

EDITORIAL

When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for the humanists to write a newsletter, a decent respect for the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to do so.

Well, maybe we're taking ourselves too seriously. But we thought you should know our goals in giving you *Forum*, the newsletter of the Cheshire humanists.

Writing about humanistic studies in *The Integral Formation of Catholic Priests*, Nuestro Padre says: "Our seminarians have to know the roots and particularities of the culture where they will exercise their ministry. This is an essential condition for later promoting the *inculturation* of the Gospel message, especially in places where adaptation is most necessary."

That is our goal. We want to look at the most influential cultures of the world around us and ask ourselves, "What caused this?" We hope to find out by unearthing the humanistic roots of culture: the language, the history, the literature; and also by sifting through the foliage of the important areas of politics and economics. In the end, we hope to shed light on why the culture in question was influential in the past, how it is influential today, and the opportunities for evangelization that its influence provides.

We hope over the course of this school year to discuss several important cultures that are small but important offshoots of the one with the big "C": Western Culture. In this edition we will cover the United States of America, and in subsequent months move on to Great Britain, Spain, and France, and end with an analysis of globalization.

Culture is something people create with their capacities to reason and imagine, to think and imitate, to will and love. It's a very human thing. Everyone, every group in the world is a builder of its own culture: a common thread of customs and beliefs and ideas and accomplishments that members of that culture (either by race or by choice) can hold on to and develop around. Some cultures barely survive, others die, a few thrive and grow.

The cultures we will study this year have been manifestly successful. Studying the reasons for that is important. The Church and the Legion have a culture of our own, and each culture is as vulnerable or as strong as its members at any given time. By studying the secrets of success and the causes of failure, we can learn from the strengths of the cultures in the world and avoid the pitfalls that lie in wait for every human institution.

Finally, studying the roots and branches of these cultures will help us understand the conditions and influences that imperil or improve the chances for their successful evangelization. Our motto is "write, teach, preach Christ," and we hope this study helps us understand our audience better. In everything, we are inspired by Nuestro Padre's desire that we know and understand the urgent needs of modern man and the world today. "When I think of the world, waning and dying for lack of Christ... I cannot hold back the cries of my heart." We hope that *Forum* helps you think of that world, hear those cries, and be better equipped to do something about it...

AMERICA

This edition is about the rookie: the United States of America. It is the newest of the cultures we will study, and by historical standards, it is extremely young. 231 years from their founding, the Romans were still in daub-and-wattle huts on the banks of the Tiber. The Norsemen who settled in Normandy hadn't even gotten around to invading England in that amount of time, and the Holy Roman Empire was barely bothering to do anything worthy of the history books yet.

Young though it is, however, America's culture is an extremely important one to study. And difficult. The cultures of the European powers we will study later have all somewhat passed their apogee. Their influence in the world today can nearly always be traced back to an event in the past, like rays of light radiating away from the Big Bang. Not so with America. We are still in the middle of the bang, and it keeps getting bigger. America's influence is immense, and tracing its sources can be tricky.

America is young, but it is also different. Unlike the other nation-cultures we will study, America is not a race of people or an extended family. It is an idea, an idea people from anywhere in the world can come and look at and accept and embrace and take on as their own until they become "American", no matter who they are or where they are from. American culture is based on a set of core principles and ideas. Come to the States and accept those principles, and you're an American. "We pledge allegiance to the flag..." "One nation under God" "We hold these truths to be self-evident" "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness."

In this regard, America resembles the Church (and the Legion): open to all, excluding none, requiring allegiance and adherence to a unifying principle. (It is just missing the important little bit about being divine in origin.)

In this newsletter we will summarize for you America's history, her political and economic system, the influence of American English, and several of her most characteristic works of literature. Since the leitmotif of *Forum* is the importance of the unifying forces of culture, we will also discuss some works of ancient literature that brought unity to the similarly great civilizations of Greece and Rome: the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and the *Aeneid*. At the very end, we will discuss the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats America poses to our mission of conquering the world for Christ. We hope you enjoy!

FROM SEA TO SHINING SEA

America is the third largest country in the world after Russia and Canada, and is composed of fifty states, whose names bear the influence of the European settlers of the America's neighbors to north and south: Canada and Spain; the English; and of course, the Native Americans. The French influence is found in the names of Vermont (Green Mountain), Maine (a region in France), and Louisiana (named after King Louis XIV).

The English named a few of their thirteen colonies after their monarchs – Virginia (after Elizabeth, the Virgin Queen), the Carolinas (after King Charles II), and Georgia (for George I, the Hanoverian king who replaced the Stuart Dynasty in 1714). New Amsterdam, a Dutch colony, was renamed in honor of the Duke of York, the future James II. Settlers from the English counties of Jersey and Hampshire founded two colonies, and another colony founded by Protestants exiled from Puritan Massachusetts called their settlement an Anglicized version of the Dutch name for the area: Roodt Eylandt. A Quaker who procured the release from English jails of 1200 members of his sect named his neck of the woods Pennsylvania. The only colony where Catholics were tolerated was named Maryland in honor of the Mother of God by Lord Baltimore. Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Delaware kept the names of their Native American inhabitants.

The Spanish influence was vast. Florida, while still a colony of Spain, fell into American hands during the war of 1812. Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, Arizona, Nevada, and California all passed to the United States after an 1848 war with Mexico. The rest of the 48 states were bought – like Alaska; annexed – like Hawaii; or gradually settled by the slow westward drift that Americans saw as their Manifest Destiny. They usually kept the names given them by their Native American inhabitants (Alabama, Kentucky, Illinois, Kansas, Dakota, Oregon, Idaho, etc) or were renamed by cultured settlers (Montana is Latin for mountainous region), or by patriotic ones (Washington). The American flag has thirteen red and white stripes for each of the thirteen colonies that seceded from Great Britain, and one white star on a blue background for each state. The fiftieth star was added for Hawaii in 1959.

WORDS, WORDS, WORDS

Movies, business, music, communication, and air traffic control have one thing in common: English. Yet when the Pilgrims landed on Plymouth Rock, they could not imagine that their decision would help make English the international language of the world.

The story of American English begins with Noah Webster, who created the first dictionary of American usage and spelling. The early colonists had



brought with them their own accents from the different parts of the English Irish, and Scottish countryside. Due to the vast distances separating them from the Mother Country, a certain independence developed in their pronunciation and spelling. Capitalizing on this, Webster chose to cut out superfluous letters of French provenance and simplify the spelling of words. Centre would become center, cheque became check, harbour turned into harbor, gaol became jail, and so on. Noah Webster himself tried to undo some of what he had done a few decades later, but found the new spellings already in widespread use.

Early American authors had imitated rather heavily the British style of writing, and it was not until the advent of writers like Nathaniel Hawthorne and the Fireside Poets, and later, Mark Twain that a literature came from America which was written with a singularly American style.

In the 20th century, the economic clout of Wall Street guaranteed the widespread use of English in the business and financial world. English is particularly adept at combining old words and inventing new ones to capture new ideas. Hardly any of the following words can be found in a dictionary from the 1940s, though they seem normal to us today: sub-prime, inflow, out-source, bond-futures, hedge fund, depositors, downturn, automation, antibiotics, ecosystem, nursing home, or condominium. Impact and program were nouns, not verbs. Watergate was a hotel.

Wall Street and the new word makers furthered the rise of English, but less glamorous suspects are the true cause of English's dominance as the world language of the late 20th and early 21st centuries: computer geeks.

The Internet, Microsoft, and Google, and a host of hardware and software (itself a new word) companies have foisted English onto a computerized world. Words normal for us now were invented in the recent past to describe new technological concepts: fax, scan, zip, web, network, blog, google, stream, download, dual-core, and motherboard: a new word, it seems, nearly every week.

The power of Hollywood as the movie capital of the world reinforces the ubiquity of English, as does the might of the American music industry. But modern music's fascination with English isn't solely geographical. English, thanks to its short, mono-syllabic Anglo-Saxon roots and many rhyming words, is a boon to song writers.

Yet those first Pilgrims never knew the impact that settling in America would have or the world language it would create. Now English has become the language of communication, technology, business, music and movies, a worldwide language capable of overcoming national barriers and allowing the world to share money, ideas, and culture. Let's use it to write, preach, and teach Christ.

ONE NATION, UNDER GOD

In 1776 the founders brought forth upon this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

The Founding Fathers researched and discussed the democracies and republics of the ancient world, primarily Athens and Rome, and delved into the contemporary political philosophies of John Locke and Montesquieu.

Athens was the Democracy of ancient times. They employed the most direct form of government. Each man had a vote he could cast in favor or opposition to laws and leaders. The drawbacks were that a mob could easily be swayed by a demagogue, and the people were often uneducated and chose poorly.

Rome's Senate decided laws and carried out all the duties of state. This avoided the problems Athen's faced because of the common man's lack of knowledge of how governments and countries actually work. Still, those who were senators often didn't represent the people; they came from the wealthy class and were not elected by the vote of the people. Another recurring problem was that generals would march their army on Rome and crown themselves emperor.

After considering these previous governments and the comments and theorizing about them of Locke and Montesquieu, the founding fathers of America decided on a three branch government: law-making, or *legislative*; law-enforcing, or *executive*; and law-judging, the *judicial* branch. The three distinct branches had different ways, known as checks and balances, to put restrictions on and curb the power of the others.

The **legislative** branch is divided into two different parts, the House of Representatives and the Senate. The House of Representatives introduces laws and then passes them to the Senate for approval. The Senate ratifies and changes the proposed laws of the House of Representatives and then in turn delivers them to the president to receive his approval.

Each state elects its representatives for both the House and Senate. For every 30,000 people in a given state there is one representative in the House of Representatives, so a state with 3,000,000 people will have 100 representatives and a state with 60,000 will only have 2 representatives in the House. This is equal representation. However, regardless of population, each state has only 2 Senators. Here even the smallest states have the same say in the debates despite their population.

The **executive** powers are reserved for the president. The president can veto any law the Senate sends to him but he can make no laws himself. If he does veto, the senate can override it with a vote of 2/3 majority. This is surprisingly the weakest branch of the government, yet it stabilizes the country because the president cannot make laws. His primary duty lies in implementing the laws Congress passes.

The **judicial** branch consists of all judges who work for the federal government. They are not involved the making of laws. A federal court may rule that a law is unconstitutional and thus is not a law at all. A recent example is the case of partial birth abortion. A state sued, claiming that partial birth abortion is wrong. The case went to the Supreme Court and it ruled partial birth abortion unconstitutional. Naturally, two groups have emerged within in the courts: those who solely interpret the Constitution as it is and those who consider the Constitution as a work that is still evolving, subject to change.

The only missing ingredient is the method for choosing those in office. The president and vice-president are chosen by a group of electors, similar to the College of Cardinals. Each state has a college of electors as numerous as its delegates in the House of Representatives. For the elections of president and vice-president, there is both a popular vote, where each person can choose his candidate and the Electoral College vote. If the candidate has the majority of the popular vote in a state, the members of the Electoral College from that state vote for the same candidate unanimously.

Although there is no perfect government in the world, this system has survived more than 200 years of peaceful governing with no change of government - one president after another stepping down for another man to lead. As Winston Churchill once said, "It is the worst possible form of government – except for all the others which have already been tried."

THE INVISIBLE HAND

The establishment of the three basic economic systems that we know as capitalism, communism and socialism stems from the common quest of creating a healthy and successful nation

When trade between countries became frequent in the Middle Ages, *mercantilism* was standard practice, the one economic tradition that they all held in common. Mercantilism is now known as *protectionism*, since it keeps the advantage for the home team. In effect, the self-interested group of merchants or producers in a given country would demand to have monopolies in their domain of trade. They also asked that the government slap tariffs – or import taxes – on foreign goods that they themselves were producing. English farmers produced cheap wool, as the Flemish did textiles; Germany had iron, and the Swiss made good armor for a bargain. But each country tried to sell more than it bought. Logically, this was impossible, and meanwhile trade was confined to a trickle.

Then, more than two centuries ago, Adam Smith began to take note of the nature of the contemporary English internal economy in its country markets with farmers, merchants and craftsmen. The notion that *self-interest* can be used for the betterment of society soon became apparent to him. Instead



of each family providing for all its necessities itself, each did what he could do best.

For instance, he saw that Mr. Smith might choose to continue in the trade that he had learned from childhood, making horseshoes and metal plows and knives, instead of spending time on farming, given that he didn't have much of a green thumb. Farming was Mr. Green's specialty, but he couldn't make so much as a shovel or a knife to save his life. And both were grateful to Mr. Shoemaker, who provided boots and shoes for the town.

Spending all of his time in the blacksmith shop, Mr. Smith developed a better hammer and tougher nails for the shoemaker and a four sturdy horseshoes for the farmer; he traded these implements for two pairs of shoes, and three bushels of wheat. Mr. Green gave the shoemaker one leather cowhide in exchange for three pairs of shoes. This was a simple market scene from the time of Adam Smith: people constantly getting better in what they did so that they could get more things for it. And they were doing it without guidance. They might exchange one cowhide for three pairs of shoes, not because of some inherent the price tag, but because that was what it seemed to be worth. This is capitalism; a free market economy with as little third party (government) interference as possible.

Socialism is an economic system that attempts to distribute wealth equally. More government involvement is necessary to manage this, because disparity in wealth is ordinary – some people naturally do things better than others. In the town, Mr. Smith continues working iron at his smithy, but his work is standardized; the iron and tools with which he made the nails and horseshoes, having been taxed by the government, is more expensive. Some of the money from the tax is used to help the Green farm, which suffers from the occasional dry spells – they need money to cover the cost of partly lost grain crops. On the other hand, any cowhide the farm sells to Mr. Shoemaker is taxed a small amount as well; money from this goes to pay for Mr. Smith's iron furnace fuel, which previously had been rather expensive. The end result is that Mr. Shoemaker finds that his shoes cost more money to make, but he can also earn a little more. Before, Mr. Smith had been most often the richest; Mr. Green had had wide-ranging fortunes, sometimes exceeding even Mr. Smith after producing a great crop, but at other times just getting by; while Mr. Shoemaker had never been rich, he always had a steady job (everyone needs shoes). But now the three men make practically approximately equal amounts of money.

Communism is a different story; a scene of more radical government involvement. It meant a government in complete control of the economy, owning all the means to produce. It meant change. In this way of life, Mr. Shoemaker works on the former Greenivski farm. Mr. Smithivsky works along with him there. Life is simple; Mr. Greenivski works at the blacksmith's shop. Even if he is not quite a hand at the hammer, he knows how to work the furnace. Every third day Mr. Smithivsky goes to the farm tool shed where he puts shoes together, and on the next day, he travels to the People's Party Smithy, where he gives the allotted portion of food and shoes and takes back some



nails and other farm implements. Now life is stable, certainly. From changes in careers to proportioning of food allowances, the government has made sure of it.

Here then are the village models of three economies: communism, socialism, and capitalism – the free market. When it comes to international trade, all of them are relative newcomers, less than three centuries old.

The new idea of capitalism came from the old market concept. What differs is that a successful capitalist economy has three important requirements. First is *trust* in a medium of exchange, namely, money that is recognized by all. Next, a *rule of law*, where those who would dishonestly manipulate the system, extort and steal are brought to justice; this also ensures stability. The final prerequisite is the hardest to find: *honesty* at government level. A playing field or a town square free of corruption can be hard to come by. If these conditions are met, then capitalism writes its success story by en-

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

A novel is a window into a nation's soul. America has produced many fine writers, and in this section *Forum* would like to recommend several books that have helped define the way we think of America's past.

The best early American novelists captured the mood and feel of colonial life and the early American frontier, even though writing from a distance of several decades or even centuries from their subjects.

- Washington Irving's short story, *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, recreates life in New York state just after the War of Independence.
- James Fenimore Cooper's *Last of the Mohicans* is a paean to the frontiersmen of the French and Indian War.
- Nathaniel Hawthorne depicts beautifully the attitudes and customs of Puritan New England in the short story *Young Goodman Browne*, and the classic *The Scarlet Letter*.

Later authors were able to crystallize their own experiences of growing up on the westward-moving frontier.

- Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn* are classic books about childhood and growing-up, and succeed in putting that era in a bottle of time.
- Willa Cather's most famous book is *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, and is an excellent depiction of the American Southwest.
- Finally, many books have served as a catalyst for social change, but none with the power and the glory of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, or the inimitable pathos of Harper Lee's bestseller, *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

As the wells of America's academic life began to be poisoned in the 1960s and 70s, the books that served as a window into America's soul also became dirtier and darker. Few books, and no great ones, are worth reading from the 1970s onwards. However, the art of story-telling is still the dominant cultural force in the world, and film has replaced the novel as the dominant medium of that force. The success of movies that either portray timeless values like strength and honor, time and eternity (*Gladiator*, *Braveheart*), or are allegorically or overtly Christian in content (*Lord of the Rings*, *Narnia*), and especially, the success of *The Passion of the Christ*, is the best sign of hope that not all is lost in the American soul.

Edmund Burke once wrote that "the means by which providence raises a nation to greatness are the virtues infused in great men." Biographies of great American leaders are always inspiring, and nobody does biographies better than David McCullough. One of the best writers in America today, McCullough has won the Pulitzer Prize for both *Truman* and *John Adams*. He excels at presenting hardly-remembered historical characters, and by deftly describing their virtues and character, endearing them to the reader. That talent sounds like it would be awfully useful for writing the history of the Legion, but in case you're thinking of a book called, say, *The Cofounders*, by David McCullough, think again. Those stories are waiting to be told by *you!*

couraging hard work, personal responsibility, talent and innovation, just as it raised the standard of life in America.

The influence of capitalism is unquestionable in a constantly developing world.

GOD BLESS AMERICA

All great nations must have a principle of unity thanks to which they survive hardships and overcome threats. Among these principles are race, language, and social customs; the most common being race.

Greece left a legacy of wisdom never to be forgotten. Its monuments remind us of its greatness. But Greece was not so much a country as an idea. The idea of Greece began with Homer. His epics were a school of thought that could unite the belligerent tribes of Greece into a people of common beliefs and practices. Homer's stories formed a "Bible" for Greek mythology and they propounded a moral code for all to follow. The ideals of honor, glory, and fame were advanced in the Iliad. In the Odyssey Homer teaches that above the values of personal ambition stand the virtues of religion and family: piety, fidelity, fortitude, and perseverance.

Homer's epics became a unifying factor for the Greek city-states. Through this, Greece became a people of importance, a people whose mark was left on history.

The Romans were presented with the dilemma of how to coalesce disparate groups into one unified empire. They conquered, but did not destroy and presented to their subjects the benefits and pride of subscribing to the ideal of Romanness. The peoples were offered citizenship, a common cult, patrimony, and protection, and they in turn were required to pay tribute to Rome.

Augustus codified this ideal. With his victory at the battle of Actium in 31 BC, he brought peace to the troubled empire and made it his duty to instill unity. Augustus commissioned the writers of the day to give the Roman ideal a form, history, and mystique. Among the greatest of these is Virgil, born in Mantua in 70 BC, who wrote the epic *Aeneid*. Patriotism is one of Virgil's foremost concerns. Theirs is a chosen nation, resurrected from the ashes of Troy, descended of heroes, and seed of great men to come. This fate Virgil unveils throughout the *Aeneid* as seen in the prophecy of Father Tiber, on the shield of Aeneas, in the funeral games of Anchises, and in the procession of Romans in the underworld:

*Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento;
hae tibi erunt artes; pacique imponere morem,
parcere subiectis, et debellare superbos.*

*But, Roman, never forget that government is your medium!
Be this your art: to practice men in the habit of peace,
Generosity to the conquered, and firmness against oppressors.*
(Aeneid VI.850-853)

With these lines, the character of a people was formed. It was a nation destined to bring peace and security to the entire world, and intensely conscious and proud of its identity.

America is known abroad as the land of the free, despite the scars of slavery and oppression. It has stood as a symbol of peace, despite its heritage of wars, such as the Revolutionary War and the Civil War. It is the "melting pot" of nations, constituted by a variety of peoples from manifold backgrounds; nevertheless, it holds together. It holds because America is not a race. America is an idea – an ideal that people of any race can latch on to and into which they can integrate – just like many great nations before her. It is the ideal, marked down in the Declaration of Independence that cements America's diversity into a nation and makes it such a powerful influence on the world.

In the globalized world, as race quietly disappears, countries are realizing that in order to survive they must put aside the unifying principle of race and establish an ideal that all can subscribe to.

STARS AND STRIPES FOREVER

The history of the United States of America began in a boat of Pilgrims in 1620. From the first colonies of America in the early 1600s settlers came steaming into the continent carving out a nation from the uncharted wilderness. By 1700 the entire eastern seaboard was in English hands save the Florida coast. By 1733 the thirteen colonies were all formally established. To these colonies an ever increasing number of immigrants came. Those who had the courage to brave the dangerous ocean voyage filled the colonies with men possessing the traits for which America later became famous—love of freedom, ambition, energy, and enterprise.

In 1775 the colonies numbered some 2.5 million settlers, and had acquired personalities of their own. Political and economic control by a country 3,000 miles away had become intolerable in the eyes of many colonists. A "long history of abuses" led to open hostilities, which began on April 19, 1775 at the battle of Lexington and Concord where "the British regulars fired and fled, and the rebels gave them ball for ball, from behind each barn and farmyard wall." The die was cast and the war begun. After six years of desperate fighting the colonies had done the impossible. They had defeated a world power and won their independence. In 1783 the treaty of Paris was signed and the war officially ended.

The coming decades for the fledgling nation were trying and difficult. Af-



ter the new federal government was formed in 1787 the nation continued to expand westward. In 1792 Kentucky was the first state outside the original 13 colonies to be admitted into the Union. In the early years of the 1800s the young nation further matured as the result of the War of 1812, in which the United States was able to hold its own against Great Britain a second time. One of the heroes from that war, Andrew Jackson, was elected president in 1828. He introduced what came to be known as "Jacksonian Democracy": greater participation of the people in political affairs and wider suffrage. Jackson's strong personality, fighting spirit, and powerful leadership brought most of the country into a personal loyalty to their commander-in-chief.

The internal politics of this period were dominated by the question of slavery. Such illustrious men as Henry Clay of Kentucky, Daniel Webster of Massachusetts, and John Calhoun of South Carolina dominated the Senate floor. Despite great efforts of compromise the South had had enough. Upon the election of Lincoln as president in 1860 South Carolina passed an Ordinance of Secession and ten Southern States followed suit. Thus the Confederate States of America was formed. Lincoln he duly invaded the South with an army to force the Southerners into submission. Despite the heroic efforts of the South led by brilliant generals such as Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson the Confederates were defeated. As a result of the war slavery, the scourge of America, was abolished forever.

The next half century saw a rapid growth on the American continent in all fields. Territorially it extended from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Population had soared to over sixty three million by 1890. From 1865 to 1873 the extension of railroads had doubled. By the early 1900s the United States was the world leader in steel and oil. This period of economic and industrial growth made rich men of not a few American citizens. Such names as Rockefeller, Carnegie, and Vanderbilt go down in history as some of the richest men in the world. But not everyone was indulging in newfound wealth in America. The lot of the laborer was as bad as ever. Woman and child labor was frequently abused. Immigrants came in by the hundreds of thousands and overwhelmed the work force with their cheap labor and so further aggravated the misery of the common worker. Over time these difficulties were worked out through legislation and organized labor. Eventually America rose to have one of the highest living standards in the world with a huge middle class.

By the end of the 19th century American foreign policy was clearly beginning to change. Traditionally it was based upon the principle of isolation which discouraged involvement in international affairs. By 1898 the American public was appalled at the Spanish administration of Cuba and Puerto Rico. And when the *USS Maine* was sunk in Havana Harbor they were determined to fight back. The Spanish American War ended with the American acquisition of the Philippines, Cuba, and Puerto Rico. America was beginning to awaken to the world around her.

President Wilson expressed the desire of most Americans when he proclaimed American neutrality at the outbreak of war in Europe in 1914. Fortunately or unfortunately this neutrality never existed. With their products in



high demand in a war-torn Europe, American merchants were eager to sell to one and all. The British Royal Navy, however, did not recognize neutral shipping and thus the Allies were the only ones to receive aid. With no other alternatives, the Germans resorted to submarine warfare to impose a blockade on the Allies. In May 1915 a German submarine torpedoed the American liner *Lusitania* without warning, which resulted in the death of 114 Americans. This was one of the key factors which led to America declaring war on April 6, 1917. Once war was declared the nation gave itself over fully to the war effort. Both economically and militarily America was the driving impetus which brought the war to a close in 1918, though she lost 125,000 of her sons in the process. The 'War to end all wars' had finally come to an end.

The interwar period saw a booming economy during the 'roaring 20s'. National wealth soared from approximately \$187 billion in 1912 to \$450 billion in 1929. The main reason for the new found wealth was primarily due to new industries especially in the fields of automobiles and electricity. But this prosperity was not to last indefinitely. In 1929 an inflated stock market crashed, ushering in the greatest depression in the nation's history. Thousands lost everything, and thousands more were unemployed. America did not recover until the huge industrial needs of World War II revived her economy.

In 1939 Hitler invaded Poland. In 1940 he overran France and the Scandinavian countries. Roosevelt was giving 'all aid short of war.' But on December 7, 1941 Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and the United States declared war on Japan and on Germany soon after. The Allies agreed that the German threat in Europe should be taken care of first. On D-day, June 6, 1944 the largest invasion force in world history landed on the beaches of Normandy. On August 25 Paris was retaken. Finally after stiff resistance the Allies crossed the Rhine in March of 1945 and on May 7, 1945 Germany unconditionally surrendered. Japan's defeat was only a matter of time. After most of the Pacific Islands had been retaken the Japan was offered an ultimatum of surrender or "prompt and utter destruction." The ultimatum was ignored. So on August 6 an atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima and three days later on Nagasaki. Japan duly surrendered. Thus two tragic world wars in one generation had ended.

The decades following are known to posterity as the Cold War. After the end of WWII two super powers remained on the globe: the United States and the USSR. Though actual war never broke out between the two nations the tension was felt all over the world. The Korean War and the Vietnam War are manifestations of the conflict. Nuclear war and an end to the world as we know it were always distinct possibilities. The Soviet Union was broken economically by the huge demands of keeping pace with the West's military. After the Communist economic system collapsed the satellites of the Soviet Union clamored for independence. Finally in 1991 the Soviet Union collapsed due in large part to the work of Pope John Paul II and President Ronald Reagan.

The last sixteen years have also seen huge historical developments. The Middle East now dominates the world's attention, and global Islamic jihad has

proven a force to be reckoned with. The rise of the Internet and unbroken economic growth around the world has made the earth more like a global village. Globalization, Islam, the fate of Europe, and the rise of China seem destined to be the hot topics of the day after tomorrow, when we will be priests of Christ, apostles of the Third Millennium.

CATHOLICS: AMERICA'S LAST, BEST HOPE

Everyday, several times a day, we pray the words, "Thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will be Done." In them, we state the goal of evangelization: the establishment of Christ's Kingdom, which comes about whenever men and women dedicate themselves to God's will. Evangelization is of peoples, but peoples are grouped in cultures and nations, so it is apropos that we examine the strengths and weaknesses of the American culture, and the opportunities and threats it poses to the evangelization of America and the world. But here are a few words of warning. First, this is a newsletter, not a book, so this is necessarily a superficial, generalized view of the situation. Second, America is a deeply divided country, and often the exact opposite of what follows could also be said and be equally true. Third, there are many more negative aspects to America than are mentioned below. We focus more on the positive because, as in our personal formation, greater change is wrought through potentializing virtue than through eradicating vice.

America's greatest **strengths** are still the values of hard work, integrity, responsibility, and respect for the rule of law, Christian in origin, which are the heritage of her middle class. Initiative and professionalism are prized virtues, and Americans are inveterate problem solvers, full of initiative and new projects. Entrepreneurs thrive in America, and so do their businesses, and therefore, so does the American economy. Americans are proud of that, and proud of the good things America does and has done around the world, and so are patriotic. It is this combination of hard work, new projects and ideas, economic clout and self-assured patriotism which creates the "soft power" - science, technology, business, and most especially, the infectious concoction of music, movies, media and McDonalds - that makes America rule the world.

The individual virtues mentioned above are best cultivated in strong families. Though they often passed unperceived by the cultural radar, there are still many strong, large families in America. This is an obvious **opportunity** for evangelization. Aside from the fact that children from strong, faith-filled families will generally pass on those virtues to their own offspring, and thus increase the number of families in which "God's will is done", it is no accident that the majority of priestly vocations come from such families as these.

Forming solid families is the surest, though slowest, way to spread the



CULTURAL CORNER

Can you name the provenance and occasion of the following quotes from American history, literature, and culture? Send your answers to *Forum* (Outlook: Brock Matthew LC)!

Four-score and seven years ago...

Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.

We hold these truths to be self-evident: all men are created equal...

Hold your fire until you see the whites of their eyes!

Sinners in the hands of an angry God.

These are the times that try men's souls.

To ebony and topaz, and the brave men who gave it!

Tippecanoe and Tyler too!

A city on a hill...

Dewey defeats Truman!

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord!

Crucified upon a cross of gold...

The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.

Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.

Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!

I'm not a crook!

With malice toward none, with charity toward all...

I have not yet begun to fight!

A day that will live in infamy

Kingdom of Christ, but we cannot overlook the tremendous opportunities for evangelization that America's "soft power" provides. American media forms the minds and opinions of millions, and America's national storytellers – Hollywood – influence the way myriads more see the world.

Yet it is precisely here that we touch on America's **weaknesses** and the **threats** she can pose to evangelization. Due to a still largely unexplained dominance of liberal thought in American academic life dating from the early of the 20th century, many centers of higher education have created an atmosphere of cynicism, nihilism, relativism, and absolute distrust of traditional values. Hollywood and the media are full of people who have studied at these schools, have imbibed this poisonous concoction, and are now spreading it around the world. The licentiousness and relativism promoted hereby are not only antithetical to the beliefs of the silent majority of Americans, they also do much to entrench the negative image of America held in many parts of the world.

It would be tempting to demonize the media as the source of America's ills, but that would be forgetting that the media is simply a tool. What matters are the people who wield it. Reaching the point where Catholics can wield that tool in any world-changing way will be a long, hard, uphill slog, but is not an impossible task, and it is one well worth the time and effort.

A last **weakness** and therefore a **threat** is an interesting spinoff from the fact that Americans tend to be problem solvers: they see lack of comfort as a problem, and will invent and do anything to be comfortable.



There is nothing wrong with comfort, but too often a comfort-seeking culture can forget the salubrious effects of sacrifice, and this can lead, in the lives of Catholic Americans, to an absence of any trace of the cross. Part of this is due to the Protestant influence in America, and to the lingering residues of the old Protestant myth that the supposed economic backwardness of "Catholic" nations is due to their emphasis on "offering things up", instead of looking for ways to overcome difficulties. Whatever the origin, it is something that will bode ill for both the nation (since it will no longer be able to ask its citizens for the sacrifice required to keep her free and prosperous), and for the Church (who will find fewer willing to respond to her challenges to sanctity and heroism.) This can only be overcome by instilling in the young an appreciation for the value of sacrifice on a personal level, that the love we all yearn for is precisely self-giving, and a deeper understanding that redemption was won through the cross.

These strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats are already being potentialized, overcome, exploited and neutralized by many of our apostolates in the United States of America. The next fifty years will see the last generations of Legionary cofounders do battle for Christ and souls. Through fidelity – Christ promises it – we will be successful, and the Catholic faith, God's Kingdom on earth, will continue to be the last best hope of not only America, but of the whole world.