

# Selected Book Summaries

Prepared by

*The Voice of Renewal/Lay Education National Working Group*

## *Selected Summaries*

The following summaries provide chapter-by-chapter reports on the selected books, as a way to provide readers with the central concepts each author presents. Unlike book reviews, the summaries try to present what the author says in as straightforward a manner as possible, to serve as a guide for the contents.

These summaries also are intended as a supplement to the Annotated Bibliography maintained by the Voice of Renewal/Lay Education National Working Group.

Here are the books selected for the summaries:

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## *Catholic Social Teaching by Charles Curran*

*Catholic Social Teaching 1891-Present: A Historical, Theological, and Ethical Analysis*, Charles C. Curran, Georgetown University Press, Washington, DC 2002, ed. James F. Keenan, SJ (Moral Traditions Series)

{Summary prepared by Anne Southwood}

Richard McBrien, on the Notre Dame faculty and general editor of the Harper Collins Encyclopedia of Catholicism, calls this “the best one-volume exposition and analysis of Catholic social teaching in our time.”

Curran refers to 13 different “authoritative teaching” documents on Catholic social teachings, including two by John XXIII and Vatican II documents as well as the USCCB pastoral letters on the challenge of peace and on economic justice. A brief explanation of documents is included in the introduction.

In the introduction, Curran says that his perspective for systematic analysis of the “canon” of social teaching is that of an ethicist looking for understanding on the ground.

The first half of this book is devoted to methodology: theological, ethical, ecclesial.

The book beginning is abstract but clear as Curran traces the changes in emphasis in written documents at the papal and episcopal level over more than 100 years. Other than historians, religious themselves, and ethics teachers, this in-depth exploration of the roots of Catholic social policy would interest anyone working toward improvement in the socio-political order.

The remainder of the book relates content of major issues to each other and to an understanding of the whole.

This is helpful to any Catholic following the application of “authoritative” teaching currently moving from focus on the economic order to the political.

Between both sections, Curran covers issues such as the need for law in the political order, religion as a more relational/responsible model, the greater emphasis on human dignity and “person as subject,” and “the preferential option for the poor” stressed by Brian Hehir, former head of U.S. Catholic Charities. The concept of discontinuity/continuity recently discussed by Benedict XVI is another Curran thread.

In the “Afterword” of this book, speaking as a moral theologian, Curran says:

“In this chapter I have discussed further aspects of the political understanding of Catholic social teaching - human rights, religious freedom, law and morality. Significant historical development has occurred in all the areas and some tensions remain.

“John Paul II’s failure to use the religious freedom approach to law and morality illustrates the tension ... as older approaches continue to exist with newer approaches even though they are in some opposition.”

He continues, “In my judgment, Catholic social teaching should accept and employ the religious freedom approach.”

Curran’s book is not simply a compendium. It traces changes and is influenced by Curran’s thoughts as an American theologian. He elaborates in the book on the significant contribution to Vatican II made by John C. Murray in the *Document on Religious Liberty*. Sanctioning of constitutional democracy in the political order is implicit in its acceptance.

Curran makes an important point in his theology of social teaching section. He notes that the only document written solely for an audience of Church members is *Evangelii Nuntiandi* by Paul VI. It is the document known to stress faith, grace, conversion and change of heart and locates the social mission of the Church within evangelization.

Curran contrasts this with the attachment to reason and objective truth implicit in traditional Catholic philosophy.

The author calls attention several times to the 1971 “*Justice in the World*” pastoral letter resulting from an Episcopal synod. He praises the attempt to translate abstract theory to practical action.

Moving to an ethical focus, Curran points to *Gaudium Et Spes* (Joy and Hope) for moderating a division between faith and life, and *Dignitatis Humanae* for the recognition of the need for a person to be allowed to exercise subjective conscience seeking the good. The state must not restrain conscience.

He also points out the “backsliding” during the papacy of John Paul to the traditional term “social doctrine” as opposed to the post-Vatican II term “social thought.” Curran notes that John Paul balked at a personalized inductive approach, which can lead to discontinuity - in 1993 he emphasized the importance of the doctrinal continuity in *Veritas Splendor*.

Curran then considers the ecclesial shift in self-understanding with Vatican II documents, from a juridical sense to a sense of Church as the mystery of the People of God. He praises the development of general principles for a just social order. At the same time, he faults the narrow lens of “universality” in written documents for the slow motion toward development of moral theology as a guide to disciples in the Vatican II mandate to holiness.

## *Faith That Dares to Speak* by Donald Cozzens

*Faith That Dares to Speak*, Donald Cozzens (Liturgical Press, 2004)

[Summary prepared by Ronnie Mitchell]

As Cozzens says in his introduction, he is writing “to convince the reader of nothing.” He instead invites “the reader into a passionate conversation about this beloved church of ours.” At stake, he says, is the sacramental character of the church as well as its mission of liberation; the role of the laity, particularly women; the future of ministry; and the church’s structures of governance.

In the eight chapters, described below, Cozzens seeks to outline what is needed for that passionate conversation.

### **The Courage to Speak**

Cozzens believes that “within the heart of every committed disciple exists a storehouse of experiences and memories that determine ... his or her journey of faith.” They bear witness to the Spirit working in the church’s journey and are therefore a source of wisdom for the church. But to speak “one’s truth in love” requires mature faith and resolute courage because of the long tradition of inequality in the church, the remnants of the church’s feudal roots, and the present climate of suspicion and hostility.

### **The Humility to Listen**

Especially since the First Vatican Council, bishops have learned to listen defensively, Cozzens says. For many church leaders, “Christian belief is fundamentally static and ahistorical.” Priests too face many of the forces that challenge bishops. In order to hear the conversation Cozzens calls so necessary, the clergy need to listen carefully to “the wisdom of the gospels, the lessons of their pastoral experience, the experience of their parishioners, and indeed to the voice of their bishop.”

There are fewer cultural and structural obstacles to effective listening among the laity, Cozzens notes. But learning to listen requires “a contemplative heart, a humility that awakens the soul to the essence of Christian faith...beyond the various cultures and ideologies that breed contention and division.”

### **Love That Dares to Question**

Simply to be human is to wonder and question, Cozzens says. But questioning in the Church, even when out of love and loyalty, requires courage because questioning threatens the structures of power and order.

Cozzens feels that obligatory celibacy, the clergy vocation crisis, the clergy abuse scandal and the church's response to scientific research are some of the issues that need to be discussed without fear. He says that the faithful have the right and obligation to question structures and practices that no longer serve the needs or mission of the Church.

### **Faith That Dares to Speak**

U.S. Catholics feel that things will never be the same and they sense that the role of the laity will be a major determining factor in the change. Cozzens speaks of the voices already raised: Fr. Camilo Macisse, former president of the Union of Superiors General, who decried the church's patriarchal authoritarianism; laity disappointed with the betrayal of the Second Vatican Council; priests grieving the wounds inflicted by brother priests; the breakdown of honesty between bishops and priests and the ministerial crisis; and the cries of anguish raised by the victims of clergy abuse.

Prophetic voices of vowed religious have dared to ask troubling questions, he says. Faithful writers and speakers have dared to speak the truth from a committed, mature faith perspective. And Catholic universities and colleges embrace the vision to provide intellectual and moral leadership.

### **The Liberation of the Laity**

Cozzens sees the present crisis as "pregnant with the grace of the Spirit." While not downplaying the role of the ordained leaders of the church, he feels that the laity's role is vital and necessary in the affairs of the church, as confirmed by Vatican II. For decades Catholics have been told that they are the Church, yet they have not experienced the full reality of those declarations. The laity are in need of "liberation from structural oppression," Cozzens says. With the entire church, the laity must claim their identity as disciples of Jesus Christ. When the laity are adults in the church, remaining silent in the face of the abuse crisis is no longer an option. Integrity demands insistence on accountability and transparency by right.

### **The Voice of the Faithful**

Because speaking one's truth in love is not a simple matter, Cozzens concludes that many lay Catholics dare to speak through membership in various renewal organizations. They are discovering what it means to be an "adult member of the church," and Cozzens asserts that a large number of the people of God are finding their voices.

Call to Action, which began as a conference call by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in 1976, is one such organization. Voice of the Faithful, a response to the sexual abuse crisis, is another, with a mission to support victims of clergy sexual abuse, support priests of integrity and reform church structures. The National Review Board is also an

example of laity “speaking from the center of their souls-what is heard is the voice of conscience.”

## Contemplative Conversion

As the author explains, if this is a moment when we must dare to speak, it is also certainly a moment when we must learn to sit still. Silence has become profoundly awkward. Our best chance to move beyond closed- mindedness is to turn to the insights of the church’s contemplative wisdom. What is at stake in the cultural wars taking place in American and European countries, Cozzens says, is not revealed truths but lines of control and power. Times of crisis such as these need inspired words and deeds. They also require silence that leads to wisdom born of solitude.

To deal with the power of the hierarchy the laity must use the power of questioning in love and faith; of declaring one’s presence as adult members of the church; of holding church leaders accountable; of organizing so voices will be heard and actions discerned; and of remembering that hope rests in God’s promise of fidelity to the community of disciples.

## A Rising Chorus

Cozzens reminds us that there is much to fear in the “passionate conversation.” Honest conversations, questions and dialogue may take us where we do not want to go. But no matter the danger, a greater danger awaits if we fail to speak the truth in love.

Our realistic hope is in the numbers of exceptional young women and men, highly committed to gospel values and called to join a rapidly expanding lay ministry corp. Untouched by the current cultural wars they want to live the gospel. These young men and women are the leaders of the church to come, Cozzens says.

Cozzens urges laity and ordained alike to have the “courageous freedom” of the late Kenneth Untener, bishop of Saginaw, Michigan, to speak if it is true and for the good of the church. And to have the “extravagant trust” of Pope John XXIII, to trust in God’s abiding spirit.

As paraphrased from “Faith Beyond Resentment” by James Alison, we are reminded that fear and resentment are two of the most powerful forces keeping the church in bondage to structures and systems that no longer work.

In conclusion, Cozzens reminds us of Jesus’ response to the Pharisees objecting to the praise, which greeted his triumphal entry into Jerusalem: “If they were to keep silent, I tell you the very stones would cry out” (Luke 19:40).

## *The New Church: Essays in Catholic Reform by Daniel Callahan*

*This volume of essays from pre-Vatican II helps us understand the American mood and expectations for the Council taking place in the 1960s. The writing is succinct and clear.*

*The New Church: Essays in Catholic Reform*, Daniel Callahan (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966)

Callahan as Catholic intellectual calls the early 1960s a time of anxious analysis with a need to be part of a broader conversation than the traditional separate defensiveness of Catholic thought. Testing the ecumenical water, Catholics became "more sensitive to non-Catholic thought."

Callahan examines the 1960 election of the first Catholic president through the lens of the nature of Catholic authority, which presupposes conscientious discernment. Noting the differences in degree of attachment to the magisterium, Callahan discounts "an official Catholic position" vis a vis politics. Callahan points to "what does the community take this statement to mean" as the most accurate base by which to assess the Catholic reaction to authority statements. He states that the average American believes the Church can't require anything depriving one of citizenship rights and responsibilities.

Another essay on American politics examines the strongly negative Catholic reaction to Supreme Court decisions allowing a pluralistic society. "Catholics are far less willing to relinquish the old idea of a sacral society than even they recognize," says Callahan. The question then becomes, is Catholicism compatible with a society in which religion loses its traditional privilege. Callahan sees the "either/or" Catholic reaction as preventing a creative response to a neutral state and a secular society. But free of this traditionalism, he says Christianity has sufficient inner resources to flourish on its own.

In two strong essays Callahan examines different ways the ecumenical movement and a society becoming distinctly secular impact each other. He takes the edge off secularism by touching on major theological thinkers of the 1960s, from Harvey Cox to Karl Rahner to John Courtney Murray and Teilhard de Chardin. Callahan sees ecumenism as a model for reconciliation. He also sees it stimulating the inner renewal of churches and as a force for broad Christian pressure groups for social change in the secular world.

A Callahan essay on the "Lay Revolution" begins with praise for the creation of a commission on the lay apostolate prior to Vatican II while at the same time noting the lack of lay participation.

Callahan fears the great danger in this anxious time is not loss of faith, but loss of hope and idealism. His own aspirations are for a broader consultative role in the *magisterium* and the creation of structure for a voice in decisions that concern the laity.

Callahan says this adherence to custom and the lack of a juridical base for empowering the laity prevents any guarantee that lay expectations will be fully met by the Council. He



states that even clerical aspirations for a more integrated laity cannot be met without canonical change and theological development.

“One of the most striking features of American Catholicism is that its interior development has not kept pace with its exterior growth,” says Callahan at the beginning of an essay on liberal Catholicism. He concludes that the material security of Catholics should now offer a base for expansive thinking on life and society. Rebellion, says Callahan, requires self-confidence and articulated sense of purpose. Developing slowly after the Pius XI encyclical on *Reconstruction of the Social Order* and the Catholic Worker Movement, and fed by a more connected society after World War II, Catholic liberalism has become a reality. But it needed Vatican II to ensure permanent vitality, says Callahan.

In an essay on “The Quest For Honesty” in the Church, Callahan notes a difference between Catholic and Protestant trends. In the Catholic Church, the issue is more that of freedom to speak out at all in comfort. He illustrates this with a painfully honest passage from Karl Rahner’s *Nature and Grace*.

Delighted with the Vatican II documents on the Apostolate of the Laity and Constitution of the Church, he urges the revitalization of the local parish as a model community of Christians open to the Spirit. Its vitality depends on human relationships, says Callahan. He advocates a “new freedom” in individuals reaching for Christian adulthood as members of a servant church on pilgrimage. He asks that this new freedom keep itself honest by means of community discernment on a fresh approach to what the essence of Christianity really is.

Callahan lauds the significance of theology opening up to a more educated laity. While he notes the lack of theological credentials among bishops as a whole, he considers them more open than other administrators in the Church structure. Callahan predicts difficulties will ferment in the ranks—people who want to renew the church in either a half or full-measure but at different speeds. Despite that, he stresses that using the “new freedom” is necessary.

## *Modern Spiritual Writers by Charles Healey*

*Modern Spiritual Writers* by Charles Healey, SJ (Albany, NY: 1989)

*Fr. Healey, PhD, theology, is former Superior of the New England Jesuit Province and long-time BC faculty member. At the time this book was published, he taught systemic and spiritual theology at Pope John XXIII Seminary in Weston, MA.*

Healey investigates nine modern spiritual writers, looking at their ability to merge intellectual depth with advice on spiritual growth. He examines their legacies in regard to prayer and attaches a list of recommended readings by these spiritual writers.

Healey's choices are a mix. Dietrich Bonhoeffer is a Lutheran legend. Abraham Heschel is Jewish. Caryll Houselander was an English Catholic writer, poet, and spiritual advisor. C.S. Lewis was an Oxford don whose conversion was the basis for much of his prolific writing. Healey also includes the giants Thomas Merton and Teilhard de Chardin, and finishes with John Henry Newman.

Healey begins his study with the trio of Dorothy Day, Heschel, and Merton, focusing on their development of spirituality. In the discussion on Dorothy Day, he cites the regular integration of contemplation and spiritual reading into the active life style associated with the Catholic Worker movement. He highlights the Day's theological baseline of community with this quote from *The Long Loneliness*: "We cannot love God unless we love each other, and to love we must know each other. We know Him in the breaking of the bread and we know each other in the breaking of the bread."

"Know before Whom you stand" is a prominent theme Healey finds in exploring the writings of Abraham Heschel. The influential Heschel recommends transcending the self and "accosting the ultimate" to stand in awe. He contends that the action resulting from insight and awareness will represent the presence of God in the world.

In a closer focus on prayer, Healey points to the Heschel admonition that a rabbi must love his people to help bring them closer to God. Heschel believes that belonging to God in a continuous covenant requires structure in community. Healey offers this Heschel quote:

"The essence of prayer is inwardness. Yet it would be a tragic failure not to appreciate what the spirit of *halacha* does for it, raising it from the level of ... occasional experience to that of a permanent covenant. It is through *halacha* that we belong to God."

Healey contrasts the lack of spirituality in the background of Thomas Merton with the Abby of Gethsemane motto, "God Alone," and its lifelong meaning to Merton after entering the order. Healey maintains that despite the "active" lifestyle in his writings, Merton was foremost a monk who needed time alone for contemplation and also creative action. Healey states that Merton spirituality is completed by manifestation in the present, living with all in Christ. He offers this Merton summary quote from *No Man Is An Island*: "Action is the stream and contemplation is the spring. The spring remains more

important than the stream, for the only thing that really matters is for love to spring up inexhaustibly.”

Looking closer through the prayer lens, Healey cites the importance of Merton’s desire to open the heart to God, to the realization of what he had. For Merton, the relationship with God began and ended in Love.

At this point, the reader sees a common thread in Healy’s book: recognition and standing in awe of being called by a loving God, and prayerfully manifesting that relationship. He reinforces this theme of contemplative charity being drawn outward by exploring the writings of Bonhoeffer and C.S. Lewis.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, an activist pastor, theologian, and writer, was executed by the Nazis at the end of WWII. His writings describe the extraordinary quality of Christian life, the immediacy of Union with Christ as mediator, which unites us all. The importance of the community coming together is predicated on the ability to be alone first with God for scripture meditation and prayer. Through the lens of prayer, Healey cites the importance Bonhoeffer places on the beatitudes and working through everyday life. He offers this Bonhoeffer quote from *Letters and Papers from Prison*: “It is in such a life that we throw ourselves utterly in the arms of God ... and watch with Christ in Gethsemane. That is faith, that is metanoia, and that is what makes a man and a Christian.”

Healey states that C.S.Lewis as Christian apologist seeks a way that will satisfy both the mind and the heart. As a BBC broadcaster in wartime 1941, Lewis presented a series designed to challenge the mind and conscience and also to present the gospel message in an understandable way. The popular series was later collected into the book *Mere Christianity*. Healey offers this quote in explanation of Lewis’ appeal: “... whereas if you simply try to tell the truth ... you will, nine times out of ten, become original without ever having noticed it ... Give up yourself and you will find your real self.”

Looking through the prayer lens, Healey offers this quote to explain the Lewis attitude: “But in order to find God it is perhaps not necessary to leave creatures behind. We may ignore, but we can nowhere evade, the presence of God. The world is crowded with Him.”

The Healey focus on God in an ordinary life is continued in the exploration of English writer Caryl Houselander, characterized by Maisie Ward in her biography as the “Divine Eccentric.” Houselander was known for ESP, and psychiatrists sent difficult wartime patients to her. She stressed relating to the indwelling of Christ in others as members of the Mystical Body. To Houselander, the passion of the Risen Christ continues in our lives and our suffering. In the focus on prayer, Healey states that Houselander considered prayer the first defense against dehumanizing forces in wartime.

Healey includes in his book the Irish monk Columba Marmion, prior of the Benedictine Abbies of Luvain and Maredous in Belgium during the Nazi occupation, who was known for his synthesis of dogmatic theology and spirituality. Healey says Marmion was heavily influenced by the Apostle Paul, “doing the truth in Charity,” aided by the grace of the

Eucharist. Marmion defined holiness as living out God's plan. Looking through the prayer lens, Healey again notes stress on compliance with the action of the Spirit in an open heart.

Jesuit scientist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin was famous for touting compatibility of faith in God and faith in the world. Healey includes Teilhard in this book because of his lifetime development and sharing of "a rich spirituality of the Christian's role in the world centered on the Risen Christ."

Healey explains that Teilhard's theory of cosmogenesis is one of Christogenesis -- the becoming of the Cosmic Christ. Love is the binding, energizing force and any human effort has value in the evolution of humanity toward union with Christ.

Healey offers a prayer written by Teilhard during wartime service as a stretcher-bearer, which begins: "Lord Jesus Christ, you truly contain within your gentleness, within your humanity all the unyielding grandeur of the world."

Healey concludes his book with comments on the Anglican convert John Henry Cardinal Newman as an example of the harmony achieved in an active life by a constant spirituality.

A writer and religious leader before his conversion, Newman continued to draw crowds in sermons primarily addressed to the laity with a central theme of holiness. Healey states that Newman's student counseling and sermons both called for contemplation of an awareness of religious truth, bringing it home as a concrete basis for life. Newman asked for a thankful personal response to the gift of the indwelling of the Spirit. The Newman sermon specific to prayer named it a continuous conversation with God, following St. Paul's instruction to "pray without ceasing." Healey expands on the need to "till" the ground of the heart to be amenable to a steadfast and faithful way of life.

## *Archbishop: Inside the Power Structure of the American Catholic Church by Thomas J. Reese*

*Archbishop: Inside the Power Structure of the American Catholic Church* Thomas J. Reese, SJ, PhD. (NY: Harper and Row, 1989)

Fr. Reese, a political scientist and the former editor of the Jesuit magazine *America*, says his purpose in this volume is to explain how a priest advances to the post of bishop, archbishop, or cardinal, and how these clerics organize to respond to their territorial ecclesial responsibility. To prepare the book, he interviewed 31 Church leaders and also some top-level assistants during staff meetings.

Reese takes the reader through the bishop-selection process, beginning with a list of candidates from the pertinent diocesan bishop and culminating with the decision of the American Apostolic Pro-Nuncio who sends a “ternus” (discerned list of candidates) to Rome.

As Reese describes the process, if the position to be filled is that of an archdiocesan bishop, the Pro-Nuncio consults the bishop assigned to cover that region on the USCCB’s “Committee on the Selection of Bishops.” The Pro-Nuncio also might consult priests, religious, and prominent laity, but only in regards to diocesan needs and desirable personal qualities. No nominations or suggestions of names is permitted or accepted.

Ultimately, this process results in 90 percent of the final choices for archbishops having already served as bishops and more than 60 percent of the final selections having already served as head of a diocese elsewhere. Also, most of the selected Archbishops come from another diocese, not the diocese with the vacancy.

Reese notes that in 1973 in Baltimore there was an exception to this standard process when the local priests’ senate sent the Pro-Nuncio a discerned list of top choices based on the personal qualities they deemed necessary. Though the Pro-Nuncio did not forward particular names to Rome, the eventual choice was someone named on the Baltimore priests’ senate list.

In contrast with the relatively open process in Baltimore, Reese points to Los Angeles and Philadelphia as being extremely conservative in the selection process.

Turning to the descriptions of a bishop's power, the author explains that a Bishop, often running his episcopacy for decades, is limited in action only by Papal decree, by the Code of Canon Law, or by a vote of his national bishops’ conference (currently in the U.S. that’s the USCCB or U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops).

In administering his episcopal region, a bishop must have a chancellor, a finance Committee, and a “College of Consultors” consisting of at least six priests from his priest council. Their approval is required on significant property transfers.

Under Canon Law, proceeds of a real estate transfer exceeding half a million dollars require Holy See approval if the money goes to another person or institution. But Reese notes that a Bishop may temporarily transfer proceeds to an endowment fund to avoid this requirement.

Reese highlights the significance of this control over Church finances by citing the revenue and assets of the Archdiocese of New York: more than \$1.25 billion dollars at the time he writes this book. He notes that many bishops have no training in financial management other than “on the job training” as an auxiliary in a previous post.

Reese also notes that management style is influenced by personality and preference of the bishop. He used in-depth interviews to explore the importance of the management style of particular Bishops. Some rely on personnel boards and finance directors. Others take a more personal role and want systemic problems or personnel issues brought to their attention.

The size of the diocese also is a factor in management styles.

Reese also points to bishops who have been known to allow easy access by their priests. He cites former Bishop Quinn of San Francisco as notable for allowing private lines to his residence so that his priests could bypass boards to make contact with him.

Reese makes a connection between financial and personnel problems. He notes the complexity of personnel issues in a large diocese and also the effects of growing lay employment within diocesan offices.

His interviews lead him to the conclusion that other problems can often be solved by solving personnel problems. Another conclusion is that periodic evaluation of pastoral competency is a weak link in the organizational chain. Reese cites the exception of the Detroit Priest Council choosing a “priest of the year,” with a consequent reward from the bishop.

Moving to diocesan programs, Reese concentrates on the largest and most complex -- education and social services -- noting that their directors are more likely to have management training than other Archdiocesan officials. He says that a large Archdiocese may have a Vicar General for Education responsible to the Archbishop to balance the concerns of both Catholic Schools and parish religious education in the Archdiocese. Reese points out that when diocesan control is decentralized, school superintendents will have more say in policy. At the same time he notes that the increase in lay personnel is driving more centralization.

The bottom line is that school opening or closing or major borrowing must have approval of the Archbishop.

As the biggest non-governmental provider of social services in the country, the Church’s delivery of service is a multi-million dollar operation in every diocese. It is done by a mixture of professionals and volunteers. It differs by diocese, partly because of the need

to be flexible to environmental needs. Reese cites the classic example of decline of orphanages and increase in elderly care. Changes in governmental policies also will affect social service demand and delivery capability. But a bishop can exercise his personal preference in delivery of these services through budget changes. Reese says bishops may allow the creation of desired programs in hopes of finding eventual outside funding.

Lastly, Reese touches on relations between an Archbishop, his diocesan bishops, and his fellows in the external Church structure beyond his metropolitan responsibility. He points out that actual policies of Archbishops are more incremental and reactive than visionary.

Reese states that Archbishops and former heads of the USCCB have the strongest role in influencing adoption of a policy that comes out of national committees.

On the world scene, Reese cites the important role played by American bishops in the discussion of religious liberty at the Second Vatican Council. American Church leaders serve on Vatican congregations of Church governance, and Reese says that much of their time is spent on ad-hoc work for Rome as chairs of papal commissions. Reese notes the only real contact for most bishops with these Vatican offices is at the periodic “ad limina” visit to Rome in regional groups, following individual reports to the Congregation for Bishops.

## *The Democracy of God: An American Catholicism* by Robert J. Willis

*The Democracy of God: An American Catholicism* Robert J. Willis (iUniverse Inc., 2006)

In his classic work, *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville favorably contrasted the democracy he observed in America with the monarchies he experienced in Europe. Robert Willis quotes extensively from Tocqueville in making a case for democracy in the American Catholic Church.

Willis draws on four themes in de Tocqueville's work to make his case: separation of church and state, sovereignty of the people, administrative decentralization, and equality of citizens. In fact, he divides the chapters in the book into these four topics, with an opening chapter on the seeds of democracy in the early American Catholic Church.

The efforts of Bishop John Carroll and Bishop John England to adapt the Church in America to the democratic culture of this new country occupy much of the first chapter. Although many of us know something of these two men, Willis provides us with a more comprehensive picture of their efforts to stave off control from Rome. He quotes extensively from their writings. We hear of Carroll's extended (and minimally successful) battle with Rome to allow priests in America to elect their own bishops. And we read of England's crafting of a Diocesan Constitution, including a call for an annual Convention of all priests and elected lay delegates. There is also an interesting treatment of Trusteeship and the Schism in the early American Church.

But the bulk of the book focuses on the four themes mentioned above. Willis leaves no doubt about his position as he criticizes the monarchical form of government exercised in the Church. He points to all of the current issues facing the Church in the U.S. that are familiar to all members of Voice of the Faithful, including but not confined to the sexual abuse crisis. He points to the encroachment of the Church into politics as a violation of the separation of Church and State. He rails against the centralization that has occurred, especially under Pope John Paul II, which violates the autonomy that rightly belongs to the bishops and to the collegiality of bishops' conferences. And he calls for a greater concern for unity in the Church as opposed to the current emphasis on uniformity.

On the basis of *Lumen Gentium*, the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Willis argues that the sovereignty of the people is upheld in the concept that the Church is the People of God. Bishops and priests are first of all, by their baptism, members of the People of God, and their roles of service to the people should be determined by the people. Related to this is the concept of equality of the people that Tocqueville saw as the bedrock of American democracy. Interestingly enough, Tocqueville observed that, in spite of the role of the Pope, Catholics in the new country had a far greater sense of equality than most of their Protestant brothers (and sisters).

As a psychotherapist for many years, Willis calls on his experience to speak to the stages of development in human maturity to describe the maturing of the American Catholic.



The Church in the U.S. today is blessed with thousands of well-educated and faithful Catholics who are eager for, and have a right to, a greater voice in the governance of the Church in America. Willis also draws on his psychotherapist experience to describe the pathologies of a Church locked into a hierarchical structure, with a closed clerical culture, that has little to do with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Willis speaks for many of us in calling for a transformation in the American Church. He ends with a call for a Bill of Rights for the American Church. Drawing on the United Nations' *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, he identifies 10 rights that would transform the American Church into a Democracy of God. The affirmation of these rights would call for Church leadership that, rather than seeking to control people, focuses on bringing people to a deeper love of God. He seeks "Christian leadership that concerns itself primarily and essentially with helping others, Christians and non-Christians alike, to discover in their own experience the saving presence of a loving God."