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Abe Lincoln, again and again

by Tom Gallagher

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By now, we are all aware of President Obama's keen interest in Abe Lincoln. Today's *Wall Street Journal* has a piece on choreographer Bill T. Jones.

The 57-year-old Mr. Jones, a MacArthur "genius" grant recipient, is readying two new stage productions for the fall season: "Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray," an evening-length piece celebrating the bicentennial of Lincoln's birth -- "fondly do we hope ... fervently do we pray" -- is from a line in Lincoln's second inaugural address.

The second production is called "Fela!," a musical about Fela Anikulapo Kuti, the Nigerian musician who dubbed himself the "Black President."

Another devotee of Lincoln is the new bishop of Allentown, Pa., diocese, Bishop John Barres.



Here is what Bishop Barres offered during his installation Mass:

"Now is the time for evangelization, using every means of modern technology at our disposal to spread the Gospel," Barres said, hinting at a new kind of episcopal leadership in this Facebook-and-Twitter age.

He quoted Abraham Lincoln, a figure so influential in Barres' life that he is represented in the bishop's coat of arms by a woodsman's ax. The president "was magnanimous and generous in his forgiveness and pursuit of the common good," said Barres, who has repeatedly pledged outreach to clergy abuse victims, the disaffected, the poor and the imprisoned.

As Lincoln spoke of "binding up the nation's wounds" in his second inaugural address, Barres called on the faithful to bind up the wounds of the church and the world."

Can you see the ax in Bishop Barres' coat-of-arms (lower right corner)? Has a U.S. president ever made it into a Catholic bishop's coat-of-arms?

By the way, Bishop Barres is clearly enroute to an archdiocese before too long. He'd be a natural fit in Philadelphia, Baltimore or Washington, when they open up.

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