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To the Judges:

From Vatican City to Pennsylvania's Amish country, our reporter has tracked stories about how religious faith impacts people's lives and communities. These are our nominations for the Templeton Award:

Breaking News: This was the opening story in our reporter's daily coverage of the Vatican's Synod on America. At least 1.2 million Catholics are by far the largest religious group in our circulation territory, so our paper was the only secular U.S. paper to send a reporter to Rome for the synod. This story uses the art and architecture of the Vatican to describe how Rome views the United States and to accurately predict that the synod will reveal more about the concerns of Rome than the concerns of American Catholics.

Feature story: Our seminary-educated reporter was aware that the stories she read in children's Bibles were often distorted reflections of scripture. Seeking to look more deeply into this, she located a scholar who had studied the issue and interviewed the creators and publishers of various children's Bibles. The story was highly praised in all quarters of the religious community for its theological insight.

Analysis: This measured response to feminist concerns about Promise Keepers reflects the author's own life experience as well as her reporting from several Promise Keepers events. It places the movement in a contemporary historical perspective and shows that evangelical Protestantism is far more complex and dynamic than it is often portrayed as.

Profile: The Catholic charismatic movement celebrated its 30th anniversary in our city, where the movement officially began three decades ago. Our reporter, who has written extensively about turmoil within that movement, brought all of her experience and sources to bear in this profile. The story examines the movement's long-term impact on the Catholic church and the reasons why so many of its former leaders are no longer associated with the movement.
Writer's Choice: Our reporter set out to write a story about how a brutal murder had affected Amish views of mental illness. That topic was relegated to a sidebar, however, when she discovered how the case had forced Amish communities to wrestle with the meaning and implications of forgiveness. The Amish are extremely reticent about publicity and most do not have telephones. It took our reporter months to gather the information, making initial contacts at an auction and then working to gain the trust of some Amish people. Rather than looking at the Amish as a regional tourist attraction, this story examines their Christian faith and reveals the conflicts beneath the plain surface of Amish life.
VATICAN CITY — Surrounded by hundreds of American bishops beneath the great dome of St. Peter's Basilica, Pope John Paul II asked them to search their souls concerning the role the church has played in creating vast inequalities in the Western Hemisphere.

"In comparison to other countries, North America has reached a higher level of technological advancement, economic well-being and... development of democratic institutions," the pope said at yesterday's opening Mass of the month-long Synod on America.

"Faced with these realities, we cannot but ask about the historical causes which gave rise to such social differences," John Paul continued.

"To what extent does the heritage of colonization count in them? And what influence did the first evangelization (by Catholic missionaries) have?"

Nearly 300 cardinals, bishops and theological experts have gathered in Rome to make recommendations concerning the future of the Catholic church in the Western Hemisphere. Among them are Bishop Donald Wuerl of the Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh and Archbishop Judson Procyk of the Metropolitan Byzantine Archdiocese of Pittsburgh.

Applause swept through the basilica as John Paul made his way, slowly down the aisle. Although the 76-year-old pontiff appeared shockingly frail compared to the robust athlete he was in years past, he walked unsupported. His voice, which quavered at first, seemed to grow stronger throughout the Mass and was firm when he later spoke to the crowds from his window above St. Peter's Square.

"Most of the Mass was in Latin and Italian, but scripture passages and prayers were read in American languages. The prayer in English was for all Catholic clergy and nuns — perhaps as an acknowledgment that the number of North American priests has dwindled while vocations have quintupled in parts of Latin America. A prayer in the Quechua Indian language of Peru was offered for all poor and marginalized Americans, asking God for "a new, economic and social order, inspired by the gospel."

"Although this is one of the largest gatherings of bishops since the Second Vatican Council, some U.S. priests seated near a reporter said there was no talk about the synod among Americans studying at the Vatican. One Midwesterner in Rome on sabbatical asked the reporter for some very basic information on the synod because his bishop had arrived to take part."

The lack of information and interest among U.S. clergy may reflect early indications that this will be a very Roman view of America. The synod's first official press conference was held Saturday, entirely in Italian with no translation.

Citizens of the United States, whatever their faith or family history, are taught to view themselves as the heirs of Protestant pilgrims. But in Rome, all Americans are the children of Christopher Columbus. The synod working paper's primary treatment of Protestants in America refers to them as an "invasion" of "sects" headed from the United States to Latin America.

After all, the world was flat and ended east of the mid-Atlantic Ocean in 324 when Emperor Constantine built the first basilica here on the reputed site of the Apostle Peter's martyrdom.

A very young Michelangelo finished the Pieta — the basilica's exquisite sculpture of Mary holding her crucified son — just seven years after Columbus planted the first cross in the land he mistook for India.

The current St. Peter's was completed in 1626, designed to show the glory of Catholicism to the upstart Protestant movement. The frescoes of saints and angels lit by the skylight at the apex of a lesser dome evoke a sense of gazing into heaven. The Statue of Liberty atop her pedestal could raise her torch in the center aisle. Two could stand atop each other beneath the great dome of the basilica.

So, in English, John Paul called on the spiritual descendants of Columbus, "to consider the continent as a whole, from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego, without introducing a separation between the north, the center and the south, so as not to risk a contrast between them. On the contrary, we must look for the deeper reasons which prompt this unitary vision, by appealing to the common religious and Christian traditions."

In Spanish, John Paul said that the entire hemisphere "appeared as a single reality to the eyes of those who reached their shores over 500 years ago."

For Wuerl, the sights and sounds reinforced the pope's message:

"What struck me during the Mass was when you looked around the basilica and saw all the bishops representing a whole range of cultural backgrounds. And when the prayers of the faithful were given in Mayan and Quechua, it struck me how universal the church is. There is a oneness there that perhaps we have not explored enough before," Wuerl said.

Quechua, with its Inca roots, and Mayan represent the great ancient civilizations of America, while English, Spanish, Portuguese and French are the modern languages to be used in the synod, Wuerl said.

"With all of our cultural differences and diversity, the treasure we all share at the synod is something very, very profound. And that is the faith."

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"The prophet Elisha was walking from one town to another. On the way, he met a gang of mean boys. They teased the prophet because he had no hair. 'Get out of here, baldy!' they shouted.

'Elisha turned and stared at the boys. Then he put a curse on them. Right away two bears ran out of the woods and tore the boys to pieces.'

That account from 2 Kings 2:23-24 is unlikely to be found in any recent children's story Bible. It is violent, frightening, reflects poorly on a biblical hero and — perhaps most important to publishers — is guaranteed to confound any parent who has to explain it to a 5-year-old.

But 250 years ago, the story of Elisha and the bears was so popular that "some (children's Bibles) multiplied the numbers of boys which are eaten," said Ruth Bottingheimer, associate professor of comparative literature at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, an authority on children's Bibles.

Today, most children's Bibles are vigorously edited for violence, sexual content and other behavior that would earn at least a PG-13 rating were it in a movie. But in censoring those troubling images, some scholars wonder if editors have also excised sin, judgment, repentance, forgiveness and redemption.

For instance, today's story Bibles usually depict Noah with a happy scene of giraffes and elephants aboard the ark. No corpses float by as a reminder that everyone else on earth drowned as judgment for their sins. Even the texts often omit that aspect.

But generations ago, many children's Bibles illustrated the story with a woodcut of desperate people clinging to trees. Mothers held their infants above water as the ark set sail without them. The message of judgment was clear.

Children's Bibles are rarely viewed as important works of theology. But what goes into them — and what is left out — can shape a generation's image of God. Since many people never study the Bible seriously as adults, those childhood impressions may define their faith.
"For most people, 95 percent of what they know about the Bible comes from children's Bibles," said Bottigheimer, who analyzed more than 1,000 versions spanning 800 years for her groundbreaking book, "The Bible for Children" (Yale University Press, $35).

"In talks, when I tell a story as it appears in the Bible and then show what has been made of it for children, people are often amazed at what I tell them is in the Bible." Bottigheimer, whose expertise is literature rather than theology, is not arguing for a return to violent, graphic story Bibles.

She was astounded at some of the material deemed fit for the spiritual edification of 18th-century children. And she was appalled to find one recent edition that included the account of the gang rape, murder and dismemberment of the Levite's wife in Judges 19.

"I don't think children 8-12 years old should have to deal with that," she said.

There is an enormous range on the market today. Some are pure kitsch. At the far end of the spectrum are the ones that include Bible texts that I believe are inappropriate for children. But in the middle are very conscientious efforts to do out what the Bible stories are trying to communicate."

There are no reliable sales figures for children's Bibles. In 1990, Publishers Weekly estimated sales at $40 million — not counting those produced and distributed by nonprofit Bible societies. The market has grown considerably since then, as publishers responded to a baby boomlet. In fact, the market is so hot that some of the most popular story Bibles have changed publishers amid bidding wars. For that reason, the publishers listed alongside the books in this story are as subject to change as the prices.

"A few years ago, [children's Bibles] started being sold almost by the pound," said Laura Minchew, vice president of editorial and acquisition for Tommy Nelson, the children's division of Bible publishing giant Thomas Nelson.

"They do sell more than most children's books will sell, but they are very expensive to produce. The bulk of the cost is the creation of 400 pages of artwork and color separations."

Tommy Nelson publishes several varieties of both types of books known as "children's Bibles."

What Minchew calls "true children's Bibles" contain the full biblical text, translated at a third- or fourth-grade reading level. Tommy Nelson publishes two of the best known — the International Children's Version and the Contemporary English Version.

But most biblical literature for children takes the form of "story Bibles," highly paraphrased interpretations of isolated texts. Like their "true Bible" counterparts, some include simple study questions to help parents and children discuss what they have read.

Although the best-selling children's Bibles are Christian, a similar children's renaissance has taken place in Jewish publishing, said Brad Perelman, owner of Pinsker's Judaica in Squirrel Hill.

"Read Me Beraishis" (C.I.S., $12.95) is a story Bible for preschoolers based on the Torah portions read in synagogues. Another series, "The Little Midrash Says" (Beni Yacov, 5 volumes, $15.95 each), is a version of the ancient rabbinical commentaries on scripture.

"Parents are looking for materials to help expose their children to this. Because, in many cases, the parents don't have the expertise themselves," Perelman said.

But the stories such books help parents to tell have changed over time.

"Everyone thinks that children's Bibles are new in their generation, or maybe their parents'. They have been saying that for 300 years," Bottigheimer said.

"But the genre is 800 years old. It came into its own with the printing press and has been going strong ever since."

In an age before immunization and antiseptics, children knew death. Adults saw no reason to omit that reality from a book intended to prepare children for life after death. Yet historical records show that children were petrified by some of the accounts in their Bibles.

Young Soren Kierkegaard's trauma over the story of God telling Abraham to kill his son led to the birth of existentialism. In the 17th century, some little French princes were so terrified by the same story that they hid their Bible from their father for fear it would give him ideas, Bottigheimer said.

It's also evident that politics has affected the editing of story Bibles. For example, few from Victorian England mention the Tower of Babel, a passage from Genesis in which God brings judgment against humanity for trying to build a tower up to heaven. That was unpopular in an empire
that was busy building monuments to itself, she said.

Until about 1750, most children's Bibles were written for the aristocracy. They tended to be faithful to the biblical text in all of it, sometimes troubling complexity. Later, when church groups began to distribute Bibles to poor children, the stories became more moralistic and paternalistic.

Strong female characters, such as the Israelite judge Deborah, began to disappear. So did patriarchs' flaws.

The story of David and Bathsheba underwent a series of changes.

In the biblical account from 2 Samuel 11-12, King David impregnates Bathsheba, the wife of one of his army officers. Hoping to hide his adultery, David recalls her husband from the battle front on a pretext, then urges him to spend the night with Bathsheba. When the officer refuses out of loyalty to his troops, David sends him back to the front with sealed orders for his general to dispatch him on a suicide mission.

Children's Bibles before the 18th century told the whole story of adultery and murder. Later, Bibles began to polish David's image. They first omitted the adultery, saying only that David killed Bathsheba's husband so that he could marry her.

"Then slowly, over the decades, they got rid of the murder. And they sort of got rid of Bathsheba, too. They say only that she was Solomon's mother," Botheimer said.

Contemporary children's Bibles vary widely in their treatment of this story. "My First Bible in Pictures" (Clyde House, $9.99), which is aimed at toddlers and young preschoolers, summarizes it opposite a picture of Bathsheba bathing as David spies on her:

"This beautiful woman is Bathsheba. King David did something very wrong. He killed Bathsheba's husband so he could marry her. When he did this, David broke some of God's most important rules. This made God very angry, so he punished David."

But "The Beginner's Bible" (Zondervan, $17.99), which is intended for preschool to early grade school, omits the entire story. So does "The Early Reader's Bible" (Gold'n'Honey, $16.99), which is targeted at 5- to 8-year-olds.

Lynn and John Schrott of Mt. Lebanon have read the story of David and Bathsheba to their children, ages 6, 5 and 2. They used the version in "The Children's Bible in 365 Stories" (Lion Publishing, $16.95).

"We didn't go into the sexual issues, but we talked about the essence of it, which was that he wanted someone else's wife for his own. This version doesn't skip the issues of sin and consequences. But it doesn't give a lot of detail that children of that age don't need to be burdened with," Lynn Schrott wrote.

Every night before bedtime, the couple reads Bible stories to their children. Lynn Schrott examined 10 to 15 story Bibles before choosing three to use regularly.

She looked for simple language, lots of attractive pictures and biblical accuracy.

"I want something that holds close to the essence of scripture. There are some I looked at that are more like stories about nice people. That is the kind of thing that we have chosen not to use," she said.

She is fond of "The Beginner's Bible," with its colorful, multi-ethnic illustrations. "Read Aloud Bible Stories" (Moody Press, $18.99) is good for holding the attention of her 2-year-old. And "The Children's Bible in 365 Stories" gives a sense of the full sweep of biblical history.

"My husband and I believe firmly that scripture is truth and that the essence of what is important in life can be taught through it — character building, right and wrong, salvation," she said of their commitment to teach these stories to their children.

Alan Jacobs, an associate professor of English at Wheaton College in Illinois, gave up trying to find a story Bible that didn't distort scripture. He now reads to his 5-year-old son from an edition of an adult translation, the New International Version, illustrated for children by artist Tomie de Paola.

Jacobs simplifies difficult language as he reads.

While he would not want to inflict a grisly tale on his son, Jacobs believes it would be wrong to present a sanitized David. The story of David and Bathsheba is critical to understanding both the horror of sin and the depth of God's love, he said.

"David was a murderer, for God's sake. He could be such a horrible figure. Yet at the same time, he was said to be a man after God's own heart who really sought after and pursued the Lord."

Jacobs, an evangelical who has written about this issue in the neo-conservative journal First Things, suspects that a century of Bible stories in which the faithful don't sin and God doesn't judge have helped create a situation in which many Protestants no longer consider themselves in need of salvation.

"Protestants know that they are supposed to say, 'I am a sinner, saved by
grace.' But then they turn around and say, 'I do bad things, but that doesn't make me a bad person,'" he said.

"We are very contradictory. I think that may be in part because we don't see the full range of sin and evil as depicted in the Bible."

Perhaps no children's Bible standard has undergone a more pronounced shift in interpretation than that of Noah and the flood. Early versions even included the account of Noah passed out, drunk and naked, in his tent.

The frightening 1825 woodcut of drowning people, which illustrated the story for more than a century, was likely inspired by images of disastrous floods that struck western Europe around 1600.

"It is very, very graphic, just filled with terror. You are left with the sense of the tremendous punishment that comes to evil people," Bottigheimer said.

"That image died out in the late 1700s, when the image of God changed from that of a vengeful God to the Enlightenment view of a loving, just God. That is when the emphasis changed from the drowning people to the animals."

A luminously illustrated Bible story book by a local writer and artist takes two different approaches to its treatment of judgment and death in the stories of Noah and Moses. "God Speaks to Us in Water Stories" (Liturgy of Press, $17.95) was written by Mary Ann Getty-Sullivan, associate professor of theology at St. Vincent College, and illustrated by Lawrenceville artist Mary Glass Durlski Antkowski.

On one hand, it offers a highly euphemistic account of the flood:

"God decided to renew the whole world. So God told the man, Noah, and his wife to build a huge boat, called an Ark. . . . They built the Ark the way God instructed them to. When it was finished, they all set out together on a grand adventure."

On the other hand, its account of the crossing of the Red Sea features a riveting picture of drowning Egyptian soldiers. An officer raises his fist in rage as water rushes over him.

Deciding how much of each biblical account was appropriate for children 10 and under was difficult, Getty-Sullivan said.

"We talked a lot about not scaring them to death. We also made an editorial decision that most of the stories should end on an upbeat note, a celebration," she said.

Her grandchildren, who serve as test readers, were disturbed by the Red Sea account. But that became an entry point for discussion.

"They don't think it was fair that the Egyptians were drowned," she said.

Perhaps the most popular children's story Bible on the market today is "The Beginners' Bible." It has inspired more than 200 items of ancillary merchandise from videos to bedclothes. Don and Chris Wise, the Nashville couple who produce "The Beginners' Bible," even dream of a theme park based on the book's colorful and often amusing illustrations.

This Bible is candid about the flood as God's judgment against humanity. But it omits the lines in which God declares his intention to destroy everything that isn't on the ark.

"Many years passed after Adam and Eve left the garden. People began to forget about God. They began to do bad things. There was only one good man. His name was Noah."

"God said, I am sorry that I made people. I will start all over again," God told Noah to build a big boat called an ark."

The Wises are not biblical scholars, although Don Wise, 45, studied Bible at Abilene Christian University. They employ children's authors to write the stories under their supervision. Only later do theologians screen the text for accuracy and denominational bias.

One of the biggest challenges for Bible story writers is the Book of Revelation; the enigmatic and apocalyptic end to the New Testament. Some children's Bibles omit it. Others say that Jesus' friend John had a vision about heaven, but provide no details.

It was important to the Wises that "The Beginners' Bible" end the way the Bible does. They chose to skip all the debated symbols — such as the four horsemen and the whore of Babylon — to focus on the vision of glory.

"[John] saw a new Heaven and a new earth. He saw a new city of God. A loud voice said, 'God's people will live with God now. They will not need the sun or moon. God's glory will give them light. There will be no more dying or crying or hurting. God's people will live with Him for ever and ever.' Then Jesus said, I am coming soon," And John said, 'YES, JESUS. COME.'"

"I don't know of any scholar anywhere who knows how to handle (Revelation). Everyone looks at it in a different way," Don Wise said.

"But at the end of the day you go to the end of the book and it says, 'This is what is waiting for you.'"
Look carefully before you choose

don't judge a children's Bible by its cover. Some with adorable pictures on the cover contain only a difficult adult text, barren of illustrations or study aids geared for children.

Story Bibles not only vary widely in their treatment of particular stories, but in the stories they select. For instance, although the New Testament accounts for only a small percentage of the Christian Bible, many story Bibles take more than half their content from the New Testament.

Most major publishers want their children's Bibles to have broad cross-denominational appeal. Tommy Nelson's "Hosanna Bible," ($16.99) which emphasizes stories praising God, could have been perceived as a Pentecostal or charismatic version. So Laura Minchew, vice president of editorial and acquisition, sent the manuscript to 30 different biblical scholars, including many who completely reject the Pentecostal view of the Holy Spirit.

"There were changes to the text, but they were not significant," she said.

"The charismatic people and the Church of Christ people who reviewed it were all very positive. They said that it represented the Bible very fairly. That is the Bible that I use now with my own children, because I trust it."

Ruth Bottigheimer, who has analyzed more than 1,000 children's Bibles, urges shoppers to compare several versions side by side.

"That is when you really start to see the differences. If you just read one, the story looks more or less right. But if you put two together, you can see where they are an awkward fit. You see the changes."

Kelli Maravalli, the director of Christian education at Mt. Lebanon United Presbyterian Church, suspects that highly censored children's Bibles have contributed to a widespread neglect of uncomfortable aspects of the Christian faith.

"Here at the church, we have been talking about the fact that we don't talk about sin to adults anymore," she said.

Publishers "have made some choices about where we go with the Word that has changed the way children and adults view the character of God."

She is fond of "The Beginners' Bible" and "The Toddler Bible" (Victor Books, $16.99) for very young children. But her church gives every third-grader a copy of "The Young Explorer's Bible," (Zondervan, $15.99/$19.99) a complete New International Version with study aids for children. Maravalli also gives them a list of daily readings that provide an overview of scripture, while avoiding R- and X-rated texts.

"I want children to have a comfortable relationship with God's Word, to feel that it is a book that is accessible to them and that there is much in it that is applicable to them," she said.

"But there are accounts of incest and rape and all sorts of things that children left to read on their own, without the guidance of an adult, may be confused about. We are all confused by those passages. Although I wouldn't want to shield a child from those things, I would want to walk through it with them and try to help them see a bigger picture."
submissive attitude. It never took.

Preachers, college-retreat leaders, even some seminary-level counseling textbooks told me that women were fragile, intuitive, highly emotional, generally irrational and needed their husbands to make all of the decisions for them. Although I realized in college that this description owed more to a misuse of Jungian archetypes than to anything the Bible had to say about women, I tried to fit in.

But I couldn't overcome the fact that I was decisive, independent, logical, utterly nonintuitive and a lot sharper than many men I went to seminary with. After reading an essay by a prominent evangelical counselor on the differences between men and women, I remarked to my seminary roommate, "According to this, there is absolutely no doubt that I am male."

We agreed that the essay was, in the words of the Apostle Paul, dung.

But I had acquired some scars attempting to fit my square peg personality into the small circle that I was told God had ordained for me. I also knew a number of thoughtful, sensitive, evangelical men who were trying to mold themselves into domineering jerks for the same reason.

This is why I have spent several years scrutinizing Promise Keepers for "Your wife is a wimp and you had better make sure she stays that way" theology. So far — after attending a conference, reading much of the movement's literature and interviewing many people who have participated in or observed the movement — I haven't found it.

Evangelical men have changed over the past 25 years and Promise Keepers seems to reflect that. There are undoubtedly individual leaders connected with the movement who preach wifey submission. But the conferences re-

When I first heard of Promise Keepers several years ago, I started hunting for male chauvinist boars behind all the family-friendly hype.

I had reason to be suspicious. I'm the product of the Jesus Movement, one of the nation's first evangelical super churches, a major evangelical campus ministry organization and one of the nation's most prominent evangelical seminaries. And, with due apologies to every evangelical I ever dated, the church of my youth seemed bent on creating a religious culture of overbearing men and feather-brained women.

I spent my adolescence and early adulthood trying to cultivate a properly
flect no specific theology of marriage apart from expecting husbands to be loving, responsible, responsive and faithful.

It's not that evangelicals no longer talk about submission. The word is in the Bible. But they understand it in a more complex and flexible way than they once did.

The key passage is Ephesians 5:21-28 (New International Version):

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour. Now, as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

At the independent Bible church where I spent most Sunday evenings as a teenager, this passage was preached in a relatively benign way for that era.

"Husbands love your wives" got equal time with "Wives, submit to your husbands." We were told that this did not give all men authority over all women, but that it created a sort of constitutional government for marriage. Husbands were expected to listen to their wives and honor their opinions. But if a husband and wife couldn't agree on a decision, the husband always had the final say.

I know people who seem to have wonderful marriages based on that principle. But, in my opinion, they are not truly hierarchical marriages. They are de facto egalitarian marriages because the husbands are good guys who would never insist on taking actions that their wives thought would be a terrible mistake. The problems arise when this unconditional power of decision is given to men who are irrational, irresponsible, mean or violent. And the church, being a hospital for sinners, has its share of those men.

Outside of my own church there were popular evangelical preachers who read far more detail into the Ephesians passage.

There was a very popular series of seminars for young Christians, in which participants were given lengthy lists of supposedly biblical rules for living. More than one marriage I am aware of suffered from applying a rule that the husband should take complete charge of all family finances. A lot of evangelicals found out the hard way that there is no male gene for balancing a checkbook or handling investments.

However, as the evangelical movement grew and became mainstream in the 1970s, so did the feminist movement. Evangelicals are very critical of some aspects of feminism, particularly support for legal abortion. But it is also very clear that conservative Protestants have quietly taken to heart many feminist-inspired criticisms of the evangelical subculture.

Today, many evangelical leaders interpret Ephesians 5 far differently than their elders did. There are, of course, more liberal Christians who believe that the entire passage can be dismissed as an irrelevant and dangerous piece of first-century cultural baggage. But evangelicals feel a responsibility to take every passage in the Bible seriously, even when it reflects a culture far removed from the one they live in.

Now, young evangelicals are likely to hear that the passage begins with a command for all Christians to submit to each other — rather than for any of them to seek dominance over others. In the 1970s, that verse was considered the last line of a previous passage and was not included in the teaching on marriage.

Furthermore, they are told, the entire passage deals with a series of civil relationships in which submission was a given in Greek and Roman society: husband and wife, master and slave, father and child. The law gave men life-and-death power
over their wives, slaves and children. But the church called on Christian men to view all human beings as their equals in the eyes of God, no matter what their social standing.

The church had no power to change unjust laws, but Christians could live in a way that subverted them. Wives had no choice but to submit to their husbands. But Christians wives were asked to do so in a way that witnessed to the love of Christ, rather than out of fear or resentment. By law, husbands owned their wives. But Christian husbands were told to treat their wives as they would their own bodies, not as pieces of property.

In fact, there are evangelical scholars who argue that Ephesians 5, properly interpreted, is downright feminist.

Now, I have never heard the concept of “mutual submission” preached at Promise Keepers. But neither have I heard the traditional concept of hierarchical submission preached there.

As with other doctrines that divide evangelicals, Promise Keepers remains silent and leaves the preaching up to participants’ home churches.

Last year, as a reporter, I was one of the few women to attend a Promise Keepers stadium event. I don’t think it’s a panacea for every marital problem, nor do I think it can reach all men. And it doesn’t claim to either.

What I did think, as I watched thousands of men embracing each other, crying and promising to be more sensitive and attentive husbands and fathers, was that it was a shame this wasn’t around when I was growing up. Where young evangelical men in my day were handed a list of rules and told to enforce them, young evangelical men today are told to go home and love their wives.

And that, I’ll submit, is a change that women can be grateful for.
Thirty years ago, 25 Duquesne University students and their professors ignited the Catholic charismatic movement when they experienced Pentecostal gifts on a retreat weekend. This weekend, 7,000 Catholic charismatics will hold a 30th anniversary national conference at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center.

The term charismatic comes from the Greek for "gift." Typically charismatic Catholics are active members of their parishes who can sometimes be spotted because of a tendency to sing or pray with their arms upraised. Although they are fully integrated into church life, they often attend charismatic prayer groups or Masses on a weekly basis.

Often they are introduced to the movement by attending a charismatic meeting or Life in the Spirit seminar, a course that instructs and invites people to experience the power of the Holy Spirit. At those seminars other charismatics may lay hands on them and pray for them to receive the gift of tongues.

Worldwide, 60 million to 100 million Catholics have claimed supernatural gifts such as speaking in tongues, miraculous healing, prophecy and being slain in the spirit — knocked unconscious by the Holy Spirit. About 250,000 of 60 million U.S. Catholics are active in the movement, but 10 million have passed through it since 1967. Some say that the movement is waning in this country.

Its American leaders often lived in "covenant communities," communes that attempted to replicate something like monastic orders for families. But many communities disintegrated amid charges of authoritarianism run amok. The crises damaged the movement's leadership and credibility.
Nevertheless, the movement has a strong international legacy. And its many American alumni have become salt-of-the-earth parishioners who help with litigation, visit the sick and serve the homeless. The charismatic renewal is widely credited with helping give life to Vatican II's call for the empowerment of the laity.

Patti Gallagher Mansfield, 50, was a junior at Duquesne when a spiritual quest led her to attend the retreat at what is now the Cardinal Wright Center in Gibsonia. Her book, "As By a New Pentecost," tells the stories of 18 people who attended that retreat.

Mansfield was rounding up students for a birthday celebration when she happened into the chapel.

"I knelt in the presence of Jesus and literally trembled," she said.

"I remember feeling very much afraid, like I had better get out of there or God would ask something of me that I didn't want to give. But I had a much greater desire for unconditional surrender."

She awoke on the floor, overwhelmed with God's love.

"I wanted to stay and bask in it. I had this taste of eternal life — of what it was to know Jesus, to know the Father, to know the love of God. I wanted to die and melt and just go to be with him."

But she had been given a mission.

"I felt convinced... that if I could experience God's love, mercy and goodness in that way, then really anyone could," said Mansfield, who now works for the Archdiocese of New Orleans as liaison to the charismatic movement.

She ran to tell a priest, who said that another student had had an identical experience an hour earlier. Soon most of the students were gathered in the chapel, weeping, laughing and beginning to pray with words they did not understand.

News of their experience spread nationwide. Six years later 35,000 charismatic Catholics met at the University of Notre Dame.

In the Diocese of Pittsburgh about 50 of 218 parishes have active charismatic prayer groups. A dozen charismatic priests meet weekly for prayer and attend yearly retreats at the Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio, a nerve center of the movement.

One of the priests, the Rev. Kenneth Oldenski, pastor of St. Richard in Richland, was charismatic before there was a movement. As a seminarian 35 years ago he had a crisis of faith and opened his Bible to discover for himself who Jesus was.

As he read, "I had a conversion experience and I began to pray in tongues, which I didn't even know what it was. But when I let go and the sounds came out, I felt so good."

Now, he encourages such experiences among his parishioners.

"When I see people come on fire with the Holy Spirit, it is so beautiful. I see a peace, a joy, a good self image. People who couldn't share their faith before start to talk. There's an expectancy that God is a God who is almighty and can do great things," he said.

"They get into service too. They don't just sit around and navel gaze. I could call the charismatics in my parish in the middle of the night, and they would be there."

Richard Bach, a 57-year-old auto body repair teacher who moonlighted as a musician, discovered that charismatic movement at Oldenski's last parish, St. Ferdinand in Cranberry. He now uses his musical talent to help others open their hearts to God.

"Before, all I thought about was me, myself, I. You go to work every day and you have a little time for God one day a week. Once I got involved in the charismatic movement, I became involved 24 hours a day. The Lord is always on my mind," he said.

At Holy Trinity, the Rev. Nick Mastrangelo explains that during an afternoon of prayer, the priests receive many "words of knowledge" about healings God intended to bring about that night. He asks people to raise their hands if they know someone who matches any of more than 60 messages that he reads from a small, yellow notepad.

Some involve ubiquitous maladies: "A stomach ulcer will be healed." A few are distinctly Catholic: "A loved one who died and is in Purgatory will be released through the Eucharist." And then there is the miscellaneous, "Someone praying for a dog — an Irish setter."

The final message is, "Pray for prayer groups. The Lord will take away all factions."

An early dilemma for Catholic charismatics was how to reconcile their experiences with the sacramental theology of the church. Most of the books available to them
were by Protestant Pentecostals who believed that no one was filled with the Holy Spirit until he or she had spoken in tongues. But Catholics believe that Christians receive the Holy Spirit in the sacrament of baptism, usually as infants.

Bishop Sam Jacobs of Alexandria, La., is chairman of the U.S. bishop's committee on the charismatic renewal.

"We are charismatic by baptism and confirmation. Whether you call yourself that or not, you are empowered by the gifts of the Spirit. To what extent you exercise those gifts is a free choice," he said.

"Some people are involved in the movement and are conscious and aware of the gifts of Pentecost. But it is not that everybody has to be part of the movement. The movement's responsibility is to bring people into an awareness of those gifts and help people appropriate those gifts."

After Vatican II, the charismatic movement filled a void where many traditional devotions had been. It offered a sense of mystery that some people feared was gone with the Latin Mass. And it moved Catholics from a very private spirituality into a group experience more in tune with Vatican II's emphasis on community, said the Rev. Jerome Vereb, a Pittsburgh priest who in the 1970s was the Vatican secretary responsible for dialogue with Pentecostal churches.

"All of this raised the expectation that spirituality was available to lay people," he said.

But too often, charismatic Catholics were often left to find their own way theologically, Vereb said.

"One of the biggest problems was that the majority of the clergy were unprepared for the resurgence of lay engagement that came about as a result of the charismatic renewal. Some were threatened by it and many eschewed it, making charismatics feel rejected, and leading to a mutual rejection, so to speak."

Jim Manney, the former editor of New Covenant, a magazine for charismatic Catholics, is one of many movement leaders who left after suffering problems in his community.

The communities gave charismatics a place to integrate their spirituality fully into their lives at a time when most pastors wanted to reduce the movement to an optional weekly activity. But they isolated their members from the mainstream church, Manney said.

The movement "was something that started out for the whole church. It became parochialized into an effort to build rather small communities," he said.

"The leaders, by and large, were lay people who were not theologically trained. In a lot of ways, they weren't equipped for what they were doing. I think the blame [for the problems] can get spread around. I think the pastoral authorities of the Catholic church have to share in some of that," Manney said.

Mass has ended and Connie Miller is out cold on the floor at Holy Trinity, apparently asleep. Departing worshippers step gently around her, while her husband, Raymond, waits for her to revive. Sometimes it takes as long as 45 minutes after she has been slain in the Spirit.

"Connie is very sensitive to the Spirit," he says.

Miller, 45, the director of quality assurance and technical services for the Koppel Steel Corp., goes to all the prayer meetings, but considers his wife the charismatic. Married for 23 years, they discovered the movement 10 years ago. As a former Catholic seminarian, he appreciated the depth of spirituality that it brought to their home.

They pray together and rarely miss daily Mass at St. Ferdinand in Cranberry, he said, gazing down lovingly at his unconscious wife.

"It is a very peaceful experience. The Lord is doing something in this manifestation, and what he is doing is unique to Connie," he said.

A wide spectrum of Catholics who passed through the charismatic movement say it has enriched them spiritually, although they no longer participate.

The Rev. Richard Rohr, 54, is a speaker and author who is exceptionally popular with the Catholic left. But for 15 years, the Franciscan priest was the leader of a charismatic community in Cincinnati.

Rohr clashed with other charismatic community leaders early on. Most of them set up a strict pyramid of authority in which women had little voice and no vote. Rohr shared leadership with both men and women.

He left the community in 1985 and no longer calls himself charismatic. But he is grateful for what he received from the movement.

"I would consider the charismatic prayer experience a wonderful
mal theology, it was a necessary corrective. It was for me," he said.

"I continue to see people doing work in sophisticated areas of
social justice and community organizing. And I will see a certain quality
of faith in them and find out —
maybe over a beer some night —
that for five years they were in-
volved in a prayer meeting."

Like Rohr, Keith Fournier, 42,
has passed through the charismatic
movement. The attorney and for-
mester dean of the Franciscan Univer-
sity of Steubenville is now
president of the Catholic Alliance,
an independent offshoot of televangelist Pat Robertson's Christian
Coalition.

He left Steubenville in 1991 after
helping to call attention to prob-
lems in a charismatic community
in which he had been a leader, and
apologizing for his part in creating
those problems.

A five-month investigation by
then-Bishop Albert Ottenweller of
Steubenville later concluded that
the Servants of Christ the King
community had spiritually and
emotionally harmed some of its
members and that its key teachings
were not Catholic. His report said
that poorly trained community
leaders had excessive, unchecked
control over members' lives, in
matters ranging from sex to child
rearing to real estate transactions.
Yet the community had viewed it-
self as the only hope of a dying
church.

Trying to cork the renewal in a
community was like trying to cork
fire in a bottle, Fournier said.

"Renewal movements, generally,
are not meant to be self-perpetual-
ing. They are meant to bring an in-
fusion of life and dynamism and the
Holy Spirit into the church."

Whatever the future of the
movement, "Millions of Catholics
have been affected by it," Manney
said.

"It is part of the larger upheaval
that is going on in lay people's un-
derstanding of what our role is in
the church. It is not the role of the
bishops and priests, but it is our
role to take the gospel to the world.
Vatican II says that is our job.

"I see that as the big thing that is
going on. It is much more impor-
tant than feuds about women's or-
dination and the civility of how we
talk to each other in churchly de-
bate. That is inside baseball. The
big thing now is how do we serve
each other, take the gospel to the
world, love our fellow man and
woman and share the love of
Christ."

Thirty years after her experi-
ence in the retreat chapel, Mans-
field feels at one with the Virgin
Mary, who said "yes" to the mes-
sage that she would bear God's
son.

"Every one of us who says a yes
to God, in some way conceives Je-
sus and has the mission of bringing
him forth to the world," she said.

"When I travel to other coun-
tries, people I have never met be-
fore thank me. I understand what
they mean, because of the mystery
of the body of Christ, the commu-
nion of saints. In some way my yes
and the yes of all the others on the
Duquesne Weekend has reverber-
ated in yesses all over the world. As
those yesses multiply, they are our
future generations."
In the back of the small store where she sells straw hats, suspenders and food in bulk for large Amish families, Liz Chupp weighed sacks of whole wheat flour. With her graying hair tucked up under a white Amish bonnet, she bent her head over an electronic scale, monitoring its digital display.

A small sign on her store’s cash register says, “Shoplifters will be prayed for.”

Chupp belongs to a New Order community — open to technology if it enhances family life. But it is their evangelical fervor that truly sets them apart from most of the nation’s 150,000 Amish, she says.

And that faith determines their response toward Edward Gingerich, the psychotic Amishman who killed his wife in Crawford County. While Gingerich’s own Amish community has petitioned to keep him locked up permanently, Chupp’s New Order community is one of several that have asked for Gingerich to be paroled to their care.

On March 18, 1993, Gingerich was 27 and suffering from the delusions of schizophrenia when he kicked his wife, Katie, to death in front of their young children. He then decapitated her with a hunting knife. Found guilty of involuntary manslaughter but mentally ill, he has served much of his five-year sentence at Warren State Hospital. There, by all accounts, medication has restored his right mind.

The Gingerich case has tested the Amish of northwestern Pennsylvania. For the first time in living memory they must decide what it means to forgive a brother who has committed the worst crime imaginable. Their response reveals deep divisions beneath the apparent uniformity of Amish life.

The Bible doesn’t say, “Not in my back yard,” Chupp said.

“What he has done is sin and it’s very wrong. But then, there is no sin that can’t be forgiven except for the blaspheming of the Holy Spirit. So murder can be forgiven,” she said.

“But then I have to step back and say, what if he had been my son-in-law? What if he would have done that to my daughter? Could I be that forgiving? It is not easy. It is definitely not something you can do on your own strength. It has to be a strength that passes understanding, and that comes from God.”

Gingerich’s crime was unfathomable to a society of absolute pacifists who have no television and forbid their children to point a finger and say “bang.”

“One of the Ten Commandments is ‘Thou shalt not kill.’ That is one of the things we try to instill in our children — that a human life is very, very fragile and very important and delicate,” Chupp said.

Chupp has never met Gingerich. But men from her community who visit him
say that he is a good Christian, deeply sorrowful for a crime he committed while insane.

Before he lost his mind, Gingerich's neighbors testified, he was a loving father and generous neighbor who never raised his voice. They said his extraordinary intelligence enabled him to transcend the limited education deemed fit for an Amishman. In a community that rejected modern conveniences to a point that even other Amish thought severe, Gingerich taught himself to repair diesel engines.

But he became depressed, suffering terrible headaches and hallucinations. He raved that God and Satan were struggling for possession of his soul.

One year before the killing, his community took the extraordinary step of admitting him to hospitals in Erie and Jamestown, N.Y., for treatment of schizophrenia. It required the combined strength of paramedics, neighbors and his family to remove him from his home as he howled like a wolf, barked like a dog and threw himself about like a man possessed.

Powerful drugs quelled his symptoms but rendered him sluggish. Frustrated that they impaired his work, Gingerich stopped taking them — with encouragement from others in the community, his attorney says.

The voices and bizarre behavior returned, along with visions of angels and giant rabbits. His family sometimes kept him tied up. His brothers, who lived nearby, took turns watching him around the clock. With typical Amish faith in natural healing, they took him to a chiropractor once a month.

On March 17, 1983, Katie's 29th birthday, Gingerich was afflicted with a severe headache and threatened suicide. His worried wife and brother recruited a non-Amish friend to drive them 90 miles to Punxsutawney to see an Amish "eye-reader," who gave him herbal remedies. The next morning they took him to the chiropractor.

By late afternoon, he seemed calm. The brother who was supposed to keep watch left early. According to trial testimony, Katie was singing happily to herself as she worked in the kitchen.

Suddenly, Gingerich stormed in and struck her. Katie ordered their 5-year-old son to run to his uncle's home for help. Their two younger children saw what happened next.

When Gingerich's brother arrived on horseback, Gingerich was sitting on Katie, her body lying bloody and still on the kitchen floor. He appeared to gouge at what remained of her face with his hands, then rose to stomp on her head with his heavy workboot. The brother rushed to the home of a non-Amish neighbor to call police.

Soon afterward, Gingerich left his house, carrying his 3-year-old son and holding the hand of his 4-year-old daughter. He walked calmly up to an ambulance that was waiting down the road for police back-up. He told the fire chief, "You pedple won't understand, but my people will. I'll need therapy for this."

Douglas Ferguson, a Crawford County prosecutor, met with the bishop and members of Gingerich's community to explain the trial. He found them as innocent of the law as they were of psychiatry.

"They had no concept of how the judicial system worked," he said.

"Violence is totally alien to them. Up there, when the Amish have a theft, they don't report it. They say, 'That's just the way it goes.'"

Amish from several communities attended the trial.

"I think the main reason they went was concern for his soul," Chupp said.

"We were wondering, 'Is this person born again?' Because that needs to be first. He will never forgive himself if he doesn't realize the forgiveness in Christ.'"

That is the central question for the New Order Amish. They believe that the difference between their response to Gingerich and that of his own community runs deeper than the horror and anguish he inflicted on his own. If the Old Order views the New Order as dangerously worldly, the New Order believes the old often substitutes old German culture for biblical faith.

Being Amish is not about rejecting technology, but about living a life open to the love of God, Chupp said.

Her community, for instance, went electric when agriculture regulations required them to refrigerate their milk. They looked at the diesel refrigeration the Lancaster County Amish had set up. But they saw no reason to spend a fortune on such elaborate mechanics when existing power lines could be turned back on for a small fee.

God, they said, did not consider diesel better than electric.

Gingerich's community, by contrast, rejects even indoor plumbing. A middle-aged Amishwoman who had often visited Gingerich's community, and who did not wish to be identified, said it reminded her of the community she had grown up in. Her elders had very little schooling. They spoke German better than English, but not well enough to fully comprehend the German Bibles they read from.

"They are a lot more conservative. They don't talk as freely about the Bible and salvation as we do. Some of them are afraid of knowing too much about the Bible," she said.

Chupp was raised Old Order. And, while she says there are many faith-filled Christians among them, the movement tends to place Amish culture above Christ.

"They are more worried about their young people being dressed the way they are supposed to be than about teaching them the Christian principles the Bible is based on," she said.

Every decision in her community must be tested by whether it helps to cultivate the Gospel message of new life in Christ. And it is that test that they now apply to Gingerich.

After a vigorous insanity defense, he was found guilty of involuntary manslaughter, but mentally ill. When Ferguson returned to Gingerich's community to explain sentencing, he found its members divided.

"There was a faction that said, 'We don't want him back.' And there was a faction that said, 'He has to come back under certain conditions. Those that wanted him back felt that they could help him.'"

At the sentencing, the bishop asked the judge to lock Gingerich up for at least a decade. Katie's parents also wrote a letter to the court, saying that none of the Amish could understand how Gingerich could ever be set free.

Nearly 60 members of Gingerich's community signed a petition asking that he be kept permanently at Warren State Hospital.
"We like Ed Gingerich but absolutely don't trust him and are seriously afraid of him," it said.

He received the maximum term of two-and-a-half to five years.

Gingerich adapted better to life under lock and key than do common criminals, said his attorney, Donald Lewis.

"Prison life is not unlike the routine he has been used to all of his life — deprivation, early to bed, early to rise. He is better equipped than most to handle it. They like him down there," Lewis said.

When Lewis first met him shortly after the killing, Gingerich spoke incessantly of Katie.

"He had one of his wife's dresses with him and he would smell it. He missed her that much," Lewis said.

"He would talk about his wife as if she was on vacation and he would be back with her. He was all over the place mentally. He was that way until he had been back on his medication for quite some time."

Because of the year Gingerich spent in jail awaiting trial, under state guidelines he should have been paroled before he was sentenced, Lewis said.

"He is in jail now because people are pissed off that he didn't get convicted of murder. . . . His brain was AWOL when this happened. He has no recollection of it. He wasn't there when it happened."

Gingerich's first request for parole was denied in January 1996.

The reasons given included "very high assaultive behavior potential . . . need to continue to participate and benefit from treatment program for mental health problems, unfavorable recommendation from district attorney [and] extremely serious nature of crime."

The parole board reviewed his case again in May.

It is unclear how his community will respond if he tries to return.

The white farm house where Gingerich's parents live looks too peaceful to be home to the grief it harbors. Its dirt driveway is crisscrossed with buggy tracks. The animals in neighboring fields are fat and sassy. The air is filled with the sounds of roosters crowing, hogs snorting and cattle lowing.

Gingerich's mother, Mary, answers the door, her gaunt but kind face framed by her white bonnet. She speaks almost in a whisper, holding the fingers of one hand before her mouth as if to guard her words.

She has spoken with her son, but not recently, she says. She does not know if he will be allowed to return to the community if he can ever live with his children again. She seems vaguely aware that other Amish communities have taken an interest in him.

She wants to know why the reporter at the door wishes to write about her son. She asks that the story be truthful because, she says, some accounts have not been.

But when asked to name the inaccuracies so that they can be avoided, she declines.

"Whatever God wills," she said.

Members of the Conneautville New Order Amish Church began to visit Gingerich after they heard that no one had spoken on his behalf at last year's parole hearing. Whether or not he was fit to be free, they couldn't understand an Amishman being left on his own.

Among them was Andrew Troyer, 40, a rooemaker.

He met a man who was rational, intelligent, repentant and who understood that God had forgiven him. Gingerich told Troyer that he had wept daily for two years when he finally realized what he had done to Katie.

"He figured he would never see a happy day in his life. Well, he is not happy over the fact of the matter, but he came to the place where he can feel Christ's forgiveness," Troyer said.

"He is born again. And he emphasized that he really knows what it takes to forgive in his case. He is calm, he is normal. He accepts and wants to take his punishment. He is not trying to squirm out."

Ideally, Troyer would like Gingerich to return to his original community. But understanding that community's fear, several New Order communities devised an alternate plan.

They located a Mennonite-run halfway house in Indiana that Gingerich could be paroled to. Eventually he would be welcomed into an Amish community, probably outside of Pennsylvania so he could escape his notoriety. He might live with a mature couple who would monitor his medication and call doctors at the first sign of deterioration.

More than one community has volunteered to take him in.

"As far as him being in our own community, yes, I would be afraid to a certain extent. But then I wouldn't be, if I knew there was somebody there taking care of him, making sure he takes his medication and ready to get help right away if there is a change in his personality," Chupp said.
"I believe he could be a productive person in any community if he is given half a chance."

That's not a bad plan, said Ferguson, the prosecutor.

"It is tragic. He is going to have to stay in the environment that he is used to being in. And I think the New Order Amish are legitimately concerned about him and that they mean very well."

On a day when Amish from many communities gathered in Crawford County for an auction, a group of men circulated a petition on Gingerich's behalf. As a breeze gently rippled quilts that hung in the sunshine and lustrously groomed draught horses ran in the back field, they sought out every man who had visited Gingerich.

Some were skeptical about the plan, but no one raised his voice, questioned another man's integrity or made a threat.

"We have found Ed as a man who has accepted his punishment without any resentment or bitterness," the petition said.

"Yet when we review his case we ask ourselves this question: Is it right to keep punishing a person simply because he has no one to intercede or fend for him? We who had personal contact with Ed, and have signed this letter would feel comfortable having Ed living in our community. We don't consider him a physical threat. We would like Ed to have a fair chance."

Lewis wishes that Gingerich's own community had given him that chance. He is angry that they recognized neither the severity of his illness nor the necessity of proper treatment.

"As long as he is on his medication, he is fine. These people think that if he misses his medication in the morning, by the middle of the morning he is carving somebody up. He was off of his medication for months before this happened. And there were plenty of signs."

It is time to seek redemption and move on, Troyer said. In God's eyes, he believes, Gingerich is no worse a sinner than he is.

"The Bible says that if you hate somebody, you are a murderer. What is a murderer? Somebody like Ed was. Who is on earth who has never at one point hated somebody?" he said.

"If you want to really get down to brass tacks, in plain words, if you do not forgive, God will not forgive you. There is no way around it."

It is frightening to think of what Gingerich did and to realize that it could happen in a peaceful Amish community, Chupp said.

"But I think we have to quit looking back and go forward and help Eddie for what he is today. That is what we are here on earth for, to help each other."
For some of the Amish, Edward Gingerich's slaying of his wife has led to soul-searching about the nature of mental illness.

"If anything, Ed has alerted people that it can happen to us and it is something that you cannot control yourself," said Barbara Byler, 48, an Amishwoman from outside Meadville, Crawford County.

Attitudes toward his release depend on how much they know about mental illness, she said. Her own education came through afflicted relatives.

"If they are on medication and recognize and treat the illness, that is 90 percent of the battle," she said.

"But some people won't accept that it is a medical problem. They consider it a spiritual problem. And that makes a big difference in how they feel about it."

Tim Moriarty, a writer from Erie who specializes in Amish reporting, told the story of Gingerich's successful treatment in The Budget, the national Amish newspaper. Consequently, Moriarty received more than 200 letters from Amish across the United States, thanking him and asking where they could find help for themselves or a loved one.

They had been raised to believe that mental illness was satanic.

"For them, almost everything evil in the world is devil-based. So mental illness must be the work of the devil," Moriarty said.

In very closed, isolated communities such as Gingerich's, people are less aware of the help available to them than in communities whose members mingle more with outsiders.

Steven Riggall, a psychiatrist in Sharon, has about 35 Amish patients from New Wilmington. They call him a "nerve doctor."

"I really have not run into a lot of significant prejudice against the idea of seeking psychiatric help. That came as a surprise to me," he said.

Another surprise was that Amish men are as likely to seek treatment for depression as Amish women. National statistics say that women suffer twice the depression that men do. But Riggall suspects there is more wrong with the statistic than with the Amish.

"I think some of these national statistics are culturally bound. Generally speaking, I find Amish men to be a lot less concerned [than other men] about appearing weak or unmanly as a result of having problems with their emotions or feelings," he said.

His Amish patients seek treatment when emotional problems interfere with work, Riggall said.

"Amish women, especially, are more ashamed about their inability to do their work than about any other aspect of their mental health problem," he said.

Changes in psychiatry over the past 20 years have made it easier for some Amish to accept help, he said.

In the days when mentally ill people were institutionalized for years on end, the Amish took care of their own. And traditional psychoanalysis would have been an affront to their religious values. But now that mental illness is typically seen as a neurological disorder, some view it the way they would heart disease or diabetes.

"They are comfortable with talking about symptoms and taking medications," he said.

"That is much more palatable to the Amish than sitting in a room and talking for an hour at a time for weeks on end about family dynamics."