

America



MARCH 4, 2019

ESUIT REVIEW OF FAITH AND CULTURE

Latin America's Refugee Crisis

A REPORT FROM THE VENEZUELA-COLOMBIA BORDER

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PUT AWAY YOUR SWORD: GOSPEL NONVIOLENCE IN A VIOLENT WORLD

May 3-5, 2019 • Chicago

On 2017's World Day of Peace, Pope Francis issued "Nonviolence: A Style of Politics for Peace," perhaps Rome's first official statement on active nonviolence. It raises several important questions: Is God nonviolent? Does God want us to renounce violence as well? In a violent world, does nonviolence work? Addressing these questions, this conference gathers voices from around the world to explore theologies of nonviolence; martyrdom and the cross; nonviolence formation at the grass roots; gender and nonviolence; and practices of nonviolent peacebuilding and the "responsibility to protect."

Keynotes by

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Community of Sant'Egidio (Rome)

Robert Emmet Meagher

Author, *Killing from the Inside Out: Moral Injury & Just War*
Professor of Humanities, Hampshire College (Amherst, MA, U.S.A.)

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A Cosmopolitan ‘America’

I am writing this column on a bumpy motor coach just a few miles from the old city of Jerusalem. Our bus is headed to Bethlehem, where we will venerate the traditional site of the nativity of Jesus, one of several stops on **America’s** 2019 pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Each year, we invite our readers to join us on this special journey in the footsteps of Our Lord, and I am pleased to say that more than 100 of your fellow readers have signed up for the pilgrimage this year. In just four years, we have led more than 700 pilgrims to the Holy Land, Spain and Rome, with additional destinations planned for the years ahead.

Before I arrived in the Holy Land last week, I spent several days at meetings in Rome, which I’ve visited three times in a year that has taken me to several other countries as well. It is ironic, I suppose, that the editor in chief of a magazine named **America** would so often find himself traveling abroad. But the notion does not seem so crazy when one considers just what we mean by **America**—the magazine, that is.

As I like to remind our editors and staff, the founders of this review made it clear in their opening editorial in 1909 that the name **America** is not a synonym for the United States, that “the name **America** embraces both North and South America, in fact, all this Western Hemisphere... [while presenting] to its readers all that interests Catholics in any part of the world... True to its name and to its character as a Catholic review, **America** [is] cosmopolitan, not only in contents but also in spirit.”

For a couple of reasons, that cosmopolitanism is as important today as it was 110 years ago. First, Catholicism is a global religion. In fact, that is pretty much what the word *catholic* means: global, universal. Yet American Catholics often think that our ecclesiastical problems and their solutions are the same as those of the church writ large. Sometimes that’s true, but sometimes it’s not. The church is 1.3 billion people, spread across five continents, a myriad of cultures, traditions and languages. The 70 million U.S. Catholics constitute 5 percent of Catholics worldwide. When Catholics in the United States, for example, think that certain church reforms are obviously and urgently needed, we should remember that such views are more than likely minority opinions among the world’s Catholics.

But the second reason why **America’s** cosmopolitan spirit still matters is that, for better or for worse, the United States, the home of this magazine for more than a century, is leading the world at this particular moment in human history—or not, as the case may be.

But no one can deny that the United States occupies a position of pre-eminence in global affairs. It is important, therefore, that we the people of the United States have some knowledge of what is happening in the rest of the world, if for no other reason than to better understand the consequences of the choices our government makes in our name across the world. As Antonio De Loera-Brust reports in this issue from the Colombia-Venezuela border, the ruinous regime of Hugo Chavez gained “popular

support even as he weakened democratic institutions and repressed his political opponents, whom he painted as proxies for the United States.”

For these reasons, **America** will continue to report international news, and our network of international correspondents will continue to analyze issues at the intersection of the church and the world from their unique vantage points. Last year, our award-winning team filed stories from more than two dozen countries—from Johannesburg to Hong Kong, from Rome to Los Angeles. At a time when many media outlets are closing foreign bureaus and cutting back on international correspondents, we are still adding to our masthead—the latest is our correspondent in São Paulo, Brazil.

In 1909, the editors relied on the telegraph to stay connected to their international network. Today, even the editor in chief can use his iPhone to file a column from a bus en route to Bethlehem. Come to think of it, I guess it is appropriate that I’m writing about this topic from this particular place. After all, that angel who appeared to the shepherds in the Gospel of Luke was a correspondent of sorts: What was it he said? “Do not be afraid. For behold, I bring you good news.”

While I can’t promise you that all the news we report will bring you “great joy,” I do promise our continued best efforts to help you make sense of your world, far and near, seen and unseen.

Matt Malone, S.J.
Twitter: @americaeditor.



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AP Photo/Dieu Naljo Chery

Thousands of demonstrators march to demand the resignation of President Jovenel Moïse, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, on Feb. 7. Protesters are angry about the government's failure to prosecute embezzlement from a Venezuelan program that sent discounted oil to Haiti.

Cover Image: Courtesy of Antonio De Loera-Brust

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Are consumer boycotts a helpful form of resistance?

When asked if consumer boycotts help to hold companies accountable, 83 percent of respondents said yes. Eighty-five percent said they had participated in a boycott themselves.

“In the world of consumer products and for-profit corporations,” wrote Kathy Wright of Loretto, Ky., “money talks.”

This sentiment was echoed by scores of readers, who said the “bottom line matters” and that boycotts and strikes are necessary to curb corporate irresponsibility. Asked why they have boycotted companies, some respondents—34 percent—said they have protested companies’ treatment of their employees.

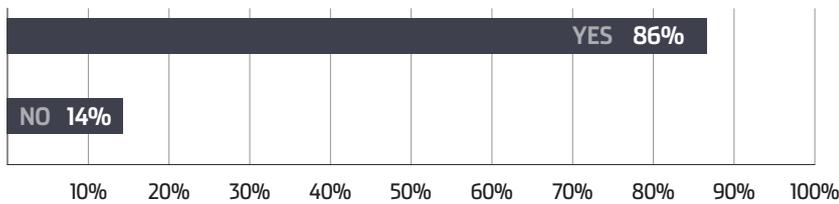
A number of readers said they participated in the Delano Grape Strike of the 1960s and 1970s to support farmworkers in California. Sandra Farrell of Philadelphia, Pa., was one of

those participants. “I do not wish to give my money to companies who use their outsized power to promote ideas and actions that violate my beliefs as a human being, Catholic and union member,” she wrote.

Readers offered a few caveats to their support for boycotts. Multiple readers wrote that a boycott will only work if it can generate widespread publicity.

Asked specifically about labor strikes, readers were generally supportive but also qualified their support. Gerry Kelly of Ottawa, Canada, noted that if strikes are to effect real change, they must be “sustained.” Theresa Raymond of Abington, Mass., was more reticent about striking. “I was a teacher and a member of a union, but we never had reason to strike,” she said. “I would have found it difficult to participate and disrupt the students’ education.”

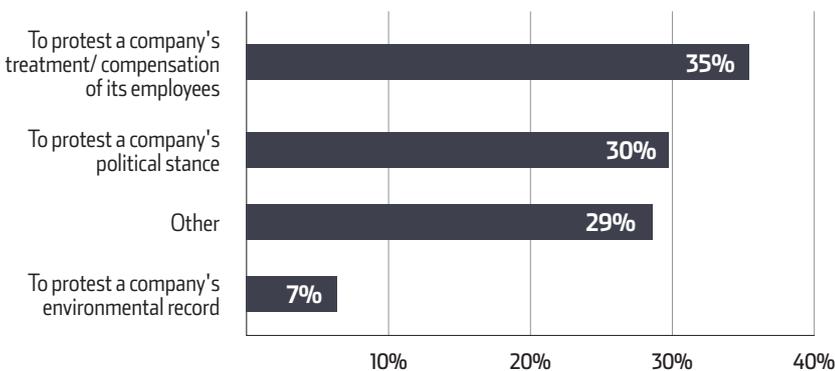
Have you ever participated in a boycott against a company?



In support of California grape pickers protesting their work conditions and pay, I abstained from purchasing grapes.

Linda Radosevich
Orlando, Fla.

Why did you participate in a boycott against a company?



While not always changing corporate behavior, boycotts shine a light on activities and create consumer solidarity.

Dick Brummel
Kansas City, Mo.

These results are based on reader responses to a poll promoted on Facebook, Twitter and in our email newsletter. Because of rounding, percentages may not add up to 100.

Community Is the Answer

Re “The Ability to Pray,” by Matt Malone, S.J. (Of Many Things, 2/18): Technology can be a great component of a parish outreach program, but it is not the answer to evangelization. Just as people are rarely attracted by dogma and doctrine, they need to find community and relationships when their driverless car ferries them to the door of church.

Mary Therese Lemanek

A Fresh Agenda

Re “The Tragedy of Abortion Absolutism and How the Pro-Life Movement Can Respond” (Our Take, 2/18): Thank you for providing an immensely better template for moving forward with a more holistic pro-life agenda. It is time to move on beyond the stale argument of being pro- or anti-abortion.

Gene Chabot

Keep Speaking Out

Re “A Call to Love,” by Olga Segura (2/18): I wish I could see my church at the forefront of the justice movements that Jesus brought to the world. I am truly grateful to all the Catholics working hard to bring justice to immigrants and people experiencing homelessness and those who joined and supported the Black Lives Matter movement. The color of someone’s skin should not either entitle one to a better life or trap one in suffering and systemic abuses. Keep speaking out. This is so important!

Robin Vestal

The Real M.L.K.

Re “Beyond the Dream: Taking Martin Luther King Jr. Out of the Box,” by Régine Michelle Jean-Charles (2/18): I have always found the later Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to be much more fascinating than his earlier self. And this was why his assassination was such an awful tragedy. Who knows what speeches he would have made that could have influenced not only the civil rights movement but all the other movements that were emerging in 1968.

Alvaro Bo

Where Was the Faculty?

Re “Why the MAGA Hats at the March for Life?” by Michael J. O’Loughlin (2/18): Bishop John Stowe is correct

to question why “Make America Great Again” hats were on show at the March for Life. I have to ask: Where were the faculty members who went on this trip? Where were the chaperones who allowed the students to wear the hats while they were representing the school? If the students wore anything, it should have been their school colors. This was a school-sponsored trip.

Rudolph Koser

Enlightenment

Re “Ignatian Yoga,” by Joe Hoover, S.J. (2/18): What Brother Hoover stated is true: Most yoga in the United States is gym yoga, a workout more than anything. I have been doing yoga on my own for the last 20 years. Can it be spiritual? Sure, just like the time I was lifting weights and reflecting on the presence of Christ was spiritual.

Jim Richard

What Matters

Re “Without Love of Neighbor, No Salvation,” by Peter Schineller, S.J. (2/18): This is one of the best things I have read from a faith-based perspective; this is indeed the only thing that should matter. I would agree that in the last few decades the Catholic Church, at a theological level, has moved from “outside the church, no salvation” to “outside love of neighbor, no salvation.”

Mark Ammer

A Ministerial Offering

Re “Deliver Us” (2/13): I just finished listening to the first episode of **America’s** new podcast, and I want to thank you for this beautiful ministerial offering to your fellow members of the church. This first episode moved me because, spiritually, I have been yearning to connect with Catholics who have the courage of their convictions to speak in solidarity with members of our community whom our priests sexually assaulted. Thank you and your colleagues for lending your time, intellect, emotions and journalistic talents to this effort; and thank you for modeling how we can live our professed commitment to the dignity of all people.

Nora Schauble

Arlington, Va.

Comments drawn from our website, americamagazine.org, and America Media’s social media platforms.

Letters to the editor can be sent to letters@americamedia.org. Please include the article title, author and issue date, as well as your name and where you are writing from.

The Green New Deal Should Be Improved, Not Mocked

On Feb. 7 a group of Democrats in Congress unveiled a resolution calling for a “Green New Deal,” a massive, 10-year mobilization by the federal government to head off the worst-case scenario of global climate change. The outline for future legislation seeks to meet “100 percent of the power demand in the United States” through renewable sources. Other goals include eliminating greenhouse gas emissions “as much as technologically feasible” and to “achieve maximal energy efficiency” in every building in the United States. It also foresees a radical transformation of the U.S. economy to create millions of new jobs, improve health care and housing, and repair the “historical oppression” of “vulnerable communities,” including low-income workers and migrants.

The resolution, introduced by Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York and Senator Ed Markey of Massachusetts, both Democrats, quickly attracted the support of more than 80 members of Congress, as well as several Democrats running for president in 2020. But Republicans have mocked the proposal, with Senator John Barrasso of Wyoming calling it a “socialist manifesto.” The Senate majority leader, Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, called it a plan “to end air travel and cow farts,” and Republicans seem ready to tie Democratic candidates to each and every provision of the proposal.

While it is clear that not everything in the Green New Deal is realistically achievable, what is less realistic still is to dismiss it out of hand in order to continue the pretense that climate change can be ignored.

The Green New Deal is in many

ways consistent with the message of Pope Francis’ 2015 encyclical “*Laudato Si’*,” which calls on Catholics to favor “forms of industrial production with maximum energy efficiency” (No. 180). The resolution’s call for the protection of “frontline and vulnerable communities” echoes the encyclical’s warning that the costs of climate change fall most heavily on the poor. In addition, the creation of jobs is consistent with the church’s recognition of the necessity and dignity of labor. While there is much work to be done to identify policies that are economically, technologically and politically feasible, ridiculing the idea that climate change demands significant and expeditious political and economic adaptations is incompatible with the spirit of “*Laudato Si’*.”

Yet proponents of the Green New Deal should also take the challenge of climate change seriously enough to avoid turning this resolution into a wish list for every item on their agenda, especially those that are red flags for political conservatives. Whatever one thinks of the advisability of a federal employment guarantee, that question need not have been linked to reforms focusing on clean energy. A focus on job creation through infrastructure investments and the development of green technologies—which is also in the resolution—would demonstrate a desire to attract and maintain political support for a challenging agenda.

The difficulty of responding to the complex problems of climate change is reminiscent of the many attempts to improve health care in the United States. Since World War II, Congress has repeatedly thrown out worthwhile proposals for being too ambitious or

displeasing too many constituencies and has even tried to roll back incremental progress toward a health care system on a par with other industrialized nations. The health of our planet is at least as important, but this time we do not have the luxury of spending more than seven decades searching for a solution that pleases everyone.

However indistinct its path to actualization may seem now, the resolution should be welcomed as an important first step toward more detailed legislation.

Sisters Break the Silence

Pope Francis once again made headlines while on board the papal plane when he acknowledged on Feb. 5 the sexual abuse of nuns by priests and clergy. “I cannot say this doesn’t happen in my house,” the pope said during a press conference. “Should something more be done? Yes.” While it was the first time Francis has publicly addressed the issue, the fact that women religious have been subject to such abuse is not news to the Vatican.

As far back as 1994, the Vatican received a comprehensive report that documented the sexual exploitation of religious sisters in 23 countries. The crisis was found to be especially acute in Africa, where offending priests and bishops considered sisters to be “safe” sexual partners amid the H.I.V./AIDS epidemic. A report presented to the Vatican in 1998 described the harassment and rape of African women religious by members of the clergy as “allegedly common” and found that some

Founded in 1909

sisters were even forced by their abusers to obtain abortions. It is not clear how the Vatican responded at the time; and in the two decades since then, a culture of secrecy has kept the stories of many victims in the shadows.

But today more and more women religious are speaking up and demanding that the church hold abusers to account. In India, a bishop was arrested and temporarily removed from ministry after a nun alleged that he had repeatedly raped her over two years. Late last year, the Vatican launched an investigation into a religious order in Chile after a number of nuns went public with allegations of sexual abuse at the hands of priests. In November, the International Union of Superiors General, which represents more than 500,000 sisters worldwide, condemned the “culture of silence” and called on survivors to report their abuse to church and state authorities.

Far too often, women both inside the church and out have been silenced, disbelieved and even blamed for their own abuse. The courageous action of the women who have come forward despite the forces arrayed against them is a great service to the church. That their suffering has been acknowledged at the highest level of the church will, we hope, lead other victims to come forward. But, as Pope Francis said, more must be done. As the #MeToo movement has revealed in the worlds of business and entertainment, sexual abuse and the silence that allows it to continue are also an abuse of power. In the church, that power imbalance is called clericalism, and if the church is to prevent the abuse of women, children and all vulnerable people, that clericalism must be acknowledged and uprooted at every level.

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The dignity of human beings must not be measured in ‘usefulness’

Despite some significant positive changes over the last few decades, persons with Down syndrome can still be treated in many degrading ways in contemporary life, whether through personal animus or social systems like discriminatory employment practices. Perhaps the most egregious examples are in Denmark and Iceland, where close to 100 percent of babies with Down syndrome are aborted. To be clear, Down syndrome is not being eliminated in these countries; persons with Down syndrome are being eliminated. The reasoning behind that trend is not uncommon in our recent discourse in the United States.

Persons with Down syndrome are capable of representing themselves, but as they are rarely given a platform in politics, journalism and other avenues of public discourse, we must strive to listen to, learn from and empower their own voices even as we advocate on their behalf. Hence, I want to direct attention to a subtle problem that can occur even among those who love and support persons with Down syndrome: reducing a human being to their usefulness.

Those who wish to defend the dignity of persons with Down syndrome should avoid the perhaps unintended, but nonetheless consequential, dehumanization process of portraying persons with Down syndrome as “useful.” Yes, persons with Down syndrome can accomplish amazing things vocationally, contribute civically and bring happiness to the lives of others (as evidenced by the new Gerber Baby model with an “infectious smile”). It is important and good to celebrate their contributions and accomplishments. They have more to contribute to our

exhausting, lonely society than many of us realize.

But the dignity of human beings must never be reduced to how well they accomplish the ends of other people. As Micha Boyett, the mother of a 3-year-old boy with Down syndrome, has argued, “despite the fact that people with Down syndrome are living longer, going to college and achieving more than ever before, a culture that defines human worth by what a person can contribute, produce or enjoy is always going to leave people behind.”

Only five years ago a memorial was erected in Berlin commemorating the victims of Aktion T4, the program in Nazi Germany that euthanized 300,000 physically and mentally disabled people deemed burdens “unworthy of living.” Upon its dedication, the German culture minister Monika Grütters declared that “every human life is worth living: That is the message sent out from this site.... The ‘T4’ memorial confronts us today with the harrowing Nazi ideology of presuming life can be measured by ‘usefulness.’”

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that “the dignity of the human person is rooted in his creation in the image and likeness of God” and that human dignity transcends every quantifier of worth (Gn 1:26–27; Jas 3:9). In the economy of grace, God’s saving wisdom and power are revealed in the weakness and folly of the cross, choosing the lowly and despised things of the world (1 Cor 1:17–31). As the New Testament scholar John Barclay concludes in his 2015 book *Paul and the Gift*, “the Christ-event fits no preformed evaluative schema.... Baptism ‘into Christ’ provides a radically new foundation for communities

freed from hierarchical systems of distinction, not because of some generalized commitment to ‘equality’ but because of the unconditioned gift of Christ, which undercuts all other reckoning of worth.”

That is, God’s raising a crucified Jew from Nazareth as Messiah and Lord recalibrates human worth, requiring us to have new eyes for our neighbors and especially for the most vulnerable in our midst.

Detractors from Celsus to Nietzsche gaze upon the body of Jesus nailed to the cross and perceive only weakness, folly and the scandal of something useless in a world of power—something that must be eliminated. But those who believe the good news that “he has risen; he is not here” behold on the cross nothing less than the image of the invisible God and prepare for the beatific vision by conforming to “the image of the Son” in cruciform love for others (Rom 8:28).

A world indifferent or hostile toward the claims of faith needs reminding that every last one of us is dust, and to dust each of us, in our utility and inevitable burdensomeness, shall return. Those who cleave for life to a crucified and risen Messiah must welcome and love as our own selves those brothers and sisters with Down syndrome because of their irreducible worth rooted in the image of God as co-heirs of the new creation.

Joshua Heavin is a Ph.D. candidate in New Testament theology at Trinity College Bristol, University of Aberdeen and lives in Dallas.

Journal of Catholic Social Thought

Announces an Upcoming Conference and Call for Papers

NOSTRA AETATE

Drawn to Fellowship:

The Promise and Progress of Interreligious Dialogue

November 7–9, 2019

Vatican II's *Nostra Aetate* urges adherents of the world's major religions to promote understanding, justice, peace, freedom and human welfare. Why did controversy surround this 1965 document? What is its significance today?

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Sidney Griffith, the Catholic University of America

Complete list of speakers available at mission.villanova.edu

Call for Papers

Suggested concurrent themes related to *Nostra Aetate* include the document's unfinished work; possibilities and/or conditions for future interreligious dialogue; dialogue with Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, and secularism; and non-Catholic Christian views of *Nostra Aetate* more than fifty years later.

Proposals for concurrent sessions are due May 1, 2019. Papers for consideration for the *Journal of Catholic Social Thought* are due March 1, 2020. Send to editor barbara.wall@villanova.edu. For more information, visit mission.villanova.edu.



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Contra Trump, church leaders describe a humanitarian emergency at the border

By Kevin Clarke



President Trump had been insinuating for weeks that a declaration of a national emergency would be the funding option of last resort for his long-promised border wall. On Feb. 15 he made good on that threat, arguing that his proposed wall was necessary to stop “an invasion of our country” by undocumented migrants and asylum seekers.

Bypassing Congress, Mr. Trump hopes to siphon billions of dollars from federal military construction and drug-interdiction efforts to finance a border wall he first proposed in 2015 during his campaign for president. The

move drew immediate bipartisan objections on Capitol Hill and is expected to provoke multiple legal challenges.

As justification for his emergency declaration, the president has frequently spoken of a state of lawlessness along the southern border. He has warned of undocumented migrants, with many violent offenders among them, flooding border communities and has insinuated that terrorists were creeping across the nation’s open deserts.

Regarding the border from his perspective as leader of the Diocese of El Paso, Bishop Mark Seitz said, “I don’t per-

A U.S. Border Patrol rescue in the Rio Grande by Piedras Negras, Mexico, on Feb. 10.



ceive an emergency—in the sense that he means it, at least...as an invasion of aliens.” El Paso is a vibrant Texas city that shares a border with Juárez, Mexico. “We’re at a low ebb in terms of the people who are crossing,” he pointed out.

To Bishop Seitz the real emergency is humanitarian—a matter of deciding how best to care for the people coming to the border. “That should concern us,” he said. “This is a group of very vulnerable people.”

According to Bishop Seitz, past undocumented border crossers were primarily young single men and women from Mexico seeking job opportunities in the United States. “Now what we are seeing are families that are fleeing unbelievably difficult situations in their home countries,” he said, “and looking for a place of security more than anything else, where their lives are not being threatened every day.” Families represented just 3 percent of apprehension incidents with border agents in 2012. Last year they represented 35 percent of border patrol apprehensions.

Though the president speaks frequently of menacing caravans of migrants from Central America, estimates of the overall number of people reaching the border without legal status have diminished greatly in recent years, judging from the number of border apprehensions, a data point used to estimate overall migration flows. That is especially true of undocumented migrants from Mexico.

Apprehensions of Mexican nationals collapsed from a recent high of more than 1.6 million in 2000 to as few as 128,000 in 2017. Though the numbers of migrants and asylum seekers from Central American states like Honduras and Guatemala have increased in recent years, culminating in a spike to 467,000 apprehensions in 2018, overall numbers of border apprehensions are far below previous peaks.

The president has also suggested the wall will stem the flow of illicit drugs across the border. But drug interdiction experts say traffickers prefer to smuggle their product

through busy ports of entry, not the open desert the proposed wall would bisect. “Yes, there are areas of criminal concern on the border,” said Bishop Gerald Kicanas. “We have human trafficking, we have gun trafficking and we have drug trafficking, but most of these criminal acts are happening through ports of entry.”

The former leader of the Diocese of Tucson, Ariz., Bishop Kicanas has come out of retirement to temporarily serve the Diocese of Las Cruces, N.M. He worries that more miles of walls will do little to curtail crime or address complex migration issues. But he is sure they will mean more deaths in the southwestern deserts.

“Building more walls will just drive people into more dangerous areas,” said Bishop Kicanas. “We experienced so many tragic deaths in the desert of people crossing in areas where it was nearly impossible to bring water to them.”

Pointing to the ongoing economic, political and social crises in Central American states that are driving migration north, Bishop Kicanas said, “We do agree with the president that there is a humanitarian crisis at the border, but the way to look at addressing that is through comprehensive immigration reform” and better assisting those nations where migration originates. “Most people don’t want to leave their own countries, their own cultures, their communities,” he said, but facing grave threats of violence and economic deprivation, “they have no choice.”

Though the president estimated the wall’s cost at \$12 billion, critics say it would be far more expensive, with some estimates as high as \$60 billion. The Department of Homeland Security’s own estimate is \$22 billion.

“If some of this money could be used” to address the root causes of migration, “that would be great,” said Bishop Kicanas. In 2017 Central America’s Northern Triangle states—Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador—received just \$297 million in disbursements from the U.S. Agency for International Development to support programs in governance and economic development.

For Bishop Kicanas, the failure to pass comprehensive immigration reform, moldering in Congress since 2003, is the real emergency at the border. “Everyone

knows this system is broken, and we know how it can be fixed. We just have to have the moral courage to do it,” he said.

“We have to live the values we profess as a nation. We say that we prize diversity; we say that we prize people coming here hoping for a decent way of life. Our Statue of Liberty has welcomed generations of immigrants to our country,” Bishop Kicanas said, “but right now it is hard for them to enter, and that is why there is such a great influx of people at our border.”

“There have been only two real emergencies [on the border] that I have experienced,” said Dylan Corbett, the director of the Hope Border Institute. In both instances, one during the 2018 midterm elections and the other around Christmas last year when the federal government’s partial shutdown was dominating national headlines, scores of asylum seekers were dumped on El Paso streets by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

agents. Mr. Corbett described that as a staged emergency. “That’s how they want the border to appear,” he said, “a crazy place, out of control.”

“But it’s not,” said Mr. Corbett. “El Paso is a thriving, safe community.”

With just a few hours’ warning about the impending dump of asylum seekers on the city’s streets, the Hope Border Initiative and other humanitarian entities in El Paso were able to respond. Mr. Corbett described the experience as emblematic of the city’s spirit and sense of solidarity with migrants. “Three hundred people a day are coming into El Paso and being assisted by its residents,” he said. “That is not a crisis; that is a community dealing with a situation with generosity and compassion.”

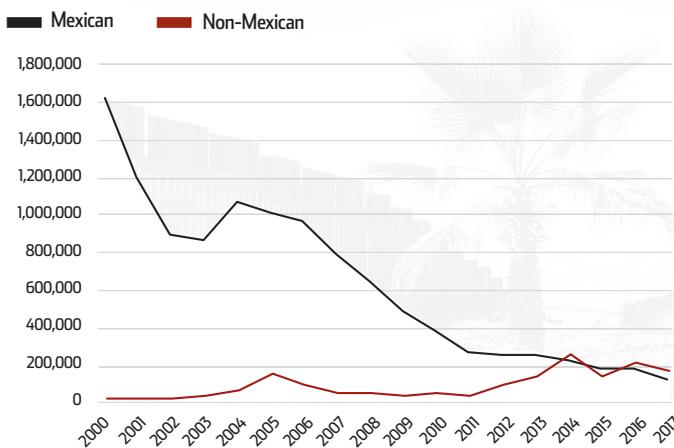
Kevin Clarke, *chief correspondent.*
Twitter: @ClarkeAtAmerica.

U.S.-MEXICO BORDER: 1,954 MILES

TRUMP’S PROPOSED WALL > 1,000 MILES
EXISTING BARRIERS > 654 MILES
CONGRESS HAS APPROVED > 124 MILES OF NEW AND REPLACEMENT BARRIERS

APPREHENSIONS AT HISTORIC LOWS

Though border apprehensions spiked in 2018, they are far from historic highs:



VIOLENCE AT THE BORDER

USE-OF-FORCE INCIDENTS BY BORDER AGENTS WERE DOWN **22.9 PERCENT IN 2017 FROM 2016;** INCIDENTS WITH FIREARMS DROPPED FROM **55 IN 2012 TO 17 IN 2017.**

OVERWHELMED BY IMMIGRANTS?

2016: 10.7 MILLION UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS IN THE UNITED STATES—DOWN FROM 12.2 MILLION IN 2007. UNAUTHORIZED IMMIGRANTS FROM MEXICO DECLINED BY **1.5 MILLION.**

THE COSTS OF THE WALL

Though the president estimated the wall’s total cost at **\$12 BILLION**, critics say it will be far more expensive. The Department of Homeland Security’s own estimate is **\$22 BILLION.**

THE WALL WON’T STOP DRUGS

80 TO 90 PERCENT OF DRUGS TRAFFICKED ACROSS THE BORDER ARE **SEIZED AT LEGAL PORTS OF ENTRY, NOT IN OPEN DESERT.**

Sources: “The Border Wall: What Has Trump Built So Far?,” Denise Lu, The New York Times, Feb. 12, 2019; “What We Know About Illegal Immigration From Mexico,” Pew Research Center, Dec. 4, 2018; Use of Force Statistics, U.S. Customs and Border Protection; “Immigrant Share in U.S. Nears Record High but Remains Below That of Many Other Countries,” Pew Research Center, Jan. 30, 2019; “Fact-checking Trump Officials,” Alan Gomez, USA Today, Jan. 16, 2019.



Volunteer librarian Jos Janssens, S.J., at work among the volumes.

For 400 years and counting The Bollandist Society uncovers the lives of the saints

Most of what we know about saints—from the most beloved to the most obscure—comes from the little-known Bollandist Society. For four centuries, the priests and lay scholars at this Jesuit ministry have dedicated their diligent minds to archiving, studying and publishing material on the lives of saints and martyrs.

Since the dawn of the church, monks and scribes have produced and copied thousands of texts describing lives of the saints. This literary genre, known as hagiography, flourished in the Middle Ages and encompassed narratives both factual and legendary. According to Gordon Whatley, a retired professor of medieval English, this body of writing “became for Christian readers...the primary narrative expression of their religion’s values, beliefs, ideals and identities.”

“I think of it as a vast, creative supplement to and continuation of the Bible itself and the divinely charged, miraculous history it contains,” Mr. Whatley said.

In 1607, Héribert Rosweyde, S.J., took stock of the myriad hagiographic manuscripts and decided to organize, research and gather the stories of saints in a more systematic fashion. When Father Rosweyde died, a fellow Jesuit, Jean Bolland, S.J., took up the work and published the first edition of the *Acta Sanctorum*, or “Acts of the Saints.” Today, the Bollandist Society is the only institution dedicated exclusively to the critical study of hagiography.

Over the centuries, the mission of the Bollandist Society has remained the same: to “serve the glory of the saints by serving the truth.” Their library of 500,000 books and thousands of periodical articles feature saints from the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church, drawing on manuscripts in Latin, Greek, Coptic, Ethiopian, Syriac, Arab, Armenian and Georgian. Today they continue to unearth ancient texts, glean information on saints from scientific reviews, organize the data in digital catalogs and produce rigorous scientific articles in their periodical,

Analecta Bollandiana. Recently, they have begun publishing reader-friendly stories on their Facebook page.

Examples of discoveries and anecdotes abound in conversations with the Bollandists. Their library, for example, includes transcriptions of the trials of martyrs—among them the Filipino hero St. Ruiz in 17th-century Japan.

“The trial is only known through a document, which transcribes the dialogue between the judge, the translators and Ruiz, which is quite marvelous,” Robert Godding, S.J., the director of the Bollandist Society, said.

Saints serve to continually renew the church. Every generation has its own holy men and women, who respond to the challenges of their era by acting in conformity with the Gospel. “Saints like [Óscar] Romero or Teresa of Ávila refresh our faith,” Father Godding told *America*. “Without figures like these, the church would only be an institution.”

In recent years, “the canonization of a wide spectrum of ordinary people has given us a sense that a life of faith is achievable,” said Patrick Geary, professor of Western medieval history at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton University in New Jersey.

“We can notice that saints are not only something from the past or a few clerics, but for all,” Mr. Geary said. They also embody the Catholic belief in transgenerational solidarity, he added, according to which “we are not alone because the living and the dead are part of the kingdom of God.”

The number of saints, like our knowledge of the past, has no limit, and the work of the Bollandist Society is never over. Both scholars and the faithful rely on these researchers, who will continue to find and organize gems of Christian spirituality, values and history. There is much work to do.

Melissa Vida, contributor.
Twitter: @MelissaVidaa.



How Florida's DeSantis is putting the environment on his agenda

Florida's new Republican governor made headlines his first week in office in January with an environmentally focused executive order that included funding for Everglades restoration and new state-level positions focused on scientific analysis and accountability. Gov. Ron DeSantis has earned cautious praise from environmental groups, who say the commitment is a substantive step forward on improving water quality and protecting the state's fragile ecology. But some state environmental leaders say the order does not go far enough because it does not explicitly address the growing threat of climate change, which exacerbates some of Florida's most severe environmental problems.

The executive order creates a task force focused on preventing blue-green algae blooms in waterways and on shorelines. It continues a grant program to help local governments contend with the lingering effects of a red tide algal bloom last summer that left beaches strewn with dead fish and turtles.

It includes \$2.5 billion in funding for Everglades restoration, which should help ameliorate blue-green algae outbreaks like one in the summer of 2016 that throttled tourism, fishing and boating. It also mandates the appointment of a chief science officer and creates an Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection "to help prepare Florida's coastal communities and habitats for impacts from sea level rise."

But many environmental leaders say that to address Florida's environmental problems comprehensively, Mr. DeSantis and other state leaders need to take direct action on climate change, because the changing climate is intensifying existing challenges. Thus far, Mr. DeSantis has not publicly acknowledged climate change or said that man-made greenhouse gas emissions are responsible for global warming.

The Florida Conference of Catholic Bishops expressed support for Mr. DeSantis's executive order and encouraged lawmakers to maintain the momentum on addressing state environmental concerns. "An ongoing commitment to the protection of Florida's natural resources is needed to ensure the health and well-being of generations to come," Marco Paredes, the conference's associate director for health, said in an emailed statement.

An abundance of evidence suggests action on climate change is critical. Many parts of the state are experiencing more days with temperatures in the 90s, leading to increased health risks for elderly residents, people with heart and lung conditions, and outdoor workers.

Southeast Florida could see widespread contamination from septic tanks and could face rising insurance rates because of increased flooding and stronger hurricanes. In some areas of Miami, low-income residents are feeling



Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis with his wife Casey and son Mason on Jan. 8, in Tallahassee, Fla.

pressure to sell their homes to developers seeking property on high ground away from the water. Statewide, a study last year found that more than one million Florida homes could experience chronic flooding related to sea-level rise by the end of the century.

U.S. Rep. Francis Rooney, whose district includes Naples and Fort Myers, is a Florida Republican who has recently risen to national prominence by pushing for bipartisan action to cut greenhouse gas emissions. On Jan. 24, Mr. Rooney was introduced as a co-sponsor of a new national carbon pricing plan alongside two Florida Democrats in the House—former Gov. Charlie Crist and Ted Deutch, who co-founded the Climate Solutions Caucus.

In a statement, U.S. bishops welcomed the plan and encouraged further bipartisan climate action.

“Climate change is beginning to be seen as a crucial moral issue, one that concerns all people,” said Bishop Frank J. Dewane, chairman of the U.S. bishops’ Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development. “At a time when the dangerous effects of climate change are becoming increasingly apparent, the need for legislative solutions like this is more urgent than ever.”

Kate Stein, contributor. Twitter: @stein_katherine.



GOODNEWS

Pope Francis leads largest-ever Christian act of worship on the Arabian Peninsula

Pope Francis made history on Feb. 5 when he celebrated Mass for more than 135,000 Catholics from many nations and cultures at the Zayed Sports Stadium in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates.

It was the largest Christian act of worship ever celebrated on the Arabian Peninsula, in the heartland of the Muslim world, and the festive occasion gave powerful expression to the joy of the Gospel.

There were scenes of joy and excitement as Pope Francis was driven in a jeep around the stadium before Mass to greet these Catholics—migrant workers from India, the Philippines, Uganda and many other countries of Asia and Africa, as well as expatriates from Western countries. They cheered, sang, chanted and applauded as they waited for the pope to arrive.

Francis appears to be greatly admired in the Muslim world, especially in the United Arab Emirates. The country’s minister for tolerance and other authorities of the U.A.E. attended the celebration together with 4,000 Muslims.

The presence of so many Muslims at the Mass sent a strong message of tolerance to the inhabitants of this peninsula and to Muslims and Christians across the world, but also a repudiation of some who seek to ignite a clash of civilizations and foment hostility between Christians and Muslims for political ends.

Recognizing the reality of the lives of the migrant believers, Francis said: “It is most certainly not easy for you to live far from home, missing the affection of your loved ones and perhaps also feeling uncertainty about the future. But the Lord is faithful and does not abandon his people.”

Gerard O’Connell, Vatican correspondent.
Twitter: @gerryorome.



BOLÍVAR'S BROKEN DREAM

*A refugee crisis at the border of
Colombia and Venezuela*

By Antonio De Loera-Brust

The city of Cúcuta, Colombia, lies on the western bank of the Tachira River, the present-day border between Colombia and Venezuela. It was here, in 1813, that Simón Bolívar won his first major victory against the Spanish in the wars that secured most of South America's independence. After the victory, Bolívar crossed the Tachira Rivera and began the liberation of Venezuela, the land of his birth.



Photo by Antonio De Loera-Brust

The ruins of the church where the constitution of Simón Bolívar's "Gran Colombia" was signed



Jenny holds her newborn in the Scalabrini-run migrant shelter in Cúcuta, Colombia. “In Venezuela, there’s nothing,” she said.

Photo by Antonio De Loera-Bruist

Since 2015, hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans have traversed the Tachira River in the other direction, fleeing economic and political turmoil in their home country. Some will cross back after earning Colombian pesos to spend in their home country. The Venezuelan bolívar, the currency named for the great liberator, is essentially worthless. Handbags made of stitched-together bolivares are sold on the streets of Cúcuta. Obtaining foreign currency is the only way many can afford to feed their families. While traffic on the bridge is heavy in both directions every day, more and more Venezuelans are leaving for good, escaping a society in free fall.

“In Venezuela, one cannot get rice anymore,” said an indigenous man I met in Cúcuta after he fled Venezuela. “In Venezuela, everything is expensive. In Venezuela, when the children get sick and you take them to the hospitals, there is no medicine. That’s why we’re here” in Colombia. As South America’s refugee crisis deepens, attitudes toward Venezuelans are hardening across the continent. In Brazil, local governments have attempted to close the border with Venezuela. In August 2018, xenophobic attacks upon Venezuelan refugees and their makeshift dwellings prompted the deployment of Brazilian troops. In Chile, new visa rules require Venezuelans to apply for refugee status from within Venezuela, where the asylum

process has essentially come to a halt. Meanwhile, Ecuador and Peru have closed their borders to Venezuelans without passports, which are extremely difficult to secure from the Venezuelan government. And in Venezuela itself, the crisis has reached a boiling point, with two rival claims to the presidency threatening to throw the country into outright violence.

But it is Colombia that is bearing the brunt of the refugee crisis. According to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, over one million Venezuelans had arrived in Colombia as of May 2018. Colombia is not a rich country and is only beginning to emerge from its own decades-long internal conflict between the government and guerilla forces. There are over seven million internally displaced people living in Colombia—individuals forced to flee their homes because of persecution or violence. And in some regions of the country, the fighting continues between the military and various leftist groups, which also fight one another. The integration of almost one million Venezuelan refugees represents a monumental challenge for Colombia, one that threatens an already fragile social order.

The Helpers

Helping to bear the burden of receiving thousands of Venezuelan refugees every day is the Catholic Church. The

How do we build hospitality when border communities are suffering poverty, abandonment, injustice?

church has exerted a powerful influence in the region since the colonial era and was instrumental in negotiating the 2016 peace deal between the Colombian government and the FARC, the largest of the many leftist guerrilla groups that have been at war with the Colombian government for the past five decades. Jesuit Refugee Service Latin America and the Caribbean, a division of the larger organization, has been active in the region since the early 1980s and conducts crucial work both in Colombia and in Venezuela. Now they are on the front lines of the largest refugee crisis in Latin America's history.

Over the past three decades, tens of thousands of Colombians have settled in Venezuela, escaping the intractable civil conflict in their home country. Marcelo Pérez is one of them. A Colombian refugee who has lived in Venezuela for the past 17 years, Mr. Pérez still describes Venezuela as “the land of opportunity.” Nevertheless, Mr. Pérez conceded “the situation here [in Venezuela] is tight; it's not a secret.”

But Mr. Pérez feels that he will be able to weather the storm, saying in an interview with J.R.S. representatives that “for us Colombians, wherever we go we don't stand around; we do our best to get ahead.”

The Venezuelan government takes a dimmer view of its Colombian refugee population. Venezuela's economic problems became acute in 2015, when a collapse in the price of oil rattled an economy already weakened by severe fiscal mismanagement. Colombian refugees proved to be an easy scapegoat. “August 2015 was the big turning point [in Cúcuta], when the Venezuelan government deported and forcibly repatriated more than 22,000 Colombians residing in Venezuela, along with their families,” said Oscar Calderón, the J.R.S. coordinator in the state of Norte-de-Santander, which covers Cúcuta and much of the Venezuelan border region. “From then till 2016 it was mostly a dynamic of Colombians returning from Venezuela.”

J.R.S. in Cúcuta scrambled to meet this first wave of displaced people from Venezuela, but the worst was yet to come. According to Mr. Calderón, 2016 was the fateful turning point, when Venezuelans began to flee. “This is a highly complex migration,” he said. “There are people who flee from direct threats to their lives, others who flee seeking medication, mixed Colombian-Venezuelan families.” But arriving in Colombia is no guarantee of safety or stability. The Tachira River marks “a very violent borderland,” contested by guerrilla groups and drug cartels, a region scarred by poverty and resentment. This is the world in which those who fled Venezuela must now somehow rebuild their lives.

Sister Republics

Once upon a time, Venezuela and Colombia were meant to be one country. That was Simón Bolívar's dream; the state of “Gran Colombia” encompassed all of present-day Colombia, Venezuela, Panama and Ecuador, in addition to portions of Guyana, Brazil and Peru, until it broke apart by the early 1830s. Not far from the Simón Bolívar Bridge lie the ruins of a Catholic church that was destroyed by an earthquake in 1875. It was in this church that the original Colombian constitution was signed in 1821.

Today, the bridge is the main entry point for Venezuelan refugees. On the Colombian side is a chaotic bus terminal and market known simply as *la parada* (“the stop” or “the station”). Venezuelans of all ages and backgrounds sit in the shade of trees with their backpacks and suitcases pondering their next step. All around them are street vendors, scam artists, bus ticket peddlers, aid workers and Colombian police and military—all trying to impose some order on the chaos or to find a way to profit from the new arrivals. Large billboards advertise bus lines and fares to get to places like Bogotá, Lima or Santiago, the most common destinations for the Venezuelan refugees who do not intend to return home.

At *la parada* there is a food kitchen run by the Diocese of Cúcuta. Every day over 1,000 Venezuelans are fed here—and 100 or more must be turned away. Prioritizing women and children and often faced with desperate men attempting to get in, the church volunteers and a priest do their best to uphold both a semblance of order and the dignity of the refugees they serve. It is a challenging task. Volunteers more than once have had to close the gate to the food kitchen as those outside banged on the door. On the day I visited, a group of Venezuelans alleged the Colombian police had set fire to their belongings. J.R.S. staff told me this is a common occurrence.

Nevertheless, the Venezuelan population of Cúcuta keeps growing, as few can afford to travel any farther. All over Cúcuta, Venezuelans are living on the street, in impromptu



shanty towns on the outskirts of the city or in church and government shelters already filled past capacity. Colombian authorities appear to be as mystified about what to do with the sudden influx of refugees as the Venezuelans are about what they will do next.

This situation is exacerbating existing problems in Cúcuta. For Mr. Calderón, it represents a challenge to the mission of J.R.S.: “How do we build hospitality when border communities are suffering poverty, abandonment, injustice? The systemic failure of the Colombian state to integrate migrants has made them live in the poorest regions of Colombia, forcing them to compete with Colombians for the bare minimum.”

A particularly tragic example of the conflict among people living in poverty stems from the sudden influx of Venezuelan women working as prostitutes in Cúcuta. Colombian currency is a lifeline for Venezuelan families (a single Colombian peso is worth 70 Venezuelan bolivars), and according to J.R.S. workers, many Venezuelan women and girls are turning to sex work as the quickest way to earn cash. This, in turn, has driven down the wages of established Colombian sex workers and created severe social tensions and even violence between Colombian prostitutes and Venezuelan prostitutes.

Women and Children

All sectors of Venezuelan society are represented among the refugees. Those who can afford to do so have already settled in places like Madrid or Miami; the daily flows of refugees in Cúcuta represent the less fortunate, especially the poor and members of the now vanished middle class. Indigenous groups face particularly strong discrimination from Colombian authorities, despite often belonging to tribes whose historic homelands straddle the Colombian-Venezuelan border.

Amid the crisis, there is one group that stands out: pregnant women. No other group of refugees seems to be as overrepresented or as vulnerable. Pregnant women or mothers with newborns are everywhere in Cúcuta. “Both the public and private health care system in Venezuela [are] nearly to the point of collapse,” said Mr. Calderón. According to J.R.S. workers, many Venezuelan hospitals are no longer able to perform c-sections, and pregnant Venezuelans are at risk of malnutrition because of the country’s food shortage.

Jesuit Refugee Service pays for an ultrasound examination for every pregnant Venezuelan woman they iden-



Venezuelan migrants line up for a meal provided by the Diocese of Cúcuta near *la parada*, which feeds more than 1,000 Venezuelans a day.

tify. It is almost always the first ultrasound the mother has ever received. Sometimes it comes too late. One J.R.S. worker spoke of a Venezuelan refugee whose ultrasound revealed her child had been dead inside her for almost a month because of malnutrition. The woman refused to believe it and returned to Venezuela, carrying her dead child inside her.

J.R.S. continues to check up on Venezuelan women around Cúcuta, conducting postnatal visits to collect information and help secure basic necessities for the mothers and newborn babies. One of those mothers is Jenny, a 25-year-old Venezuelan woman who recently gave birth in Colombia. Jenny left behind two sons in Venezuela, a 4-year-old and a 2-year-old, and came to Colombia in search of a way to send money home. “I couldn’t get food,” she told me. “No matter how hard the father and I worked, the money just wasn’t enough. No breakfast, no dinner. Parents leave [for Colombia]. In Venezuela, it’s all grandparents and children now.”

Jenny left two children behind in Venezuela when she came to Colombia to work, selling her small plot of land to pay for the passage. But when she became pregnant in Colombia, Jenny knew that for the sake of the baby she could

not return to Venezuela. “In Venezuela, there’s nothing,” she said. “To get care in a hospital, one needs to buy everything. You need to buy the gloves; if necessary you even need to buy the needles.... Lots of people have died due to lack of medical attention.”

Jenny is staying at the Scalabrini shelter in Cúcuta, which has become a hub for Venezuelan migrant mothers and their children. The shelter is one of many across the Americas run by the order of Scalabrini priests, who were founded in 1887 to assist Italian immigrants in the United States and Brazil. “Migrating isn’t anything easy. The Colombians do help. Not all of them are bad; just like Venezuelans, there are good and bad [among everyone],” Jenny said. She has little hope, however, that the situation in Venezuela will improve under the current regime. But for now, Jenny has her eyes fixed only on the future. She is unsure whether she should return to Venezuela with her newborn or bring her two older children to Colombia. “Some women who stay here start to cry, saying this is terrible, that they want to go back,” she said. “But others say, no, go forward, never backward. Don’t even think about going back across the border.”

Colombian authorities appear to be as mystified about what to do with the sudden influx of refugees as the Venezuelans are about what they will do next. ●●

Venezuela's Collapse

It is hard to overstate the totality of the societal collapse in Venezuela. Basic necessities like food and medicine are devastatingly scarce. The economic collapse has fueled a violent crime rate that is among the highest in the world. According to the United Nations refugee agency, as of November 2018, the number of Venezuelans who have fled has surpassed three million.

None of this was supposed to happen. Venezuela, home to some of the world's largest petroleum reserves, was once one of the richest countries in Latin America, with a gross domestic product far above its neighbors. But in 1998, decades of severe inequality and political corruption led Venezuelans to democratically elect Hugo Chávez, a former army officer who had been jailed for participating in a failed coup in 1992. Calling his movement "Bolívarian," after Simón Bolívar, President Chávez promised all Venezuelans would share in the nation's wealth and overcame fierce opposition from the established political order and the business class, including an attempted coup against him in 2002. Mr. Chávez consolidated power and redistributed the wealth produced by Venezuela's state-run oil company to the poor in the form of social services. This earned him popular support even as he weakened democratic institutions and repressed his political opponents, whom he painted as proxies for the United States.

By the time of his death from cancer in March 2013, President Chávez's 14 years in power had left Venezuela's constitutional system hollowed out and the economy dangerously dependent on its poorly managed oil sector. Mr. Chávez's appointed successor, Nicolás Maduro, continued the consolidation of political power, even as the economic warning signs grew. In 2014 the Venezuelan government responded violently to a wave of student protests driven by high inflation and food shortages. Soon after, the price of oil collapsed, taking a good portion of Venezuela's G.D.P. with it.

As economic conditions inside Venezuela worsen, the government is becoming increasingly repressive. Freedom House, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have documented increasing repression and human rights abuses year after year. After the disputed presidential election in 2018 saw Mr. Maduro returned to power, the Organization of American States passed a resolution calling for Venezuela's membership to be suspended, indicating Venezuela's government is increasingly isolated not just from the United States but from its fellow Latin American states.

While the Maduro government has long defied predictions of its imminent collapse, dramatic developments in January 2019 indicate the regime's time could be running out. After mounting protests, Juan Guaidó, the 35-year-old president of the Venezuelan National Assembly, declared himself the interim president of Venezuela "until free and transparent elections take place." Mr. Guaidó quickly gained recognition as the legitimate head of state from the United States, most of the European Union, Colombia and many other Latin American nations. Nicolás Maduro, however, still has the support of the military.

"We hope God takes control of this, that Venezuela returns to a normal government," said one Venezuelan refugee, who wished to remain anonymous. He had been forced to flee Venezuela after blowing the whistle on the Venezuelan military for selling food on the black market. "We have faith in God, that this government, sooner or later, will fall. We can't be afraid of being imprisoned or tortured or killed. We want to return to our country someday, the place that saw us born, to be with our families."

Peace, No Justice?

If Venezuela is a once-prosperous country facing ruin, Colombia is showing signs of finally turning the page after being one of the most violent countries in the world. In 2015 the historic Colombian peace accords between the government of Colombia and the FARC represented the most hopeful development in the South American country after decades of war. Pope Francis welcomed the Havana accords and kept a promise to visit Colombia once a peace deal was reached. But after decades of war, peace can feel like an injustice for many Colombians. Some felt the deal offered clemency to leftist guerrillas responsible for decades of atrocities. Others felt the deal did not address the war crimes committed by the government-aligned right-wing paramilitary groups.



A Venezuelan refugee and her child cross the Simón Bolívar Bridge between Venezuela and Colombia. As economic conditions in Venezuela worsen, the government is becoming increasingly repressive.

Photo by George Castellanos

The disarmament process has also created a power vacuum, especially in the Catatumbo region of northeast Colombia near the Venezuelan border. The FARC was only the largest of the leftist guerrilla groups. In the FARC's absence, both the Ejército de Liberación Nacional and the Ejército Popular de la Liberación continue to fight against the government, as well as each other, for control over drug-trafficking turf.

To prop up the peace process in the region, J.R.S. focuses on eliminating the cultivation of coca in order to break the cycle of violence associated with the drug trade. J.R.S. has also resettled thousands of Colombian internally displaced persons within Cúcuta, in particular, those who face threats of violence or reprisal from guerrilla or paramilitary factions.

Not too far from the hilltop where Simón Bolívar won his famous victory, there lives a resettled I.D.P. family—a mother, a father and two children—from the Catatumbo, all of whom wished to remain to anonymous. The husband had been a motorcycle courier, taking packages from village to village along the treacherous jungle roads. His wife told me the story; the husband himself was so shaken he could not speak of the incident. One day, he was pressured into moving drugs. When he came upon a military roadblock, he discarded the drugs, drawing the ire of traffickers. Soon after he was threatened again and given a day to get out of the Catatumbo or risk being killed. It was the wife who roused the family, packed the bags and got in touch with contacts at the Diocese of Tibu, who got the family out. It is not this

woman's first time having to flee. She had fled her home village years before, after her brothers were killed by guerrillas—or perhaps paramilitaries. “No one really knows who kills whom,” she said matter of factly.

The most striking legacy of Colombia's multisided internal conflict is mixed families. After massacres, survivors of different families will pair up and form a new family. A man who has lost his wife will take as a new wife the woman who lost her husband. Children who were orphaned will be taken in by families whose own children were killed. So the bonds of community are preserved even in the harshest of circumstances.

An Uncertain Future

The tensions of the Colombian conflict were on everyone's mind going into the presidential election on June 17, 2018. The elections pitted Ivan Duque, a Georgetown University-educated hardline opponent of the 2016 peace deal, against Gustavo Petro, a leftist and environmentalist who was briefly a guerrilla himself. In many ways, the fact the Colombian conflict was being settled at the ballot box and not with bullets was itself an enormously positive sign of how far Colombia has come.

Yet political developments since the election may bode ill for the hard-won peace process. Mr. Duque, who labeled the peace deal with the FARC “a monument to impunity,” won in a landslide. His victory is widely seen as a mandate for a tougher line on guerrilla groups. In the Catatumbo, many viewed his election with dread. “The peace will be

While the Maduro government has long defied predictions of its imminent collapse, dramatic developments in January 2019 indicate the regime's time could be running out.

over,” worried one former coca farmer. In January 2019, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo pledged U.S. support for new Colombian eradication efforts, seeking to curtail coca production by 50 percent by 2023.

President Duque also played on the fears among voters that what happened in Venezuela could happen in Colombia, labeling his left-wing opponent a socialist. Indeed, some Venezuelan refugees expressed their support for Mr. Duque during the campaign, hoping he will lead efforts to drive President Maduro from power. But it is possible that Mr. Duque will also implement harsher measures to stem the flow of Venezuelans into Colombia. In Cúcuta, where anti-refugee sentiment runs high, Mr. Duque won almost 80 percent of the vote amid high turnout.

But for now, Colombia is still the destination for an increasing number of Venezuelans. Much of the rest of Latin America is closing its doors, ending a long tradition of relatively open borders on the continent. The election of the far-right congressman Jair Bolsonaro, labeled the “Brazilian Trump,” as the president of Brazil will likely dramatically increase the migratory pressure on Colombia.

In Venezuela, should Maduro respond with force to what his government has labeled “a coup,” President Trump has stated “all options are on the table,” continuing military threats against Venezuela that go back to 2017. U.S. national security experts, however, have argued such an intervention could be a disaster, more likely to resemble the decade-long occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan than the speedy invasions of Grenada or Panama. In all likelihood, an armed conflict would only worsen the refugee crisis.

Nevertheless, some Venezuelan refugees would welcome military action, seeing anything as preferable to the current situation. “I have my family there; it hurts to say this...but let the *gringos* come and invade my country, and take him [Maduro] out in one punch,” one Venezuelan refugee told me. “[Maduro] has said ‘rifle against rifle.’ He wants rifles? Let the *gringos* come and invade! If he wants lead, let them give him lead!”

The one thing the United States could do to dramatically improve the situation of Venezuelans would be to resettle them as refugees. Yet despite taking a hard line on the Maduro regime, the Trump administration has done little for Venezuelan refugees. Indeed, Venezuelans have been deported to Venezuela, even as the Trump administration condemns the Venezuelan government on human rights grounds. With the United States missing in action, there is no one coming to help Colombia bear the burden.

“There doesn’t seem to be a bettering of the economic or political or social situation that will prevent people fleeing Venezuela,” says Mr. Calderón. “Instead what we see is that every time it’s people who are more vulnerable, who are poorer, who are arriving at the border.... Colombia’s system for refugees is too feeble [to accommodate them].”

From the small, ramshackle offices of J.R.S. in Cúcuta, Mr. Calderón surveys the continent: “Across Latin America, we are seeing various migrant movements, where we see so much human pain. That’s what we see in the streets of Cúcuta: people on the streets, with little food, at the mercy of discrimination and criminalization. At play here are very profound spiritual values about human dignity and about the protection of that dignity.”

Mr. Calderón, who has been in Cúcuta since 2010, longer than almost any other J.R.S. worker, does not come off as being remotely optimistic. At the same time, through his weariness, he never hints at giving up. “Colombia has to remember what countries in this region have represented for us in the past, as countries that welcomed our people. We have to make historical memory of that hospitality. We must not now be inferior to the challenge of history.”

Simón Bolívar’s dream of a united Colombia and Venezuela is surely part of that challenge. Bolívar’s memory continues to exert a powerful pull on the imagination of both countries. There is a reason Hugo Chávez claimed Bolívar’s name for his revolution. Perhaps there is still some feeling of siblinghood between Colombians and Venezuelans waiting to be rediscovered.

Antonio De Loera-Brust is a writer and filmmaker and a former Joseph A. O’Hare, S.J., fellow at America Media. He visited Colombia in June as part of Jesuit Refugee Service/USA’s Journalism Encounter program.



Watch America’s original video reporting on Venezuela at [americamag.org/video/venezuela](https://www.americamag.org/video/venezuela).

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After removing symbols of his office—ring, miter, zucchetto and crosier—Bishop Barry C. Knestout of Richmond, Va., lies prostrate during the Mass of Atonement for victims of abuse on Sept. 14 at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Richmond.

THE CASE FOR PUBLIC PENANCE

An ancient church practice offers lessons for the age of clerical abuse, mass incarceration and #MeToo

By Eve Tushnet

On Sept. 14, Bishop Barry Knestout of Richmond, Va., celebrated a Mass of atonement in reparation for the sexual abuse and its cover-up by Catholic priests and prelates. In his homily, the bishop apologized to all those abused and their families as well as “this church of Richmond, the people of God who see the church torn apart.”

“We failed so miserably,” the bishop said, “and are shamed before the whole world because we were called to so much more, but we fell short, so far short, of what we should have done.” He promised to make public the names of members of the clergy who have been “credibly accused” of abuse and announced the creation of a fund to provide counseling to abuse survivors.

He also did something that gave eloquence to his words and underlined his promises of practical action. He laid the symbols of his office—the ring, miter, zucchetto and crosier—on the steps to the altar and prostrated himself on the floor.

Bishop Knestout is not the only U.S. prelate to have made public acts of self-abasement in penance for clerical abuse. Bishop Frank Caggiano of Bridgeport, Conn., and Archbishop Charles C. Thompson of Indianapolis, Ind., have also publicly prostrated themselves. Bishop Robert Reed of Boston, Mass., spent 24 hours in fasting and prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. In a column for his churches’ bulletins, he invited the faithful to join him as he did “the only things I know to do in the face of evil; prayer and penance.”

We are unused to these sights. Their power, in fact, comes from their unexpectedness. The bishops’ actions signal their sincerity precisely because this is not a gesture

we have seen many times before. But the body language of humility—prostrations, fasts, the symbolic stripping of the marks of office—and the public nature of the bishops’ penance are taken from a very old practice, which once was well known in the church.

Most people today expect penance, like confession, to be private—even secret. Even in groups like Alcoholics Anonymous, people generally make amends with some degree of privacy. But well into the Middle Ages across Lotharingia (modern-day Netherlands, Belgium and parts of Germany and France), public penance was a major part of Christian life, often linked to the liturgical year. The ash cross placed on the foreheads of penitents on Ash Wednesday is one of the few practices of this earlier era that Catholics see regularly today.

But from late antiquity until the 13th century in this region, public penance was performed by kings and prelates, peasants and knights, sailors and farm wives. Early Christians could do penance only once, and their penance also carried lifelong consequences, like the inability to marry or hold public or church office. Understandably, many people avoided or postponed this grueling ritual. By the sixth century, a more private or “secret” confession and penance had arisen independently both among Irish monks and on the European continent. Although reconciliation did not always take place within the rite of confession, the spread of secret confession and penance brought into the medieval world something like the ritual we are familiar with today.

Public penance offered medieval Christians a language for repentance, humility and reconciliation that was in many ways richer than our own. ●●

But public penance took a long time to disappear. Recent studies, like Mary C. Mansfield's *Humiliation of Sinners: Public Penance in Thirteenth-Century France*, found that in certain regions public penance lasted significantly longer than earlier scholarship had assumed—at least two centuries after its supposed demise around the time of the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. And public penance offered medieval Christians a language for repentance, humility and reconciliation that was in many ways richer than our own. These medieval rites may offer insights for the age of mass incarceration, exposure of clerical abuse and the #MeToo movement.

A Brief History of Public Penance

Records of public penance are spotty, especially from earlier centuries. Historians have had to rely on what might be called aspirational texts—the ritual guides and confessor's handbooks that expressed what Catholic authorities thought ought to happen, though not necessarily what did happen. Creative scholars, like Sarah Hamilton (*Practice of Penance: 900–1050*), Mansfield (*Humiliation of Sinners*) and the co-authors Peter Biller and Alastair Minnis (*Handling Sin: Confession in the Middle Ages*), have sought evidence of penitential practice in the details of hagiographies or have drawn conclusions from assumptions underlying official texts.

First, we might ask what kind of penance people typically performed and why. The answers are quite varied. Public penance could be anything from whipping to reciting psalms, from pilgrimage to fasting to public humiliations, like standing outside the church doors in sackcloth and ashes.

Penances were probably performed publicly when sins were notorious. (This is an oversimplification of a complicated debate about the boundary between secret and public penance, but for the most part, the penance was public if one's sins had been public.) The sins atoned for in this way could be anything from usury to homicide, from rioting to throwing counterfeit coins to the poor on your wedding day.

Scholars disagree on how voluntary or semi-voluntary penance was. Often those who refused to do public

penance risked excommunication from the church, which could have severe civil consequences. For this reason, it is fair to draw modern parallels not only with purely religious acts, like the bishops' prostrations in reparation for abuse, but also with secular forms of public disgrace and even with the criminal justice system itself. And when we look at medieval practices with our own time in mind, we notice several points of divergence.

Medieval Penance Compared With Today's Rituals

Although in the Middle Ages penance (whether secret or public) could be performed at any time and could even be linked to celebrations like victory parades, Lent was a common period for public penance. As the scholar Sarah Hamilton finds, many rubrics for the beginning of Lent walked a difficult line, singling out for public penance some whose sins had become notorious while emphasizing that all—even the priest and bishop—face God from the position of a penitent.

A 10th-century ceremony for Ash Wednesday, for example, begins with a call to all Christians to confess and receive penance. Everyone then confessed individually outside the church. The priest's prayers during this rite move from asking God's mercy on the penitent to asking for God's mercy on all the people.

The next steps might sound familiar to us—an Act of Contrition and the assigning of a penance. But a 10th-century penitent was expected to kneel, to cry, to "prostrate himself full-length on the ground weeping and groaning with all his heart," according to Hamilton in *Practice of Penance*.

Then the priest prostrated himself beside the penitent. In this act, Hamilton says, "both are human, and as such must acknowledge their humility before God." Both the priest and the penitent rise, and the priest announces what the penance will be. Then the penitent prostrates himself or herself again, asking for the priest's prayers, which the priest offers by reciting psalms and set prayers. The priest and penitent pray together as they enter the church—both of them crawling or on their knees.

There is one ordeal left for the penitents. During Mass, they receive ashes on their heads and put on sackcloth. The priest says, "Change your heart and humiliate your soul in ashes and a hairshirt. For God does not despise a contrite and humble heart." The priest prays (using the first-person plural, *we*) for God's mercy and salvation, and, with readings from Genesis on the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise, the public penitents are ejected from the church. Then the ashes are blessed and,



with further prayers for mercy on sinners and for God's help in their Lenten fasting, placed on the heads of the rest of the congregation. (Liturgical practice varied widely. In many areas only penitents, clergy and monastics would receive ashes. The universal distribution of ashes came to these areas later but, as we know, proved extraordinarily popular.) The Gospel reading for this Mass is the parable of the publican and the Pharisee, ending with, "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

Although there was a real and painful separation between those performing public penance—whose rituals enabled them to be received back into the church and, for some, welcomed to the Eucharistic table on Holy

Thursday—everyone did penance. Everyone fasted, everyone humbled themselves in ashes, and everyone confessed their sins.

In the age of public penance, Ash Wednesday offered ritual acknowledgment that sin is universal. But it was also a recognition that certain acts have harmed the community in a public way.

Sara Perla, a Catholic in Maryland who has participated in several forms of public prayer in reparation for clergy abuse, says she fasts and prays in penance for others' sins. She says she does this because "if we're called to follow Christ, that means choosing to bear the sins of others for them.... We participate in that as members of his body." But, she quickly adds, "that is a different thing from saying, in response to the crisis, 'Well, we're all sinners

Henry IV, the Holy Roman Emperor, sought forgiveness from Pope Gregory VII in 1077 by standing in the snow for three days with his head uncovered. In the Middle Ages, public penance was a major part of Christian life.



CNS photo/Adrees Latif Reuters

In the age of public penance, Ash Wednesday offered ritual acknowledgment that sin is universal, but also recognized that certain acts have harmed the community.

and we all need to repent,' which is frightfully inadequate." Such a response, Ms. Perla believes, implies that responsibility for the abuse crisis is equally shared by all church members—which is untrue.

As Dawn Eden Goldstein, a writer who has called for more bishops to perform public penance for abuse, told **America**: "St. Maria Goretti on her deathbed forgave her attacker—but she also described him to the cops! Just as mercy doesn't exclude justice, likewise penance doesn't exclude justice; rather, it is part of justice."

The Need for Reconciliation

Unlike 21st-century rituals of disgrace and punishment, public penance ended in reconciliation. We might even say that unlike our own practices, public penance had an end point.

Consider two recent stories that suggest public penance is neverending for people who have been convicted of crimes today, no matter what they do. Vladimir Matyssik, a 65-year-old of Los Gatos, Calif., was charged and jailed for trespassing, but the case was dismissed after a judge determined he had Alzheimer's disease. He was released one morning in 2015 and walked for eight miles before he was hit and killed while walking on the highway. Releases in isolated areas are not uncommon for people coming out of jail or prison. As a *New York Times* Maga-

zine profile in 2015 put it: "An inmate might be released from a prison outside Sacramento and expected to find his way to a parole officer in San Diego, 500 miles away, within 48 hours."

Last summer a man named Geoffrey Corbis was found dead behind the wheel of his car, parked on a New York City street, a week after he killed himself there. I hesitate to speculate about the reasons for anyone's suicide. But Corbis had changed his name after finding it impossible to get a job under his birth name, Geoffrey Weglarz. In 2013, Mr. Weglarz threw his sandwich at a pregnant McDonald's drive-through worker and was arrested for disorderly conduct. The story "went viral," with his name attached, and Mr. Weglarz became an avatar of entitled rage. He never found a path back from disgrace. On learning Mr. Weglarz's story, the writer Seth A. Mandel noted, "Everything is pointless if there's no way back."

Many of the famous men recently accused of sexual harassment (or worse) have attempted to make public apologies. Some of these seemed heartfelt. Some of them sounded more like P.R. ploys, vetted by lawyers who know humility can be a liability risk. Some were flailing attempts by men whose desperation practically oozed from the page. One celebrity chef sexual harassment apology earned contempt for concluding with a recipe for pizza dough cinnamon rolls (really). The poet Isobel O'Hare redacts abuse

apologies by celebrities, blacking out the self-exculpatory words until all that's left is a caustic confession:

*my d**k [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] a question [REDACTED]
I [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] run from [REDACTED]
or, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] the whole history of
music [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] was never
[REDACTED] necessar y [REDACTED]*

Perhaps these men's apologies are easy to reject because they have not suffered enough. And O'Hare draws attention to this lack of suffering, in a way that almost can't help being prideful, even if it is also insightful.

But where can someone who sincerely wants to repent and atone find guidance or models for apologizing well?

Even when people have paid harsh prices for misdeeds, we have little concern for the human need for restoration. Everyone who works in criminal justice reform, prison abolition or "re-entry" services can report that even a short prison sentence carries lifelong consequences. Depending on where a person lives and the nature of the conviction, a criminal record can make it impossible for a former prisoner to vote; it can present barriers to earning a professional license or lead to exclusion from public (and, obviously, private) housing. A felony drug conviction can make a person ineligible for SNAP benefits (food stamps) and Temporary Aid to Needy Families. Although some cities have started holding "re-entry fairs" to address the practical needs of people coming out of prison, the need for social restoration is even more broadly overlooked.

In certain regions in medieval times, when public penitents were expelled from the church on Ash Wednesday they were typically allowed back in when Lent was over (even if they still had years of penance to serve). These poignant ceremonies of reconciliation took place on Holy Thursday. They varied widely in how elaborate they were.

In the same 10th-century rubric described above, the reconciliation of public penitents on Holy Thursday begins when the penitents are brought from outside the church building to inside (uniting church and world in a highly public spectacle). The archdeacon pleads for them, and the bishop prostrates himself, confesses his sinfulness and begs the Lord for strength and salvation. The penitents approach

the bishop, genuflecting, as he calls them three times: "Venite! Venite! Venite!" (Come in!) After the third exhortation, they prostrate themselves at his feet and, amid the singing of Psalm 33, they are raised up and led by the hand to the bishop, who touches them with his hand in a sign of restoration. They lie prostrate and the bishop joins them in this posture; then he rises to offer intercessory prayer, absolution, sprinkling with holy water and censing and commands, "Rise up, you who are asleep, rise from the dead and Christ will give you light." At this, the penitents stand up, their place in the community having been restored.

In a given year, not all the penitents present would have completed their penance by this point. Those with unfinished years of penance might continue to suffer exclusion from Communion; nonetheless, every year their welcome would be renewed at Holy Thursday.

John Braithwaite, one of the leading theorists of the "restorative justice" movement, distinguishes between "disintegrative (or stigmatizing) shaming" and "reintegrative shaming." In the first kind, which contemporary American society practices often and harshly, "much effort is directed at labeling deviance, while little attention is paid to de-labeling, to signifying forgiveness and reintegration, to ensuring that the deviance label is applied to the behavior rather than the person, and that this is done under the assumption that the disapproved behavior is transient, performed by an essentially good person." The welcoming of penitents on Holy Thursday offers a striking image of reintegrative shaming. Their penance is painful enough to satisfy justice, unchosen enough to avoid self-absorption—and it ends in a restoration of community.

A medieval Maundy Thursday offered striking visual imagery of hope and healing, which reminded everyone that public penitents remained a part of the body of Christ.

Humiliation as Mercy

As the Holy Thursday rite demonstrates, medieval public penance often included the humiliation of members of the clergy. In many Ash Wednesday rituals, the priest or bishop would switch back and forth, from the role of shepherd imposing penance to that of a wayward sheep huddling humbly with the others.

Some church hierarchs tried to manage the consequences of the penitential humiliation of the mighty. In parts of Lotharingia, powerful bishops were continually embroiled in violent conflicts with secular rulers. In this area, the Holy Thursday ritual began with the bishop calling penitents to come and hear him, and he did not prostrate himself even

Just as mercy doesn't exclude justice, likewise penance doesn't exclude justice; rather, it is part of justice. ●●

— Dawn Eden Goldstein

once. The Holy Thursday rite became not a dramatic display of humility before God but an assertion of the bishop's power and authority. Moreover, no matter where the rite was performed, the priest determined the penance. He retained a high degree of control over the process, subject to various efforts to standardize penances.

Our current judicial system resembles this anxious style of power-preservation. Even the physical structure of the courtroom reinforces a hierarchy in which the judge looms above the defendant (and the victim). Here and there, a judge will choose to acknowledge his or her commonality with the defendant. One judge in North Carolina, a veteran who serves in a special Veterans Treatment Court, sentenced a man to a night in jail for a probation violation—but then spent the night alongside him, “in the foxhole” with his fellow veteran.

But many people have experienced contemptuous or condescending lectures from the bench. Leslie Jamison, observing a drug court for her book *The Recovering: Intoxication and Its Aftermath*, quotes a judge asking if the defendant is “Humble? Willing to listen now?” However well-meaning this intervention, it assumes the judge's superiority to the offender. Even when judges choose to display humility from the bench, the fact that this is their choice means it will always draw some attention (however unwanted) to their personality, their virtue. Chosen humility may also be more colored by racial stereotypes and other unacknowledged assumptions about whose crimes are most like our own.

By contrast, self-abasement by members of the clergy on Ash Wednesday, alongside the public penitents, called attention to the humility they had to display because of their role, not their personalities. It reminded them that the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep.

Historically, public penance characterized the lives of some of the most honored people in a society, who were monks and nuns. Fasting, corporal punishment, coarse clothing and other marks of public penance were open reminders of these esteemed people's sinfulness. Mary Man-

sfield writes, “Solemn penitents were criminals, but they acted the part of saints.”

When monks and saints are presented as criminals and sinners—and vice versa—how does this shape our understanding of criminality and reconciliation? Consider a wild hypothetical. If Mr. Rogers had worn an orange prison jumpsuit instead of a cozy sweater, would generations of American children have learned that even their idols are capable of wrongdoing? Would viewers have realized that Mr. Rogers's acceptance extended to all the people “in their neighborhood”—even the ones serving time far from home? The sharing of public penance calls our attention to a shared humanity found precisely in our failures.

Public penance by bishops is only one part of a Catholic and clerical self-emptying that must also include humble and complete cooperation with secular justice; support for survivors; and “opening the files” on past abuse. Without these practical steps, prayer and penance will start to look like nothing but public relations.

But the bishops who performed public penance must have sensed that something was lacking in a strictly worldly approach to horrific betrayal by clergy and hierarchy. In doing public penance, the bishops reached for a very old language, which expressed better than our modern tongues the ideas that clergy are here to serve and not to be served, that sin is both the common burden of Christians and an attack on the body of Christ, that humiliation can be received as mercy and that a public reckoning with sin is part of what is owed to victims of abuse.

Eve Tushnet is a contributing writer for America. She is the author of Gay and Catholic: Accepting My Sexuality, Finding Community, Living My Faith and Amends: A Novel.

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Why I Am Pro-Life

From the unborn child to the refugee,
every life is precious

By James Martin

Whenever I say that I am pro-life, it always surprises some people—which always surprises me.

Last summer I attended a conference on polarization in the Catholic Church, held at Georgetown University. One evening, when I mentioned my pro-life convictions to a participant, her face registered shock. “I’m so relieved to hear that,” she said.

Maybe because I also advocate for refugees and migrants, L.G.B.T. people and the environment—causes usually championed by those who identify as politically progressive—some people tell me that they wonder about the sincerity of my public comments in support of unborn children. By the same token, others with whom I share common ground on a variety of social justice issues often express discomfort, disappointment and even anger when I use the phrase “pro-life.”

So perhaps it would be helpful to explain what I mean when I say that I am pro-life. And I would invite you to consider this more as a profession of faith than as a political argument.

The best way of explaining my belief is this: The longer

I live, the more I grow in awe of God’s creative activity and in reverence for God’s creation.

I see God’s creative activity in countless ways, but mainly in the ways that God is active in the spiritual lives of people with whom I minister. Over the last 25 years, I have accompanied perhaps hundreds of people in my ministry as a spiritual director—that is, someone who helps people notice God in their daily lives and in their prayer.

In the process I have seen first-hand how God encounters individuals in breathtakingly, sometimes nearly miraculously personal ways. With one person, God encounters him or her through a powerful experience in private prayer, with another during an almost mystical experience amid nature, with another in a conversation that suddenly heals an old emotional wound. The expression “God meets people where they are” captures some of this reality—but only a little. God’s ability to enter a person’s life in ways that are perfectly tailored to that life always amazes me.

The more I see this, the more my awe of God’s creative activity naturally grows.

But I notice God's creative activity in other ways, too. The birth of my two nephews, who are now 20 and 13 years old, profoundly deepened my appreciation for the mystery of life. When I first saw my older nephew in the hospital a few hours after his birth, I was tremendously moved. After returning home, I wept for joy, completely overwhelmed by the gift and vulnerability of God's new creation. Over the years I've watched them learn how to eat, sit up, talk, crawl, laugh, walk, read, run, ride bikes, make jokes, throw a ball, drive a car and take joy in the world.

Recently I had dinner with my older nephew and thought, "I can't believe that he didn't exist 20 years ago" and felt a surge of gratitude for God's grace. (I knew enough not to tell him this, since he'd probably say, "Uncle Jim, give me a break!" Or more likely, "Uh huh.")

The more I reflect on this, the more my reverence for God's creation grows. All of this naturally increases my reverence for the life of the child in the womb.

Now, as a man and a priest, and therefore someone who will never experience the joys and challenges of being a mother, someone who will never have to make a decision about an abortion and someone in a position of some power in the church, I recognize the limitations of my experience. And I recognize that many women consider it offensive to hear this from a man—because they have told me.

Many women whom I love, respect and admire support abortion rights and see these rights as a constitutive part of their authority over their own bodies. And who can doubt that over the centuries, women have been dominated and abused by men—even men responsible for providing them with legal, pastoral and medical care?

But acknowledging that women's bodies are their own does not diminish my own reverence for the living body in a woman's womb. Thus, I cannot deny that I see the child in the womb, from the moment of his or her conception, as a creation of God, deserving of our respect, protection and love. Mysterious, precious, unique, infinite, made in the image and likeness of God. Holy.

And my respect for life extends to life at every stage, a feeling that has only grown through my experiences in various ministries during my 30 years as a Jesuit—for example,

with refugees.

For two years, as a young Jesuit in the early 1990s, I worked in Kenya with refugees from around East Africa who, in search of a safe life for their families, had fled war-torn countries like Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda, Somalia and Rwanda and settled in the slums of Nairobi. There, along with colleagues from the Jesuit Refugee Service, I helped them start small businesses to support themselves.

Many of them had suffered the severest losses in their home countries, tragedies that might seem unbelievable to some—seeing spouses hacked to death with machetes before them; watching their children have their throats slit; and being brutalized, kidnapped and tortured themselves. Sometimes people think I am concocting these stories. I'm not. I have met these people and in many cases have seen the proof: medical records, newspaper clippings and gruesome scars.

Their lives were devalued, threatened and imperiled. It's no wonder that refugees and migrants flee their home countries. Nearly all of them flee to save their lives and protect the lives of their children. So when I think of "life issues," I often think of the 68 million refugees, migrants and internally displaced people whose most important "pro-life activity" is to flee. Their lives are often at risk not just in their home countries but also in transit through the deserts and on the seas and later in teeming refugee camps, where, despite many noble efforts, they and their children die from lack of food, sanitation and medicine.

Every life is precious to God—including the lives of refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons. In other words, the life of a child at a border is precious, just as the life of a child in the womb is precious.

To take another nontraditional "life issue," think about L.G.B.T. people. In the past few years I have learned a great deal about how these precious lives are also in grave danger. Consider this: Lesbian, gay and bisexual youth in the United States are almost five times as likely to commit suicide as their straight counterparts. In many countries around the world, a gay person is at serious risk of being beaten or killed if his or her sexuality is discovered, and in eight countries homosexual acts are punishable with the death penalty. And in the last 10 years, over 3,000 transgender people have been murdered worldwide; the most common causes of their deaths are shootings, stabbings and beatings.

In some places, then, L.G.B.T. issues are truly life issues. The life of an L.G.B.T. teenager in a family that rejects them is precious, just as the life of a child in the womb is precious.

I could also tell you about many other vulnerable lives that I have encountered as a Jesuit, which are equally valuable in the eyes of God: the lives of patients with traumatic brain injuries confined for years in a hospital in Cambridge, Mass.; the lives of the poor, sick and dying men and women in their final days at Mother Teresa's hospice in Kingston, Jamaica; the lives of street-gang members in the violent, deadly and now-demolished housing projects in Chicago; the lives of men who have attempted suicide and who now sit in solitary confinement in a prison in Boston. All these people are God's beloved children, made in God's own image.

So my respect for life extends to all people but most especially those whose lives are at risk: the unborn child, to be sure, but also the refugee whose life is threatened by war, the L.G.B.T. young person tempted to commit suicide, the homeless person whose life is endangered by malnutrition, the uninsured sick person with no health care, the elderly person in danger of being euthanized, the inmate spending time on death row. I have come to value all life, from conception to natural death, including the unborn, migrants and refugees, L.G.B.T. people and all human beings, and I believe that our laws should reflect this important principle.

Sometimes this is referred to as the "consistent ethic of life" or the "seamless garment" approach, a reference to the robe stripped from Jesus before his crucifixion and for which soldiers cast lots (Jn 19:23-24). It has been criticized unfairly by some people as "watering down" pro-life activities. One strong advocate of that approach, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, the late archbishop of Chicago, lamented it was wrongly used in that way. But the misuse of a principle does not invalidate it.

In fact, the point of the consistent ethic of life is not that we should focus on other issues instead of abortion but that our witness for social justice and in defense of all life is strengthened when we base it clearly and consistently on the recognition of the dignity of every human life at every stage.

No less a person than St. John Paul II, in his encyclical "The Gospel of Life" ("Evangelium Vitae"), pointed to several "life issues" beyond abortion, invoking the *Didache*, one of the most ancient Christian texts outside the Bible, which dates to the first century. The *Didache* (which means "teaching" in Greek) not only inveighed against abortion but also condemned those who "show no compassion for the poor" and who "do not suffer with the suffering."

In his encyclical, John Paul highlighted not only "the ancient threats of scourges of poverty, hunger, endemic disease, violence and war" but also "new threats." "Evangelium

Vitae" joined with the Second Vatican Council in "forcefully condemning" practices that are "opposed to life itself."

The long list often surprises people, but it is a reminder of the breadth of human life and the many threats to it:

...any type of murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia, or willful self-destruction, whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, torments inflicted on body or mind, attempts to coerce the will itself; whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where people are treated as mere instruments of gain rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others like them are infamies indeed.

Today we could add even more to St. John Paul's list. The threats to human life in all its diversity grow with each passing year.

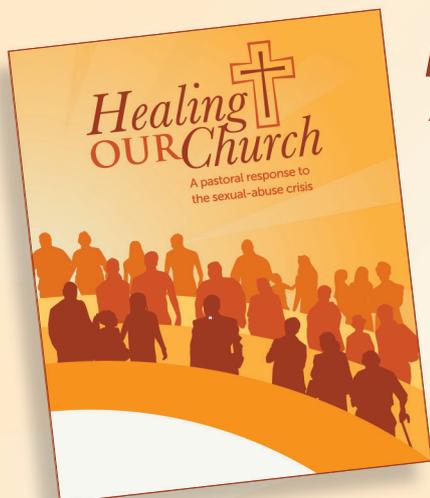
Perhaps it is time to expand our understanding of what it means to be pro-life. During the Georgetown University conference, I met many thoughtful people who proposed other ways of framing the discussion: "Whole Life," "One Life," "Every Life." These may be some helpful ways forward.

What would help even more than a new label is for all of us to care for every life. For the refugee advocate to care passionately about the unborn. And for the pro-life marcher to care passionately about the migrant. We should care for all life.

Because, as our faith teaches, as I have learned and as I believe, every life is sacred.

James Martin, S.J., is editor at large of *America*, consultor to the Vatican's Dicastery for Communication and author of many books, including, most recently, *Building a Bridge: How the Catholic Church and the LGBT Community Can Enter Into a Relationship of Respect, Compassion and Sensitivity*.

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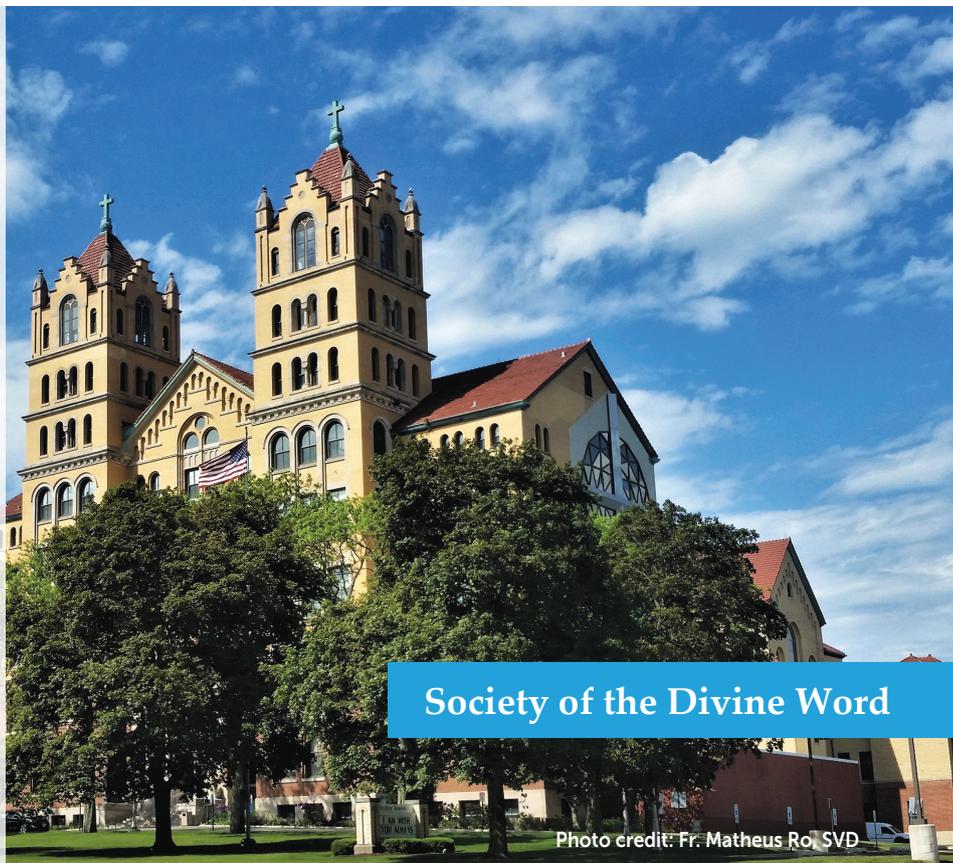
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Photo credit: Fr. Matheus Ro, SVD



Mornings With Mahalia

By W. Ralph Eubanks

On Sunday mornings when I was growing up in Mississippi, my father, Warren Eubanks, a slender man with skin the color of warm caramel, would take a black and gray Sears Silvertone record player and roll it into my parents' bedroom. He owned many records, but on these mornings, it seemed he played only one: a 1960 Apollo Records vinyl called "In the Upper Room," with Mahalia Jackson.

Jackson, who was known as the "queen of gospel," was born in New Orleans in 1911. She began performing as a teenager in Chicago in the 1920s. In 1947 she signed with Apollo Re-

ords, and a year later, her career took off with her recording of the composer William Brewster's "Move On Up a Little Higher." The record sold eight million copies around the country and catapulted Jackson to stardom, first in the United States, then in Europe. She was Apollo Records's top-selling and most-recorded artist and the first gospel singer to perform at Carnegie Hall in New York City.

In a 1963 interview with Studs Terkel, Jackson described her singing as a mystical experience: "I don't seem to be myself. I am transformed from Mahalia Jackson into something

divine." This transformation allowed her listeners to feel a connection to something sacred and spiritual. She believed that she talked with the Lord when she sang and asked listeners, like my father, to do the same.

Before going to church, my father would allow the lyrics of "In the Upper Room" to center him in prayer. I remember him standing over the record player, watching its incantatory spin as he listened to the music flowing from the scratchy speakers. "*Seeking help in loving prayers/ It is this how I feel the spirit/ And I sat with him and pray.*" His head was always bowed as Jack-



AP Photo

Mahalia Jackson believed she talked with the Lord when she sang.

son quietly sang with the gentle accompaniment of her longtime pianist, Mildred Falls. He would lift the phonograph needle with great care as he replayed the first part of the title track several times.

My relationship with gospel music was forged not just on those Sunday mornings at home with Jackson and in church with my family but also on late nights in the backseat of a 1962 Chevy Bel Air sedan. On Sunday morn-

ings, we would often drive to visit my father's mother in the red dirt hills of Alabama. During these drives, gospel music punctuated the long silences of the road with sounds of faith and joy. On dark stretches of two-lane blacktop, my three siblings and I nodded off to sleep accompanied by the soulful musical testimony of artists like Clara Ward, the Mighty Clouds of Joy, Shirley Caesar and The Blind Boys of Alabama on the Clear Channel radio station WLAC from Nashville.

WLAC could be heard across 20 states. Many of its most devoted listeners were black families

like mine, who were crossing lonely and seemingly forgotten highways with nowhere safe to stop in the then-segregated South. Even today, when listening to Ward's "How I Got Over," I am transported back to the safety of my childhood, now with the knowledge that the music gave my parents comfort as we traveled on dangerous roads. (The murders of three civil rights activists, Andrew Goodman, James Chaney and Michael Schwerner, occurred near our route home.) Like my father's Sunday mornings with Mahalia, gospel on the radio those Sunday evenings served as a form of prayer, a petition to the Lord that we arrive home safe and unharmed.

•••

I was raised in the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, a historically black denomination founded by former slaves in the American South in the aftermath of the Civil War and Reconstruction. Up until the 1960s, C.M.E.s were known as the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church. But to our more refined brethen of the African Methodist Episcopal Church—founded in late 18th-century Philadelphia—we were known simply as the Country Methodist Episcopal Church because of our less staid and at times raucous liturgical music.

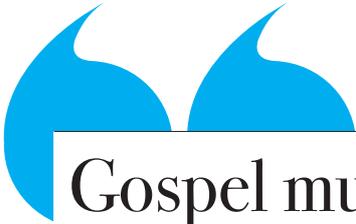
When it came to liturgy and music, C.M.E.s were unpretentious, echoing the spirituals sung by our founding members. Rather than singing "Amazing Grace" like a traditional hymn, we sang it as a call-and-response anthem. Like in the gospel music I heard growing up, we would shout and clap a little.

Gospel improvisation was a part of the C.M.E. liturgy and music, in contrast to the more formalist and structured approach of the A.M.E. churches.

This divide in worship style speaks to a class tension within the black community at large in mid-century America, particularly as black Southerners moved north and took their music with them. Many black Northern churches—and even Southern ones—tried to emulate the formal hymns of white churches, using choirs to sing European classical songs and anthems. Moving away from black folk traditions in music became a way for blacks who had attained a higher socioeconomic status to display their new identity. The historian Carter G. Woodson observed that socially mobile blacks felt that "the old-time plaintive plantation hymns...should give place to music of a refined order."

I left the C.M.E. Church in the mid-1970s when, at the age of 18, I converted to Catholicism. I was drawn to the church by its intellectual tradition, which I felt matched the person I was becoming. I was intellectually and spiritually curious, an interest which began in the writings of John Henry Newman on individual conscience and Thomas Merton's *Seven Storey Mountain*. These Catholic thinkers—both converts—inspired me to embrace the idea of a quiet, contemplative faith. Merton made a journey from unbelief to faith, which was a different conversion experience from my own, yet one I embraced wholeheartedly while mourning the music I was leaving behind.

In *The Souls of Black Folk*, W. E. B. DuBois noted that "the Negro



Gospel music on the car radio gave my parents comfort as we traveled on dangerous roads. It served as a form of prayer.

folk-song—the rhythmic cry of the slave—stands today not simply as the sole American music, but as the most beautiful expression of human experience born this side the seas.” DuBois understood music as a way of shining a light on the idea of dual consciousness, his belief that black people have to learn to operate in two Americas, one that is black and one that is white. Dual consciousness is the awareness of the “two-ness” of being black and American and the largely unconscious, almost instinctive movement between these two identities.

But as Northern blacks in the 1940s and 1950s confronted DuBois’s idea of dual consciousness—one could argue that this duality was brought about by the pressures of the dominant white culture to assimilate—and merged their dual consciousness into “a better and truer self,” many sought to abandon or erase rather than embrace their pasts. Instead of seeing beauty in their spiritual origins, they sought to blend their way of musical worship into the manners of the dominant culture. The gospel music movement embraced DuBois’s idea that in this merging of selves and dual con-

sciousness, the older selves would not be lost. Dual consciousness did not mean cultural erasure.

This same tension existed for black Catholics in the 1970s. Although the Catholic Church had more black converts and baptisms than ever before in the early 20th century, black church membership and attendance had begun to shrink by the mid-1970s. When I came into the church, being black and being Catholic were identities perceived to be at odds with each other in an era when black empowerment and cultural expression stood as the order of the day. Although I felt welcomed and embraced by members of my college parish in Oxford, Miss., there were times at Mass when I felt I had to check my blackness at the door.

Perhaps that is why when the pastor of my parish wanted to send a representative to a diocesan “Call to Action” conference in the spring of 1978, he asked me to attend. One of the topics was black Catholic spirituality and the need to make black cultural expression a more integral part of Mass, something my pastor knew was lacking for me. It was at that meeting that I first experienced gospel music as part of the Mass and realized that

the music of my formative years could be a part of my adopted faith.

Other black Catholics in my diocese also wanted to strengthen the ties between black cultural expression and the Mass. Later that same year, the Diocese of Jackson welcomed a newcomer to the diocese by the name of Sister Thea Bowman to head an office of intercultural awareness. Sister Thea became a vocal advocate for the incorporation of African-American hymns into Catholic worship, not just locally but nationally. Sister Thea, who became a Catholic in 1940, said that we “had to leave behind us the music that was an expression of the spirituality of our home, community and upbringing.”

Yet during this time, there were many older black Catholics who saw gospel music as something they had to leave behind. In her introduction to *Lead Me, Guide Me: The African American Catholic Hymnal*, Sister Thea wrote African-American hymns were “shared by black American Christians across time, geographic, socioeconomic, and denominational lines.” Sister Thea sought to bridge the gap between older and younger black Catholics by framing gospel music in both its American-ness and its blackness.

Today at Saint Martin of Tours Catholic Church, my parish in Washington, D.C., the gospel music at Mass connects Catholics across racial and class lines in the rapidly gentrifying neighborhoods of Eckington and Bloomingdale. I am a relative newcomer, after years attending a much whiter and more traditional parish in another part of the city. The banner outside Saint Martin’s proclaims “Welcome All Sinners”—something

I would have never seen at my previous parish—and the sound of the music flows out into the street. The soulful hymns seem to attract people from across the city, even some who are not Catholic and just come for the music. My favorite opening hymn has become the choir’s version of Hezekiah Walker’s “Every Praise,” which the choir performs to the rousing accompaniment of a small brass and percussion section. In the Kyrie Eleison and in other parts of the liturgy, I hear the jazz-inflected influence of Mary Lou Williams’s Mass, more polished than the down-home music I grew up hearing but still layered with the rhythm and bounce of gospel.

There is a long bright line that connects the gospel music of Saint Martin’s to my musical past, one that I am certain my father would enjoy and recognize. While he accepted my becoming a Catholic, my father wondered whether Catholicism would distance me from my culture. He need not have worried; he is the one who helped me to form an unbreakable connection with gospel music.

Listening to the music at my church today, sometimes it feels as if I have returned to my cultural roots. But the truth is, I never really left.

W. Ralph Eubanks is a visiting professor of English and Southern studies at the University of Mississippi. This essay is adapted from *Can I Get a Witness?* published by Eerdmann’s.

Psalm 103

By Jane Simpson

*As for man, his days are as grass:
as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.
For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone.
—Ps 103:15-16*

The orchid on the porch blossomed today—the same tropical that languished for two years with no bloom, just those long, sinewy blues—vines that looked like old lady leg veins. Then, it flowered—soft textures, but petals that never moved, like mounted butterflies. The orchid book says to stop watering right before you think it’s enough, which doesn’t help much—I’m missing those instincts. It’s like when I read that deep calls to deep, am I hearing plinks in pails, rain-barrels? Is it the echo in a rock quarry? Is it the call of the orchid that thrives in low light, stony ground, little water?

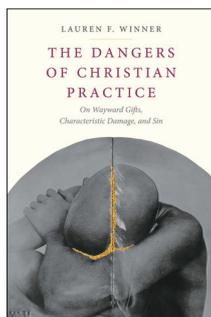
Jane Simpson was named the 2018 Georgia Author of the Year by the Georgia Writer’s Association for her chapbook, *On the Porch, Under the Eve*. Her most recent book is *Blessings of the Beasts*.



Mosaic of Leonardo DaVinci's "The Last Supper" by Giacomo Raffaelli. Stock

Remaining faithful to fragile gifts

By Patrick Gilger



The Dangers of Christian Practice
On Wayward Gifts, Characteristic Damage, and Sin
By Lauren F. Winner
Yale University Press
240p \$28

There is a passage of exceptional courage in the decree issued by the most recent General Congregation of the Society of Jesus. “The question that confronts the Society today,” the delegates wrote, “is why the *Exercises* do not change us as deeply as we would hope.” Why, in other words, does the holiest practice the Jesuits have to offer, the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, fail to fully convert even its own members to Christ?

The question itself is all too familiar. Regardless of our tradition, we know well that gap, that black hole that stretches between what we hope our holiest religious practices will

produce in us and what they do in fact produce. The Exercises, for example, aim to make us into persons moved by mortified, magnanimous desires; into women and men who are moved by the Spirit and are able to, in freedom, “upon Christ throw all away.” But all of us who have made them are well aware that even afterward we miss the mark.

In her beautifully written new book, the Episcopal priest and Duke University professor Lauren Winner trains her attention on this same gap, albeit from another perspective. Instead of asking about our personal incapacity—what Augustine called our “concupiscence”—in *The Dangers of Christian Practice* Winner shows that even our holiest religious practices create characteristic distortions. Our most prized Christian practices, like the Eucharist or baptism, she insists, must be understood not only in terms of the goods at which they aim, or their sad failure to produce those goods; they must also be understood in terms of the way they are “characteristically

damaged.” Damaged, that is, not by external influences but in “ways having to do with the practice itself.” Her attention is trained, in other words, upon the ways that the very things that we humans have built to help us turn our recalcitrant hearts back to God are deformed and, as a result, deform we who engage in them.

Take, as Winner does, the prayers for patience and restraint made by Keziah Brevard, a slave-owning woman in 19th-century South Carolina. A proper account of the practice of prayer, Winner argues, must not only account for St. Ignatius’ “*Suscipe*” prayer but also for Brevard’s prayers that her slaves will be obedient and that she will have “better feelings” toward them. That such prayers exist, prayers that ask God to reconcile her to the irreconcilable situation of being a slave owner, show that prayer is not a pristine practice but a damaged one. Even more, it shows that this damage emerges not because of some malicious external influence but because

◀ Our most prized Christian practices, Lauren Winner insists, must be understood not only in terms of the goods at which they aim, but also in terms of the way they are “characteristically damaged.”

of what prayer itself is—because it requires the one praying to share with God her desires, malformed though those desires may be.

The characteristic deformation of prayer, in other words, lies in the fact that we human beings are continually forgetting to ask whether the things we want are the things we ought to want. Keziah Brevard ought not to want to be reconciled to being a slave owner, and yet that is the thing for which she prays.

This attention to the way practices themselves, not just their practitioners, are damaged is particularly important because, over the past few decades, postliberal theologians have attempted to turn away from thin definitions of religion—religion as a set of beliefs or a structure of meaning, for example—and toward the thicker category of religious practice. Taking their cue from Alasdair MacIntyre (or Duke’s own Stanley Hauerwas), they have proposed that it is not beliefs but practices (or liturgies, or collective rituals) that compose the body of the church. This has been an important argument because it is these practices, the theologians contend, that give the church the resources it needs to resist the ideologies of nationalism, militarism, or moralistic therapeutic deism that attempt to infect the body of Christ. It is Winner’s contention that such postliberal theologians have, however, painted too rosy a picture of Christian practices, and in so doing have failed to acknowledge the ways that the practices themselves tend to cause damage.

But perhaps such diagnoses of the intractable brokenness of hu-

man institutions and the practices that compose them seem rote these days. Certainly we know by heart the playbook of castigation and condemnation, of departure and destruction, that is run daily in these United States. (The voice in our heads repeats some version of “Why be a part of such a broken institution as X?,” where X can be our church, our political party, our civic organization, our workplace and on and on.)

It is to Winner’s credit that she does not join this chorus. Her aim in pointing out the characteristic damage caused by Christian practices is not so that we will abandon them, but so that we might “depristiniate” them—stop pretending that any of them, either guitar liturgies or *ad orientem* Eucharists—are pristine, somehow preserved from characteristic deformations. Instead of denouncing the Eucharist or prayer or baptism as irredeemable, Winner aims to alert us to the pattern of predictable distortions in order to help us lessen and minimize the kind of damage they cause. “An account of characteristic damage,” she writes, “can help the community be alert to the kinds of damage its hallmark practices are likely to extend.”

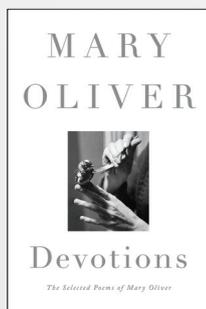
Provocatively, the clue Winner offers to help us pursue this task of depristination comes not from outside our Christian tradition but from within it: lament and confession. Turning again to the practice of prayer, for example, Winner raises up the Our Father as paradigmatic. There she notices that Jesus’ plea that the Father “take this cup from me”—the very words by which he gives voice to his own deep

desires—is tied to another request, that “thy will be done.” Winner argues that depristinating prayer does not mean refusing to state our desires. Instead, it means both stating our desires and submitting them to the Father, whose desires are truly right and just. “Part of what we ought to bewail in confession,” she concludes, “is our inability to discern what is good for us.”

Even more fundamentally, however, Winner holds that we ought to remain faithful to the fragile practices that have been handed on to us not only for pragmatic reasons but because (although broken) they remain gifts given to us by God. In a moment of exceptional courage of her own near the close of her book, Winner asks and answers the one question that remains. “What kind of God,” she poses, “gives gifts we can’t use well? The God who gives *felix*’d gifts.” The one who makes all things, even broken practices, new.

By this she does not mean that, say, the horror of slavery is anything other than a horror. Instead, Winner means that it is in our practice of acknowledging, lamenting and repenting the damage our broken gifts have caused that we contribute to God’s transformation of each gift into a *felix culpa*, one of those happy faults by which our wounds are woven into new Exultets sung in praise at the wonder of our salvation.

Patrick Gilger, S.J., is pursuing doctoral studies in sociology at the New School for Social Research. He is *America’s* contributing editor for culture. Twitter: @paddygilgersj.



Devotions:
The Selected
Poems of
Mary Oliver
By Mary Oliver
Penguin Press
455p \$30

Be astonished

“Listen,” writes Mary Oliver, urging the reader to put aside questions and doubts as she describes terns wheeling over ocean waves, “maybe such devotion, in which one holds the world/ in the clasp of attention, isn’t the perfect prayer,/ but it must be close.” With *Devotions*, Oliver, who died on Jan. 17 at age 83, offers a record of her attentiveness to the world in over 200 poems selected from more than 20 books.

Devotions begins with a selection from Oliver’s most recent work, *Felicity* (2015), and ends with selections from her first book (*No Voyage and Other Poems*, 1963). Over half a century and 400 pages, Oliver’s subjects remain consistent. *Devotions* often finds the poet rising early to welcome morning, setting out to chronicle the impermanent beauty of the natural phenomena near her home, which in many of these poems means the ponds, fields and woods near Provincetown, Mass. Here the readers will encounter foxes and songbirds, snakes and deer, dogs and fish, each creature perfectly doing its part to enhance the beauty of the world.

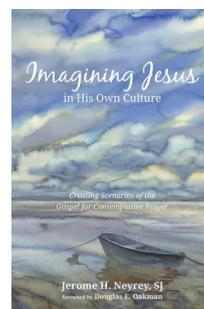
Overwhelmingly these are poems of empathy, delight and awe, brimming with praise and grat-

itude for creation—for the dying goldenrod joyfully spilling its gold; for the fish and “her soft eggs” and the kingfisher’s “peerless, terrible beak”; for the roses that do not question, but bloom. “Joy is not made to be a crumb,” she writes, while also acknowledging “loss is the great lesson”; we have been called “to love what is lovely, and will not last.”

While the play of ornamental, formal language found more frequently in Oliver’s earlier poems is undeniably satisfying, the simpler, pared-down grace of her later work is perhaps even more engaging. Sonically pleasing, her conversational style, peppered with repetition and mild questions, invites readers to share in her project of attentiveness. After describing a swan as “an armful of white blossoms/ a perfect commotion of silk and linen” she asks (in a gentle counterpoint to Rilke), “And have you too finally figured out what beauty is for?/ And have you changed your life?”

The last poem in *Devotions* is also one of Oliver’s earliest, “Morning in a New Land.” The poet wakes as Adam alone in Eden, “parting the leaves/ Like tissue on some vast, incredible gift.” To turn the leaves of *Devotions* is to glimpse that gift.

Carolyn Oliver’s poetry has appeared in *FIELD*, *The Greensboro Review*, *Booth*, *Gulf Stream* and *Frontier Poetry*. She is not related to Mary Oliver.



Imagining Jesus in His Own Culture

By Jerome H. Neyrey, S.J.
Cascade Books
172p \$22

The cultural Jesus

The title of this book could not be more straightforward, and yet it describes the book perfectly. Jerome Neyrey’s *Imagining Jesus in His Own Culture* focuses on Jesus, it encourages the use of the imagination, and it describes in some detail the culture in which Jesus actually lived.

Neyrey has been one of the leading Scripture scholars in the United States for the last 40 years, and so it should be no surprise that this book concentrates on New Testament studies. A founding member of the Context Group (whose members strive to apply the social sciences to the explication of Scripture), he was also a popular theology professor at the University of Notre Dame for many years.

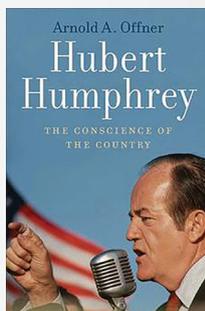
Neyrey organizes much of his book around the contemplations in the Second, Third and Fourth Week of St. Ignatius Loyola’s Spiritual Exercises, in which Ignatius encourages the exercitant to imagine scenes from Jesus’ life as a method for discerning insights into one’s life and vocation. For this reason, *Imagining Jesus in His Own Culture* will serve as a valuable companion for anyone engaging in the Exercises.

In Chapter 3, Neyrey outlines how first-century Jewish culture differs from our present world in terms of gender roles, occupations, family life, marriage, food, health conditions and so on. Later on, he even considers questions such as “Did Jesus get married?” and “Did Jesus laugh?” He also describes how Jesus probably prayed.

Some of the most informative pages are the author’s depictions of Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem (in case you were wondering, the pregnant Mary almost certainly did *not* ride on a donkey), his evidence that Jesus may have done woodwork for fishermen’s boats and thus gotten to know Peter, Andrew, James and John before he called them to follow him, and many details surrounding Jesus’ crucifixion. He also describes the gentle humor that Jesus displayed in his post-resurrection appearances to Mary Magdalene, the disciples at Emmaus and the doubting Thomas.

Neyrey’s study displays the many ways in which Jesus was not only “like us in all things” but also definitely a person incarnated in his own culture.

Michael V. Tueth, S.J., is *emeritus professor of communication and media studies at Fordham University in New York.*



Hubert Humphrey
The Conscience of
the Country
By Arnold A. Offner
Yale University Press
490p \$35

A politician worth emulating

On the evening of Aug. 29, 1968, Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey, a Democrat, was primed to accept a prize every politician covets: his party’s presidential nomination. Little did he realize that night at the party convention in Chicago how his nomination and acceptance would be both the pinnacle and the nadir of his political life. He earnestly believed he was eminently qualified for the office which is, to use that old-fashioned phrase, “the gift of the American people.” But because of the fates and circumstances of that whirligig of a year, he was not destined to sit as the 37th occupant in the Oval Office.

In this absorbing book, *Hubert Humphrey: The Conscience of the Country*, Arnold A. Offner, the Cornelia F. Hugel Professor of History Emeritus at Lafayette College, presents a Hubert Humphrey who was more than his famous moniker “The Happy Warrior.” Through prodigious research, Offner shows us a serious man who sought a serious goal: the betterment of his fellow Americans, whether through persuasion or legislation.

This biography shows how torturous Humphrey’s journey was. Offner does not gloss over the lim-

itations and imperfections that impeded that journey, whether those were Humphrey’s own or those of others. Humphrey’s presidential dreams were thwarted by two men: the president he served (Lyndon B. Johnson) and his Republican opponent (Richard M. Nixon). Because of their idiosyncrasies, paranoia and just plain jealousy (especially on L.B.J.’s part), both men did what they could to undercut Humphrey’s chances: Johnson by withholding crucial political and financial support and Nixon by colluding with the South Vietnamese to scuttle the Paris peace talks and by buttering up Johnson’s ego to such an extent that L.B.J. actually preferred Nixon over his own vice president.

In the aftermath, Humphrey returned to the Senate, where he continued championing his core issues. By the end, he became perhaps the most beloved Democrat of his generation until his death from cancer at age 66 in 1978. Though seldom referred to today, he should be remembered for one particularly important legacy: his ability to put aside grudges and reach for accommodation in order to effect positive change. Given today’s toxic political climate, that might just be one Humphrey legacy worth emulating.

Joseph McAuley, *assistant editor.*



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The Catholic past of Hercule Poirot

By John Anderson

Poirot has been played by everyone from Orson Welles to Albert Finney to John Malkovich.

There is a mystery at the heart of the new “The ABC Murders.” And not just the one about serial killers in merry old Depression-era England.

Who, exactly, was the fastidious, mustachioed Hercule Poirot? There is a solution to that question (and a spoiler below) in the adaptation that recently materialized on Amazon Prime and stars an unlikely John Malkovich as Agatha Christie’s persnickety Belgian sleuth. It comes courtesy of a BBC team that included Sarah Phelps, the writer of such Christie adaptations as “Ordeal by Innocence,” “And Then There Were None” and “Witness for the Prosecution,” as well as 50-odd episodes of “EastEnders” and last year’s “The White Princess.”

Taking on Poirot means taking on a character who has been played by everyone from Orson Welles to Albert Finney to Peter Ustinov to David Suchet. He has been ubiquitous, and caricatured, seemingly forever. “Even

Christie got sick of him,” Ms. Phelps said in an interview with **America**. “He’d become a series of tics and affectations.” But even a lot of devoted fans would have to confess to not being quite encyclopedic on Poirot.

“Neither am I,” said Ms. Phelps. “I’ll be really honest: Till I started working on them, I’d never read a Christie. I thought, ‘Oh they’re going to be really safe, really cozy,’ which is how Christie’s been sold in the U.K.—murder as cozy entertainment. But it shocked me! It was like the Greeks, like Aeschylus, really remorseless, really savage; and I really enjoyed it.”

At the same time, she wanted to get at who Poirot was, besides (as Christie implied) a devout Catholic, a refugee from 1914 Belgium and a walking catalogue of mannerisms and trademark haberdashery. Why, she wanted to know, was he so relentless in his pursuit of the guilty? Why did he “honor the body on the floor,”

and so compulsively move from one murder to the next, through 33 novels and dozens of short stories?

There are, she said, inconsistencies in the backstory. “Some people got mad at me,” Ms. Phelps said. “They said, ‘He was the head of the Belgian police!’ and I said, ‘Yes, well, the thing is...he’s a refugee. And refugees are civilians. In an invasion by a foreign power, the police aren’t going to have civilian status. I think he’s been lying.’”

Look at his silhouette, she said, the way he wears his clothes. “That brimmed homburg, that hard, unfashionable collar he always wears under his chin; that particular gray overcoat, the way it drapes his body, the watch chain across his chest....

“And I kept thinking, ‘You know what? I think that brimmed hat is a saturno. And that gray overcoat is his soutane. I think that watch chain is a rosary. And that hard collar that he habitually wears—turn it around. What is it?’”

More evidence: “In some of the books,” Phelps said, “he refers to himself as Papa Poirot. He habitually addresses groups of adults as *mes enfants*. I thought, well, who does that? A man who addresses groups of adults as ‘my children’ has been addressed himself as ‘father.’ So I said, ‘I know what you are and I know why you lied.’”

In brief flashbacks that appear in each of the three installments of “ABC Murders,” Poirot re-experiences his final days in Belgium, as a country priest who is beaten unconscious while his church full of parishioners is set ablaze by invading German troops. Only in the last moments of the series is Poirot’s tragedy revealed, though there are clues along the way—the prie-dieu he keeps in his bedroom, for instance, along with a Marian shrine.

Ms. Phelps said she is a big fan of Malkovich’s interpretation, which was a 180-degree “spin on the character.”

“The denouement, of course, was exciting for him,” she said. “That anguishing little aspect of Poirot not having been enough to save his flock, and not being able to forgive himself, and being compelled to seek justice. It is a deep, deep dive into what it meant to be Hercule Poirot, a refugee who made his home in England, who was celebrated and famous but who I imagined as having been the most humble” of men.

John Anderson is a television critic for *The Wall Street Journal* and a contributor to *The New York Times*.

The first virgin ‘bachelor’ challenges prejudices

For the first time, the leading man on “The Bachelor” is a virgin, and sexual innuendos are legion in a show that is already pretty risqué. In this season of “The Bachelor”—where 30 women try to win the heart of one man—Colton Underwood is presented as a person whose defining quality is his virginity, which reveals a preoccupation with sex that is problematic. The women who date Colton at times appear to be more concerned about taking his virginity than marrying him.

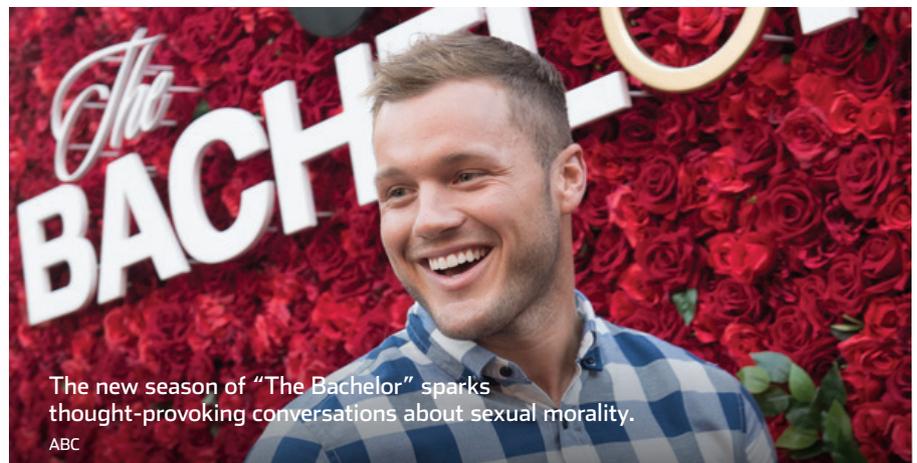
In the first episode, Colton and the host of “The Bachelor” address the negative responses to his virginity. Some of the show’s critics doubted that Colton could be ready for marriage if he has not had sex, while others said that Colton is “not a man.” But even as the show mocks his virginity, Colton invites empathy and sparks thought-provoking conversations about sexual morality. It seems that even when you are an attractive, accomplished man, dating as a virgin can be hard.

In one recent episode, a contestant named Caelynn tells Colton about being drugged and raped in college. Caelynn talked about the shame she has felt and said she still sometimes has difficulty with physical

intimacy. Colton assures her that she is safe with him and hugs her. He also confides that his first love was sexually abused and that part of the reason he had not had sex was because she was not ready for that level of intimacy. Following their conversation, Caelynn said that her romantic relationship with Colton is the safest and most comfortable she has ever had (even though, in the world of “The Bachelor,” it is happening at the same time as his relationships with the other contestants).

In these scenes, Colton breaks down two of the most prevalent untruths we hear about sexuality: (1) that sex has no emotional weight and (2) that once you have had sex, you are dirty or ruined. Human sexuality is complex and nuanced. In the era of #MeToo, the virtue of chastity should not be wielded to shame people who have had sex but to call everyone to treat their partners with patience. At the same time, people like Colton who are committed to chastity deserve to be respected and not mocked.

Amanda Haas is a 2017 graduate of Loyola Marymount University’s School of Film and Television.



All for Mission

Readings: Dt 26:4-10, Ps 91, Rom 10:8-13, Lk 4:1-13

The account of Jesus' temptation appears with slight variations in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. These accounts expand upon Mk 1:12-13, which mentions briefly that Jesus "remained in the desert for forty days, tempted by Satan." Mark gives no further details, but Matthew and Luke both knew the tradition in this Sunday's Gospel, in which the devil tempts Jesus three times and then withdraws to seek another opportunity.

The language of this threefold temptation bears some resemblance to a vision found in the prophecy of Daniel. In Dn 7:14, God gives three gifts to a heaven-sent savior called the "one like a son of man." These gifts of authority, glory and kingship perhaps lie behind the temptations with which the devil entices Jesus. The first temptation was not only for Jesus to make bread from stone, but also to use his divine authority over creation to sate his hunger. The second temptation was not just the enticement of royal power, but rather a temptation to accede to the world's fantasies of kingship (which the devil had corrupted) rather than to proclaim the true kingdom that God had established. The third temptation was not just a testing of trust in divine grace, but rather an abuse of God's favor for Jesus' own glorification. Jesus bore divine gifts, but they were for mission. As he repelled each temptation, Jesus resisted using these gifts to satisfy his own needs.

The account in this Sunday's Gospel reading has some details specific to Luke, who presents the three tests in a different order than Matthew does. Both Evangelists agree that in the first temptation Jesus resisted using his divine authority to feed himself, but Luke places the kingship temptation second and the Jerusalem temptation last. Doing so highlights the role of Jerusalem as the place of Jesus' glorification. The devil suggests that since Jesus has God's attention at all times, he ought to use that divine grace to reveal his status. Jesus instead waits for the moment the Father has chosen to reveal the Son, which is the resurrection. Luke's narrative here foreshadows the moment when the Father lifts Jesus up not for spectacle but for salvation.

'You shall worship the Lord, your God, and him alone shall you serve.' (Lk 4:8)

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

What gifts has God given you?

Do you use them for yourself or for the needs of others?

How can Lent become a time to imitate Jesus' selflessness?

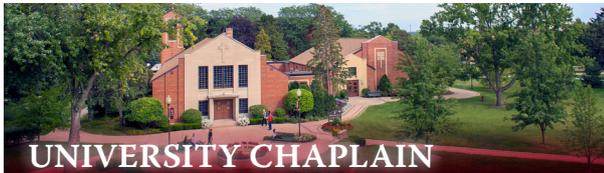
As Jesus was tempted, so are his disciples. The Father who endowed the Son with every gift has also given the Son's disciples everything they have, and they face temptations similar to those Jesus overcame. God's presence and action always accompany a call to serve. Although some might find in their God-given talents a career that provides security or purpose, Jesus revealed that such gifts are tools to repair creation and undo the damage of sin. Similarly, following a spiritual path may lead to positions of authority over others. Social status easily leads to pride, but Jesus' example leads instead to humble service. Finally, God's love may provide identity and self-esteem, but ultimately divine love calls Christians, as it did Jesus, to a complete self-offering. As Jesus overcame temptations to use divine grace for himself, so Christians must continue to seek God's purpose in every gift they receive. Only then will they fulfill God's saving mission.

Michael Simone, S.J., teaches Scripture at Boston College School of Theology and Ministry.

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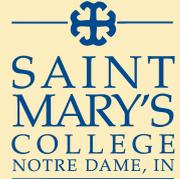
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Revealing God's Glory

Readings: Gen 15:5-18, Ps 27, Phil 3:17-4:1, Lk 9:28-36

Many years ago, at a 12-step recovery meeting, I saw someone transfigured. The recovery group met in the basement of a church in an urban neighborhood on the East Coast. It was a midday meeting not far from several treatment programs and halfway houses, and some of those in attendance were there by court order.

One young man had attended every day for nearly a month. He spoke to no one, sat cross-armed the whole time, and kept the visor of his baseball cap pulled down low. As soon as the meeting was over, he was out the door. He kept to himself with such skill that, after a while, I stopped noticing him.

The winter that year was particularly cold, and in addition to those seeking recovery, the meeting space housed several homeless people to whom the church had given shelter. One day, an elderly homeless man stood up, cried out and grabbed his chest; he was having a heart attack. The young man, who had never so much as twitched except to race to the door, immediately leapt to his side and began C.P.R. He took control of the situation and alternated calmly between caring for the stricken man and sending someone to call an ambulance.

As I learned later, the young man had been a paramedic before drugs took over his life. When he saw a life in danger, his training took over and he acted to save it.

As I reflected on the incident later, I realized that—for

just a second—I had caught a glimpse of that young man as God sees him: a confident paramedic, skilled in his calling, a rescuer of others. An opportunity for service to another drew the young man out of himself and showed us all a moment of utter beauty. The next time I saw him, he was back to his old reticence, but I never forgot the sight of his transformation, and now years later, when I cannot even remember his name, I can still remember that moment of wonder when he was revealed to me, when I got to see him through God's eyes.

“This is my chosen son; listen to him.” In this Sunday's Gospel reading, Peter, John and James catch a glimpse of Jesus as the Father saw him. Faith had already brought them to belief; now they saw clearly. Luke also draws our attention to Moses and Elijah, who show forth a glory like Jesus and discuss his mission with him. Elements of Luke's account refer back to Jesus' baptism, but they also draw our minds ahead to the resurrection and Pentecost. Luke's themes emphasize that those who accompany Jesus through his “exodus” will reflect his glory into the world.

If the transfiguration requires anything of our discipleship, it is to let go of our masks and let others catch a glimpse of God in us. Jesus' own transformation was a proclamation of the Gospel; it confirmed the faith of the disciples who joined him. Likewise, as Lent continues, Christians undertake practices that help others see God at work and help themselves catch sight of those sometimes fleeting moments when God reveals the divine face in another.

Michael Simone, S.J., teaches Scripture at Boston College School of Theology and Ministry.

‘This is my chosen Son; listen to him.’ (Lk 9:35)

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

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Practical Resistance

How to succeed at organizing in the 21st century

By Nathan Schneider



Some years ago, I attended a weekend meeting at a middle-of-nowhere hotel, looming over a highway that snaked through Pennsylvania hills. I had come as part of a group of maybe 50 activists from around the country, all working on nearly as many issues. We were there to find what we had in common and to organize some sort of united front; but as far as I remember, that did not happen.

Other things did. The memory that sticks with me the most was the introductory exercise. Each person shared a few minutes' worth of autobiography. I was among the youngsters, so mine was short. But most of the others had been at this for decades. Some were faces we see in the news quite frequently, pressing on with seemingly futile but necessary causes. The way they told their stories, however, did not comport with how I had come to know their later-life personas.

The old-timers tended to begin with a story of success. This was not success the way a lot of my friends were then measuring it—the video gone viral, the march that briefly fills a city's streets, the ideological argument won. Nor was it the success of a mere legislative patch or a candidate elected.

One woman helped build the fair-trade movement. One had been a doctor who healed the sick. One built a national anti-racist organization and a career in hip-hop. Their sense

of their own strength and their perseverance over decades seemed to swell from those experiences. Early success shaped the rest of their lives. It convinced them that tangible, life-giving change is possible, even when it seems impossible. I feared for the younger activists whose only claim to fame so far seemed to be passing virality.

Today, it is easier than ever for activists to command attention for a moment but harder to form the lasting relationships and organizations that are also needed to make lasting change.

One of the activist elders I have learned the most from is George Lakey, a Quaker who began his career with Bayard Rustin, an organizer of the March on Washington. As I wrote previously for *America*, he ran humanitarian supplies through wartime blockades of North and South Vietnam, helped build the antinuclear movement and trained generations of younger activists. He has not stopped, either; a few years ago, he and his friends used nonviolent action to force PNC Bank to divest from mountain-top-removal mining. In his essential new guide to nonviolent campaigns, *How We Win*, he suggests dispensing with tactics like marches altogether.

The trouble with attention-getting tactics is that we can mistake the attention sugar-high for a real win. By denying ourselves that passing satisfaction, we can steer ourselves into

more creative, more effective kinds of action. *How We Win* is full of stories of people doing that—unsung stories, often, of people making real change and discovering their own power.

Mr. Lakey also eschews the style of organizing that depends on constant internal policing and shaming among activists; rather, he offers techniques for mutual understanding, compassion and healthy conflict. When a group's focus is on what it can accomplish, not how it might look on social media, it is easier to tolerate and work with differences. If social change depends on a group being perfect before taking action, it will never begin.

The meeting at the Pennsylvania hotel ended not with a revelation or a plan but with a breakdown. A man who had fought in Vietnam began shouting out, experiencing a terrifying flashback. In the middle of our conference room, he was suddenly back in that brutal jungle, scared for his life, a dying child before him.

After that, there was no more strategy, just caring for him and each other—fittingly so. That is the work. It shows how broken we are and how urgently this world cries out for such repair that we will never complete. How we win is how we persist.

Nathan Schneider, a contributing writer for *America*, is a reporter and professor of media studies at the University of Colorado, Boulder.

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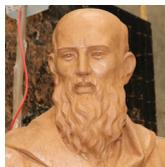
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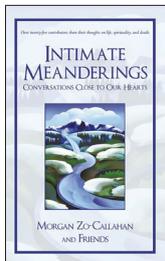
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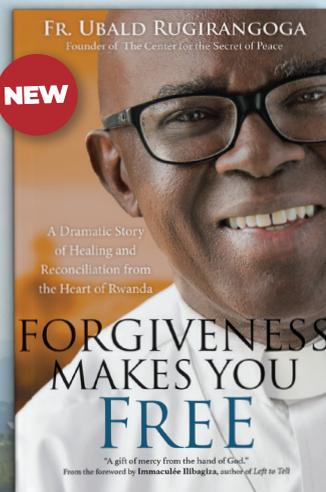
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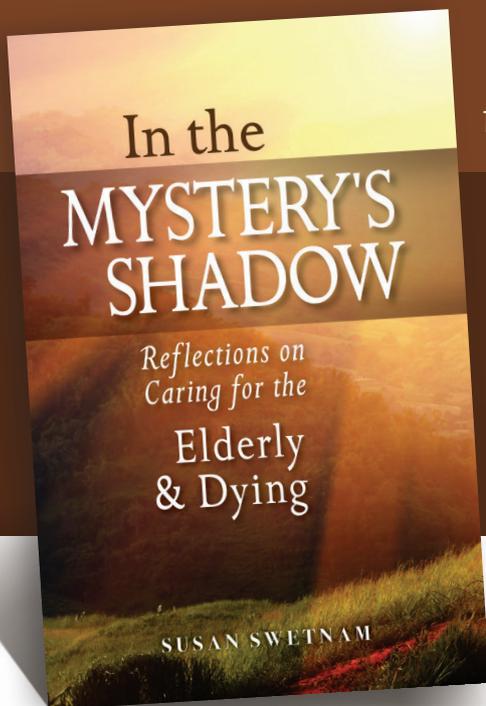
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