



STUDIES

IN
THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

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Tuskegee Years

What Father Arrupe Got Me Into

JAMES S. TORRENS, S.J.

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THE SEMINAR ON JESUIT SPIRITUALITY

The Seminar is composed of a number of Jesuits appointed from their provinces in the United States.

It concerns itself with topics pertaining to the spiritual doctrine and practice of Jesuits, especially United States Jesuits, and communicates the results to the members of the provinces through its publication, *STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS*. This is done in the spirit of Vatican II's recommendation that religious institutes recapture the original inspiration of their founders and adapt it to the circumstances of modern times. The Seminar welcomes reactions or comments in regard to the material that it publishes.

The Seminar focuses its direct attention on the life and work of the Jesuits of the United States. The issues treated may be common also to Jesuits of other regions, to other priests, religious, and laity, to both men and women. Hence, the journal, while meant especially for American Jesuits, is not exclusively for them. Others who may find it helpful are cordially welcome to make use of it.

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James S. Torrens, S.J.

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The first word . . .

“The Sixties” get a bum rap. To the conservatives among us, the term suggests the collapse of civil order and the beginning of the implosion of the Roman Catholic Church as we knew and loved it. To liberals it stirs misty-eyed memories of promises unfulfilled. Those of us who define ourselves, like John Courtney Murray, as “the radical center” have mixed feelings about the era. Sure, it was a crazy time, but in fairness, let’s say something positive about “The Sixties.” It was, after all, the period when we, as Americans and Jesuits, took enormous strides in facing the racial inequities that remained as a legacy of centuries of slavery and legally sanctioned racial discrimination. That was no small achievement for any decade. No, we haven’t erased all injustices, but rather than fret about how far we still have to go, it might be salutary to recall where we began this journey.

By one of those strange coincidences, this issue was in preparation during the trial of Edgar Ray Killen, 81, the former Ku Klux Klan leader who now stands convicted of arranging the murder of three Freedom Riders, Michael Schwerner, James Earl Chaney, and Andrew Goodman in 1964. The three victims had volunteered to spend the summer traveling through the South to register black voters, but Klansmen ambushed them and buried their bodies outside Philadelphia, Mississippi. The wall of silence in the town enabled the state to decline to prosecute the case for lack of evidence. When the U.S. Department of Justice brought federal charges, one juror held out, and the resulting hung jury could not provide a verdict. With a wink and a smile Mr. Killen walked away a free man. It took forty-one years for Mississippi prosecutors to bring in a conviction, but they got one, even though it was for the lesser charge of manslaughter.

The events took place a long, long time ago. Are they best forgotten as we move forward? I think not. They seem unpleasant incidents from a bygone era, as indeed they are, but they cast a dark shadow through the years to the present. For this reason alone, it would be a terrible mistake to write them off as aberrations of the distant past, and it would be tragic to allow them to be forgotten. Look back to those early years of what came to be known as the civil-rights movement, the lunch counter sit-ins, and the incident involving Rosa Parks, the black woman in Montgomery, Alabama, who refused to give her seat to a white man on a bus in 1954. How much remains in our collective memory? Let’s try a quiz of a few other names from the beginnings of that bumpy journey, to see how much

we remember, and more to the point how much we've forgotten about those days.

Orville Faubus. In late 1954, in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that all citizens had equal claim to an education, and that segregated schools did in fact fail to provide equal opportunities. After delaying the mandated integration of public schools for over a year, Gov. Orville Faubus of Arkansas called out the National Guard to prevent nine black children from entering a Little Rock elementary school. President Eisenhower had to nationalize the Guard, thus removing it from the governor's control and placing it directly under the command of the president, as commander in chief. As some commentators pointed out, it was the first time federal troops had enforced the law in a Southern state since Reconstruction ended in 1872. Recall that in those days a Republican president had little to lose in a solidly Democratic South. That *does* sound like ancient history.

Ross Barnett. In 1962 James Meredith enrolled in the University of Mississippi, but Governor Barnett resolved he would never attend a class. President Kennedy, as a Democrat, had to proceed a bit more cautiously. As a Catholic, he had a more precarious hold on the Democratic South. He instructed federal marshals to accompany Mr. Meredith through both the angry crowds and the state police Governor Barnett had ordered to keep him from entering. Several of us kept a clandestine radio in the basement of the scholasticate and slipped down the back stairs between classes to see if the confrontation had led to rioting or gunfire between the two law-enforcement agencies. It was a scary time.

George Wallace. After losing his first gubernatorial election to a Klansman, John Patterson, on the charge that he was soft on segregation, Wallace based his next campaign on the slogan "Segregation now, segregation tomorrow, and segregation forever," and he won in 1962. The next year, two black students tried to enroll at the University of Alabama, and Wallace vowed he would personally block their entry. It was a season of particular violence throughout Alabama in those days. Remember the four little girls killed in a church in Birmingham in 1963 and Martin Luther King's arrest and famous "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" that same year. The confrontation on Edmund Pettiss Bridge in Selma would take place a few months later. In order to restore order, President Kennedy turned to the Eisenhower tactic of nationalizing the Guard after negotiations with Governor Wallace failed. Wallace, it will be recalled, ran for president in 1964 and surprised everyone with his strong showing in the Democratic primaries even in the North. But 1964 was the year of Barry Goldwater, and despite his loss, his candidacy began the inexorable move of the "solid South" toward the Republican Party.

Lester Maddox. After President Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act in 1965, reaction against integration intensified. Mr. Maddox owned the

Pickrick Restaurant in Atlanta and made headlines by guarding his establishment armed with a pick handle in order to bar entry to any black patrons. In 1966 he was elected governor, even though he had never held elective office before. The pick handle became the symbol for his campaign, and he gave out autographed replicas for souvenirs.

If recalling Rosa Parks and these four governors has helped to recreate the spirit of the times, it is only logical to wonder what American Jesuits were doing during this terrifying period in our history. Let's go back a few years to get a wider perspective. Here's another name that few Jesuits have recognized in my informal polling.

Claude Heithaus. Following the economic pattern of the post-colonial period, Jesuits owned slaves, and after emancipation for the most part followed local customs on segregation. In November 1944 Father Claude Heithaus used the pulpit of St. Francis Xavier Church at St. Louis University to denounce segregation in the Catholic schools and churches of the region, especially at the university. He was warned about his inflammatory message, but he refused to be silent. As a result, his continued insistence on bringing this issue into the public forum became a matter of obedience in the mind of some superiors. With the consent, and perhaps more than consent, of Cardinal Joseph Glennon, Father Heithaus was removed from his position as a professor of classical archaeology at St. Louis University and transferred to Fort Riley, Kansas, as a military chaplain. (The official Website of the Archdiocese of St. Louis provides a remarkably candid assessment of racial issues during Cardinal Glennon's time.) Despite Father Heithaus's quasi exile, St. Louis University was in fact the first Catholic university in a former slave state to admit students of color, even though integration into the life of the campus remained a sensitive issue for many years. A year after leaving St. Louis, Father Heithaus resumed his academic work at Marquette, and after fourteen years was able to return to St. Louis.

One can only imagine the heated reactions on both sides that resulted from this controversy. The matter would have gone to Rome, but the superior general, Wlodimir Ledóchowski, had died in 1942. Because of the war, nearly four years passed before a congregation could be convoked to elect the new general, Jean-Baptiste Janssens, in September 1946. In the meantime, administration of the American Assistancy fell to Father Vincent McCormick, who asked John Courtney Murray to compose a document sorting out the issues raised by the Heithaus uproar. References to "the Negro" and "our" responsibilities to "him" grate a bit on contemporary ears, but the call for justice and equality leaves no doubt about Murray's conclusions: "The fact that he [the Negro] is barred from our schools is a scandal." His observation that "social justice obliges us to do only what is possible at the moment" might have provided a bit too much wiggle room for the hesitant, but he was clear in his call for action. (The

complete text is available in *Woodstock Letters* 97, no. 3 [Summer 1968]). In the absence of a general and with the chaos of the postwar period, the matter seems to have lost its urgency in official Rome. When Vatican II gathered, it placed issues of poverty and injustice on a wider canvass.

This should not lead one to conclude that Jesuits in the United States were doing nothing. American society as a whole was beginning to recognize racism as a moral evil and American institutions, those of the Society included, were examining their own consciences and making changes. Some few visionaries were genuine leaders. Some Jesuits found the changes long overdue; others found them precipitous. But on the whole our history was not a source of pride in this period; we failed to exert moral leadership when it was urgently needed. The parade had begun, and we risked letting it pass us by, or joining in with others who had already begun this great march toward equality. When Father Arrupe responded to the racial crisis that seemed to be tearing American society apart in the 1960s, as we have seen, he wrote: "Unfortunately, our apostolate to the Negro in the United States has depended chiefly upon individual initiatives and very little upon a corporate effort of the Society." He noted the service to disenfranchised groups in the past, but observed chillingly: "As the immigrant groups advanced economically, educationally, politically, and socially, the Society of Jesus came to become identified more and more with the middle-class, white segment of the population." (The complete text of this letter of November 1, 1967, is also available in *Woodstock Letters* 97, no. 3.)

This brief historical reflection raises more questions than it answers. What happened to our "apostolate to the Negro," as Father Arrupe calls the work in the quaint language of the day? Quite a bit, to be sure, but much less than we might have expected in the heady days of President Johnson's Great Society, when we Americans thought we could heal our divisions merely by identifying them. It might have been a classic case of Jesuit hubris coupled with naive American optimism.

As men of their time, Father Murray and Father Arrupe made the mistake of thinking, or at least writing, in monolithic terms about "the Negro." As early as the mid-1960s serious splits within the African American community became apparent. Martin Luther King's creation of a nonviolent movement in the quest for justice, based in the churches and animated by biblical language, provided a congenial setting for collaboration with Catholic organizations. The Nation of Islam under Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X, and more recently under Louis Farrakhan, proved more confrontational and less hospitable to outsiders. When Malcolm X and Dr. King were both assassinated, in 1965 and 1968 respectively, their ideas seemed to morph into a kaleidoscope of different ideological positions.

We liberals of the sixties thought of complete integration as the goal. Any visit to a college dining center can shatter that fantasy. Some African Americans simply prefer to socialize with people who share their heritage, as do whites and Asians. We (black and white people both) soon had to address the complex questions of the desirability and morality of social engineering in ways we never imagined in the sixties. It's taken us a while to understand the delicate balancing act involved in being "integrated" while maintaining one's racial and ethnic identity.

Over the past year I had the occasion to work through all the films of Spike Lee, our most successful African American director. In *School Daze* (1988) Dep, a campus activist played by a very young Larry Fishburne, is summoned to the dean's office for leading a disruptive demonstration. He dismisses the administrators contemptuously as "civil rights Negroes" who have nothing to teach him. Clearly, Dep feels that there is a generation gap. Through the character, Lee tries to tell us (black and white audiences alike) that a lot has changed since the sixties. In one film after another, Lee holds up a mirror to the complex dynamics within black society: poverty and wealth, education and ignorance, black identity and assimilation, collaboration and resistance, self-confidence and self-delusion. As a European American I learned a great deal, and more to the point, I was continually embarrassed at my ignorance about these issues. Surely, I knew that the expanding black middle class faces issues far different from those of people caught in poverty, but I failed to appreciate adequately the extent of the tensions within different segments of the African American community. Did the ghost of "the Negro" still haunt my intellectual attic?

Surely I come late to the game; others have been far more perceptive. Among American Jesuits today we don't hear much about the "inter-racial apostolate" anymore. A perusal of the *Catalogus* is instructive. Each of the provinces has an office or director for "social" or "pastoral" ministries, but none has an office for "interracial" activities. That may be a healthy sign. We have learned to work alongside people of all races in all kinds of ministries to all kinds of people on every rung of the socio-economic ladder without making the racial distinctions that seemed so clear to Fathers Heithaus, Murray, and Arrupe. No, it's not perfect, but think back to the sixties and thank God for the progress we've made in understanding and refining the complexities of race-related issues.

STUDIES is grateful to Jim Torrens for sharing his Tuskegee diary with us. His adventure takes place on the cusp of history: after *Brown v. Board of Education* and the Civil Rights Act but while the spirit of Wallace, Maddox, and the Klan were still very much alive in the South and beyond. Through his eyes we can reconstruct an era that brought "faith and justice" issues to the center of the Jesuit mission. He helps us recall those days when superiors struggled to balance the Society's commitment to its institutions and traditional ministries with its encouragement of

individual initiatives in meeting the needs of the day. As a teacher of literature he was caught in the conflict between standard English and black English, a seemingly arcane issue to the outside observer, but one that holds enormous implications for racial identity at a traditionally black college like Tuskegee. The local Catholic Church, he discovered, had its own time-tested, but questionable style for ministering to local congregations. How does a newcomer respond to these internal matters? Jim's narrative is a deeply personal statement, but its very humanness should not lull readers into missing the serious issues that we Jesuits wrestled with then and continue to face in our ministries today.

A few second words. . . .

STUDIES stands corrected. Two of our readers, both alumni of St. Andrew-on-Hudson in the 1950s, alerted me to a long-held misconception about the supposedly surreptitious burial of Teilhard de Chardin. Both personally attended the interment with the full St. Andrew's community. The novices and juniors did not have an Easter week off-campus recreation that day, as I had often heard and had repeated in "The first word." Our readers recall that it was raining heavily that day, and the casket was placed in the crypt under the chapel until a permanent resting place could be prepared in the cemetery. During the final commendation, the novices and juniors gathered on the portico, one story above the entrance to the burial vault, and somewhat out of the sight line to those immediately surrounding the casket below. The choir sang the customary Benedictus. The ceremony took place at the rear of the building, an unattractive setting that included various service entrances and at the time a coal yard. Those who insisted that Father Teilhard de Chardin had not received the respect he deserved from the Society may simply have failed to account for the weather and architecture of the building. More likely, it is a part of the oral tradition that took on a life of its own some years later, when Teilhard was thought to be "controversial."

Equally eagle-eyed readers might have noticed the annual change in our cast of characters printed on the inside front cover. The Seminar says goodbye and thanks to Tom Rausch and Greg Chisholm, two stalwarts, who leave us to enjoy the pleasures of golden California without the intrusive and relentless e-mails from Seminar Central.

We'll be joined for the next three years by Gerry McKeivitt, the Ignacio Ellacuría, S.J., Professor for Jesuit Studies at Santa Clara University. A UCLA historian, Gerry has specialized in the history of the American West and the Society. His interests converge in his forthcoming book, *Brokers of Culture: Italian Jesuits in the American West, 1848-1919*.

Dennis McNamara is the Park Professor of Sociology and Korean Studies at Georgetown. A survivor of Harvard, a postdoctoral year at Berkeley, the Fulbright Commission, and the National Science Foundation, he has collaborated widely with educational and governmental projects throughout East Asia. His most recent book is *Market and Society in Korea: Interests, Institutions and the Textile Industry in Korea*.

Phil Rosato has recently arrived at the Theology Department at St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia after a thirty-year stint at the Gregorian University in Rome. After completing his studies at Tübingen, he specialized in sacramental theology. Phil has compiled a lengthy list of articles in the scholarly journals, and his *Introduction to the Theology of the Sacraments* has been translated into Spanish, Italian, and Polish.

Welcome to the new arrivals! I'm sure readers of STUDIES will get to know them and appreciate their work in the near future.

Richard A. Blake, S.J.

Editor

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James S. Torrens, S.J., of the California Province, is currently on the staff of Cardinal Timothy Manning House of Prayer for Priests in Los Angeles. After completing his doctoral work in English at the University of Michigan, he taught for three semesters at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama before joining the English department at Santa Clara University. He served as associate editor at *America* for nine years, and before his present assignment taught at Universidad Iberoamericana Noroeste in Tijuana, Mexico for three years. He authored *Presenting Paradise: Dante's "Paradise," Translation and Commentary* and most recently a volume of poems entitled *Uphill Running*.

TUSKEGEE YEARS

What Father Arrupe Got Me Into

During the social turbulence that accompanied the civil-rights movement in the United States, Father Arrupe encouraged American Jesuits to become involved in one of the great moral movements of the time. Responding to the challenge involved more complications than one Jesuit might have imagined. After more than thirty-five years, Father Torrens now shares the diary he kept of his experiences. His recollections put a human face on the great and puzzling events of that era.

I. Introduction

In the summer of 1968 I headed south to Alabama in an old Ford Fairlane to begin teaching at Tuskegee Institute. The world was at a boil in 1968 as seldom before or since. The Prague Spring had been a brave if premature defiance of Communism. Student protest was surging in Paris, in Mexico City, and worldwide. In the United States, racial unrest had peaked with the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the subsequent firestorm in American cities. Vietnam had the American conscience roiled, and *Humanæ vitæ* did the same for American Catholics. Here was I, a young Jesuit of Italian-Irish background, emerging from the mole hole of doctoral studies to foster learning at one of the traditional black colleges.

Tuskegee (Tuss-kee-ghee) Institute, in Alabama, between Montgomery and Columbus, Georgia, was the creation of Booker T. Washington, who wished southern blacks to get enough basic learning and practical skills to survive American apartheid. The Institute, besides fostering the research of George Washington Carver, became something of a free zone for African-Americans in hostile territory. When I arrived, Tuskegee had programs in nursing,

veterinary medicine, and engineering; it also had an Ed school, nascent science and humanities majors, and a renowned choir. Just up the road but in another world was Auburn University.

Getting approved for Tuskegee had already been the big adventure of my life. On All Saints Day in 1967, our superior general, Father Pedro Arrupe, wrote to American Jesuits urging us into action for interracial justice. His letter was the work of two U.S. Jesuits whom he called to Rome, William Kenealy of the Boston College Law School and Louis Twomey of New Orleans. Twomey, a graduate of the Institute for Social Order (ISO) at St. Louis University, became director of the Institute for Industrial Relations and the Institute of Human Relations at Loyola University, New Orleans. Starting in 1948, he mimeographed a newsletter, *Christ's Blueprint for the South*, and sent it to Jesuits in formation all over the country. In its spectrum of social concerns, racial justice loomed the largest. I was very much affected by it. Kenealy was professor and dean at the Boston College Law School and was active for a seven-year stint as visiting professor at Loyola New Orleans. In the late sixties he initiated the national office of the Jesuit Social Apostolate.

Twomey and Kenealy, old collaborators, worked through a number of drafts of Father Arrupe's letter with the American Assistant, Father Harold Small, and the General Assistant, Father Vincent O'Keefe, before arriving at a version that suited the General. This letter, one of Father Arrupe's earliest initiatives, answered his deep concern over the current racial crisis in the United States. His disquiet had been sharpened by a visit from Whitney Young, director of the National Urban League and a major player in the civil rights movement.

Father General saw much promise in the situation of ferment, which could open a door to equality and dignity for black Americans. His letter did not mention sit-ins, protests, or marches, but focused instead on the changes mandated by the Supreme Court, beginning in 1954, with its "justly famous" decision in the School Segregation Cases. This series of cases, beginning in 1952, is best known for *Brown v. Board of Education in Topeka, Kansas*. This ruling "held that compulsory racial segregation is irreconcilable with 'equal protection of the laws,'" as mandated in the U.S. Constitution. Father Arrupe ventured to say, "In God's Providence, a new and hopeful era in race relations has now dawned." But this hopeful

view was shadowed by the very real danger of a widening violence and bitter division.

If resistance on the part of a hostile white community, with extreme reaction on the part of more militant Negroes, defeats this effort, not only will an historic opportunity be lost, but a permanent fracture in the structure of national life will become an awesome possibility. . . . The riots and bloodshed accompanying racial strife in the United States have given us grim forewarning of the danger lurking.*

Father Arrupe wanted all American Jesuits to be clear that "racism in all its ugly manifestations . . . is objectively a moral and religious evil. . . . As such it can never be solved *adequately* by civil laws or civil courts. It must *also* be solved by the consciences of men. American Jesuits cannot, must not, stand aloof." He grounded this statement of principle in "the Christian concept of man" (these were the days before inclusive language), which forbids any odious distinctions against a brother in Christ. He bolsters his argument by quotations from the Second Vatican Council ("Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions") and from the 1958 statement of the American hierarchy, "Discrimination and the Christian Conscience."

The Arrupe letter is blunt with American Jesuits.

It is humbling to remember that, until recently, a number of Jesuit institutions did not admit qualified Negroes, even in areas where civil restrictions against integrated schools did not prevail, and this even in the case of Catholic Negroes. It is embarrassing to note that, up to the present, some of our institutions have effected what seems to be little more than token integration of the Negro. (19)

You American Jesuits, Father Arrupe says, have a distinguished record of ministry to minorities. He specifically lists the American Indian, the Irish, the Italian, the German, and the Slav immigrants of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. (Asians are conspicuously missing.) But the American Negro is a notable exception. "Unfortunately our apostolate to the Negro in the United

*Parenthetical references correspond to paragraphs in Father Arrupe's "Letter on the Interracial Apostolate to the Fathers, Scholastics, and Brothers of the American Assistancy" (*Woodstock Letters* 97, no. 3 [Summer 1968]: 291-302). The letter may also be found in *Justice with Faith Today: Selected Letters and Addresses*, ed. Jerome Aixala, S.J. (Gujarat Sahitya Prakash; reissued in 1980 by the Institute of Jesuit Sources, St. Louis), 13-27. It was originally distributed in booklet form to communities.

States has depended chiefly upon individual initiative and very little upon a corporate effort of the Society." The question of why Jesuit response has been so poor engages him in some pointed speculation. Then he changes the tone to credit initiatives currently underway. "I am happy to observe among us a quickening pace of apostolic concern," Arrupe says. He articulates some of these changes, but still has to conclude, "It remains true that the Society of Jesus has not committed its manpower and other resources . . . in any degree commensurate with the need."

Lest he leave this letter generic and theoretical, Father Arrupe concludes with a substantial list of policies to be instituted in all sectors of formation and apostolate. He spells out specific steps to be taken and the timetables for them. In November of 1967, as I was reading through these policies, in the final stages of my dissertation on the literary criticism of T. S. Eliot, the following sentence leaped out at me: "Serious consideration should be given to the feasibility of permitting Jesuits to teach on the faculties of Negro colleges and of inner-city high schools" (27, e).

Father Connolly, as my former juniorate rector, was well versed in my frailties and deeply worried, as were all major superiors, by the drift of priests and sisters from their vocation in that unstable time.

I had to say to myself: Who more available than me? Why not a post-doctoral year at a Negro college? My previous contact with African-Americans had been edgy and minimal, the only exception being Alvin Henry, a close friend and kindred spirit among the doctoral students at the University of Michigan. But the late sixties, with

the Vietnam War underway, had brewed a tremendous activism on the Ann Arbor campus and among the campus ministers I had come to know. And social change was as crucial at home as it was abroad. No one in those days could be unaware of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the poignant and heroic and sometimes tragic episodes unfolding in the struggle for civil rights.

The University of Michigan had a program of faculty and student exchange with Tuskegee Institute and of assistance in academic areas. When I inquired about it, the program administrator promptly put me in touch with a Tuskegee professor who was then on campus. This got me a flight down to visit the campus, where I

promptly received an offer to teach in their English Department. Exciting but scary. I had to write for permission to my Jesuit provincial in California, John F. X. Connolly, who in his turn had to submit my request to his consultors.

As I read my four-page request now, I find it pretty eloquent and cogent. Father Connolly and all of his consultors did not. The provincial wrote: "The University of Santa Clara has been planning on your joining the faculty and opportunities have been passed up for acquiring capable professors." He added one more consideration that loomed large for American provincials, because many young Jesuits were attracted to teaching at secular campuses. (This would include Fathers Jim Devereux, Bill Neenan, and Bob Barth, who distinguished themselves at the Universities of North Carolina, Michigan, and Missouri.) "I can see untold problems if permission is given to certain individuals to work in this apostolate without any overall plan."

Given the steps I had already taken at Tuskegee, the response from my province left me in a fix. Swallowing hard, I wrote to Father Small in Rome, asking Father Arrupe, in substance, if he had really meant what he said. Father General replied on January 16 with the encouraging warmth for which he was known. "It was with great pleasure and satisfaction that I read your letter of January 3." He struck a note of appreciation for the Society's "excellent work for souls in America," but then added this:

I am also convinced that our vocation to undertake the harder ministries which others are unable to perform, requires that we concentrate our efforts with heightened intensity upon the apostolate of the Negro and the disadvantaged. It seems that as Jesuits we are eminently equipped to make our unique contribution by laboring as educators to bring the poor closer to the love of Christ.

Father General assured me that he would ask the provincial to notify me "if he sees the possibility of allowing you to work at Tuskegee." He reminded me, however, that "there are perhaps complications . . . about which I know nothing." Father Connolly, as my former juniorate rector, was well versed in my frailties and deeply worried, as were all major superiors, by the drift of priests and sisters from their vocation in that unstable time. I wrote to him again. I waited. I phoned him nervously one Saturday morning. The previous day, he told me, his consultors had considered my request

again and this time they split their vote, leaving it to Father Connolly. That morning on the phone, I am sure he had to take a very big gulp before adding, "I decide you can go."

What follows is my journal of those unforgettable days and months. A journal abounds in particulars. This one will have a lot about the learning environment at Tuskegee Institute, the people, the social milieu, the religious climate and my day-to-day reactions. Readers will find that some of the terminology for African-Americans dates unavoidably to an earlier time.

II. The Journal

September 9. My teaching days at Tuskegee begin, remarkably enough, on the feast of St. Peter Claver, who spent almost forty years devoted to the Africans who were arriving in the slave ships at Cartagena, Colombia, more dead than alive. In one sense he calls to mind all that was most condescending—those old-time mission campaigns to save the souls of the blacks (as for their bodies, well, that could hardly be helped). His story unfolded at a time and place when colonialism was at its worst, yet his instincts were right. His horror at the cruelties of the slave trade was total; his determination to bring what alleviation he could was lifelong. The selflessness of his charity was the one important thing.

A group of people in a place like this, white outsiders, can so easily lapse into habits of catty small-talk as to make their daily existence purgatorial or worse. I have lived close to this sort of negativism very often in the Jesuits and been dispirited by it.

Peter Claver's colonial world is a far cry from the student militancy that came storming to birth earlier this year right here in Tuskegee. Tonight Tom Doyle and his wife Mary Lou, sitting by the light

of two chunky candles in a house they have just rented, traced in detail the episodes of last spring—the egg-throwing at government spokesmen for the Vietnam War, the mass meetings with President Luther Foster, the imprisonment of the regents in Dorothy Hall guest house and the arrival of the National Guard to liberate them, the incendiary threat, the subsequent closing of school, the trials, the

handful of dismissals—in short all the mixture of outrage and stridency and administrative groping that characterizes the tumultuous college scene.

[The Doyles had come to Tuskegee to teach English with their MAs from Ann Arbor. They were in the flow of the white graduate students who made their way in impressive numbers to the traditional black colleges in that era, with genuinely high ideals, but sometimes also with an eye to what might satisfy their draft boards in the heat of conscription for Vietnam. The Doyles later settled in San Francisco, my home town, where Tom has taught ever since at City College, so we have been able to keep up our friendship.]

When Tom had finished his account, I suddenly realized that all the ceremonies of this past day which seemed so long—the introduction of innumerable new faculty, the debate about ROTC credits in the Humanities Division, the long, cautious address of Dr. Foster—were shot through with drama for anyone who had known the turmoil of spring.

Drink! I feel as if I have done nothing in my twenty-four hours here but drink ice water. There is nothing that looks so good—not beer, not fruit juice—as a jar of cool water in the Frigid-*aire*, unless, of course, it be this same water with scotch and ice cubes added!

“Southern exposure.” If only I can remain alert and sympathetic. A group of people in a place like this, white outsiders, can so easily lapse into habits of catty small-talk as to make their daily existence purgatorial or worse. I have lived close to this sort of negativism very often in the Jesuits and been dispirited by it. Hope I have learned my lesson! The exposure could well be of my own nakedness, and naked males have always struck me as rather ludicrous, hardly the Apollos of the artist. Well, we’ve all come naked from God, and it does not hurt to have the bare ribs of one’s finitude made public, so prepare your soul!

At the time it was difficult for me to understand the intensity of concern and feeling expressed by some of those present, but human emotions are not without their reason.

September 11. Boy, what a day! I have spent it all counseling freshmen about their class schedules. After only three days on campus!

Reminds me of that famous painting of Brueghel's, the blind leading each other in a sort of chain right into the drink. I suppose the chaos of registration is the same everywhere, but that doesn't make it any less dramatic. These youngsters have to take two hours of PE, a non-credit reading course, ROTC, and a weekly hour of orientation (to which I was wholly oblivious until almost the last of my counselees), and this on top of twelve hours of solids.

September 12. More of the same. A half dozen of my freshman counselees kept coming back, as much as three or four times, to modify their plans, substitute for courses closed out, correct omissions or ignorance of my own, and in general compound the chaos of registration. A more unpromising way to begin college I can hardly imagine.

September 18. Last Friday evening after Mass at St. Joseph's, the local Catholic church, the sisters of the parish school [*Dominican Sisters with their motherhouse in Sinsinawa, Wisconsin*] invited me out for a picnic with Stanley Maxwell and Milton Davis, two students at the Institute, plus Phil Loretan, who teaches engineering, and two young couples with their children, Ray and Trudy Barreras (Ray teaches biology at the Institute) and a younger couple with their first baby, Mac and Regina Woolard. [*This group became the nucleus of my Catholic connections at Tuskegee. At the moment I write this in 2005, one of those sisters, Geraldine O'Meara, O.P., is back as principal of the school and Stanley Maxwell is deacon and administrator of the parish.*]

On Sunday evening Regina and Mac Woolard invited us to their apartment for a prayer meeting. After the recent hectic weeks, I was in need of some such praying but also uncertain of what was in store. It turned out to be very simple and very moving. It is indeed awesome to glimpse the inner life of people devoted to God—to know their hopes, ideals, problems, anxieties, and even shortcomings. At the time it was difficult for me to understand the intensity of concern and feeling expressed by some of those present, but human emotions are not without their reason.

I discovered a deep source of unrest in the parish next day, when I myself was not allowed to say evening Mass in St. Joseph's Church. The reason given was that the Mobile chancery seems to have no record of my priestly faculties. The real reason seems to be

the threat I pose to the pastor. What an awkward situation. How am I to function in this place, peacefully and unobtrusively, as a priest? How can I preach effectively about the dilemmas of the Christian, black or white, in A.D. 1968? How can I live my own religious identity? But those are small questions over and against the pathos of this man, who has devoted his life to serving Christ among the blacks, being put on the defensive by my brief appearance on the scene and my supposed expertise, which is literary not pastoral, and a very relative thing at that.

[Father Arthur Flynn, S.S.J., the pastor, was a member of the Josephites, a religious order devoted to African-Americans. They stood out in the South for their pastoral ministry to these beleaguered Catholics. In the case of this Bostonian, isolation had bred a severe defensiveness. It did not help that the media were making hay that year of a splinter phenomenon among Catholics known as the "Underground Church." (See Michael Novak, "The Underground Church," in the "Saturday Evening Post," December 28, 1968.) I was the Underground Church at his door!]

September 18. I feel civilized again. This afternoon I found a couple of bottles of wine at the liquor store—the one authorized Alabama state liquor store in town. I felt like I was withdrawing money from a bank as I went through the various formalities of purchase. Anyway, I had Italian Swiss Chianti with dinner, and it made everything (baked potato, frozen broccoli and pork chops) taste 200% better.

Because I am "living as a layman," the Mobile chancery office has canceled my permission to operate as a priest in the diocese.

It is a little hard getting dinner music on the radio. I can pick up only one weak FM station, and the AM stations are appalling: either gospel music of the saccharine and jingly sort ("There is Someone to care about you") or, more often, the pounding of electric guitars and the yowling of mouths about six inches too close to the mike. TV is even more of the same. If you don't like Johnny Carson, you're stuck. And even if you do.

September 20. Today in the *Atlanta Constitution* (bless them, they kept it on page 6) we read of Governor Lester Maddox assuring a

Baptist Brotherhood Dinner that "America needs a genuine Holy Ghost revival" and that people do not have to be called 'old-fashioned' when they turn a deaf ear to Socialists, Marxists, and bums who are tearing at the very soul of America." [Maddox, owner of a fried-chicken outlet, opposed the Civil Rights act and stood off any blacks trying to enter his restaurant with a coterie of men carrying ax handles. The ax handle became his official logo.]

So much for the State. The Church touches me more nearly. I woke up this morning reduced, as it were, to the lay state. Because I am "living as a layman," the Mobile chancery office has canceled my permission to operate as a priest in the diocese. Father Lipscomb, the chancellor (*Most Rev. Oscar Lipscomb, now archbishop of Mobile*), says he

took it up with Archbishop Toolan, who allows me to say Mass privately but not in public. "Had it been clear to us from the onset that you would not have been wearing clerical dress, such faculties for public ministry would not have been granted."

"Mardi Gras is the least of the Negro's troubles but is nevertheless a neat instance of his finding himself invisible, present yet unaccounted for. For there is hardly a place for him in the entire publicly sponsored 'official' celebration of Mardi Gras."

I have committed myself to non-clerical wear at the Institute. To suddenly alter the pattern will certainly be awkward. I wish I could be clear in my own mind whether non-clerical wear is all that important here on campus—whether, in other words, I am brewing a tempest in a teapot.

Father Howard Douville, chaplain of the Veterans Hospital, came over in the role of fellow-Jesuit and peacemaker to talk turkey. Why be stubborn about so minor an issue? he asked. Ray Barreras appeared, by coincidence, at the very same time and agreed.

I suppose I have no alternative but to get back into black. It won't be comfortable. A white man on campus stands out like a sore thumb, as it is. After my brush last spring with the Negro militant from San Jose who told me just what he thought of the Church, I will be doubly uneasy, as if I were wearing ecclesiastical purple. People here assure me I am making a mountain out of a molehill. Hope so.

As I sat in my apartment at dinner this evening, guess what came on the radio: "I left my heart in San Francisco." And how!

September 27. Father Flynn got word to me last evening that he hoped to see me at morning Mass, which I was happy enough to hear. He then invited me to concelebrate with him and even, as I gathered once we went out on the altar, to lead the concelebration. How much more the kiss of peace meant under these conditions. Afterwards he invited me to the rectory for fruit juice and coffee. Hopefully this is a step back to my acceptability around the parish, a start in reducing the mountain to molehill size.

September 29. I was never much struck by Ralph Ellison's metaphor for the Negro, as in the title of his distinguished novel, *The Invisible Man*. It seemed to me more cerebral than real, farfetched, melodramatic, a steal from Dostoevski. Well, that probably shows how little I really know about the black experience. An article and a story in this month's *Harper's* opened my eyelids a centimeter. Walker Percy, in "New Orleans Mon Amour," discusses the Negro and Mardi Gras. "Mardi Gras is the least of the Negro's troubles but is nevertheless a neat instance of his finding himself invisible, present yet unaccounted for. For there is hardly a place for him in the entire publicly sponsored 'official' celebration of Mardi Gras."

September 30. What makes Mrs. Ada Peters such a good teacher in everyone's estimation? This morning at coffee she got talking about the way she has students present various short stories in class, in panels of four or five. That way the discovery is theirs (although she keeps a lot of questions and observations in reserve). The trouble with so many college teachers (some in the English Department at Michigan) is that they are too fond of the sound of their own voice.

[Ada Peters was an elegant, brisk schoolmarm, African-American, from Maine. During the student uprising in the spring, I was told, when they blocked access to the classroom building, she arrived to teach. "You can't go in there, Miz Peters," one of the militants told her, "I'll lay right down here in front of the door." "Lie!" she corrected him indignantly, and walked in. We heard that the voter registration board in Tuskegee had refused to register her, that is, had given her a failing mark on the literacy

test, when she balked at the sloppy version of the Declaration of Independence they handed her to copy, as they did to all unsuspecting black applicants. She was more literate than anyone there.]

October 3. Not only do I have twelve hours to teach (three preparations, four courses), like everyone else; I have to wind up with all of them on Tuesday and Thursday. If only I can build up enough stamina to stay on top of such a schedule. I have not as yet; the old asthma is giving me trouble.

Correction of prose, I can see, is really going to be the challenge. We just had a pride of linguists in here to discuss the teaching of English to those who grow up with a dialect. They refer to Negro speech as a second language at times, which overstates the case, I think. Undeniably, however, there are quite different structural patterns in the daily speech of many of these youngsters, which makes it difficult for them to switch over into standard English. After the linguistic conference, I am more convinced than ever that the widening of horizons and the ability of students to deal with more subtle concepts demands that they be at least at ease with the type of prose which, at its best, we find in Walter Lippmann, Churchill, the essays of Baldwin.

A large part of the difficulty with student writing, and not just here at Tuskegee, lies in a certain carelessness about logical continuity, not just in an essay but within the body of a single sentence. Expectations are set up as the sentence moves along and then are frustrated by a sudden change of subject, haphazard placing of clauses, imprecise connectives, etc. A teacher of comp is there to help the student get down on paper, a little more effectively, just what he or she wants to say.

October 9. Yesterday evening I finally got my Comparative Lit course off the ground, with a vengeance. The students were reading their papers about Dido and Aeneas when a full-scale fight broke out between two of them about the motive for Dido's suicide, Miss Brown claiming that it was shame over her guilt and Miss Williams shouting just as loud that it was hurt pride. The rest of the class pitched in. No hair was pulled, no friendships broken, and everyone seemed to enjoy the broil. I veered from one persuasion to the other as lines from Virgil were quoted back and forth.

Phil Loretan, recovering from an eye operation last night at the hospital, told me that some dogs made an awful racket outside his window during the night. On the way out I saw one of them, a police dog with legs as thick as my arm. A Negro farmer, with a young daughter holding to his hand, told me that a pack of such animals had come rampaging around his home. He was so concerned for his young children that he took out a 22 rifle and shot nine of them. The county gave him a bounty, for the beasts had been killing young calves and other farm animals. Sounds like a Jack London story, only this is hardly Alaska.

October 13. A sign on the highway between Montgomery and Birmingham says "Alabaster." What a bright shiny name for a town, but how suggestive of lily-white. When I drove through there yesterday, sure enough, the youth of town were out at the stoplights passing their straw hats—banded in red, white, and blue—for Governor George Wallace, that champion of segregation yesterday, today, and forever. The first time I saw this curious folkway was a month ago in Birmingham, where the city police swarmed the intersection to get funds for some medical charity.

Friday evening was the first of a series of Human Relations workshops at St. Jude's High School auditorium in Montgomery. Bishop Vath [*Joseph Vath, auxiliary bishop of Mobile and soon to be the first bishop of Birmingham*], in his address of greeting, dwelt on *The Little Prince* as a lesson in the right human values. Happily I had a good chat with the bishop as a step towards getting some warmer welcome from the archdiocese. The people from Tuskegee were, for the most part, unhappy that the meeting did not get anywhere, accomplish any specific goal. For my own part, I was fascinated just to hear people groping nervously for a more Christian attitude or trying to find grounds for hope at a paranoid juncture of American life.

This sudden sense of the human electricity in the wires at Tuskegee convinces me how important it is that I keep teaching in civvies, and not wave a papal flag in addition to a white one.

I spent yesterday and today with Dave Huisman [*we had been fellow doctoral students at Michigan*] and his wife, Lois, at Miles College in Birmingham. It was the first real break and rest I have gotten in six weeks. On Sunday I went to a small Catholic parish nearby, a black parish where the liturgy was very much alive but where the pastor, an old missionary from China, rather browbeat the congregation for noise in church (I didn't hear a peep myself) and also scolded the altar boys who had not shown up. What a dismal approach. I specially remarked the statue of the Blessed Mother in the midst of this throng—alabaster white, of course, right from Barclay Street.

Father Flynn recalls that in Birmingham he himself was set upon by police dogs and his congregation was clouted around by the representatives of law and order. This is what a supremacy feeling does to a man; it makes a bully out of him.

October 17. It has been intimated to me that the faculty of Tuskegee deeply resents the English Department, which has such an increas-

I had spent days preparing a lecture on the Dark Ages, from the decline of Rome to the early Middle Ages. It was a disaster, a few flickers of interest but eyes mostly averted. The heart (and stomach) went out of me.

ingly high proportion of whites. They also resent the campaign, real or imagined, against Negro dialect [*what became known as Black English and later as Ebonics*] in favor of Standard English. And here I have gone and taken the initiative myself to prepare a paper on the subject, which Dr. Youra Qualls, the chairperson, wants me to present at the next faculty meeting.

The contention of the paper is that most of the serious writing problems the students have are problems of logic—the logic of grammar—not of dialect. Talk about stepping into a hornet's nest!

This sudden sense of the human electricity in the wires at Tuskegee convinces me how important it is that I keep teaching in civvies, and not wave a papal flag in addition to a white one. It also makes me mindful of two wise observations. One is from John Keats, in a letter to Sarah Jeffrey (June 9, 1819): "To be thrown among people who care not for you, with whom you have no sympathies, forces the Mind upon its own resources, and leaves it

free to make its speculations of the differences of human character and to class them with the calmness of a Botanist." Keats had strong and deep sympathies for many people, but perhaps the general tenor of his passage holds true in any circumstance where one meets with hostility, overt or latent. It has certainly, I am sure, been the experience of most blacks who have come to maturity in white America.

The other observation is from Faulkner at his most humane, in "The Bear." A small hunting dog, the fice, plucks up its courage and moves in for an attack on Old Ben, that symbol of the wild and impervious wilderness. She got a light pat, a "tattered ear and raked shoulder . . . for her temerity." Sam Fathers, the Indian woodman, remarks: "Just like folks. Put off as long as she could having to be brave, knowing all the time that sooner or later she would have to be brave once so she could keep on calling herself a dog, and knowing beforehand what was going to happen when she done it."

I must in all honesty add the episodes which can and should make this whole year worthwhile, the fact that a few older students have remarked to me in passing that this is the first time they have been called upon in class to come up with their own appraisals of what they are reading. Sounds hard to believe.

It takes a lot of humility to learn from a dominating person, and humility is a virtue that the Negro is going to leave in abeyance for a while.

October 20. All of Friday we had to endure the soaking fringes of hurricane Gladys. Four of us went to Columbus, Georgia, to see Tuskegee beat Morehouse, 14 to 12, with Sylvester Robinson, my Comp Lit student, at quarterback. Through most of the game we sat in a dismal, dripping rain, though I must say it was rather fun.

On Saturday I drove through the countryside to Auburn University, about a half hour's ride from Tuskegee. I had once envisioned Alabama as one continuous cotton field, like parts of Fresno County, California. But the cotton fields appear only here and there, as if hard won from the wilds and precariously held. It is a rolling land of pineywoods, like the man said.

October 25. Tom Doyle and I have been talking about the drama of teaching. Yesterday was it. I had carefully prepared a number of topics and problems of interpretation concerning *The Scarlet Letter*. As the discussion got rolling in my American Lit class, many hands went up, which I had not seen before, and these people had intelligent things to say. Did Hester really repent of her sin? Was it indeed a sin? Did Hawthorne consider it such? What about the malevolent Black Man? Is there psychological realness to Pearl? My next section of the same course, with some excellent students, went much slower and was more ill-defined. For my evening class I had spent days preparing a lecture on the Dark Ages, from the decline of Rome to the early Middle Ages. It was a disaster, a few flickers of interest but eyes mostly averted. The heart (and stomach) went out of me.

October 27. Julian Bond spoke at Logan Hall to a large crowd this evening. [*Julian Bond, an organizer of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee while a student at Morehouse College, Atlanta, had been elected in his twenties to the state legislature in Georgia and sat there for twenty years. He is currently the national chair of NAACP.*] His speech was very low-keyed, but quick and sharp. There is little of the black fire-eater about him, either in physical appearance (he is light, with wavy hair), in dress (he wore a double-breasted suit!), in manner of speech (fluent Adlai Stevenson English). Someone from the assembly got up to insinuate he was becoming an Uncle Tom. But there is no doubt about who he is, what he stands for, with whom his lot is cast, and what a probing intelligence is here at work and what personal courage.

October 29. Today was the best day yet of class. My large American Lit section had a spirited debate over two student papers arguing that Hawthorne should have had *The Scarlet Letter* end happily. Many in the class agreed. Then gradually others began to point out why he ended it as happily as the situation would bear. My afternoon class presented their highly personal reflections on "Upon First Looking into Keats." It was a good window into their enthusiasms and distastes. In the evening class we read *Everyman* (in a wretched translation); everyone took parts and seemed to relish the dramatic reading.

November 3. I drove down among the endless pines to be with the Jesuits at Spring Hill College, Mobile. Dogwood everywhere is turning a fierce red. Outside Montgomery I was lucky enough to pick up some hitchhiking Auburn freshmen, who guided me to and through Mobile, were good company, and shared the driving. We arranged a return trip two days later. Perhaps I was even able to convince them that Tuskegee really exists. Our school is clearly a world outside their ken.

November 6. How will I ever get used to the phrase "President Nixon"?

November 10. One byproduct of the generations of white supremacy is a self-assurance among those with the most expertise. Those who have the most innovative ideas to contribute to the growth of a place like Tuskegee seem to me almost to create viruses within their own proposals. I sat in as a third party recently while a young white administrator from Ann Arbor, who has taught here at Tuskegee and works hard at a distance for its development, proceeded to tell the chairman, Dr. Qualls, in a very positive way, what is wrong with the freshman English program: All the exercises are based entirely too much on the imitation of printed paradigms. He was very strong on the correction of the students' writing by their own peers—team learning, he calls it. I think he has no idea how strong he came on. It takes a lot of humility to learn from a dominating person, and humility is a virtue that the Negro is going to leave in abeyance for a while.

"Blackness, we are told, symbolizes evil, sin, the irrational, the devil." If you are black, what do you make of it?

Milton Davis is pledging a fraternity. Walter Singletary too. They do it with an earnestness truly startling, for each of them is at a far remove from college playboy. The initiation routine cuts into study time and psychic energy something fierce, yet they consider the goal well worth the endurance it demands. What goal? No doubt the sense of brotherhood, the solidarity of the group, with its common life and its shared interests. The yearning for fraternity or

sorority, the *koinonia* (in-common-holding) of the early Christians, the *ekklesia* as a group “called together”—I think I will preach about this on Sunday, now that the bishop has restored my faculties.

The young white teachers, here only since September, are already talking of where they will teach next year. Did somebody promise them a rose garden?

November 13. In the *Campus Digest*, the student newspaper, so many outraged minds clamor about blackness and beauty. It is as if, in a Catholic student paper, the cry were constantly going up, “It is good to be a Catholic; it IS.” There is not yet the peacefulness of acceptance; at least there is not yet enough careful probing, imaginative variety, pride of skillful expression.

My class has just finished discussing *The Scarlet Letter*, and with gusto. Hawthorne thrives on the allegorical conflict between darkness and light. The Prince of Darkness appears in this novel as The Black Man, the leader of forbidden revels in the forest, that native place of our unfettered instincts, at midnight. One of my students, writing with great insight about the symbolic polarities in the novel, begins this way: “Blackness, we are told, symbolizes evil, sin, the irrational, the devil.” If you are black, what do you make of it? We know what the white-sheeted Klan made of it in their desperate defensiveness. Hawthorne uses his color symbolism ambiguously. People are not necessarily what they appear on the surface. The Puritan hypocrisies bear a seed of death, and the lawless forest hides a promise of vigorous life. What a man is comes from inside himself.

November 22. So what if smog and airplane exhaust clogs even the Santa Clara Valley [*in California, once called The Valley of Heart's Delight, for all its orchards.*] Thank God it has not yet gotten here; that is some compensation for the rural South. Nighttimes, very late, I often sit out on my doorstep to say my rosary and view the panoply of stars. I suppose I do more star-gazing than praying, so sharply do they sparkle—but admiration is not an unworthy form of prayer. St. Ignatius used to sit out on the roof for the same purpose in Renaissance Rome.

November 23. Last night two carloads of us went down again to Montgomery for a Human Relations session. The topic of the keynote speaker was "The White Man's Problem," and the discussion really opened up afterwards, when we looked around to find the gathering composed of two groups, white clergy and sisters, mostly from out of state, plus representative blacks from the community. Where were the whites of Montgomery? The sisters had tried desperately to get the loan of facilities from the white churches of Montgomery for these mixed gatherings, with no result but an ice-cold shoulder. What a commentary on the bankruptcy—or let us say, the horrendous deficit—of the churches and the fact that religious faith has not been anywhere nearly strong enough to affect the lifestyle of unregenerate man, to modify his habits of inhumanity to his neighbor. This phenomenon poses the most serious enigma to be faced by the person of faith.

Now I can see why in American colleges as a whole the fraternity system has been so loudly charged with working at cross-purposes to educational goals and the maturing process.

November 24. Here I sit correcting essay questions on Walt Whitman. One of the questions concerns his poem "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry." He explores the continuity between himself and all the generations of people who will float across these waters at sunset time, like himself, in times to come. The link he has made strikes me now as uncanny. [*In 1992, on the centenary day of Whitman's death, I walked the Brooklyn Bridge, reading this poem.*]

My exam has this question about the *Song of Myself*: "Is Whitman hopelessly egotistical and narcissistic?" What a door I opened! My feeble voice is being drowned out by a thundering chorus of boos. One student's response is typical: "He doesn't know how to be modest." However, there is a handful of respondents who at least were able to talk about what Walt is trying to do in making himself "the American common man as lyric hero."

November 25. Today I had my first haircut in a black barbershop, at the Vets' Hospital [*made famous in Ellison's novel, The Invisible Man.*]

Big deal! But he did cut a wide, bare swath above and behind the ears. While I was there another customer came in, one quite familiar with the barbers, and after a little banter he suddenly went off on an incredibly frank account of his sexual adventures, all definitely hetero, with my own barber sort of chuckling and cutting in now and then. There were a few refinements which I don't seem to remember reading of in our moral theology books. Well, that's what you get when out of the collar, an idea of what goes on where!

November 26. I just went out to the VA for confession to Father Douville. It is largely a mental hospital, and this morning, Sunday, the grounds were full of patients, wandering or sitting, but not a sound. The silence is eerie, a palpable living space for these unhappy people who have locked themselves into their own private worlds or been forced into it by others.

December 6. I have my crew full of fraternities at Tuskegee. One of my most promising male students, after a good start, has been floundering along for two months, rarely appearing in class and keeping up with assignments only by reason of the late papers I have allowed him. He was my only student among fifty to miss the

midterm, because he overslept.

To lead a group of black students in reading a book about themselves, doesn't this violate their privacy?

When I put to him the question why all his grades have taken a nose dive, his answer was frank: "Fatigue." Now I can see why in American colleges as a whole the fraternity system has been so loudly charged with working at cross-purposes to educational

goals and the maturing process. And as to rites that are humanly debasing, you would think that the Negro has had quite enough of that. We don't know how to test self-discipline without turning the whole procedure into a sort of Iroquois gauntlet.

Thoreau has a sentence in *Walden* which may go a long way to explain the wariness of Negro students towards their white teachers: "If I knew for a certainty that a man [*"The Man"*!] was coming to my house with the conscious design of doing me good, I should run for my life."

December 9. All-Institute Conference today, and I got talking to Mr. Ed Epps of the Behavioral Research Center. I was voicing my gripe about Tuskegee fraternities. Without denying the extremes to which they go, he defended them as a rallying place for imaginative and serious students, not bedeviled by the typical anti-intellectualism of the white American fraternities. It struck me then that three of the students I know who have just gone through this mill are active in musical performances on campus, and there are some other indications of their earnestness. This would therefore seem to be one of those complex local phenomena which are so deceiving or difficult for the outsider to judge.

December 15. Logan Hall was packed tonight for the Christmas concert of the Institute Choir. They did a dozen or so hymns and spirituals (a few with audience participation) and, as the main course, *The Messiah*. The soloists were from the Music School at the University of Michigan, except for the soprano, Bessie Hunter, one of my Comp Lit students, who was superb. I was really proud of her. She has been having considerable trouble with my course, but a teacher has to rejoice at such a success.

Walking home after the concert, with the temperature down close to freezing, I passed a student huddled in a coat, rubbing his hands desperately and telling the world: "The hawk is on my back" [*The cold has its talons in me*].

January 10, 1969. Yesterday, Thursday, was my most satisfactory day in the classroom. The reading materials seemed to click with the students, and we had some spirited presentations and discussions—of poems by Emily Dickinson (which caught on surprisingly well), of Michel de Montaigne ("Of the Inconsistency of Our Actions"—has he given up on the possible integrity and order in a man's life?), and of some startling pieces by W. H. Auden ("Victor," "Miss Gee," "The Managers").

Fortune's fickle wheel was not going to keep me on the height. This morning, at 6:30, the newsboy was rapping at the door to alert me that my car, during the night, had rolled down backwards across the slope of the parking lot into the back of Dr. Sid-dique's car, bashing his right rear fender and taking off a streak of

paint. The professor was not at all amused. I had left the emergency off. Did I really park the car out of gear?!

February 6. Richard Wright's autobiography *Black Boy* is one of those rare books that turned everything upside down for me. Page after page I would be caught up short, saying to myself in one way or the other, "My God!" Now I am about to teach his story, "The Man Who Lived Underground," and I wonder, have I any right to? To lead a group of black students in reading a book about themselves, doesn't this violate their privacy?

February 13. Sam Allen lectured this evening on Richard Wright in Paris and Africa, after World War II. He opened up one or two fascinating vistas. The first has to do with Wright's lack of sympathy with the African aesthetic and religious outlook. He who wrote so scathingly of his own Southern-church experiences thought that religion was only superstition. And he considered that all the emphasis on hand-crafted artifacts as a magical way of controlling nature could only impede the entry of Africa into a world of precise industrial techniques. Africa was still so highly communitarian and the tribe regarded as such a unified living organism, how could it ever accept analytic objectivity and specialization? Wright felt that Leopold Senghor and the other proponents of *Négritude* as an aesthetic had become too cerebrally French. In a conference in Paris there were apparently some heated exchanges.

[Samuel Allen, a leading African-American poet and a graduate of Harvard Law School, who for years worked with the U.S. Information Service, was the luminary of our English Department. He had traveled with Langston Hughes to Africa and known James Baldwin in Paris and was a live connection to the promising young writers of the Negro Digest. He taught subsequently at Boston University until retirement, and we have remained good friends.]

Aubrey LaBrie of the History Department afterwards asked Sam whether Wright wasn't rather cold and unsympathetic to his fellow Negroes and was therefore much less representative than someone like Chester Himes. Sam allowed that it might be so, and so it may. But it strikes me that Wright was fighting desperately for his own individuality. He admits to being driven into himself and put perpetually on his guard by the narrow hostility he breathed as

the very air of his early life. He was not going to be cowed by anyone.

February 17. Was I imagining things this morning? I thought I overheard a young man in the corridor say under his breath, "We don't need you." Tuskegee doesn't need whites leading the show—he is right about that. But how about auxiliaries on the team?

I don't see what business whites have going around wearing Black Power emblems. Are they trying to muscle in even here?

Dr. Ward of the Music School referred to us English teachers as the Foreign Language Department. He was referring wryly to the talk about teaching standard English to speakers of the black vernacular as being roughly analogous to teaching a foreign language to dialect users. He himself is quite an elegant practitioner of the [high-standard] language. [Prescriptive teaching of what we might call polished English was huffed at in those days, even by Webster's Third International, and became more so with the onset of Post-Modernism. I still consider some refinement of language to be pretty basic to education and adult communication. It does not have to mean the loss of a more relaxed home idiom. The average high-schooler, white or black, today may well find polished English to be a pretty foreign language.]

All the holy statues, except for Martin de Porres, are white-faced, so as to make even the Holy Family look as if they grew up in the British Isles.

February 18. Tom Doyle and I were talking about approaches to the students. I am a good deal more formal with them than he is—call them "Mister" or "Miss" so-and-so in class and see little of them outside of class. I wish I saw more of them; but I am not about to invite over a houseful of girls, and that's mostly what I have. Still, I must find some way to open the doors up a little more. One thing I think about a first name—you have to wait until your familiarity with a person reaches the stage that you naturally and spontaneously fall into it.

February 19. I blessed and distributed ashes at early Mass today, to myself as well as the congregation. Later, before heading off to school, I glanced in the mirror and, guess what, a large black smudge on this pale face. Should I wipe it off? But then why did I go through the ceremony? Wear it and explain a little. Which I did. My student Robert Thompson from Mobile, when he found out the meaning of the mark, said, quite unhappily, "You mean I missed Mardi Gras?!"

We must do what we can to change the climate. There is an atmosphere of insanity in the whole racial antagonism, not to be conjured away by some starry-eyed Platonist who thinks he is not

infected. Recently a series of slides and recordings on African art were shown at the Institute, including some very pale masks. It was explained that in Africa white is the color of the supernatural. The professor showing the slides later made one comment, a reminder that in Africa white is the color of death. That's not what the recording said. His remark is correct in seeing white as a proper color for the realm of the dead, but it tends to downgrade the whole African belief in afterlife and the spirit-world of ancestors.

Over and over we passed that prototype of country living, "the sagging broken-backed cabin set in its inevitable treeless and grassless plot and weathered to the color of an old beehive," just like Flem Snopes's place in The Hamlet. How thickly a Faulkner sentence reproduces what he handled and smelled and looked at and listened to all around him.

How deep our color biases go. St. Joseph's parish church, with a largely black congregation, is an example of fine insouciance. All the holy statues, except for Martin de Porres, are white-faced, so as to make even the Holy Family look as if they grew up in the British Isles.

March 1. The magnolia trees are out in full panoply today. Did they just open up overnight? I get up fairly early for Mass in the morning, but there is already magical bird song. And the wild ducks are still wheeling around above the pine woods or floating on Tuskegee Lake, where Tom Doyle and I watch them while jogging. [I wrote to

Doyle recently that I might be publishing this journal and he responded: "I hope you get those runs along the dirt road by the lake and the cotton fields. The sky was orange and black in the winter sunset."]

March 16. This weekend I drove with Ted and Claire Blatchford and Morris Kaplan to Oxford, Mississippi, on a pilgrimage to the home of Faulkner. *[Kaplan was a philosophy teacher at the Institute and Ted Blatchford, also from Yale, an English instructor. His wife, Claire, who was hearing-impaired, was a teacher of the deaf and a poet.]* Characteristically there was little enough visible of him—a long curving avenue of weathered cypress trees and a green-shuttered house just visible at the edge of lawns. What we most wanted to see was Faulkner country. I and my companions read to each other from *The Hamlet*, *As I Lay Dying*, "The Fire and the Hearth," and "The Bear" during the long drive.

My version of Faulkner country now includes a lot of bare trees standing knee-deep in inky water or strangling in the grey embrace of kudzu, the Tombigbee River churning its muddy way, and a long slash of arrow-straight highway through the woods of Lafayette County to Oxford. Over and over we passed that prototype of country living, "the sagging broken-backed cabin set in its inevitable treeless and grassless plot and weathered to the color of an old beehive," just like Flem Snopes's place in *The Hamlet*. How thickly a Faulkner sentence reproduces what he handled and smelled and looked at and listened to all around him.

At Tuscaloosa, we went to see the campus of Stillman College, one of the black colleges recently closed down by student violence. We were told they have a striking new chapel. Our visit was a bit rash. We were followed, stopped, and questioned by police. They did not exactly use the gentle approach in chasing us out of town.

They were extremely friendly to me as an outsider, and I pitched into the soul food with my usual good appetite.

Here was another very appealing instance of that worldwide phenomenon, the banquet for the dead—where the living feed to go on living, or that life may go on.

March 29. I went today with George Edsel [*occupant of the front part of the house where I rented*] to Phenix City for the funeral of our landlady, Mrs. Austin. The funeral service was to me a startling and powerful experience, with a very sturdy gospel-singer (hoarse, however, this day) and the preacher's sermon drawn from the Book of Samuel (his theme: Jonathan's seat will be left vacant), with its gradually building bass rhythms calculated to draw murmurs or calls of assent from the congregation. Three or four older women of the family broke out into agitated grief, crying out upon the Lord, and were gradually quieted by women ushers and their friends as the preaching and singing went on. This has an unsettling effect on the outside visitor.

There is clearly some cathartic value in this outburst of emotion, because the members of the family were all able to take a quiet and normal part in the family reception afterwards. They were extremely friendly to me as an outsider, and I pitched into the soul

food with my usual good appetite. Here was another very appealing instance of that worldwide phenomenon, the banquet for the dead—where the living feed to go on living, or that life may go on.

They let me know how upset they were at the mere idea of the way white English teachers (and their fellow-traveling older blacks) are messing up the minds of the students with white values. In my case, that included Christianity, the teacher of humility and submission.

Holy Thursday. Ray Barreras put on a Seder meal for about twenty of us. It was painstakingly and reverently done, though if I were Jewish, I don't think I would be exactly happy to know that imitation Seders are being put on by Gentiles. It is how I would feel to

know that imitation Masses are being carried on in town. Yet a good deal is learned about the Exodus story (about the "sensibility" of Israel) and about the Jewish sense of "holy family" on such an occasion. As for us Catholics, how can we recapture the family-meal spirit in the church service? That is a walloping big question, complicated by the fact that we Western people know almost nothing about a ceremonial meal.

Good Friday Evening. I'm weary—weary of having to play Mister Charlie twenty-four hours a day. It will be good to get down to the Jesuits at Spring Hill College for a few days.

April 7. Thus ends a short and very pleasant Easter weekend at Mobile. It was a good time to be on the road, the fields full of young calves, the pine trees in yellow-green bloom (I didn't know that could happen) and, down along the coast at Mobile, a riot of azaleas. The bushes and banks of brilliant azalea—white, pink, red, reddish orange, reddish purple—leave the passerby stunned. It was good to see the California scholastics [*who were studying philosophy at Spring Hill*] and to spend some hours with John Stacer [*a Jesuit classmate from my theology studies in Belgium*], especially out on the beach and in the water at Gulf Shores.

April 17. This evening I went over to the Chicken Coop to get a take-out dinner. A young man stood in front of me at the counter wearing a khaki cap and, upon the cap, this ink inscription: "Hate honkies, love soul."

April 25. During the last few weeks the feelings of the student body have surfaced abruptly. First of all, Leroi Jones came on campus with his contempt for the Western world. (If their culture is so great, why is the world so fouled up? Don't be taken in by the individualism of those Viennese homosexuals.) His plea was for a sense of black community. [*Leroi Jones, from Newark, a brilliant poet and caustic social observer, soon afterward changed his name to Imamu Amiri Baraka.*]

Jones was followed by the Literary Arts Festival, featuring the poets Margaret Danner and Mari Evans, Larry Neal, the anthologist and theoretician of black aesthetics, and Hoyt Fuller, editor of *Negro Digest*. Alexander Bell read his paper on Jones's novel, *The System of Dante's Hell*; his reading was carried on Montgomery TV. Shirley Staples, Arthur Pfister, and other students read their poems. Arthur staged his with interpretative dancing. I was scheduled to preside on the second evening, but the "Be Black" atmosphere was too fiery and I declined.

A few of the professional inquisitors on campus went to work again on white faculty. In this state of affairs, I put it frankly to a

few of my serious students whether or not I should sign my contract for next fall. [*Santa Clara University was allowing me this additional one-semester postponement of my arrival.*] I assured them I was playing no game. I told them I will be happy to return, but I want to know whether it is of value to them. They let me know how upset they were at the mere idea of the way white English teachers (and their fellow-traveling older blacks) are messing up the minds of the students with white values. In my case, that included Christianity, the teacher of humility and submission. It also includes the rugged individualism which has cost the black man so dearly, and the ironical coolness of Western intellectuals (to say nothing of their depressing pessimism). The students said, "Don't come back." A few days later they huddled again and afterwards told me, "Yes, come back." Maybe they did not too much mind their taste of Jesuit education. I am satisfied.

May 5. George Edsel was talking today about that lean and hostile Southern service-station type that Robert Hayden caught so sharply in his poem "Tour 5." We've got to go more than fifty percent of the way with such people, he says, "to bring them into being." What a neat phrase. He still hopes to make them human.

May 23. It is two o'clock Friday afternoon of final-exam week, and though I should probably still be in my office, I have beaten a

I have to say, when you've grown up getting all the breaks, a footstep into these other lives on the edge makes you feel pretty small.

strategic retreat for home. The students who start showing up from now on show up to wrangle, and I have little enough stomach for that. Besides, I have some tough decisions about some of them to calculate and weigh. I don't have much psychic energy right now, and the students seem to be sapped as well. A number of them

in my exam this morning had colds, looked pale and worn, and one even had to head for the dispensary. They (and perhaps I as well) are geared so high to exams and marks that it is frightening.

I tried to make a reasonable test for my American Literature class, which turned out instead to be a tough one—a vocabulary

recognition which set many of them guessing and an objective exam about our short stories and authors where many entries were left blank. I was up until 1:30 myself last night devising the exam, and when I finally turned in there was a bird outside the house somewhere, perhaps a mockingbird, going on as if it were midday.

Despite muggy weather the last few weeks and a humidity level that wreaks havoc on my asthmatic bellows, there have been some wonderful country moments. Two Saturdays ago Lawrence McLaughlin [*an instructor of English at the Institute*] organized a motley group of us, in inner tubes, to float three hours down a local river in search of petrified wood. We went swirling through plenty of your rich Southern mud and I got broiled in the process, but what fun!

Last Monday the Sisters and the Barreras family and the Woolards brought in a large family, the Wilsons, from their country shack to a park for a cookout. The youngsters came all dressed up and shy, but when the games started and all the food came on, they really perked up. Miss Wilkerson, the public-health nurse, was the silent star of the evening. She runs clinics all over the county, and knows all these people and their food-stamp existence and their troubles with the rent and with wells, as if they were just part of her family. I have to say, when you've grown up getting all the breaks, a footstep into these other lives on the edge makes you feel pretty small.

When the rural South, with all its flaming quick passions and its frontier code of honor and its black survival strategies is remanded to history so deep that people will blink their eyes in disbelief that such a place could have been, and that people could have been strong of heart in it and despite it and because of it, Faulkner is where they will have to turn.

Pentecost Sunday. This afternoon I watched the TV program *Guideline*, which featured Father George Clements from Chicago and a black sister from Cleveland talking about the Negro in the Catholic Church. It's the only Christian group in the country, said Father Clements, where you can find congregations entirely black with sisters and priests entirely white. Well, I had just come back from

celebrating Pentecost and preaching to exactly, or pretty nearly, the group of people he was describing.

September 4. No wonder so much good fiction has been written about the South. Even the surface of things is so describable here. The thought came to me today in downtown Tuskegee. The suburbs of San Jose, where I spent the summer, blend indistinguishably into one another, definable by shopping centers and used-car lots. There is a blur of contours and a contest of motorists. Tuskegee, although sluggish, is of a more manageable shape for the imagination: coeds from the college parading into town, older black women by twos and threes in floppy hats, coveralled men from the county seated in rows under the eaves of stores, a brisk young salesman in white shirt, the gnarled and tougher and older white citizen like Conner of the lumber store. For setting, oaks and elms under a pale blue sky, with lazy distinct heaps of cloud. In the town center, seedy and unimproved, still stands the statue of the rebel soldier.

It is unaccountably strange coming back to Tuskegee. I thought of the school and my students often during the summer, talked a lot about the past year, and looked forward to returning. But it did not take more than twenty-four hours on the spot for reality to set in. Sister Joan Lafontaine, of the Grand Rapids Dominicans, was picked as stand-in chair of the department for next year—a lovely person but quite a traditional older white, focused on rhetoric and speech. What on earth made her step into that hornet's nest? [*Actually she seems in the long run to have quite held her own.*] And at St. Joseph's Parish, hope for anything in the way of active liturgy, study sessions, or any other effective announcement of the Good News to the institute Catholics seems very dim. Corraggio, Giacomo!

September 23. It has been raining hard enough for the last two days to impress even Noah. After the convocation in Tuskegee's startling, soaring new chapel, and after substituting for Howard Douville at Mass at the VA, I spent the day reading *Intruder in the Dust*. When the rural South, with all its flaming quick passions and its frontier code of honor and its black survival strategies is remanded to history so deep that people will blink their eyes in disbelief that such a place could have been, and that people could have been strong of

heart in it and despite it and because of it, Faulkner is where they will have to turn.

Father John Connolly [*who had been succeeded as provincial by Father Patrick Donohoe*] died last week. John wore himself out for the brethren. He was galled and burdened by the hesitancies and dilemmas and doubts and sometimes insincerities of so many Jesuits. He was a source of understanding and encouragement to many, including me in my days of juniorate fog. He had so much innovation to puzzle him and haunt his sleep, especially the hue and cry to move our school of theology to Berkeley, that no wonder his provincialate took its toll. My own Tuskegee project must have worried him. A man of great human affability and concern. His holy works are his crown.

October 3. This afternoon, in my old clothes, I was introduced to a Tuskegee transfer student as a priest. "You really mean it? You're a priest?!" I answered jokingly, "Yes, you won't hold that against me, will you?" It's a self-deprecating phrase that I have used before. To her credit, she said, "No, I think it's great." When John Henry Newman entitled his conversion story *Apologia pro vita sua*, it was not a public statement of embarrassment.

I went into the state liquor store to buy some beer from a pudgy man rooted to his seat behind the counter. I asked him if he had been watching the World Series game earlier in the day and he said no, only the last few innings. "A nigger comin' in asked me what the score was, an' I turned on the set." He used the word "nigger" as casually as you would say "bucks" or "booze." This usage keeps coming up in the stories of Richard Wright that I have just been reading (in *Uncle Tom's Children*), and always with the impact of a cattle prod. It recreates at a stroke an age-old contempt and a placid sense of superiority, unreflective but devastating.

October 13. I drove up to Talladega, just east of Birmingham, to visit Tom Grace of the New England Province, a Jesuit scholar and long-time professor of English who preceded me to the historically black colleges. He lives and teaches at Talladega College, a small liberal-arts school. One anecdote from my journey merits recording. The Volkswagen I was driving had a flat out in the hills near Talladega, and I could not loosen the bolts. I was picked up and brought into a

repair shop by Ocie Stone, a deputy sheriff, a tall bony man in a black shapeless breadloaf hat, bent over his wheel though friendly enough. He gave me his card, which I may just keep. *[I still have it in my wallet. I am told his boss controlled the illegal liquor in the county, and they eventually caught up with him.]*

October 14. Jackie Huffman talked about pledging time for the sorority. "We're polishing ivy until 6 A.M. and then supposed to go to class and keep alert. Last week we were told, 'Since you've been going faithfully to class, you can afford the two or three cuts this week.' It's like I haven't been to school for five weeks."

November 7. We have just read *Walden* in my American Lit class, about eighty students in two sections. I gave them as assignment to write a letter to Thoreau. They seemed to love it, especially after the earlier essay I called for on Hawthorne and the Puritans. Some really tied into Thoreau for being on an ego trip, for not showing much human sympathy, or even for returning from the woods to civilization.

Some really tied into Thoreau for being on an ego trip, for not showing much human sympathy, or even for returning from the woods to civilization. Some others were like the young woman who said in class, "I grew up in that cabin and I don't want any more of it."

Some others were like the young woman who said in class, "I grew up in that cabin and I don't want any more of it." The majority responded warmly, one girl because she herself had been part of a Quaker group who built their own summer quarters at camp for six summers. One wrote in the persona of a contemporary friend of Thoreau's, one swung into Thoreau's own style. Doing your own thing as well as not letting oneself be pushed around by the government are salient atti-

tudes of the college generation, so Thoreau could be expected to catch on, though he is too celibate for the good pleasure of most. Youra Qualls, our previous department chair, disapproves of Thoreau, judging his rejection of civilized life to be the opposite of what the students need.

December 29. As I write this, I am looking down from 27,000 feet, after dark, at the constellated towns of Alabama, that starfish pattern of home lights and traffic lights against the jet black fields and woods. I have kissed goodbye to Tuskegee, not without grief. You can't just pull up the heart; a network of small roots remains clinging. My colleagues staging such a whirl of parties just before Christmas will surely be missed. It is harder still to leave the students who are just discovering literature or their ability to write, some wrestling desperately with their past and their future, some edging towards graduate school. So much regretfully undone. Such a dramatic semester!

III. Afterword

This did not end my history at Tuskegee. After teaching the winter and spring quarters at Santa Clara, I returned for one more semester, the fall of 1970, but did not keep up my journal. That semester I roomed with Phil Loretan, who had come from Notre Dame with his doctorate in nuclear engineering. Phil was all warmth and generosity. He never left Tuskegee, marrying one of the former Dominican Sisters who had taught at St. Joseph's School and devoting himself to projects like sweet-potato farming and other services that would benefit the poor of Macon County. He died a few years ago, highly admired.

In 1968, when I left Ann Arbor and our close community of Jesuit graduate students—four of us had rented an old house together—my one big fear about Tuskegee was loneliness. Loneliness, as it turns out, is the one thing that never happened to me there. Too much was going on, and I had a supportive community.

By the fall of 1970, things had very much improved too at the local parish. The Josephites had assigned Father Joseph Begay to replace Father Flynn as pastor at St. Joseph's Parish and had sent Father Joe Doyle to begin a Catholic Newman Center near campus.

A national struggle taking place in Africa came to involve me in Tuskegee, the war for independence of the Ibo people in Nigeria. It was known as the war for Biafra, which took such a devastating toll through battle and starvation. The institute had a handful of Ibos, plus other Nigerians. An Ibo professor, Elechukwu Njaka, pressed me to raise funds so a young family member could continue

his secondary education outside the country. I raised about \$500 from family and friends. I will not forget the simple meal to which he invited me in his apartment, out of gratitude. Eating with my fingers the traditional dish called *fufu*, of the consistency of very soft bread, I was struck by the root meaning of the word “companion”—the one you invite to take bread with you.

What perhaps helped me relate well to these Africans was the theology studies I had made in Belgium, with classmates from the Belgian Congo, which attained independence while I was there and became Zaire. In fact I was ordained with the first Rwandan Jesuit, Chrisologue Mahame, one of the first victims of the massacres in 1994 because of his promotion of harmony between the Tutsis and Hutus.

I smile thinking of the Reverend Peter Gomes, a brisk New Englander with Ivy League credentials, who had just been ordained in 1968 as an American Baptist minister. The students were intrigued by this model of a black intellectual, witty and spellbinding in his history lectures. Soon thereafter Peter was named university chaplain at Harvard, a post that he has retained to this day along with that of Professor of Christian Morals. Peter ranks high on any list of outstanding U.S. preachers.

I remember some favorite students, such as Diane Frazier who braved it into graduate school at Auburn and then into television newscasting, or Johnny Anderson, later a preacher and civic leader in his home town of McComb, Mississippi. And I muse fondly upon Milton Davis from St. Joseph’s, with his dour wit, who went into the law and public life, much to the benefit of blacks in Alabama.

So now comes the big question for me after thirty-five years: What kind of lasting effect, if any, did these eventful years have on me? For an answer I think, first of all, of the Jesuit Volunteer Corps with their humorous but pointed motto, “Ruined for Life.” After Tuskegee, I could not possibly see a lot of things about our country and our Jesuit schools in the same light as before.

I did not seriously weigh settling at Tuskegee, because I felt a commitment to a corporate Jesuit enterprise. That meant, specifically, taking some root at Santa Clara University, where I had been assigned and had achieved a foothold through four years of summer-school teaching. I must admit too that following my particular line of scholarship, Modernist poetry and poetics, would have been difficult

at Tuskegee. I did envision, and actually try, an alternating rhythm of teaching—the fall semester at Tuskegee plus the winter and spring quarters at Santa Clara. I did it for two years, 1969 and 1970, but with the load of Freshman Comp at Santa Clara, I found the tandem too exhausting.

What I brought back to Santa Clara, I believe, was an awareness of the African-American students who were just beginning to appear there, a willingness to help them get up to standards, and a feeling for their militancy in those restive times. I still remember two of those students in Freshman Comp who engaged me in continual arm-wrestling over my expectations and their grades, and I can imagine them smiling about that now.

My fiction courses at Santa Clara allowed me to introduce Southern writers, with their sharp detail about the disparities between white and black. My poetry courses let me introduce Langston Hughes and the Harlem Renaissance, along with a spectrum of new black poets. In fact, we brought a handful of these poets to campus for readings, including my colleague from Tuskegee, Samuel Allen. And we were able to stage a Black Arts Festival of good quality. I had no illusions of reaching the majority of our students at Santa Clara, whose background was as protected and sheltered as mine had been. But I did enjoy conspiring with the African-American faculty and staff to reach them somehow.

My chief co-conspirator at Santa Clara was Charles Lampkin of the Music and Theater Departments, a television and movie actor, a jazz pianist, and an exponent of black culture to schools and other audiences. After Charles died, I did what I could to honor him with a biographical sketch in the alumni magazine. He was a historic character and I had the materials to write more extensively, but I did not find the outlet. In recent years, Santa Clara has more resolutely spoken a language of diversity. I would hope that African-Americans have benefited from this.

In the mid-seventies, because of the big Hispanic influx into California (and because I am pretty good at languages, and because I had once entertained missionary aspirations to Latin America), I began learning enough Spanish to minister to them. In 1976 the Horizons for Justice Program of the American Jesuits took me to Mexico for a summer of seminars and immersion. The program aimed to create “a constituency for justice.” That proved to be the

case for me in the early eighties, after I traveled on some human-rights delegations to El Salvador and Central America. I found myself afterwards as a journalist, speaker, and letter writer to make known the woeful conditions and Jesuit struggles there. When I joined *America* in 1990, Latin America became my major topic.

Among Jesuits in this past generation, a full-court press has indeed taken place in support of the Spanish-speaking poor in the Americas. Central American Jesuits, who were under the gun literally, desperately needed this support. What became, then, of black America in my perspective? For one thing, I sensed that class and its invidious distinctions was playing the same evil role in Latin America as race and color prejudice did in the USA. Perhaps my Tuskegee years made me more alert to such realities.

A big grace for me in the last fifteen years has been volunteering in prison ministry. I did so especially in New York City throughout the nineties, in a women's prison and then in a psychiatric prison attached to New York Psychiatric Hospital on Ward's Island, just east of Harlem. African-Americans form the predominant prison population in America. That unsettling fact should be a continual reminder to all of us, and the Society of Jesus in particular, that things are far from well in our country. The achievements of the black community, with their "eyes on the prize," have been huge since the 1960s, but the walking wounded are still innumerable. A handful of those to whom I ministered in New York remain vivid in my thoughts and prayers.

When I found myself appointed to the House of Prayer for Priests in Los Angeles in 2003, I looked around for a Spanish-speaking congregation where I could serve on Sundays. By a providential stroke, I ended up at St. Brigid Church, one of the classic African-American parishes in South Central Los Angeles, staffed by none other than the Josephite Fathers. It is a center of apostolic radiance to African-Americans, with a widely admired choir. Even as I minister to the Spanish speakers who have been filtering into the parish boundaries, I have rediscovered the tremendous expressiveness of African-American religious music and preaching.

St. Brigid and other parishes of South Central Los Angeles devote themselves these days to a supersensitive task—fostering mutual respect and even collaboration between two communities painfully at odds in this city, the Hispanics and the African-Ameri-

cans. Everyone here knows of the tensions between adolescents, especially in gangs, but the adults feel them sharply as well. The tide of immigration has made nothing easier for African-Americans. They bear the brunt of competition for jobs and for the fruits of social spending. The new arrivals have little understanding of the history of segregation—who could expect them to?—but they are very sensitive to slights or rough treatment.

Mutual respect and appreciation is so hard to come by and so costly. But that's what "Catholic" has to mean for us, achieving brotherhood and sisterhood at all costs. I am proud of Verbum Dei High School, the Jesuit Cristo Rey school here in Los Angeles, for taking on this challenge full force with its mixed enrollment of black and Latino students.

As to Tuskegee, Virgil was right. *Forsan et hæc olim meminisse juvabit* (Perhaps it will please you to remember these old moments too). And not just to remember them. To live by them, to have them enter into what else you think and say and do. Thank you, Don Pedro.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Editor:

I am writing an addendum to Dennis Smolarski's monograph "Jesuits on the Moon: Seeking God in All Things . . . even Mathematics" (Spring 2005).

Dennis was establishing a need of the Society to be involved in one of the most important aspects of modern society, the area of mathematics and technology, continuing the tradition that originated with Clavius, and indeed not just as they exist in the curriculum of our educational institutions. He praised highly the effort of the non-educational institution, the Vatican Observatory. I would like to call the attention of your readers to another such organization, the Clavius Group of Mathematicians. First, let me say that in the "Directory of the Secretariat for Education of the Society of Jesus," the Clavius Group is listed under the rubric "International Projects and Associations," with myself listed as the coordinator. Let me give you a brief history of the group. Larry Conlon and I started the group in 1963, the year that I was ordained. As Dennis stated so well, the climate for science and math was not so welcoming at that time in the Society. Basically the superiors treated our degrees as union cards, with no concept of the professionalism to which we aspired. So Larry and I approached the superiors and simply asked if we could be free during the summer from summer school and

pastoral assignments. Without going into details, we have been at this now for forty-three summers!

During this time we discovered what Clavius was all about. And it was very much as Dennis described it in the last pages of your essay. We became a small voice of the Church in the mathematics profession. Our invitations to the Institut des Hautes Études Scientifiques of France, the Institute of Advanced Studies of Princeton, and the Centro de Investigación in Mexico City showed to that rather alien society that the Church was interested in mathematics. Then our invitations to Notre Dame, and the Jesuit Universities of New England—Boston College, Holy Cross, and Fairfield—gave a visibility to mathematics in the Catholic environment. One of our group became president of the Mathematical Association of America, and the present president of the American Mathematical Society has been quite cordial to the group. What we discovered, however, was that we were really founding a faith community of religious and laity with mathematics as the theme that bonded us together. This is exactly the theme of partnership that the present Society is trying to express. At the present moment actively we have seven Jesuits (three from outside the United States), one religious priest, not a Jesuit, one Christian Brother, one religious sister, two single laymen

and one single laywoman; fourteen families, including two from Poland. We are now on our third generation of children (two of whom have already completed their degrees in mathematics and will be joining the group), and the bonding that has occurred was truly the work of the Spirit.

Unfortunately, at the present moment I just do not know of any young Jesuit in the pipeline who is interested in mathematics. And this is a theme in Dennis's essay. But Clavius is assured of making it to fifty years. After that it is in the hands of the Spirit.

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Editor:

I have just read with great pleasure Dennis Smolarski's essay in *STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS* on mathematics in the Society. It has often puzzled me that many Jesuits take *satisfaction* in their ignorance of mathematics and science, and their inability to do any but the simplest tasks on a computer. In the seventeenth century, Jesuits in Peru were deemed ineligible for ordination if they had not mastered Quechua. Perhaps we should institute something similar with respect to computer literacy in our own time.

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