

## EDITOR'S NOTE

## Imagining what might be



Heuristics, the art of problem solving, is a field that has captivated my imagination for many years as a means for addressing complex issues. For instance, if you can find a situation analogous to your own, then understanding one may provide clarification for the other. Heuristics is full of such methodologies for making sense of the world around us.

The pronouncements from Rome this past summer have forced us to reconsider our understanding of the winds blowing through the church. Our comprehension of an already complex situation became even more complex. More information only seemed more confusing. We watched as energies were being focused on specific questions while the bigger picture was blurred. We at NCR asked John Allen to draft an article that would provide a fuller assessment of the situation facing us.

In the article, John used the phrase evangelical Catholicism. It was as if he turned on a light bulb while we were searching for the point of illumination for comprehending Benedict XVI's papacy. Using a term we recognized within an analogous situation, evangelical Protestantism, we were able to make better sense of the happenings of the past few months, if not the past 20 years.

Benedict XVI's papacy is bringing to fruition the foundation laid by Pope John Paul II for the construction of evangelical Catholicism. Using this as a guide, future pronouncements become almost predictable as the church struggles in response to the forces shaping the world of the 21st century.

We seized upon John's term, evangelical Catholicism, and asked him to complete his piece as our cover story and give us a fuller explanation of these thoughts as well as his insights regarding implications for liberal Catholicism.

As always, we are interested in hearing what you think about this interpretation and your own assessment of the current reality.

In another article this week, we report on a lay convocation (part of the lay synod movement) that took place in San Francisco. Again, the field of heuristics may offer insight into future possibilities for these assemblies.

A potential approach for addressing questions of church is based on a new theory and methodology of human development called "Appreciative Inquiry." The basic idea is to build organizations, in this case church, around what works, rather than trying to fix what doesn't.

The approach asserts that we can become prisoners of our own perspectives on a problem rather than think about what worked in the past and what represents our best experience.

After reading about the experience of the San Francisco gathering, I thought of what I had read concerning Appreciative Inquiry and whether this particular way of asking questions and envisioning the future would be helpful. Appreciative Inquiry doesn't ignore past difficulties and injustices, but emphasizes positive relationships by building on the basic goodness in a person, a situation, and an organization. In so doing, its goal is to enhance the group's capacity for collaboration and change. In the words of Dr. David L. Cooperrider of Case Western Reserve University, a significant voice for the Appreciative Inquiry method, the hope is to "ignite the collective imagination of what might be."

In the words of the Web site [appreciative-inquiry.org](http://appreciative-inquiry.org), "It's about seeing what others may not see. It's about heightening our awareness of the value, strength and potential of ourselves and others — and overcoming the limits that we impose, often unconsciously, on our own capacities."

Contact me at [rlarivee@ncronline.org](mailto:rlarivee@ncronline.org).

*Rita Larivee, Editor*

## HOW TO REACH US

Mail: National Catholic Reporter; P.O. Box 411009; Kansas City, MO 64141-1009  
Street Address: 115 E. Armour Blvd.; Kansas City, MO 64111  
Phone: (816) 531-0538 Fax: (816) 968-2280

## HOW TO SUBSCRIBE OR RENEW

Call toll-free (800) 333-7373, use the subscription order form on Page 4 or subscribe or renew online at [NCRonline.org](http://NCRonline.org).

Subscription rates: Cover price \$1.95. One-year subscription U.S. \$43.95. Foreign \$78.95 (U.S. or equivalent). Please allow 6-8 weeks for delivery of first issue. Electronic-only subscription available online at [NCRonline.org](http://NCRonline.org) for \$34.95. For back issues, phone (800) 444-8910; for bulk subscriptions, phone (800) 432-5564, or e-mail [ncrsb@ncronline.org](mailto:ncrsb@ncronline.org).

## SUBSCRIPTION AND BILLING QUESTIONS?

Phone (800) 333-7373 or e-mail [ncrsb@ncronline.org](mailto:ncrsb@ncronline.org). For faster service, please have your address label on hand. For billing questions, please have your invoice available.

## MOVING?

Send your new address and old mailing label to NCR, P.O. Box 472, Mt. Morris IL 61054-0472, or go to [NCRonline.org](http://NCRonline.org). Please allow 4-6 weeks to process address changes.

## ADVERTISING DEPARTMENT

NCR offers both display and classified advertising. For rate cards, media kits, and general advertising information, contact Advertising Manager Fr. Jack Lumanog at (800) 444-8910 ext. 2238 or staff at ext. 2218, ext. 2217 or 2216; fax (816) 968-2268 or (816) 968-2292; e-mail [ncradv@ncronline.org](mailto:ncradv@ncronline.org).

## INTERNET

NCR is posted online by the Tuesday before the issue date. Subscribers to *National Catholic Reporter* are able to access all of [NCRonline.org](http://NCRonline.org) at no additional charge. Back issues, as well as Web exclusives, are accessible through the online archives.

## EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT

Phone the Editorial Department at (816) 968-2253, or e-mail respective editors directly:  
Publisher/Editor in Chief.....[rlarivee@ncronline.org](mailto:rlarivee@ncronline.org)  
Assistant to Editor.....[tharris@ncronline.org](mailto:tharris@ncronline.org)  
Opinion/Arts Editor.....[mpatterson@ncronline.org](mailto:mpatterson@ncronline.org)  
Letters.....[letters@ncronline.org](mailto:letters@ncronline.org)  
Poetry.....[poetry@ncronline.org](mailto:poetry@ncronline.org)  
Photos.....[photos@ncronline.org](mailto:photos@ncronline.org)  
Permissions.....[tharris@ncronline.org](mailto:tharris@ncronline.org)  
Web Coordinator.....[dcoday@ncronline.org](mailto:dcoday@ncronline.org)

## SUBMITTING MANUSCRIPTS

All manuscripts must be typewritten; if submitted electronically, send an e-mail cover letter with manuscript text as a Microsoft Word attachment. Unsolicited manuscripts and accompanying materials will be returned only when accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope. *National Catholic Reporter* is not responsible for unsolicited manuscripts or for manuscripts and photos lost or damaged in transit.

Unless otherwise stated, all published material becomes the property of The National Catholic Reporter Publishing Company, which has the exclusive right to reproduce it in electronic form.

## NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER

*Seeking to inform and inspire a just and peaceful world, serving as a platform for discussion of church, society, and global community.*

—NCR Mission

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Patrick J. Waide Jr., chair; Annette E. Lomont, vice chair; Sr. Rita Larivee, SSA, president; Zeni Fox, secretary; Fr. Julio Giulietti, SJ, treasurer; Donald A. Brennan; Fr. Charles E. Curran; Pamela D. Hayes; Sr. Theresa Kane, RSM; Fr. Jayson J. Landeza; Jeanne Marie Lee; Jake Mascotte; Jeanette Rodriguez; Landon H. Rowland;

PUBLISHER/EDITOR IN CHIEF  
**Rita Larivee, SSA**

EDITOR  
**Thomas W. Roberts**

ASSISTANT TO EDITOR  
**Tara Harris**

BUSINESS MANAGER  
**Wally Reiter**

MARKETING MANAGER/  
ADVERTISING MANAGER  
**Linda Romey, OSB**

CIRCULATION MANAGER  
**Jo Ann Schierhoff**

**EDITORIAL STAFF**  
Special Sections Editor/  
Photo Coordinator, Teresa  
Malcolm; Poetry/Copy Editor,  
Patty McCarty; Layout Editor/  
Art Director, Toni-Ann  
Ortiz; Opinion/Arts Editor,  
Margot Patterson; Assistant  
to Opinion Editor, Rich  
Heffern; Assistant to  
Layout Editor, Philip D.  
Hageman; Staff Writer,  
Dennis Coday

## BUREAUS

Rome, John L. Allen Jr.  
[jallen@ncronline.org](mailto:jallen@ncronline.org)

## NCRonline HIGHLIGHTS

## Join the conversation



**NCRcafe.org** is NCR's interactive Web site that allows a community of people to read about and respond to the issues shaping our church today. Topics currently under discussion include:

- The *motu proprio* authorizing wider use of the pre-Vatican II Latin Mass.
- Is nonviolence a practical strategy? An ideal to strive for? So much daydreaming?
- If we really want U.S. troops out of Iraq, how can we do it?

## Listen to NCR Podcasts

■ Tom Fox talks with Lisa Striebing about organizing a lay convocation in San Francisco. (See the story on Page 8.) Listen to the interview on [NCRcafe.org](http://NCRcafe.org).

■ Hameed Ali, whose pen name is A.H. Almaas, was studying physics at the University of California in Berkeley when he had an epiphany and turned from exploring the physical to exploring the spiritual. He talks with Tom Fox about his book *Dimensions of Spirit: Love as the Source of Existence*.



## On the Road to Peace

Fr. John Dear is about to stand trial for an act of civil disobedience in a campaign to end the war in Iraq. You can read his thoughts on this in his Web column posted every Tuesday to [NCRcafe.org](http://NCRcafe.org).



Copyright of National Catholic Reporter is the property of National Catholic Reporter Publishing Company and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.