



“Open Your Mouth for the **SPEECHLESS**”



While trade agreements get underway between the U.S. and China, a more pressing collaboration resurfaces: American citizens and Congressmen unite to amplify China's dissident cry. **REGGIE LITTLEJOHN** helps us to grasp the urgent plight of the oppressed while catalyzing a heightened sensibility in the nation and the world.

BY SUZANNE LABOE

A call for justice in China was heard in the nation's capital recently when President Hu Jintao came to negotiate business with the U.S. President and more than two dozen of America's top executives. As the head of a country that offers political asylum and personal and legal support

for hundreds of Chinese dissidents and immigrants, many felt that the President should have pushed harder for an end to violent and unjust oppression of millions of China's citizens, whose most outspoken protagonists reside in the USA.

After Hu Jintao's visit, President Obama, eager to show progress to-

ward alleviating the crippling unemployment rates, said the nations sealed deals that would mean \$45 billion in U.S. exports and create roughly 235,000 jobs. The package included moves by China to expand U.S. investment and curtail theft of intellectual property. Could Hu Jintao's foreign policy, which advocates



“China’s peaceful development” in pursuing “soft power” in international relations, lead to a more relaxed treatment from within of the millions of political prisoners and others suffering from human rights abuses? At a press conference during the visit, Bob Fu, President of China Aid, applauded a recent call for such

reform in China from Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (after two years of silence), but he decried her pronouncement of China as an “equal partner” with the USA, saying, “It is time to really change course.”

Exploring this question with *Traces* on the eve of the 100th anniversary of International Women’s Day is Reggie Littlejohn, President of Women’s Rights without Frontiers, a non-partisan, international coalition to oppose forced abortion (there are 35,000 abortions per day) and sexual slavery in China. As an expert on China’s One Child Policy, she has addressed the European Parliament in Brussels, briefed the White House, and testified before Congress.

She has also met with officials in the U.S. Department of State, the British Parliament, and the Vatican. A graduate of Yale Law School, Ms. Littlejohn is the leading voice in a growing awareness of the forcible policies at work in upholding the One Child Policy in China.

How did you transition from being a high-powered attorney to a fulltime Chinese human rights advocate?

In the mid-1990s, when I was working as an intellectual property litigator, I had my first asylum case on behalf of a woman who was mercilessly persecuted as a Christian in China, and also underwent a forced sterilization, without anesthesia, after her second child was born. Due to the lack of hygiene, she got a massive infection and has lived in chronic pain ever since. It was then that I grasped what horrific tactics were at work in enforcing the One Child Policy.

It wasn’t until later that I realized I was being called to fulltime work for this cause. In 2003, I had bilateral mastectomies, further complicated by a post-operational, drug-resistant MRSA staph infection. I had many more surgeries and months of aggressive antibiotic treatments. While my life was very much in the balance, I began praying for all of those in situations worse than my own: women who were being forcibly aborted and Christians who were being tortured or even giving their lives for their faith.

God moved my heart during this time, and when I recovered He drew me to be the voice of the voiceless in this heartbreaking cause.



Reggie Littlejohn.

So your faith as a Christian has always been in play...

Yes. Although Women’s Rights without Frontiers is not a religious organization, that fact does not

stop me from having my own personal faith. One of the Scriptures that has spoken deeply to me over the years is *Proverbs* 31:8-9, “Open your mouth for the speechless, in the cause of all who are appointed to die. Open your mouth, judge righteously and plead the cause of the poor and needy.”

With the twentieth anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre just passed, do you believe that the international pressure since that event has helped to improve treatment of Chinese citizens?

No. I don’t believe we’ve seen international pressure; rather, we’ve seen international appeasement, and therefore the situation has grown worse. Allowing China member- ➤

» ship into the World Trade Organization in 2001, and subsequent collaborations, have had the opposite effect we had hoped for, as the human rights situation is now delinked from Most Favored Nation status. The Congressional-Executive Commission on China was created specifically to monitor Chinese human rights after China was accepted into the WTO.

Their reports very specifically detail in hundreds of pages the escalation in human rights abuses.

On January 18th, the same day that President Hu Jintao was treated to a State Dinner by President Obama, you and many others spoke at a press conference presided over by Congressman Chris Smith, the leading international human rights advocate on Capitol Hill. Did this impact on the visit's negotiations?

You never know what kind of impact such a conference will have. But President Obama did not raise the issue in any forcible way. There has been a great sense of disappointment over the decrease in support from our government. For example, it was just announced that the Voice of America Mandarin services is being cut off. The excuse given is budget cuts, yet the money that would have gone to the Mandarin services will simply go to other VOA services.

If it's not saving money, why cut the Mandarin services? Is it a coincidence that this proposed cut follows closely on the heels of the U.S. visit of President Hu Jintao? Such an action leaves the Chinese people bereft of news from around the world, and even from their own country. The BBC has also

just announced that it is cutting off its Mandarin services, contributing to this news blackout.

What should President Obama do now—can he take more action on behalf of human rights yet preserve the economic boost to the U.S. that China provides?

Our government's voice is muted because of the terrific debt situation, and history has shown that we cannot count on the Obama administration to press for justice in China.

And yet there is much hope among the Chinese that America can provide some relief...

America's private citizens and organizations such as my own do not have their hands tied like our government does, and like the Chinese nationals do. As a U.S. citizen, I have freedom of speech and I feel the moral obligation to speak out as loudly as I can against human rights abuses in China, which always includes not only the "offenders" but also the incarceration and abuse of family members—even for those manifesting signs of "unauthorized" pregnancies.

And what many don't realize is that after 30 years of the One Child

There is a shortage of women in China, giving rise to a business in human trafficking involving girls brought in from surrounding countries.

STATISTICS

35,000

abortions per day

500

female suicides per day (three times that for men)

400 million

births prevented since institution of the One Child Policy in 1980

30 million

marriage-aged males in excess of the female same-aged population by 2020

Data: Women's Rights without Frontiers

Policy, and the gendercide of female babies, there is now a shortage of women in China, giving rise to a tremendous business in human trafficking and sexual slavery involving girls brought in from surrounding countries.

Also, the One Child Policy is particularly oppressive for many Christians and Buddhists, who may oppose abortion on religious grounds—so forced abortion is also a violent form of religious discrimination.





A propaganda mural in Guangzhou, China, reads: "The One-Child Policy benefits the country and its people."

Women's Rights without Frontiers is not a religious organization...

I would like to get everyone possible behind this issue without limiting it to Christians. This is the biggest women's rights issue in the world right now that affects one in every five women in the world population. Forced abortions, sterilizations, and infanticide represent human rights atrocities of the first order.

You were just called to New York to

present at a workshop in connection with the United Nations Conference on the Status of Women. What did you bring to the table there?

The UN is funding the United Nations Family Planning Fund, or UNFPA, which was found by former Secretary of State Colin Powell to be working in collaboration with coercive family planning in China.

They are ignoring the fact that the "family planning" in effect in China is coercive birth control taking place

under violent conditions. I am bringing the perspective that forced abortion is not a choice but rather a form of official government rape that is destructive physically, emotionally, and spiritually. I would like this to become a top priority of the UN who otherwise would be ignoring one-fifth of the world's female population.

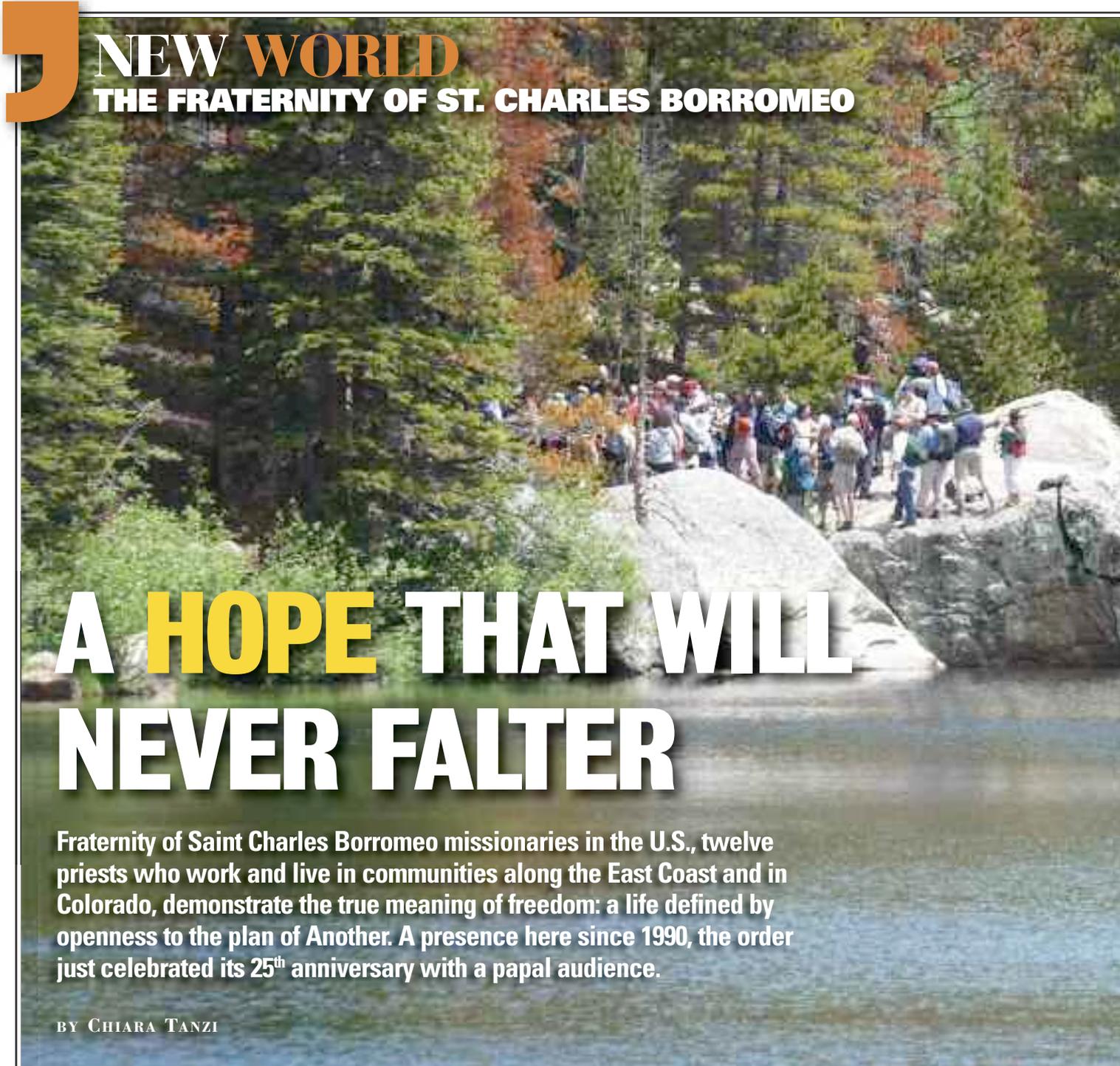
What inspiration do you have in this uphill battle?

One of the most important Bible verses for me, that keeps me going, is *Proverbs 24:11*: "Deliver those who are drawn toward death and hold back those stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, 'Surely we did not know this,' does not He who weighs the hearts consider it? He who keeps your soul, does He not know it? And will He not render to each man according to his deeds?" And of course, anyone who knows Jesus knows how much He loves little children, and how much these offenses must grieve His heart...

Fr. Carrón recently said, "If Christ is present, it isn't because of our words but through His signs that we can acknowledge Him."

Do you think there is the possibility for more Chinese to see His signs in such an anti-religious environment?

This may come as a surprise, but Christianity is growing by leaps and bounds in China through an "un-registered" underground Church (we know this because it is being tracked by China Aid here in the USA). These people are praying for their government; they see the ways the government is grieving the Lord and they are a very positive force in China. They are lifting their nation up every day to the throne of the Most High. **T**



A HOPE THAT WILL NEVER FALTER

Fraternity of Saint Charles Borromeo missionaries in the U.S., twelve priests who work and live in communities along the East Coast and in Colorado, demonstrate the true meaning of freedom: a life defined by openness to the plan of Another. A presence here since 1990, the order just celebrated its 25th anniversary with a papal audience.

BY CHIARA TANZI

It's a Friday afternoon in Kensington, Maryland, and a group of middle school students have gathered at Holy Redeemer Parish, as they do every week. They pray together, and one of the adults, Fr. Roberto Amoruso, reminds them of their "rule": "Jesus is giving you something great right now. If you see it, tell someone and, if you don't, say the *Memorare* so that you can see." After a few years of friendship that keeps this rule in mind, their method

has borne fruit. From the total distraction typical of pre-adolescents, they've woken up, to see that being in class or helping at home is actually an invitation to more. From not remembering what happened the day before, they now speak with a precision that betrays the influence of Fr. Roberto's own contagious enthusiasm for the present moment. And so, "on Monday, this happened..." and "on Thursday, I saw that..." Life's ordinary moments become invaluable signs

of "something great." Fr. Roberto is a priest of the Fraternity of St. Charles Borromeo (FSCB), one of twelve priests now present in the United States. Spread between Washington, DC, Boston, and Denver, they work in parishes and teach various subjects. In America, the would-be land of hope and opportunity, they come to bring a hope that will never falter, with no other strategy than willingness to share the love of Christ. After all, it's a love that so impassioned them that they left their



Left and from top, Fr. Michael hikes with a group in Colorado; some of the priests concelebrate Mass; a camping trip of the Maryland Knights group.

to everyone. Fr. Michael Carvill noted that belonging to this fraternity is “extraordinarily helpful, because it reminds you of who you are, what you are waiting for, and Who has come. So you live in reality.”

SOMETHING AWAITED. Fr. Michael’s reality, since 2009, is his life as the pastor of Nativity of Our Lord Parish in Broomfield, Colorado, while two of his confreres serve in the parish and also as teachers and chaplains at local Catholic schools. It is a young and lively place, with over 3,000 families registered and a few new parishioners each week. Their biggest problem has become space: the 1,000-seat church can no longer accommodate all the people at Mass. Beyond gratitude for this abundance, he appreciates the eager response to everything that the new priests propose, but he’s quick to insist that this enthusiasm is not due to themselves: “We are just a few normal men, but we bring something deeply awaited by the human soul. There is a hunger in people for things that speak of the truth, a hunger for hope.” Fr. Accursio Ciaccio is teaching religion to 160 middle school students in the parochial school, a highly unusual position for a priest. However, the priests had noticed a great need in this age group to have the faith proposed to them, and so moved quickly to respond.

This simplicity is evident in the whole history of the Fraternity of St. Charles in the United States. It began when Fr. Michael arrived in the U. S. in 1990, taking temporary positions in Sacramento and Tampa. Then, through Msgr. Lorenzo Albacete, whom Fr. Michael had met while studying at the John Paul II Institute, Cardinal Sean O’Malley invited them to settle in Fall River, Massachusetts. Fr. Michael, Fr. Vincent—who now

lives in Jerusalem—and Fr. Antonio Lopez arrived in Fall River in June 1994. Fr. Michael worked in the diocese of Fall River until 2009 when he moved to Denver. There, Archbishop Charles Caput had come to know the Fraternity through *Together on the Road*, by Msgr. Massimo Camisasca, Superior General of the Fraternity of St. Charles Borromeo. Archbishop Caput asked for priests of the Fraternity to come to Denver shortly after the book was published. With some sadness, Fall River was left behind to follow this providential call and, in the meantime, other houses have been born.

In Washington, DC, six priests and one seminarian now constitute the largest FSCB house in the U.S. Fr. Antonio López moved there with Fr. José Medina and Fr. Stefano Colombo in 2002 after working and studying for eight years in the Boston area. Unexpectedly, he was recently named Dean of the John Paul II Institute for Studies of Marriage and Family. Fr. José Maria Cortes just arrived from Portugal to become pastor of Christ the King Parish in Silver Spring, recently entrusted to the Fraternity by Cardinal Wuerl. Beyond their official roles, the priests also serve the CL community wherever needed: Fr. Pietro Rossotti helps to lead the CL university students (CLU); Fr. Franco Soma, a teacher at Georgetown Visitation Preparatory School, follows the high school youth group (GS) present in a number of local schools; and Fr. Roberto, of course, helps to lead the “Knights,” when he is not busy teaching at the Avalon School for Boys.

Fr. José went north to Boston in 2005, where he was later joined by Fr. Stefano. There, Fr. José is now the Principal of Cristo Rey Boston High School and, aside from this demanding job, serves as national responsible of GS. The >>>

homes (in four countries) to tell the world about Him.

In February, their Fraternity celebrated its 25th anniversary with a general audience with Pope Benedict XVI in Rome. He urged them to “bring to everyone the communion that is born from the heart of Christ” (see p. 30). This is the whole point of their work, and if they become true fathers to the people it is because of this love that they bear. The Fraternity’s mission is simply to extend this friendship of Christ

THE AUDIENCE WITH THE POPE

ON SATURDAY AT PETER'S HOUSE

On February 12th, after 25 years of mission to the four corners of the earth, a confirmation from Benedict XVI: "Continue to go out into the world."

BY MARCO SAMPOGNARO

"**O** felicem virum, beatum Joseph...." The choir of the seminarians had just intoned the hymn. When they got to "Joseph," those who were watching Benedict XVI noticed him recovering from his tiredness, looking at the small crowd before him and smiling, as if to say, "Yes, I am a happy man, and you are my friends."

"Happy Joseph," says the hymn, because "he was granted what many kings wanted to see, but did not see, to hear, but did not hear. And not only did he see and hear, but he was able to hold Him, hug Him, kiss Him, dress Him, and protect Him" (these are St. Bernard's words). It was one of the most intense moments of the audience granted by the Holy Father, on February 12th, to the Fraternity of Saint Charles Borromeo. There were 400 of them, including 100 priests, 40 seminarians, 15 nuns (the Missionary Sisters of St. Charles, founded five years ago), parents and friends of the priests, and staff from the Fraternity's offices in Rome. Fr. Julián Carrón was there with them, too, a physical witness to the unity with the charism of the Movement from which the Fraternity grew. They were all in the Sala Clementina, next to the Pope's study, to celebrate the silver jubilee of the Fraternity founded in 1985 by Fr. Massimo Camisasca.

The venue of the celebration is at the heart of Christianity. At 10:00 am, Mass was celebrated in the Apse of St. Peter's Basilica, behind the Apostle's tomb, by the Archbishop of the Mother of God in Moscow, Paolo Pezzi. At the end of the celebration, the Vatican gendarmes escorted the group of 400 up the stairs leading to the papal apartments. The Pope came in, the seminarians sang, Fr. Massimo proffered greetings, the Pope gave his address, 30 "representatives" kissed his ring, and it all ended with a final applause. The whole day had a solemn but familiar tone, one of simultaneous grandeur and intimacy. The point of de-

parture was the memory of "Don Gius." "The gift that moved us and still moves us is the experience of Fr. Luigi Giussani," Fr. Massimo said in his greeting. "His Christian wisdom, his love for Christ and for man, indestructibly joined, that wound of which you, Your Holiness, spoke on the day of our beloved Fr. Giussani's funeral. ... The experience of communion, in which Fr. Giussani was a master for us, led us, from the start, to choose community life and therefore the 'house' as the point of radiation for the faith."



A moment during the audience.

Pope Benedict, too, recalled the founder of CL: "This moment brings back to my mind my long friendship with Monsignor Luigi Giussani and bears witness to the fecundity of his charism." He greeted Archbishop Pezzi and Fr. Carrón, sitting together in the first row, "who symbolically express the fruits and the root of the work of the St. Charles Fraternity." Then he went on to give a brief lesson, in his particular style, dealing with two themes—"The place of the ordained priesthood in the life of the Church," and "The place of community life in priestly experience."

"At the kissing of the ring, Fr. Massimo presented each one of us," recalls Stefano, a fifth-year seminarian involved in the organization of the event. "The Pope used friendly, informal words with everyone, and at the same time said something meaningful to each of us." In 1984, John Paul II had said to CL, "Go into the whole world to bring the truth, the beauty, and the peace that are met in Christ the Redeemer." Benedict XVI took up that exhortation in his conclusion: "Continue to go out into the whole world to bring to all the communion that is born from the heart of Christ!" "There is great continuity with the 1984 audience," says Fr. Massimo Invernizzi, Pro-Rector of the seminary. "Benedict reconfirms that mandate with his blessing, before a hall of people which, at a glance, shows the action of the Spirit: a people gathered from all over the world."

school is flourishing in its service to low-income minority students and a glance at Fr. José's cluttered schedule leaves no doubt as to his total commitment to the students and teachers before him. Fr. Stefano also teaches there, while Fr. Luca Brancolini teaches at another high school in the city.

PRICELESS. The brief history of these priests in the United States testifies that openness to the plan of Another was not merely an entrance hurdle, but defines their whole life. Fr. Michael explained that becoming part of a missionary society in the Church means being available to go wherever one is sent, because, through the circumstances and the Superior, it's Christ Himself who does the sending. Far from an oppressive obedience, "being sent by Christ gives you a great freedom and a great certainty." His words seem contradictory, but maybe they make sense after all, if you recall Fr. Roberto's middle school students. They learned that happiness is possible *now*, because the reality before you is given by Christ Himself for you to see something great. Fr. Gabriele Azzalin, recently arrived in Denver, perhaps said it most simply in a letter to Fr. Camisaca: "What's priceless is being happy in the place where you are." In the USA, the FSCB have found a people with a lot of positive energy, and a desire to hope. The priests' witness to Christ points to a purpose for such energy and "a hope that does not disappoint." Fr. Antonio, FSCB North American regional delegate, notes that their proposal breaks open the American religious tendency to "fall prey to a self-determining freedom that thinks it is able to choose whether, how, and where to relate to God."

Instead, "Christ's consoling presence in the Church teaches us that God is all in all. Being awakened to this totality makes us truly free." ■

FILM

CAN A MAN BE BORN AGAIN?

In *The Wrestler*, Randy the Ram (Mickey Rourke) has spent the past twenty years in weekend wrestling bouts and weekday odd jobs—all in the hope of retrieving this lost glory. After a serious operation, he begins to ask, “What have I done with my life?”

“Human kind cannot bear very much reality,” said T.S. Eliot, as Randy demonstrates in his failure to sustain a relationship with his grown daughter. His slide into debauchery leads her to completely reject him. Paradoxically, when Randy is offered a second and third chance at



Crazy Heart
Scott Cooper, Director
Fox Searchlight Pictures (2009)
Rated R/112 min.

happiness—signified by the ex-stripper Cassie—he rejects it, saying, “The only place I get hurt is *out there* [in the world, not on the mat].” She patiently points out the obvious to him: “I’m here; I’m really here.” His final leap into the ring is a refusal of salvation.

The life of Bad Blake (Jeff Bridges) in *Crazy Heart* has contours similar to Randy’s: failed relationships, an estranged child, a career in limbo, and a body battered by abuse. But Bad manages to hit something besides despair at rock bottom when he recognizes his radical inadequacy and his dependency on Another. He does far more than crawl out of a bottle: he

begins to engage life in all of its glorious mundanity: cleaning the kitchen, raking the yard, and, yes, writing songs for his one-time protégé, now country music sensation, Tommy Sweet.

“Why does one affirm reality and another deny it?” Giussani notes in *The Religious Sense* that the poor in spirit are those who “have absolutely nothing to defend, who seize everything as it is, and follow the attraction of reality according to its total implications” (p. 123). Even when it means doing the dishes.

Matt and Teresa McGuinness



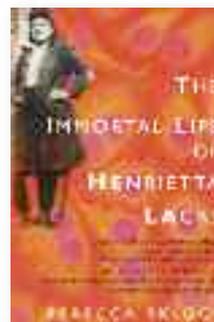
The Wrestler
Darren Aronofsky, Director
Fox Searchlight Pictures (2008)
Rated R/109 min.

BOOK

WITNESS TO A TRANSFORMATION

A writer (St. Paul, Karl Marx) can change the world. A writer’s gaze can do the same. With her attention and compassion focused on an African American family, science writer Rebecca Skloot becomes a witness to transformation. Her subject, Henrietta Lacks, an African American mother of five, died of cancer in 1951. Scientists had been trying to grow human cells for decades, unsuccessfully. Henrietta Lacks’s cells grew because they were infected with a strain of human papillomavirus. Code-named HeLa, the cells were used to test Jonas Salk’s polio vaccine, sent aloft by NASA to study

zero-gravity effects, and employed in AIDS research. They remain in wide use today in biomedical research. Developed over ten painstaking years, this scientific detective story is a study in race relations and a meditation on bioethics. (In the billion-dollar biomedical research industry, who owns our cells?) However, what finally struck Skloot is the humanity of the Lacks family—poor, black, scientifically illiterate, and remarkable. To the doctors who harvested Henrietta Lacks’s cells, she was a cypher. To her children, some of whom were too young when she died to remember her,



The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks
By Rebecca Skloot
Crown Publishers, 2010,
327 pages.

Henrietta was Mother. Skloot brings HeLa to the attention of Henrietta’s children and shares in their discovery. The epigraph from Elie Wiesel is on target: “We must not see any person as an abstraction. Instead, we must see in every person a universe with its own secrets, with its own treasures, with its own sources of anguish and with some measure of triumph.” *The Immortal*

Life of Henrietta Lacks is about miracles—the kind that science boasts about and the more moving miracles of lives transformed.

Webster Bull