

in a

Word

How America treats the new
immigrant
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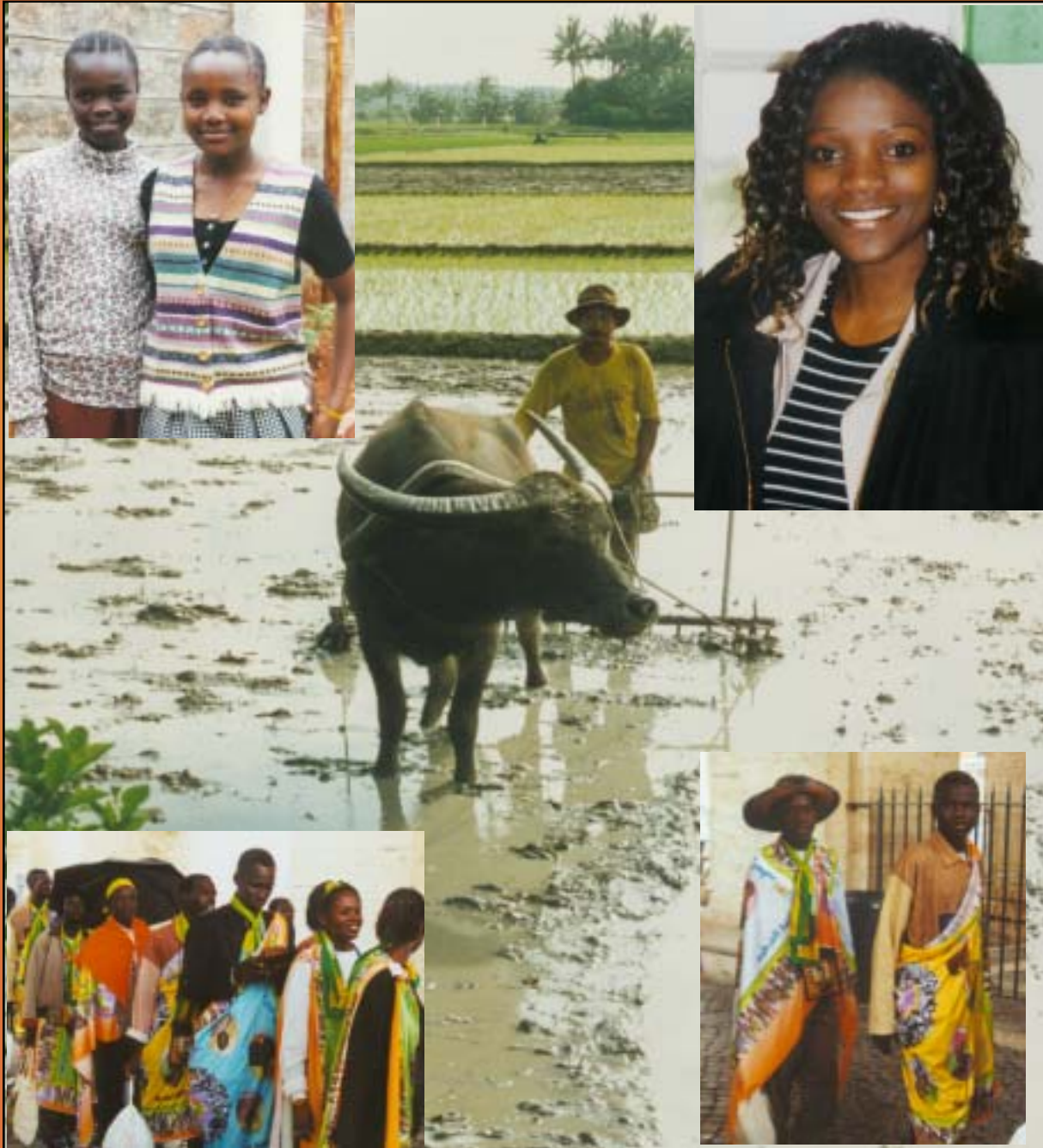


Photo by Father Pawlicki, SVD

*“God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble”
(James 4:6)*



Reflections on Life! *CAN GOD MAKE GREAT USE OF YOU?*

Rev. Jerome LeDoux, S.V.D., syndicated columnist

Search the newscasts, specials and documentaries, surf the TV, the Internet and everything else, and you will invariably find gifted people of considerable ability, sometimes luck, who make the big news, create the major changes, and seize the attention and following of people at large.

With all these givens, ask yourself the prying question: "Do you believe God can use you as a powerful tool?"

Implicit in that question are other questions such as: What kind and what degree of talent do I need for God to make great use of me? What amount of education and training are necessary for God to use me to the max? Which connections do I need with people of clout to be able to serve God totally?

Perhaps the secular, the mundane, the worldly-wise do not know it or could not care less, but God discounts all the above-mentioned talents, abilities, education, training and connections. Not that these things are useless to God. It is just that the worldly tend to glorify themselves, taking the credit.

Without ignoring the standards, talents and resources of the world at large, God eventually humbles everyone to prove that the credit, recognition and glory belong to him alone. Often against their will and every desire, God uses even the worldly to promote his kingdom, but they are not his priority.

God takes the rejects of the world, the badly soiled, defective and sinful, and raises them up to dizzy heights in his kingdom. Thus Mary Magdalene, described as simply "a sinful woman" turned 180 degrees into a wonderful tool by the compassion, the grace and love of Jesus, was extolled by Jesus.

After Mary Magdalene had anointed the head and feet of Jesus on a second occasion, Jesus put her acid critics on notice: "Amen, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be spoken of, in memory of her" (Matthew 26:13).

Peter himself, the "rock" on which Jesus built his church, was anything but a rock, showing his fickle-

ness, timidity and cowardice on numerous occasions, finally denying his Master thrice at the most dire moments of Jesus. Yet, God used him, a defective tool, to anchor his kingdom on earth.

Formerly known as Saul up to the point of his conversion, Paul thought he was doing great, serving papers on the Christians and delivering them to the authorities, sometimes unto death. So God knocked him flat on his back, taking away his eyesight until he should find the right path to God.

St. Jean Marie Vianney, the Cure" of Ars, was so slow intellectually that he was almost thrown out of the seminary. Laboring on his sermons with a painful scrawl deep into Saturday nights in the church sacristy, all he did was blow the congregation away with the force of the Holy Spirit. People from many countries came to him for confessions up to 8 hours a day.

The numbers and ranks of the weak, defective, timid, even sinful vessels put to marvelous use by God are mind-bending. "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6). Unless

there is a vacuum in us, unless our cup is empty, God does not work his wonders in us.

So, back to the question: Do you believe God can make great use of you? Don't try to weasel out, claiming you have no talents, no gifts, no abilities, no training or education. It is abundantly clear that, while God makes use of these things, he does not make them a priority or even a necessity.

Au contraire, we have an advantage with God when we are weak, poor, wretched and failing. "About myself I will not boast, except about my weaknesses... for power is made perfect in weakness... when I am weak then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:5,9,10).

Can you imagine that, in God's sight, it is actually an asset for us to be loaded down with liabilities? All we have to do is allow God to take over all our useless, harmful baggage and work his wonders in us.



NO ONE IS A FOREIGNER



In the Church, no one is a foreigner: For this reason, it is important to create occasions for dialogue and foster reciprocal understanding. Above all it is necessary that each one feel involved in a pastoral endeavor that responds to the people's real needs."

She is a pretty 19 year old Taiwanese girl. Has lived in California for 5 years. Speaks English very well. Yet her self image is alarmingly low. Why? She is ashamed of her accent. "Students laugh at me", she says quietly. "I have no friends."

These lines are often repeated throughout the USA each and every day as countless numbers of families come and take up residence here in our country. They come with gifts and talents. They bring their own traditions and history. We know from our American history that these other cultures which have made America so unique.

Yet for some reason we Americans treat the new wave of immigrants with rudeness. We are so intolerant. Intolerant of someone's speech. We laugh. We say we can't understand.

Why are we so uncomfortable with someone being different? Their looks and appearance are appealing but when it comes to their speech and pronunciation we find a reason to exclude!

The front cover has photos of such individuals. They come from Kenya, Sudan, Swaziland, Philippines. They are pleasing to look at and obviously have gifts and talents, a willingness to work hard. Yet the minute they speak will we have labeled them? Nine times out of ten we know the answer to that will be "YES"!

Pope John Paul in a recent homily to a church of multiethnic faithful said that "there are no foreigners in the church". He said.. **"In the Church, no one is a foreigner: For this reason, it is important to create occasions for dialogue and foster reciprocal understanding. Above all it is necessary that each one feel involved in a pastoral endeavor that responds to the people's real needs."**

"Therefore, you must know how to be a community open to all, persevering in listening to the word of God, and the celebration of the sacraments of salvation,"

We as Catholics in the United States of America must understand the hurt that takes place day in and day out in our country. Hurt to people who come from someplace else. We do have immigrants in this prosperous land and we must recognize the intolerance in ourselves and those around us.

There is no reason for this beautiful, talented girl who came from Taiwan to feel so isolated. She is charming and intelligent. Yet the young people around her and the community in which she lives have almost destroyed her spirit.

This is what "love one another" is all about. We as Americans need to welcome and respect others even if they speak differently. Who are we to think we are better than they?

Speak to someone who has recently come from another country and ask them how they feel Americans have received them. Don't be surprised by what you may hear.

in a word or two

The Office for Racial Justice of the Archdiocese of Chicago is up to the task! The First Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Racial Healing and Reconciliation Prayer Service, Commemorating the life and legacy of Dr. King, will be held on April 4, 2001 at 7pm at Holy Family Church, Roosevelt Rd and May St., Chicago IL. With keynote speaker, the Most Reverend Wilton D. Gregory, Bishop of Belleville, IL, the prayer service takes a proactive stance in beginning the healing process that will reach out to Chicagoans and those they touch. `What are you doing to begin the racial healing and reconciliation process?

The Institute for the Recovery from Racisms will be holding training sessions on April 20-22, 2001 in Detroit, MI. For more information about the Institute's programs, contact:
Rev. Clarence Williams, CPPS, Ph.D., Director
P. O. Box 13559
Detroit MI 48213-0559
Ph: (313) 521-7777 Fax: (313) 521-7766
Email: ifrfr@aol.com

Resumes are being accepted from Roman Catholic lay men and women, religious sisters and brothers and priests for the position of **Pastoral Administrator of St. Agnes Parish**, a dynamic, financially sound, urban parish in Cincinnati, Ohio. St. Agnes has 240 families – 85% of whom are African American. The ideal candidate will have experience in the African American Catholic community and lead collaboratively with demonstrated administrative ability.

Position requires: 1) a minimum bachelor's degree; 2) degree or certificate in theology, pastoral ministry or equivalent; 3) demonstrate competency in administration; 4) demonstrate ability to work in the African American community; 5) knowledge and love of African American Catholic history, culture and heritage. Competitive salary, benefits and on-site housing available. Deadline March 30, 2001. Position begins June 1, 2001. For more information, contact:

Fr. Thomas DiFolco
9927 Wayne Ave.
Cincinnati OH 45215
Ph: (513) 554-4010

The **Sankofa Youth Summit IV** will be held in St. Louis on May 4-6, 2001 T THE Hampton Hotel. This gathering is sponsored by The Bowman-Francis Ministry. The primary goal of this gathering is to

respond to the educational, psychological and spiritual needs of African American Youth. Sankofa Youth Summit emphasizes an urban and Africentric approach in addressing the needs of our youth. For more information, contact Angela Scheck at (317) 634-3173.

On March 18, 2001 the Office of Black Catholic Ministry of the Archdiocese of New York, in conjunction with the Office of Women and the Franciscan Handmaids of Mary, will sponsor a **Women's Day Celebration**. The theme for this event is Women Affirming Their Faith, Their Works, Their Future. The Spelman College Glee Club, celebrating more than 50 years of choral excellence, will perform a repertoire of sacred, secular, spiritual and African American composed music and other culturally works.

Guest speaker for this event is Dr. Estella Majozou, a native of Louisville, Kentucky, and noted author and poet. The celebration will be held in the Aaron Davis Hall, 135th St and Convent Ave. at City College of New York. Tickets are \$25, \$20 and \$10 through Ticket Master (212) 307-7171. A reception will follow. For more information, call the Office of Black Catholic Ministry (212) 371-1011 ext. 2681.

The Arusi retreat for Christian Marriage will take place May 18-20, 2001 at the Portiuncula Center for Prayer in Frankfort, Illinois. Led by Andrew and Terri Lyke, national leaders in Christian marriage ministry, the event is a great opportunity for couples to deepen their relationship.

For more information and registration go to <http://membersaol.com/Arusilove> or write or call:

Lyke to Lyke Consultants
P.O. Box 652
Matteson, IL 60443-0652
Phone 1-888-658-2940
e mail to Arusilove@aol.com

Deacon Bishop King of Chicago died on January 8, 2001. Deacon King was a visionary who worked tirelessly in the Chicago office for Catholic Education for the religious formation of African Americans and moving the Church to respond to the needs of the African American Catholic community.

Divine Word Missionaries is an international missionary community of over 5,000 brothers and priests. In 1905 the SVDs began working among blacks in the southern United States. Today, Divine Word Missionaries work in over 35 parishes in Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas and Arkansas.

IN A WORD is a publication of The Society of the Divine Word's Media Production Center.

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