Exonerating witches

Alse Young of Windsor, Connecticut, was hanged in 1647. Her crime? She was a witch. She was the first person that is known to have been executed in New England for the “crime” of witchcraft, but not the last (the Salem, Massachusetts, witch trials netted at least 20 plus four who died in prison).

Now some of the descendants of these condemned Connecticut residents are seeking justice. A resolution was introduced in the Connecticut General Assembly in 2008 seeking to exonerate the victims, but the measure died. An effort was also made to get the state’s Board of Pardons and Paroles to pardon the victims, but the board said it does not grant posthumous pardons. Now the Connecticut Wiccan and Pagan Network is urging Governor Dannel Malloy to sign a proclamation that will exonerate the victims, but to date he has not responded. — *Christian Century*

Marriage license battle

The Center for Inquiry (CFI), which fosters a secular society, claimed that the state of Indiana violated the United States Constitution by authorizing the clergy of various faiths to sign marriage licenses while refusing that privilege to nonreligious people. So they sued.

However, a federal district judge, Sarah Evans Barker, ruled that “the free exercise clause [of the Constitution] is not a guarantee against inconvenience.” She pointed out that Indiana law allows anyone to perform a marriage ceremony. The restriction is on who can sign the marriage license. “Clergy” of the Humanist Society, which is registered as a religious organization in Indiana, are authorized to sign marriage licenses, but CFI specifically does not want to register as a religious group. It has promised to appeal the ruling.—*National Catholic Reporter*

Who can sell caskets?

St. Joseph Abbey, located near Covington, Louisiana, has, for years, been making handcrafted cypress caskets for its members. However, when the abbey decided to sell caskets commercially, the state’s Board of Embalmers and Funeral Directors tried to shut them down. But a three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals concluded that the only purpose of the law was economic protection of the state’s funeral services industry, and they ruled in favor of the monks.—*Washington Post*

Church meets in a bar

A few years ago, someone from a church Bible study group in Montreal, Canada, suggested that Reggie’s, a bar on the campus of Concordia University in Montreal, would be an interesting place to meet. The manager agreed to give them the space, provided they cleaned up the place beforehand. The group showed up at noon and started cleaning. According to Michael Jones, the group’s leader, when the manager walked in three hours later,
“he flipped out”—he'd never seen the bar look so clean. The group now cleans the bar each Sunday—the only condition for membership—and holds services each Sunday evening. —Christian Week

Who's considered to be the most or least honest?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nurses</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police officers</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bankers</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawyers</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car salesmen</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Gallup Organization.

Woman rescues dove

Judith Sudilovsky, who lives in Jerusalem, Israel, attended a crowded religious ceremony that included the releasing of three live doves at the edge of the Jordan River. Unfortunately, before they could be released, one of the birds was knocked off its perch, and the attendants who put it back failed to realize that it was injured. When the doves were released, the injured dove fell into the river. When Ms. Sudilovsky saw that no one was going to rescue the dove, she waded into the river dressed in her blue jeans, and picked it up. She gave it to an Israel National Parks ranger, who promised to turn it over to a rehabilitation center for injured birds.— Care2

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When Life is Unfair

A note from Mark Finley to Pacific Press:

One afternoon I received a phone call from my son who was working in the Emergency Room at a Chattanooga Hospital. On his twelve hour shifts, he was daily confronted with life’s injustice and stared tragedy in the face. He continually treated people with severe medical problems that they did not bring
upon themselves. After a lengthy phone conversation, in an attempt to help him process some of what he was seeing on a daily basis, I began to write an e-mail to my son on the theology of human suffering. I attempted to answer the question, “Where is God when life is unfair?”

I felt an unusual sense of the presence of God as I poured my heart out to my own son on the meaning of the suffering he was seeing all around him. Initially I had no thought of submitting the article for publication. It was simply a father bearing his heart to his son. When I read the article later, I thought it might have wider application. On further reflection, along with you I believe God prepared it ahead of time to bring hope and comfort to tens of thousands of people but now you know the story behind the story.

Thanks again for the opportunity to work together.

Mark Finley

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—Patricia Borris, criticizing the state of Connecticut for declining to posthumously pardon her great-great-great-great-great-great-grandmother and grandfather, John and Joan Carrington, who, charged with being witches, were hanged in Connecticut in 1651. (see
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