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THE JESUIT REVIEW OF FAITH AND CULTURE

Hope for
Hurting
Mothers

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Jesus, Please
Don't Fix My
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Venezuela's Via Crucis

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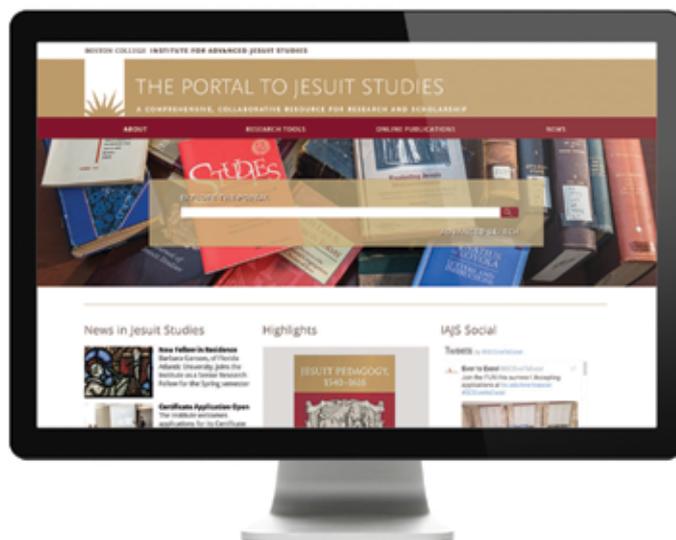


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The women who marched

My conversion to the pro-life cause began, strangely enough, when I took part in a pro-choice march in the spring of 1992. Along with thousands of other college students, I traveled to Washington, D.C., that April to participate in a demonstration organized by the National Organization for Women. *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* was pending before the U.S. Supreme Court and the presidential election was in full swing; pro-choice activists wanted to flex their political muscle, while pro-choice politicians wanted to brandish their liberal *bona fides*. Thus 400,000 of us gathered on the National Mall, most of us waving signs that read, “I am the face of pro-choice America.”

In those days, I was. Twenty years old and an undergraduate at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, I was a devout left-winger and one very angry, nonpracticing Catholic. The church, I thought, was oppressive, backward and petty; I wanted nothing to do with it. I was searching for something else—for love, of course, but more than that, I was searching for the Truth, the Great Idea that would organize my life and work. I thought I’d found it in the peculiar brand of liberalism I encountered at UMass: radical democratic socialism, identity politics and a form of bourgeois activism that seemed anachronistic even then. (Don’t get me wrong: I am a proud son of UMass. I received a great education there, and the friends I had in college helped make me the moderately decent human being I am today.)

Which brings me to a parking lot at the Pentagon, where I’d come to catch a ride back to Massachusetts after a day of marching. As I headed

toward our chartered, battered Greyhound, I had an epiphany. All along Pennsylvania Avenue, I’d had conversations with women from every region of America. Obviously, I’d talked with women before, but never like this. Most of the marchers were women; and there was something about being in that enormous crowd of women that gave them the motivation and the freedom to talk about their lives in a totally transparent way. We hardly mentioned abortion. Instead, we spoke about the obstacles they encountered daily—at home, in the workplace, in the classroom; the manifold injustices, large and small, that come from living in a society that is often hostile, or simply indifferent, to women’s hopes.

My eyes began to open. I started to see these women and, especially, the women closest to me, in a new light. I began to see how I was a part of the problem; how I had been unconsciously complicit in the injustices they described; how I had too often discounted their views, their talents, their challenges. Feminists might describe what I experienced that day as “consciousness raising.” That it was. I learned for the first time how women at home and abroad suffer indignities and forms of social oppression that I will never experience as a man, injustices that violate their inherent worth and dignity.

This was all on my mind when I arrived at the Pentagon. In typical fashion, I was late and rushing. As I tried to jump up the three short steps in the front of the bus, I tripped and landed flat on my face. When I looked up, there was a woman standing in front of me, offering her hand. I didn’t notice her gesture at first because I was blind-

sided by the big black letters on her white T-shirt, which read: “Abortion on Demand and Without Apology.”

In an instant, something broke loose in my conscience. The words on her shirt were blunt, emphatic, unequivocal. If they were meant to provoke, they had. Yes, I had just marched in a pro-choice demonstration, chanting all kinds of rhythmic, unnuanced, absurdities. But this felt different. These words were devoid of the very moral claim that I had just encountered. The women I had spoken with during the march had made it clear to me in a radically new way: It is manifestly unjust to treat anyone as less than fully human. Now on the floor of our Greyhound, a new question: Doesn’t the human life in a woman’s womb deserve that same consideration? Are not a mother and her unborn daughter both human beings, with an inherent dignity no one can ever revoke?

I pondered these questions for a couple of years before I fully embraced the pro-life cause, a reminder that the journey to truth is often circuitous and it’s patently unhelpful to simply stress what we think is the obviousness of our claim. In time, of course, I returned to the church—in dramatic fashion! But in a curious, paradoxical twist, it was not the church that set me on the path to pro-life activism. It was those women among the marchers 25 years ago this spring who first raised my consciousness about the realities of sexism and injustice and, in doing so, inadvertently roused my conscience to see the worth of every human life.

Matt Malone, S.J., editor in chief;
Twitter: @americaeditor.



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Fra' Giacomo Dalla Torre del Tempio di Sanguinetto, right, was elected on April 29 to lead the Knights of Malta for a one-year period, and will work on a constitutional reform, the Knights said.

(CNS photo/Order of Malta via EPA)

(Cover: Caracas, Venezuela. AP Photo/ Fernando Llano)

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An adaptation of Margaret Atwood's dystopian novel comes to Hulu.

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BILL MCGARVEY

One black man's outreach
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What is the biggest obstacle to forming stable families?

When we asked our readers about the greatest obstacle to forming stable families, respondents chose a range of answers, including work demands (19 percent), lack of affordable housing (9 percent) and poor education (13 percent). The results of our informal survey suggest that although many people are concerned about the challenges facing families, there is little consensus on how to address current problems.

The most common response (32 percent) was that the redefinition of marriage (which includes divorce and an “unwillingness to commit”) was to blame. Gregory Popcak, who has written for **America** (“Anxious Hearts,” 1/2/16), selected this answer. “Once marriage is redefined as a personal instead of a social institution,” said Mr. Popcak, “it makes no sense to stick it out through even moderately bad times.” He elaborated, “In this scenario, emotions, rather than principles, become the barometer for whether a couple stays together or not.”

Bridget Morningstar of Maine also chose this answer

but approached family stability from an economic standpoint: “In rural Maine, impoverished parents often do not get married in the first place because they can get more government support as single parents.... A lack of formal commitment to begin with increases the chances of parents drifting apart.” Ms. Morningstar also noted that for those parents who can afford to marry, divorce is a common choice later on.

Twenty percent of our respondents said that inadequate family leave policies and a lack of child care options posed the most significant threat to forming stable families. Kelly Swa of Ohio told **America**, “It is immensely challenging for families to build a strong foundation when new parents, during one of the most significant transition times of their lives, as well as one of the most physically and emotionally exhausting, must return to work within weeks of the baby’s birth.” Ms. Swa added that the high cost of child care jeopardizes the financial security of parents, “creating stress that can affect the health of a family.”

■ WORK DEMANDS

“For most families, both parents have to work to keep a roof over their head. When you add in all the time that is spent working and just trying to make a go at things, it is really hard to stay afloat.”
Amelia Stutzman, Kan.

“What seems to lead to marital hardship is often the stress involved in both parents working to make ends meet.... This is bad not only for the marriage but also for the relationships involved between parents and children and the moral upbringing of the kids.”
Charles Comer, Pa.

■ POOR/INACCESSIBLE EDUCATION

■ POOR/INACCESSIBLE HEALTH CARE

■ LACK OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

■ REDEFINITION OF MARRIAGE (unwillingness to commit, divorce)

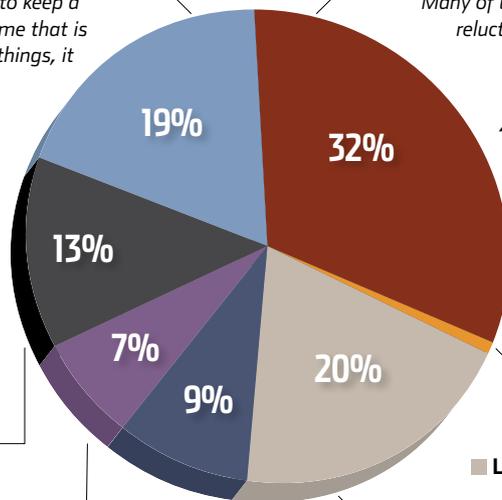
“Many of us Generation X and millennial children of divorce are reluctant to wed at all. I don’t want my marriage to end in heartbreak and vindictive legal fights over money.”
Daniel Watts, Calif.

“The breaking up of families is an everyday matter.... This system produces broken people. Since access to mental health services is severely limited, these broken adults and children cannot heal.”
Emese Hasznos, U.K.

■ HIGH TAXES

■ LACK OF ADEQUATE MATERNITY/PATERNITY LEAVE AND CHILD CARE OPTIONS

“I have seen too many families unravel under the stress of trying to work, pay bills and simultaneously care for a newborn child.”
Cindy Asher, Ohio



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.

More Planning Required

Re “The Largest Parish in America,” by Leah Libresco (5/1): Thank you for this inspiring article. I read with great interest how “a small group at a Catholic Church requires more planning.” Here in Eastern Africa we have a parish-practical, pastoral solution that works for us: small Christian communities, which are small-neighborhood, parish-based groups following a pastoral model of church that transforms the parish into a communion of communities and an instrument of evangelization. An S.C.C. is a small group of 10 to 15 people who meet weekly—usually in their homes but sometimes in a parish facility, a school or another institution—to reflect on the Bible, especially the Gospel of the following Sunday, and connect it to their daily lives in Eastern Africa. We now have 180,000 S.C.C.s in Eastern Africa.

Joseph Healey

Online Comment

Poet, Patriot, Hero

Re “A Tree Grows on the Marne,” by Matt Malone, S.J. (Of Many Things, 5/1): This article about Joyce Kilmer was most welcome, and Mr. Kilmer’s story is not widely known. My father, John McCormack, served our country as a private in the trenches of France next to Kilmer. When I was a small child growing up in the Bronx, my father recited “Trees” and taught it to us long before it was a class assignment. He always marveled at the deep and adopted faith that Kilmer was so grateful for. My father and Kilmer spent long hours talking about our faith, as I am sure many young men in battle do. Thank you for writing this and exposing the very little known facts about the man, poet, patriot and hero. One small addition: It is and will always be the “Fighting 69th” infantry (not 59th).

Maureen McCormack

Online Comment

Poetic Wisdom

Re “What Do You Do With the Mad That You Feel?” by David Dark (5/1): An astounding article, filled with poetic wisdom. I kept thinking he had made his point and yet the article kept going, kept elaborating and filling in our essential needs for honesty and relationship. Conversation.

Care. Courage. Presence. This kind of writing feeds my soul. Thank you.

Beth Cioffoletti

Online Comment

A Sense of Humor

Re “A Sorta-Catholic’s Very Catholic Wedding,” by Tracey Wigfield (5/1): In our years of marriage prep it became difficult, with a steady increase in those preparing for a wedding rather than a sacrament. However, there were always breakthroughs like what Ms. Wigfield described—her line “for real and forever” says it all. A sense of humor is a huge advantage in life and marriage. Congratulations to the newlyweds. This was hilarious!

Tom Mohan

Online Comment

In the Face of Prejudice

Re “How Do I Respond When ICE Comes for My Flock?” by the Rev. Raymond Roden (5/1): I find myself needing to write the editors and writers of **America** to cheer them on in championing the poor and weak in the face of prejudice and greed. In particular, I want to commend Father Roden’s article on immigration, the role of ICE, and for referencing Pius IX’s “Mit Brennender Sorge,” which was written and distributed in defiance of the Nazi government. **America** magazine is fighting the good fight by bringing up truths often ignored and calling Catholics to act for the sake of God and country. Thank you! You will be in my prayers.

Robert Aguirre

Online Comment

New Appreciation

Re “Welcomed Home,” by Shannon Evans (4/17): I’m almost 70 now and have been peripherally associated with the Catholic Worker Movement since my childhood. Dorothy Day once held my hand as she and I picked lilacs on the farm on Staten Island. I thought I knew the Catholic Workers, but when I read Shannon Evans’s story, I cried tears of new appreciation and joy. May God and Mary be with us all.

Thomas P. Donlon

Online Comment

‘Law and Order’ Should Not Mean Wiping Out Civil Rights Protections

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Los Angeles riots that erupted after the acquittal of four officers involved in the beating of Rodney King in 1991. The incident had been caught on video, and the civil unrest that followed sparked an investigation into the Los Angeles Police Department, which revealed the city’s systemic failure to address racial profiling and police brutality. In response, Congress included in the 1994 federal crime bill a provision authorizing the Department of Justice to intervene when state or local law enforcement agencies display “a pattern or practice” of policing that violates civil rights.

Under President Obama, the department used this authority to investigate dozens of cities and to enforce legally binding police reform agreements, known as consent decrees, aimed at rooting out misconduct and repairing frayed community-police relations.

Now Attorney General Jeff Sessions, the new head of the Department of Justice, is arguing that the federal government has no business fighting racial bias and corruption in local police departments. In a memorandum on March 31, Mr. Sessions ordered a review of the Justice Department’s police oversight activities, stating that “it is not the responsibility of the federal government to manage non-federal law enforcement agencies” and that the misdeeds of “bad actors” should not “undermine the legitimate and honorable work [of] law enforcement.” Depending on the outcome of that review, pending consent decrees

in places like Ferguson, Mo., and Baltimore, Md., could be revoked.

The move is part of a wider “law and order” approach embraced by President Trump and is driven by the widespread view among members of the administration that crime is on the rise and American cities are descending into chaos. “New York City continues to see gang murder after gang murder, the predictable consequence of the city’s ‘soft on crime’ stance,” Mr. Sessions said in a statement in which he threatened to withhold federal grant funds from nine so-called sanctuary cities. While it is true that murder rates have spiked in certain cities, New York—and the country overall—is experiencing historically low rates of homicides and other crimes.

Today, Angelenos say they trust the L.A.P.D. more than any other local institution, with 58 percent saying they expect the police to do the right thing “all of the time” or “most of the time,” according to a new study from Loyola Marymount University. But that trust took decades to build. Even after the 1992 riots, it was not until the federal government enforced a consent decree with the city in 2001 that changes were implemented in policies regarding the use of force, officer accountability and community relations. And despite an uptick in gang-related murders in 2016, Los Angeles remains a safer city than it was 10 years ago.

Public safety and protecting the civil rights of citizens are not competing goals. Police departments across the country know this. The Trump administration should listen to them.

Pro-Life Goals Need to Be More Ambitious Than Opposing Abortion

At the beginning of April, the State Department announced that it would withhold funding from the United Nations Population Fund because of its connection with population control programs in China that involve coercive abortions and sterilizations. This decision was met with praise from pro-life groups. Cardinal Timothy Dolan, chair of the U.S. bishops’ Committee on Pro-Life Activities, called it “a victory for women and children across the globe, as well as for U.S. taxpayers.” But pro-choice advocates have said that the defunding would lead to a crisis in women’s and maternal health in developing countries.

Both the Trump administration’s decision and the responses to it are following a familiar script, last played out shortly after the inauguration, when the “Mexico City policy,” which blocks federal funding for international organizations that provide or promote abortions, was reinstated. While political rhetoric treats whatever changed most recently as either a definitive victory or an outrageous affront, in fact these policy changes have predictably tracked the sitting president’s party-line positions on abortion. President Trump is not mounting a new assault on women’s health; he is reinstating the established policy of the three previous Republican administrations.

While pro-choice opposition to these policies is predictable, pro-life advocates nevertheless may be able to learn something important from it. As

necessary as opposition to abortion and funding for it are, they are not sufficient pro-life goals, especially when achieving them eliminates support for other programs that support maternal health. The pro-life community should find ways to demonstrate the depth of its commitment to the well-being of women and children at every stage of life.

It has been too easy for defenders of abortion to depict pro-lifers as driven by atavistic desires to control women's reproduction rather than by recognition of and respect for human life at its earliest stages. It has also been too easy for pro-choice advocates to portray themselves as the exclusive supporters of women by focusing primarily on support for abortion.

Pro-life supporters need to ask for more from political leaders who want to be on the side of life: not just the defunding of organizations connected to abortion but also major increases in funding for other women's health initiatives; not just legislative opposition to abortion but also passionate opposition to health care reform that would gut coverage for maternity care; not just the appointment of Supreme Court justices who may reverse *Roe v. Wade* but also leadership in advocating for parental leave and support for working families.

By demonstrating more coherent and consistent pro-life convictions, these goals may help open the hearts and minds of Americans to recognize the need to protect unborn life and offer women a better choice than abortion.

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To fight climate change, we need to improve capitalism, not get rid of it

Pope Francis correctly points out the evil fruits of capitalism, including inequality. However, no other system has lifted billions of people out of poverty. It is an imperfect system, with many flavors, but it is our best form of imperfection. Now, more than ever, we must rely on—and change—its dynamics.

We live in the Anthropocene, a period defined by the emergence of humans and our impact on the climate and environment. Before this period, there were five major mass extinctions: Ordovician, Devonian, Permian, Triassic and Cretaceous. Each time, a catastrophic event, or series of events, wiped out between 76 percent and 86 percent of all species.

Should we be concerned about another mass extinction? The Industrial Revolution has dramatically affected the climate, causing the melting of the Arctic, rising sea levels and unbearable pollution in cities such as Beijing and Mumbai (and, at one time, Los Angeles). Yet the idea of climate change is still controversial. Is it hyperbole or undeniable reality?

I contend it is the latter. We cannot ignore the signals from nature itself. Scientists estimate that we are now losing species at 1,000 to 10,000 times the natural long-term rate. That means dozens of species are going extinct *daily*. In her book *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History*, Elizabeth Kolbert reports that a third of all reef-building corals, a third of all freshwater mollusks, a third of sharks and rays, a quarter of all mammals, a fifth of all reptiles and a sixth of all birds are headed toward extinction.

The answer to this scourge is cap-

italism, but in a new form and magnitude.

For decades, there has been a largely philanthropy-driven effort to promote socially conscious investing and grant-making. But only recently has a focus on social and environmental responsibility started to gain traction among for-profit investors and financial markets. It takes the form of a new approach called E.S.G. (for “environmental, social and governance”) investing, and it is increasingly being used by endowments, pensions and family-controlled investment groups.

E.S.G. investing has been mainstreamed through “impact investment” firms that seek both financial and social returns, as well as through philanthropy. In total, these efforts account for the hundreds of billions of dollars invested in private markets annually. Evidence from leading business schools and experts suggest that E.S.G. investing can increase financial and social returns by lowering the cost of capital, reducing volatility, increasing returns (or the risk premium), improving governance (a proxy for management) and mitigating a variety of regulatory and other risks. Once an outlier, E.S.G. is now seen by the U.S. Department of Labor as valid in helping to determine the value of an investment.

Here is the challenge, and it is enormous: The hundreds of billions invested annually from impact investing and philanthropy is critical but only a first step in addressing worldwide environmental change. We must now focus on the approximately \$180 trillion invested annually in public global

financial assets. E.S.G. investing barely touches this sector, but it is only this quantum of capital that is truly capable of shifting our global trajectory, through investments in a cleaner environment, improved governance and healthy communities. We have not yet seized the opportunity to drive powerful change through the allocation of global public capital. Reasons for this include the short-termism of financial reporting, managerial priorities and differences between investors in different geographic areas (for example, Europe is much more E.S.G.-focused than the United States is).

We are nearly out of time. Most environmental scientists warn that if temperatures rise another two to four degrees Celsius, we will face irreversible change, including crop failure, flooding, diseases, wildfires, rising waters, extreme heat, and social and economic instability at a global level. An alternate course is possible if our greatest investors, and the trillions in assets behind them, recognize the gold mine waiting to be prospected: \$180 trillion annually!

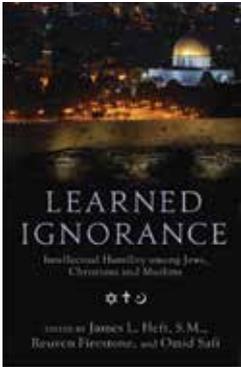
The time is now for a course correction in capitalism, and its rewards are abundant. Everyone should preach this gospel.

Peter Kellner is founder and managing partner of Richmond Global Ventures L.L.C. and chairman and C.E.O. of the Richmond Global Compass Fund L.P.



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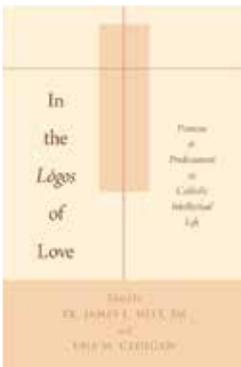
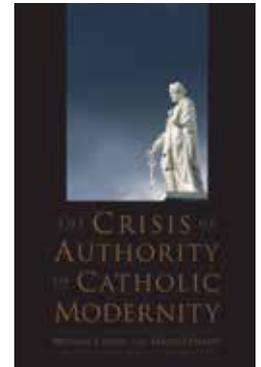
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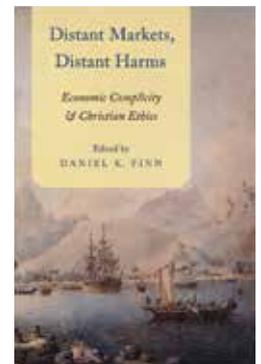
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**ABORTION
BETRAYS
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#WOMENBETRAYED
- STUDENTSFORLIFE.ORG -

A woman from Students for Life stands outside the U.S. Supreme Court before the Women's March on Washington on Jan. 21.

DEMOCRATS STUMBLE OVER ABORTION POLITICS IN OMAHA

By Robert David Sullivan

It took a mayoral election in Omaha, of all things, to reveal that the Democratic Party is capable of outdoing the Republicans in self-destruction. Still, the outcome was clear: Abortion is now the single issue defining the Democrats, and Ilyse Hogue, the president of NARAL Pro-Choice America, is the de facto head of the party. This gives the Republicans a major advantage in holding off electoral losses if the Trump administration continues to founder.

The battle began when Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont, along with Keith Ellison, deputy chair of the Democratic National Committee, campaigned on April 20 for the Democratic nominee for mayor of Omaha, part of a “unity tour” that was supposed to capitalize on President Trump’s unpopularity. That nominee is Heath Mello, a 37-year-old Catholic who had, as a state senator, supported a bill requiring that women be informed of their right to request a fetal ultrasound scan before getting an abortion.

Ms. Hogue was incensed: “Since the election, women have been engaged on the front lines of every progressive fight. So what message does it send for the party to start this tour with an anti-choice candidate?”

The NARAL president essentially conflates “women” with “abortion rights activists,” though the Pew Research Center reported last year that 40 percent of women think abortion should be illegal in “most” or “all” circumstances (the same percentage as among men), a view also held by 42 percent of Catholic voters, 49 percent of Hispanics and 37 percent of voters under 30.

But Ms. Hogue demonstrated that NARAL is at least as powerful within the Democratic Party as the National Rifle Association is within the Republican Party. The D.N.C. chair, Tom Perez, had originally defended the endorsement of Mr. Mello. But after Ms. Hogue’s criticism, he “retreated,” then said in an interview with *The New York Times* that he respected Democratic candidates who “have personal beliefs” against abortion, but “if they try to legislate or govern that way, we will take them on.”

Kristen Day, the executive director of Democrats for

Life of America, said it appears that the party’s new chairperson wishes to “bend everyone’s arm to NARAL’s position”—an outcome she believes would be a disaster for Democrats during the midterm elections and beyond. “I don’t think it’s ever been clearer” for pro-life Democratic candidates: “Change your position or get out.”

Mr. Sanders has taken the brunt of the criticism for the Mello kerfuffle, but he is far more popular nationally than any Democratic Party leader, with equal favorability ratings among men and women and especially high ratings among blacks and Hispanics. One would think that a party whose share of elected offices is near its lowest in a century would want to piggyback on that popularity.

Speaking on NPR after the Omaha rally, Mr. Sanders said: “The truth is that in some conservative states there will be candidates that are popular candidates who may not agree with me on every issue. I understand it. That’s what politics is about.... We have got to appreciate where people come from, and do our best to fight for the pro-choice agenda. But I think you just can’t exclude people who disagree with us on one issue.”

He may have been thinking of the 17 or so states where there are more pro-life than pro-choice voters. After last year’s Electoral College fiasco, are the Democrats really ready to write those states off?

Many pro-choice activists are dismissive of the idea that voters can oppose abortion for any reason other than wanting to oppress women. They cannot accept that some of the same men and women who rally for the humane treatment of refugees, for the abolition of the death penalty and for the Black Lives Matter movement also have moral objections to abortion—that the consistent ethic of life is real for many people.

When people speak of “identity politics” hurting the Democratic Party, they are not referring to issue stands or policies but to the practice of viewing everything in terms of how it affects the hierarchy of constituent groups—as in NARAL’s claim to speak for the Democrats’ “most active political base,” with veto power over all candidates.

In 1992, Patrick Buchanan delivered a speech at the Republican National Convention in which he eagerly embraced the idea of a “culture war” in the United States over issues including abortion and gay rights. It is widely believed that his divisive, no-compromise speech horrified centrist voters and helped to deliver the White House to the Democratic candidate, Bill Clinton, that fall. The Battle of Omaha is not as high-profile, thanks to the unending distractions coming from Mr. Trump, but it suggests that the Democratic Party has loaded a pistol and is waving it dangerously close to its own foot.

According to recent surveys, “our party is actually less popular than Trump,” Ms. Day said. “That’s really hard to do.”

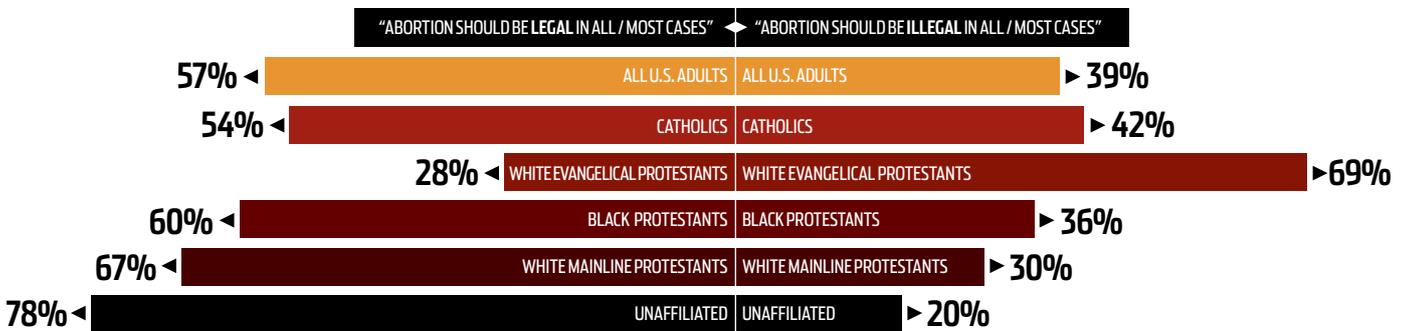
The party cannot push through its legislative positions in the minority, and it cannot emerge from its minority status without the support of pro-life Democrats, she argues.

“The reality is that we are losing touch with our base,” she said. “We lost the ‘blue wall’ [of Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Michigan]; that should have been a huge wake-up call.”

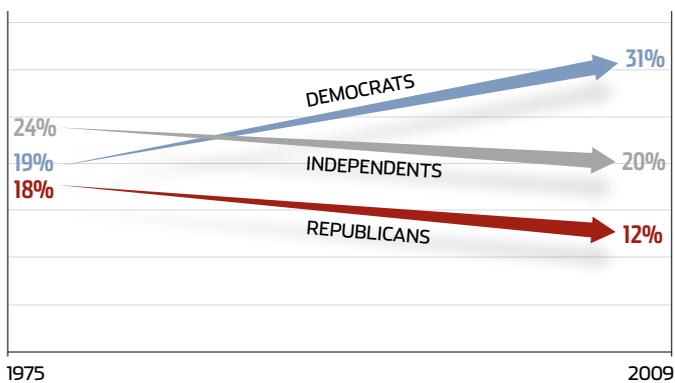
Now “we’re not really looking in the mirror at all and maybe listening to the wrong people.... We have California and New York—if that is all you want, keep doing what you’re doing, but we’re not going to win back Middle America with West Coast values.”

Robert David Sullivan, associate editor.

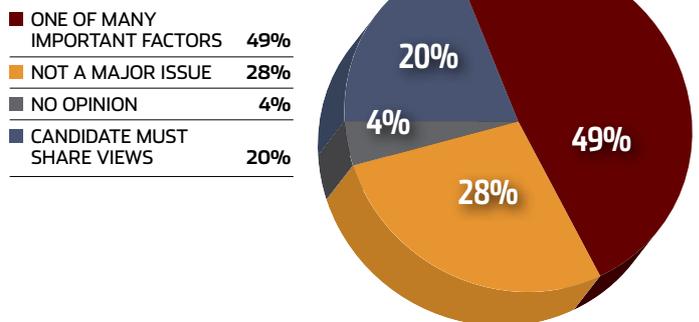
ABORTION AND U.S. POLITICS



“ABORTION SHOULD BE LEGAL UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES”



IMPORTANCE OF ABORTION IN VOTING



HYDE AMENDMENT VOTES

SHARE OF DEMOCRATIC U.S. HOUSE MEMBERS VOTING TO BAN FEDERAL FUNDING OF ABORTION: **45% in 1976**
2% in 2017

ABORTION RATE

ABORTIONS PER 1,000 WOMEN AGES 15-44
 1973 (ROE V. WADE DECISION): **16.3**
 1980 (PEAK): **29.3**
 2014: **14.6**

Sources: polling data for religious groups from Pew Research Center (2016); polling data for party affiliation and importance of abortion (2016) from Gallup; abortion rate from Guttmacher Institute. Hyde Amendment banning federal funding of abortion first passed U.S. House in 1976, with Democrats voting 107-153 and Republicans voting 92-32. Ban made permanent in January 2017, with Democrats voting 3-183 and Republicans voting 235-0. Roll call data from Govtrack.us.

In Mexico, journalists become targets

Miroslava Breach Velducea, a reporter for the national newspaper *La Jornada* and the regional daily *Norte* in the northern Mexican border state of Chihuahua, was gunned down in the early morning of March 23 just outside her residence in the state's eponymous capital city. The assassin left a piece of cardboard by the body. "For being a tattletale," it said. The message was signed by El 80, the alias of Arturo Quintana, a man identified by law enforcement as a Chihuahua crime lord.

"Miroslava's death was a terrible shock for all journalists in the state," Ms. Breach's friend and fellow reporter Patricia Mayorga said. "We were suddenly struck by fear, all of us."

Ms. Breach, 54, was widely respected in Chihuahua as one of its most fearless journalists. Born in the state's rugged western mountains, a lawless region where criminal gangs have been in control of lucrative drug smuggling routes for years, she would often venture into areas where few other reporters dared to go in order to investigate ties between organized crime and local politics.

One of those stories may have signed her death warrant. On March 4, 2016, she wrote a story for *La Jornada* in which she reported on mayoral candidates in several small towns in the western mountains of Chihuahua, including the mother-in-law of Mr. Quintana. According to several Chihuahua journalists, the story angered the gang leader, and Ms. Breach began to receive death threats.

To Ms. Mayorga, herself a well-respected correspondent in Chihuahua for the widely read muckraking magazine *Proceso*, Ms. Breach's death represents both a personal and professional tragedy. The two often teamed up on long reporting trips, and some of the threats her friend received were also directed at her.

After the news of the murder reached her, she went into hiding. "It was clear that I could no longer continue my work in Chihuahua," she said. "It was no longer safe." She left Chihuahua several weeks ago and asked *America* not to disclose her current location.

The murder of Ms. Breach was one of no fewer than four deadly attacks on Mexican journalists in less than two months. In early March, the crime reporter Cecilio Pineda was killed in the southern state of Guerrero, followed by Ricardo Monliu, a newspaper columnist based in Veracruz State. And on April 17, Maximino Rodríguez, a veteran reporter and columnist in the northern peninsular state of Baja California Sur, was shot to death in the city of La Paz.



An impromptu memorial and protest rises on the streets of Chihuahua, Mexico, soon after the murder of journalist Miroslava Breach Velducea.

Two other reporters survived attempts on their lives.

The multiple attacks over such a short timespan was a shock even for Mexico, a nation described by press freedom organizations as one of the most dangerous in the Western Hemisphere for journalists.

In states where organized crime is deeply rooted, like Guerrero, Sinaloa, Veracruz, Tamaulipas and Chihuahua, reporting on organized crime and political corruption is often lethal. The killers have little to fear from the Mexican justice system. According to Article 19, a press freedom group, the impunity rate for attacks on journalists is a staggering 99.75 percent.

Many observers attribute the spike in violence against reporters to changes in government after a series of regional elections last year. According to Balbina Flores, the Mexico representative of Reporters Without Borders, organized crime leaders see changes in state government as openings to assert themselves against journalists they consider hostile to their interests. "We can interpret much of that violence as a sort of rhetoric against incoming governments," she said.

That certainly appears to be the case in Miroslava Breach's murder. She was a personal friend of Javier Corral, the PAN governor who entered office last year, and the cardboard warning signed by El 80 explicitly threatened, "The governor is next."

Jan-Albert Hootsen is *America's* Mexico City correspondent.
Twitter: @jahootsen.

Georgetown seeks forgiveness for sale of 272 enslaved people

“The Society of Jesus prays with you today because we have greatly sinned and because we are profoundly sorry,” said Timothy Kesicki, S.J., president of the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States during the Liturgy of Remembrance, Contrition and Hope at Georgetown University. The service was meant as a moment of acknowledgment of an institutional sin committed to raise money to preserve Georgetown University in 1838—the sale to plantations in Louisiana of 272 men, women and children who had been the “property” of the Maryland Province.

“We betrayed the very name of Jesus for whom [the] Society is named,” he told a hall crowded with some of the descendants of those 272, gathered in Washington on April 18.

Sandra Green Thomas, president of the GU272 Descendants Association, spoke during the liturgy.

Like other enslaved people of their time, the suffering of the 272 “was unparalleled; their pain is still here. It burns in the soul of every person of African descent in the United States,” she said. “It lives in people, some of whom have no knowledge of its origin but who cope with the ever-present longing and lack it causes.”

African-Americans “have hungered and thirsted for the promise of America, the equality of man, the pursuit of happiness” but have only been offered “meager scraps.”

Through this historic ordeal, a faith that transcended their circumstances has been “a necessary tool in the survival kit” of African-Americans, she said.

“What group in this country has demonstrated more faith, more belief in the American promise, more belief in heaven, in the final communion with God and the saints than Afri-

can-Americans?” Ms. Thomas asked.

“For the 272, I believe that their Catholic faith enabled them to transcend,” she said. “No matter how incongruous their existence was with the Gospel of God’s love and protection, they clung to their faith; and even when they were deprived of the opportunity to practice it, they remained faithful and passed their faith on to subsequent generations.”

During his homily, Father Kesicki asked for forgiveness from the descendants, “yours to bestow—only in your time and in your way.”

Ms. Thomas in her remarks seemed to have already offered a reply to this plea.

“The certainty of forgiveness upon an act of contrition is one of the most hopeful and joyful aspects of the faith and its sacrament of penance,” she said. “Penance, although personal and sometimes private, is not self-determined; penance is not easy; penance is not self-serving; penance is not for public show; but penance is necessary.

“So...we the descendants return to our ancestors’ home place, acknowledging contrition, offering forgiveness, hoping for penance and, more important, seeking justice for them and ourselves.”

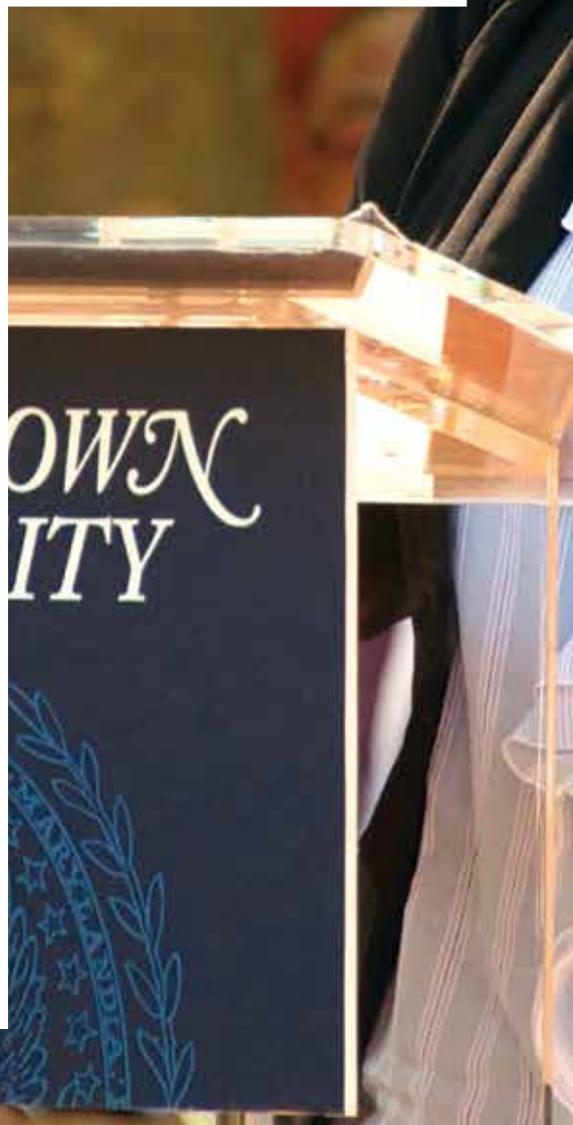
The day’s events included the dedication of a campus building, Isaac Hawkins Hall, named for the first enslaved person listed in documents related to the 1838 sale. The university also rededicated a second building, Anne Marie Becraft Hall, named for a free woman of color who was one of the first teachers of Catholic black girls in the town of Georgetown. These buildings originally were named for Georgetown Jesuits who had been involved with the sale.

Jessica Tilson, a descendant of

Isaac Hawkins, explained that as an infant her daughter had been saved by a medical advancement supported by Georgetown. She found in this instance a moment of reconciliation between the pain and suffering of her ancestors and the actions of Georgetown, and she expressed hope for further healing.

“The door’s open now. Leave it open,” said Leon Williams, the great-great-grandson of Isaac Hawkins. “Keep it open, and things’ll get better.”

Kevin Clarke, *chief correspondent.*
Twitter: @clarkeatamerica.
With additional reporting from
Teresa Donnellan, *O’Hare fellow.*





Jessica Tilson, a descendant of a number of the people sold by the Jesuits in 1838, speaks at the dedication ceremony of the Isaac Hawkins and Anne Marie Becraft halls.

Election tensions lead to rise in anti-Semitic incidents

The Anti-Defamation League, a Jewish civil rights group, found 1,266 cases of anti-Semitic intimidation and vandalism in the United States last year, compared with 941 in 2015 and 912 in 2014—evidence that anti-Jewish bias intensified during the election. The increase continued into the first three months of this year, with reports of 541 incidents compared to 291 in the same period the year before, according to A.D.L. data released on April 24.

The preliminary 2017 numbers include a wave of more than 150 bomb threats that started in January against Jewish community centers and day schools. Authorities arrested an Israeli Jewish hacker allegedly behind the harassment. The A.D.L. insists those threats should still be considered anti-Semitic since Jews were the target.

Even without those bomb threats, the number of anti-Jewish incidents this January, February and March in the report would be higher than the year before.

Anti-Semitic harassment in the United States has been at historic lows in recent years, according to the organization. In some prior years, the number of incidents surpassed 1,500 or 2,000, Oren Segal, director of the A.D.L. Center on Extremism, said. But the recent uptick has fueled anxiety among American Jews during a period of emboldened expressions of white supremacy and white nationalism during the presidential election.

“I think the pace in which the incidents are happening, the speed at which the spike is occurring, I think the historic low is a thing of the past,” Mr. Segal said.

The report linked 34 cases last year to the presidential race, including graffiti found in Denver last May that said “Kill the Jews, Vote Trump.”

Associated Press



▶ Toppled and damaged headstones rest on the ground at Mount Carmel Cemetery in Philadelphia on Feb. 27, 2017.

AP Photo/Jacqueline Larma

HEALING A MOTHER'S PAIN

*Catholic women harness
the power of the church for mothers
with postpartum depression*

By Kerry Weber

For Marissa Nichols, the turning point came one night in 2011 when her husband went out to buy milk. Sitting in their apartment in Santa Clara, Calif., with her then 2-year-old daughter and infant son, she felt profoundly alone and in despair. They were feelings that had been growing since the birth of her second child and were compounded by the fact that the economic crash left her family in difficult financial circumstances. Nichols had recently quit her job to care for her children at the same time that her husband was transitioning from working as a teacher to training to become a police officer, which meant nights and weekends at the police academy.

The sole caretaker for much of the day, Nichols began to feel burned out and overwhelmed by daily tasks—trying to breastfeed her infant while also feeding a toddler or doing laundry at the coin-operated laundromat nearby. Her discouragement grew into dislike, which grew into what she describes as a “delirious, desperate hatred.” She constantly felt frenzied and then would “stop, break down, and wake up and do everything again.” She found herself taking out her anger on her husband, and the two fought often. Nichols occasionally texted her sister for support, but the days continued to engulf her.

She longed for her family life to mirror “this glorious covenant between God and his church,” with children as “this great fruit of our love.” Instead, she found herself thinking: *No, I don’t want “fruit” anymore. I just want ev-*

eryone to leave me alone. “I just couldn’t bring myself to love anyone or anything,” she said. “I had nothing to rely on, and I didn’t see a point in being alive.”

Then, that night her husband left to buy milk, something in his departure triggered a reaction in Nichols. *I feel so alone in this*, she thought. She called the nonemergency number for the police and told them she was worried she would hurt herself. She was voluntarily placed in an overnight mental health facility and soon was diagnosed with postpartum depression.

A majority of women experience what is often called the “baby blues”—feelings of sadness and frustration—for about 10 days following childbirth, but these symptoms are typically short-lived. Symptoms that last longer than two weeks can be a sign of a perinatal mood disorder like postpartum depression and anxiety. Approximately one in seven women experience some form of postpartum depression, a medical condition that ranges widely in severity and is marked by persistent feelings of anger, shame, irritability, guilt and an inability to bond with one’s child. The symptoms, often rooted in hormonal or chemical imbalances, can be triggered or compounded by circumstances, including socioeconomic status, prior mental health history and birthing experiences like traumatic delivery, premature birth or trouble breastfeeding. The condition can have a dramatic impact on the well-being of families, increase levels of stress in a marriage and have long-term implications for the health of a child.

Composite image: iStockphoto.com/America





American society often expects women to be all things to all people.

Given the complex confluence of factors that contribute to perinatal mood disorders, treatment typically must be multifaceted as well, often including medication, therapy and support groups. Medication often is the first and fastest treatment for depression, but studies have also shown that religious beliefs and practices can be additional helpful tools for coping. According to one study in 2016, women who attended religious services were less likely to experience depression. However, another 2016 study, led by researchers at the State University of New York at Buffalo, found that there is more that churches and faith communities can do to support mothers who have experienced postpartum depression, particularly African-American and Latina women, who are at an increased risk (38 percent) for the condition. The study found that faith communities—especially those in which there are “people who are willing to help and pastors who are willing to listen”—have helped to alleviate postpartum depression symptoms in these women. The researchers suggested greater collaboration between churches and formal service providers could increase the number of women willing to seek treatment.

Despite the potential benefits of a faith community, Catholic women often cannot easily find Catholic resources that can help them to handle the challenges of depression and motherhood. Pope Francis acknowledged this need for practical support for all mothers in his Jan. 7, 2015, general address. “Despite being highly lauded from a symbolic point of view—many poems, many beautiful things said poetically of her—the mother is rarely...helped in daily life, rarely considered central to society in her role,” he said. “Yet the center of the life of the church is the mother of Jesus.”

During the depths of her depression, Nichols—now 35 and a mother of four children between the ages of 9 and

1½—turned to her faith, but at first this only made her feel more frustrated. “I went to confession, and I remember being so angry,” she said. “I felt God had completely duped me into this whole thing. I read *The Theology of the Body*. I believed it. I loved it. I understood natural family planning, but I felt duped into this. I felt: This isn’t anything like what it’s supposed to be like.”

Nichols feels greater peace with her faith today but continues to feel the pressure of an American society that often expects women to be all things to all people, and she continues to hope for more help from the church in finding a healthy balance.

“Society says you need to be able to do it all, and if not, you’re a failure or you’ve wasted your education,” Nichols said. “I don’t need someone to tell me about using my degree or to quote the *Catechism* to me. How about you come over and help me? I’m a taxi; I’m a cook; I’m a doctor. And people still think, ‘Oh you’re a stay-at-home mom,’ and it’s a strike against me in the world’s eyes, or it’s something the church doesn’t really know how to help with. Our church does so much so well: ministries for the poor, for kids, for prisoners. But there is something that is missing if mothers are feeling this way. There’s something we need to do that we’re not doing.”

MOTHER OF MERCY

For Catholic women experiencing postpartum depression and anxiety, faith and faith communities can be a lifeline—but also a potential source of guilt, shame or frustration. In the same 2015 address, Pope Francis described mothers as “a great treasure,” “the antidote to individualism” and “the greatest enemies of war.” These are welcome and affirming words in many respects, but for mothers struggling with postpartum depression and anxiety, who may feel disconnected from their role and their children, an idealized version of motherhood can seem impossible to live up to and can exacerbate feelings of isolation and spiritual failure.

Shortly after her oldest daughter was born, Gina Parnaby was brushing her teeth in the bathroom as her husband was putting her daughter to bed. Parnaby’s daughter was fussing, and Parnaby felt that the sound of her daughter crying was boring straight through her brain. *If I had a gun*, she thought, *I’d shoot them and myself*: When her husband finished putting their daughter to bed he found Parnaby in a puddle of tears on the floor of the bathroom. “I don’t know what’s going on,” she told him, “but I need help.”

Through her employer, a Catholic school, Parnaby, 37, now a mother of three, ages 8, 7 and 3, in Roswell, Ga., had access to a hotline for an employee assistance program that connects individuals with mental health professionals. She soon was diagnosed with postpartum depression. The diagnosis was particularly guilt-inducing for Parnaby because she and her husband had long struggled with infertility. “Because we had prayed so hard and so fervently and so long to just even have this child...I was struggling with ingratitude,” Parnaby said. She now knows that infertility is a condition that, in addition to the obvious hardships, can also increase the chance of developing postpartum depression.

“Our image of motherhood and maternity in the Catholic Church is often this beautiful, peaceful and serene Mary, and that’s not always the reality of motherhood,” Parnaby said. “You feel like there’s something wrong with you if you’re not perfectly happy and glowing as a mother. And that’s part of our church culture but also our American culture, and that’s not healthy.” Parnaby has had a lifelong devotion to Mary, and feeling far from Mary during her depression left Parnaby feeling even more isolated. But as she dug further into Marian spirituality, especially the image of Our Lady of Sorrows, Parnaby found greater comfort. “I think Mary does get it,” she said. “But I don’t think that all of our images of her get it.”

As a teacher, Parnaby has offered talks to her female students about both infertility and postpartum depression, but she also hopes that the church understands that it is not just women who need to be aware of such things. “Pastorally, this needs to be on the radar for clergy,” she said. “If a priest sat down with a family to do baptismal paperwork he could say, ‘How are you feeling? How are you coping? If you need help or assistance, here are resources we can direct you to. And here are some resources for Catholic mothers.... What are the signs of postpartum depression? And how can we help?’”

Greater awareness of perinatal mood disorders among Catholic women also could help to dispel the stigma many women feel when trying to discuss their condition with others. Sara Snapp, 32, from Colorado Springs, Colo., experienced postpartum depression after the births of both her children, now ages 8 and 2½. She had trouble bonding with her children and sought comfort in her faith and in her faith community. However, when she tried to bring up the topic in a mom’s group at her parish, she was met, she



“There’s something we’re missing if mothers are feeling this way,” said Marissa Nichols.

said, “with crickets.” She never heard the topic discussed at Mass or at her parish. She turned to prayer and tried to pray every day.

“I used to try to imagine what the Blessed Mother would do, and I just keep thinking she would be more patient than me and experience the fullness of God’s love in a way that I wasn’t able to,” she said. Eventually, Snapp expressed this concern to her doctor. “I told her I felt like a bad Christian because I couldn’t beat depression with the power of prayer. And she said, ‘Would you feel someone was a bad Christian because they needed an appendix removed?’ and I said, ‘No, that’s crazy.’ And she said, ‘Yeah, it is.’”

Over the years, Snapp has grown more comfortable sharing her experience. “We talk about motherhood being a holy vocation, but it is often completely ignored in our community life,” she said. “I would dearly love to see women deacons so women could share their life experiences in a setting where they get a little respect. To give women the chance to speak to the whole congregation would open up a whole new conversation.”

A CONTINUUM OF CARE

Of course, the potential for Catholic postpartum support extends beyond the walls of the church. Catholic physicians and hospitals have the potential to be crucial points of contact for mothers in need. Dr. Marguerite Duane, a family physician in Washington, D.C., and an adjunct associate professor at Georgetown University, worked for several years at a faith-based community health center where she helped to deliver about 300 babies in five years. Duane has found that her role as a family physician has allowed her to gain a better understanding of her patients’ lives before, during and after pregnancy, giving her a better chance of identifying problems postpartum.

“It’s not just that I see patients a few times, but that I

formed a relationship with them,” she said. “I got to understand what was normal for them and what wasn’t.”

As co-founder of the Fertility Appreciation Collaborative to Teach the Science, Dr. Duane also works to educate physicians and health professionals in the basic principles of fertility awareness-based methods of family planning, so physicians can provide better support for families using these methods. For Catholic women who choose these methods, the postpartum period can be a crucial time for support, according to Dr. Duane, as frustration and stress around natural family planning methods are common following a perinatal mood disorder, often due to pressure from either doctors or Catholic communities.

“One of the challenges is you want to treat [the depression or anxiety] but you also want to address the trigger, so in some cases, there is a strong need to postpone another baby,” Dr. Duane said. “And a woman may be under pressure from a well-meaning physician to go on birth control, which may add to the conflict or stress women feel. Some doctors can be dismissive of that, and encouraging a woman to give up an aspect of her faith—which may be part of her healing—can add to the internal conflict and undermine her trust in a method of family planning that can be used very effectively.”

Dr. Duane said that another source of pressure for women struggling with postpartum depression can come from well-intentioned Catholics. “There can be a badge of honor among some people to think that the more kids you have the better Catholic you are,” Dr. Duane said. “But Pope Paul VI did not call for women to have as many children as they can; he said if there are serious reasons for a couple to postpone a pregnancy, they need to use N.F.P. to postpone pregnancy. And for a couple postponing pregnancy in order to deal with postpartum depression, getting comments or criticism from well-meaning Catholic friends asking when they plan to have more children can undermine their experience.”

Supportive and understanding health care professionals can go a long way toward providing a better continuity of care for women. St. Joseph Hospital in Orange, Calif., a member of the Catholic Health Alliance, delivers about 5,000 babies per year. The hospital makes sure that each mother is screened using the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale, a 10-question form that assesses a mother’s risk for postpartum depression. Katie Monarch is a therapist and the founder of the hospital’s program Caring for Women

With Maternal Depression. In her 11 years at the hospital, Katie has worked with over 2,000 moms. While the Edinburgh test is a well known and effective predictor of depression, she estimates that only about 50 percent of hospitals consistently screen women for perinatal mood disorders.

The success of St. Joseph’s program comes in part from their ongoing relationship with patients and a flexibility that accounts for a woman’s individual situation. Women can be screened in the hospital after delivery, but the topic is also discussed in prenatal birthing classes, and brochures about the condition are placed in referring obstetrician offices. New moms return to the hospital’s mother-baby assessment center three days after the birth, a process that allows for relationship building and ongoing care. “The Edinburgh paperwork puts the seed in [a new mom’s] head that ‘If I am having problems I know they have a program and I know that I can call them,’” Monarch said. “And a lot of moms have called because of that.”

In recent years, Monarch said, the topic of postpartum depression has received greater attention as celebrities have spoken out about their own experiences with it. She cited Chrissy Teigen’s recent essay about her postpartum struggle in *Glamour*. “You see Chrissy at all the awards looking stunning, and with that baby that is as cute as a button, and she says ‘I’m not liking this and it’s hard,’” Monarch said. “I think that’s perfect. It’s helpful. That normalizes a lot. And these moms are dying to feel normal.”

POSTPARTUM POTENTIAL

Despite increasing awareness of the condition, only about 20 percent of women who exhibit symptoms seek help for postpartum depression. This can be attributed, in part, to a lack of understanding of the symptoms, inadequate screening and fear of being stigmatized. Faith communities can serve as a missing link between women and mental health services. It is crucial, however, that faith communities seek out struggling mothers, as studies have shown that women who were experiencing depression were less likely to attend religious services. At a time when women might be most in need of a supportive faith community, they often are less likely to be a part of one.

An informal Facebook poll by **America** of 116 women who had experienced perinatal mood disorders found that 84 percent stated they had not felt supported by their faith communities during their depression. There are no national Catholic ministries specifically for women experiencing

“You feel like there’s something wrong with you if you are not perfectly happy as a mother,” said Gina Parnaby.

perinatal mood disorders, although some dioceses offer counseling services. And there have been some successful one-time projects. In 2007 the New Jersey Catholic Conference partnered with the statewide Maternal and Child Consortia to train clergy, religious and lay parish staff in the symptoms of postpartum depression.

Jennifer Ruggiero, director of the Respect for Life office of the Diocese of Metuchen, served as the diocesan liaison with the consortium and helped to get information out to parishes. She also planned workshops that included a talk about the clinical side of postpartum depression and a witness talk from Sylvia Lasalandra, a prominent Catholic advocate for awareness about postpartum depression. (Lasalandra has written a book about her experience called *A Daughter’s Touch*.) Ruggiero said that the people in attendance were moved by the talks but that the turnout by parish leaders had not been as robust as she had hoped. “I would be very much in favor of doing it again,” she said. “I would love to see more clergy educated. But we go from issue to issue, and there are so many pressing issues.”

Recognizing that their diocese or faith community may not have the resources or structures in place to provide support, Catholic women who have themselves experienced these conditions have spearheaded ongoing efforts around postpartum depression awareness at the grassroots level.

Looking back now, Beth Gilbert, 57, knows she experienced some form of postpartum depression after the births of the first three of her five children. But it was only after the birth of her third child that she began to understand what was happening and to seek help. An encounter with a woman religious at her parish who was also a counselor helped her to understand more about her postpartum condition. She began counseling. Medication helped, but so did eating healthy foods, exercising, trying to build social networks and trying not to feel guilty about needing a break. “I had to prioritize self-care so I could be a better caregiver to my children,” she said.

Then, three years after her third child was born, Gilbert had a miscarriage. She found little solace in her parish community. She wrote a letter about her experience with a miscarriage to the pastor at the time, with the hope that it might help him minister to other women who came to the church looking for support. She never received a reply.

Gilbert found comfort in the Mass and sacraments but needed emotional and practical support as well. She sought community at a conference for women in Peoria, Ill., spon-



sored by the Elizabeth Ministry, an international Catholic organization working to provide spiritual and emotional support and resources to women with regard to childbirth and relationships. Gilbert began talking with other women about the possibility of starting a chapter at their parish. “I thought, *Boy, this wasn’t available when I was going through difficult times, and this could be helpful to other people who might experience something similar.*” she said.

Postpartum depression is not the main focus of the Elizabeth Ministry, but its model can easily be adapted to include support for mothers struggling with the condition. The ministry at Gilbert’s parish involved personal outreach to women, particularly mothers, in the parish and the community who might need a listening ear or logistical support after a birth or miscarriage or while going through any difficult time. The group worked to match up individuals who had had similar experiences. They started sponsoring pregnancy blessings at the parish four times a year, which had the benefit of identifying new moms so that they could be connected with women in the community if they needed support. They offered prayer cards and baby showers and made calls and visits to each other and delivered meals to new moms.



Jena Booher founded Babies on the Brain to help companies form family-friendly policies.



Beth Gilbert (third from left) used her own painful experiences to help build a parish support network for mothers.

The support she offered to others through this ministry allowed Gilbert to use her own painful experiences to offer compassionate listening and helped her to gain perspective. “I just needed to be able to find the right balance of taking care of myself and taking care of my children,” she said. “And I needed other people to help me learn to do that correctly. I also had to be an instrument to help create a structure so that other people could benefit.”

CREATING A CARING COMMUNITY

The Blue Dot Project is another resource for women with perinatal mood disorders that came from a mother who sought a supportive community following her experience. Peggy Nosti of Escondido, Calif., co-founded the project after she was diagnosed with postpartum anxiety following the birth of her third child in 2010 at the age of 39. While she was struggling with anxiety, her friends and family took night shifts with the baby, visited her and dropped off meals. Nosti was open about her struggles, but her family members still were careful not to publicly discuss Nosti’s anxiety because they felt she would be embarrassed or ashamed.

“I never understood that,” she said. “I knew it wasn’t my fault...[it wasn’t the case that] I wasn’t equipped to be a mom. It’s a mental health issue.” She hoped to help others understand this as well.

The daughter of a former priest and a former nun, Nosti, whose children are 11, 8 and 6, was born into a Catholic family dedicated to service. This spirit of service inspired her to search out new ways to communicate to moms who are suffering to let them know they could talk about their experience. She felt that a universal symbol of awareness could help. Nosti then met with a reproductive psychiatrist who agreed to partner with her to found The Blue Dot Project, through which they have promoted their symbol for maternal mental health awareness—the titular blue dot. Postpartum Support International voted the dot the international symbol of the cause, and The Blue Dot Project distributes round baby blue magnets, stickers and pins that can be worn or posted as a sign of support for maternal mental health.

Already the dot magnet on her car has spurred several conversations for Nosti while out in the community. “You do the best you can, but we’re not meant to do this on our own,” she said. “We’re meant to have community.”

Jena Booher, 30, of Chappaqua, N.Y., also channeled her postpartum experience into an effort to help women find community, consolation and balance after childbirth. In contrast to The Blue Dot Project, the main goal of which is to raise awareness, Booher has dedicated her efforts to providing mental health counseling services and consulting services for corporations hoping to provide a family-friendly environment.

Booher spent her pregnancy struggling with hyperemesis gravida, an extreme form of nausea. She also faced a difficult situation at her Wall Street office, in which she was increasingly sidelined from her accounts after announcing her pregnancy. Following the birth of her daughter Siena, now 2½, complications continued. Booher quit her job shortly after her maternity leave but struggled with processing what her new role as a mother meant for her identity after so many years focused on her career. Booher found herself losing weight and became dangerously thin, partly because she was skipping meals, though she hardly realized she was doing this. She had persistent low energy and insomnia and often ruminated on the tasks she hadn’t completed that day. Nearly a year after childbirth, Booher was diagnosed with postpartum depression.

“I had identified my self-worth in my achievements,” she said. “That contributed to my depression because my identity was flipped on its head.” As she struggled, she grew in her appreciation for what it meant to be a parent. “I had viewed the role quality [of motherhood] as not as great as my big-time Wall Street job,” she said. “It pains me to say

Photos: top, courtesy of Jena Booher; bottom, courtesy of Beth Gilbert

Peggy Nosti founded The Blue Dot Project to raise awareness of postpartum depression.

that because I now know that's bullshit. Motherhood is the hardest job there is."

Approximately 46 percent of women do not return to the workplace after childbirth. For some this is a deliberate choice; others have no choice but to leave after facing the cost of child care, inflexible work schedules, the wage gap, lack of maternity leave or discrimination. Booher set out to eliminate some of these factors by founding Babies on the Brain, a cross-sector organization that both helps new moms transition to their new identities through life-coaching services and counseling and helps companies set policies that make it easier for women to stay in the workforce. "I help companies think beyond nice-looking maternity leave policies," she said. "It's about redefining the status quo."

The status quo for Booher's own life has changed as well. She no longer is bound by 12-hour days at an office, which has helped her to embrace her role as a working mom. "I wanted to work and am working but in a way that is not defined by traditional norms," she said. "I am the primary caretaker of my daughter, and I'm a full-time grad student, and I'm running my own business. How do I do all that? I work weird hours. I get up at 4:30 or 5 a.m. and do work before my baby wakes up. The rules about how to achieve success—I am not playing that game because that game does not work for moms."

Struggling with depression and motherhood forced Booher to reconsider her prayer life as well. "I tried to pray a lot with the Annunciation," she said. "That prayer really helped me. Knowing that Mary didn't have all the answers, and if Mary didn't have all the answers then sure as hell I don't." For now, she tries to focus on the beauty of the moment, on the moments of "sheer joy" she now can feel about being a mother. "It's this mystery. The joy I feel that I helped bring this life into the world is an immense, overwhelming, take-your-breath-away feeling, as hard as it is in real life."

The difficulties of motherhood are something to which Pope Francis has also called attention, in the hopes that the church will pay closer attention as well. "Perhaps mothers, ready to sacrifice so much for their children and often for others as well, ought to be listened to more," he said. "We should understand more about their daily struggle to be efficient at work and attentive and affectionate in the family."

These days, Marissa Nichols is still facing the daily struggle that comes with both parenting and depression, but the ways in which she has been able to draw closer to God through her painful postpartum experience have also



"Motherhood is too often ignored in community life," said Sara Snapp.

become clearer. "I'm getting to know God as a parent," she said. "Humanity does to him what I know my kids do to me." She also knows that while it still can be difficult to explain depression to others, she feels "no judgment from [God] about this. Just a lot of mercy."

She hopes that other Catholic women struggling with postpartum depression and anxiety feel this, too, and apply that same mercy to each other, letting go of the stigma and shame too often surrounding these issues. "The church is saying motherhood is something we should all revere," Nichols said. "But we have yet to fully put that into practice."

Kerry Weber is an executive editor of America. She is recovering from postpartum depression.

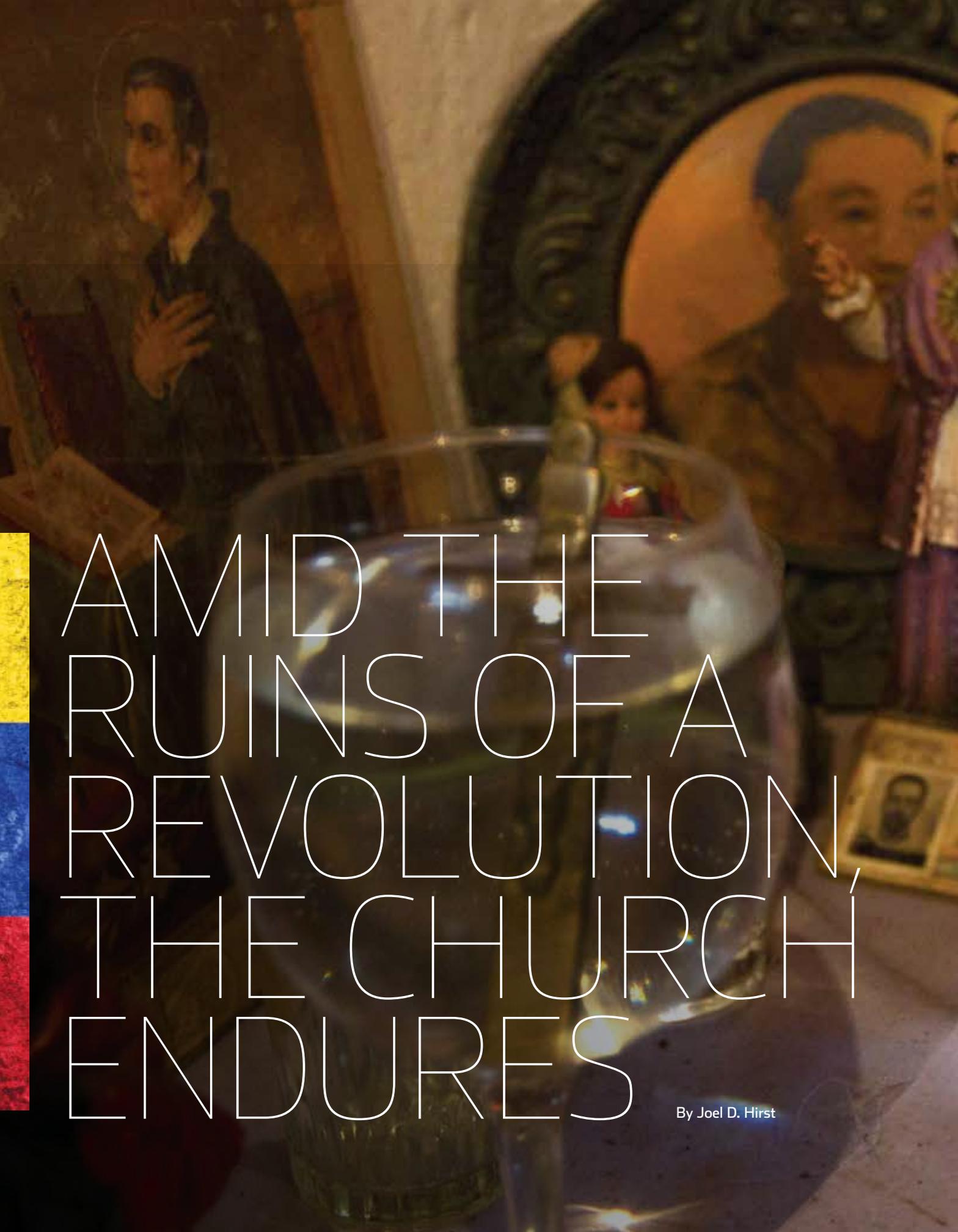
May is Maternal Mental Health Month.

According to Postpartum Support International, the symptoms of postpartum depression can include:

- Feelings of anger or irritability
- Lack of interest in the baby
- Appetite and sleep disturbance
- Crying and sadness
- Feelings of guilt, shame or hopelessness
- Loss of interest, joy or pleasure in things you used to enjoy
- Possible thoughts of harming the baby or yourself

For more resources:

- Postpartum Support International: postpartum.net
- National Coalition of Maternal Mental Health: www.NCMMH.org
- The Blue Dot Project: thebluedotproject.org
- Babies on the Brain: www.babiesonthebrain.com



AMID THE RUINS OF A REVOLUTION, THE CHURCH ENDURES

By Joel D. Hirst



CNS photo/Carlos Garcia Rawlins, Reuters

Political campaigns are supposed to be exciting. They are often contentious.

What they are not supposed to be is macabre, but that is the only way the last campaign of Venezuela's President Hugo Chávez in 2013 can be described—the slow-motion suicide of a man bloated and bald from disease, careening recklessly around the country in the bed of a pickup truck. By the end, he could barely walk.

President Chávez's last campaign was fundamentally morbid. Gone was talk of the extraordinary plans of yesteryear—they had all been tried anyway. No more the dizzying promises from headier days when the revolution had energy, when it had money and purpose. There were not even appeals to the future; even the most fervent of disciples knew in their hearts that this was in fact not a campaign but a farewell tour.

After 14 years of business seizures and petro-dependency, the "Bolivarian" project was ending. No surprise there. The national economy was just about completely dependent on oil exports for foreign exchange; the currency was in shambles—even the "strong bolivar" launched by Mr. Chavez in 2008 had lost two-thirds of its value. A spiraling murder rate brought Venezuela into grim competition with the likes of Baghdad and Medellín in the 1980s.

The revolution was exhausted, but a growing opposition had energy and youth and, more important, a forgotten idea to rally around—liberty. All the revolutionaries had was Hugo. And he had one last role to play.

It is hard to understand why Mr. Chávez chose this remarkable, public exit. Why not fly to Paris or London or Brasília for treatment instead? Maybe he was in denial or in fear that his legacy would be destroyed by the young upstart governor challenging him. Who knows? What was most striking, however, was not the weary exhortations of this last campaign. It was a short prayer service, live-streamed from inside the tiny chapel on Mr. Chávez's opulent *finca* in Barinas State.

There, in front of a few family and friends—the suffering Jesus, with a crown of thorns on his head and a cross on his back, as a backdrop—the Hugo Chávez of socialist legend finally became merely a man again as he wept and pleaded with his maker: "And so I say to God, if what I have experienced and lived through has not been sufficient, but I lacked this [suffering], I welcome it. But give me life,

▶ The church still struggles to find a way through the tensions of its responsibilities to the people of Venezuela and its mission.

though it be a blazing life. A painful life, I don't care.

"Give me your crown, Christ, give it to me—that I bleed. Give me your cross, 100 crosses, and I will bear them, but give me life because I still have things to do."

Even a despot who called himself the true heir of Christ and dismissed the church's bishops as perverts and degenerates in the end returned home.

It was a long time getting there: 18 years. That is how long the revolutionaries have directed events in Venezuela—25 if you count the coup attempt in 1992 that set Mr. Chávez at the center of national politics. Some 250,000 people were murdered between 1998 and 2015, according to the Observatorio Venezolano de Violencia—casualties of what can best be described as a civil war.

More than \$1 trillion in oil revenue has been lost, stolen or given away to buy the next in a series of "revolutionary" elections; 8,000 businesses were bankrupt, victims of policies that were supposed to help the poor but mostly helped shore up support for Mr. Chávez; inflation reached over 700 percent in 2017; diseases that had been on the run, including malaria and dengue, made a comeback; hunger, even starvation also returned in some pockets of the country.

Two generations were stolen as students were put to studying Fidel Castro and memorizing the poems of Che Guevara. Two million Venezuelans were put to flight to Panama City, Costa Rica and Miami; New York and London; Paris and Dubai—6.4 percent of the national population. Crime became the economic life blood of the Venezuelan economy. Some 41 percent of cocaine stock destined for European markets is now trafficked across the sacred waters of the Orinoco or to a first stop in West Africa from the main airport's presidential runway. The official mantra, "socialism or death," played back in an endless loop became all that was left of the *caudillo's* failed regime.

And through all that turmoil the church endured.

I have a friend who once was an archeologist—not a famous man making history-shaping discoveries, but a simple community man, laboring for his municipal government, approving building permits and overseeing excavations for the odd basement or new minimart. His humble responsibility was to assure that no part of his nation's heritage was inadvertently destroyed—surely an Old World problem, one for places where everything is infused with the history of the ancients and civilizations remembered and forgotten, resting one upon the other in layers of birth, vibrancy, decadence and decay. One uncovered lay-



er might be thought to tell the whole story, but my friend learned that it is always wiser to go deeper, to seek out the next layer and the one under that, each civilization building upon the previous and adding to it something new, the story of an irrepressible society.

The Catholic Church is like that. It draws deeply from what the Letter to the Hebrews calls "so great a cloud of witnesses" (12:1), nestling the stories of the terrestrial tribulations of the oppressed within the epic struggle of people to live in freedom and practice their faith in peace. And as she has braced herself against the surging tides of totalitarianism in Venezuela, the layers of her resilience—laid down carefully during years defying the darkness—show themselves again.

Latin America's Catholics have never been comfortable with the all-male nature of the West's Trinity. They are a people assailed by *machismo*, male innuendo and bravado. They have seen parades of soldiers stomping down the central avenues of their capitals; they are a people familiar with the violence of men and the impunity that can envelope it, a people who have lost sons and daughters to undeclared wars that have spanned decades; they are families destroyed by alcoholism and infidelity and abuse.

I suppose it is a natural reaction. While men might not be trusted, who need turn away from the Virgin?



Hugo Chávez was at the center of Venezuelan politics for 25 years. Pictured: an altar in his honor.

She has become an important aspect of the faith in Latin America, the loving edges of the mother smoothing over some of the roughness and violence of men, humanizing the church, making it safer and nurturing.

For Venezuela, so accustomed to male mischief, this is surely true. Venezuela is custodian to a crowd of Marys: the Virgen de Coromoto, protecting the memory of the indigenous conversion to the new faith from her imposing cement cathedral in Portuguesa State; the Virgen del Valle rests in delicate splendor inside a whitewashed cathedral under bougainvillea and ivy in Porlamar on the eastern Islands of Nueva Esparta, reminding the islanders of the day she saved the population from a hurricane and a drought; the Virgen de Chiquinquirá, “La Chinita,” appears to the lake people of the west to assure them that God loves those who serve him.

The festivals surrounding the canonizations and memorializations and miracles are a part of the fabric of Venezuela’s culture. The periodic celebrations of the Virgin’s appearance have become a resplendent parade of faith and family and hope for the future—a technicolor reminder that there are still moments of gentleness, of love and tradition away from the acrid breath of the brute military men who commandeered the country.

Of course, the revolutionaries probably do not like this

Mary business one bit. Spaces outside of their control, responding to a higher authority? Something soft and gentle that is nevertheless stronger and more resilient? That captures the national imagination naturally while they work so hard and so unsuccessfully to implant their insipid ideas?

It aggravates their oversized sense of importance. They wrap themselves in arrogance and godlessness as if the land had not breathed before they walked across its crust, as if their past did not come from the mountains and the hills and the rivers and the oceans, emerging from the faith of their fathers and grandfathers. Until they at last need him in the end too.

During the so-called dark ages in Europe, not all was dark. The continent was broken into feudal city states, armies at the service of petty lords, violence and poverty and death a daily portion. During these times the light of the church broke brightly through the darkness. A merciful forerunner to the N.G.O.s that now wander the torn places of the earth were the legions of monks and nuns—not as they are often portrayed, cloistered away in their abbeys, but spreading out across the land—running soup kitchens and fielding doctors and helping the poor and the blind and the destitute. This noble tradition of church service continues into modern times, of course.



CNS photo/Marco Belio, Reuters

When the state becomes predatory, defenders of the faith are called upon to point people back to God.

I have walked through Don Bosco centers in places like Barquisimeto, where a group of heroic priests patiently cares for youths with Down syndrome. Once children in acute need, they are now young adults who have been abandoned or surrendered by their parents. They will never live alone, never have a job, a spouse or a family. Segregated by degrees of disability—from the slightly afflicted to those who cannot speak or control their bodies—they are cared for by the priests. Salted across Venezuela's vast slums are Fe y Alegria church schools and radio stations and programs where the teachers provide quality education, love and care to the poorest children of the poorest families, so they too will be able to find their places in a hard world. I wonder how they are faring, 20 years after Hugo Chávez started his war on the free mind.

Corrupt states in the throes of decay often first grow like cosmic red giants across the land, expanding in their disorder to engulf all around them. But when the star finally goes supernova—it torches everything in its expanse and then collapses, leaving behind a blackened and desiccated land. That is what happened after Rome fell, and it is what is happening now in Venezuela. As in ancient Europe, the

only lights that break this darkness will be the charities, many of which are run by the church.

The church has always been such a sanctuary from the state and honors its martyr-victims—Thomas Becket and Thomas More, Christopher Robinson. Venezuela even has its own martyrs, including the native son Bishop Salvador Montes de Oca, who was murdered by the Nazis in the massacre at the Monastery of Cartujos en Massa in Italy in 1944. When the state becomes predatory, the defenders of the faith are called upon to point people in the right direction, away from the violence of the authorities and back to God, reminding the people he is still there, that he is still looking, still caring.

This important role continues in places where the state likes to pretend it is God.

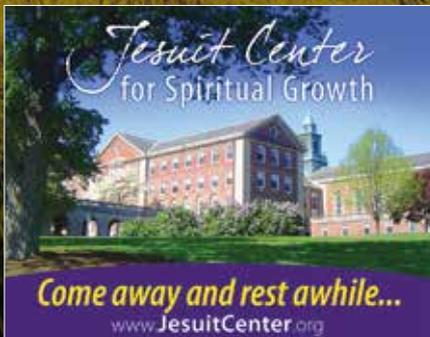
Venezuela's church has become such a place of refuge. As the revolutionaries attempt to brush aside the final vestiges of liberty and the freedom of God-fearing people to think and act as they know is best, it is no wonder that they

Continued on Page 35.

AMERICA'S GUIDE TO RETREATS

Many of our readers are curious about retreats. What does one do on a retreat? Where does one go? What are some good retreat houses? Simply put, a retreat is an extended period of prayer, usually done in silence, and usually at a retreat house, where a team of spiritual directors helps you find God in your prayer. There are also different kinds of retreats. On a directed retreat, a person meets with a spiritual director on a daily basis to discuss what is happening in prayer. A guided retreat focuses more on one topic (say, women's spirituality) and offers presentations as well as opportunities to meet with a director a few times. Preached retreats consist in listening to presentations and praying on your own, but with less opportunity for direction.

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Ph (610) 670-3625; email: mleonowitz@jesuitcenter.org

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website: www.loyolahouse.com

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Ph: (973) 539-0740 ext 24; website: www.loyola.org

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Ph: (650) 340-7474; email: mc@mercywmw.org; website: www.mercy-center.org

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Toll free: (866) 930-1181 ext. 122; Ph: (303) 688-4198 ext. 122

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San Alfonso Retreat House

755 Ocean Ave., Long Branch, NJ 07740

Ph: (732) 222-2731 ext. 159

www.sanalfonso retreats.org; Facebook: [alfonso retreats](https://www.facebook.com/alfonso retreats); Twitter: [@alfonso retreats](https://twitter.com/alfonso retreats)

San Alfonso Retreat House and Conference Center, a ministry of the Redemptorist fathers and brothers, is situated on eight acres on the New Jersey coast, providing a setting of great natural beauty to meditate and pray, reflect and study, and to be still and listen.



Spiritual Ministry House

4822 Del Mar Avenue, San Diego, CA 92107

Ph: (619) 224-9444; Fax: (619) 224-1082

Email: spiritmin@rscj.org; www.spiritmin.org

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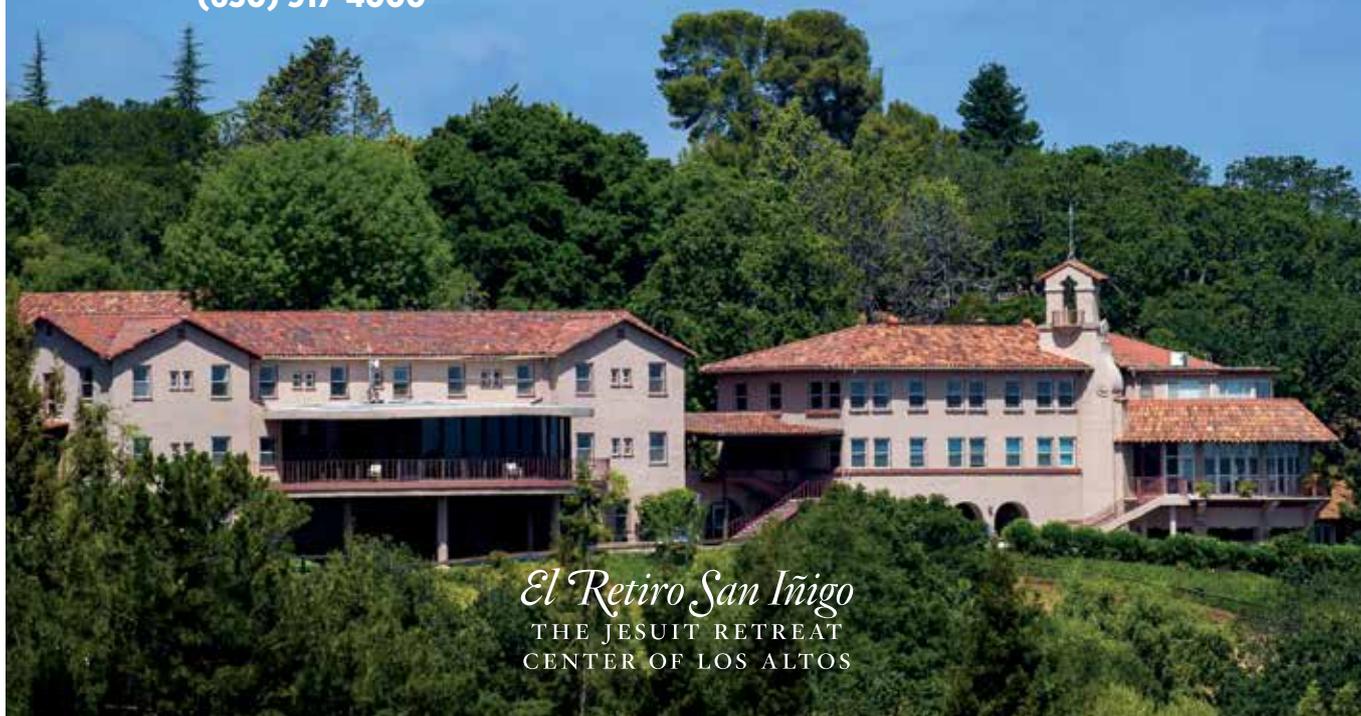
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have identified the church as perhaps the greatest threat to their project. Pro-government militias, known in Venezuela as *colectivos*, have even on a number of occasions disrupted Mass at churches in Caracas in attempts to silence church leaders.

And, in response, it is no wonder that Mother Church has grown to extend her protective wings over her people: Nixon Moreno, falsely accused of attacks on police, climbing the walls of the embassy of the Holy See in Caracas and finding sanctuary there; the Universidad Católica Andrés Bello closing its doors against Chavista thugs; the Venezuelan bishops, supported by the Holy See, calling for the people to “not be intimidated,” but instead to “rebel against the dictatorship peacefully and democratically” because “never before have so many Venezuelans had to eat garbage”—as a message read from pulpits across the land recently said.

I would be remiss if I did not also recognize that there have been missteps along the path of resistance. The Catholic Church is, after all, a political organization, just as it is a spiritual one. Pope Francis’ attempts to pull the church into stillborn dialogues with the narco-Communists who govern Venezuela only shore up the regime’s legitimacy and hand another bitter disappointment to the nation’s citizen-warriors. Similarly, the voting watchdog group Ojo Electoral attempted to monitor free-but-unfair elections for years, certifying each revolutionary step closer to the abyss.

Now Venezuela’s bishops call for a peaceful and democratic “rebellion” against President Nicolás Maduro’s dictatorship. They are not wrong in seeking to preserve the liberty of the faithful. The question is always how best to achieve this and proceed against the brutal polarization that populist regimes use to divide and conquer.

The church still struggles to find a way through the tension of its responsibility to the people of Venezuela and the demand that it remain true to itself and its divine mission.

As Venezuela’s political paralysis extends, its problems have degenerated, passing through an economic crisis and reaching its inevitable outcome as a humanitarian disaster. Through it all, the church remains engaged.

It has repeatedly called for the release of political prisoners, like Leopoldo López. He was illegally jailed three years ago after protesting against the regime. The church has spoken out constantly against the spiral of violence that Venezuela’s misrule has created. It has raised its voice

to highlight the terrible conditions of those living in increasing poverty, as it has repeatedly called for a definitive solution to the problem.

The new superior general of the Society of Jesus, Arturo Sosa, is Venezuelan-born and a former instructor at the Universidad Católica Andrés Bello. In his soft-spoken way, he has consistently pressed for a return to human freedom in Venezuela. *Chavismo* has been “a system of domination, not a political system that has legitimacy to function in tranquility,” he recently observed.

He has also described it “a statist regime.” He said, “From there to dictatorship is just one step.”

Yet despite his strong criticism, Father Sosa has the ear of prominent members of the government of Mr. Maduro as it barely caretakes the apparent end of *Chavismo*. Even revolutionary firebrands like Maripili Hernández take note when he speaks.

“The advantage that Arturo has compared to many members of the Venezuelan Catholic hierarchy,” Ms. Hernández recently observed, “is that, even though he has had a position critical of the government, it has been both a serene and reasonable position.”

The dictatorship is entering a new period with two possible outcomes: a collapse that makes way for a return to democracy or an “advancement” to an even more sinister authoritarianism. Venezuela’s church has played many roles in the past, and soon it will be asked to fill a new role, laying another layer of its story as the inevitable approaches in Venezuela.

When St. Augustine wrote *City of God*, the church was still in her youth, her fate was unsure and the empire that protected her had died. That early saint was forced to contemplate the future of the faith absent so great a benefactor.

He should not have been concerned. Faith—true faith in a true God—will always find a way. Imperial Rome was only the first of the many layers of the church’s epic story across time.

Powers great and small rise and fall. Sometimes whole civilizations crumble away, and their stories are remembered no more. The dark crust of Venezuela’s revolution is already cracking and decaying. Soon it will be gone; it will be brushed away, and the people will think of the revolution no more.

But the story of the Venezuelan church will go on.

Joel D. Hirst is a novelist and a playwright and was a visiting International Affairs Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations.



Composite art: iStockphoto.com/America



MY DAUGHTER
HAS A DISABILITY.
I DON'T WANT
JESUS TO
'FIX' HER.

By Heather Kirn Lanier

I am a skeptic who goes to church on Sundays. Over the past year, I started reading chunks of the Bible every day, and I was surprised by the man I met. I did not encounter the Jesus of my Baptist upbringing, that shampoo-commercial brunette who smiled beside children and lambs. I encountered a Jesus who





She's not 'damaged goods.' She's good and she's whole and she's holy. ●●

pushes against the rules of religious and cultural authority. He says, *I know your laws. I'm healing on the Sabbath.* He says, *Scratch your tribal divides, I'm drinking water with a Samaritan woman.*

But on the subject of disability, I found a Jesus that is, frankly, disappointing. He usually does precisely what disability advocates rail against. He reinforces the idea that the disabled body is broken, damaged. He treats the disabled body as something to fix.

"Take up your mat," he tells people who could not walk, and suddenly they walk. He spits into his hand, touches a deaf man and the man can hear. The sick and lame touch the "fringes of Jesus' cloak," and, like that, they are "fixed," transformed into the likenesses of their able-bodied brethren.

"I've got a bone to pick with Jesus," I said to my husband, an Episcopal priest. "Why does his primary miracle have to be un-disabling the disabled?"

My husband conceded the problem, noting that Jesus often operated within the constructs of his time.

NOT DAMAGED GOODS ✦

Five years ago, my husband and I had just begun life as parents when we discovered our baby had an ultra-rare syndrome. One night, as she was sleeping upstairs, we talked at our dining room table. I hedged around the unsayable for a few minutes and then went straight for it: "What will she do when she gets older? Bag groceries?"

I said this as though working as a grocery bagger were a tragedy. I would not have said this to any other person because I knew that such statements were snobby and ableist and disparaging of grocery baggers. But my kid had just been diagnosed with a chromosomal condition that in most cases led to intellectual disabilities. And so, it turned out I was snobby and ableist and disparaging of grocery baggers. I had to admit this aloud so I could excise it from myself.

My husband's reply was a plain sentence of ferocity

and kindness. "She's not damaged goods," he said. In four words, he named the prevailing attitude toward people with intellectual disabilities—that they are broken—and he kicked that attitude out the front door of our home.

"Of course she's not," I said quickly. But inside I heard another response. *She's not?* It was a real question. And in reply to this question, two voices emerged inside me.

One voice said: *Yes, of course, she's damaged. She's missing a chunk of a chromosome. It broke off during meiosis and it makes her small and epileptic and delayed. If you could fix every one of her cells, if you could find that small tip of her fourth chromosome and put it back, you would.*

But just as this answer formed, a second one arose. It said simply: *No. She's not "damaged goods." She's good and she's whole and she's holy.* This second voice did not mean that my daughter was "special" or "angelic" or any of the other tropes of disability. It just meant she was good and whole and holy simply because she was human.

That was five years ago. Since then, the second voice has only gotten louder and clearer. I hear it when I watch my 21-pound 5-year-old strut across the living room, swinging her left arm in an exaggerated saunter. I hear it when my daughter squeals with delight because life contains cheese and hats and Elmo. I hear it when my girl snuggles against my chest before bedtime. "I love you," I say, and her sapphire eyes look up at me, and she says with a long whisper, "Yeaaaah."

Today, my daughter is a mostly nonverbal, toddling kindergartener, bounding with light and learning alongside typical peers twice her size.

She's good and she's whole and she's holy. This voice is as weighty as the seismic hum of the planet.

Yet since my daughter's diagnosis, I have heard that first voice in the cultural buzz all around me. The voice that says my daughter is flawed, imperfect, in need of fixing. I hear it when people describe a newborn baby's features as "birth



defects.” I observe it when looking at the way terms for “intellectually disabled” eventually become insults. *Moron. Retard. Mentally challenged.* Soon, maybe, *special needs.*

I hear that voice when internet comments assert that people with any kind of disability shouldn’t have children, or shouldn’t take up valuable resources or shouldn’t be alive. I hear that “damaged goods” voice when the Princeton ethicist Peter Singer argues that babies with disabilities can ethically be killed.

I hear that obnoxious buzz when a candidate for the country’s highest office bends his wrist, throws his hand against his chest, shakes his body around and slurs his words. “You should see this guy,” he says of a reporter with physical disabilities. “You should see this guy.”

And I hear that voice, loud and clear, when that candidate is voted into office.

The disabled body is less than. This is the cultural message.

WHOLE AND HOLY

But one place I did not expect to find this message is in the words of the man that two billion people on the planet worship. For months, I held a grudge against Jesus, deciding that the Son of Man was a horrible disability advocate. Eventually, though, I learned that the Gospel of Luke, which contains many of Jesus’ healings, was most likely written by a doctor.

“Back then,” my priest-husband said, “people didn’t make the same distinction between the body and the soul like many do today. In the mind of Luke, the body and the soul are one unit. So whenever there’s a healing going on, the spirit is also healed. That was part of the worldview.”

My husband was saying that, in order for the Gospel writer to convince his audience about a healed soul, there had to be a healed body.

Two thousand years later, we still see the residue of this flawed body-soul logic in our culture. People with visible disabilities often describe being accosted by religious strangers. On the blog Planet of the Blind, Stephen Kuusisto writes: “It’s peculiar when I meet a stranger who finds herself or himself driven by who knows what compulsion to say: ‘Can I pray for you?’ This happens more often than one may think.”

On the blog “Bad Cripple,” Bill Peace writes: “Many people have prayed for my poor crippled soul.... I have been told repeatedly that I am paying for grievous sins my parents committed. My miserable existence is God’s punishment to hurt my parents. Little old ladies sitting in wheelchairs come up to me in church and tell me they are praying for me and that I should not worry: ‘*God will cure you. You will walk again.*’”

My daughter attends church every Sunday, and, thankfully, no one tries to heal her. But I still seek a more promising disability theology. And as I continue reading the Bible, I notice something about Jesus’ many healings. He seems hesitant to do them, annoyed even.

When a father asks him to cure his child’s epilepsy, Jesus says, “How long must I put up with you?” After putting his fingers into a deaf man’s ears and touching the man’s

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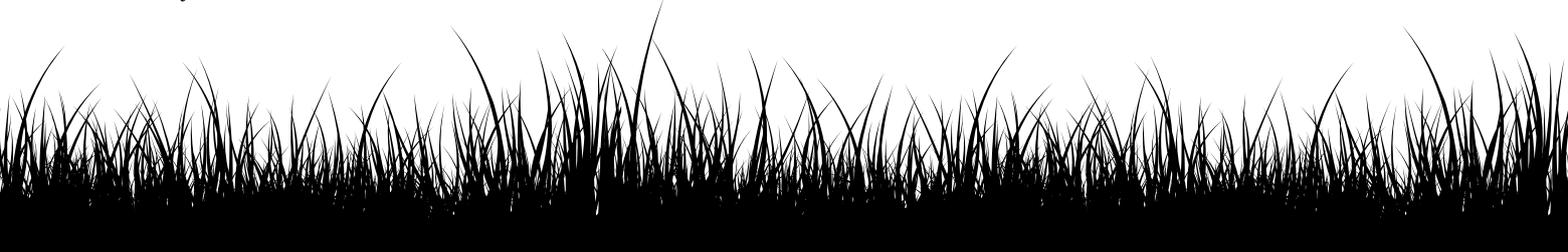
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tongue with spit, he sighs to the heavens as if to say *enough of this*. Even though theologians will tell you it is a calling down of the spirit, I read it as frustration. He seems sick of it, the incessant demand to heal. *The healings*, I think he is saying, *are not the point*.

In *The Disabled God*, Nancy L. Eiesland notes that Jesus' body is not perfect after the resurrection. According to the written accounts, Jesus is not some ethereal figure of light, some divine translucence. He is flesh. He is bones. And he has wounds. He has the slash on his side, the holes in his hands. From the ordeal of his crucifixion, Ms. Eiesland argues, his body has been in some small way disabled.

She argues that, to boot, when Jesus returns to his friends, he upends the belief that disability is taboo. He says, "Peace be with you," and then, "Stick your fingers in my side." He encourages them to touch his wounds.

"In so doing," Ms. Eiesland argues, "this disabled God is also the revealer of a new humanity. The disabled God is...the revelation of true personhood, underscoring the reality that full personhood is fully compatible with the experience of disability."

Whether or not you believe the seemingly absurd story that a divine reality decided to meet humanity on foot, walk among people, die and then walk again—the heart of Ms. Eiesland's argument is compelling: Disability is part of our wholeness.

Call me faithless, but the tip of my daughter's chromosome will never appear in every one of her cells. But I do not want anyone to "fix" my kid. That is not the miracle I seek.

Instead, I want someone to lay hands on the people who presume she is less than. I want someone to eradicate the idea that bodies are either productive or burdensome, that they either contribute to the gross domestic product or drain it. I want someone to lay hands on the president for doing what an apologist later called "the classic retard." I want some mystical savior to eradicate the assumption that disability is a curse, a calamity.

Wouldn't that be the bigger miracle?

Heather Kirn Lanier teaches at Southern Vermont College and is the author of the memoir *Teaching in the Terrordome: Two Years in West Baltimore With Teach for America* (University of Missouri Press).



I thought I could 'save' gang members. I was wrong.

By Greg Boyle

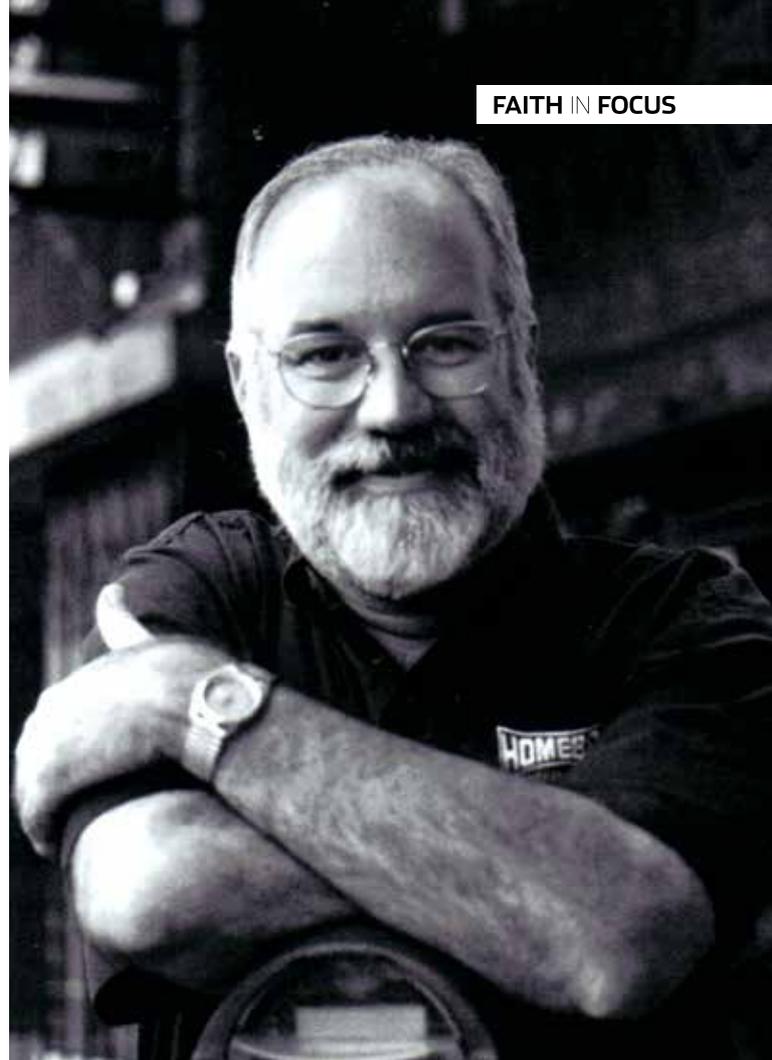
I don't believe in mistakes. Everything belongs, and, as the homies say, "It's all good." I do believe in lessons learned. I have learned that you work with gang members and not with gangs, otherwise you enforce the cohesion of gangs and supply them oxygen. I know now that gang warfare is not the Middle East or Northern Ireland. There is violence in gang violence, but there is no conflict. It is not "about something." It is the language of the despondent and traumatized.

In my 30 years of ministry to gang members in Los Angeles, the most significant reversal of course for me happened somewhere during my sixth year. I had mistakenly tried to "save" young men and women trapped in gang life. But then, in an instant, I learned that saving lives is for the Coast Guard. Me wanting a gang member to have a different life would never be the same as that gang member wanting to have one. I discovered that you do not go to the margins to rescue anyone. But if we go there, everyone finds rescue.

Louie was 19 years old, a gang member making money hand over fist by running up to cars and selling crack cocaine. He quickly became his own best customer. After my many attempts to get him into rehab, he finally agreed to check himself in. He was there one month when his younger brother Erick did something gang members never do. He put a gun to his temple and killed himself. Gang members are much more inclined to walk into enemy turf and hope to die than to pull the trigger themselves.

I called Louie and told him what happened. He was crestfallen. "I will pick you up for the funeral," I said, "but I'm driving you right back." "I want to come back," he said through his tears. "I like how recovery feels."

When I arrive at the rehab center, Louie greets me with *un abrazo*, and once in the car, he launches in. "I had a dream last night—and you were in it." In the dream, he tells me, the two of us are in a darkened room. No lights whatsoever. No illuminated exit signs. No light creeping from under the door. Total darkness. We are not speaking, but



he knows I am in the room with him. Then, silently, I pull a flashlight from my pocket and aim steadily on the light switch across the room. Louie tells me that he knows that only he can turn the light switch on. He expresses his gratitude that I happen to have a flashlight. Then with great trepidation, Louie moves slowly toward the light switch, following closely the guiding beam of light. He takes a deep breath, flips the switch on, and the room is flooded with light. As he tells me this, he begins sobbing. "And the light," he says, "is better than the darkness." As though he had not known this was the case.

We cannot turn the light switch on for anyone. But we all own flashlights. With any luck, on any given day, we know where to aim them for each other. We do not rescue anyone at the margins. But go figure; if we stand at the margins, we are all rescued. No mistake about it.

Greg Boyle, S.J., the founding director of Homeboy Industries, has worked with gang members in Los Angeles for over 30 years.

'Happy Little Wives and Mothers'

An Account From Halfway Up

Long before “mommy blogs” and social media were the vectors for anxiety about parenting prowess, Katharine M. Byrne, writing in *America* in 1956, called for a more realistic account of the experiences of mothers. She was frustrated by the “brave and cheerful” stories of mothers, so common in the Catholic press, that were “making [her] life no easier.”

What she wrote instead is honest, humorous and hopeful in a way that stands the test of time. As we celebrate Mother’s Day, we are happy to bring it to you again.

The happy little wife and mother is really busy these days, and she is making my life no easier. You cannot turn many pages of a Catholic magazine without running into the brave and cheerful story of her life. Her days are filled with worthy projects at home and abroad, and the modest recital of her successes (“Of course, I can’t do very much as I have eight children under six years of age”) must have some good purpose in mind. Perhaps she rushes into print as an encouragement to the spiritually-lagging or hollering-at-the-kids type of female. That a quite opposite effect may follow is certainly no fault of hers.

The Life Beautiful

Most of us females of a lower order have a hard enough time learning to live with the lady in the *House Gracious* ads. You know the one. She sits smiling on her sun-drenched patio reading *House Gracious*. In the out-of-doors recreation area, some distance removed, her two roguish children (“We will raise a family, a boy for you, a girl for me”) are engaged in constructive and compatible play. Or she may be sitting at a desk in the meal-planning area of her kitchen, her gourmet cookbook at her fingertips, a pink telephone at her elbow. No child has ever hurled a bowl of Pablum at these walls, nor is this gleaming floor ever awash with spilled Wheaties.

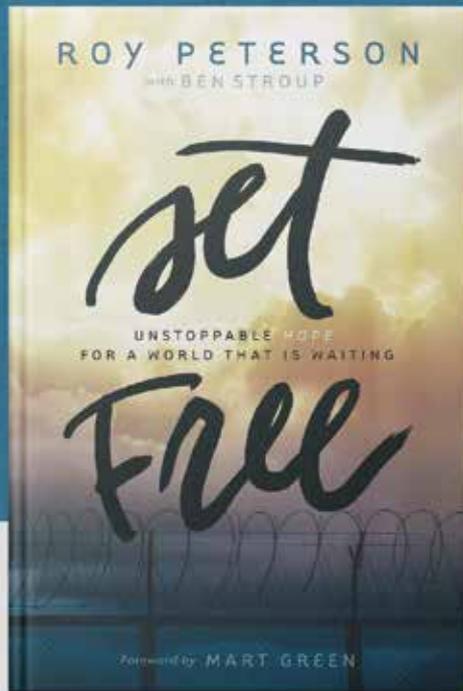
Poor banished children of Eve, we look with longing at all the Things which seem to fill her life so nicely.

Only after a spiritual struggle which may last for years do we learn to rise above this girl, and to reject her way of life as false, materialistic and secular. Besides, we tell ourselves, she couldn’t be that happy. Maybe she has a mean mother-in-law.

But we are faced at times with a different and more difficult problem. There is another Happy Little Wife and Mother who sits on no sun-drenched patio. She lives, usually, in a huge lovable wreck of a house, distracted by few modern conveniences. In some cases her numerous brood may be tucked into a three-room apartment. No matter. Cheerful as a well-worn cliché, she makes out nobly. While you pale at the thought of 48 hours with a non-operating Bendix, she wouldn’t mind beating the bluejeans on rocks.

Her children are good. Her curly-headed two-year-old folds dimpled hands in prayer. Yours has just sunk savage teeth into the arm of her little brother and followed up his screams with a soothing kiss. No such ambivalent behavior ruffles the spiritual calm of her household.

You may think you are doing a fair job in human relations, but your efforts never work out quite as beautifully as hers. If she is good to the little boy nobody in the neighborhood likes, he blossoms under her kindly ministrations, is diverted from his objectionable hobby (stealing small articles from the local dime store), and now writes her grateful letters from a monastery.



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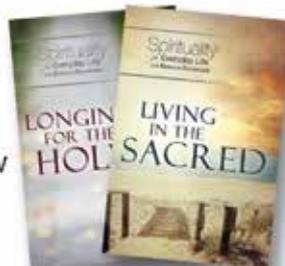
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There was a little boy who hung around your swings and sandbox one summer. Nobody knew where he lived, and the other children weren't very kind to him. When you brought out the milk and sandwiches for yard picnics, you used to bring some for him, too. You urged the children to share toys and popsicles with this outlander. One day when it was time to put the rolling stock away, you noticed that one fairly new 24-inch bike was

oldest person in the community, her birthday was always the occasion for a newspaper interview. When she reached her 100th year the usual questions were asked. But Mrs. Mulholland, God love her, had none of the usual answers. Did she drink? Well, yes, a little. She had had her first cocktail at 95. Wasn't that a bit late in life to start drinking? "Well, no. Before that I just took a straight nip when I needed it." Wasn't it hard for her to raise all

that while the way of life which she chose, and the one which, with God's grace, she is trying to live well, is the one she wants, it is nevertheless a somewhat monotonous life. And often very lonely.

And on occasion, as she kisses her immaculate, clean-shaven, white-collared husband goodbye, and turns to face the montage of congealed egg-yolks, unbraided braids, ankle-deep cereal and damp baby which constitute her first order of the day, might she not indulge, even briefly, her Cool Sewer Complex? (This complex was inspired by Ed Young's famous cartoon depicting the fat and harassed wife who greets her Art Carney-type husband with the classic plaint, "Here I am, standing all day over this hot stove, while you're down in that cool sewer.") Or think, even fleetingly, "Lord, life was good in the dime store." Or the Acme Tool and Die Works. Or the dust and dimness of the Modern Language Library stacks.

While I am often plunged into sadness by a comparison of my own inadequacies with the lives led, in print, by all Happy Little Wives and Mothers, I would feel a real spiritual affinity for the woman who will give us groundlings a work-in-progress report of her efforts toward the Good Life, an account written, not from the peak of Everest, but from halfway up, where the going is still rough and the backslides many.

Katharine M. Byrne, of Chicago, began contributing to *America* in 1953 and continued well into the 1990s. She published at least 25 pieces in our pages over the years. The article reproduced here appeared in the issue of Jan. 28, 1956.

I would feel a real spiritual affinity for the woman who will give us groundlings a work-in-progress report of her efforts toward the Good Life.

missing. You never saw the little boy again either.

Nothing like this ever happens to the Happy Little Wife and Mother. Hers is a simplicist's world of easy and invariable answers to life's questions, a kind of you-too-can-learn-to-play-the-Hawaiian-guitar or *Readers' Digest* world in which formulas are neat and all the experiments behave as they should.

And yet, you know that life cannot be so simple, even for her. She probably leads the same soul-buffed life that we do. She may be better at it, but she's human, and I wish she'd break down and admit it. It would be a real comfort to me to hear the H.L.W. and M. admit that once, after three bleak winter weeks of unalleviated pressures, she walked out on her whole family and took a bus ride to the end of the line, alone.

When I was a little girl, we had a remarkable neighbor named Mrs. Mulholland. Because she was the

those children alone, since her husband had died when she was in her thirties? Well, no, not as hard as you might think. Her husband, though a good man, you understand, had never really been too much help to her. But she had had a bachelor brother, Joe, with a good civil service job with the city, and he had turned over his check for years. Dear Mrs. Mulholland, I salute your honest virtues.

The Human Touch

When a woman whose dieting efforts have largely failed reads a "You, too..." article by a lady who lost 50 pounds in 50 weeks, she is heartened by the author's rueful admission that once, in the midst of this rigorous regimen, she locked herself in the bathroom and devoured a pound of butter-creams.

In much the same way, perhaps, we would welcome from the Happy Little Wife and Mother the admission

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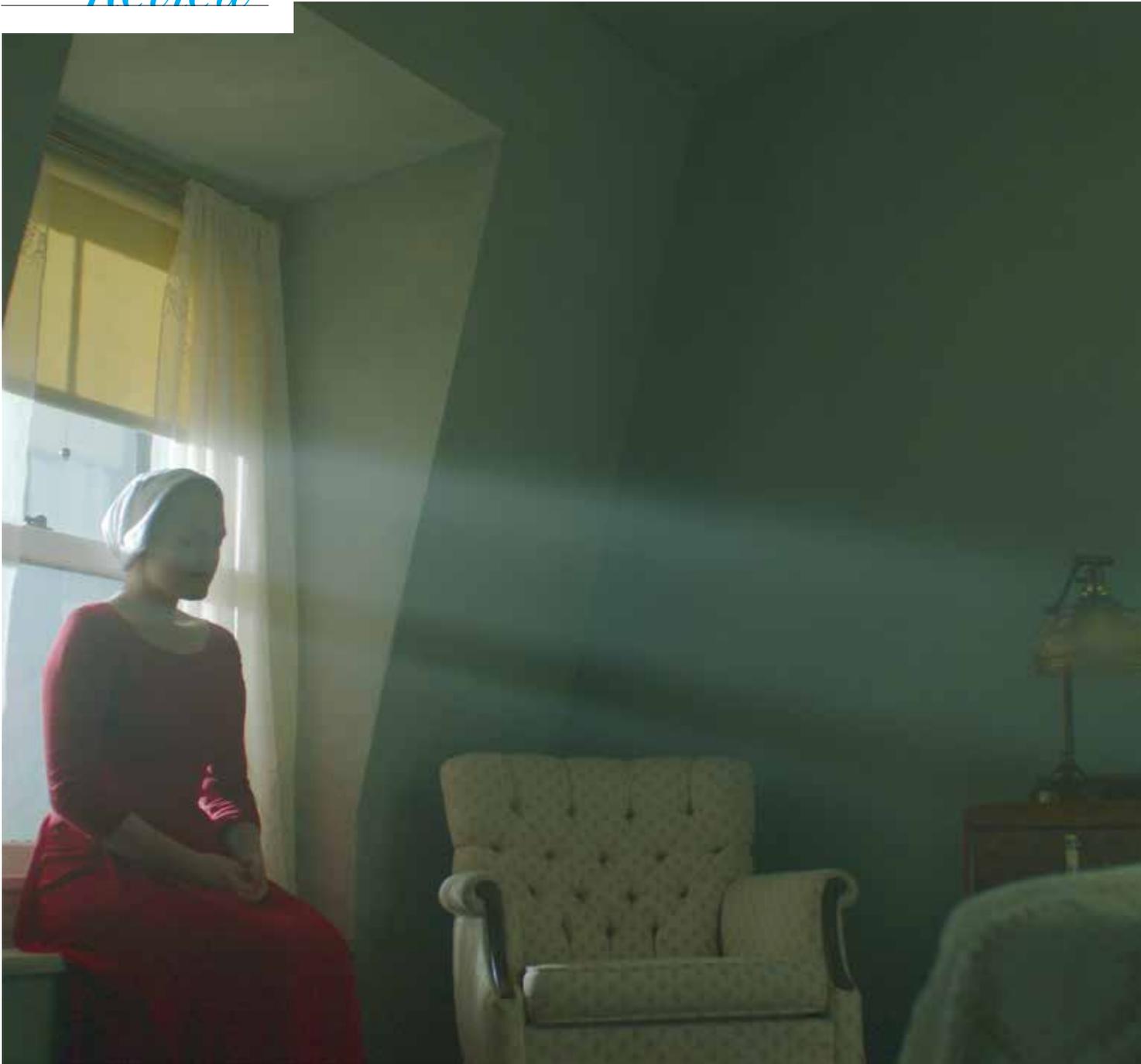
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Faith, Feminism and 'The Handmaid's Tale'

By Eloise Blondiau

In “The Handmaid’s Tale,” on Hulu, Offred’s faith proves that religion has profound value, even in a hellish setting.

The Blessed Virgin’s radical female presence opens up the possibility of a relationship with God for many Catholics. This is particularly true for women who struggle to recognize themselves in church structures, or perhaps even in images of Jesus, at first. Because she prevailed in impossible situations by the grounding of her faith, Mary has provided particular solace to the poor and vulnerable in Fatima, Lourdes, Guadalupe and well beyond. Her image is unique in its accessibility and pervasiveness.

Unfortunately, a historical overemphasis on Mary’s assumption, virginity and Immaculate Conception, to the eclipse of her other qualities, has led to impoverished popular images of her that, intended or not, too often reinforce patriarchal social structures. These incomplete images have also been used to create a rigid view of women, including Mary herself.

In her book *Truly Our Sister*, Elizabeth Johnson, C.S.J., who stresses that Mary is an avenue to God, not a feminine image of God, raises the voices of women who find over-idealized images of the Virgin Mary oppressive. She cites Margaret Cuthbert, an elderly South African woman, who decided with her all-women prayer group to omit two titles from the Litany of Loreto, “Mother inviolate, Mother undefiled,” which the women regarded as insulting to their blessed experiences of childbearing and sex.

Not all women feel that way. For some, it is not difficult to see—and admire—Mary’s purity alongside her inspiring displays of perseverance,

autonomy and solidarity. A narrowed perception of Mary does exist, however, and that image is conducive to neither faith nor feminism. If anyone doubted the damage a shallow, sanitized Marian ideal of womanhood could inflict—on women, on faith and on the church—Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* shows us.

The original notion of the handmaid that intrigued Atwood, an agnostic, is well known to Christians. In many translations of the Bible, Mary uses this term to describe herself when accepting the responsibility for bearing Jesus. “Behold the handmaid of the Lord,” says Mary. “Be it done unto me according to thy word” (Lk 1:38).

In Atwood’s hellish, futuristic novel, which is the basis of a new television series of the same name on Hulu, the handmaid is a woman named Offred. Offred is one of many women separated from her family and enlisted to bear children for the ruling classes of a theocratic state. In Atwood’s dystopia, the handmaid must embody the one-dimensional caricature of Mary who has sometimes been used to restrict women’s roles: a walking womb; bounteous, quiet, complacent.

Before writing *The Handmaid’s Tale*, first published in 1985, Atwood came across a peculiar news story: A Catholic parish in New Jersey had been overrun by a sect within its congregation called The People of Hope, in which female members were relegated to the home, some of whom won the title of “handmaiden.” In At-

wood’s fictional state, Gilead, where birthrates have plummeted, an even more extreme interpretation of a handmaid’s service to the Lord is enforced. These handmaids do not have autonomy like Mary—they do not volunteer—but are rather used for their fertility as punishment for transgressions. “We are two-legged wombs,” says Offred. “That’s all: sacred vessels, ambulatory chalices.”

Offred, played by Elisabeth Moss, has daily duties that include tending to her fertility with regular exercise and balanced meals, walking every day to “buy” food with tokens and attending ceremonies when other handmaids become pregnant or give birth. Handmaids move about Gilead like robots, wary of expressing individuality or autonomy—for which they could be mutilated, killed or sent off to some other dreadful, unknown fate. Reading is forbidden; so is conversation, friendship, love, life. In their place are canned pieties: “Praise be,” “Under his eye” and, perhaps most notably, “Blessed be the fruit.”

Offred’s most important job is also the most horrific: She must have ritual, clothed sex with her “Commander” (Joseph Fiennes) in the presence of his wife so that she might carry the child they could not conceive together. Hulu’s representation of this ritual is fittingly awkward and alarming. During the act, Offred must lie in the lap of the Commander’s wife who looks on, pained, while gripping Offred’s hands. The camera is positioned above the bed, offering an uncomfortable view of Offred’s vacant face, her



body disturbed by the Commander's every movement.

As far-fetched as *The Handmaid* might seem at first, its strength lies in its pertinence. Yet the novel and the television show have different methods for asserting their relevance. While Atwood's timeless setting has enabled the story to age well, the television series works hard at timelessness. The Hulu series opens with a pre-handmaid Offred in a car with her daughter and her husband. Their clothes are ordinary but their own. Offred's hair is highlighted a bright blonde; her daughter peers from underneath a hoodie. Offred is alive with fear and love for her family and very unlike the hollow handmaid she will have to become in order to survive. In flashbacks, throwaway references to Tinder and other facets of online life are clunky but effective in forcing the viewer to think, "This hell is possible."

It is a wonder that Offred has any faith left as a handmaid. Her faith is a

testament to Atwood's openness to the wondrous possibilities of religion, in addition to its potential to impose terror. In the screen version, Offred and her friend Ofglen (Alexis Bledel) surreptitiously lament the demolition of St. Paul's, their local church.

Offred also talks to God, even though, she admits, she doesn't know what to say (and isn't permitted to speak, anyhow). Later she concocts her own version of the Lord's Prayer. "There's Kingdom, power and glory. It takes a lot to believe in those right now. But I'll try it anyway," she offers. "I wish I knew what You were up to. But whatever it is, help me to get through it, please. Though maybe it's not our doing: I don't believe for an instant that what's going on out there is what You meant.... I suppose I should say I forgive whoever did this, and whatever they're doing now. I'll try, but it isn't easy."

Atwood's exploration of how Mariology and, more broadly, religion

can be misused to subjugate women has led to accusations that Atwood is anti-religion and that Gilead is a "demonic misrepresentation of Judeo-Christianity." But if anything, Atwood does a service by showing how easily Mary's image can be distorted in order to exert control.

The state religion depicted in *The Handmaid*—pro-birth, anti-abortion but also anti-life—will be seen by many Christians as a distortion of their own faith, but it still bears hallmarks of Judeo-Christianity. All state actions in Gilead are justified by Scripture, mostly by quoting from the Bible (for example, the barren Rachel's command to Jacob to impregnate her maid in Genesis 30 or the iconic lines, "Be fruitful and multiply" and "Blessed are the meek"). We already know that religion can be used to inflict terror. But many in the West mistakenly see this possibility as a problem unique to Islam, as opposed to all faith groups. Atwood's representation could be regarded as an arrogant

Photo: Hulu/Take Five

Offred, played by Elisabeth Moss, talks to God, even though she doesn't know what to say.

parody of religion, and yet Offred's faith proves that religion still has profound value in Gilead. In reminding us of how Judaeo-Christianity can be manipulated toward violent ends, *The Handmaid* is a call for thoughtful faith and action.

The Handmaid shows us that that terrible things happen when there is only one acceptable religion to practice or when there is only one way to be a woman. "There is no eternal feminine; there is no essential feminine nature; there is no ideal woman," Elizabeth Johnson, C.S.J., wrote in **America** in 2000. "An adequate theology of Mary must be clear on this point."

In her moment of despair and reckoning, Offred begins to sound a lot like the Mary of the Gospels who, as Dr. Johnson writes, had faith "precisely as a poor woman, one of those on the underside of history." Mary was, after all, a young, homeless teen mother who then had her son taken away from her—and never stopped trusting in God.

There is a beauty and resonance in the frank perseverance of Offred's relationship with God, in spite of her own dire circumstances. In Offred's case, this faith does not grow out of purity laws but rather in spite of them. Like Mary, her connection with God springs from agency—it is her decision to talk to him, her decision to believe. This is a freedom that Gilead has been unable to take away. "My God," Offred appeals, "Who Art in the Kingdom of Heaven, which is within."

Eloise Blondiau, *producer*.
Twitter: @eloiseblondiau.

To the Ghost

after Mary Szybist

By Cameron Alexander Lawrence

But give me your silences,
and I will wear them on my clothes,

the delicate remains of your tongue
clinging to this body, these limbs

you gave me to fruit the world.
Give me your absences, too,

and I will carry them, happily,
I will hang each emptiness

from these limbs, this body
you gave me to overcome.

So when the wind blows,
I will rattle back to you

something like praise.
So I will be the hand ringing

your ossuary of bells,
these skeletons you spoke to me,

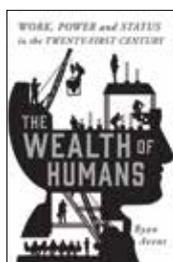
these words I crush
in the hollow of my hand.

Cameron Alexander Lawrence lives in Decatur, Ga., with his wife and three daughters. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *West Branch*, *Forklift*, *Ohio*, *Whiskey Island*, *Image* and elsewhere.

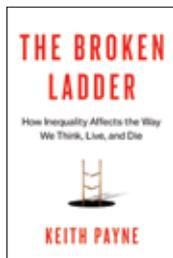


Cities with the highest social capital also have some of the highest economic inequality.

The Rich We Will Always Have With Us By Jonathan Malesic



The Wealth of Humans
Work, Power
and Status in the
Twenty-first Century
By Ryan Avent
St. Martin's Press. 277p
\$26.99



The Broken Ladder
How Inequality Affects
the Way We Think, Live,
and Die
By Keith Payne
Viking. 246p \$28

The list of factors fueling the new transatlantic nationalism is long and contested, but work, wages, inequality and immigration certainly belong on it. All of these were integral to the uneasy post-Cold War status quo in which inequality was considered tolerable because the free flow of persons and goods made it possible for Chinese farmers to become factory workers and for Polish plumbers, Indian engi-

neers and Guatemalan fruit-pickers to seek better wages in richer countries. The economic tide was rising, so what did it matter if the biggest ships became vastly larger and more opulent?

Well, now we know. The people turning to nationalism—the middle and working classes in the richest societies—are well off in absolute terms but feel economically left behind. Their wages are in the top fifth globally but have not grown at all in several decades. Western societies need to figure out how to address their concerns and accord them dignity without fostering resentment.

The paradigmatic (if not statistically average) Trump, Brexit or Le Pen voter is used to earning his daily bread, as Adam did, by the sweat of his brow. But in the digital age, only a small percentage of people in rich countries work in fields and mines. Instead of struggling against thorns and thistles, workers battle kinks in the supply chain and low consumer confidence. It is no longer clear that human effort is what adds value to our products.

As Ryan Avent argues in *The Wealth of Humans*, the biggest value-creator in the digital age is neither labor nor hard capital like land or machinery. It is social capital, the information and customs embedded in our common life. In this country, widely shared but intangible goods like the rule of law, respect for innovation and even the stigma attached to unemployment all contribute to corporate productivity.

The trouble is that the fruits of social capital go mostly to business owners. Automation magnifies this inequality. As a growing share of human workers compete with machines on the labor market, wages fall while profits keep accruing to business owners. Because wages are most people's sole path to wealth, the abundance of labor will keep the global poor—and the rich world's working class—from improving their conditions.

Avent thinks labor abundance will also foster more conflict over migration. Even as communication technology and free trade have helped dif-

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fuse wealth to more of the world, their bigger effect has been to intensify the social capital of global business centers like New York, London and San Francisco. “There is no anti-poverty programme in the world as successful as access to American society,” according to Avent.

This means that as wages for less-skilled labor decline, ever more people will have an incentive to move to high-social-capital places. Current residents’ economic incentive, however, is to keep newcomers out.

In drawing attention to the productivity of common cultures, Avent, a writer and editor for *The Economist*, makes an economic argument that is (I assume unintentionally) consistent with Catholic teachings on human solidarity and the dignity of the person. Like the popes since Leo XIII, Avent believes that the market alone cannot produce a just distribution of wealth. As he puts it, “Left alone, the invisible hand is simply the thudding fist of the powerful.”

Avent thinks that if we want to bring about greater economic justice, our governments should allow more of the world’s poor to move to the rich world. In accord with the church’s call to welcome the stranger, Avent hopes that residents of rich societies “could recognize the wild contingency of their wealth, cultivate human empathy, and do what they can to extend the wealth of humans to everyone.”

Still, not all of the world’s poor can or would want to move to global centers of social capital. What happens to them in an age of abundant labor? Do they remain “disposable,” as Pope Francis often laments? Avent thinks it is easier to expand immigration than to build up social capital in the poor-

est regions. He may be right, but this approach still excludes too many.

The cities with the highest social capital—New York, London and San Francisco—also have some of the highest economic inequality. And as the social psychologist Keith Payne argues in *The Broken Ladder*, living in a more unequal place “has deadly serious consequences.”

Relying on dozens of experimental studies, which he describes in vivid and graspable narratives, Payne shows that even in a generally wealthy society, feeling poor relative to your neighbors will harm your health, impair your ability to make long-term plans, push you toward conspiracy theories and ultimately cause you to die sooner than you otherwise would. On measures of well-being, residents of the United States fare worse than residents of countries like Canada, Sweden or Japan, all of which are less wealthy but more equal.

This happens because those who feel materially deprived make different decisions than those who feel secure. Two of Payne’s experiments showed that people who are placed in conditions of greater inequality are more likely to take risks, hoping to maximize short-term gains. But those risks lead to worse average outcomes and exacerbate inequality. Payne calls this the “live fast, die young” strategy, bred through evolution into all species as a way to cope with scarcity.

Inequality may also grow because the relatively rich seek to preserve their wealth through politics. In a stock market simulation game that Payne designed for an experiment, people who were led to believe that they had lower status than others in the study were more likely to support

both redistribution and a more democratic process for deciding the game’s rules. Those who were made to feel superior wanted less redistribution and more restricted voting rights.

This psychological dynamic mirrors the economic one Avent sees regarding access to social capital. Both dynamics leave working-class Americans in an uncomfortable position that nationalist politicians can exploit. They feel poor compared to the super-rich, but they feel threatened by a rising class of immigrants, who appear to be economic competitors.

Payne’s analysis implies that shutting the global poor out of American society would not actually improve conditions for the economically anxious. That is because the rich would still be with them. And as Payne points out, “The inequality reflected in statistics like the Gini coefficient are driven almost entirely by how wealthy the rich are.” Thus economic growth alone cannot fix the problems of inequality, either. Payne wants us to start “building a flatter ladder” between rich and poor and “get better at living amid its rungs.”

Given that downward pressure on wages will likely increase in the years ahead, we may need a system for distributing wealth that does not depend so much on employment. Avent’s argument about the shared nature of social capital helps show why generous redistribution, even to nonworkers, is warranted. Payne’s argument shows why it would drastically improve people’s lives.

Jonathan Malesic, who lives in Dallas, is writing a book about the spiritual costs of the American work ethic.
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Confessions of a C.I.A. interrogator

The invasion of Iraq—and Afghanistan—must be the most disastrous U.S. foreign policy venture since the Vietnam debacle. *Debriefing the President: The Interrogation of Saddam Hussein*, John Nixon's informative, personal account as the C.I.A.'s lead interrogator, provides one more testament to the military and intelligence inadequacies surrounding the Iraq war whose horrific consequences are ongoing. The C.I.A. was "woefully unprepared...even though it seemed clear by late 2001 that the United States was going to war with Saddam."

Saddam, led to believe that he was being debriefed rather than interrogated in the weeks shortly after his capture, surprised his questioners

with answers that call into question U.S. intelligence competence. Nixon had "studied Saddam closely" while pursuing a master's degree in "national security studies" from Georgetown, and before being sent to the Mideast, had "spent the previous five years studying Iraq and Iran"; yet besides using a translator, he often seems taken by surprise at Saddam's revelations, not least, on learning that at the time of the invasion, Saddam had mostly relinquished running the government and was writing a novel.

Nixon debriefs the president under strained circumstances. Bush is "intelligent" but suffers from "naivete" and a "black and white view of the world." To C.I.A. "careerists it didn't matter what you said as long as you made the president happy."

Nixon concludes that all the ef-

fects of the invasion are "negative." On reading Bush's book, *Decision Points*, Nixon realizes that its author "had learned nothing about Iraq or Saddam Hussein." Like Saddam, Bush lived in a "bubble," insulating him from "the outside world." Meanwhile, "the Agency slavishly sought to do the president's bidding...in an effort to get a seat near the center of power and justify its budget." The C.I.A.'s "sclerotic" bureaucracy, nevertheless, couldn't even adopt technology before it was "obsolete by the time it was deployed."

"The C.I.A. needs fixing," he says, but "the answer does not lie in Langley."

Jerome Donnelly, a former professor at the University of Central Florida, originated and co-authored *Human Rights: A User's Guide*.

Spirituality that makes sense

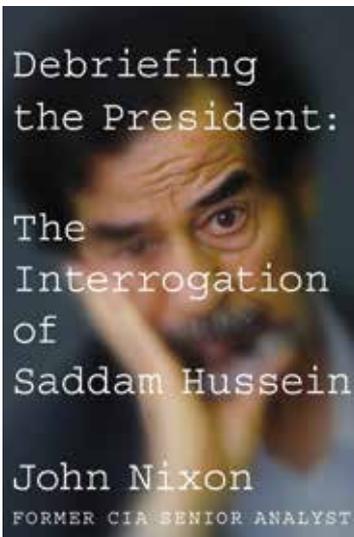
As the world goes quietly (or noisily) mad, there is an increasing thirst detectable, especially among the young, for a spirituality that makes sense. This remarkable book, *The Virgin Eye*, which should be read slowly and contemplatively, offers just the thing. Several chapters need to be read more than once, not because they are difficult but because they run deep. This book, published after the author's death, is a distillation of a life-long pursuit of wisdom. Although Robin Daniels was a Christian and he became a Catholic at almost the very end, his book can be read by anyone engaged in the search for spiritual integrity. Though he speaks of "mindfulness," there is nothing here of being trendy for the

sake of being with the trend. Rather, he acknowledges and shares spiritual wisdom wherever he finds it. One instance is the author's ability to use poetry over an impressively wide range, aiming not to impress us with his erudition but using these lines to make exactly the point he wishes to make.

Some of the chapters are challenging indeed; each ends with prayers to be savored, the distillation of a grasp of life (and suffering) lived under the presence of God. Daniels is not afraid to stress the importance of jettisoning as unwanted baggage all our false and destructive views of God. The tone is never condemnatory, though there is a useful chapter on "stress" in contemporary society, which makes for decidedly grim reading. Our shifting values and increased affluence have not made for

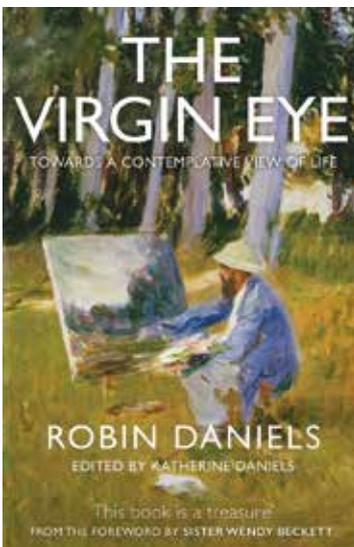
greater happiness, and it is good to say so, and to ask why. One gentle criticism: Daniels makes the occasional claims about Hebrew and Greek meanings that are not quite accurate; but that does not detract from the very considerable merits of a book that needs to be widely read in our time.

Nicholas King, S.J., is the province delegate for formation in England.



Debriefing the President
The Interrogation of Saddam Hussein

By John Nixon
Blue Rider Press. 242p \$25



The Virgin Eye
Towards a Contemplative View of Life

By Robin Daniels
(edited by Katherine Daniels)
Instant Apostle. 416p \$18.99

A new path for unions

In this feisty book, veteran labor organizer Jonathan Rosenblum chronicles what he calls the first successful campaign for a \$15 hourly wage in SeaTac, Wash., and attempts to chart a new path for the American labor movement. Unions today, Rosenblum contends, are too timid and fail to challenge the inherently destructive “leaders of big business and finance [who] have imposed their designs on the rest of us.”

The November 2016 election is not mentioned in Rosenblum’s book, but an obvious question arises: If millions were willing to elect a blustering personification of capitalism as president, is this really an opportune time to talk about upending American capitalism?

If there is much to debate about Rosenblum’s solutions, his analysis of the problems facing labor is sound. Two important forces for change are alluded to in his subtitle: immigrants and religious leaders.

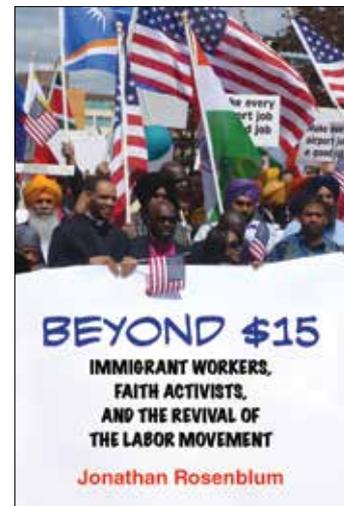
In the wake of President Trump’s executive orders on immigration, Cardinal Joseph Tobin of Newark, N.J., cited Exodus (“You shall not oppress an alien...”), lending much-needed moral clarity to an argument sometimes blurred by rage. As for the even thornier issue of immigration, Rosenblum acknowledges that employers “have skillfully exploited divisions among workers.”

Given the hostility still engendered by the immigration debate, it is not mere timidity to question whether the victories Rosenblum highlights can be replicated on a larger scale.

Rosenblum’s argument could have been bolstered by some historical context, exploring (say) how the labor movement in America absorbed previous waves of immigrants, or how “*Rerum Novarum*”—Leo XIII’s 1891 papal encyclical on capital and labor—was received in the United States.

There is no question that progressive thinkers and activists would be wise to build coalitions with religious leaders, even those with whom they disagree on hot-button issues like abortion. Whether the key figure of the election of 2016 was not hyper-capitalist Donald Trump, but instead the insurgent socialist Bernie Sanders, remains to be seen.

Tom Deignan (tdeignan.blogspot.com) is a columnist for *The Irish Voice*.



Beyond \$15
Immigrant Workers,
Faith Activists, and the Revival of
the Labor Movement

By Jonathan Rosenblum
Beacon Press. 240p \$16



What can Beyoncé and Pope Francis teach us about love?

Two weeks after Pope Francis released “The Joy of Love,” another look into marriage and family life was released: Beyoncé’s “Lemonade.” The album presents an unrelenting look into the singer’s 10-year marriage to Shawn Carter, known as Jay Z. While comparing the world’s greatest living pop star with the leader of the Catholic world might seem like a stretch, both offer an important—often fundamentally different—look into love and marriage. And just as Pope Francis describes marriage as a means to gaze into the reality of God, Beyoncé’s brutally honest presentation of her marriage demonstrates how God is already present in pop culture and in a broken and redeemed marriage.

“A love that is weak or infirm, incapable of accepting marriage as a challenge to be taken up and fought for, reborn, renewed and reinvented until death, cannot sustain a great commitment,” Pope Francis writes in Chapter 4 of his apostolic exhortation. In Beyoncé’s “Lemonade,” we explicitly see what it means to fight

for—and be reborn in—love.

The album opens with “Pray You Catch Me.” The singer believes her husband has been unfaithful and sings: “You can taste the dishonesty, it’s all over your breath.” Her marriage, presented in stark contrast to her tightly controlled public image, is not perfect. There is distrust. There is the pain of a woman who no longer understands who her partner is, or what he is doing. And she lays these insecurities in front of her audience.

In the song “All Night,” we witness her conversion. Beyoncé sings: “True love breathes salvation back into me/ With every tear came redemption/ And my torturer became my remedy.” And, in the video for “Love Drought,” we watch as she wades through water with nine black women behind her, all dressed in light blue garb. They join hands and lift their arms toward the sky. She sings: “you and me could move a mountain.../ you and me could calm a war down.../ you and me would stop this love drought.”

One of the most powerful themes

in “The Joy of Love” is its focus on forgiveness. Beyoncé has baptized herself in these waters; she is a new woman, converted, capable of forgiveness, for she knows there is power in love.

Along with its depiction of love and marriage, “Lemonade” offers an explicit look into the experiences of black women. In the video for “Don’t Hurt Yourself,” we see scenes of various African-American women as we hear Malcolm X’s famous line, “The most disrespected person in America is the black woman.” For Yolanda Pierce of Princeton Theological Seminary, “Lemonade” shows how black women live out their faith. Pierce describes the album as “equal parts ‘testimony service’ and Sunday morning worship.” It presents “the contrasting realities under which black Christian women live their religious lives.”

And “Lemonade” is very rooted in Christian themes, from the imagery of baptismal water to its emphasis on mercy, reconciliation and love. The album also borrows from other faiths,

Beyoncé's album "Lemonade" is rooted in Christian themes, from the imagery of baptismal water to its emphasis on reconciliation.



Photo: Reuters/Lucy Nicholson

particularly “the traditional religions of the Yoruba in Africa and the Caribbean,” writes Pierce. “Lemonade” shows “just one of the many expressions of faith that people of African descent brought with them during” the slave voyage from Africa to America.

Pope Francis reminds Christians that there must be “an effort to strengthen marriages, to help married couples overcome their problems,” because the weakened marriages affect not just couples but “society as a whole.” While “The Joy of Love” provides Christians with a nuanced ecclesiastical look into marriage, Beyoncé provides a perspective from someone living and experiencing life *in* a marriage. Together, both works demonstrate that marriage and family life, when rooted in God and love, are not meant to be perfect. They are meant to be real.

Olga Segura, *associate editor*.
Twitter: @OlgaMSegura.

American atheist is hated, murdered, revived in new film

The opposite of belief in God is not in fact that long despised enemy of godly people everywhere, atheism. The enemy of belief, rather, is run-of-the-mill indifference. This notion is given credence by Tommy O'Haver's “The Most Hated Woman in America,” a recent film from Netflix. The film goes a long way in arguing that atheism isn't the converse of theism but just another shade on the color wheel of belief, with all the pageantry and chaos that frequently entails.

The film tells the (true) story of Madalyn Murray O'Hair (Melissa Leo), a woman who garnered notoriety in the early 1960s for suing the Baltimore public school system—a move that ultimately led to a Supreme Court decision banning mandatory Bible reading in the public school classroom. O'Hair then went on to found American Atheists, a national organization dedicated to advocating for the rights of atheists.

The primary thrust of “Most Hated” is its exploration of the what, the why and the how of O'Hair's kidnapping and murder, which took

place in 1995. The film is quick to indict O'Hair as no better than the corrupt religious leaders and institutions she rails against. As she becomes the public face of unbelief, people start donating money to her and the movement she dubs “The Cause.”

O'Hair's story does raise questions worth investigating. The most significant: Can a deeply embedded commitment to unbelief avoid mirroring the very thing it opposes? It would seem that any cause worthy of faith and commitment cannot help but become organized, incorporated and hierarchical.

As dark a gloss as “Most Hated” tries to put on organized movements, the fundamental reality seems to be that we need some kind of hero, or vaunted ideal (be it Jesus or Never Jesus) to give some sort of shape to our existence. People need something to believe in, even if that thing happens to be a commitment to unbelief.

Jake Martin, S.J., is a special contributor to *America*.



Melissa Leo as Madalyn Murray O'Hair

Photo: Beth Dubber/Netflix

The Presence

Readings: Acts 8:5-17, Ps 66, 1 Pt 3:15-18, Jn 14:15-21

The Hebrew Bible answers the question, “Where is God?” in two ways. One answer is that “God is somewhere else.” Another answer is that “God is here with us.” In the opening chapters of Genesis, for example, God is both the cosmic creator who transcends the heavens and the master gardener who works the earth with his own hands. In Exodus and Numbers, Moses finds God in the solitude of the mysterious cloud, but every Israelite also saw God in the fiery glory at the center of the Israelite camp. David and his successors found God in springtime thunderstorms, refulgent with power and light, coming mysteriously down from the heavens, filling the earth with life and then departing just as suddenly. They just as easily found God’s presence in the Jerusalem Temple, where anyone who wished could come and pray. It took many centuries, but Israel learned that God was both “there” and “here” or, as scholars say, both “transcendent” and “immanent.”

This is part of Israel’s religious genius. A god who is only immanent can become very small, a god of favorites, cliques and petty issues. “God-with-us” can too easily become “god-not-with-you.” A solely transcendent deity, on the other hand, can appear cosmically vast, remote, indifferent and ineffective. Instead, Israel came to believe that the God who established a treasured people also had a loving interest in the entire universe.

Jesus inherits Israel’s brilliance. He does not hesitate to pray to his transcendent Father “in heaven,” but he also believes in a Father who is very near. In today’s Gospel he teaches his disciples how to recognize that same presence.

“On that day you will realize that I am in my Father and you are in me and I in you.” Throughout his Gospel, John insists on the strong relationship between Jesus’ commandments and the Father’s presence. Jesus commanded us to do only what he himself learned from his Father: to lay down his life for his friends. He obeyed the Father out of love; that self-sacrificial love meant that the Father was present with Jesus even after death. It was this presence that gave Jesus victory over death, and this presence that

‘It is something very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart, to do it.’
(Dt 30:14)



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Michael Simone, S.J., is an assistant professor of Scripture at Boston College School of Theology and Ministry.

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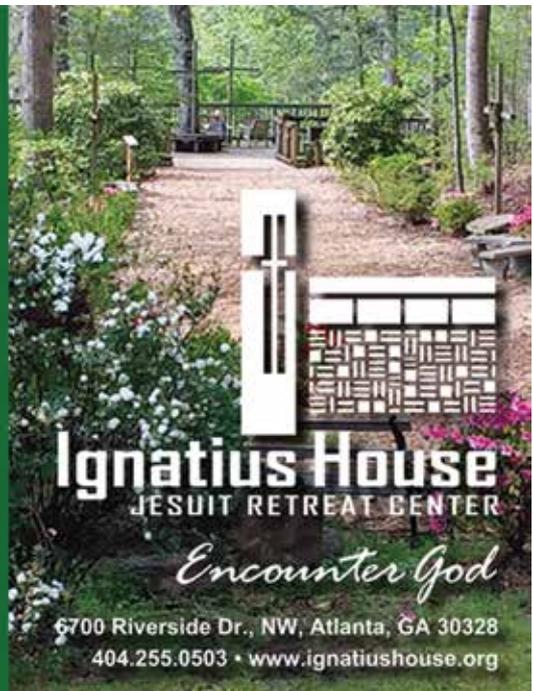
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Go Out to All Nations

Readings: Acts 1:1-11, Ps 47, Eph 1:17-23, Mt 28:16-20

Last week, the Gospel reading from John explained how Christ was both present and absent, dwelling at once with the Christian community and his heavenly Father. This week, Luke and Matthew address the same theme. Although Christ was no longer bodily present, he made himself felt in many ways.

Luke gives the only scriptural account of Jesus' ascension. In each Gospel, Jesus says farewell to his disciples, but only Luke describes his actual departure. Luke calls it an "ascent," a common theme in ancient literature. In addition to the biblical ascent of Elijah, nonbiblical texts preserve ascensions of Moses, Abraham, Enoch, Isaiah and Muhammad, among others.

The setting of the Ascension is important. In Ezekiel's prophecy, God's glory leaves the temple during the Babylonian conquest (586 B.C.), and takes up residence over the mountain east of Jerusalem (Ez 11:23). This height in Jesus' day was called the Mount of Olives. Jesus' ascension from the same mountain implies that he has gone, quite literally, up to his Father. From his place at the Father's right hand, Jesus would someday return; until then, he continues his mission through the action of the Spirit in the church.

'I am with you always, until the end of the age.'
(Mt 28:20)



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

How does Christ reveal his continuing presence to you?

How have you gone out on mission with Christ?

Matthew uses the prophecy of Daniel to relate something similar. In Dan 7:13-14, "one like a son of man" appears before God's throne and receives three gifts, "authority, glory and a kingdom." To Matthew, Jesus was the obvious fulfillment of this prophecy. Matthew insists that Jesus "speaks with authority"; he makes clear that Jesus' transfiguration was a sharing of the Father's glory, and he relates in detail Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom. In the closing lines of his Gospel, Matthew sketches the full realization of these themes. Having been glorified by the Father, Jesus received "all authority," which he shared with his disciples for the propagation of the kingdom.

This mission was noteworthy in several ways. First, Christ demanded no vengeance. Although the Spirit-inspired martial heroes in Israel's past (Jgs 3:10, 6:34, 11:29), Jesus does not send his apostles to avenge his death (a hint of this may lie behind their question about "restoring the kingdom to Israel" in Acts 1:6). Second, the mission required mature faith. The Apostles were no longer apprentices, but full sharers in Christ's authority. Finally, Christians were called to go *out* to make disciples. For the Evangelists, it was not enough to create a closed, self-propagating community. The angel who asked the disciples, "Why are you standing there, looking at the sky?" reminded them of Christ's injunction to go out and make disciples of every nation. Christ's authority and mission extend to every person on earth. It is only within a church as complex and wide-ranging as humanity itself that Christ, still with us, can reveal his face.

Michael Simone, S.J., is an assistant professor of Scripture at Boston College School of Theology and Ministry.

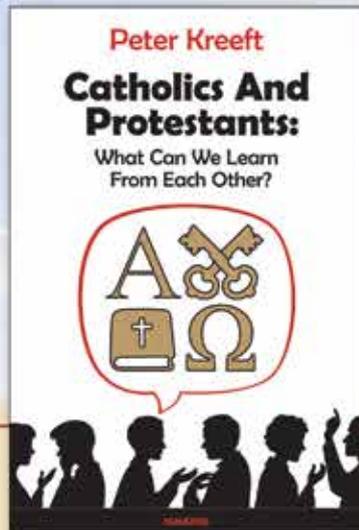
Editor's note: A commentary on the readings for the Seventh Sunday of Easter is available at americamagazine.org/section/word.

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Peter Kreeft

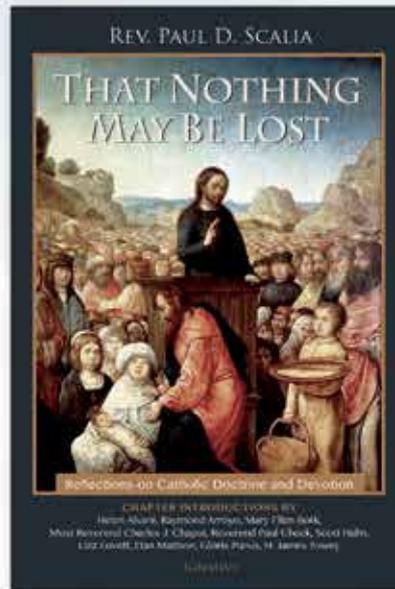
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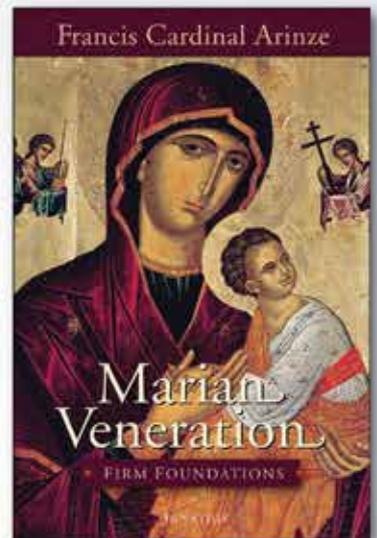
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Radical Reconciliation

One black man's outreach to the Ku Klux Klan

By Bill McGarvey



“How can you hate me when you don’t know me?” asks Daryl Davis in “Accidental Courtesy: Daryl Davis, Race & America,” now on Netflix. Davis is a 59-year-old black man—married to a white woman—who regularly meets with Ku Klux Klan leaders around the country for one-on-one dialogues on race and prejudice. In the decades he’s been doing it, Davis has even developed close friendships with numerous Klansmen, some of whom have disavowed the K.K.K. and surrendered their robes to him.

“Accidental Courtesy” chronicles Davis’s fascination with the K.K.K., from the 1980s through his current work with the Klan, American Nazis and other white supremacists and separatists. It is a strange, compelling and at times unsettling documentary that has to be seen to be believed. Davis’s approach to race relations is unorthodox and not without its detractors. (His sitdown with Baltimore’s Black Lives Matter activists is tense and unsuccessful.) But given our current political and cultural climate, his unconventional methods are a reminder of the potentially transformative power of being in relationship—or, at the very least, conversation—with those we perceive as enemies.

A musician by trade, Davis has befriended and played piano for some of rock and roll’s early icons, like Jerry Lee Lewis and Bo Diddley. But it is Chuck Berry—with whom he played on and off for many years—whom he

singles out not only as an artist but as a bridge builder between races. “To me...his music did as much for civil rights as others did by protests and marches,” Davis writes in *Klan-des-tine Relationships: A Black Man’s Odyssey in the Ku Klux Klan*. “At Berry’s concerts, an atmosphere of tolerance permeated. Blacks and whites danced and intermingled without incident.”

Davis is not an academic or even an activist in any traditional sense of the term, which makes for fascinating viewing as he engages various people throughout the film. Whether it is the Southern Poverty Law Center representative who calls Davis’s work “more of a retail strategy” as opposed to their “wholesale” approach, or Baltimore’s Black Lives Matter activists who see his efforts as a “fetish,” Davis confounds the traditional categories applied to people in the civil rights field.

Many of the warmest encounters in the film involve Klan members he has befriended over the years. It is moving to hear Scott Shepherd, a former grand dragon in the Klan who is now an anti-racism activist, discuss the violent, alcoholic household where he grew up in Mississippi and how it led him to look for belonging in the Klan when he was young.

Davis’s meeting with his “good friend” Frank Ancona, an active K.K.K. imperial wizard, is moving for different reasons. After receiving an honorary certificate of friendship from Ancona’s Klan organization, Da-

vis tells him that he hopes to welcome Ancona and his wife and daughter to his home someday. Their meeting takes on an unintentional resonance now that Ancona’s wife and stepson have been indicted for his murder this past February.

To be sure, Davis’s approach requires enormous patience, and his results cannot be measured in terms of political impact or policy. The Black Lives Matter activists he meets are stunned that he has collected only 25 or so robes from members who have left the Klan. Davis, however, is undeterred, noting that “time and exposure” are the great healers, “perhaps the only healers for irrational fear and hatred.”

There is something eccentric and prophetic about Davis. Quirky, cock-eyed and occasionally misguided, Davis seems radically committed to the sometimes challenging Ignatian ideal of “meeting people where they are.”

It is an ideal that has been sorely put to the test recently in the United States. “When two enemies are talking, they are not fighting,” Davis said in a recent interview. “They may be yelling and screaming at each other...but at least they’re talking. It’s when the talking ceases that the ground becomes fertile for violence, so always keep the conversation going.”

Bill McGarvey, a musician and writer, is the author of *The Freshman Survival Guide* and owner of *CathNewsUSA.com*.

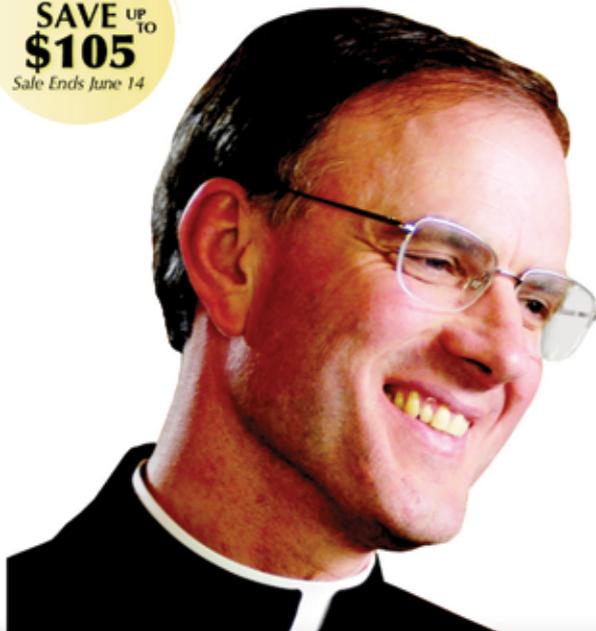
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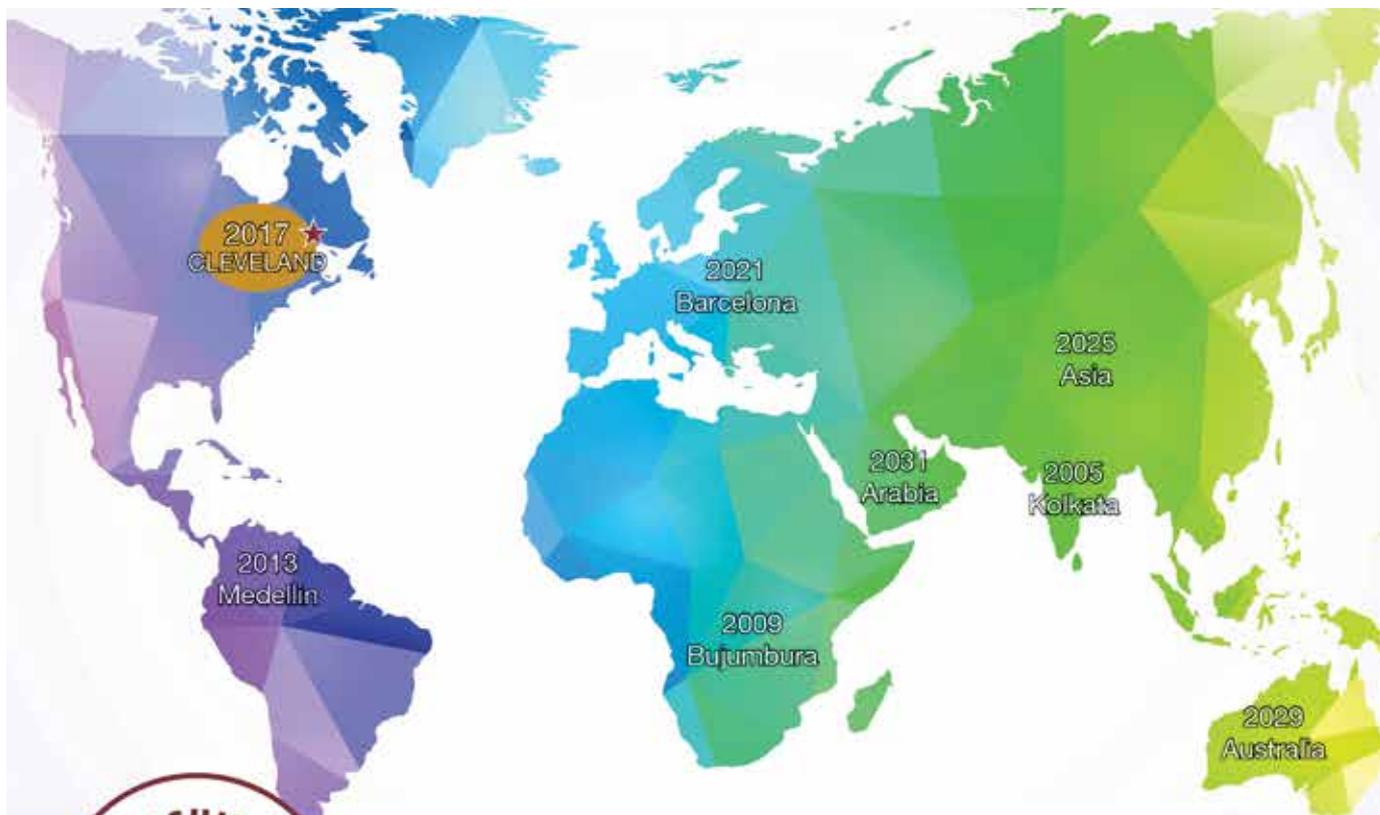
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