

America

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THE JESUIT REVIEW OF FAITH AND CULTURE

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San Diego

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Deportations:
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America Journeys Presents

Walking in the Footsteps of Jesus in the Holy Land



UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF:

Fr. James Martin, S.J.

Editor at Large, *America*

Author of *Jesus: A Pilgrimage* (included for each pilgrim)

WITH

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Mr. Nick Sawicki - Group Manager

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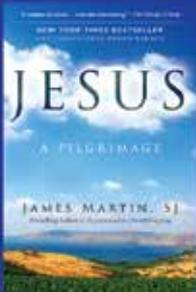
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This is 'Jeopardy!'

Given that many of you are likely reading this on the beach or in transit to your summer destination; and because the contents of this issue tackle some very serious topics, I thought I'd offer you some lighter fare here.

Welcome to "America Jeopardy!" The game is played like the real "Jeopardy!" except that you'll have to wait for the answers, er, questions, in the next issue. But if you're dying to know sooner, you can go to the web page with this column at americamagazine.org and see the answers/questions there.

Your category, obviously, is **America**. Good luck. And, as Alex always says, please remember to phrase your responses in the form of a question. For some reason, that's important. Happy summer.

1. This New York Times best-selling author, a longtime member of the editorial staff of **America**, once worked in human resources at General Electric.

2. Charles W. Whelan, S.J., one of **America's** longest-serving associate editors, was a first cousin of this famous TV mom and spokesperson for Wesson Oil.

3. This world-famous singer from Hoboken, N.J., once wrote a letter to the editor.

4. The editors of **America** got into trouble with Woodrow Wilson when they hosted a dinner for this man, who would later serve as the first president of Ireland.

5. This larger-than-life associate editor, who would later host a long-running, rapid-fire TV program about current affairs, once ran for the U.S. Senate in Rhode Island.

6. Gail Buckley, who has written for the magazine since the 1990s, is the daughter of the jazz legend Lena Horne

and was married to this Oscar-nominated director of "Twelve Angry Men" and "Dog Day Afternoon."

7. This world-famous conductor, who has hosted several concert specials on PBS, is known as "The Pope's Maestro," a nickname bestowed on him by the editors of **America**.

8. This longtime **America** columnist was included on President Nixon's "Enemies List." She won the 1975 Pulitzer Prize for commentary.

9. George W. Hunt, S.J., the 11th editor in chief, was a close friend of this writer, whose novel *Being There* was adapted into an Academy Award-winning film starring Peter Sellers.

10. This editor in chief, who later served as president of Fordham University, once sang "It Had to Be You" with Imelda Marcos, the first lady of the Philippines.

11. The uncle of this frequent **America** contributor served as director of the C.I.A. from 1953 to 1961.

12. This U.S. politician, who has written for **America** on three occasions, served as the 55th governor of Louisiana.

13. This vice president of the United States attended the 50th anniversary gala for **America**. His future opponent, a Catholic, did not.

14. This longtime subscriber to **America** has three films listed on the American Film Institute's top-10 list of the best American movies of all time.

15. This three-time **America** contributor served as a U.S. senator. His surprise showing in the 1968 New Hampshire presidential primary forced the incumbent, Lyndon Johnson, to withdraw from the race.

16. This novelist wrote a letter to the editor in 1974 to say, contra **Amer-**

ica's review, that there was "goodness" in his novel *The Exorcist*.

17. This American businessman, whose company invented the Band-Aid, published a major essay in **America** on business ethics in 1945. The nation's largest public health philanthropy still bears his name.

18. This man, who remains the longest-serving director in the history of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, wrote a letter to the editor in 1948 rebutting the charge that the F.B.I. was at risk of evolving into a "secret police."

19. This granddaughter of the 26th president of the United States, who shares a name with a famous frog, wrote an article for **America** in 1968.

20. This six-time contributor to **America** won two Emmy Awards for Most Outstanding Television Personality. He is interred at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York.

21. This author of the novel *Decline and Fall* wrote an article for **America** in 1964.

22. Raymond A. Schroth, S.J., **America's** books editor, was struck by police tear gas while covering this event in Chicago in the summer of 1968.

23. Daily Double: The name of this author, who wrote for **America** magazine 98 times, is included in the second episode of "Monty Python's Flying Circus," in the sketch "The Mouse Problem." He is also the only regular **America** contributor who served as a member of the British House of Commons.

24. Final Jeopardy: This Jesuit also trained as a firefighter. As the 14th editor in chief, he's been putting out fires since 2012.

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



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Refugees from South Sudan watch a match between men's soccer teams in the Bidi Bidi refugee settlement in northern Uganda, June 4.

(AP Photo/Ben Curtis)

(Cover: Gaza Strip in 2014. CNS photo/Mohammed Saber, EPA)

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Who should take the lead in protecting the environment?

Sixty-two percent of the readers who responded to this week's survey told **America** that the federal government should take the lead in protecting the environment. When pressed for their reasoning, they cited the federal government's capacity for oversight and enforcement. Kathleen Wiedeman of Massachusetts wrote, "Although environmental protection must be personal and local... federal government needs to take the lead due to the interdependent nature of environmental impact of actions across regions." Many readers also noted that the federal government is uniquely able to join international efforts to combat climate change. "The environment is a global issue," said Bede Cisco of Indianapolis. "The federal government is positioned to build coalitions with other nations to address global issues."

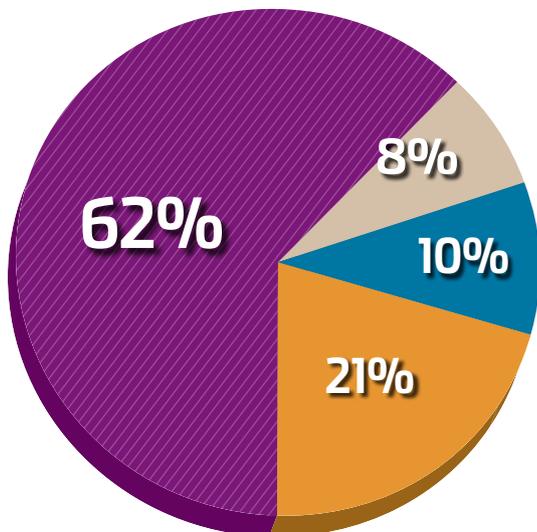
A smaller subset of our reader sample (20 percent) told **America** that individual citizens should take the lead in protecting the environment. From Anchorage, Alaska, John Goll explained that "citizens have the best chance"

to make an impact because they can choose "how they live, what they buy and for whom they vote." Stephen Hymel of Tuscon, Ariz., gave a similar response: "If a significant number of individuals lead and take action, local, state and federal governments will take action, too." Mr. Hymel noted that climate change is already influencing decision-making in the private sector. "Many businesses are taking action now," he wrote. "It's the right thing to do" and it eventually increases revenue.

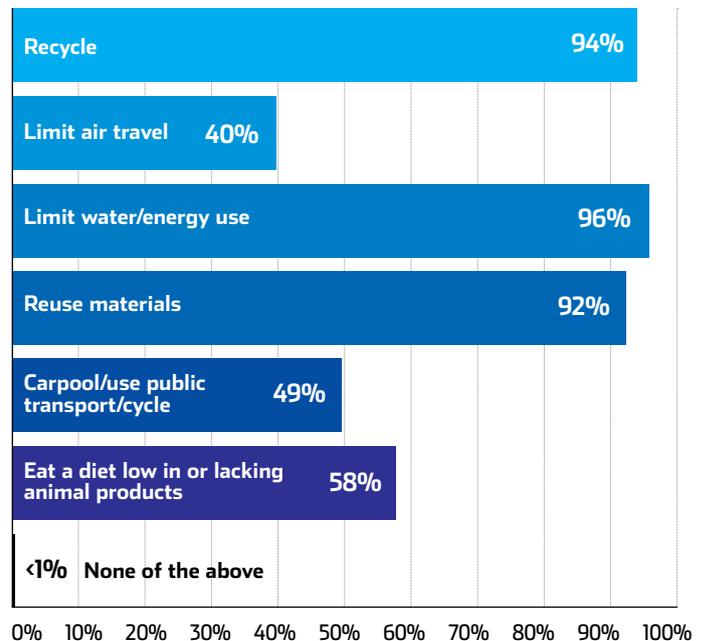
The remaining readers responded that business leaders (8 percent) and local and state government (10 percent) should lead efforts to care for the environment. But regardless of who readers thought should take the lead, a striking majority called for collaboration in battling climate change. Mr. Goll, for instance, noted that in protecting the environment "all of the above [federal government, business leaders, individual citizens, and local and state government] must be involved."

OVERALL READER RESPONSES

- Federal government
- Individual citizens
- Local and state government
- Business leaders



HOW DO YOU LOOK AFTER THE ENVIRONMENT?



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

Unfortunate Truth

Re “No Catholics of the Left or Right” (Our Take, 6/26): Well, the online comments on this editorial show that the pope has his work cut out for him on this one. The unfortunate truth today, at least in United States, is that people have turned their political affiliation into their God, agreeing only with the aspects of their religion that agree with their politics.

Gregory R. Hansell

Online Comment

Unclear Motivation

Re “Lords of Charity,” by Nathan Schneider (6/26): I see the point, but I can’t help but wonder what the author would have the wealthy do with their money. Granted that Mr. Gates and Mr. Zuckerberg have influence, it seems to me that there are plenty of wealthy people with influence who do nothing with their wealth but enjoy themselves and accumulate more wealth for the sake of having it. Give me a Gates or Zuckerberg who at least use that wealth to do something positive. And unless the author really interviewed either man in depth and dug into their history to analyze their motives, I respectfully ask, “How do you really know what motivates them?”

Fran Shaw

Online Comment

Sense of Giving

I need to read this a second time and possibly a third to get everything the author is offering. In teaching U.S. history in a Catholic school, I often had the students analyze the 19th-century “captains of industry” through the lens of Catholic social teaching. The kids were more brutal than this author. Now I wish we had done the same for today’s captains. I am glad that Gates and others are giving to others rather than just buying more stuff for themselves. I just never thought of their giving as actually buying influence. But questions remain. Isn’t the gift the right of the giver? Does any individual or group get to impose their values on the giving of another? And should we perfect our own sense of giving before being so critical of someone else? Is someone else’s giving even in our realm to review, let alone criticize? It is so very easy to think about how to spend someone else’s money.

Mary Kay Blum Peters

Online Comment

A Masterful Tale

Re “As Harry Potter Turns 20, It’s Time to Take Him Seriously,” by Vanessa Zoltan (6/26): I have read all of J. K. Rowling’s books. One of the real benefits of the Harry Potter series is that it motivated thousands upon thousands of young people to read. Rowling’s books and movies were released over a 10-year period so young people could literally age right along with the characters. The Harry Potter books are wonderful companions for boys and girls growing up, and they teach valuable lessons. They have been translated into around 70 languages, so their appeal is cross-cultural. Rowling has created a masterful tale for our age.

Robert Killoren

Online Comment

Built on Story

Re “A Jesuit Perspective on Harry Potter,” by William Reiser, S.J. (6/26): I have never been a big fan of Harry Potter, but my daughter has read the whole series a few times. I have to agree with you on your point that “Christian faith is built on a story, and stories require imagination.” A creative story is what we humans like.

Keller Franks

Online Comment

Honest Debate

Re “Does the Truth Matter? This is No Longer a Theoretical Question,” by Charles Sykes (6/26): What an excellent article, one that points to one of the very worrying aspects of politics in this country. My only disappointment is that the author did not provide an example to highlight how politics has moved toward tribalist partisanism.

We need to get back to honest debate and decent, well-thought criticism of both President Trump and the opposition party. The circus of the last campaign season did not end after the election, and I fear that if changes are not made, even more harm could be done to our country.

Gabe Antonio

Online Comment

Closing the Door to Democracy

Senator Orrin Hatch, Republican of Utah, had a simple explanation for the lack of committee hearings in the Senate on a major bill to replace the Affordable Care Act, of which the “discussion draft” was finally revealed in late June, only a few days before Congress was scheduled to break for the Fourth of July holiday. “We have zero cooperation from the Democrats,” he said, according to *The Los Angeles Times*. “So getting it in public gives them a chance to get up and scream.”

Just about everyone is sick of the partisan rancor that radiates from Washington and now flares up in the most unwelcome places, from subway trains to church parking lots. But the chance to “get up and scream” is inseparable from the democratic process. Crafting legislation behind closed doors is an admission not only that the legislative system is broken but that political leaders have no interest in repairing it.

The Republican drive to replace the A.C.A. with a bill that the U.S. Catholic bishops say will “wreak havoc on low-income families and struggling communities” has been distinguished by an almost complete lack of public input from those with a working knowledge of health care—which means there has been almost no attempt to inform or educate the voters who will ostensibly pass a verdict on this Congress’s work next year. But this is not a sudden change in the way Washington works.

Julie Rovner of *Kaiser Health News*, who has been covering the never-ending attempts to reform health care for more than 30 years, recently marveled at “Congress’s slow, stuttering retreat from...transparency.” And

The *Washington Post*’s Glenn Kesler writes that the Democrats’ push to pass Obamacare in 2009 featured a floor debate “mostly for show.” Like earlier efforts during the Clinton administration, the real crafting of the legislation was done behind closed doors. By this reasoning, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, who has been startlingly upfront about how everything has been pushed backstage this time around, has simply “skipped the preliminaries.”

Mr. McConnell’s stated intention to force a vote on the Senate bill only a few days after its unveiling—to put maximum distance between the vote and next year’s congressional elections—only underscores the normalization of power politics as a substitute for public debate. By choking off adequate funding for Medicaid, which now serves about one-fifth of the U.S. population, the Republican legislation would constitute “the largest single reduction in a social insurance program in our nation’s history,” as three health care experts recently wrote in *The New York Times*. Yet the wisdom of such a drastic move has barely been discussed in the halls of Congress, let alone in the increasingly scarce town hall meetings held by members in their home districts.

Politics is the art of the possible—but on health care, our politicians keep settling for the possibility of narrow, partisan victories in Congress rather than workable, long-range solutions to worsening problems like rising costs and inadequate insurance coverage. Americans are united in dissatisfaction with our health care system but are almost intractably divided over potential fixes. Both

that level of division and the needs of the tens of millions whose access to health care is at stake demand that both legislators and voters struggle with this issue in public until we can achieve something much better, especially for the most vulnerable members of society.

In War, Delegation

Donald J. Trump said on the campaign trail that the generals “don’t know much because they’re not winning.” But as president, he has given these generals “total authorization” to carry out the United States’ wars. In June the Pentagon quietly announced that President Trump had delegated to Secretary of Defense James Mattis authority to send thousands of American troops to Afghanistan, where the Taliban has regained the initiative and threatens the survival of the U.S.-backed government of Ashraf Ghani. This followed a decision in April to allow the Pentagon to set troop levels in the fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.

Those who distrust the president’s temperament and judgment may be relieved that Mr. Mattis, a retired Marine Corps four-star general who enjoys widespread bipartisan support, is giving the orders on the battlefield. It would be imprudent, however, to so quickly disregard the United States’ tradition of having civilians in control of the military.

There is a difference between the delegation of duties and an abdication of responsibility. Generals who welcome a longer leash after years of what some considered to be micro-management under the Obama administration would do well to recall

Mr. Trump's lashing out at his own Justice Department when things were not going his way in the courts. How might this detached and impulsive president react to a botched operation or failure to turn around a war that, in the words of General Mattis, we are "not winning"?

More important, no amount of flexibility on the ground can replace an achievable strategy. Any credible strategy for even partial victory in Afghanistan will require coordination between agencies and the buy-in of the American people—both of which fall under the purview of the president. Unfortunately, there is little evidence that our commander in chief, like the Congress and the country he leads, takes seriously his duty to provide civilian oversight of military operations.

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Deportation to deadly countries is a test of morality

Bishop Daniel Flores of Brownsville, Tex., last year questioned the morality of the United States deporting refugees seeking asylum, rightly treating their plight as a right-to-life issue. “I consider supporting the sending of an adult or child back to a place where he or she is marked for death, where there is lawlessness and societal collapse, to be formal cooperation with an intrinsic evil,” Bishop Flores said, “not unlike driving someone to an abortion clinic.”

Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala and Mexico have been experiencing massive violence from gangs, often with the collaboration of law enforcement officials and the military. But according to the American Immigration Council, U.S. immigration courts granted asylum to only 1 percent of applicants from Mexico in 2012, and less than 10 percent of applicants from the three Central American countries mentioned above. These figures contrasted with acceptance rates of over 80 percent for asylum applicants from Egypt, Iran and Somalia.

Many claims asserted by Central Americans are based on forced gang recruitment, and many claims presented by Mexicans are based on threats by drug cartels. But those claims do not fit neatly within the criteria established by the Board of Immigration Appeals, which focus on fear of persecution because of political opinions, religion or membership in a targeted social group. The U.S. government is thus sending people back to situations in which they face an imminent danger of death. Can a Catholic employed by the government carry out his or her job duties in good conscience if they include the depor-

tation of people facing such danger?

The principle of double effect is used in the Catholic Church to determine the morality of an action. If the possibility of evil exists, an action cannot be deemed moral unless it meets all four of these criteria: 1) the action itself is good or indifferent; 2) the good effect is not produced by means of the evil effect; 3) the evil effect is not directly intended; and 4) a proportionate reason supports causing or tolerating the evil effect.

Under this principle the deportation of an undocumented criminal who poses a threat to others can be a “good,” at least for the deporting country. But in most deportation cases, the only certain result is that a person is denied the chance of a better life in the United States. So the first criterion is not met. The second criterion comes into play only when deportation can be considered a good, but most would not describe the massive deportations now disrupting families that way. However, rejecting applicants for asylum would meet the third criteria, since even the probable murder of a deportee in his or her home country is not intended.

As for the last criterion, there is no proportionate reason to justify placing large numbers of asylum applicants, themselves nonviolent, in proximate danger of death—even considering that they have broken immigration law. It is critical to note that our current immigration system itself has been categorized as “broken” by politicians in both parties, by the Catholic Church and by other Christian denominations and religions. Thus, the fourth criterion is not met.

According to the theory of dou-

ble effect, Catholics directly involved in the mass deportations of asylum seekers are formally cooperating with an evil action. This is not true of everyone working in government offices involved with immigration law, but some positions that appear to be immoral include those of an official who approves a deportation order, pilots who fly deportees back to their home countries and lawmakers who vote for an unjust deportation policy.

The church has consistently taught that being an abortion provider, an assisting nurse or a person who pays for an abortion is cooperation in an immoral action. But what is clear regarding collaboration in the evil of abortion is not often seen in other matters of life and death. Bishop Flores points to this inconsistency.

One of my main ministries is with refugees who may be deported. Listening to their stories is heartbreaking and makes clear the immorality of our present immigration system. Nearly 40 years after the assassination of Archbishop Óscar Romero in El Salvador, violent killings continue there and elsewhere in the region. We can choose to follow a consistent ethic of life and oppose this violence with effective, nonviolent actions. We can also choose the unfortunate path that has preceded so many injustices and genocides in world history, remaining silent. We do not need to be heroic. But we need to be faithful to the Gospel.

Rafael García, a Jesuit priest of the U.C.S. Province, ministers to migrant and refugee persons, adults and minors in detention in El Paso, Tex.



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IMMIGRATION, HEALTH CARE TAKE CENTER STAGE AT SPRING BISHOPS' MEETING



CNS photo/Andrew Combert, EPA

Political issues, including immigration, health care reform and religious liberty, took center stage in June as the U.S. bishops gathered in Indianapolis for their spring meeting.

Bishop George Thomas of Helena, Mont., took to the floor to highlight what he sees as shortcomings with the White House-proposed federal budget that he said could have “potentially catastrophic effects on the lives of our people, most especially children and the elderly, the seriously ill, the immigrant and our nation’s working poor.”

That speech was delivered during a debate about health care reform, during which Bishop Robert McElroy of San

◀ This young man makes a strong case against deportation last year before the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington. The issue of immigration and the right of families to remain intact were among other pressing concerns raised by U.S. bishops during their spring meeting.

Diego said efforts to repeal the Affordable Care Act (known as Obamacare) that result in the loss of insurance are an “assault on the core principle of Catholic social teaching.”

A review of legislation by the Congressional Budget Office estimated that millions of Americans could lose health insurance under Republican-backed proposals. Cardinal Blase Cupich of Chicago said he feared congressional efforts to repeal Obamacare are being driven by a desire to “have savings in order to give a tax cut to people,” even if it means that fewer Americans are covered by insurance.

Much of the meeting on June 14 and 15 was devoted to the issue of immigration. Last November, Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, appointed a temporary working group to study how the church could contribute to the debate about immigration-related promises made by Donald J. Trump during last year’s presidential campaign.

That group reported on its work during the meeting in Indianapolis. Archbishop José Gomez of Los Angeles, the U.S.C.C.B. vice president who chaired the working group, recounted the flurry of statements promulgated by bishops in recent months opposing Mr. Trump’s proposed border wall and his legally contested executive orders that would curtail refugee resettlement, as well as the bishops’ advocacy of an immigration policy that respects the rights of families to remain intact. He said those statements “helped to make a positive impact on the public conversation” about various migration proposals.

The bishops also voted 132 to 53 to turn an ad hoc religious liberty committee into a permanent committee. That committee was created in 2011 by then-U.S.C.C.B. president Cardinal Timothy Dolan when a number of Catholic universities, hospitals and dioceses argued that being mandated by the government to provide insurance plans that included coverage for contraception violated their religious freedom.

During a presentation on June 15, Archbishop William Lori, who chairs the committee, said that “religious liberty remains under challenge, and it’s likely these challenges will intensify in the years ahead.” The legalization of same-sex marriage in 2015 and new legal protections for transgender individuals have led to legal clashes between some Catholic entities and the government, which Archbishop Lori said required a standing religious freedom committee “ready to address new challenges as they arise.”

During the debate, some bishops argued that creating

the new permanent committee while letting the working group on immigration disband could suggest that bishops were retreating from immigration.

Cardinal Joseph Tobin of Newark, for example, said such an outcome would “send a message that the conference is actually disengaging” on migration, which he said is “a crisis that is growing stronger each day.”

When the meeting concluded, the U.S.C.C.B. said in a press release that the immigration group would continue, citing “the continued urgency for comprehensive immigration reform, a humane refugee policy and a safe border.”

In other business, bishops heard an update from Francesco Cesareo, chairman of the National Review Board, about the need to remain vigilant in fighting the sexual abuse of children. Preaching at a special Mass addressing how the church mishandled reports of sexual abuse, Archbishop Wilton Gregory of Atlanta said, “At this Mass, we bishops humbly and sincerely ask for the forgiveness of those who have been harmed, scandalized or dispirited by events that, even if they happened many years ago, remain ongoing sources of anguish for them and for those who love them.”

Bishops also weighed in on preparations for the Synod of Bishops at the Vatican in 2018, which will focus on young adults and vocations. Dioceses are consulting young people and are expected to submit reports for the synod by September. Bishop Jaime Soto of Sacramento urged bishops to make a special effort to speak to young people who are incarcerated, a “population that almost feels thrown aside, thrown away by society.”

At the start of the meeting, bishops listened to an address about evangelization from the apostolic nuncio to the United States, Archbishop Christophe Pierre, who challenged them to encounter those with different perspectives. “Do we listen, even to those with whom we disagree, so that we might propose the essentials of the Gospel in a more persuasive, life-changing way?” he asked. “The call to be a missionary disciple demands moving beyond our comfort zone to the peripheries.”

Michael J. O’Loughlin, *national correspondent*.
Twitter: @MikeOLoughlin.

Summertime blues? A season that's hard on the earth.

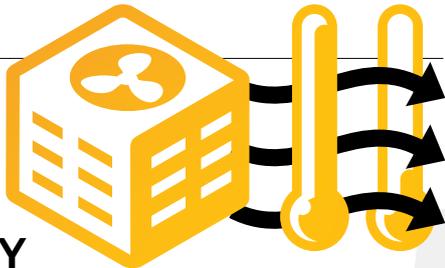
Most Americans say they have changed their behavior to help protect the environment (see Your Take, Page 6)—whether because they are heeding the warnings of Pope Francis in his encyclical “Laudato Si” or are alarmed by stories of severe weather and rising sea levels (as in Miami Beach; see next page). But summer may bring the biggest test of good intentions. A warming planet means more demand for air-conditioning, once a luxury but now almost universally used in the United States and rapidly being ad-

opted in the rest of the world. And more air-conditioning means more CO₂ emissions of greenhouse gases and other pollutants. Vacation travel, gasoline-powered lawn mowing and even the beloved backyard barbeque are among other seasonal activities that consume surprisingly large amounts of energy while contributing to hotter summer days in the future.

Want to reduce your carbon footprint and still have fun this summer? See “Tips for a Green Summer” in the online version of this story at Americamagazine.org.

AIR-CONDITIONING

6% OF ALL ELECTRICITY PRODUCED IN THE U.S. IS USED FOR AIR CONDITIONERS **RELEASING 117 MILLION METRIC TONS OF CARBON DIOXIDE EACH YEAR**



PROJECTED AIR CONDITIONERS WORLDWIDE

2015:	900 MIL
2030:	1.6 BIL
2050:	2.5 BIL

COOKOUTS

300 KG OF CO₂ ARE EMITTED TO PRODUCE 1 KG OF PROTEIN FROM BEEF

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS FROM RAISING LIVESTOCK ACCOUNT FOR 15% OF ALL MANMADE CO₂ EMISSIONS WORLDWIDE

CATTLE (BEEF AND MILK) ACCOUNT FOR ALMOST TWO-THIRDS OF THIS AMOUNT

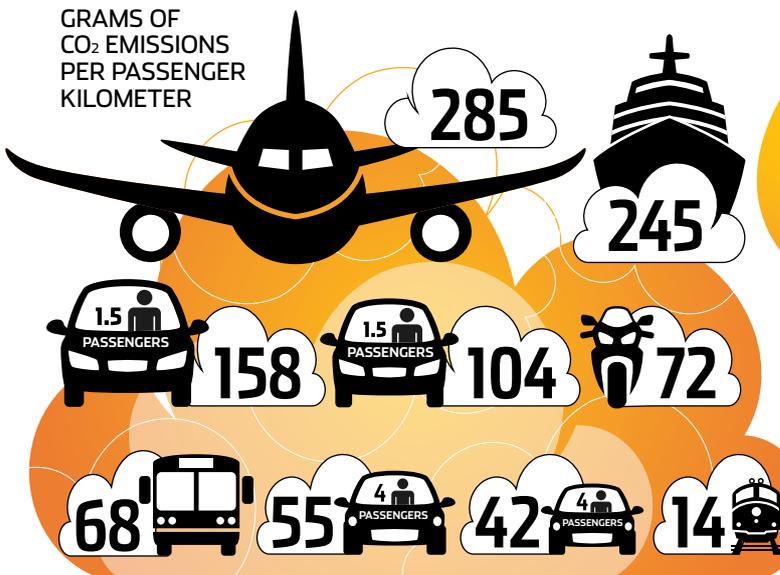


60 MILLION FOURTH OF JULY BARBECUES CONSUME ENOUGH ENERGY TO POWER 20,000 HOMES FOR A YEAR

LESS THAN 100 KG OF CO₂ ARE EMITTED TO PRODUCE 1 KG OF PROTEIN FROM CHICKEN OR PORK

TRAVEL

GRAMS OF CO₂ EMISSIONS PER PASSENGER KILOMETER



U.S. LAWNS, ANNUAL USE

3 TRILLION GALLONS OF WATER

200 MILLION GALLONS OF GAS (FOR MOWING)

70 MILLION POUNDS OF PESTICIDES



Sources: Air-conditioning data from the U.S. Department of Energy and a study by the Ernest Orlando Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, cited in The Washington Post; cooking data from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, cited by Weil Cornell Medical College; transportation data from European Environment Agency; lawn care data from Natural Resources Defense Council, Environment and Human Health Inc. and the Environmental Protection Agency. Anna Marchese provided assistance in compiling this data.



As sea waters rise, 'stilted' development begins in Miami

A van drives through a residential street in Miami Beach after a storm in 2009 caused extensive flooding.

It has become a slimy poster boy—make that a poster mollusk—of global sea-level rise. Last November, as another king tide flooded Miami Beach, an octopus was found floating along an inundated parking garage floor.

The startling octopod had come up from Biscayne Bay and through the garage's drains. Those were originally set above Miami Beach's high-water mark, but today they are often among many submerged sluices on the iconic South Florida island city. The octopus video went viral, of course, one of the funniest and scariest reminders yet that rising seas due to global warming have rendered the coastal high-water marks more obsolete by the day.

That is especially true in the Miami area, which every media report on sea-level rise seems to profile as ground zero for deluge doom. Scientists estimate our oceans will rise between three and six feet by the end of this century. That directly threatens as many as 13 million coastal-dwelling people in the United States. The largest concentration of them is in South Florida, where as many as 1.5 million residents could feel the tide lapping at their doorsteps.

The dangers transcend drenched living rooms, of course. Rising, encroaching salt water can contaminate aquifers and corrode infrastructure. Pope Francis weighed in on the hazards in his 2015 encyclical "Laudato Si'." He warned that a "rise in the sea level...can create extremely serious situations, if we consider that a quarter of the world's population lives on the coast or nearby, and that the majority of our megacities are situated in coastal areas" (No. 24).

The question is how to confront it. Perhaps the most sought-after solution is elevation—raising roads, sea walls and homes and buildings or erecting new ones higher above ground—to counter the warming, creeping sea. Miami Beach is embarking on a \$100 million project to raise roads in the island's midsection by two feet or more, complement-

ing that lift with more advanced water pumps and sewer links. It is planned to be the city's debut of a wider, half-billion-dollar effort to combat rising and surging sea water.

The problem, however, is what to do with all the private Miami Beach properties that will now be sitting lower than all the loftier public infrastructure. The answer may well be to raise them too. Raising a house or building by a few feet now is cheaper than tearing down a seawater-rotted structure and rebuilding it later. A big factor will be whether federal, state and local governments can come up with funding mechanisms to help defray the costs.

Either way, Miami's Big Lift is not exactly a new idea. It follows and may revive a centuries-long tradition in the low-lying Caribbean and South Florida regions, where keeping above water has always been a challenge. Thatched-roof stilt houses were (and in many areas still are) a fixture of the indigenous Caribbean. Venezuela, in fact, got its name from Spanish conquistadors who came upon the stilt houses of the Guajiro Indians in Lake Maracaibo and dubbed the place "Little Venice."

The Spanish themselves dotted Florida's coast with stilt shelters. In Miami, the stilt houses of Biscayne Bay—known as Stiltsville—have assumed historic landmark status. So have the stilted "hunt camps" due west in the Everglades, which are often carpeted, air-conditioned retreats for self-described "swamp rats" who commute there by airboats. Once considered quaint reminders of Florida's past, those structures may now be a model for its climate-altered future.

Tim Padgett, *Miami correspondent*. Twitter: @TimPadgett2.

Gasoline theft becomes major criminal enterprise in Mexico

The air in Progreso de Juárez is thick with a pungent odor. It is not difficult to find the origin. Just next to one of the roads that enters this small section of the city of Acatzingo is a large, dark spot, several feet wide. “Gasoline,” explains Alejandro (who did not want his real name to be used). “This is where they were illegally tapping from an oil duct a short while ago.”

Progreso de Juárez is part of the Red Triangle, a region of small towns in the central Mexican state of Puebla, surrounded by flat farmland. Farming, however, is not what provides its inhabitants with income.

Underneath the village runs one of the most important pipelines of Pemex, Mexico’s national oil company. That pipeline provides the income for some 90 percent of the population here through clandestine tapping. Progreso is not alone. Most communities in the area have become hotbeds of what has become one of Mexico’s most profitable criminal ventures: gasoline theft.

With a production of more than two million barrels of crude oil per day, Mexico ranks 12th among the world’s petrol powers. The national oil industry is monopolized by Pemex, which is state controlled; but almost eight decades after its creation, it has lost much of its former glory. Oil production has dropped steadily since reaching its peak of 3.38 million barrels per day in 2004. And while production drops, fuel theft spikes. No less than 27,000 barrels of oil are stolen every day, according to Pemex, and the number of clandestine tappings of gasoline pipelines has increased a staggering 915 percent be-

tween 2011 and 2015.

With approximately 10 percent of Mexico’s annual state revenue derived from oil production, the losses are enormous. According to a recent investigation by the news website Animal Político, almost four billion gallons of fuel have been stolen since 2009, worth almost \$8 billion.

Fuel theft has become an especially embarrassing problem for the Mexican government now that it is in the process of a historical reform of the petrol industry. In 2013 President Enrique Peña Nieto began a gradual opening of the energy sector to private investment in an attempt to reverse declining production. The effort has been controversial, especially after a sudden spike in gas prices earlier this year caused riots and protests across the country.

The fuel thieves puncture the pipelines, stop the leak with a valve and siphon the product into tank trucks. The stolen gasoline is then transported to distribution centers and sold in local markets. Stolen gasoline is significantly cheaper; whereas Pemex charges between \$3.40 and \$3.80 for a gallon, the clandestine product costs a mere \$2.40 per gallon.

“Stealing oil has become ingrained in both the local economy and the local culture,” Alejandro explained. “It is now considered a normal part of everyday life here.”

But as gasoline theft has spiked, so has violence. Organized crime has moved in and industrialized the practice. Barely two decades ago, stealing fuel was mostly a family affair, with small groups of people siphoning the product into jerry cans. Now caravans

of tank wagons are used to tap massive amounts of petrol from the ducts.

The Mexican Congress is currently debating a law that would punish fuel thieves with up to 30 years in prison. But few locals in the Red Triangle believe it will end the criminal enterprise any time soon.

According to Alejandro, most of the thieves do not believe they are criminals. “They grew up with the idea of the nationalization of the oil industry, that oil belongs to all Mexicans,” he said. “Now that the government is opening the oil sector to private investment, they think that it’s actually the government stealing from Mexicans. They think they’re the good guys.”

Jan-Albert Hootsen,
Mexico City correspondent.
Twitter: @jahootsen.



Canadian bishops urge response to hunger crises in Africa and Yemen

The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops and Canadian Jesuits International joined other faith groups in Canada in June urging a humanitarian response to the increasingly perilous hunger crisis in East Africa and Yemen. United Nations sources report that as many as 30 million people are threatened by hunger in South Sudan, Somalia, Nigeria and Yemen—and 20 million “are at immediate risk.” Famine has already been declared in South Sudan’s Unity State, where more than 100,000 are in imminent peril of starvation.

A man-made hunger crisis born of the ongoing civil conflict in South Sudan threatens 5.5 million in the world’s youngest nation with severe hunger. South Sudan has now become the world’s fastest-growing refugee crisis, according to U.N. officials, with more than 1.8 million people—including one million children—fleeing to safety in neighboring states.

Bishop Douglas Crosby, O.M.I., the president of the Canadian bishops’ conference and the head of the Diocese of Hamilton, Ontario, joined other Canadian religious leaders in calling for a response “to one of the world’s largest humanitarian crises since the Second World War.” In their statement, Canadian leaders from a number of different faiths and Christian denominations note that a declaration of famine has not been made by U.N. agencies since July 2011, “when some 260,000 people died in Somalia—half of them children under the age of five.”

They write: “The world must not let those horrors be repeated.... Our government has made known its intention to participate more fully at the U.N. Security Council in the coming years. Now is the moment for our Prime Minister and all Canadian leaders to live up to that aspiration by speaking out clearly and consistently to end the violence taking place in South Sudan, Somalia, Nigeria and Yemen.”

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



A rise in gasoline prices led to this protest in Guadalajara in January and increased demand for black-market fuel.

CNS photo/Helen Manson, U.S. Embassy in Uganda



A mother and baby at a refugee camp in Arua, Uganda, to which thousands have fled from South Sudan.



LOOKING FOR HOPE IN GAZA

A war-torn people finds a way to persevere.

A thousand feet in the air and a quarter-mile ahead, a distended, gray Israeli surveillance balloon is the first sign that we are approaching the Erez Crossing, the official point of entry for foreigners traveling to the Gaza Strip through Israel. The balloon's ominous, ever-present eyes hover above the mine-laden no-man's land, pock-marked by artillery fire, that separates Gaza from what can only technically be described as its neighbor. The smell of manure from nearby farms mingles with the briny Mediterranean air, a pungent symbol of uneasy coexistence. We park the car and head for the Israeli checkpoint, a 375,000-square-foot building enclosed in reinforced steel and bulletproof glass.

Photo: America Media Staff

By Matt Malone



WEST BANK

JERUSALEM •

GAZA STRIP

EGYPT

ISRAEL



In many ways, it looks like any terminal in a major international airport. Except for the people. There are very few of them. Apart from several dozen heavily armed Israeli officials and a few dapper businessmen traveling on Chinese passports, there is only me, accompanied by a guide from Catholic Relief Services and our two-man film crew from America Media.

Completed in 2007 at a cost of \$60 million, the Erez checkpoint was meant to be the place where the two states of the two-state solution would meet. According to the original plan, a secure corridor through Israel would connect Gaza with the Palestinian-controlled West Bank some 40 miles to its east, forming a single Palestinian state alongside the state of Israel. Erez was built to accommodate 45,000 travelers per day. The planners were optimistic, but not without cause. The Israeli army's withdrawal from Gaza in 2005 led the powers that be to believe that a workable political arrangement might be possible, the kind of deal that would facilitate a vigorous flow of people, goods and services across the checkpoint.

But just as workers were putting the finishing touches on the Erez facility, the Palestinian Islamic group Hamas started winning elections in Gaza, splintering the Palestinian National Authority into bitterly divided factions. In response, the United States, Israel and much of the rest of

the world, who all regard Hamas as a terrorist group, cut off direct aid to Gaza just as Israel tightened its security grip on the enclave. Seven years later, Hamas still controls Gaza's internal government, and Israel is still master of Gaza's borders, waters and airspace. Now only about 500 people pass through the Erez checkpoint each day, or little more than 1 percent of its capacity. It is a three-dimensional symbol of Gaza's dashed hopes.

The Gazans are not the only ones who appear disappointed. The Israeli officials in Erez have the unmistakable bearing of people who would rather be somewhere else, almost anywhere else, as if they each pulled a short straw that sent them here. They are more incredulous than suspicious. The words are, "Why are you going to Gaza?" But the tone is, "Why would anyone go to Gaza?" Our honest reply does nothing to assuage their cynical curiosity: "We're here," we say, "to attend a puppet show."

UNDER SIEGE

Israel and Hamas will not deal directly with each other, so the Palestinian National Authority, the governing body for Gaza and parts of the West Bank established by the 1993 Oslo Accords, acts as their middle man. That means visitors must pass through three checkpoints to enter Gaza, each



◀ Gazans cannot leave or enter the territory except under extraordinary circumstances and only with the reluctant permission of Israeli or Egyptian authorities.

military, makes a sizable chunk of Gaza uninhabitable.

In recent years, there has been progress toward some semblance of a functioning society. About half of the 18,000 homes destroyed during the 2014 war have been rebuilt, mainly through donations from other Arab governments, and a shopping mall was opened recently with great fanfare. But a paucity of natural resources, a barely functioning infrastructure and accelerating population growth make for a volatile mixture of uncertainty and instability. A United Nations study released in 2015 contained a dire warning: “The social, health and security-related ramifications of the high population density and overcrowding are among the factors that may render Gaza unlivable by 2020.”

How did this happen? In a word, war; specifically, three wars in seven years.

BLESSINGS AND PLEAS FOR PEACE

After a slow zig-zag through the pothole obstacle course of Gaza City’s central streets, our Toyota pulls into a dusty driveway next to the home of Um Husam, a Gazan woman in her late 30s, whose two-story, cinderblock-and-plaster house sits a couple of miles from the border with Israel. Her house is also in the shadow of a Hamas training camp whose guard tower can be seen just beyond the ridge behind her backyard. As a result, the Husams are directly in the flightpath of Israeli rockets.

In response to Hamas rockets fired at Israeli targets, Israel has taken military action in Gaza on multiple occasions in the last decade. The Israelis argue, with some justification, that they have acted in self-defense and have sought to minimize what government officials call “collateral damage.” In plain English, “collateral damage” means innocent men, women and children. The problem is that dropping dozens of bombs in the third most densely populated polity on Earth will inevitably result in a lot of “collateral damage.” In the most recent Israel-Gaza War in 2014, the United Nations estimates that more than 2,200 Gazans were killed, of whom some 65 percent were civilians. By comparison, fewer than 100 Israelis died, the clear majority of whom were combatants. More than 10,000 Gazans, moreover, were wounded, including some 3,000 children, of whom one-third are now permanently disabled. After just seven weeks of bombing, a third of Gaza’s population had been displaced.

At the end of a generous lunch that would rival an American Thanksgiving dinner, Mrs. Husam tells us in her

less grand and more dysfunctional than the last. Though less than five miles, the journey from Erez to the Palestinian Authority checkpoint and then to the final checkpoint controlled by Hamas can take as long as three Kafka-esque hours, more than enough time to realize how isolated this place is—not just from Israel, which is the intended effect, but from the entire world. The short trip from Erez to Gaza City is a long journey from the first world to the third, or to what former British Prime Minister David Cameron once called the world’s largest “open air prison.”

It is easy to see why he thought so. Gazans cannot leave or enter the territory except under extraordinary circumstances and only with the reluctant permission of Israeli or Egyptian authorities. The Israeli Navy blocks Gaza’s access to the Mediterranean, and the strip’s only airport was destroyed in 2000. Hemmed in by Israel to the north and east and by the sea to the west and Egypt to the south, Gaza is easy to blockade because of its tiny size. From a hotel room overlooking the Mediterranean, you can see the northern border with Israel and the southern border with Egypt simply by turning your head. Yet while Gaza has one-tenth the land mass of Rhode Island, it has almost twice the population. Nearly two million people inhabit this scant 141 square miles. To make matters worse, the extensive security buffer to the north and east, patrolled by the Israeli

The Husam family lives in Gaza near the Israeli border ▶ in the shadow of a Hamas training camp and directly in the flight path of Israeli rockets.

motherly way that while we have not eaten nearly enough, she will now take us on a tour of her home. She delights especially in the beautiful mosaic that graces the stairwell and includes a quotation from the Quran: “Be thankful for the great things Allah has given you.” Among other things, Allah has given her and her husband seven children, several of whom are now playing in the yard. At their feet is a spent Israeli artillery shell, likely manufactured in the United States and then included in some U.S. arms sale to our closest Middle Eastern ally. A chilling epiphany: All sin is social in nature; there is blood on all our hands.

Whatever its origins, Mrs. Husam knows well where the shell landed and the near-deadly path it took through her roof, down the stairwell and into her living room, where it exploded a short distance from her husband and children. Luckily, they were huddled in another room and escaped injury. Her father had not been so fortunate. In a previous conflict, moments after assuring her that all would be well, he was killed right before her eyes by a bomb. As she recounts the night of the most recent attack, you can hear in the rising, pleading pitch of her voice the sound of every mother who has ever feared for her children. “If someone had been in the room, we would’ve been killed. The whole house was shaking. The windows were all broken,” she says. Her eyes sink into grief as her son, Abdulrahman, not yet 10 years old, sheepishly recounts his story: “They killed many children and did other horrible things,” he says. “I want peace. I don’t want war.”

What helps them cope? Prayer, she says. And, hopefully, a puppet show.

A REFUGE FOR FANTASY

Basma is a theater company with a modest but powerful mission: to use the performing arts to help Gazans recover from the trauma of war. In the few years since it was founded, the company has traveled up and down the Gaza Strip sowing seeds of hope and healing. Supported by a grant from Catholic Relief Services, Basma stages serious theater for adults (last year it mounted a production of “Death of a Salesman” in Arabic), but today it is presenting a puppet show for children. Humanitarian relief workers say that half of Gaza’s children are malnourished, one quarter are without health care and one third will die prematurely. They are also the ones who are most likely to suffer the lasting, psychological wounds of warfare.

At a neighborhood community center, about 30 chil-



dren and their parents have gathered to watch the show. The scene resembles the children’s reading hour at your local public library. The squeals are cacophonous; someone needs to go to the bathroom; someone else is complaining that another child keeps touching him; laughter and smiles abound. As the children take their places on multicolored plastic chairs, a rotund, 40-ish Palestinian father of four waits in the wings. Mohammad El-Masri makes his living as a lawyer. At one time he was also a policeman. But none of that matters to the kids. To them, he is their hero, a kind of Bozo the Clown and Mr. Rogers rolled into one. A former contestant on the TV show “Arabs Got Talent,” Mr.



El-Masri has an amazing gift for producing widely varied character voices, as well as the precise sounds of dozens of animals. This Mel Blanc of the Middle East will provide several of the voices for today's production. During the last war, Mr. El-Masri would visit the shelters and perform for the children while the bombs fell above them. "You could die at any moment," he says. "I would imitate the sounds of rockets" to help the children to be less afraid. "I'm glad I helped relieve the tension, especially the children's."

Today, he says, the children are still frightened. "Sometimes the children hear a strange sound and it scares them," he tells us, "because it reminds them of the

war. Sometimes my daughter asks me if there is another war starting soon." As he speaks, the look on his face conveys the agonizing disappointment of a father who cannot answer that question with any degree of certainty.

Mr. El-Nasri, decked out in a gold lamé costume, is the narrator: Once upon a time, he tells them, there was a king whose queen had died. The king now wants to make his daughter a queen, but the queen's crown is missing a jewel, so he sends the princess out into the forest in search of one. It is too dark for her to see the path, so she asks the children to sing a song so the sun will rise and light her way. In the now-bright light, the princess spies a monkey,

Basma is a theater company with a modest but powerful mission: to use the performing arts to help Gazans recover from the trauma of war.

who lends her a boat so that she can cross the river and talk to the Black Bird, who “will surely know how to help her.” When she reaches the Black Bird, he tells her that he will give her the jewel if she gives him the boat. “But the boat does not belong to me,” says the princess. The Black Bird suggests that the princess give him the boat and tell the monkey that the boat was stolen. The princess refuses to lie and goes home to the king, heartbroken, to tell him that she has no jewel and cannot be queen. “You have not failed,” the king tells his daughter. “This was a test of your character. I now know that you will be an honest queen and I will crown you with the biggest crown in the kingdom.”

This is theater at its best, a fantasy that helps people make sense of reality. “Honesty is the moral of the play,” says Nahid Hannona, the show’s director. “My favorite scene is with the princess and the crow. The princess didn’t want to lie, so she asked the children for advice. The children agree with the princess: she shouldn’t lie.”

The story is told in the universal language of children. There are kings and princesses and talking birds, and they all live happily ever after. Basma has rewritten the puppet show more than 10 times with the help of child psychologists who specialize in post-traumatic stress. “We want the children to have hope in life and in the future,” Mr. Hannona says. But the puppet show also speaks to the interminable conflict that defines the children’s present. Its morals are meant to instruct, but to comfort as well: Do not take something that does not belong to you. Do not lie to your friends. And most important: Though the forest is dark and forbidding, do not be afraid.

Basma’s efforts seem to be paying off. Seated near the front of the audience is Mrs. Husam’s little boy, Abdulrahman. Whenever he talks about what happened during the war, his eyes narrow in sadness and fear; they have seen more than they should have. But now, amid the laughter of his friends and the care of his kind-hearted neighbors, Abdulrahman is smiling and laughing too. It is as if the innocence that his mother feared was gone forever has somehow, almost magically, reappeared. For a moment, “happily ever after” seems possible.

HARVESTING CONCRETE

Tattered, faded green-and-white Hamas flags, dangling beneath the broken bulbs of the street lights, line the roads leading to our hotel. Windswept, strewn with the wreckage of warfare, half the streets bear the signature of Israeli fire-



power. At the site of the once-towering apartment buildings near the northern border, across from an enormous field filled with refuse, the destruction is stark and nearly total. Old men are “harvesting” concrete: collecting the blown-up bits of their former homes, grinding them into powder and recycling the material for new construction.

Our car follows the narrow road between the city and the sea. To our left is the oldest refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, established after the first Arab-Israeli War in 1948; generations of refugees have lived and died here. To our right, Palestinian fishermen rock and bob in doughty little boats. It is hard going. Under international law, Gazans have the right to fish within 20 nautical miles of the shore, but under the Oslo accords, they are restricted to six nautical miles; under the watchful eye of an aggressive Israeli Navy, the actual limit is closer to three. Due in part to the limited access to the fishing grounds, today a caravan of donkey carts waits to transport food from a World Food Program distribution center; it is a reminder that three-quarters of Gazans require some form of food assistance.

Three years on from its latest cataclysm, 65,000 Gazans are still internally displaced; 60 percent of the youth are unemployed; the suicide rate is climbing. Those appalling statistics, Haaretz reported in June, “are like a ticking bomb



that could eventually push the Hamas government into a new clash with Israel.” While war is not inevitable, at least this much is certain: If war does come, it is not the war-makers who will suffer most; rather, it is innocent people like the fishermen and the old men and the Husams who will suffer the onslaught. As we make our way to our hotel, a haunting question: What next will test their resilience?

HOPE IN THE SOUNDS OF GAZA

The balcony of my hotel room on the Gazan shore provides a front-row seat to another show: a Mediterranean sunset, in all its dazzling light and color. Why would anyone want to go to Gaza? For the same reason that people of faith want to go anywhere: to find God. It’s easy, of course, to see God in the sunset. But finding God in the agony of Gaza? That’s hard. And yet God is here, in the generous hospitality of a people of meager means; in the unbounded love and care of mothers; in the healing work of a father and his devoted company of artists.

After their years of violent, unrelenting struggle, we expected to meet an embittered, downtrodden people. But while Gazans are anxious and angry, they’re not despairing. They are a proud people, but with unassuming hopes: wa-

ter, food, housing, education—in other words, a future. That future may yet be within reach. If the Erez checkpoint is a symbol of Gaza’s broken dreams, the puppet show is a sign that dreamers like Mr. El-Masri will not give up. “There are people in Gaza who love life and who love to dance,” he said. “I love its people, its children and even its broken streets. I love the sounds and voices of the street vendors.”

As I watch the light retreat across this city that has lived with war for three millennia, I remember something else Mr. El-Masri said: “Gaza is my homeland. Its sadness is my sadness. Its joy is my joy.” The people want to live, not merely survive. And like the princess in the forest, they live in hope. “Remember,” he said, “after every dark night, there is always a dawn.”

 Matt Malone, S.J., editor in chief of *America*, visited Gaza in March 2017.



Watch a short documentary by America Media on our visit to the Gaza Strip at www.americamagazine.org.

An aerial photograph of a coastal city, likely San Diego, showing a bay, a city grid, and a large green field. The image is used as a background for the text.

My strategy for tense situations is to have a beverage in hand. If I am intellectually ambushed, I can take a drink, swallow slowly and win a few seconds to come back with a thoughtful, disarming response. While navigating my first day at the San Diego synod on the family, my cup was running over—in both senses of the phrase. However, I soon realized my abundantly filled coffee cup

A REPORT FROM THE CHURCH NOT A

was unnecessary. Even with all of the potential points of contention, no one came to the synod with a nefarious agenda. And believe me, there were competing commitments: Catholic/public/home school choices; beliefs that L.G.B.T.Q. families need their rights protected; others saying that allowing these parents to adopt goes against biblical values; different views on how to handle families who are undocumented or have mixed immigration status; the flyer on the “five non-negotiables” a delegate gave me on our car ride home; and others. Given the fact that there was a representative from each of the 100 parishes in the diocese—consider the variety of parish cultures—I am still inspired by the warm pastoral consensus that emerged from the synod.

By Maureen K. Day

A SYNOD, A SOLUTION

For benefit #5 ^{culturally relevant}
Diocese will provide formation in the areas of conscience formation, and internal forums, not only to implement the pathway to sacramental participation outlined in the Joy of Love, but even more fundamentally to illuminate a core element of christian discipleship itself.

- Form pastoral leadership (priests, deacons, lay leaders)

3: actional

/unwelcoming

• Inflexible/time constraints

The Diocese of San Diego made waves last year on the Southwest shores of our nation. In late October 2016, Bishop Robert McElroy held a synod on the family, called *Embracing the Joy of Love*, in response to Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation "*Amoris Laetitia*," released earlier that year. I served as the theologian for the group that discussed the welcoming and forming of children. Both secular and religious news sources did an excellent job bringing the content of the synod to the world. But they could not quite capture one important element: The whole event was revolutionary. Bishop McElroy highlighted the broader significance of the occasion in his opening homily, saying to the roughly 125 participants, "We recognize that this very act of gathering in the name and grace of our God is a profound declaration of ecclesial identity, hope and witness."

The greatest amount of press attention was devoted to the final 15 proposals the delegates presented to the bishop in late October. But if we focus only on those final proposals, we will miss something even bigger: the process. The bishop invited me to participate in the diocesan synod along with five other theologians, 10 facilitators, five recorders and just over 100 delegates. I was impressed by the process that Bishop McElroy had planned. The diocese assigned each of the participants to one of five working groups and asked the delegates to hold listening sessions at their parishes. The delegates then circulated the concerns of their listening sessions to those in their working groups so we could learn from them. The working groups met separately, and each formulated at least three proposals that would be discussed, refined and voted upon when the groups came together for the general assembly. These proposals were pastoral in nature, providing ways to accompany families in the diocese. Listening, learning and accompanying are perhaps the three greatest pastoral insights of the synodal process.

LISTENING

The San Diego synod, like the meetings of the Synod of Bishops in Rome, began with listening. Three-quarters of the participants were laypeople—most of them parents. Their participation was important not only for reasons of equity but also for theological insight. Both the San Diego synod and the synod in Rome worked to move beyond an abstract theology of married life, wanting to encounter the emotions, struggles and other concrete realities that families experience in a very direct way.

Delegates varied in their own religious and political

commitments. Needless to say, when I went to meet my small group, I was worried that the different perspectives would make people adversarial and destroy conversation. Yet regardless of their own positions, the delegates knew that there were people in the diocese who need pastoral care, and that awareness made them want to work together effectively. The stories they told demonstrated a knowledge of church teaching at the same time that they revealed uncertainty as to how to apply these teachings to particular circumstances. In sum, as far as I could tell, no one there had an ax to grind.

And in putting the axes aside, productive work happened. A common hope and commitment united the participants despite the many differences among us. The delegates approached the tasks of the synod with more questions than answers, with a deep desire to welcome and minister to every family in the diocese, whatever their context. In short, these people were remarkable in their humility. Many of them said they did not know why their pastor picked them to come; one mother joked to me that she imagined the first choice was busy. Yet the pastors could not have been wiser in choosing delegates who recognized the seriousness and scope of the task at hand and went about gathering experiences and wisdom from others. To close our working group meeting, Bishop McElroy asked the roughly two dozen participants to describe their experience of the day in a word or two. When my turn came, I proclaimed my word with certainty: "Pentecost." "Pentecost?" the bishop verified. "Pentecost," I confirmed. There is no way a group of strangers so different could come together with such unity and resolve without inspiration from beyond themselves.

LEARNING

As my coffee-cup strategy illustrates, people, myself included, can listen without any intent to learn from the speaker. It is easy to imagine that synod participants listened out of politeness or to redirect the conversation to something they found more pertinent or even to find ways to undermine a position they opposed. But this was not the sort of listening that took place at the synod. The listening there was authentic and facilitated learning. This listening and learning affected me personally through the role we theologians were asked to play at the synod. Proposals were to emerge from the delegates organically during the synodal process, not from heavy-handed theologians orchestrating them. Our job as theologians was to ensure



Working in small groups, the delegates refined the ideas that emerged in previous sessions in the effort to develop specific proposals to welcome and strengthen families in the diocese.

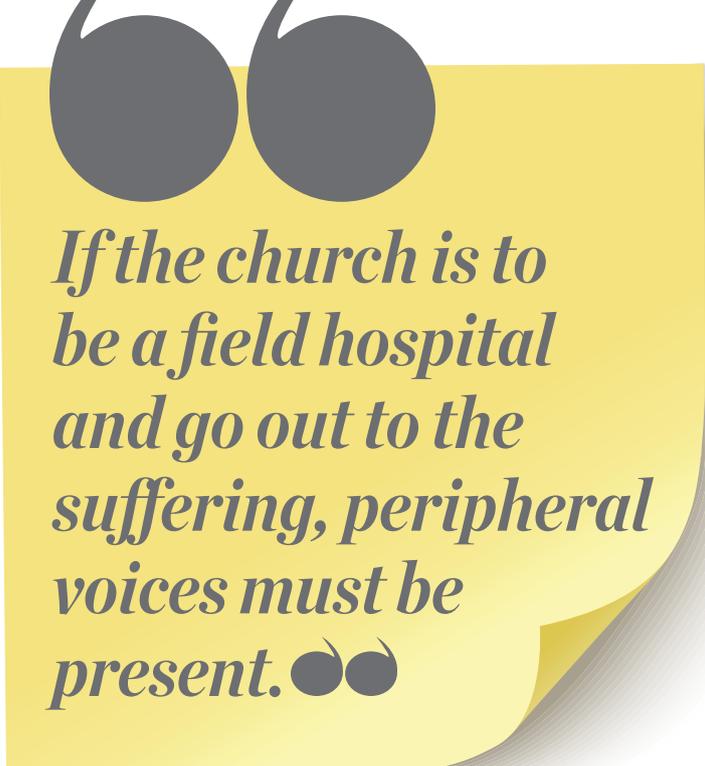
that delegates represented church teaching accurately and to help illuminate the theological significance of the delegates' experiences. It was a time for the theologians to draw upon our own humility and allow lived insights, rather than academic knowledge, to guide the discussion.

Consider the implications of this. It is common to hear that the bishops teach, govern and sanctify. Here, though, the magisterium is on the other side of the desk, learning from the laity. It takes genuine humility for members of the clergy to admit that despite their graduate degrees, the examples of their own holy parents, the closeness they feel to their nieces, nephews and godchildren, and the countless hours they spend with pre-Cana groups, children's faith formation, marriage counseling and the like, they still have much to learn from families. The synod created a space for our bishop and priests to learn from the laity in safety and courage.

If there was any doubt as to who was teaching whom at the San Diego synod, Bishop McElroy dispelled this. He told my working group that if the church is going to be effective in ministering to families, we need to involve the experts: the laypeople who live these challenges every day. Indeed, he has said so directly: "Marriage and family is where the laity has the expertise." Again, revolutionary.

Additionally, all of us at the synod learned from one another. We all had our own specific experiences in the families we were raised in and most also had experiences forming a new family through marriage. While we shared some things in common, there were still many differences between families. Sheila McKinley, a delegate, not only reported back to her parish the synod's proceedings, but also shared a bit of her own familial experiences in her parish bulletin. She wrote that her extended family has faced many challenges; her alphabetized list begins with *addiction* and ends with *suicide*. Her family reflects the struggles and brokenness of many families. We learned we needed to be attentive to the unique experiences of each family, recognizing that no family can ever be fully comprehended from the outside.

Starting from lived experience and allowing for unscripted, open dialogue, the synod had to deal with disagreements as well. Pope Francis commented on the ways dialogue can be messy in his closing remarks at the Synod of Bishops on the family in 2015: "[T]he different opinions which were freely expressed—and at times, unfortunately, not in entirely well-meaning ways—certainly led to a rich and lively dialogue." I never heard any session comments spoken thoughtlessly or with poor intentions within the



If the church is to be a field hospital and go out to the suffering, peripheral voices must be present. ●●

San Diego synod (although we were not together for four weeks as the participants in the two Roman gatherings were!), but we did have the rich and lively dialogue that can only happen amid disagreement. One delegate, a young father with extensive ministerial experience in Catholic high school and colleges, asked me a question during a break. He had an approachable demeanor, a warm and enthusiastic smile. Referring to a point I had made earlier, he asked: How do you know when it is time to push a person further along in his or her faith journey? While I probably err on the side of pushing more slowly and he preferred to move more quickly, his question was not an attempt to prove his approach superior to mine. Like others at the synod, he was asking real questions, seeking to understand how best to do the complicated work of pastoral accompaniment. Throughout these conversations, even amid diversity in belief, there was a mutual desire to serve God and the people of the diocese with mercy, honesty and compassion. That is what made dialogue among participants so fruitful.

ACCOMPANIMENT

The notion of accompaniment appeared 15 times in “Amoris Laetitia” and was a recurring theme within the San Diego synod. In his homily at the synod, Bishop McElroy said we must be a “church made not merely for the pure, but for all.” Gerardo Rojas, who helped facilitate the synod, explored the richness of *acompañamiento* at length and reminded

the general assembly, “Jesus walked compassionately with those he was trying to invite to have a deeper, more intimate relationship with Christ. We need to do that.”

The synod was not an exercise in analysis of or advocacy about church teaching. Rather, the delegates concentrated on how to serve the needs in their own communities and in the diocese at large. This focus on pastoral realities—rather than trying to resolve debates about church teaching—also reflects the link between the local synod and the results of the Roman synod as reflected in “Amoris Laetitia.” As I and many others read it, “Amoris Laetitia” does not change church teaching. This apostolic exhortation is, instead, very pastoral in its tenor. A pastoral focus on accompaniment did not, of course, instantly result in agreement, either in Rome or in San Diego. I would be misrepresenting what happened if I said our synod was easy or that the delegates were all on the same page. But consensus could be built around recognizing pastoral needs in common, even when there was significant disagreement about the issues causing those needs.

Another theologian at the synod told me that a man in one working group had been with his civilly married husband for 13 years. This same group also had people very opposed to same-sex marriage. I listened to delegates complaining to one another about what they perceived as either rigidity or laxity in their groups, some even questioning the right of others to be there. There were clear differences among the delegates when it came to church teaching. But when it came to a pastoral response, there was strong consensus, even amid the obvious ideological division. When deciding how to best minister to L.G.B.T.Q. families, the working group covering this topic recommended incorporating them into parish life as they would any other family. Whereas initially this working group proposed a separate effort to connect with “L.G.B.T. Catholics and their families,” they finally opted simply to include these families among the others who are too often overlooked, like divorced families or those dealing with military deployment. An effort to be inclusive while recognizing the unique challenges that warrant sensitive pastoral care was apparent in the proposals and the more concrete objectives.

PENTECOST REVISITED

I felt my working group experience of Pentecost echoed throughout the synod. It happened in more obvious ways, like the contemplative chanting of “Veni Sancte Spiritus”



The synod brought together diverse perspectives to identify ways to attract and support today's families. These voices included (left to right) the Rev. Devadhasan Masillamony, Grace Williams and Jed Banayat, who participated in a small group discussion.

as we processed into the chapel for the opening rite. It could have stayed simple and clean, but it did not; in small ways it got messy. When the delegates and their small groups offered preliminary feedback on the proposals to the general assembly, a few noted that it would be easier if some programs, such as sacramental preparation, were uniform across the diocese. They worried that parents parish-shopped for the least demanding program and suggested that identical expectations would solve this. I intervened on the synod floor to emphasize the importance of parish autonomy in offering unique pastoral care to specific contexts. It seemed to resonate, as uniformity in parish programming did not come up again. Yet it was not because a heavy-handed theologian threw her weight around; I know this because the second part of my intervention was ignored. I had also suggested that the group attending to divorced and remarried Catholics would do well to address the pastoral care of children whose parents are undergoing divorce. This did not appear later in the proposals. I had to trust that the Spirit would work as God intends, not as I see the needs. If this need emerges later, the Spirit will be there again.

We needed to be comfortable leaving our synod work

unfinished, as a developing reality, as planting seeds, as having loose ends. This also reflects the messiness of Pentecost, which was neither predictable in advance nor quickly brought to resolution once it had occurred. Pope Francis concluded the Synod of Bishops on the family in 2015 with the remark that we are “journeying together.” All of these synods—and perhaps synodality itself—are not about coming up with a comprehensive solution but about taking first steps and beginning the journey, not arriving at the destination. They are about trying to follow God’s will when that will is not yet perfectly clear in specific circumstances. Dr. Emily Reimer-Barry, another theologian at the synod, closed her reflection with the phrase “God blesses our messes.” Just as I can see beauty within the spilling of glitter and paint in my child’s art project, God sees goodness in the messes. God rejoiced in the efforts of the synod.

IMPORTANT TAKEAWAYS

Looking at the process, and not just the content, of the San Diego synod illuminates important lessons for both clergy and lay leaders in the church. I will highlight two here.



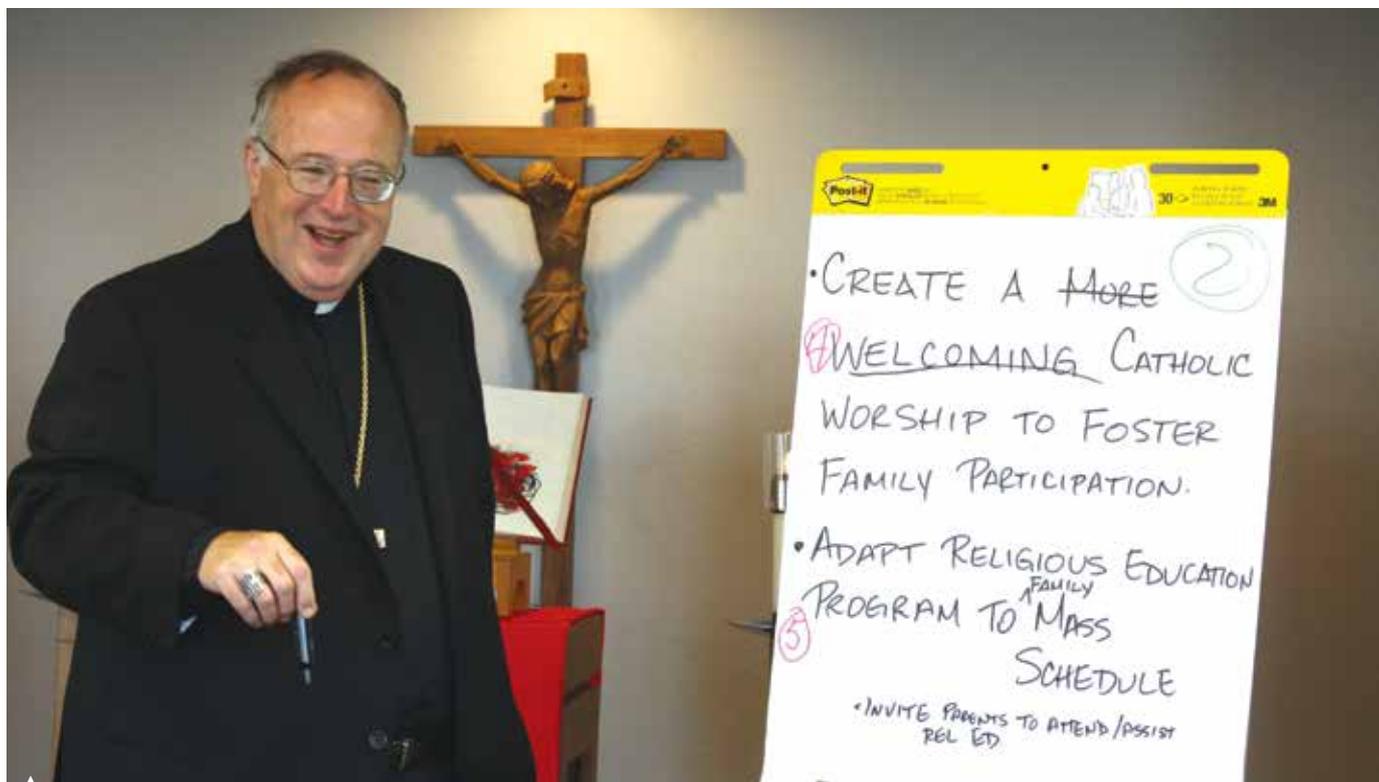
Left to right: Eilin Friedman and Veronica Brewster. Most synod participants are highly committed Catholics. They attend Mass at least weekly, consider their faith to be very important and are very unlikely to leave the Catholic Church.

First, there are important limits to this process. The synod involved some of the most impressive Catholics of the diocese. They were, by their own accounts, ordinary people, but their holiness, humility and commitment to the church and their parishes led them to overlook the fact that they were, indeed, extraordinary. They were what sociologists would call high-commitment Catholics, meaning that the vast majority of them, if not all, attend Mass at least weekly, consider their faith to be very important and are very unlikely to leave the Catholic Church. These are the figurative “choir” for whom preaching is redundant. But what about Catholics who are more marginal or who have left altogether? What about those events that can leave people feeling estranged from the church, like becoming an unmarried mother, undergoing a divorce, realizing a gay or lesbian identity or simply moving out of the house as an emerging adult? Processes like synods that draw only the most active and committed Catholics will not help us understand the experiences of the more peripheral Catholics. If the aim of a Catholic organization—from Bible study to youth group to school to diocese—is to be a field hospital and to go out to the suffering, these peripheral voices must be present. This necessitates important follow-up sessions that in-

clude their experiences, lest we run the risk of becoming less like a field hospital and more like a country club.

Second, in bringing the practices of listening, learning and accompaniment together, the synod offers a new way of being church. I have mentioned humility several times in this article. This virtue often goes hand in hand with trust. Bishop McElroy could not have done what he did without trusting the people of his diocese, believing that their experiences, grounded in deep faith, could add more than his own knowledge and experiences alone could. He needed to trust that the Holy Spirit was already guiding the delegates in their own experience and would guide them within the synod in fruitful ways. The results were astounding, and he earned the trust of the laity in return, building community across the diocese.

Even if family is not the primary focus of your ministerial commitments, it is still wise to pay attention to the synodal process. The American bishops have taken a similar approach in writing some of their pastoral letters, and these resulted in more dynamic and compelling documents. I have no doubt that the implementation committees will enjoy these same benefits. The church proclaims the good news more credibly when clergy and laity trust one another and take their discipleship seriously, follow-



Bishop Robert McElroy of San Diego told one working group that if the church is going to be effective in ministering to families, it needs to involve the experts: the laypeople who live these challenges every day.

ing Jesus in their own lives and reaching out to the least of these. San Diego has provided a splendid example of this approach on the topic of family, and the church can apply it to other contexts. Whether one works in Catholic higher education or is looking to increase vocations, listening to those to whom one ministers and learning the ways that personal struggles and social forces influence their choices will help make for better accompaniment.

Implementing this approach will not be easy; the synod was completely draining. I was not exaggerating when I told people it was like having a child! But, also like birthing a child, when the work was complete, it resulted in immense satisfaction, appreciation and wonder. All involved in the synod gathered on the ground floor of the pastoral center, joined by their much-missed families for a lovely taco fiesta while listening to a mariachi band. Children raided the salsa bar and ate too much flan. Delegates who became fast friends exchanged contact information and hugs. I was introduced to the spouses and children of the people I had come to appreciate on a much deeper level than people normally reach after only two or three days of knowing one another. Together we enjoyed a moment to rest. But just as any child needs care in order to grow, so too the work of the synod continues

beyond the “birth” accomplished in these days of meetings. Those days, graced as they were, are only the beginning of a creative journey. As the implementation of the synod moves forward, we will gain a better understanding of the fruits of listening, learning and accompaniment. I trust we will not be disappointed.

Maureen K. Day is an assistant professor of pastoral ministry at the Franciscan School of Theology in Oceanside, Calif. In keeping with her appreciation for synodality, she is editing a book on young adult Catholics in anticipation of the meeting of the Synod of Bishops in Rome in October 2018 on young people, the faith and vocational discernment.



THE QUEENS OF CHAVARA

The orphan girls left behind by India's AIDS epidemic

By Paul Wilkes

She giggles as she runs her fingers through the doll's hair, a riot of reds, yellows, blues, greens. Fourteen years old, she is reduced to a much younger day, perhaps one she had never experienced in quite this innocent way.

A ray of sunshine bursts brilliantly into a chilly morning in the northeast of India as my wife, Tracy, hands each of the girls at Chavara Home a doll, handmade by Dollies Making a Difference, a group of Los Angeles women who have evoked thousands of similar emotions from children across the globe.

In this happy moment, it is hard to believe we are standing at ground zero of the AIDS epidemic in India—and that this ecstatic teenager is H.I.V.-positive.

Let us call her Rose, for that easily could be her name in this largely Christian part of India. Her young life has been stalked by this long shadow. Her father contracted AIDS from a prostitute and infected her mother, who then gave birth to Rose. First her father and then her mother died of AIDS. As she watched them die, she gradually became aware the virus killing them was within her as well. Without a precise regime of drugs and good nutrition, the disease would take her, too.



Here at the Chavara Home in Dimapur, Nagaland, five sisters of the Congregation of the Mother of Carmel stand not only with girls orphaned by AIDS but with the men and women from the surrounding area who contribute to the sad statistics ranking Nagaland highest in AIDS infections in India and Dimapur the highest district within the state.

Although Africa more often dominates coverage and assistance for persons with AIDS, India has the third largest number of H.I.V. infections in the world after South Africa and Nigeria. According to a 2015-16 study, approximately one in 400 Indians is infected; in Nagaland that rate is one in 113. But here in Dimapur the number is staggering: One in every 27 had the virus. The local hospital admits 60 to 70 new cases every month.

Truckers and drug runners carried the disease up and down National Highway 29, the state's main artery. Dimapur is a key commercial center and crossroads, drawing people from outlying villages. Ethnic warfare, poverty and a dysfunctional health system whip up a perfect storm for spreading the disease. Largely untreated until a few years ago, AIDS moved rapidly through a population who too late would realize not only its prevalence but its deadly web of infection. Prevention was hampered by ignorance and then government inertia; treatment today whipsaws because of erratic funding and corruption.

The Fatherless and the Widow

After handing out the dolls, we are eager to see more of Chavara Home. Our next stop is the tiny office of Sister Agie. A woman who bespeaks Carmelite simplicity, she has dispensed with her last name and is equally straightforward and unemotional as she tells of her work. She is a small woman with salt-and-pepper curls stubbornly sneaking out from beneath her white coif and the steady gaze of a battle-weary yet battle-ready veteran.

Slowly, as if recalling each by name, she runs her hand over some of 5,000 brown folders jammed into shelves that are as tall as she is. Each contains the records of an AIDS patient treated in the home. "They came to us looking so pitifully," Sister Agie begins, "skinny, sick, no one to care for them. We put them on antiretroviral drugs, provided food as best we can. We were able to save so many." Her fingers stop at the end of a row of folders, "But not all."

The Carmelites, many of whom are nurses, had come to an area parish some 15 years ago to catechize and provide general medical assistance for the poor and unserved,

but the scourge of AIDS quickly refocused their work. In the tiny building where they lived—no bigger than perhaps 20-by-20 feet—they pushed their cots closer together and put up a privacy curtain to make room for a widow who had lost her husband to AIDS. Then another came, homeless, with nowhere to go. Then an AIDS widow, this time with young children.

Some of the earliest arrivals died; but as AIDS continued to ravage the community, more women came, bringing their children. They were "tribals," members of indigenous groups who have fought and killed each other in the past. But now they were united in their plight. The curtain was useless; soon even the sisters' valiant efforts to provide merciful and compassionate care in their own home became untenable.

They bought a small parcel of land with a tiny house 10 years ago and named their new mission Chavara Home. It was in honor of the legendary 19th-century Carmelite priest, St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara, canonized this past November by Pope Francis, who created numerous schools and homes for members of India's lower castes and tribes. He founded the sisters' order in 1866, making it the oldest indigenous religious congregation for women religious in the country. There are over 6,400 sisters serving in Africa, Asia, America and Europe.

With AIDS patients to care for in that building, the sisters quickly constructed a small convent and hastily threw up a temporary bamboo shelter to provide separate living quarters for the girls. They hoped to start construction immediately on a permanent home for the girls. And the arduous journey of faith began.

At first, even other Carmelites would not visit Chavara Home, fearing they would contract the virus from being with the girls. Neighbors threw garbage over the walls to discourage the sisters from staying. But then, as neighbors' relatives needed medical attention, slowly, the sisters became part of the community.

Carmelite spirituality proved their anchor in those early days. As the sisters tried as best they could to experience the divine indwelling, they also sought to see God's presence in others.

"Yes, the prostitute who came to us infected, who has spread this horrible disease, perhaps even to one of our girls, she, too, must be loved," says Sister Agie, her eyes looking through me, staring at that midpoint where reality and contemplation are joined. "And yes, she may go back to her work because she has no other way to support

herself. And we will love her each time.”

“Is it easy? No. But we will,” she pauses. “God will.”

A Chance to Thrive

Sister Agie continues our tour along a darkened hallway that opens onto three small rooms for the sickest AIDS patients. Eight are there during our visit, two women, the rest men, some intravenous drug users, others who contracted the disease through sexual contact. All are painfully thin, hollow-eyed and silent. One woman lies curled up on a bed; she will soon be sent home to die. The sisters will continue to visit her, but here it is a matter of triage. Nothing more can be done; and another patient, who can be helped, needs the bed.

Sister Agie leads us by a makeshift wooden ramp at the side of an unfinished shell of a squat one-story structure, a toilet block, which would provide bathing and sanitary facilities for the girls. “If we could finish it,” Sister Agie smiles wearily. “For now, we all share what we have.”

Just beyond is a rickety woven bamboo shelter, used as a dormitory and study area for both girls and sisters that has finally breathed its last. The sides sag, the roof leaks and “it is air conditioned year around,” says Sister Agie with that small shrug of resignation I have come to know so well among women religious in over 10 years of trips to India.

Some of the girls, bundled up in several layers of clothing, were inside reciting their lessons, breath visible in the cold morning air.

Their dormitory, for now, is a crowded second-story utility room in the convent, with not even enough room to store their few articles of clothing. They wash in cold water, when there is a sufficient supply. And yet, in the time I spent at Dimapur, the girls were always well dressed, on school days with uniforms nicely pressed, shoes shined, braids crisply woven.

The sisters care for 28 girls, ages 6 to 16. Five are H.I.V.-positive. “There many, many more children who are living in horrible conditions,” says Sister Agie. “We only wish we could take more and we will...some day,” the last words come slowly, “as soon as we can build.”

“Yes, some are H.I.V.-positive, but what is that?” asks Sister Agie. “They are precious children; they have their whole life before them.” (When Sister Agie later emailed me photos of the girls, the file was entitled “Chavara Queens.”) “We will make sure they take their medication, the cocktail of drugs. We feed them as well as we can af-

ford. Chavara Home is their sanctuary, we are their family. Some of them have been homeless, cast out; some of their homes were burnt to the ground in ethnic fighting or because people thought they would get AIDS just by touching them; they have suffered so much.”

One of the children who recently arrived at Chavara Home is a 12-year-old girl. After losing both parents to H.I.V./AIDS, the child, also infected, was placed in the care of her uncle. She was kept in a separate room from the rest of her family, fed separately and poorly, basically rejected. Soon, a simple sore on her head became a life-threatening infection.

When she arrived, the sisters began with simple hygiene—bathing her and washing her hair. Beneath her matted hair, they found more than 50 maggots on her untreated wound. After weeks of care and treatment with antibiotics and daily dressings for her wound, nourishment, attention and care, she is a happy, enthusiastic child attending school in fifth standard.

The sun is now high in the Nagaland sky as Sister Agie stands next to neat rows of flowers in beds that lay claim any inch of land not already utilized, flowers that are struggling to emerge from the hard-packed soil. In the convent, the cook is preparing a simple lunch of boiled plantain, spicy curried greens and white rice. Sister Agie bends down to free some yellowing leaves so they might have a chance to thrive. She gently pushes aside a clod of dirt.

“Please come, let us eat,” she says, pointing the way to the convent.

*Paul Wilkes has written periodically for **America**. He is the founder and executive director of Homes of Hope India, which has built eight orphanages in India.*





Brian Doyle Once Wrote, ‘Stories Are Prayers.’ He Has Left Us With Many.

By James M. Chesbro

In the first sentence of Brian Doyle’s frequently anthologized essay, “Joyas Voladoras,” Doyle asks the reader to “Consider the hummingbird for a long moment.” In a time when so much pessimism permeates the publishing industry, I propose that we consider Brian Doyle’s success and his influence on the landscape of American letters—for much longer than a moment.

Though Doyle died of brain cancer on May 27 at age 60, he left behind a shelf-full of books and dozens of essays. His prose will remain contem-

porary for many more years. What will his lasting legacy be? Will critics discuss his work a century from now? And when will his work be more fully regarded in our time? Perhaps those who have read him for so long have taken him for granted. Perhaps we have grown too accustomed to reading his books and encountering his essays, seemingly all over the place. Has his ubiquity spoiled us?

His honors include the American Academy of Arts and Letters Award in Literature, a Catholic Book Award,

three Pushcart Prizes and Foreward Reviews’ Novel of the Year award in 2011. Doyle earned the 2017 John Burroughs Medal for Distinguished Nature Writing for his novel *Martin Marten*. He wrote the short-story collections *Bin Laden’s Bald Spot* and *The Mighty Currawongs*, the novella *Cat’s Foot* and the novels *Mink River*, *The Plover* and *Chicago*.

Since 1991 Doyle was the editor of *Portland Magazine*, the well-regarded alumni publication for the University of Portland, where he received an hon-

Brian Doyle wrote shamelessly about Catholic customs, beliefs, practices and mysteries.

orary doctorate this spring. He also made the final selections and introductions to the volumes of *The Best Catholic Writing of the Year* from 2004 to 2007.

One fall morning in October of 2010, I heard Brian Doyle read from his essay “Playfulness: A Note” at Fordham University, where he said the essay genre “is the most playful and coolest form because it is the most naked.” He paced back and forth before us, looking up from his pages, saying, “The essay is the form with the most pop and verve and connective electricity.”

I am having a hard time realizing that somewhere in Portland, Ore., Doyle is not writing any more sentences that swing and sing and bounce along the page with rollicking musicality. “I get teased a lot for my style,” Doyle told Oregon Public Broadcasting in 2015. “People are saying, wow, a sentence will start on Tuesday and it doesn’t end ’til Friday. But I want to write like people talk. I want to write like I’m speaking to you,” he said.

“Joyas Voladoras” first appeared in *The American Scholar* in 2004. It was later reprinted in both the Pushcart anthology for that year and *The Best American Essays*. In all, Brian Doyle’s essays have been selected to be reprinted in *The Best American Essays* series seven times. Are there any other American Catholic writers who have been more prolific in both secular and Christian publications? If that sounds hyperbolic, consider his production in terms of papal ser-

vice. During Benedict XVI’s papacy, Doyle published five books. Since Pope Francis has been in Rome, Doyle has published 14 more.

For much longer than a moment, let us consider Doyle’s literary generosity. Other contemporary writers who are Catholic, like Annie Dillard, Alice McDermott and Tobias Wolff, have garnered more fame. Wendell Berry has published more books. The best-selling memoirist and award-winning poet Mary Karr, who writes about her conversion to Catholicism in *Lit: A Memoir*, has received more acclaim. But I cannot think of any other contemporary American Catholic writers who have published as many books about spiritual matters as Doyle while also being a frequent contributor to some of the country’s most esteemed secular literary journals and magazines, including *Creative Nonfiction*, *Orion*, *The American Scholar* and *The Sun*. And he regularly appeared in Christian magazines, as well, like this one, **America**, writing about his faith without apology.

After Oregon State University Press published a new edition of Doyle’s *Wet Engine: Exploring the Mad Wild Miracle of the Heart* in 2012, the *Iowa Review* called him “a *writer’s writer*, unknown to the best-seller or even the good-seller lists, a Townes Van Zandt of essayists, known by those *in the know*,” proclaiming a “new Brian Doyle essay is a mini-event, the first name you turn to in the table of contents, the first click on a literary web site.”

Maybe Doyle hasn’t been placed at the same table as Wolff, Karr and McDermott because many of his earlier works were released by independent presses. Maybe some looked down on Doyle’s fascination with Catholicism. Whatever the case may be, Macmillan published his last four novels, including his most recent, *The Adventures of John Carson in Several Quarters of the World*, an homage to the work of Robert Louis Stevenson. The *New York Times* reviewed it in April of this year. The reviewer’s analysis echoed a sentiment that some readers share about Doyle’s work in general, namely, that it can be “a matter of individual taste,” that either you admire his prose or find it “flirts with excess in ways that can seem annoying or self-indulgent.” The reviewer was ultimately “won over despite myself by his loving reconstruction of an era of storytelling now lost.”

We can consider Doyle an American Catholic writer because he practiced the religion and published about it, but, more important, he wrote shamelessly about Catholic customs, beliefs, practices and mysteries, partially because it’s “illogical, unreasonable, unthinkable, unprovable, nonsensical, counter-cultural, and in direct defiance of all evidence and human history. Isn’t that great?” he wrote in the prologue for his essay collection *Grace Notes*.

“To grow up Catholic is to be especially lucky as an artist,” he told Nick Ripatrzone in an interview, “because you are soaked in miracle and mystery and symbol and smoke



Doyle wrote about humanity with punch and courage.

and the confident assertion that every moment is pregnant with miracle and possibility and stuffed with holiness like a turducken.”

Let us consider for much longer than a moment that part of Doyle’s generosity consists of his courageous willingness to search for enduring truths in the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, in the Sandy Hook elementary school murders and in cancer. “Stories are prayers of terrific power,” he wrote in response to a fan letter from an 11-year-old in Korea. If you have never read his essay “Leap,” go find it online and marvel. Listen to how this prayer begins: “A couple leaped from the south tower, hand in hand. They reached for each other and their hands met and they jumped.” He continued:

Their hands reaching and joining are the most powerful prayer I can imagine, the most eloquent, the most graceful. It

is everything that we are capable of against horror and loss and death. It is what makes me believe that we are not craven fools and charlatans to believe in God, to believe that human beings have greatness and holiness within them like seeds that open only under great fires, to believe that some unimaginable essence of who we are persists past the dissolution of what we were, to believe against such evil hourly evidence that love is why we are here.

If you haven’t already done so, go read “His Last Game,” about watching pick-up basketball with his terminally-ill brother in the car, and think about how Doyle crafted the essay without a whiff of sentimentality. Or read “Dawn and Mary,” about the two women at Sandy Hook who “leapt out

of their chairs and they ran right at the boy with the rifle” to defend children.

In his essay “On ‘Not’ Beating Cancer” he declares, “Cancer is to be endured, that’s all.” He implores readers: “Use real words. Real words matter. False words are lies. Lies sooner or later are crimes against the body or the soul. I know men, women and children who have cancer, had cancer, died from cancer, lived after their cancer retreated, and not one of them ever used military or sporting metaphors that I remember.”

My admiration for Doyle’s work is not puffed-up, feigned applause for the posthumous author who died too young. I admire how he wrote about his faith with humility and humor. I admire his devotion to his writing vocation—not writing that is devotional, but essays and stories where the insights, scenes, climaxes and larger, more universal significance are not dependent on a readers’ religious beliefs. You do not generate quality work like Doyle’s without minding your craft, without applying continual energy to the habitual act of writing.

Some may find Doyle’s run-on sentences to be an irritation, but that’s also part of his genius. When we don’t land on the deep breath of a period and instead skip by on another comma, we are looking at a subject with Doyle’s sustained gaze, and eventually he takes us to a fresh metaphor, or an unexpected insight. The memorable last sentence of “Joyas Voladoras” comes to mind:

You can brick up your heart as stout and tight and hard and cold and impregnable as

you possibly can and down it comes in an instant, felled by a woman's second glance, a child's apple breath, the shatter of glass in the road, the words *I have something to tell you*, a cat with a broken spine dragging itself into the forest to die, the brush of your mother's papery ancient hand in the thicket of your

hair, the memory of your father's voice early in the morning echoing from the kitchen where he is making pancakes for his children.

Doyle found ways to write about humanity with punch and vibrant courage and sentences that sometimes lasted for days, but his artistry granted us, his readers, access to the

human condition we would not have had without his narrative prayers. He left them for us to read.

James M. Chesbro's essays have appeared in *The Writer's Chronicle*, *The Washington Post* and *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality*. He teaches at Fairfield College Preparatory School in Connecticut.

Praise

By Renny Golden

The boy named Wolf bursts from the kiva into a blaze of sun; men's ankle shells rattle. The boys' kirtles are white as gardenias, their hair tangled with eagle feathers. At each boy's throat, a shell of Bull's Eye Malachite.

Oh they are young and beautiful.

On cue Cochiti boys raise arms tied with pine branches, chanting, keeping time to drums' pounding beat.

Wolf does not know what the words mean. He knows the ancestors are close, he knows holy, knows the dance ends when sun turns the plaza magenta.

The translation of words is in their bodies as they move in the language of rivers.

I once knew the exuberance of youth who keep ritual,

whose bodies speak what words cannot. I was nineteen; we sang psalms in Latin. Three hundred of us beneath stained glass windows that floated rainbow colors on the white scapulars of our Dominican habits. Matins, Lauds, Vespers, we never knew we were singing the songs of prophets, of lovers, of a God who accompanied the wretched.

We knew only to sing in perfect A flat. We knew Gregorian chant inflections. We kissed the floor if we disturbed the chant. We ate our dinner on the floor if we dropped kneelers. We kept the great silence, kept custody of the eyes. Confessed our faults on our knees.

We never knew why.

We understood ourselves as belonging to promises that asked everything of us. Century after century of praise.

Renny Golden's book *Blood Desert: Witnesses 1820-1880* was named a *Southwest Notable Book of the Year 2012*. She is a former Dominican sister.

This poem was a runner-up in *America's 2017 Foley Poetry contest*.

Is the territorial parish the only basis for Christian communities today?

CNS photo/Karen Callaway, Catholic New World

The uncertain future of parish life By T. Howland Sanks

One of the most striking things in **America's** article about St. Michael's Parish in Axtel, Kan. (3/6), is how atypical the parish is in today's Catholic Church. Having a stable population in a small town, with a pastor who has been there for some time and knows everybody by name, is not representative of most parishes. But recent books about parish life and leadership give us a more comprehensive picture.

Great Catholic Parishes, by William E. Simon Jr. (Ave Maria Press, 224p, \$17.95), based on interviews with 244 pastors of parishes designated as healthy and vibrant, identifies four essential qualities that these communities have in common: sharing leadership; fostering spiritual maturity and planning for discipleship; "excelling" on Sundays; and evangelizing in intentional, structured ways.

William J. Byron, S. J., reinforces the notion that parish leadership must be shared in his recent book, **Parish**

Leadership: Principles and Practices (Clear Faith Publishing, 178p, \$17), but he adds that the leadership must integrate Catholic social teaching in the life of the parish for it to be effective. For Father Byron, parish leadership, especially the pastor's, must be "servant leadership" rather than the top of a pyramid, as the latter is abnormal and corrupting.

A much more comprehensive study of Catholic parishes is **Catholic Parishes of the 21st Century** (Oxford University Press, 164p, \$24.93), by the staff of the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), in which the authors use the 1989 Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life as a baseline for comparison. Trends that had begun at that time have continued and intensified, but the operative word in both studies is *change*. Following are the most significant changes in the last 30 years:

1. *The U. S. Catholic population*

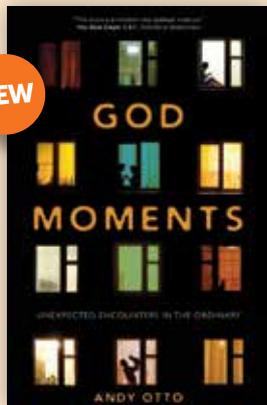
has moved from the Northeast and upper Midwest to the South and Southwest, leaving empty, old and decaying physical plants in urban centers in the Northeast (e.g., Buffalo closed 97 parishes between 2000 and 2010) and large populations in the South without churches (Atlanta added 10 new parishes during the same period). People move, but parishes do not.

2. *In 1990, there were just over 34,000 diocesan priests in the United States; in 2014 there were 16,462 active diocesan priests. In 2014, 3,448 parishes were without a resident priest. Parish leadership has been supplemented by permanent deacons and an amazing increase in lay ecclesial ministers.*

3. *There have been significant decreases in Mass attendance and participation in the sacraments. In 1965, 55 percent of Catholics attended Mass weekly; that was down to 41 percent in 1985 and 24 percent in 2010. Younger Catholics and millennials*

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OCTOBER 29

30th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Ex 22:20–26

"You shall not molest or oppress an alien ..."

AUGUST 20

20th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Mt 15:21–28

The Canaanite Woman

NOVEMBER 26

Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe
Mt. 25:31–46

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are especially unlikely to attend.

4. *There has been a major increase* in cultural/ethnic diversity in the U.S. church. In the 1980s, foreign-born Catholics made up a little more than 10 percent of the U.S. Catholic population; in 2014 this category had increased to 25 percent, or 16.8 million people. Much of this immigration is from Latin America, but there are also foreign-born Catholics from dozens of countries across Asia and Africa. About a third of all Catholic parishes serve a particular racial, ethnic, cultural and/or linguistic community, and some serve two or more of these communities.

As a result of all these changes, there is a widespread reconfiguration (closing, merging, clustering) of parishes underway in the United States, with a concomitant change in the expectations of leadership. Sometimes this entails a single priest pastoring several parishes; other times it means a team of priests who share responsibility for several parishes; and in still other cases, parishes are entrusted to deacons or laypersons or to parish life coordinators. Parishes are becoming larger and more complex—a far cry from that rural parish in Axtel, Kan.

These changes in parish life in the last 30 years pose significant challenges to parish leadership for the foreseeable future. Are we in fact preparing men for these changing forms of leadership? Another recent study of seminary formation at the theologate level by Katarina Schuth, O.S.F., **Seminary Formation: Recent History, Current Circumstances, New Directions** (Liturgical Press, 212p, \$24.95), gives a picture of what we can expect. Analyzing a wealth of data leads to some disturbing conclusions.

Sister Schuth writes, “The ca-

pability of the church in the United States to meet the spiritual needs of the growing and changing Catholic population depends on the qualities and numbers of men and women preparing for ministry.” For the past 20 years there have been barely 500 ordinations a year; meanwhile the Catholic population has grown from 47 million to 71 million since 1967. This mismatch is one of the factors in the reconfiguration of parishes and will only increase as older members of the clergy die or retire.

There is a generational divide between the older priests who exemplify the “servant leader” model and younger ones representing the “cultic model,” who see themselves as set apart from their lay colleagues.

In one of the book’s commentaries, Ronald Rolheiser, O.M.I., a longtime seminary rector, mentions that today’s seminarians are not being prepared to be spiritual guides, to give one-on-one spiritual direction or to guide people in prayer and discernment. (Recall that spiritual growth is the second essential characteristic identified in *Great Catholic Parishes*, as mentioned above.). He is also concerned that today’s seminarians do not have enough contact with the poor and are less interested in ecumenism and interfaith dialogue, being inclined to minister only to their own kind.

Taken together, these books raise some basic questions: Is the people-of-God ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council being eclipsed by an older, more hierarchical ecclesiology among seminarians and younger priests? What model of church is operative for them?

And with only 18 million out of 78 million self-identified Catholics attending weekly Mass, is the territo-

rial parish the only or even the most suitable basis for Christian communities today?

Some years ago, Karl Rahner, S.J., pointed out that “the parochial principle has never governed alone in the history of the Church’s pastoral ministry,” and he goes on to mention wandering apostles, the monasteries, the missionary migration of monks, the mendicant orders, the sodalities and confraternities and other forms of “extraparochial” ministry. In today’s highly mobile and urbanized societies, which increasingly include those in Asia and Africa, geographical proximity is not the basis of communal life. In contrast to the small town in Kansas mentioned above, people living in urban high-rises or in sprawling suburbs do not even know their neighbors. City parishes are so large that there is no sense of “neighborly togetherness.” The territorial parish today is not what it was in the past.

Some dioceses have been trying to imagine some combination of worship communities, resource communities and small communities for education and evangelization. The goal should be the pastoral care of all of the people, not the maintenance of earlier forms of ecclesial organization. Should we continue to build new large physical plants that will be empty 30 or 40 years from now? We need a new, creative, more imaginative approach to serving the pastoral needs of the people of God than the parochial principle inherited from the village and agrarian societies of the past. Axtel, Kan., is not a model for tomorrow!

T. Howland Sanks, S.J., is professor emeritus of theology at the Jesuit School of Theology at Santa Clara University in California.

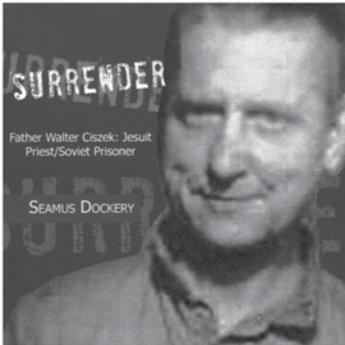
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FINDING GOD AT THE INTERSECTION OF FAITH & CULTURE

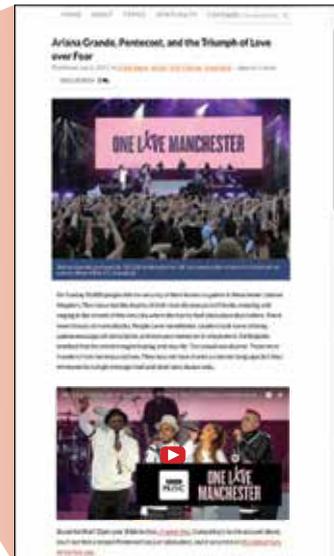
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Those familiar strangers

Richard Ford's new memoir of his parents, his first book-length work of nonfiction, provides both a window and a door. Yes, *Between Them* is a moving glimpse into the everyday lives and love of his parents, but it also becomes an invitation—even a pointed nudge—to the reader to reassess her place as a child and the role of those familiar strangers she knows as mother and father. Seldom does a slim book generate this force to shake life's foundations.

Ford, winner of a Pulitzer Prize and a PEN/Faulkner Award *Independence Day*, has been recognized for decades as a defining voice of America's literature. In *Between Them*, he attests

that we are all worthy of loving tribute but proves that every little life requires a masterful writer to present it.

On the surface, Ford's parents, Parker and Edna, appear unremarkable. Parker traveled across the South, with Edna at his side, as a starch salesman for 15 years. A long-awaited pregnancy ended their companionable, peripatetic years. In Ford's hands, their lives feel essential and their quiet lessons necessary.

Between Them fulfills the promise of Ford's 1987 Harper's essay, published after his mother's death. Now he has reunited his parents with a companion piece about his father, who died days after Ford's 16th birthday.

This is the kind of memoir only a novelist with a keen understanding of

the limitations and dangers of fictionalizing the truth could create—one who has thought deeply about form and the power of setting down memories, how retelling changes the story.

Between Them attests to what Ford claims all readers find in the right books: "testimony that there is an alternate way to think about life, different from the ways we're naturally equipped." We watch a writer construct his parents, with the knowledge that they will remain out of reach but that the striving brings them closer by honoring the sweet pain of the search.

Jennifer Levasseur is a writer from Louisiana who now lives in Australia.

The practice of penance

Have you ever wondered why confession is in decline today? Were mid-century Catholics more sinful? Hardly. Does confessing one's sins to a man (both in the sense of "human" and "male"), a total stranger no less, no longer make sense? Possibly. Are there other ways to obtain God's forgiveness that are less individualistic and legalistic and more communal and transformative, including working for peace and justice? Certainly.

Sin in the Sixties: Catholics and Confession 1955-1975 attempts an answer by looking at the way American Catholics understood sin and practiced penance in those two decades. Maria C. Morrow argues that the concept of sin as a personal and actual evil act—nameable, classifiable as venial and mortal, and confessable—was prevalent in the past and has now van-

ished. Taking its place is the nebulous and subjective notion of sin as the negative or harmful quality of a fundamental option, an interpersonal relationship and a spiritual orientation. In Morrow's account, several factors contributed to this portentous shift: the dissolution of Catholic subculture, the rise of counseling and psychology, the widespread acceptance of artificial contraception, the prioritizing of freedom and responsibility over obedience, and the popularity of moral theologians like the Redemptorist priest Bernard Häring.

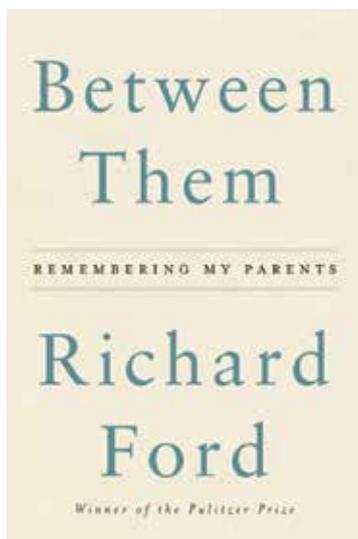
Morrow contends that losing this older concept of sin caused the fading away of both nonsacramental and sacramental penitential practices. These had mutually supported each other. Catholics in the past had a clear notion of sin as a personal and actual evil deed, and they assiduously practiced

nonsacramental penance to atone for it, including abstinence from meat on Fridays, the Lenten fast, the "Little Lent" of Advent, fasts on the vigils of major feasts, the Ember Days and the patient endurance of daily pains and sufferings. In turn, this faithful practice of nonsacramental penance led to the frequent practice of sacramental penance (called "confession") in the form of devotional and special-occasion confessions. As one was undermined, so was the other. Is this reciprocal causal connection historically true? The jury is still out.

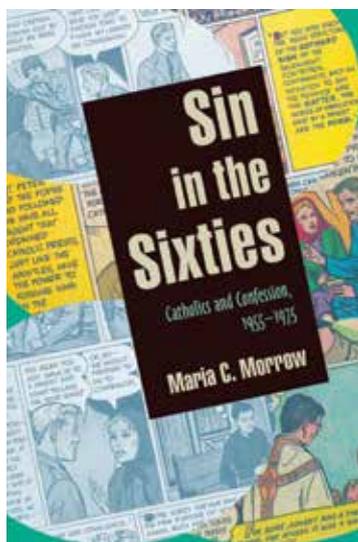
Peter Phan is a theology professor at Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.



Full-length book reviews at americamagazine.org/books



Between Them
Remembering My Parents
By Richard Ford
Ecco. 192p \$25.99



Sin in the Sixties
Catholics and Confession
1955-1975
Maria C. Morrow
The Catholic University of America
Press. 264p \$65

‘A great and mysterious force’

Early in his tenure on the U.S. Supreme Court, Justice William Brennan, a Catholic, invoked the First Amendment to limit what could legally be prohibited as obscene. He began his opinion with this significant observation: “Sex, a great and mysterious force in human life, has indisputably been a subject of absorbing interest to mankind through the ages.”

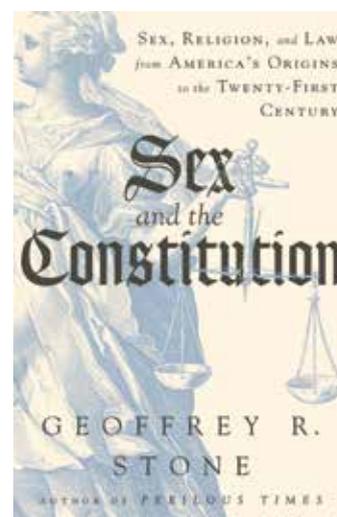
Drawing on that insight, Geoffrey R. Stone, a professor and former dean at the University of Chicago Law School, has produced an exhaustive study on the history of human attitudes about sex and how they have shaped American law. Stone’s long tale recounts much about the Catholic Church’s restrictive attitudes on sexuality from St. Augustine onward. In recent times, for instance it took a decision by the Supreme Court in 1965, in *Griswold v. Connecticut*, to allow the sale of artificial birth control, because the church used its political power to oppose the repeal of laws criminalizing that activity. *Griswold*, in turn, with its emphasis on individual liberty and privacy, laid the groundwork for *Roe v. Wade*, where the court struck down laws prohibiting abortion.

Since *Roe* another Catholic justice, Anthony Kennedy, has been the key figure in subsequent abortion cases that have come before the court. Even though he voted to prohibit that procedure when done late in a pregnancy, he has nonetheless consistently been in the court’s majority striking down laws that make early-term abortions prohibitively

difficult to obtain. Stone’s take is that Kennedy’s nuanced position there reveals his genuine ambivalence about this issue—an attitude that many, particularly Catholics, probably share.

On another major matter of sexuality and the law, Stone describes how Kennedy has been the forthright champion of homosexual rights. That culminated in 2015 when the court invalidated laws that prohibit gays and lesbians from marrying. Kennedy there cited his paramount concern that law should support human equality and dignity. He was certainly right that those values, along with love and compassion, should always override narrow and repressive restrictions on human conduct.

Daniel J. Morrissey is a professor and former dean at Gonzaga University School of Law, Spokane, Wash.



Sex and the Constitution
Sex, Religion, and Law from America’s
Origins to the Twenty-First Century
By Geoffrey R. Stone
Liveright. 487p \$23



“Oslo” shows the intense fragility and contingency of human affairs.

In ‘Oslo’ peace is a process, not a destination

The path to peace, like the course of true love, never does run smooth, not least because the destination is far from assured. How many wars have flared on the flint of failed treaties? This bittersweet uncertainty about the outcome may account for the unique suspense and pathos of “Oslo,” the new play at Lincoln Center Theater that took home the award for best play at the Tony Awards against some fierce competition in one of the better seasons in memory for new American plays on Broadway.

Suspense may sound like an unlikely quality for a play about a seemingly foregone conclusion. As we watch the backstage machinations of the secret talks between Israelis and Palestinians that gave rise to the Oslo Accords of 1993, we know in advance the story’s two endings: both the historic handshake at the White House between Yitzhak Rabin and Yasir Arafat, and the collapse into violence that would follow—not to mention the me-

tastasizing conflicts all across the Arab and Muslim world that have since challenged and in many cases overwhelmed all diplomatic alternatives. But like all the best historical narratives, “Oslo” show the intense fragility and contingency of human affairs, even in matters large and consequential. Players with clear ideological intentions and well laid plans can seldom bend outcomes to their will—indeed, it is all too often the improvisers and situationists who end up at the steering wheel of world events, and it is hard to say their record is worse than the ideologues’.

Principled planners who can improvise may be the best bet in this realm, and that handily describes the two charmingly anxious Norwegian married academics, Terje Rød-Larsen (Jefferson Mays) and Mona Juul (Jennifer Ehle), who are the improbable heroes of J. T. Rogers’s play. In 1992, after witnessing firsthand the agonies of the intifada in occupied Gaza, Larsen and Juul made a small gamble with huge

implications. While official public talks between Israelis and Palestinians were grinding fruitlessly on, the Norwegians made a breakthrough by gingerly introducing proxy negotiators for intimate, circumscribed talks under the radar, which blossomed in remarkably short order into full-fledged peace negotiations with authorized parties.

How did they do it? As Rogers’s play has it, with a combination of principle, savvy and some quick tap dancing. Larsen’s core idea may sound hopelessly idealistic: He believes that if the two sides can get to know each other as human beings, just talking in a room, they may start to see what they have in common. But it is the granular realization of that shared humanity—the food and alcohol and cigars that are strategically proffered, the off-topic jokes and confidences that spring up in the remote location, the deft finessing of foibles and misunderstandings—that gives the play its shape and surprise.

With the help of Bart Sher, the



Photo: T Charles Erickson

director, and a brilliant ensemble cast, “Oslo” manages to be true to the desperate, in-the-moment urgency of the unfolding events and alert to their human comedy. Indeed, with its twists and feints, broad strokes and fine details, Rogers’s play has both the momentum of farce and the sobering circumspection of high-stakes drama. That is almost as remarkable an achievement of boldness and tact as the accords themselves.

Lasting peace in the Middle East seems to have grown ever more remote since then. If the practical idealism of “Oslo” suggests anything to our bleak present, it may be that peace is a process, not a destination. And try as we might to imagine otherwise, we are stuck with each other, in all our cracked, pined humanity. So why not break bread and talk it out?

Rob Weinert-Kendt, editor in chief of *American Theatre* magazine.

My father the priest

Patricia Lockwood’s father, Gregory J. Lockwood, was ordained in 1988 as a married convert to Catholicism. (He had been a Lutheran pastor.) In her new memoir, *Priestdaddy*, Ms. Lockwood writes about her father with humor—“All fathers believe they are God, and I took it for granted that my father especially believed it”—and an indelible sense of grace. Nick Ripatrazone interviewed Ms. Lockwood by email. The full interview is at americamagazine.org.

Q. *Priestdaddy* is hilarious, but there are also many solemn moments of graceful paradox—as when you hear church bells and think, “Go and tell John what you hear and see...” and then say: “The words rang with meaning, because I had been raised that way. That is the vestigial organ of religion—the voice that speaks, the hand that reaches out to hold.” Does that voice ever speak to you now?

Patricia Lockwood’s new memoir is *Priestdaddy*.



Photo: Giep Hoax

A. The hand is still very much there—it’s what tells me to genuflect and cross myself in a church, to sit down and stand up with the rest of the people.

The voice comes to me mostly now as a set of rhythms—the patterns and stresses of the Bible and the liturgy. The words are not necessarily present, but the beats are there intact. I feel them when I write.

Q. *Growing up you became close with a seminarian who was staying in your parents’ home. In one scene before his ordination, you think that your relationship will soon change: “Particular friendships with women will be discouraged. I understand why, but in a wider sense, it is frightening. If you are not friends with women, they are theoretical to you.” Looking back, do you miss that connection? How do you view women and the church?*

A. Because of my father’s unique position, we saw a lot more hierarchical, behind-the-scenes sexism than the average Catholic probably did.... It was so, so strange, especially in the light of what these men claimed to love. To put it bluntly, venerate Mary all you want, but if you can’t show even a fraction of that respect to the women you encounter on a day-to-day basis, how much is it worth? If you only love Mary because she was pure, because she was untouched, because she was without sin, you do not love her at all.

Nick Ripatrazone’s newest book is *Ember Days*, a collection of stories.

How Can You Not See It?

Readings: Is 55:10-11, Ps 65, Rom 8:18-23, Mt 13:1-23

People often encounter the same experience in different ways. Discussions on social media illustrated this starkly in the spring of 2015, when millions argued over “The Dress.” Many saw a two-tone dress of indigo and black material. Almost as many saw instead a dress that was white and gold. Because the photo was poor, the viewer’s brain had to supply important information about light and shadow. Those who assumed the photo was taken in bright light saw a dress of indigo and black. Those who assumed low light saw a dress of white and gold. So deeply do we rely on our brain’s ability to supply information in this way that those who saw the dress one way found it very difficult to perceive it in the other.

Such disparities of perception are a human reality, although most are not as vivid as “The Dress.” Matthew plays on this reality in today’s Gospel. Although he calls this the parable of the sower, in Matthew’s hands it is not a story about a sower at all. It is not even primarily a story about soil and seed, as it is in Mark and Luke. Instead, Matthew uses this parable to introduce a reflection on faith.

Matthew’s community struggled to understand why so few believed in Jesus. How was it possible, they wondered, that friends and loved ones heard the same message but did not grasp its implications? In today’s Gospel, Matthew suggests that some people were simply ready to believe and therefore found in Jesus’ words the mysteries of the kingdom.

On its own, the parable of the sower is not one of Jesus’ clearest parables. The explanatory paragraph that follows shows that many early Christians found it difficult to understand. Parables like those of the prodigal son or the lost sheep required no added interpretation, but with the sower, Matthew, Mark and Luke each add an explanation from Jesus’ private teaching.

Matthew gives a fuller account of that private explanation than do Mark or Luke, a fact that highlights the importance he places on the parable. He positions the parable in a part of his Gospel that relates increasing hostility

‘Whoever has ears ought to hear!’ (Mt 13:9)



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Which of Christ’s teachings baffle you? How can you open yourself to their deeper truth?

How can you share this truth with others?

to Jesus. In addition, Matthew is writing for an audience of Jews whose belief that Jesus was the Messiah has alienated them from family and community. This parable, and the expanded interpretation of it, help Matthew explain how people encountering the same Jesus came away with such different perceptions.

“Knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven has been granted to you, but to them it has not been granted.” Matthew suggests that Jesus preached a difficult parable to seek out any who were able to hear him. Whether their readiness came from spiritual desperation or simple open-mindedness, they recognized a deeper truth that others missed.

Without this readiness, one could listen all day to Jesus but make no sense of his message. By contrast, for those who were open to the deeper truth of Jesus’ words, the mysteries of the kingdom were revealed. The barest movement of faith produced an effect that was entirely transformative. Just so, we need to be ready to hear God’s truth even in the words that challenge us the most.

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

POSITIONS

FORTUNATE FAMILIES, an organization of Catholic Parents of L.G.B.T. sons and daughters, is looking for a part-time Executive Director to oversee all operations of the organization. The Executive Director will work from a home office, with a minimum amount of travel involved.

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and Missionaries of the Precious Blood are seeking a coordinator of peace, justice and ecology ministry to promote the mission of both the Sisters of the Precious Blood and the Cincinnati Province of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood through education, advocacy and action on issues of justice responding to the needs of our times.

The coordinator will be a passionate advocate for systemic change, who will work and collaborate closely with the Precious Blood communities. He/she will represent the sisters and the missionaries by networking and participating with local, state and national organizations relevant to social justice in keeping with the priorities of the Congregation and the Province. He/she will serve as a resource person to educate and provide opportunities that will lead the sisters and missionaries to a deeper

understanding of the root causes of injustice that undermine peace and environmental sustainability.

Applicant must have a bachelor's degree in theology, social work or a related field, or a minimum of three years' experience in social justice advocacy or direct service to the poor, marginalized and excluded. He/she must have experience in organizing and educating around justice issues, and strong interpersonal and networking skills. Must have experience working within the Catholic Church and a willingness to learn, respect and work within the charism and mission of the two communities.

Position is full time (37-40 hours per week, including some evenings or weekends), salaried with benefits. The applicant works independently of daily supervision and is responsible to the President of the Sisters of the Precious Blood and the Provincial Director of the Cincinnati Province of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood.

Send résumé and contact information for references to Sr. Nancy McMullen, nmcmullen@cppsadmin.org,

4000 Denlinger Rd., Dayton, Ohio 45426. Deadline to apply: July 15, 2017.

ST. XAVIER HIGH SCHOOL, Cincinnati, Ohio, President. Start Date: July 1, 2018. Founded in 1831, St. Xavier High School's mission is to assist young men in their formation as leaders and "men for others" through rigorous college preparation in the Jesuit tradition. The President is the chief executive officer of St. Xavier High School, with primary responsibility for the school's mission, presence and resources. Specifically, the President has general charge and control of the school's property, academic, business and spiritual affairs, as well as significant fundraising responsibilities. The President reports to and serves at the pleasure of the Board of Trustees. Accepting applications from Jesuit or lay candidates through Aug. 31, 2017: www.stxavier.org/page.cfm?p=3239, or contact: Greg Achten, Search Committee Chair at ggachten2016@twc.com; day number (513) 792-2185.

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Let Them Grow Together

Readings: Wis 12:13-19, Ps 86, Rom 8:26-27, Mt 13:24-43

St. Justin Martyr, one of the earliest Christian writers after the apostles, knew a tradition that Jesus' work as a carpenter included crafting yokes, plows and other farm implements. Whether or not that was true, it is clear that Jesus uses many agricultural images. They far outnumber the nautical images that spoke to Galilee's sailors and fishermen. Something about the work of farmers strikes Jesus as particularly apt, and Matthew finds it especially helpful as he wrestles with the mystery of those who harass Christ's disciples.

To believe in the potential of a featureless, tiny seed requires great faith. Farmers trust nature to provide pollinators and wind, earthworms and nitrogen-fixing bacteria, the right mix of soil, rain and sun. Farmers understand the value of time. They know how patience and steady work can overcome setbacks and result in abundance. Jesus finds the spiritual realities of the kingdom reflected in such wisdom.

In last week's Gospel reading, Matthew tried to explain why so many rejected Jesus. This week, Matthew tries to sort out how to live with them. Jesus' answer is to do nothing. "If you pull up the weeds you might uproot the wheat along with them. Let them grow together until harvest...." Let nature and the harvesters do their jobs. The human tenants of God's homestead do not have the wisdom

'If you pull up the weeds you might uproot the wheat along with them.' (Mt 13:29)

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

What "seed of the kingdom" has taken root in you?

How is God's grace bringing it to abundance?

or skill to sort out the wheat from the weeds. Only divine wisdom can set things right.

In a world of religious violence, one might hesitate to embrace a parable that makes such stark divisions among people. If our Gospel last week taught us anything, however, it is that we need to listen with faith, especially when the word is confusing or difficult. Two implications of today's parable can be helpful to modern believers.

First, it is important to note that neither Jesus nor Matthew identifies the weeds with any specific persons or community. The making of distinctions among individuals is a mystery. The passage confronts human inclinations to draw and police boundaries and construct myths of belonging. Let them grow together, Jesus counsels. The disciples will be obvious.

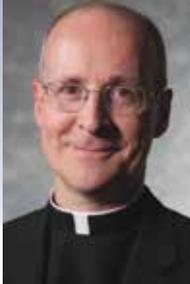
Second, Matthew inserts two short parables into the middle of his larger reflection. Both of these are parables of abundance, and they illustrate the parable of the wheat and the weeds. Jesus is comfortable letting his wheat grow because the weeds can do it no harm. God's kingdom is as inexorable as yeast or a fast-growing shrub. It grows more powerful every day. The weeds, lacking the will of God drawing them forth, simply fail to keep up.

Modern disciples who seek wisdom in this Gospel can fail in two ways. They can give in to the sectarian tendencies of the human heart and identify their own weeds to despise, ignoring Jesus' forbearance. Or they can also settle into a kind of anodyne spirituality that ignores the very real risks to Christians in the world today, minimizing the cost of perseverance in faith. Many of our sisters and brothers live in danger because of their beliefs. Yet Jesus knew the same danger, and still taught us to "grow together." Discipleship entails risk, but for those who trust in divine grace, the harvest will be abundant.

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

New Scripture Study

from
Father James Martin



Thousands of churches will celebrate Bread for the World Sunday on October 15 or another Sunday this fall — as people of faith work together to end hunger.

Rev. James Martin, SJ, editor-at-large of *America* magazine and author of the best selling *Jesus: A Pilgrimage*, has written a study on Matthew 22:1-14, the parable of the wedding banquet and the Gospel for October 15.

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Love on the Margins

What Catholic interfaith couples share with the divorced and remarried

By Astrid Lobo Gajiwala



I recently attended a service held for an old neighbor who passed away and was shocked to learn that she was Catholic. Laid out in the boarding school of her youth, it was a poignant goodbye with the religious sisters and her Muslim husband and children around her in prayer. I do not know if her birth family was present. I did not see a priest, so I am guessing she did not receive a Christian burial. What I do know is that my heart burned within me as I recalled my insensitivity to her frequent lighthearted comment that she was “half-Catholic” because of her Catholic schooling. I never followed up on this hint she offered.

I can empathize with her reticence to share her truth. Married to a Hindu, I often found myself in a similar predicament with regard to my children, who went regularly to Mass and Sunday school but were not baptized. Our secrets may have been different, but our fear of public censure was the same.

There are many stories like my neighbor’s—of women in interfaith marriages who married outside the Catholic Church because their spouse did not agree to the baptism of their offspring or did not want a church wedding or wanted a wedding according to their own religious rite. Their marriages put these Catholics on the margins of the church. Even though they are baptized and in legal, stable marriag-

es, they cannot receive the sacraments. The result is a relationship with the church that is frequently marked by humiliation and pain, exclusion and longing, fear and stealth.

Some Catholics in interfaith marriages stay away from the church either because they are unwilling to face the embarrassment of rejection or because they are afraid that the demands of the church may jeopardize their “irregular” marriage. But their desire to derive spiritual sustenance from the only God they know persists. And so some enter empty churches clandestinely, while others receive the sacraments in parishes where their marital status is unknown.

The two recent synods of bishops on the family, which brought to the fore the concerns of the divorced and remarried made me realize how much these couples had in common with Catholics in interfaith marriages. Both stand on the margins of their faith communities with their legal but nonsacramental marriages and their unbaptized children. Both are ostracized from the ecclesial community. Both suffer from and pose a challenge to the church’s understanding of the sacraments. Similar questions can be asked of both: How is God’s mercy proclaimed to you? How does the church put into practice her support for you in your journey of faith?

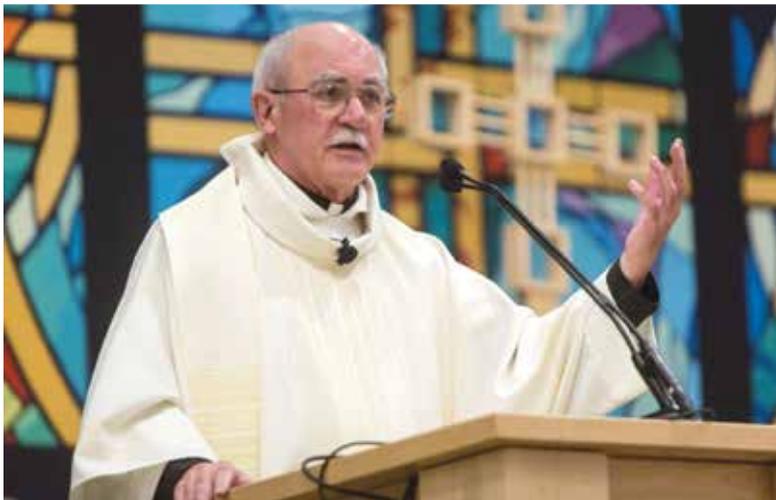
In his postsynodal letter, “The Joy

of Love,” Pope Francis has taken a step forward by stressing the need to provide special pastoral care for those in interfaith marriages and by recognizing these unions as a “privileged place for interreligious dialogue in everyday life.” But the church could go further by applying much of what the pope’s letter advocates with regard to the divorced and remarried to Catholics in interfaith marriages. Asian churches in particular, where such marriages are on the rise, need to remember that even if these couples are not married in the church, “they are not excommunicated and...should not be treated as such.” Pastoral care should allow them “not only to realize that they belong to the church as the body of Christ, but also to know that they can have a joyful and fruitful experience in it.”

If this is to happen, Catholics in interfaith marriages must be viewed as facilitators of grace who make Christ present outside the walls of the church instead of as “lost sheep.” And their decision not to get married in the church must be accepted not as a choice against the Christian faith but as a choice for the unity of their marriage.

Astrid Lobo Gajiwala, a part of the Catholic Women Preach initiative, has collaborated with the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences, the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India and the Archdiocese of Bombay on women’s issues.

THANK YOU...



America Media was proud to participate in the annual conference of the **Catholic Health Association** of the United States in New Orleans last month. We thank especially Sr. Carol Keehan, S.C., and all the members of **CHA** who commit themselves to serving those in need in a profound and ethical manner.



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