

FORUM LETTER

Volume 40 Number 7

July 2011

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An examination of conscience



- 3 “Examen: Innumerable are the manifestations of egoism! Which are most habitual with me? In the supernatural order: satisfied conviction of one’s worth and merit; care to build up a little reputation of sanctity; considering oneself superior to others; relying too much on oneself and one’s resolutions; secure complacency in the practice of virtue and the works of the apostolate; discouragement at the sight of one’s wretchedness and faults. On the natural level: love and pursuit of success, congratulations and compliments; in public, speaking too often of oneself, boasting, bragging; feminine vanities— from which certain men are not exempt; infatuation for one’s ideas, one’s views; disdain for the thought of another, severe judgments of your neighbor; envy, jealousy, antipathy, slander, calumny provoked by wounded or humiliated pride; he who surpasses me, irritates me. Criticism of superiors, of their person and their orders; little ambitions for positions of superiority, honorable posts; wretched joy at seeing another humiliated or cast aside. Fear of failure; touchiness in regard to points of respect; indignation at being unappreciated, blamed, criticized, slandered; displeasure or pouting at advice or a reprimand. Cold and distant attitude in the presence of authority; boredom at going to ask permission, lies to excuse oneself. Refusal to ask pardon or to grant it when asked; lack of simplicity and loyalty in our relations with superiors; prudent silence and slyness . . .” —Louis Colin, *Friendship with Christ: A Retreat*, trans. Sister M. Carina (Newman Press, 1959).

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Orlando—more than a yawn?



When the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America’s churchwide assembly meets in Orlando August 15-19, one big question remains: What will they do, now that they don’t have sex to kick around anymore? For the first time in recent memory, sexuality isn’t front and center on the agenda. It is probably too much to hope that it won’t come up at all, but it certainly won’t get the attention it’s gotten in recent years. And with no significant election on the agenda either, one has to wonder what, other than the convention center air conditioning, will keep the voting members in their seats?

It’s not that there are no issues, of course. There will be debates, some probably even contentious. But as a whole, the assembly is on target for being a big yawn. Not that this is a bad thing, understand. The ELCA could use a tame assembly. *Forum Letter* will be there to cover it in depth, insofar as there is any depth to cover. And so we probably should at least alert you to what might be expected.

Genetic off-putting

It's really a shame that social issues always seem to take front and center, and since sex is over for the time being, the assembly will take up genetics. There's a relationship there somewhere, but never mind. A proposed social statement, *Genetics, Faith and Responsibility*, is on the docket. I've really meant to do an in-depth analysis of the document, but I've kept putting it off because, frankly, I don't find it that interesting.

As in previous statements, there are a lot of words, many of them not very elegant, that don't end up saying a whole lot. It's hard to take seriously a document that intones, "The Word became flesh, took on a human genome, and lived among the abundance and sorrow of the earth and human culture, as evident in Jesus' ministry of proclamation, healing and teaching." St. John really said it better.

If there are fireworks here, they are likely to come in response to the sections related to agriculture. The ELCA has a lot of people in the bread basket of America, and their view of genetic engineering isn't always the same as that of the ivory tower ethicists. Still, the document is vague enough that it may not engender much debate at all.

Constitutional matters

I've already commented on the proposed constitutional amendments, noting especially the *angst* caused among some (especially in Lutheran CORE) over recommended changes to the procedures by which a congregation can leave the ELCA (*FL* March, 2011). I continue to think these changes are neither nefarious nor unreasonable, but others have a different view.

So there may be some contention over the amendments. The question is whether CORE will have enough bodies among the voting members to make much more than a *pro forma* objection. After all, the congregations inclined to leave have already done so, or are pretty far along the road toward doing so. So the discussion, while it has the potential to become a little nasty, is not likely to result in the defeat of the proposals.

LIFT high the ELCA

The "Living into the Future Together" task force (LIFT) was charged with "renewing the ecology of the ELCA." I'm not sure how that relates to the genetics statement, but I sense a theme here.

The task force has made a long list of "recommendations"—some 56, by my count. They are all over the map. Some are quite concrete, such as a proposal that after 2013 the ELCA churchwide assembly meet every three years instead of biennially. That's an idea I like, though how it renews the ecology of the ELCA is a little fuzzy in my mind.

Some are specific enough, but don't propose anything new. They recommend that "ELCA colleges and universities continue to promote the Lutheran concept of vocation as the sense of life as 'calling' among its faculty, staff and students with the affirmation and support of the whole church." Sure, I can buy that, at least insofar as ELCA colleges and universities are currently doing it. My impression is that some are, and some really not so much.

Still others are not recommendations at all, but opinions. They "recommend" that "the vision of a multicultural, multi-ethnic church which reflects the reality of the whole people of God will require synodical and local leaders to recognize the power and privilege held by a majority culture and work to dismantle the barriers that continue to divide communities." At least they punched the multicultural card, even if the "recommendation" is specious.

And some recommendations are so vague as to be utterly meaningless. What can it mean to recommend that the ELCA "nurture a culture of faithful discernment in all its expressions, assemblies and councils, the churchwide organization, synods, congregations, institutions and small groups"? Or that "the ELCA as a whole celebrate the financial interdependence of all its ministries, calling each to careful financial stewardship and faithful sharing"? Sounds like the LIFT task force has learned its writing skills in the School of Social Statements.

The missing

How will the assembly address the loss of hundreds of congregations and tens of thousands of individual members since 2009? Will it express any grief over those losses? Will they be mentioned at all? Or will it be, "Well, now we're a leaner, meaner denomination—not downsized, but rightsized"?

The answer to that question will probably reveal a lot more about the "ecology of the ELCA" than a raft of task force recommendations, constitutional amendments, and social statements. If you want on the scene, real time commentary, you'll find it on *Forum Online* at www.alpb.org. —roj

Worshiping in happy chaos

By Peter C. Garrison



My purpose in this article is to encourage pastors and congregations to welcome infants to full participation in the liturgical life of the church, and to take heart, when discouraged, from some theological advice from St. Augustine and some practical tips from yours truly.

As we missionaries seek a new generation to welcome to the Gospel, we will of course welcome new parents and their infants into the arms of Holy Mother Church. Just as there are two types of people (those who are parents and those who aren't), I believe there are two types of churches: those who welcome children and those who don't.

The welcoming congregation

I sometimes hear of a church that says it is welcoming and inclusive, diverse and multicultural, but sneers at parents bringing young children to the liturgy. I hear from parents how they dread bringing children to church in the same way they fear taking them on their first journey by airplane. I hear how rule-bound and stiff churches can be, and how discouraged people become as they split into segments and fail to interact together as a worshiping community.

My own congregation, on the other hand, is a happy church. People wonder how we stay so thankful, praise-filled and happy. Ours is not a clappy-happy entertainment-based church. We are a liturgical church with all the bells and smells. I am not an entertainment evangelist. I preach Law as well as Gospel and have an Augustinian (and thus low) estimation of human nature. I am known to glare now and again. Still, people speak of our congregation's flexibility and cohesiveness, our warmth and common kindness.

Free-range toddlers

My formula for a happy, flexible and cohesive church? Contained liturgical chaos through free-range toddlers. Listen to me: it's worth a try. The trick is that you have to throw the babies into the church with the bath water (read: baptismal water), and right into their full membership as Christians. That means regular attendance at liturgy with their parents, reception of the Eucharist and early

participation in lecturing, acolyting, choir, workdays and dishwashing.

We offer a family worship service and a Eucharistic liturgy each Sunday. One of the things visitors first notice about our worship services is our unbridled toddlers. Babies and toddlers are welcome at all our services. Families bring their children and parents stay with their children, worship with their children, teach their children and delight in their children because their children are welcomed and fussed over by the five generations in our congregation.

Chaos can be a result of this welcome. I often have toddlers clinging to my liturgical skirts as I preach. They creep behind the altar at the genuflection ("Oh, hi there, Tiernan . . ."), balance on my shoes during the elevation or get held in my arms during the prayers of the Church. I try not to make it "cute," merely accommodating and matter-of-fact. Parent-wranglers show up soon enough, though getting the new children corralled in the pew can be like herding cats. As W. C. Fields noted, it is not easy to work with children or animals.

This happy chaos doesn't go on every Sunday. "New children" may be the key idea here. I find that after six weeks of regular attendance, both the child and the parents learn what is "normal" behavior. The children see and mimic the other children, and the parents the other parents. Standards are set and enforced by what military small-unit theory calls "mutual surveillance" and "unit cohesiveness."

Not being snippy

My alternative would be to roll my eyes, sigh, drum my fingers, give a stink-eye now and again and be generally snippy. And what do you think would happen? After 25 years I would be surrounded by snippy people.

Patience, of course, is key. Children quickly learn the liturgy. I believe they learn the liturgy within their mothers' wombs when mothers attend regularly during pregnancy. My wife swears our son learned the liturgy *in utero* and found his love of music by her sitting so close to the musicians at church each week

During worship one child in our congregation, still in diapers, knows when to start crawling to the altar for the children's sermon. He can tell from the pacing of my rhetoric near the end of my sermon and the beginning of the sermon hymn. Several infants participate in the liturgy by babbling during the spoken parts of the liturgy, and cooing during the sung parts.

If you think this is far-fetched then please note that even our church dog, Potter, has learned the behavior necessary to benefit most from the liturgy. He can tell the pacing and movement of the Lord's Prayer as people stand and pray together. He moves to the center aisle at Family Worship Hour and begins to pray along (quietly huff) for the treats that are sure to be given between services.

Only two things still throw me off my pace: percussive toys such as rattles on the pews and tiny tap shoes on the cement floor.

Maintaining *sangfroid*

How do I maintain my *sangfroid*? Two ways: practically and theologically. Practically, it helps that I'm old and getting deaf; that I'm old and have raging pre-grandpa hormones; and that I'm old and have learned to become more childlike.

Theologically, I've taken to heart St. Augustine's kind advice to his catechist Deogratias. In 404 Augustine wrote *Teaching Beginners*. Deogratias was concerned with technique, but his mentor Augustine was more concerned that he enjoy his task and share this joy with his students. He was, Augustine told him, to find "delight" (*delectatio*) in his catechesis.

Augustine gave Deogratias some family images to nurture his sense of sharing patiently the gifts of the Faith in simple, gentle ways. "Lower yourself to their level, as a wet nurse warming her infants. . . . People who cherish children babble and play with words. . . . [A] mother chews the food for her baby and feeds her child in place of having herself a more grown-up meal. The mother hen tenderly covers her chicks with her wings and while they peep she calls to them with worried clucks." [Unless otherwise indicated, quotations are my translations of Augustine's *Oeuvres III: Philosophie, Catéchèse, Polémique* (Gallimard, 2002).]

An Augustinian model

How is this liturgical and catechetical joy

possible? Free-range toddlers and the happy church provide answers and examples in an Augustinian model.

As William Harmless notes, "Augustine presumed life was mysterious . . . [W]hat might be an annoyance could in fact be a token of God's loving order." Thus he advised that one "treat interruptions as providential and act accordingly." [*Augustine and the Catechumenate*, Liturgical Press, 1995, 138].

So, for instance, when a child squeaks and babbles, I may mention that perhaps the infant is trying to remember God's Name. A liturgical teaching moment has occurred in order to remind our worshipers that we know God's Name: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Distractions by little ones may be used to our own edification. "If through our human weakness we make a mistake," Augustine wrote, "which does not lead our hearers to a grave error, we ought to see but the divine will putting us to the test to see if we will calmly rectify our error or if, by defending it, we will fall into a still greater error." [*De catechizandis rudibus*, 14.20]

So when interrupted by a squeal or squeak and you stumble over your words, use the mistake to point out the true meaning of what you are saying or doing and proceed with the refreshed appreciation such an explanation may give to your hearers. Even thank the child for the chance to clarify and enlighten the worship.

Always remember you are the family of God. Worship is serious, and yet our being perturbed at interruptions can render our rites "less approachable and our bitterness make it dry and less communicative. . . Remember [that] 'God loves a cheerful giver.' (2 Cor. 9.7)"

Finally, in this family relationship as children of our Heavenly Father, we learn from those whom we teach. Again a message of humility: "Their joys in seeing these new things give rebirth to ours and unite us by sharing a renewed vision over those things we had grown used to having in sight."

Dealing with distraction

Such flexibility may not be natural to some churches and worship leaders. Admittedly much comfort is received from quiet assemblies, beautiful music listened to by quiet audiences and calm eve-

ning candlelight reflections. But someone's full Christian nature is being excluded from this important type of worship. Children can learn to behave for this adult-time, but as with any skill, this must be practiced in place.

How can the worship leaders learn to deal with the distractions? That also takes some practice. Here are my strategies:

(1) I practice in a very noisy location. (Think of the orator Demosthenes practicing next to the noisy ocean.) Outside my sanctuary windows is the constant hum of leaf-blowers, the scream of Highway 101, the roaring of San Francisco International Airport and the clanking street-sweeper truck which seems to fill its water reservoir from the corner hydrant every ten minutes. I learn to tolerate noise.

(2) I practice out loud and anticipate my innocent hecklers. I have a few comebacks ready in order to gently call attention to the interruption and then using the interruption's energy, Judo-like, to proceed with my sermon or liturgy.

(3) One cannot pretend to be welcoming. I practice no ploys for church growth, no play-acting for cutesy children's sermons, no pushiness to lead people where they don't want to go. What we look for in ourselves would be what Augustine wants from his catechist and what "the Gospel deserves: *hilaritas*: delight, enthusiasm, passion." [Harmless, 356]

Benefits for parents and pastors

This approach offers many benefits for both parents and worship leaders. Children become accustomed to "parent time" (useful training for running errands, shopping, ballet, waiting in line). Children learn the liturgy and incorporate it into their family life. One of our mothers delights in her child singing the liturgy in the bathtub.

Children incorporate a sense of worship, church and Christian identity away from their home

church. This is handy existentially: I heard my son's first private prayer when the little guy stood at the foot of the reredos at the Mission San Juan Bautista. He looked up at Christ and all the surrounding saints, folded his hands and prayed: "Jesus loves me."

Children form their identities as family members in the church and have generations of faithful Christians surrounding them with stories of their pilgrimage. This is beneficial for us Californians whose families often consist of a single generation. Children learn how real Christians behave during their long lives, are forgiven, and try again through faith by grace.

Becoming fully welcoming

Let me offer a couple of helpful hints for congregations wanting to be more welcoming of children. First, provide a room or space where parents with children can go if they get tired or embarrassed. Let parents know the option to leave worship and return as needed. Make such an option part of the announcements and bulletin each week.

Put the words of welcome in the website and phone-message.

Though counter-intuitive, have the families sit up front. The open sanctuary will swallow the noise from the nave. People will find it less disconcerting to have a noise in front of them than behind them.

It is in welcoming children that the church can attain a joy and cohesiveness not before seen. But much depends on the care and calm strength shown by the pastors and worship leaders as they usher in the changes slowly and patiently.

Pastor Peter C. Garrison presides at the chaotic but happy Good Shepherd Lutheran Church (ELCA) in Burlingame, CA. In his spare time, he reads French translations of St. Augustine.

From the archives: Campfire liturgies



Editor's Note: This year Forum Letter celebrates 40 years of publication. We continue our series reprinting some tidbit from an earlier issue, something both of historical interest and contemporary applicability. This month's selection comes

from the September 1992 issue, as editor Russell Saltzman took on what he called "campfire liturgies."

Call them "campfire liturgies," those egregious excursions to liturgical never-never land

where otherwise perfectly normal adults stand in a circle holding hands while singing “If you’re happy and you know it, pass the peace.” Or something like that. We can’t count all the times we’ve been made to endure bucolic frolics through the fields of liturgical relevance. Yuck. And just when we thought things couldn’t get any worse, someone handed us a copy of the language guidelines for worship at Holden Village. Holden Village, you may know, is a consistent purveyor of *avant-garde* ooze passed off as worship.

As the guidelines note, Holden Village has real problems with what to call God. “English pronouns that refer to God have traditionally been masculine. It may be wise to avoid the need for pronoun references by rephrasing sentences or repeating a noun. The pronoun ‘you’ is another tool that can be used.” Like, maybe: Gracious You; Hey, You; O, You. Whew.

Fond names

Holden Village even offers alternative names for God. “Gentle Trickster” is one. This might be good on Easter mornings: “Ha, Ha. You thought I was dead. Joke’s on you.” Another, “The Hang Loose One,” is sure to inspire intense feelings of deep reverence and awe among hearers. Personally,

we have developed a special fondness for “Spreader,” “Nameless,” “Bonfire,” “O Shore,” “Withinness,” “Air,” “Life Force,” “Blossom of All Things,” and—pointing out that God really is just a pretty swell all-round deity, as deities go—“The Undemanding.”

We are not so keen on “Condor” as a name for God, though the Holden guidelines list it. You try to think of God as the high Andes *Vultur gryphus* and see if something about both condors and divinity doesn’t get lost in the process. Equally, “Surroundance” is just a bit off to our taste. John Adams’ political opponents called him “His Rotundity.” “Surroundance,” don’t you agree, sounds an unpleasant echo from the nasty politics of the mid-1790’s.

How do you spell . . . ?

We stewed over “Warm Center,” but finally rejected it. It reminds us too much of the candy bar our 5-year-old left in the driver’s seat while out at the Grand Canyon this summer. “Relief,” however, is very nice. There is something about it that calls to mind the soothing effects of a Roloids tablet, an over-the-counter remedy best employed in absorbing the excess stomach acid certain to be produced when listening to inanities from Holden Village.

Omnium gatherum



Just plain nasty • We generally run a piece under the heading “synodical silly season,” poking fun at some of the odd resolutions that various synods approve each year. The action of the Southeastern Minnesota Synod might provoke a new heading, something like “synodical nasty season.” The good voting members in that synod decided to ask the ELCA Church Council to “consider removing from the Health and Benefits Program of the ELCA, clergy who have left the ELCA.” Presumably this is aimed at clergy who leave the ELCA roster because they are under call to a congregation which has left the ELCA; if they’ve left the ordained ministry entirely, they are already ineligible for the ELCA benefits program. Since 2005, the Board of Pensions has permitted continued participation as an “eligible employer” by congregations which have left, but which were sponsoring a

pastor or lay employee on or after January 1, 2005—a generous and charitable policy in effect for several years before the recent unpleasantness, and one that actually works to the advantage of the ELCA since a larger pool of participants lowers the costs for everyone. The Minnesota resolution, on the other hand, is a childish and unchristian response—and to whose benefit? This resolution should have been a non-starter, and not just because of the totally extraneous comma in its wording. A bishop worth his salt could have relinquished the chair, asked to speak from the floor, and taught the assembly something about Christian ethics. This bishop didn’t do that; he just stood at the podium waving a copy of *Roberts’ Rules of Order for Dummies*.

Jargon • Incidentally, the above-mentioned resolution was submitted by the “Facilitator’s Table” of

“Trinity Fellowship ELCA” in Rushford, MN. Apparently “Facilitator’s Table” is the about-to-be vogue term for the old outmoded and hierarchical “Congregation Council.” It’s a less elitist term, you know; after all, everyone deserves a “place at the table.” Far as I can tell, this is a spin-off from Rushford Lutheran Church, a former ELCA congregation, now affiliated with Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ.

Confession • The good folks at Concordia Publishing House have reissued Walter Koehler’s classic *Counseling and Confession: The Role of Confession and Absolution in Pastoral Counseling*. This is a revised edition, with a substantive new introduction by Rick Marrs. If you order it from Concordia and mention that you’re a *Forum Letter* reader, they’ll throw in free shipping.

Journeying together • Stories keep trickling in about astonishing ways that ELCA officials are respecting the bound conscience. Bishops in some synods, for example, have suddenly decided to start enforcing rules, and without any decency. There have been instances where retired pastors—even a retired bishop, I hear—have been told by their synodical bishop that they must leave the congregation of which they are a member because the congregation has disaffiliated from the ELCA. There’s a provision in the ELCA constitution, see, that requires that a clergyperson be a member of an ELCA congregation. There’s a loophole for those who are retired, but only if they reside “at too great a distance from any congregation of this church to be able to sustain an active relationship with that congregation.” Apparently that only applies to geographical distance, not theological distance. I also know of an ELCA congregation served for many years by a relatively conservative pastor, but a “reasonable conservative”—he opposed the 2009 churchwide assembly decisions, but did not in any way seek to lead his congregation out of the ELCA. Indeed, he steadfastly said “no” to those who wanted to talk about leaving. He has now retired, and the interim pastor sent by the synod raised some eyebrows when he informed an adult forum that one of his purposes as interim was to “re-educate them” about the Bible after the long tenure of the previous beloved conservative pastor. I’m trying to decide whether that kind

of baloney is an argument for retiring as soon as possible, or for staying until I’m 90.

Dueling town hall meetings • ELCA Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson has had a couple of what he calls “Town Hall Forums.” It’s really a gathering with a couple of dozen hand-picked people, chatting with the PB for an hour or so (well, listening to him answer questions), and then webcast so that millions can listen in. There’s another one scheduled for August 18 “with the 2011 Churchwide Assembly community,” whatever that might mean. Meanwhile, LCMS President Matthew Harrison has scheduled, shall we say, an *actual* town hall meeting for Friday, November 4, at Concordia College—New York. I say “actual” in the sense that anybody is welcome to come to this one. “Come to meet him in person and bring along your questions,” the promo says. He’ll stick around the next day for an event called “One Day Seminary,” where he will speak on “Is the LCMS thriving, or just surviving?” There will be other speakers as well. Contact Greg Dwyer at the college, gregory.dwyer@concordia-ny.edu, for more information.

Retreating within • We have nothing but respect for Daniel Lehman, editor of *The Lutheran*, and we know he has a hard job. Everybody in the ELCA has a different opinion about how the magazine should cover the present crisis. He’s at least clear that “it is a magazine of the ELCA,” as he wrote in the June issue. But it seems the ELCA is retreating more and more into itself these days, in what can only be described as a defensive posture. There are big examples, like the bailing out of the Lutheran Malaria Initiative only to start up a separate ELCA Malaria Campaign (see “Non-cooperation in externals,” *FL* November 2010). When *The Lutheran* wrote about that decision (November 2010), it didn’t come anywhere near admitting that the ELCA was pulling out of a joint program with LCMS and Lutheran World Relief, other than a vague note about “ending the partnership that was titled ‘Lutheran Malaria Initiative.’” After all, it’s a magazine of the ELCA; no need to say anything about other partners, and what they might be doing or how they might be responding to the ELCA’s unilateral backing out. And then there are little examples. Last year, a news item in *The Lutheran* very charitably noted all Lutheran pub-

lications that received awards from the Associated Church Press—the ELCA ones, of course, but also the LCMS and independent publications (like us). This year’s news story stopped with the ELCA publications. Wouldn’t want to let on that there are other Lutheran publications, apparently, and especially ones that win awards. No, that’s snarky. It’s just that it’s “a magazine of the ELCA,” so there’s no need to mention any others. Well, we congratulated *The Lutheran* on their awards, and we won’t take it back, no matter what. Meanwhile, we’ll share what the judges said in giving us the “Award of Merit” in the newsletter category: “The simplicity of the *Forum Letter* makes it stand out in this category. The publication is all about the written word, with no time or space wasted on a fancy design, photos or graphics. Readers know what they’re getting with this publication—a heavy dose of commentary with the news, and a strong point of view that connects what otherwise could be a series of barely related topics. The powerful voice—applied with humor, sarcasm, insight and love—informs and entertains while giving this publication meaning.” That’s where we have it all over *The Lutheran*. We get to have a point of view, and we get to express it with humor, sarcasm, insight and love.

Loving being Lutheran • Another example of the increasing ELCA insularity: Bishop Allan Bjornberg, representing the ELCA at the Pacifica Synod Assembly, listed ten reasons why you should be Lutheran. At or near the top of his list was “The Mission Investment Fund.” Now there’s something you can proclaim from the rooftops, something not nearly as

musty as “Here I Stand” or the *solas*. “Be Lutheran and you, too, can invest in the Mission Investment Fund!” Even allowing for the promotional nature of his task and the fact that synod assemblies are not usually the place for serious discussion of theology (or much else), one has to wonder whether the good bishop thinks that “being Lutheran” and “being ELCA” are synonymous. In fact, of his ten reasons why you should be Lutheran, seven of them were quite specifically about the ELCA, and the other three could easily describe just about any Christian denomination. But please note, I point this out with humor, sarcasm, insight and love. Not necessarily applied in equal doses.

Subtitles • The ALPB Board, publisher of *Forum Letter* and *Lutheran Forum*, is thinking they’d like to give the *Letter* a subtitle. One possibility would be “humor, sarcasm, insight and love,” but that may not be pithy enough. If you’ve got any suggestions, send them to me. If yours gets chosen, I’ll mention your name in print.

Can’t win for losin’ • “This will never do,” wrote one of my proofreaders. “I have read thru the June issue and found no errors. My life has no purpose!” (No cracks, please, about proofreaders who write “thru.”) The others had pretty much the same reaction. Well, I think, maybe at least I’m improving in one area of my life. Then the June issue arrived in the mail, and I saw that it said “May 2011” at the top of every page after page 1. Does that count as one error, or seven? Anybody want to volunteer to be the heading proofreader?
—roj

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