayer. I was healed. To my surprise it was not from homosexuality but from fear of myself, from my discomfort about who I am. It was a charismatic moment for me. I was born again and yet the power of the learned experience that it was unacceptable to be both priest and gay kept me silent. I said nothing to my wife, my family, my bishop.

Only very much later in another moment touched by the Holy Spirit did I have the courage to say aloud what before I had spoken only to my confessors and to Agnes Sanford. Since that evening of truth telling to [my wife] Elvira and our friends [former Bishop of Colorado] Bill and Barbara Frey in July 1976, I have for the most part remained silent and by my silence have given power to the forces that work to maintain the culture of silence within the church and the community.

As recently as the summer of 1991, I sat silently through the Phoenix General Convention. I did not join the debate openly and honestly, simply saying, "Hey, you are talking about me. I am a gay man." ...

Some may question what calls me to speak out now. ... Some may even wonder if all this is being made known now because of some incident or misconduct that has come to light. That is not the case.

My choice to make myself known in this way and at this time is a personal one, whatever motive or meaning others may infer. Sexuality is a part of the richness, the complexity and mystery of God's creation. It is an essential part of our human experience, and it is a part of the experience of priests and bishops. Indeed it deserves — perhaps even requires — to be dealt with as straightforwardly and sensitively as matters of doctrine and pastoral care.

I have promised myself that I will not remain silent, invisible, unknown. ... the choice for me is not whether or not I am a gay man, but whether or not I am honest about who I am with myself and others. It is a choice to take down the wall of silence I have built around an important and vital part of my life, to end the separation and isolation I have imposed on myself all these years. It is a choice to live my life as consistently as I can with my own integrity, a choice to be fully who I am and to be responsible for all that I am.

It is also a choice that has deeply affected Elvira and our children. Speaking the truth aloud to Elvira forever changed our relationship. To say that the years since 1976 have been painful is totally inadequate. They have been wrenching for us and for our family. Elvira and I began our life together with a deep commitment to have and to hold each other in sickness and in health, for richer or for poorer, until parted by death. Our marriage has been blessed. ... Our life together has been good. Slowly, however, Elvira and I have come to realize that we must live our lives separately.

In reaching this decision, I have been moved and humbled by the support and love of Elvira and our children and their families, by their openness to me, their willingness to hear me, and most of all by their affirmation and love for me. Still, it would be unreal not to acknowledge that for each of us this is a very different experience. ... There is anger, grief and loss, and at the same time we are stronger than ever before in our communication and our understanding of reconciling love.

... I would hope for people to be able finally to see in my story neither a victory nor a loss but a fellow human being and Christian on the journey that life is ... a human being doing his best to follow his heart and his Lord and to live a life of integrity and service. ...

This may be particularly difficult within the Episcopal Church. For the past 20 years or more, the subject of our diversity — racial, sexual, cultural — has been controversial, painful, and often divisive. Yet something new is being done in our midst — in spite of our reluctance. We now have three black diocesan bishops. Three women have been elected to the episcopate, one a diocesan. The same diocese that elected a woman to be its chief pastor seriously considered a gay man, living in a covenanted relationship [as a possible nominee for bishop]. Blacks, women, gays — all have had to struggle and continue to struggle to be visibly present with voice in the exclusive world of white, male, heterosexual dominance.

Because we are a people of faith, our quarrels have at times taken place as theological and moral arguments — often ignoring or even threatening the very ties of brotherly and sisterly love that bind us together as a community of believers. But precisely because we are a community of faith, bound to one another in that faith, I believe God is breaking the walls of separation. The Spirit is drawing us to a new understanding and experience of inclusion. I also believe God has drawn me to speak the truth of my experience. And I believe that as gay men and lesbians speak openly, telling the stories of their lives, the community of faith is strengthened.

THE WITNESS

Since 1917

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in Janitzio, Mex. Photo by Rose Palmisano.

The blood of the ancients

by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

*It's the blood of the ancients that runs
through our veins,
the forms pass but the circle of life
remains.*

—Celtic chant

Turning leaves and low skies mark our days now. It's an invitation to fires and shadows. As twilight encroaches, the church celebrates All Saints' Day.

Kids dress up as any of those things that hide in shadows or hover just beyond our sight. Vigils are held in Latin American graveyards. Many of us trek to an early morning mass where sleep and candle light blur into a recollection of the cloud of witnesses, a familiar face catching our breath as the responses in the liturgy flow from our lips.

My father, who throughout his childhood was taken on a monthly picnic to the grave of his mother, claimed in adulthood that we meet those who have died at the altar rail. He had no time for cemeteries.

But when we put his body in the ground — all too soon — we laid him in a graveyard that I knew well. For the two years we'd lived in Menominee, Mich., I had ridden my bike to the cemetery and listened to the stones and the trees.

Unlike my father, I've made the pilgrimages. I've spent long hours walking the graveyards where my mother's

mother's family is buried in southwest Pennsylvania. I was in the Cincinnati cemetery when my grandfather Browne's body was laid in it. One of these days I must take a picnic to the New York cemetery, but I have visited my father's grandparents' grave outside Belfast. Bill and I



Dierdre Luzwick

prayed there as our daughter, then two, climbed the stones.

Like a trashpicker or a beachcomber, I've retrieved whatever information there is. I'm grateful to relatives, however many times removed, who have salvaged material before me. I pore over birth and death certificates. I file odd notes and make copies of photos. I draw out family trees

and write to relatives again and again.

In the course of all this, I learned that my husband Bill and I — raised in different regions of the country — are related. His folks, Gary and Mildred Kellermann, enjoyed a 1984 family reunion in Hickory, Penn., a tiny town from which my maternal grandmother's family came. Poring over his folks' book of 30,000 Lyle descendants, I learned that my grandmother's grandmother's brother married Bill's grandmother's grandmother's grandfather's niece in 1827. This felt like fiction until the family historian in Hickory showed us their homes and burial grounds, lacing the places with stories.

It's the twilight. It's the shadows. It's the hint of things almost seen.

I call for my grandmother's hands on mine. I look for the laughter in my paternal grandfather's eyes and want them to turn to me. I want to know their passions, their loves, their conversions, their disappointments. I want an inkling of the sins and strengths they are passing on to the seventh generation.

When I was in college a young Japanese-American Buddhist accused me of being preoccupied with good and evil. It struck me that I could not be otherwise. On my mother's side there are six generations of Presbyterian ministers.

When I stand in the graveyard in Cross Creek, Penn. where my great-

editor's note

Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann is editor/publisher of *The Witness*. The work of Wisconsin artist **Dierdre Luzwick** is available in *Endangered Species*, Harper Collins, 1992.

great-great-grandmother is buried in an unmarked grave, I wonder what her life was like. I wonder if she would regret the hours and hours she spent in church with her husband (a Presbyterian elder) on their only day of rest. I wonder if she liked to sing. I wonder what she dreamed of when she was a teenager.

Knowing or wanting to know puts you in a “gloaming” time.

Is it a real or imagined insight that racked me with sobs when I suddenly believed that my father’s mother, who died when he was five and she was pregnant, *knew* that the pneumonia would kill her and struggled to find a way to say goodbye knowing the pain her son would carry?

Is it real or imagined that my maternal grandfather woke, after his wife’s death, to hear her singing gloriously in perfect tune for the first time?

What does it mean that so many of us have been encouraged or troubled by those we believe have left this life?

Of course in the Anglican Church, and beyond, Bishop James Pike has set a standard for such thoughts. In *The Other Side* (Doubleday, N.Y., 1968), Pike explained that his son’s communications, after his suicide, had persuaded him of life after death.

Pike resorted to mediums and blew the church wide open (again) with a televised seance. In these sessions, Pike’s son “informed” him that life does not end in death and the work continues. There are levels in heaven with the “Christ sphere” being the one for perfected individuals who can return to earth for new lives when they choose to. These and other “guides” can communicate with living humans who are receptive.

Pike rightly observes that this could be the metaphysical worldview of the mediums themselves.

But he takes seriously “his son’s” predictions concerning the presentment

against him (precipitated by different theological challenges). And he seems to intimate that folks from the other side consider him to have received Elijah’s mantle — perhaps a delusion of the size one might need to shield oneself during



Irene Cowen Browne, a missionary to China, in a Korean graveyard.

ecclesiastical denouncements.

Bill Stringfellow, in his biography of Pike, painstakingly researches the reports of the mediums, contrasting them with information available through newspapers, public documents and *Who’s Who* listings. Stringfellow concludes that Pike was “beguiled,” although he concedes that *The Other Side* is a compelling account of such relations.

I think it’s this fuzziness, where one can’t know whether someone is deluded or enlightened, that made the British Protestants so quick to ban statues, windows and music — leaving nothing but a Spartan Jesus.

It’s the same impulse that sent the missionaries around the world. And the impetus is right and wrong. I was embarrassed for years by my grandmother’s missionary work in China until my uncle

and aunt gifted me with a box of her letters. There are still things in Irene Cowen Browne’s relationship to the Chinese that are problematic, but she is unafraid of the Buddhas and temples; she mailed home a kitchen god (see page 24). She is herself — loving, competitive, funny, alive — a person crashing through cultural barricades in all her humanity.

Her missionary zeal is well-founded, I think. The tomb is empty.

On the other hand, of course, she misses nuances and substitutes cultural preferences for wisdom. She would make the mistake Kwok Pui-Lan explains regarding missionaries’ condemnation of “ancestor worship.” (Page 25.)

Anytime people remember the dead, invoke help, pray with abandon, reverence a piece of the earth, a shrine, a sanctuary, it gives pause. A friend, Mike Kettu, visited Mayan shrines this summer. Mostly he felt awed by the thousands of years of prayers now enfolded in moss and overgrowth. Once he felt chilled to his bones by a site where human sacrifice had spilled blood into the ground repeatedly.

In the twilight, the witching hour, it can be hard to discern which spirits are present.

Sometimes I want the lights turned up high and the presence of Jesus simplified (insofar as such is possible) by the removal of saints and the shrouding of incense — I want God in a normal and everyday way, without props.

But especially in the night, when I can no longer see with my eyes, I need a faith rich in sacraments, covenants and sacred objects to secure my hope. I love the incense, the genuflection, the incantation of God’s love.

As the days grow short and the shadows flicker, it feels right to invoke the saints, to call on their compassion, to feel their hand in our work, to join their cries of “how long?” and their hymns of praise.

When I Am Dead

by Red Hawk

When I am dead
my daughters will glimpse me crossing their faces
as they stare in the mirror.
They will discover me with a start of joy
in the eyes of their newborn.
Generations of lovers
will roll their heads softly off the pillow,
loving my face
without ever knowing my name.
And when their children stand alone
in the still and fearful cold
they will not know I loved their mother's mother
or that it is my voice keening on the wind,
yet they will be full of me;
they will not know that I was a man,
yet I am preparing them to be alone
and I will never leave them.

Red Hawk is the author of two books of poetry, *Journey of the Medicine Man*, August House, Little Rock, Ark., 1983, from which the above is reprinted; and *The Sioux Dog Dance*, Cleveland University Press, 1992.

Breaths

as introduced by Sweet Honey in the Rock

*In the African world view, the invisible world of spirit, humanity, and the invisible world of nature exist along a continuum and form an organic reality. The same is true of the relationship between the past, present and future. In Birago Diop's poem **Breaths** we are reminded of this continuum.*

Listen more often to things than to beings
Listen more often to things than to being
Tis the ancestors' breath
When the fire's voice is heard
Tis the ancestors' breath
in the voice of the waters
ah——wsh——
ah——wsh——

Those who have died have never never
left
The dead are not under the earth
They are in the rustling trees
They are in the groaning woods
they are in the crying grass
They are in the moaning rocks
The dead are not under the earth

Listen more often to things than to beings
Listen more often to things than to being
Tis the ancestors' breath
When the fire's voice is heard
Tis the ancestors' breath
in the voice of the waters
ah——wsh——
ah——wsh——

Those who have died have never never
left
the dead have a pact with the living
They are in the woman's breast
They are in the wailing child
They are with us in the home
They are with us in the crowd
the dead have pact with the living

Listen more often to things than to beings
Listen more often to things than to being
Tis the ancestors' breath
When the fire's voice is heard
Tis the ancestors' breath
in the voice of the waters
ah——wsh——
ah——wsh——

Lyrics based on a poem by Birago Diop,
copyright 1981, Barnwell's Notes
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Mitakuya owasin

You are all my relatives

by Martin Brokenleg

There is a place I can go to recover a deep sense of belonging and being loved. I drive west on the South Dakota grassland following highway 18 on the Rosebud Reservation to the Parmelee turnoff. The dirt road north will take me to the area called Lower Cut Meat, a butchering site in the 1890s. When I come over the prairie rise and look into the valley, I know that members of my family have been buried here for nearly seven generations.

I can see the low hill where a medicine man ancestor lies buried. He said, if he was buried in the ground, he would always watch over the family. My father and uncles tell of the times Eagle Bear came to help them. Other ancestors' bodies were returned to the elements by being placed on scaffolds or in the branches of trees. When the wind blows, it is their dust that blows in my face. This is why the elders teach us that we Lakota will always feel at home only on our ancestral lands. More recent relatives lie in the Episcopal cemetery just south of St. Mark's Church. Their graves are marked with wooden crosses, tombstones, plastic flowers, and cloth prayer flags from our traditional customs.

At many points in my life I felt a need

to understand again who I am, where I come from, and to draw strength from my relatives. A visit to the resting place of my family members does that. It brings me in close physical contact with the spirits of my relatives and ancestors.

I am grateful to God who is known to us Lakota Christians in the Hebrew Old Testament but also in the "Old Testament" of our cultural tradition. The church teaches us that God is made known to us in history and through history. For us,

Lakota history and tradition are the tools of God's self-revelation to us.

We Lakota are oriented toward family and relatives. Our relatives are the most sacred thing we have. Having relatives provides meaning, motivation, and support in our lives. Our experience shows us that death does not break our kinship bond. We turn to one another for help and support regardless of which side of death our relatives are on. All of our ethics are based on the interdependence and support which relatives always provide for one another. In fact, our experience with the world and everything in it is defined by kinship.

As long as we are good relatives, our relatives will help us. Whether our relatives are persons, animals, or things of the earth, if we are good relatives, we can

The ashes of our ancestors

To us the ashes of our ancestors are sacred and their resting place is hallowed ground. You wander far from the graves of your ancestors and seemingly without regret. Your religion was written on tables of stone by the iron finger of your God so that you could not forget. The Red Man could never comprehend nor remember it. Our religion is the traditions of our ancestors — the dreams of our old men, given them in the solemn hours of night by the Great Spirit; and the visions of our sachems, and is written in the hearts of our people.

Your dead cease to love you and the land of their nativity as soon as they pass the portals of the tomb and wander away beyond the stars. They are soon forgotten and never return. Our dead never forget the

beautiful world that gave them being.

When the last Red Man shall have perished, and the memory of my tribe shall have become a myth among the white man, these shores will swarm with the invisible dead of my tribe, and when your children's children think themselves alone in the field, the store, the shop, or in the silence of the pathless woods, they will not be alone.

At night when the streets of your cities and villages are silent and you think them deserted, they will throng with the returning hosts that once filled them and still love this beautiful land. The White Man will never be alone.

Let him be just and deal kindly with my people, for the dead are not powerless. Dead — I say? There is no death. Only a change of worlds.

— Chief Seattle, addressing Governor Isaac Stevens
at the signing of the Port Elliott Treaty in 1855

Martin Brokenleg is a canon at Calvary Cathedral and an associate professor of education at Augustana College in Sioux Falls, S. D. He is a member of the Rosebud Sioux tribe. Artist **Michelle Gibbs**, who lives in Mexico, crafts her art from fig tree bark, a tradition practiced by Mayan women.

count on their help. Whether living or dead, the power of our relatives to help us provides hope and experience. Both the church's liturgical understanding of the communion of saints and our tribal tradition express the vast source of help and support we have from our deceased relatives.

During the Gulf War one of my reservation's communities was sending several Lakota military personnel to the Middle East. At the send-off gathering an elder said that they would be going far away where our people had never gone before. The modern Lakota warriors were told not to be afraid or lonely since the spirits of all our dead warriors would be going with them to help them.

We Lakota are conscious of the presence of our deceased relatives particularly at gatherings for social or religious ceremonies. When the meal is to be eaten, small amounts of food are taken from each serving dish and collected on a single plate or bowl. An elder prays with the food and then takes it to a remote place so the spirits of the dead will be able to join us in the gathering and eat with us.

This custom of feeding the dead was thought strange by a visitor who watched a Lakota put food on a grave. The visitor asked the Lakota, "When do you think that dead person is going to come eat that food?" After a pause, the Lakota replied, "When your dead come up and smell the flowers you leave for them."

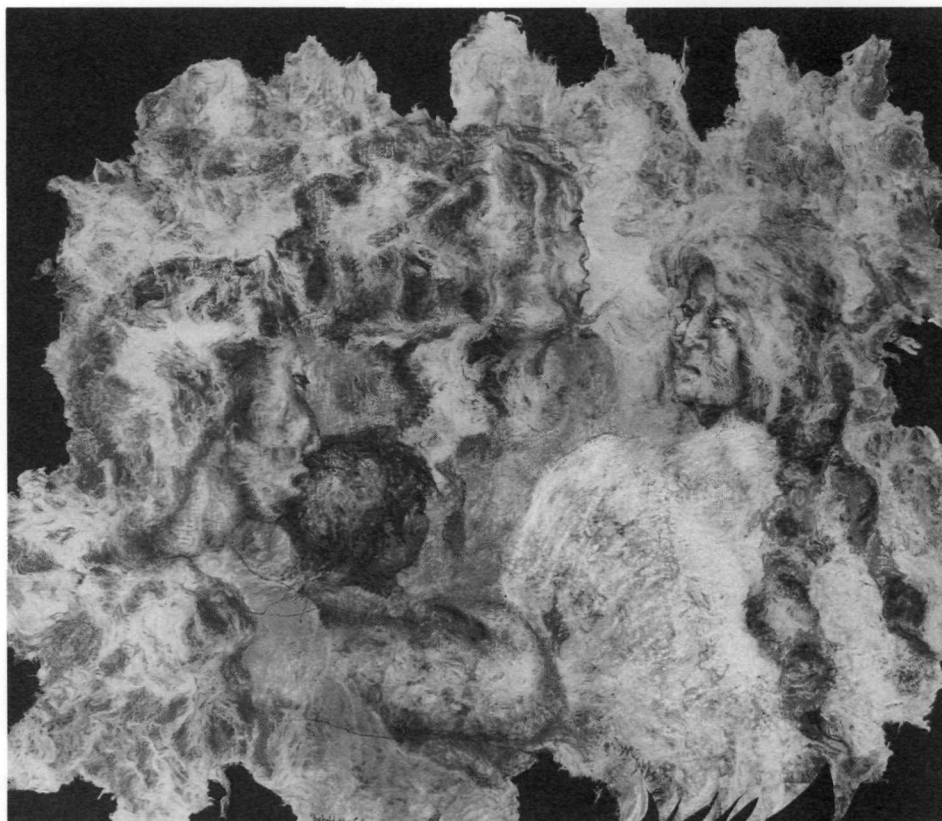
We Lakota have a closeness to our deceased relatives which is personal. That is, we can remember a relative, something the relative said, or the example the dead person set by living or teaching. Any of these can be a source of help when we are in need. It is our custom to call the spirit of a relative to come to help us. For this we use ceremony since it transcends both the spiritual and the physical realms. Ceremonial gatherings provide the presence and communion with our relatives

at a profoundly experienced level.

During the holy eucharist, the sharing of holy food on earth also unites us with Jesus and with relatives from other times and places. Church ceremonies such as All Saints', All Souls', as well as feasts of individual holy ones blend together for us. The dynamics of remembering, com-

Lakota are never alone nor would we want to be alone.

The essence of "all my relatives," the most common Lakota ceremonial statement, comes from our life experience. From the moment we draw breath, until we breathe our last, and beyond, we Lakota are surrounded by relatives. Our life ex-



Behold the future, remember the past

Michelle Gibbs

muning, receiving support, and celebrating all amalgamate in our relationship with our relatives, living or dead.

There is a drum song sung in memory of a deceased singer or dancer. The words are something like, "Whenever the people are together and having a good time, tell them to remember me." In this song, the spirit of the deceased relative or friend, whom we knew and loved, comes to the gathering and gives the occasion real depth and power.

Whether on earth or in death, we

perience is such that we know we are obligated to help our relatives and they are obligated to help us. We experience the support and stability that relatives give us no matter what comes along in life. We have a bond with relatives which is not interrupted by death. In fact, our hope for the afterlife is the desire for a state of being always in the presence of relatives. This communion of saints nurtures us in this life and in the life to come. We celebrate this on All Saints' Day as well as on all other days. **TW**

The politics of the communion

by Bill Wylie-Kellermann

As a Methodist, my heart is warmed to find a feast for John and Charles Wesley in the Anglican prayer Book calendar. On the one hand, I suppose, it reminds me pointedly that my denomination is at heart a movement. John Wesley never intended to found a church and died an Anglican priest. On the other hand, it's like stumbling upon my ancestors, my spiritual kin, prominently placed in the church's family tree. (There's something delicious about reformers in the sanctoral cycle.)

I know all my Methodist kin might not agree. Somehow growing up, it was conveyed to me that the difference between us and the Catholics was that they prayed to the saints, we straight to God through Christ. A certain healthy Protestant wariness about the saints yet abides with me. In a way, it goes back to Luther's theses nailed to the door on the eve of All Saints. So let me begin with my cautions.

The notion that indulgences (to buy friends or relatives out of purgatory) could be sold by the church based on the accrued goodness of the saints credited to some heavenly account, hardly needs a present-day refutation. But if we talk about the politics of the communion, the erstwhile control of the canon by the centralized church ought to come up.

A survey of the Roman saints even in this century, where the ratios slightly improve, has revealed that upwards of three quarters of the canonizations were men, were clerics, were persons of the

upper social classes. In the course of the Columbus Quincentenary many people were dismayed to learn how close the church has come before and again to canonizing Columbus for the "evangelization" of the Americas. Yet if the gospels are any guide the odds are long that when the saints gather round our God in circle they are heavy on the laity, the poor, and women.

Of course the festivals of the saints, more ancient than any Christian feast but Easter, originated at the graves of the martyrs. Gathering there was every bit an act of subversive memory. Much on the order of the Jerusalem women going to the tomb after the kingdom movement and its leader had been crushed, it was akin to the mothers of the disappeared returning relentlessly to the plaza with photos or chants.

As now, it was the day of their death, their "heavenly birthday" which was marked, and it was the telling of the martyr's *passio* which was celebrated. One thinks, for example, of Martin Luther King's birthday as a national holiday in mid-January. When he is recalled in the church, among the saints of God, his day would be April 4 instead. That is the day of his assassination; its political and theological meaning is different than remembering his birth.

One ancient chronicler conveys the scandal and horror which all of this implied to the dominant society:

"They collected the bones and skulls

of criminals who had been put to death for numerous crimes ... made them out to be gods, and thought that they became better by defiling themselves at their graves. 'Martyrs' the dead were called, and ministers of a sort, and ambassadors with the gods to carry prayers."

That the cult of the saints should arise at the graves of the martyrs substantially altered social geography in the cities of antiquity, as Peter Brown has shown (*The Cult of the Saints*, 1981). The cemeteries were "outside the gates" as it were. The sacred gravesite, the holy place of pilgrimage, shifted the social center to a location once apart, once peripheral, once unclean. The maps of a Roman landscape were redrawn in the paths beaten by pilgrims. Picture Vatican Hill a cemetery once outside the city, some distance from Rome. When grave and altar merged, a social balance shifted toward the margin.

Little surprise that social barriers were broken down in the deal. At graveside the boundaries not only between heaven and

earth, living and dead, town and its antithesis — but between public and private, rich and poor, men and women gave way. Brown cites an account of the procession streaming out of the capital to the shrine of Hippolytus:

"The love of their religion masses Latins and strangers together in one body ... with equal ardor patricians and the plebeian host are jumbled together, shoulder to shoulder, for the faith banishes distinctions of birth."

As Brown writes, "The church was an artificial kin group. Its members were expected to project onto the new community a fair measure of the solidarity... that

Celebrating exemplary lives is a way of recognizing the historical continuity of the faith community. They demonstrate that the biblical witness did not dissipate or end in the first century.

Bill Wylie-Kellermann's book, *Seasons of Faith and Conscience* (Orbis, 1991) is about the biblical politics of "liturgical direct action."



Joan of Arc by Jules Bastien-Lepage

courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, a gift of Erwin Davis, 1889. (89.21.1)

had previously been directed to the physical family. Nowhere was that made more plain than in the care of the dead.”

Early on, being rooted in the gravesite, the festivals of the saints were literally a “local” matter — discernment and “canonization” such as it was — remained in the hands of the congregation. Indeed, it resided in the spontaneous worship which the memory of the martyrs inspired. The calendar combined the emerging festi-

vals of the Christian year with the local host of saints and martyrs. It is a form and practice worth reclaiming. The history of the community and the lives of its members merge in the gospel story of Christ.

Celebrating exemplary lives is a way of recognizing the historical continuity of the faith community. They demonstrate that the biblical witness did not dissipate or end in the first century, that it is not so distant in time and space.

The canon, however, may also pose in its own way the temptation of distancing. Dorothy Day, for example, used to say, “Don’t call me a saint, I don’t want to be dismissed so easily.” (I imagine she’d be scandalized by Robert Lentz’s rendition of her in the style of a Byzantine icon complete with a copy of the Catholic Worker paper in her hand.) Her point was hardly that we should refrain from meditating on her life or any other Christian’s,

but merely that turning exemplary lives into canon fodder can be a way of letting ourselves off the hook of living the radical Christian life. As if only a special category of human beings were equal to its demands or subject to its call.

The exemplary lives of the saints illustrate the possible. In their rich diversity they show the characteristic biblical style lived out. Their significance for ethics is not as some static model to be imitated but in providing an improvisational and incarnational sense of what can be.

My daughter, who got wind that I am writing this article, has pulled out a book in her possession: *Miniature Stories of the Saints*. It includes very bland thumbnail sketches, heavy on prayer and virginity, with those insipid devotional pictures of pious-eyed white people in robes. I'm half inclined to mislay it. In fact, she treasures it as a gift from her godfather who has founded first a house of hospitality and now a refugee camp for the sanctuary of illegals in Texas. He is a Peruvian Indian and I believe he passed it on in part because it includes St. Rose of Lima. The traditional story of her going out alone, sacrament in hand, to meet an approaching army and succeeding to turn them away ought to be included in a history of non-violent action, but here unfortunately it is rendered in vague allusion to sound like an act of personal piety. I am reminded again that the politics of the communion of saints is affected by whomever controls and recounts the text of their lives.

At our house we have a lovely little statue of St. Nicholas (to mention one of the upper class male clerics in the canon) dressed in the robes of a bishop. We bring it out for his feast in early December to counter the cultural and commercial images into which he has been twisted. Jeanie has even written a little book for the girls which tells the traditional story of his anonymous gifts to the destitute

family with three daughters. She weaves bits of his own biography into the narrative: "Nicholas knew that being poor in Lycia was so hard that it was like being locked up in prison. And Saint Nicholas knew about prison. The Roman Emperor, Diocletian, had put Nicholas in jail for following Jesus." (Think of a Roman political prisoner dressed as the jolly old elf.) In the end it tells a variety of cultural traditions, including Santa Claus, by which Nicholas is recollected, and concludes that at our house we remember the good bishop of Lycia on December 6 and that we "smile to think of the saints of God in all times who have listened in the night and done what ever they could do to show the love of God ... They are listening and reaching to us with all their love, because God intends for all of us to be alive with the joy of creation."

The saints are intercessors. And that indeed is the work of all Christians in every time and place. I like in the Anglican tradition that the saints are not prayed to but prayed *with*.

William Stringfellow (whose feast I personally celebrate, side by side with the Wesleys, on March 2) once wrote of the Communion of Saints in a meditation on prayer:

"I refer, when I use that curious and venerable title, to the entire company of human beings (inclusive of the church, but transcending time and place and thereby far more ecumenical than the church has ever been) who have, at any time, prayed and who will, at any time pray; and whose occupation, for the time being, is intercession for each and every need of the life of this world ... Prayer, in quintessence, therefore, is a political action — an audacious one, at that — bridging the gap between immediate realities and ultimate hope, between ethics and eschatology, between the world as it is and the Kingdom which is vouchsafed."

One Halloween, on the Eve of All

Saints, a group of us undertook a liturgy of exorcism at Williams International, the cruise missile manufacturer outside of Detroit. The idea was to name and identify, confront and rebuke the power of death inherent in nuclear weapons. The demonic powers, we thought, ought not to be trivialized but taken with deadly seriousness. The liturgy was adapted from a traditional rite, and it began with a long invocation of the saints, biblical and canonical, like Mary and the Baptist, Elizabeth and Magdalene, Francis and Clare, Joan of Arc and Thomas Moore. But it spilled over to invoke others not yet formally beatified: Franz Jaegerstaetter and Ann Frank and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Oscar Romero and Ita Ford, Wesley and Barth, Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton, A.J. Muste and Mohandas Gandhi, Martin King and Sojourner Truth. Such as these and more by name. Then summon members of our own community, faithful peacemakers, who had died. The prayers had hardly begun and already we knew in our bones the presence of this great company. We stood together in prayer. Nothing was changed, but anything seemed possible.

In Latin America, where graveside feasting on "*el Dia del Muerte*" — the day of the dead — is still a cultural fact, the litany of the saints, local and universal, retains its political vitality. It is a common practice in public meetings and worship to read the role of the martyred and the disappeared. The assembled respond aloud, *Presente*, as each name is called. It is as though the power and presence of the gathering were far larger than it may appear. As though in memory and resurrection the dead had refuted death, refused to go quietly away, declined to be silent and absent.

Let it be so among us.

All saints and martyrs, pray with us. We pray with you.

Presente. Amen.

TW

A street-level shrine

by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

We remember that when people lose their lives as a consequence of injustice—their spirit wanders, unable to pass over—seeking resolution.
We remember that our lives are a continuation of those who have come before, and that many of those who are our kin have died as a consequence of injustice, and so are wandering—seeking resolution.
We remember that as long as the souls of our kin wander—then so too do we—and so we make places for their souls to be.
We are helped to remember our right to be here.
We are helped to remember our responsibilities.
We create our justice daily.
We do.

Poster at the corner where Malice Green was killed by two Detroit police officers.

Angry voices are rising in Detroit. And they are rising in an explicit attempt to put Malice Green's soul to rest, to honor his memory.

Some of us, who increasingly feel like old-timers, feel a sense of *déjà vu* and relief in the midst of the invectives thrown out by Detroit teenagers.

These angry words — however chaotic or at odds with one another — are a prayer that political activism may break the hold of drugs and handguns, greed and despair in the nation's poorest city.

"We want to rebuild an integrated civil rights movement that doesn't stop where

the last one did," David, from the Justice for Malice Green Coalition tells a small crowd at the site of Malice Green's death.

"We're calling for cops to get out of the community, because we see police as people put into our community to protect the rich from the poor. We need defense squads elected from our community, to protect us from racists, gay bashers and rapists."

Yunus Collins, of the Deadly Force Committee of the National Organizing Committee, holds the megaphone saying, "This is a trial of national significance. This is like the Algiers' Hotel incident." I'm relieved that someone in Detroit in his early 20s knows that three black men were killed by three working-class white police officers during the Rebellion in 1967.

A woman rivets the small crowd, which looks tired and worn, preaching with rigid, flaming anger:

"I was in my car on the service drive. The police came over and asked me to open my hand. I did. They asked if I was a working girl. I said yes. I work the corner of Woodward and Jefferson. I work for Councilman Clyde Cleveland. Is every woman a whore? Is everyone who walks past a crack house an addict? Does every addict deserve of death?"

A tall man in his forties steps to the megaphone: "I was in Jackson prison. We don't want the white man's religion.

We're ready. It's going to take war and people in the streets. You all are in the streets and that's good. We got the other under control. I know there are enemies in this crowd. Take notice."

He spoke with dignity for separatism, urging African American Detroiters to quit shopping at white-owned, suburban stores. When two European American Roman Catholic priests were asked to pray but launched into testimonies for order instead, this warrior disappeared.

At a second gathering a white, well-heeled judge makes a guest appearance ostensibly to explain how the justice system works, but in fact he can't restrain himself from insisting *that* it works which brings down the house.

A young Asian American woman recites a list of people who have been killed by Detroit police in the last year. "You're saying the system works; it doesn't!" As she explained what she thought the agenda should be, the room erupted.

A young man flew forward screaming: "This is the black community; we're not workers. I'm sick of white folks coming in to tell me what to do. What we going to do? Integrated movements don't work in this country. Look at history it's



Shrine where Malice Green was killed.

Jim West

Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann is editor/publisher of *The Witness*. Photographer Jim West works for *Labor Notes* in Detroit, Mich.

On wishful thinking

by Julie A. Wortman

My father, Weldon Wortman, died this past summer after the cancer he had been fighting for several years caught up with him.

In May, armed with his physician's assurance that a year's worth of chemotherapy had paid off in his restored good health, he and my mother, Ruth, had eagerly packed up the car and headed for their usual summer's stay in their cottage on Martha's Vineyard.

In July he began complaining of back pain. By early August he had to be air ambulated to a hospital back home in Cleveland. He died the morning of August 16, before my mother could complete arrangements to bring him home for what we expected would be several



Weldon Wortman

months of hospice care.

"I'd like to believe that I'm going to see your father again, but I just don't

it's nationalist movements that work."

An anger that had seemed to flow one direction branched in two and the waves collided. Members of the Justice for Malice Green Coalition were screaming at members of SOSAD (Save Our Sons and Daughters). Each was insisting that they were present to the families of those who were killed by police. The Justice for Malice Green Coalition, which clearly considers SOSAD insufficiently militant, is integrated, particularly by young white and Asian women. They're Marxist and a little glib. The second group is largely African American and includes many community grandmothers.

And again, although I'd started monitoring how safe my white skin was in this crowd — I was encouraged to hear teenagers invoking history, maybe studying the freedom movements.

"We need to be authors of peace not confusion," interjected Errol Henderson, from SOSAD. I've got a brother in cap-

tivity. Ahmed Rahman spent 20 years in jail [*Witness* 12/93]. The system does not work. It does not work for black people, brown people or for many poor white people. It definitely doesn't work for Native people. 'The constitution says...' Let's be real. We had no input there."

Sheldon Glenn, 16, whose cousin was killed by the police says, "By being peaceful, they're not going to give us nothing."

A grandmother speaks, "At 3 o'clock today my brother and three others got arrested. Now they're saying they didn't arrest him and I seen him put in the van. We see the unmarked cars, the 24-hour coverage. We can't walk down the streets. We need help like we never needed it before. Everybody counts. I don't care what color, what nationality. You got to listen to everybody."

Detroit police officers Walter Budzyn and Larry Nevers were sentenced on October 12 to 8 and 12 years respectively for second-degree murder. **TW**

think I will," my mother recently told me as we looked out over Lake Erie from a local park my parents had frequently visited these past few years.

"I think people believe in heaven out of wishful thinking."

A skeptic and rationalist to the end — his copy of the "Jefferson Bible" still lies by his reading chair — my father would have agreed with her. Years ago he had contracted for the most barebones of mortuary arrangements available because he hated the idea that anyone would treat his passing as anything other than a simple matter of death after life. His body had already been cremated by the time my two sisters and I arrived in town the afternoon of his death.

"Still, I find myself talking to him," my mother admitted as we walked on.

Asked if that meant she sometimes feels my father's presence, she replied, "Yes, I guess I do."

This kind of talk would have made Weldon uncomfortable. We never discussed it much, but I doubt he believed there was any chance of communicating with someone once they are gone.

That thought saddens me because I miss my father terribly. Still, I take comfort in knowing that the night before he died he spent a lot of time looking deep and hard into my mother's eyes, apparently willing her to understand something he no longer had the physical ability to say.

That long eye-to-eye vigil probably has a lot to do with the presence my mother continues to feel now that he is gone.

And her experience sustains my hope and growing conviction that, however easily my father might have dismissed the possibility while he was alive, he's sharing in it now, on the other side. **TW**

Julie A. Wortman is managing editor of The Witness.

A strange kind of freedom: reaching for ancestors

*Vincent Harding, a colleague of Martin Luther King, was a consultant in the production of **Eyes on the Prize**. He is a professor of religion and social transformation at Iliff School of Religion in Denver, Colo.*

Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann: In a culture like ours which is devoid of almost any sense of history and in which most of us have very little sense of our ancestors, what do you believe is important about reclaiming this history?

Vincent Harding: Our culture is one that seems to spin us off without moorings. We operate in a kind of permanent vertigo because we don't have any consciousness about where we came from. You could almost say that we need ancestors for our own fundamental and basic sanity. To try to exist as if there are no ancestors is to exist in a state of wildness.

JWK: Where do you see evidence of the wildness in our world today?

VH: In our great difficulty in knowing how to be with each other, how to be with the earth itself, how to be with ourselves. All of that seems to me to be a testimony, the kind of destructiveness that consumerism and capitalism represent for us.

We are so readily, literally and figuratively, warring with each other over the strangest kinds of things.

But I want to mention a couple

of other things in response to your question about *why* we should have a sense of ancestors.

A sense of ancestors provides us with a sense of continuity that we have come



Vincent Harding

out of something; we did not just suddenly appear; we are products of human experience — the struggles and pains and creativity of those who went before us.

We need to find ways of nourishing a sense of gratitude.

Gratitude is not an experience that comes naturally to us in this age. When we have been best at our humanity, we have remembered and given thanks. All of the great human spiritual traditions that have built into them the remembering-of-the-

Just as there were those who withstood and persevered through all kinds of things for us to be here, so too we have a calling to go through all kinds of things for people who are yet to come and whose ancestors we will be.

ancestors seem to do so because women and men discovered that their own humanity depends upon that.

Just as there were those who withstood and persevered through all kinds of things for us to be here, so too we have a calling to go through all kinds of things for people who are yet to come and whose ancestors we will be.

JWK: How did you first become interested in the concept of ancestors?

VH: I was born in New York City of immigrant parents, who had come to this country after World War I from the West Indies and so I never saw my grandmothers or grandfathers. It wasn't until I was well into my thirties before I saw the family that is still in Barbados, and so it may be that my sense of need for connection may be part of the story here.

In addition to that, I grew up in — almost literally grew up in — a small African-American congregation in Harlem that was like a tribe for me. It was a small church, not more than 100 people at its largest. The older people were tremendous sources of strength to me. Because my mother was a single mother — a divorced mother — they provided great spiritual and emotional resources to help her in the task of raising me. Those people, as they went on their way beyond this life, became very rich and real as my most immediate ancestors — the ones that I could know, even more fully than some of my blood ancestors.

The other thing that strikes me is the experience that Rosemarie and I had when we went south to participate in the freedom movement in the beginning of the 1960s. We were very conscious that those of us coming from outside the south and stirring up things were not the real pioneers. When we got there we found that there were people who had been there, who had in a very deep sense prepared the ground for those who were to come. And as we were in touch with

them, it became clearer and clearer to me that those people were there because other people had been there before them.

Of course I started more intentionally researching the history of our freedom struggle. The ancestors became more and more real to me as I went back into generations and generations and recognized the importance of these people who stirred up things wherever they were.

JWK: Does that influence how you now envision the communion of saints?

VJ: I think so. A number of years ago, I began to sketch out the outlines of what I thought might be — and what may still be one of these days — a novel that included some kind of vision of the gathering and the movement of what we might call the communion of saints.

For me, Gandhi is one of those persons who constantly comes to my mind whenever I hear or play the song “When the saints go marching in.” For me, the communion of saints is populated by people that I have known personally, but also by people whom I have only seen in dreams and books.

JWK: When you went to the West Indies in your thirties or forties, were your grandparents alive?

VH: My grandparents were dead by then. I met aunts and cousins, but my grandparents died while I was still a child.

JWK: Were you able to learn much about them?

VH: I learned some things, I wouldn’t say much and I’m not sure why I haven’t pressed myself very hard to learn much, but they were a presence in the little village where we visited with my aunts.

JWK: Do you have any advice for both the African-American and the Native American communities — given the deliberate intention of people in the slave trade to separate people who knew one another when they were brought to the

United States and in terms of the American Indians being ripped from their ancestral lands? Neither community has a written lineage. I wonder if you have any advice for people who want a sense of their ancestors but feel really cut off from being able to know something concrete.

VH: Well, it seems to me if you look at the way in which ancestors have been invoked over the millennia, it has not depended on concrete, material evidence. So much has been evoked from our reaching out to them — to those whom we never saw or heard or read about. It’s almost an act of creation.

I think that on a very important level many of us have to reach out in that kind of way and not get too tied up in what we don’t have as evidence.

I would also want to be very clear that those of us who have been broken off from the material ties and contacts with our ancestors are not the only ones who are in deep and fundamental need of those connections. In terms of the wildness and the mooringlessness that we are living with right now, the need for ancestors is not in any way confined to or even focused on people of color.

JWK: Certainly. The reason for the question — in my own history I can find census data. It’s something concrete that I can hang onto and look at, but already I feel cheated because in the 1790s women weren’t listed, I mean they were listed as “free, white females” or as “slaves” or there’s an “other” category, but the men get listed by name. I’ll never know — or I’ll be lucky if I ever find out — what the history is of those women.

VH: And maybe that is part of a strange and convoluted gift, because what it does is give you full permission to let your imagination really work and that may be what you need even more than those specific details.

JWK: Well, that may be a good entrée to my next question which is whether you



Africa: Ancestor Homage

believe that it’s possible to have communication between the living and the dead, whether in dreams, insights or memories.

VH: I would find it very strange to consider that there were not means of relationship because that’s part of what I was trying to say about the critical importance of our sense of continuity. Part of the reason why continuity can become real for us is that the sense of relationship can

Artist **Betty LaDuke** lives in Ashland, Ore.



Betty LaDuke

become real too. How we communicate, how we enter into or extend or deepen our relationship with those who have gone before us is to be explored and imagined by each of us and by each generation.

I would find it very, very strange to consider that there is no way of us being in constant communion with those who have gone before.

JWK: Have you ever had the experience

of feeling a particular word from a particular person?

VH: Yes. A variety of people and at different times. I was just thinking about the experience that really helped me to break through a very difficult time in the creation of *There is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America* (Vintage Books, 1981) and that was a dream in which I was visited by W.B. DuBois and John O'Franklin who was still alive, and J. Saunders Redding, who has passed on. The three of them, in a sense as fathers for me in this whole area of African-American history writing, were a very powerful force in helping me at a certain point in the working through of what I was trying to do.

JWK: Is it possible to invoke that kind of communication? Through ritual?

VH: If we take seriously the religious and spiritual experiences and practices of people all over the world, it is clearly possible. I think a lot of that depends on our willingness to put ourselves in the place and space where that kind of thing can become a deeper reality than we ever imagine it could be.

JWK: Can you give me an example of a way to put yourself in that kind of place?

VH: I think the experience of quietness and meditation, the

experience of almost literally and persistently calling — either outwardly or inwardly or both — on these persons is one of the ways in which we can make ourselves available to the experience.

JWK: What you're describing has a very different feel than what comes to me when I think of seances, or "New Age" channeling kinds of efforts. Is there a distinction there for you?

VH: I don't like to make those kinds of comparisons. What I said was said without any reference to anything like that, but it doesn't mean that it's not related to anything like that.

JWK: I just wondered if you saw any distinctions between the two.

VH: No, I think what I was trying to say was that each person, each community and each generation has to find the ways and the place and the means. None of us ultimately in a realm like this can say that what we have found is more authentic than what somebody else has found or that theirs is less authentic than ours. I'm just assuming that with all the great variety of the human experience there must be a tremendous variety of ways in which we can engage in this continuity of relationship with the ancestors.

JWK: The early Protestants went through England and smashed the heads off the saints in the churches because they felt that it was pagan to rely on the commun-

ion of saints. How do you explain to people who want an almost simplistic clarity in their relationship to Jesus that there's something appropriate and faithful about being connected to the people who have gone before us?

VH: I don't know that rational arguments are of much assis-

tance. I think that it's fairly clear that at least several strands in the New Testament assume that we are surrounded by a company and that they are real and that we are in relationship with them. Beyond that I am disinclined to try to argue with people about whether it's right or not right. I think that as the deep needs surface in our lives we discover whether it's right or not right. Before those needs

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or religious lines.*

surface, it's almost irrelevant to talk about it.

JWK: It seems to me there's a real freedom in knowing that the work that we do is part of an effort that continues.

VH: There is a real sense in which we can gain a full understanding of what it means to be called, because our calling then is both a kind of echo of what has gone before and a kind of preliminary to what is yet coming. One of the most important aspects of this for me is how to live, as some Native American traditions put it, in consciousness of the needs of seven generations. How to be responsible, how to simply order our lives, so that we can be resourceful ancestors for those who will be coming.

I was just reading something that suggested that people who were born in the 1990s would be the 13th generation of people who had been born here since the revolution. You can begin to extrapolate about where seven generations might take us and who might be calling on us as ancestors at that time.

One of the things that we haven't reflected on is that the lines of ancestry are going to be a lot more complicated as time goes on ...

JWK: How so?

VH: Well, I find it fascinating in my teaching to see and hear white Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans claiming African Americans as their ancestors because of the common commitment they feel with Sojourner Truth or Ella Baker or W.B. DuBois. In this country there is a kind of strange freedom that we're being given that, if we wish to, we can choose our ancestors and those choices do

not have to stay within racial lines or religious lines.

I think we've got some very interesting times coming in this matter of ancestry. Who will be calling upon us, I think, will be very unpredictable. We better get



ourselves ready for all kinds of callings because all sorts of folks we never dreamed would call us ancestors, may be doing that when the time comes.

We better get ready for all kinds of callings because all sorts of folks we never dreamed would call us ancestors, may be doing that when the time comes.

We've got to prepare in such a way that there can be a gathering of the saints in a way that the land becomes life-giving for everybody.

JWK: And you think we stand a chance?

VH: We make the chance.

JWK: I see this culture

as not having a sense of ancestors. Yet others suggest that we *are* ancestor-bound, but it's all old, white men, like George Washington.

VH: Part of what's going on now is that even the things that we protest against are breaking up all around us. We had better be very careful not to spend too much time or energy on this. How many people in America today pay any attention to George Washington? That's an icon from sometime past. There is probably, more than anything else, a need to create some ancestors who can serve us all.

Since this country is permanently in flux and permanently in creation, sitting around and waiting for it to settle down, looking for models or even looking for models to critique is not going to do it. We're going to have to take great risks and great chances in trying to figure out what we can do to qualify as real ancestors.

JWK: Do you have anything specific in mind? Or is it a general invitation?

VH: For me the preamble to the Constitution which talks about creating a more perfect union opens up a space of response, because what I would say is that wherever there are people in their own creative and faithful ways trying to develop a more perfect union, even simply a more perfect union on their street, those people are trying to be faithful ancestors to those who are coming.

My guess is that we probably ought to stop looking for major national examples. If they come, when they come, wonderful, but for right now we take bits and pieces just like Montgomery was a bit and piece in 1955. We simply don't know how and where those pieces will come, but my guess is that there are people who are still working at them. Maybe that's one of the ways in which the ancestors are with us, maybe they are still helping some folks to do what they have to do even in this crazy time.

TW

Messages from the Dead — in India

By Kiran Nargarkar

Diametrical opposites don't cancel each other out in India. They affirm and complement each other. It may sound illogical but that is the logic of the Indian ethos. I thought there was no ancestor worship in India. I was right. And I was wrong. In certain sections of society it is unknown. In others it is practiced regularly.

The specific purpose of Hindu funeral ceremonies is to liberate the soul from the body in which it is trapped. A few preconditions will help the process. A Hindu needs a son for many reasons: to carry forward the family name and genes; to look after him in his old age and lastly to light the funeral pyre and throw his ashes in a holy river like the Ganges. The soul of a human being, Hindus believe, lingers on earth for 12 or 13 days. [The exact number of days may vary depending upon your caste and the region you are from.] From the 10th to the 13th day major ceremonies are performed to liberate the soul from earthly bondage. On the 11th day, for instance, clay pots with money may be given to Brahmins. On the 12th day, the dead person's belongings including dresses and ornaments are distributed among the priests. The obligatory rite common among all castes is to give a feast to Brahmins and those who belong to the caste of the deceased.

The dead are an unreasonable lot and even when they are no more, they take a frightfully exorbitant toll on the living. There are many reasons Hindus get into debt and become bonded labourers for generations: dowries, droughts and the

feasts for the dead. On the 12th day, the son leaves a bit of food out in the open. If a crow comes and eats the stuff, the deceased has no earthly desires. If the crows do not polish off the food immediately, the dead person's soul is unhappy about something.

The son, or in his absence a close relative, then questions the dead person's soul: Are you worried about your daughter Malati's marriage? I promise I'll find a good husband for her, give sufficient dowry to him and marry her in style. Are you anxious about Rajan, your youngest son turning out to be a wastrel? I will bring him to the righteous path, help him complete his education and get him settled. Are you worried, Mother, that your eldest daughter-in-law will ill-treat your youngest daughter who is a widow? I will ensure that this will not happen. When the crows descend and eat the rice, the son knows exactly what the dead person's fears and anxieties are due to. He/she has taken the son's word and his/her soul can now leave behind this earthly abode in peace.

Ancestor worship in India, unlike say Japan, is a selective process. The ancestors chosen for this purpose are usually highly pious and saintly.

Yet the inroads of 20th-century technology may create a caste of venerated ancestors that would otherwise not exist in India. The 13th day is the cut-off date for mourning. The living are purified, you can get on with the business of life. Once every year, you remember the dead and perform ceremonies for the peace of their souls.

Framed photographs of the dead adorn the walls and sit next to the gods at domestic altars. When you put vermilion

and turmeric paste and flowers on the gods at prayer time, you put the same on the forehead of the glass frame. Graven images were expensive in the past. Will the technology of the photograph co-opt the dead father or mother into a form of ancestor-worship? It will take another 50 or 100 years to answer that.

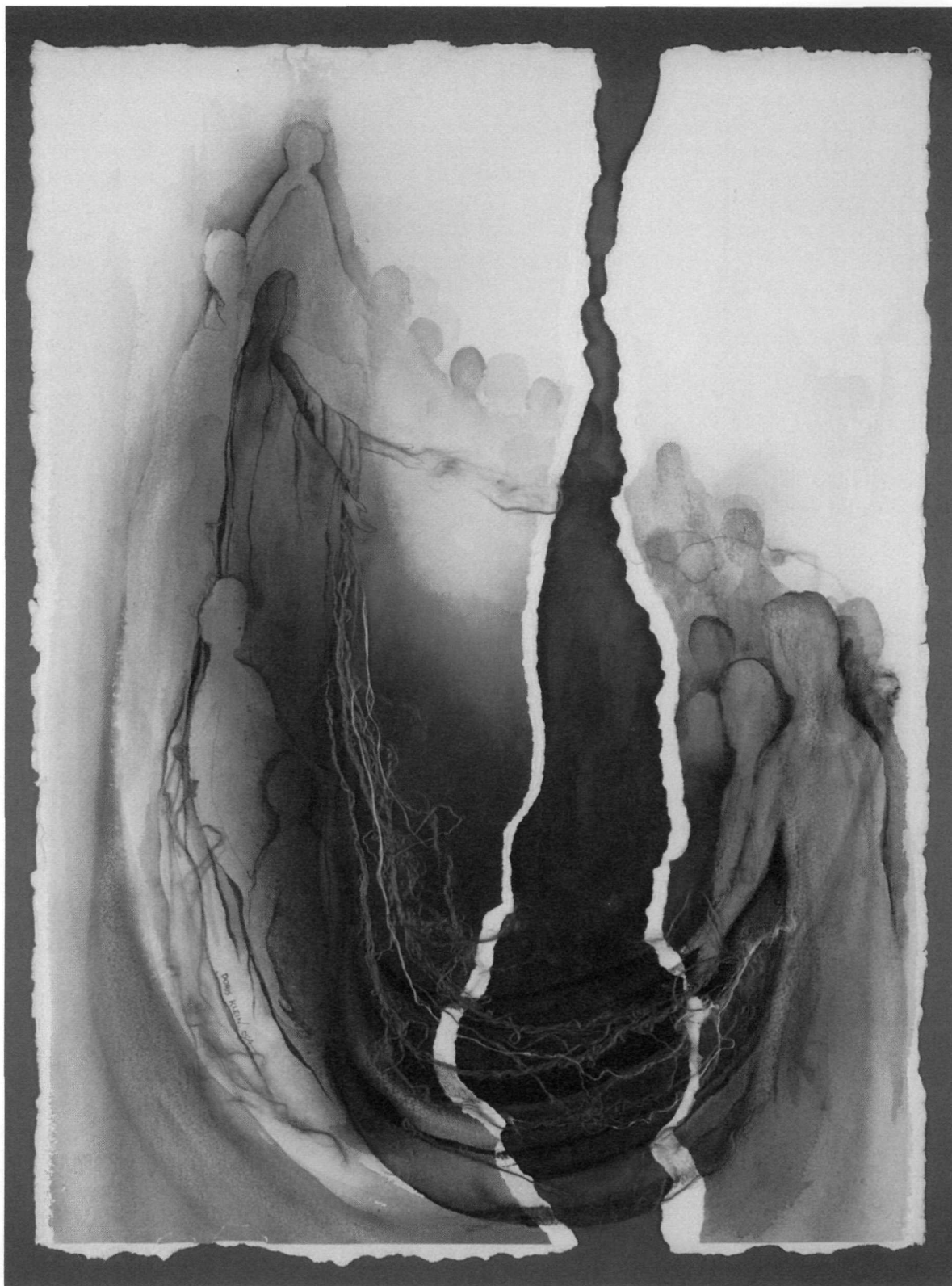
Traditionally, Hindus have worshiped the symbolic footprints or footwear of the great saint poets. Rajasthan is the home of the Rajputs, the most heroic — perhaps also the most blindly heroic — warriors in India. In medieval times when Muslim kings besieged a Rajput fortress and defeat was certain, the men wore saffron turbans, opened the gates and fought their way to death. And the women of the royal household, dressed in their wedding clothes, committed mass suicide by jumping into wells of fire to avoid capture, dishonor and rape by the enemy. Before immolating themselves, they dipped their hands in red powder and left the prints of their palms on the walls. These became objects of worship, especially among Hindu women.

The history of Hindu-Muslim enmity, riots and massacres makes headlines in India and across the world. It is a shame that nobody highlights how Muslim mystics called Sufi saints bring millions of Hindus and Muslims together. Their graves or *durgahs* are the sites of festivals, prayers and fervent worship among peoples of all creeds. A 16th century saint-poet like Kabir scoffs at the notion of compartmentalizing religion. In his rugged, rigorous, hard-headed and extraordinarily lyrical world-view, all human beings and not just some are the chosen people. Since God was not the private property of priests, mullahs, and Brahmins, the equation with Him was a totally personal one. This was incredibly liberating since it laid waste to the caste system. All human beings were equal and there were no untouchables. **WV**

Kiran Nargarkar is a novelist, playwright, screenplay writer and critic who makes a living in Bombay, India in advertising.

At times of passage we realize that God does not leave us alone, but sends midwives to accompany us and assist us on our journey. This painting reflects on the circle of women with whom God enfolds us as we experience the births and deaths of body, heart and spirit. The grandmothers who have gone before us, as well as those soul-sisters with whom we walk today, are the wise ones who stand beside of us, believe in us, challenge and encourage us.

Doris Klein's art is available from her art studio at 4311 N. 100th St., Milwaukee, Wis., 53222.



The Midwives

Doris Klein

The Day of the Dead

By Janelle Conaway

In a one-room fisherman's house, Maria Hernández laid out a table with candles, vases of flowers and heaping plates of bread and fruit, covered with embroidered cloths. Framed pictures of Christ, the Virgin Mary and saints adorned the wall.

In stark contrast to this festive corner — dressed up for the Day of the Dead — the rest of the room was almost bare. On the walls hung straw sleeping mats, which members of the family would put down later that night on the dirt floor. An old woman tended a pot of tamales cooking over a wood fire.

Hernández arranged a stack of rolls on a tray for the spirits of departed family members. One of the souls belonged to her daughter, who had been working as a maid in Mexico City when she died in a water-heater explosion. She was 13.

"Some people say that the spirits smell the scent and come," the mother said, as she prettied the table. "Well," she added with a shrug, "who knows?"

The Day of the Dead makes for a complex spiritual tapestry, weaving together ancient, pre-Columbian beliefs about the afterlife with threads of Christian theology. In parts of Mexico, these traditions are starting to be overshadowed by a U.S. import — Halloween.

But in Janitzio — an island village on Lake Ptzcuaro, in central Mexico — people stare death in the face, feel its presence, celebrate it or rail at it.

Outside one house, Severiana Cruz sat staring at an elaborate, flower-strewn offering. The scent of burning copal mingled

with the smell of bread, and anger burned in the woman's eyes. "Fifty years with him and now I'm alone," she told me. "Every year, this" — she gestured dismissively at the colorful display — "and who knows if he'll come?"

Others were certain the souls would visit. Bertina Gabriel, a second-grade teacher, became a believer a few years ago, when she saw tracks of fingers in a plate of salt that had been left out for the dead. The table had never been left unattended, she said, and the finger marks could only have been made by a spirit.

Death was everywhere on this night of All Saint's Day, but it didn't feel morbid. Mariachi bands played along the waterfront, where little boys hawked necklaces with glow-in-the-dark skulls. Vendors sold corn tortillas hot off the griddle and fruit punch that had been simmering for hours. On the village basketball court, performers entertained the tourists with traditional dances and songs.

Around midnight, people headed up a steep hill to the cemetery, to hold vigil until dawn. The cemetery glowed in the light of hundreds of flickering candles. The air was thick with the weedy scent of marigolds, the "flower of the dead." The ground was carpeted in their orange petals. A chilly breeze blew off the lake.

After most of the tourists had left the cemetery, a priest celebrated Mass.

A lone, wrinkled woman sat by a grave staring into a candle flame, two plates of bread covered with cloths set before her as an offering. At some gravesites, parents and their children curled up in shawls to nap as they waited throughout the night. Perhaps the souls of their loved ones, wandering in darkness, would find their way by the light of the candles,

along the paths of flowers, and taste the simple foods prepared for them.

At the back of the cemetery, Elodia Chern Cirangua accompanied friends at the grave of their mother, who had died of cancer during the past year. The deceased had left a large family of 12 grown children, who had pooled their resources to honor her. They had amassed elaborate offerings of bread, bananas, apples, oranges and bottled water, in case her soul should be hungry or thirsty.

Speaking in a low murmur, in the pre-dawn quiet that had settled over the cemetery, Cirangua talked about a near-death experience she had had nearly two decades before. "It was like I was asleep — like a dream," she began, her voice taking on a storyteller's singsong rhythm. "I was walking down a path full of flowers." She and her sister had been riding in a bus that hit a car and flipped over. Her sister had died, and Cirangua, a young teenager then, had hovered in a coma for a month.

In her dream — or was it a vision? — an old woman with an ugly face came toward her as she was walking down the flowered pathway and said, "Go back. You don't have a candle with you. You have to go back."

At the time, Cirangua said, she didn't want to go back. But afterwards, she remembered details that made her believe life might be even harder after death than in this world. She had seen children who were naked and sad.

Elodia had no doubt that the souls of the dead could come back to visit. They are not out to scare the living, she said; they just wander because they suffer. "If I'm afraid, it's because I am weak."

I don't know whether any spirits found their way by candlelight to Janitzio on that chilly November night. Who can know for sure? Maybe it didn't even matter whether they came. Maybe what mattered was that we were willing to expect them.

TW

Janelle Conaway is a journalist living in Albuquerque, N. M. Photographer **Rose Palmisano** lives in Rio Rancho, N.M.

“The hand of Brigid around my neck” Saints in the Celtic tradition

by J. Philip Newell

*I awake this morning,
In presence of the holy angels of God.
May heaven open wide before me,
Above me and around me,
That I may see the Christ of my love,
And his sun-lit company
In all the things of earth this day.*

The prayers that come down to us in the Celtic tradition, particularly the prayers of the people of the Western Isles of Scotland, prayers uttered for centuries at the daily rising of the sun and its setting, at the kindling of the morning fire and the smooing of the same at night, prayers offered at the birth of a child and by the deathbed of a grandparent, prayers that were passed down from mother to son and son to daughter, and many of which were finally transposed from the oral Gaelic by Alexander Carmichael in his great 19th-century collection, the *Carmina Gadelica*—these prayers, almost without exception, suggest a great

intermingling of the things of heaven and the things of earth, the world alive with the presence of God and of the whole company of heaven.

Like the interlacing design in so much Celtic art, known as the everlasting pattern because there is neither clear beginning nor ending and no one strand stands separate, so these prayers speak of the eternal inseparably woven through the ordinary details of the temporal, and point to the saints of the past encompassing the people of the present. George MacLeod,

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in saying of the Isle of Iona that it was a “thin place” in which the spiritual and the material were only thinly separated, was uttering the vision of many Celts before him for whom matter was shot through with spirit, and who neither distanced the God of heaven from earth nor the saints of light.

Not that to believe in the communion of saints and the angelic host is unique to the Celtic tradition, for we find the vision

of the “great cloud of witnesses” in the Book of Hebrews and the angels of God “ascending and descending” in St. John’s Gospel, but the Celts preserved and cher-

ished this way of seeing, and developed it naturally and imaginatively within the context of their own culture and religious heritage.

Not only were Jesus and his mother, and John and Peter, and Brigid and Patrick seen as being accessible in prayer; there was an immediacy. They were seen not as aloof in a spiritual detachment or an exalted religious hierarchy, but as belonging to the same community and flow of life. Mary is pictured not as high queen of heaven, removed from the ordinary, but as the bare-footed country girl in the midst of the hills whose help is invoked for the herding of the cattle. And the request to Brigid in the milking song is, *Come, thou milkmaid of Jesus, And place thine arms beneath my cow.*

And Peter’s blessing is sought not as a high ecclesiastic, but as the most experienced of fishermen, wise in the ways of the sea. Gathered immediately around in the day to day details of life, there is nothing too mundane for the host of heaven. Even at the morning bath the saints are addressed:

*The hand of Brigid about my neck,
The hand of Mary about my breast,
The hand of Michael laving me,
The hand of Christ saving me.*

And like the people of earth, the citizens of heaven are seen to be appreciators of banqueting:

*I would like to have the men of heaven
In my own house:
With vats of good cheer
Laid out for them.
I would like them to be cheerful
In their drinking,
I would like to have Jesus too
Here amongst them.
I would like a great lake of beer
For the King of kings,
I would like to be watching heaven’s
family
Drinking it through all eternity.*

But all of this is not only a way of

J. Philip Newell, a former warden of Iona Abbey, is a Presbyterian minister and Scottish theology scholar in Edinburgh, Scotland.

seeing and of delighting in the holiness of the ordinary, but a way of living through both festive and hard times, and, in relation to the latter, a way of seeking protection and aid. The world was not only "charged with the grandeur of God", as a later Celt was to put it, but everywhere too there were darkneses threatening to overcome the light that is in all things, obstructing the view of life and health that springs up from within creation. And so there are prayers for freedom from evil:

*On the Feast Day of Michael, O God,
Cast ye the serpent into the ocean,
So that the sea may swallow her up.*

Redemption is seen as a freeing of the essential goodness of creation from evil forces that threaten to hold it in bondage, and so the saints are invoked in the struggle as "comrade" women and men. Often these prayers evidence the pre-Christian Celtic worldview of spirits, both good and evil, being everywhere, and so the prayers seek protection,

*From every brownie and ban-shee,
From every nymph and water-wraith,
From every troll among the hills,
From every ghoul within the glen.*

The way of the Celtic Church and its mission in Ireland and Scotland, especially between the fourth century and the seventh, had been not to erase pre-Christian culture and ways of seeing, but rather to draw from them, almost as an Old Testament, and to baptise them. And so, whereas every feature of landscape, every spring and holy well, had been named after nature spirits and goddesses, with the coming of Christianity these places were christened with saints' names. Not that there was an attempt to entirely cover the old, for still today on the island of Iona, the Hill of the Angels, for instance, sits not far from the Glen of the Fairies. And in this untidy weaving of the Celtic world into Christianity, many of the legends around Celtic goddesses were trans-



St. Matthew from the Book of Durrow, 7thc.

ferred to Christian saints, Brigid, perhaps, being the most notable. Tradition has it that her father was a Druid priest and her mother a Christian slave. She

came in Christian legend to be known as the wet-nurse of the Christ-child, and represented the suckling of the Christian gospel on the pre-Christian nature mysticism of the Celtic world.

With a pre-eminence of place being given in the Celtic Church to St. John, and its remembering him as the disciple especially loved who had laid his head close to the breast of Jesus and heard the heartbeat of God, and whose Gospel spoke of the light that enlightens every person coming into the world, it was a church particularly well-suited to receive as well as to give in mission.

It may be that what it most received was the acute sense of intuition of the immediacy of the spiritual. In return it offered the vision of God as love. What resulted was a sense of tenderness in affection and a devotion of relationship between the company of heaven and the people of earth:

*The love and affection of heaven be to you,
The love and affection of the saints be to you,
The love and affection of the angels be to you,
To lead you and to cherish you this day. IW*

Christmas gift idea!

We recommend the work of *Witness* artists. The following artists have cards, prints, books or calendars for sale.

Dierdre Luzwick may be reached at W9442 Golfside, Cambridge, Wis. 53523; (608) 423-4547. Her book, *Endangered Species*, was published by Harper San Francisco in 1992.

Betty LaDuke's work may be ordered from Multi-Cultural Images, 610 Long Way, Ashland, Or. 97520; (503) 482-4562. LaDuke has recently published a book entitled *Multicultural Celebrations*, Pomegranate Artbooks, San Francisco, 1993.

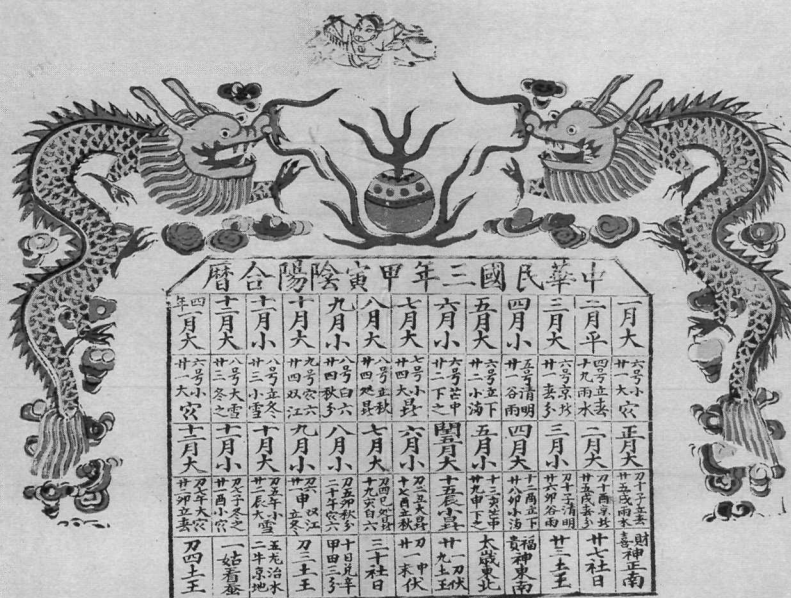
Helen David Brancato's cards and 1994 calendar can be ordered from Pax Christi USA, 348 East Tenth St., Erie, Pa. 16503-1110; (814) 453-4955.

Doris Klein's work is available from her studio at 4311 N. 100th St., Milwaukee, Wis. 53222-1393; (414) 461-7676.

Hue Bumgarner-Kirby and Robert Lentz offer their work through Bridge Building Images, P.O. Box 1048, Burlington, Vt. 05402; (802) 864-8346.

Cards featuring the work of Nicaraguan artists are available from the **Nicaraguan Cultural Alliance**, P.O. Box 5051, Hyattsville, Md.; (301) 699-0042.

Patricia Lay Dorsey may be reached at 86 Kerby, Grosse Pointe, Mich. 48236; (313) 886-0967.



A kitchen god

‘Ancestor worship’ in China

by Kwok Pui-lan

In East Asia, we put our family name first. Many of my Western friends could not pronounce “Kwok” and often asked me what it meant in the Chinese language. To provide them with a satisfactory answer, I tried to know more about the origin and meaning of my family name. According to the book, *One Hundred Surnames*, “Kwok” was the name of a state in the Chou dynasty about 3,000 years ago. It is amazing that my family name can be traced back to such an ancient period of Chinese history.

Chinese people respect their ancestors as their sources of being. A passage from the Chinese classics says: “The hair and the skin of the body were given by the parents. One dares not damage or hurt them. This is the beginning of filial piety.” In traditional China, people could often trace the long line of ancestors because the genealogy of the clan was kept in the village temple. Twice every year, during spring and autumn, the whole clan would gather together to offer sacrifices to the ancestral spirits and to clean the family grave yard. During these ancestral ceremonies, people made supplications to their ancestors and asked them

Kwok Pui-lan grew up in Hong Kong. She is associate professor of theology at the Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge, Mass. The art, a kitchen god, was sent by **Irene Cowen Browne** home to Pennsylvania from the missionfield in China in 1913. Her note explained that every new year families would put sugar water on the mouths of the kitchen god so that when they burned it, it would tell their ancestors only good stories.

to bestow happiness and long life on them. Participation in these family rituals provided members with a sense of identity and continuity.

There have been many changes in the family structure in the Chinese societies in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. The whole clan does not live in close proximity anymore. In memory of their ancestors, many Chinese keep ancestral shrines in their homes. During the first and the 15th day of the Chinese Lunar calendar, food and wine will be offered in honor of the ancestors and incense will be burnt.

Chinese people believe that after their death, they with their ancestors in the other world. A Chinese proverb says: "A tree may grow to ten thousand feet. When the leaves fall, they return to their roots."

Many Chinese people would like to be buried with their ancestors when they die. Early Chinese immigrants in America lamented that their ashes would remain in a foreign land and their restless spirits would forever wander in strange places.

The fact that kin members include not just the living but also those who have passed away adds a cosmic or religious dimension to the network of roles and status embedded in the social order.

When Christian missionaries began their work in China, they found it perplexing that Chinese people offered sacrifices to and performed elaborate rituals for their ancestors.

Some condemned such practices as superstitious because it implied "worshipping" dead spirits. For them, it was inappropriate for Chinese Christians to participate in these rituals. Others considered the ancestral rituals as an integral part of Chinese culture and the ceremonies

as civil in nature. During the 17th century, several Catholic religious orders in China had a heated debate over the issue, later referred to as the Rites Controversy. When Pope Clement XI decreed in 1704 that Chinese Catholics should not participate in ancestral ceremonies, the Emperor Kang Hsi was so incensed that he expelled missionaries from China.

It is unfortunate that the Rites Controversy ended in a bitter confrontation between China and the Holy See, but the controversy brought to the forefront the whole question concerning the relationship between Gospel and culture. While Christians remember their saints during worship, the Chinese pay tribute to their ancestors. Are these two mutually exclusive? Can they be reconciled? These questions only point to a deeper issue: How can the Gospel, which grew out of the cultures of

Chinese people respect their ancestors as their sources of being. A passage from the Chinese classics says: "The hair and the skin of the body were given by the parents. One dares not damage or hurt them. This is the beginning of filial piety."

Mesopotamia and the Greco-Roman world, interact with other cultures that have a different understanding of identity and community? This is one of the most thorny questions facing Asian or African

Christians when they try to carry out God's mission among their people.

Reverence shown to the ancestors provides an anchor for people to explore who they are and who they can become. But as a woman, I am also keenly aware that ancestor worship was traditionally a re-

enactment of the patrilineal and patriarchal structure of Chinese family and society. Only male members of the family could participate in ancestral ceremonies in the temple led by the male head of the

household. Societal pressure to have a male heir to continue the family name was immense. Even today, many people in China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan still prefer to have boys rather than girls. In some rural areas in China, female infanticide is still illegally practiced.

It is important that we become connected with the heritages of our foremothers and not just our forefathers. To be connected with my own roots as a Chinese Christian woman, I have examined the relationship between Christianity and my foremothers in *Chinese Women and Christianity*, in which I explore the relationship of Chinese Christian women to their faith, to social reform activities in China and to the feminist movement. In my research, I have found that Chinese women courageously raised the issue of ordination of women in the first meeting of the Chinese National Council of Churches in 1922, paving the way for the ordination of Florence Li Tim-Oi as the first woman priest in the Anglican Communion in 1944.

As the mother of an 11-year-old girl, my fondest hope is that I help pass along the wisdom of mothers from generation to generation. To search for, inherit and pass along the history, culture and tradition of women is important for our collective quest for a holistic understanding of our past. Only then can we begin to dream of a holistic vision for the future. **TW**

Shrouded lives

by Blaise Tobia and Virginia Maksymowicz

"Honor your father and your mother, as the Lord, your God, has commanded you, that you may have a long life and prosperity in the land which the Lord, your God, is giving you."

Deuteronomy 5: 16

"Who is my mother? Who are my brothers? . . . whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother, and sister, and mother."

Matthew 12: 48-50


It seems to be an essential part of our nature to honor those who have preceded us. We have erected monuments to George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and our men and women lost in wars. The Egyptians built elaborate tombs for their kings and queens; the New Zealand Maori carved images of their ancestors into the wall panels of their meeting houses in order to be surrounded by their spirits. Even now, Native Americans struggle for the protection of ancient burial grounds and the return of disrespectfully-exhumed bodies and artifacts. Eastern religions revere their philosophers Confucius and Lao-Tze. Jews and Muslims alike venerate the words of their prophets; in addition, as Christians, we celebrate the life of Jesus and of those whom we regard as role

models — the saints. As members of the human community we do not want to forget, so we try to find ways of remembering.

Artist Carolyn Warfield has struggled with the task of giving visual remembrance to, in her words, the "artists, political leaders, scientists, and educators who toiled incessantly to improve the world in which we live." Her series of sculptural installations, "Shrouds of Mortality," utilizes a variety of hand-dyed, painted textiles, incorporating African symbolism, as metaphors for how remembrance functions as a "thread intricately woven into the fabric of culture." In this manner, she pays homage to assassinated Granadian prime minister Maurice Bishop, educator and playwright Diane Boatman-Fuller, civil-rights activist James Earl Chaney, attorney Kenneth Cockrel, writer Henry Dumas, physicist/astronaut Ronald Erwin McNair, psychiatrist Franz Fanon, singer Ethel Waters, former Chicago Mayor Harold Washington, and the artist's own mother, educator Lucille Harrison Warfield Atkins. One shroud is dedicated to the myriad South African families who have suffered under apartheid.

In many African cultures, Warfield says, identity, ancestry and death are an integral part of the experience of the living. Sometimes, textiles designate societal level, group membership or age; in the case of the Yoruba, for example, the type of cloth one wears is a clear manifestation of status and rank. Warfield's "Shrouds" combine ideograms from the graphic traditions of Ghana, Benin, Mali, Nigeria, Cameroon and Zaire and links them symbolically to each of the "ancestors" she has chosen to commemorate.

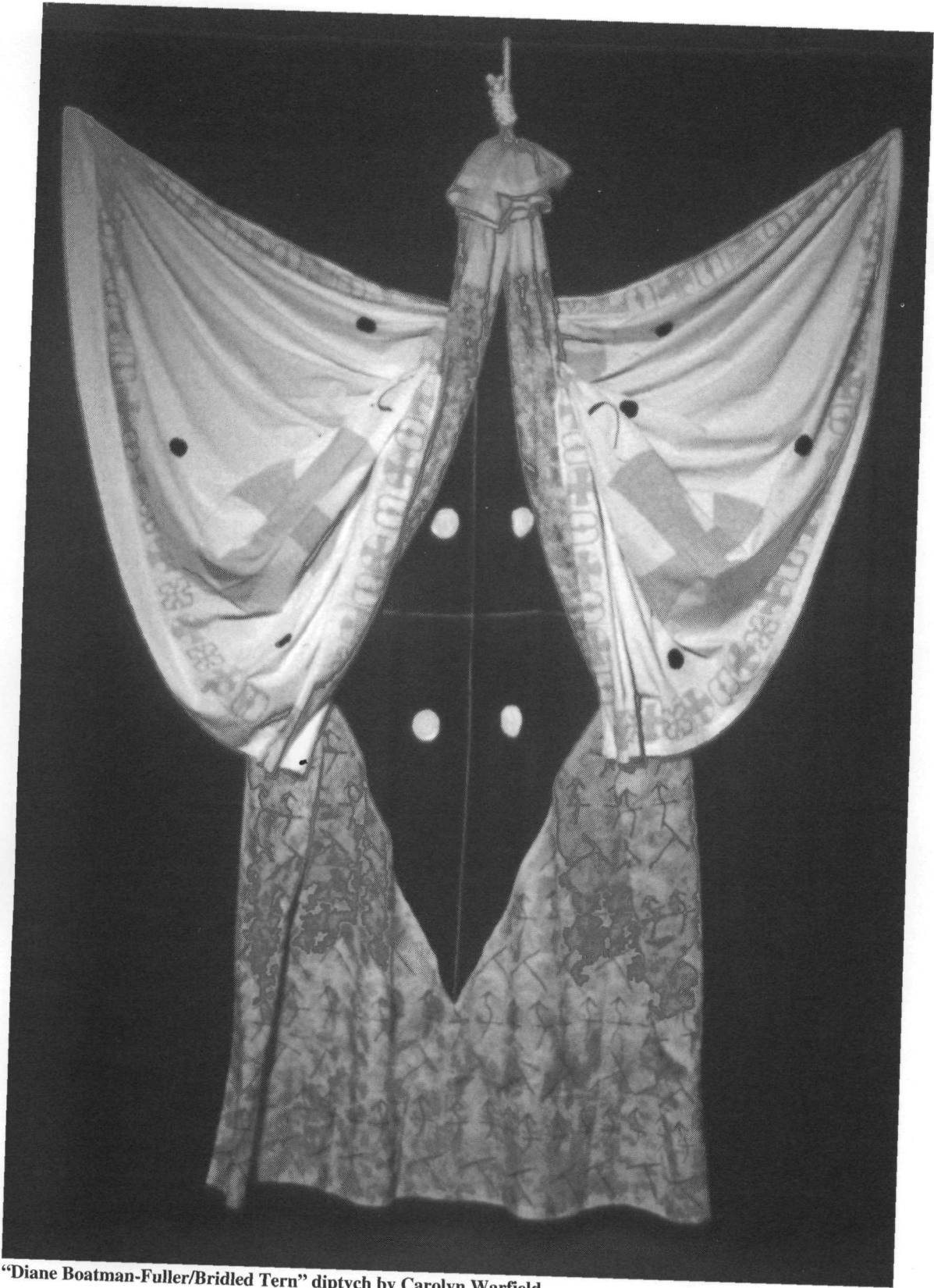
Warfield sometimes combines her images: in one case she has created a diptych by pairing the shroud dedicated to Diane Boatman-Fuller with "Bridled Tern," dedicated to Maurice Bishop, hanging the former over the latter, creating a unified image representing the two spirits. Boatman-Fuller was a Detroit public school teacher who was killed in the terrorist bombing of a Pan Am airplane over Lockerbie, Scotland. Warfield feels this woman's life represents collectivity and hope for racial collaboration, and she has incorporated Dogon (Mali), Egyptian and Adinkra (Ghana) symbols (one Adinkra symbol resembles the Christian cross) to convey that sense of hope. Maurice Bishop was working for socioeconomic reform and participatory democracy in Granada when he was assassinated (with probable U.S. government involvement). The noose from which the Bishop shroud hangs is a clearly recognized Western symbol, which she has combined with a type of ideographic script belonging to the Ejagham people of Nigeria and Cameroon along with a diamond-shaped black cosmogram to convey his journey from birth, through the apex of development, and eventually to the descent to the spirit world — where the spiral of life begins anew.

Carolyn Warfield's art arises out of a strong spiritual base and a belief that God can become manifest through human creativity. She feels that "by linking experience with memory," her images help us "to endure and rejoice." 

"Shrouds of Mortality" will be on display in the Turman Gallery at Indiana State University during the month of November, 1993.

art and society

Blaise Tobia and Virginia Maksymowicz,
Philadelphia artists, edit the Art & Society
Section of *The Witness*.



"Diane Boatman-Fuller/Bridled Tern" diptych by Carolyn Warfield

THE WITNESS

Fighting Japanese and U.S. racism

The U.S.-Japan Committee for Racial Justice (USJCRJ) has published "a handbook for analysis and action" intended to help users reflect on their experiences of both U.S. and Japanese forms of racism. Called *Unmasking Racism: At the Intersection of U.S. and Japanese Racism*, the handbook developed out of a 1992 consultation of community activists, scholars and people of faith (including *Witness* board member Seiichi Michael Yasutake, an Episcopal priest working in Chicago) who presented case studies that reflected situations of U.S. and Japanese racism. Topics include Korean-American and African-American relations, responses to Japan's "comfort women" issue, and corporate tourism in Hawaii. The short volume also includes an essay on the nature of Japanese racism.

With increasing exposure of various racist policies in Japan and with Japan's prominent global political and economic influence, "race relations work has become increasingly more complex," the preface states.

"In the United States, the economic problems and racist attitudes which promote Japan-bashing have created an even further hostile 'anti-Asian' environment. Asian Americans are subject to attack from both white racists as well as people of color who need a scapegoat to lash out against. Asian Americans addressing racism in the U.S. context have often overlooked the problems of Japanese racism due to their own ignorance or apologetic positions. With greater exposure to Japanese racism,

Asian Americans often find themselves unsure of how to address it, for fear of reprisals and the danger of adding fuel to the Japanese racism phenomenon. Meanwhile, other people of color impacted economically by Japanese corporate presence continue to call for exposure of racism when they experience it. Often, this leads to generalized attitudes against all Asians and Asian Americans. The time has come when Asian Americans can no longer avoid the intersection of Japanese racism and U.S. racism."

For additional information or copies of the handbook contact: S. Michael Yasutake, 2744 Bryant Ave., Evanston, Ill., 60201; 708-328-1543.

Charismatic renewal and modernity

Charismatics whose theology is shaped "in terms fashioned since the mid-18th century" are invited to a conference at Kanuga in North Carolina from January 6 until January 9, 1994.

Bob Hughes, at the University of the South, and Gray Temple, a parish priest in Atlanta, extend the invitation, offering a brainstormed list of principles they share which seem to indicate that this is a conference for charismatics who may be closeted in the liberal, socially-active part of the Episcopal Church.

Listed among many are an affirmation of women in all ministries in the church and an affirmation of the church's stand on abortion. Call Bob Hughes at work 615-598-1377 or at home 615-598-0229, if you're interested.

Remembering Yoshi Hattori

The Episcopal Peace Fellowship (EPF) and the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) are urging people of faith to participate in a grassroots effort to end gun violence by signing/circulating petitions asking the President of the United States to "bring his moral and political leadership to bear on the scourge of gun violence that is undermining the very fabric of our democratic society."

The petition drive was started by the

parents of Yoshi Hattori, a 16-year-old Japanese exchange student who in October, 1992, was shot and killed in Baton Rouge, La., by a homeowner who mistook him for a prowler. Richard and Holley Haymaker, Hattori's host parents in Baton Rouge, have been leading the drive in this country. The target delivery date for the petitions is this Nov. 22, the 30th anniversary of the Kennedy assassination and Hattori's 18th birthday if he had lived. The Hattoris will be present to deliver their petitions, circulated in Japan, personally.

The Fellowship of Reconciliation will supply petitions (contacted FOR at Box 271, Nyack, N.Y., 10960; 914-358-4601), or individuals/groups can write their own. Petitions should be titled "PETITION FOR VICTIMS OF GUN VIOLENCE" and include a reference to the joint efforts of the Hattori and Haymaker families.

The strength in this petition drive, the U.S. organizers say, "is that it is a protest from the heart" and simply protests the easy availability of firearms in the United States.

Church's S.A. divestment policy ends

The Episcopal Church's presiding bishop, Edmond L. Browning, announced cessation of the church's South Africa divestment policy on Sept. 17, 1993. Browning said the South African bishops, including Archbishop Desmond Tutu, had indicated that it was time to end economic sanctions against South Africa because the process of creating a democratic, non-racist, non-discriminatory form of government in that country now appears to be irreversible.

Browning also announced that the Episcopal Church's Executive Council "has approved a plan to support a new code of investment for companies doing business in South Africa." Developed with the help of church partners in South Africa, the code "provides principles for companies to use in the building of a just economy for all those who have for so long been marginalized by apartheid."



— Prepared by Julie A. Wortman

The Armenian holocaust

by William W. Rankin

Donald E. Miller and Lorna Touryan Miller, *Survivors: An Oral History of the Armenian Genocide*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

In 1939, while the Jewish Holocaust furiously smoldered and the imminent invasion of Poland was about to ignite the Second World War, Adolf Hitler remarked to his military commanders, "Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?"

Perhaps two million Armenians died, largely by attrition in the deportations beginning in 1915; this was about half the Armenian population of Turkey, and around one-third of the Armenian population worldwide. By mid-century, 70 million Armenians were killed, counting the dead from two world wars, the European holocaust, and various smaller wars.

Hitler's question speaks of all innocent victims, and has metastasized into, "Who remembers the sick, the aged, the inner-city poor, people of color, the homeless, the people of Sobibor, Soweto, and Sarajevo?"

Faithfulness means attending actively to the world, so precious to God, where the cross is starkly apparent in human suffering. There could be no better primer for faithful ministry in today's world than the Millers' excellent book. *We remem-*

ber the Armenians, as a solemn act of reverence.

Armenia was the first nation to accept Christianity. The apostles Thaddeus and Bartholomew brought the gospel there as early as A.D. 43. Gregory the Illuminator converted the Armenian sovereign to Christianity around A.D. 301 — which is why the Armenian is sometimes called the Gregorian Church.

The Armenian genocide was facilitated by their minority status as Christians in Muslim Turkey, and by their separate language and culture. Armenians had fewer legal rights than Turks, were subject to special taxes, and were viewed by numerous Muslims as infidels. Like many Jews a few decades later, they had done well in business: Armenians controlling about 60 percent of Turkey's imports, 40 percent of exports, and 80 percent of commerce. Here was fuel for envy and jealousy.

The Young Turks, with widespread popular support, had seized control in 1908, auspiciously establishing a liberal constitutional regime in place of the notorious tyranny of Sultan Abdulhamid II. Espousing liberty, equality, and fraternity, they ended up killing more Turks in three years than the previous regime had in the preceding 30. Within seven years the deportations of Armenians began.

Most of the 100 survivor interviews in this book were translated by Lorna Miller, whose father's story is affectingly told. Here are photos of old people — dignified, and full of sorrow and life, filled with the mystery of all creation.

Sometimes you catch your breath. Remember, for instance, the Kurds we worried about, so vulnerable to Saddam Hussein's fury? It is hard to contemplate the sorry role of many of them in massacring helpless Armenians. Or consider the Turkish "Special Organization," comprised of released criminals; led by officers from the Ottoman War Academy and by two physicians. The Millers wisely do not paint in gruesome colors, they merely recount memories; the tone is gentle.

There are uplifting stories too — of word going out through missionaries to Europe and the U.S., and of vigorous, compassionate response. Church schools took up collections, 200 orphanages were established and run by Americans, complementing many others by Europeans.

There were "Good Turks." The Millers and their witnesses are careful to note this. Some resisted their government, hiding Armenians, interceding for them, enacting small deeds of kindness as opportunity permitted. Religious faith was



book review

helpful for many survivors. Christian insights into forgiveness and reconciliation became life-saving, in the spiritual sense.

Unfortunately, official denial of the genocide by Turkish officials remains "the most important impediment to reconciliation," say the Millers. To this may be added Sebastian Brant's 15th century insight from *Ship of Fools*, "The world wants to be deceived."

And so it goes.

This is an enormously powerful, moving, book.

TV

William W. Rankin, a former chairperson of the Episcopal Church Publishing Company board, was recently installed as dean of the Episcopal Divinity School.

When Franz Jaegerstaetter, an Austrian peasant, was executed 50 years ago for refusing to fight in Hitler's war, he died alone.

The people of the small village of St. Radegund — all of whom were fellow Catholics — condemned his witness. At first, even his wife did not understand and wanted him to abandon his position. The parish priest, and even the local bishop, urged him to "do his duty". But Jaegerstaetter said no to all of them. It was truly a lonely decision for him. And it must have seemed futile. After all, what difference would it really make? As he heard from every side, "what you do won't stop Hitler's armies."

Probably his witness would have remained unknown outside the tiny village of St. Radegund but for a chance discovery by Gordon Zahn, a U.S. sociologist engaged in a study of German Catholics' and Hitler's wars. Zahn felt compelled to give the story of Jaegerstaetter some attention and wrote a small book which he called *In Solitary Witness*. In it he describes a man who begins to know God, to see things (insofar as humanly possible) as God would see them. Suddenly for Jaegerstaetter, life becomes both very simple—it is so wonderfully charged with God—and very complex. For to know God is to know where God is not. And knowing God impels us to bring our knowledge to those places where God seems absent. To know God means we

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honestly as we can,
to live where God is.*



Franz Jaegerstaetter

Helen David Brancato

Resisting the Nazi machine

by Thomas Gumbleton

must refuse allegiance to those persons or structures or places where God does not seem to abide. To know God is to know that we must choose, as honestly as we can, to live where God is, where the life of God is, where the wisdom of God is.

When I read Franz Jaegerstaetter's prison letters I am struck every time by one incident. It is the moment when he receives a photograph of his three daughters holding the sign, "Dear Father, hurry home." I try to imagine the anguish he must have felt in what must have been the dark night of his soul. I imagine for myself how deeply lonely and exhausting his wrestling match with God must have been. It wasn't only that he had to stand up to the military establishment, or to the power of the state, or even to the advice of people of good will who told him that he was going too far, that he could serve in Hitler's army in good conscience. His own martyrdom surely occurred when he

knew that the wisdom of God demanded even this, his absolute separation from his wife and daughters in death.

To live through the execution of the heart and still have the executioner to face—what an almost unspeakable thing it can be to know God and try to act in God's name.

Jaegerstaetter gave up his life in resistance to sin in the public order. It is not enough, he came to know, to be privately, individually moral, in the face of evil embedded in the very structure of the social system. It is not enough to be a good husband, a good father, a good citizen. When the public authority leads us away from truth into nightmares of human destruction and then persuades us that they are doing good, the believing person who has known something, some little bit, of God and of human love, must stand in the public arena and say no. The believing person says, "I will not blind

*Witnesses,
the quick and the dead*

Thomas Gumbleton is auxiliary bishop of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Detroit. Artist Helen David Brancato teaches art at the Southeast Community Center in Philadelphia, Penn.

myself." The believing person says, in the company of other men and women, "I will try to find out the truth about this evil, however uneducated I am, however inarticulate I am, however much I will not be paid attention to, however much I don't count for much." The believing person says, "I will try to speak God's name into this madness and stop it."

That is what Franz Jaegerstaetter came to know. That is what his life and death spoke to. His story is new, his life takes root in our own imaginations, because he confronted social sin so clearly. Perhaps that is where holy men and women are made—where the ancient truths of revelation and the demands of the time or the age intersect within a person's heart. Franz Jaegerstaetter knew that collision, knew the cost of adhering to the Word of God in the face of evil. His witness calls us 50 years later to the same courage, a willingness to pay the same price.

For years it appeared that Jaegerstaetter's witness was faithful but isolated—as so many Christian acts of courage seem to be. Yet, Jaegerstaetter's story is a testament to the truth that we can never know the fruit of our faithfulness, no matter how small or ignominious it may seem.

In 1971 history was changed dramatically by Jaegerstaetter's witness. Gordon Zahn's little book about him came to the notice of a Pentagon employee who was agonizing over what to do with the secret information he had about the U.S. war effort in Vietnam. Influenced by Jaegerstaetter's witness, Daniel Ellsberg decided to release the Pentagon papers to the *New York Times*. Quickly thereafter, the U.S. ended its violent war against the people of Vietnam.

In an amazing way God's Providence is clearly at work. A solitary witness of total faithfulness to God, hardly known outside a tiny village in Austria, decades later ends the violence and killing of another war.

All of us must be grateful for such witness and inspired by it. We can be confident that faithfulness to God's truth will always build God's kingdom even if we do not see how or where this will happen.

There is one more element in Franz Jaegerstaetter's story that I think is significant for us, for a church in search of models of the Gospel life truly lived. The witness for which we honor Franz Jaegerstaetter was a joint witness. After her initial questioning Franziska, his wife,

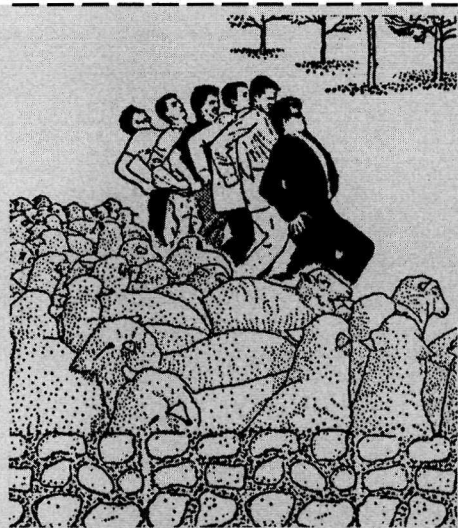
fully supported his choice. It was not made without pain or terrible soul-searching for both of them, but it was made, with humble clarity of conscience. His was the dramatic action; hers was to live out that act of resistance over many decades. He died in one dramatic act. She lived with rejection and hatred in St. Radegund for many years.

This year would have been their 55th wedding anniversary. I hope that anniversary was celebrated, because theirs is a marriage that never broke the communion of life.

TW

Activists of color

Stipends honoring activists of color are available from the Charles Bannerman Memorial Fellowship Program. Application must be postmarked by December 1, 1993. Fellows are given \$15,000 stipends for three months to explore new interests, travel, study, visit with other activists, read, relax. Applicants must be persons of color and have ten years of experience as community activists. Applications may be ordered from the Bannerman Program 410-327-6220. Responses can be sent in writing or on audio tape (languages other than English are fine).



Sheep by Yes! Pigs Can Fly, Jackson, WY.; stone wall by Image Encore, Franklin, Mich.; conga line by Stamp Happy, Hermosa Beach, Calif.

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Robert McGovern

*December issue:
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