

Century Marks

Century Marks in the [February 23, 2010](#) issue



Creation of Adam Michael Kountouris, Greece

Hope for more: As a new chaplain working in hospice care, Deborah L. Geweke thought her role was to help patients move beyond the denial of death. When a woman named Susan said to her, “Chaplain, I know God won’t disappoint,” Geweke replied: “Susan, but what if you *do* die?” To which Susan responded, “Well, *Chaplain*, then I guess *especially* in that case God won’t disappoint!” Geweke learned from Susan that the dying often go through a series of hopes: first is a hope for a cure, then a hope that one will be cared for by loved ones, and finally, for persons of faith, a hope for the kingdom of God beyond death (*Word & World*, Winter).

Time out: Given President Obama’s pro-choice stance on abortion, many members of the University of Notre Dame community were disturbed that Obama was the school’s commencement speaker last spring, and they directed most of their criticism at Father John Jenkins, UND’s president. For another side of Jenkins, his critics might want to read a recent profile of him, which relates how Jenkins hosts one-on-one sessions with students twice a semester. The interviews are usually limited to seven minutes, but in one instance, when a student confessed he no longer sensed the presence of God, Jenkins ignored the schedule and shared with the student how his own faith had been challenged when he was a philosophy major on the same campus. He invited the student to return for more conversation (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, January 3).

Word to the wise giver: Charity Navigator, which serves as a watchdog for nonprofit organizations, offers some suggestions to people who want to donate for Haiti relief: give to established organizations with a track record in Haiti. Check out

the agency's Web site to see how funds will be used. Don't give to the Haiti government, which is known for corruption. Be wary of any e-mail solicitations or telemarketers. It is not effective or practical to donate supplies. Instead of sending old clothing, for example, it's better to hold a garage sale and donate the proceeds ([Charity Navigator](#)).

Handel this: Handel's *Messiah* is most often sung during the Christmas season, but Handel intended it to be performed during Holy Week. In his lifetime the work was seldom sung in churches but was sung in playhouses, where opera was performed. When the influence of Puritans in 18th-century England led to the banning of operas during Lent, oratorios like the *Messiah* became a popular alternative form of entertainment (Frank Burch Brown in *Interpretation*, January).

Oh say can you sing? Goshen College, a Mennonite liberal arts school in Indiana, attracted national attention in 2008 because of its practice of not playing the national anthem before intercollegiate sports events. The college recently decided to use an instrumental version of the national anthem, followed by a prayer, before sports events. President James Brenneman defended the shift, saying that "playing the anthem in no way displaces any higher allegiances," provides a more hospitable atmosphere on campus for those who disagree with the Mennonites' peace stance and opens up opportunities for the college to take prophetic stances on issues such as war, racism and human rights (Goshen College news release).

Mexican and American: Cesar Chavez, cofounder of the United Farm Workers union, was, like many great leaders, a flawed and disappointing character to those who knew him best. The UFW was not run well and many of the people around Chavez became disillusioned and quit or were fired. But Chavez's genius, according to Richard Rodriguez, was his ability to wed a Mexican understanding of the value of suffering with an American optimism about fighting the causes of suffering. In one of his most famous speeches during his hunger strike in 1968, Chavez said: "To be a man is to suffer for others. God help us to be men." These words were later used in his funeral program without the gender-specific language: "To be human is to suffer for others. God help me to be human" (*Wilson Quarterly*, Winter).

Prescription for protest: "Protest," says Marilyn Chandler McEntyre, "is built into the job description of those who speak for the vulnerable." She believes that those who have learned the "art of generous, life-giving protest" share three qualities: first, a deep sense of the common good; second, a complex understanding of public

policy—of “who benefits and who pays the hidden costs when taxes are lowered or wars waged or jobs outsourced”; and third, a humility that comes from an awareness of whom they are serving. “Protest can be a form of prayer,” says Chandler McEntyre. “Wise protest is prayer turned to radical action” (from *Caring for Words in a Culture of Lies*, excerpted in *Weavings* 25:2).

Test of faith: Alabama Republican gubernatorial candidate Bradley Byrne felt compelled to make a public statement declaring that he believes “every word is true” in the Bible. He said his position had been previously misrepresented in a newspaper article. The newspaper had sent each candidate a questionnaire concerning their religious and social beliefs, and Byrne had declined to answer the question on whether the Bible is literally true. In an e-mail message to the newspaper, he said that neither a yes nor no response represented his viewpoint. In a subsequent interview, Byrne said, “I think there are parts of the Bible that are meant to be literally true and parts that are not.” Apparently that’s not good enough for Alabama voters, nearly 80 percent of whom consider themselves born-again Christians ([al.com](#)).

Doing good, doing well: Anyone investing in certificates of deposit knows that banks are paying rock-bottom interest rates. But it is possible to make short-term commitments that benefit the poor—from affordable housing in the U.S. to microenterprise abroad—and make as much as 3 percent and even higher on the investment. One-year Calvert Foundation community investment notes have been paying 3 percent interest. The money is steered “toward environmental, antipoverty, or regional initiatives of nongovernmental organizations” (*Christian Science Monitor*, January 17).

Focus on Tim: Tim Tebow, standout quarterback for the University of Florida’s football team, is known for his outspoken evangelical faith and participation in mission trips. He is widely respected, even by sports fans who don’t share his religious views. But that may change. A Super Bowl ad, financed by Focus on the Family, will share the story of how Tebow’s mother, when pregnant with Tim, became ill and was advised by her doctor to have an abortion but rejected the advice. Women’s and pro-choice groups are protesting the airing of what they regard as an antiabortion ad by CBS television ([ncaafootball.fanhouse.com](#)).