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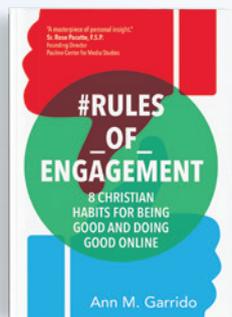
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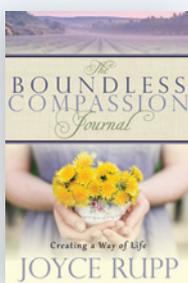
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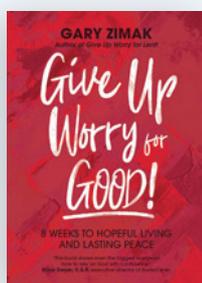
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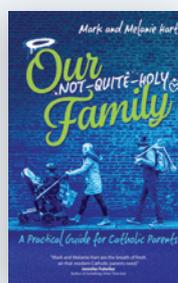
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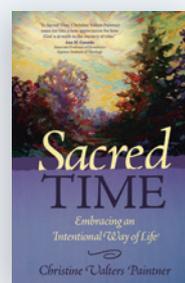
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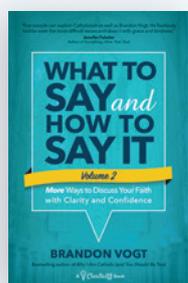
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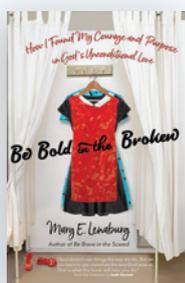
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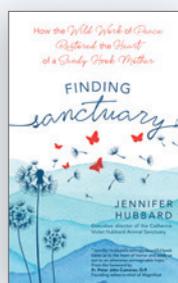
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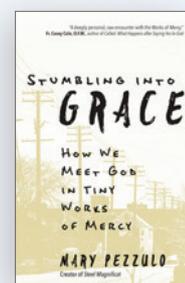
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The Passing of a Prince

Prince Philip—Duke of Edinburgh and consort to Queen Elizabeth II—who died on April 9, began the second of his 99 years as a refugee. It was 1922, and Philip’s uncle, King Constantine I of Greece, had been forced to abdicate in the wake of his disastrous prosecution of the Greco-Turkish War. Only 18 months old and just barely ahead of the riotous mob, Philip was smuggled out of Greece in an orange crate that his family had converted into a makeshift crib. A British light cruiser then safely transported them to France. Such was the inauspicious beginning of the man who would become the longest reigning spouse of a British monarch in history.

For more than 75 years, Prince Philip rendered tireless service to his adopted country. According to *The Times of London*, by the time of his death, he had undertaken 22,191 solo engagements, delivered 5,493 speeches and served as the patron of 800 charitable organizations. Those are impressive tallies for a man who once described himself as “a discredited Balkan prince of no particular merit or distinction.” Self-deprecation, of course, was one of his famous traits. But there were others, which point to some of the lessons to be gleaned from his extraordinary life.

For starters, luck counts for a lot. Being in the right place at the right time can make all the difference. Philip was fortunate to have survived the downfall of the Greek monarchy and luckier still to have been a distant relative of the British royal family, who made a new home for him and introduced him to the king and his daughter, Elizabeth. When asked in interviews about his early life, Phil-

ip was always keen to point out the role that chance had played. This is in part why he founded the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award, a phenomenally successful venture that helps prepare young people to make the most of their opportunities and to weather the fickleness of life.

Yet another lesson is that old-fashioned notions of duty and hard work also matter. Prince Philip had a number of role models to choose from, not all of them good examples. He could have gone the way of many of his wife’s ancestors, using the privileges at his disposal to pursue a life of ease and pleasure. That he did not do so is probably one of the reasons he lived such a long life—he never lost interest, never stopped asking what more he could do.

It is also true that he himself was not always a good role model. There were, of course, his infamous gaffes, mostly jokey attempts to sound down-to-earth and friendly that often had the opposite effect. “As so often happens,” he said at the conclusion of a tour of Australia in 1968, “I discover that it would have been better to keep my mouth shut.” And the occasionally offensive off-hand remark was not the only habit he may have carried with him from the wardroom culture of the Royal Navy. There were also rumors, especially in the early years of his marriage, about his late-night company.

Then again, all of that must be weighed against his countless contributions to the life of his country. A life lived without sin and error would not be a human one. And very few of us would want to be remembered for the worst thing we ever did.

Marrying the future queen is undoubtedly the best thing Philip ever

did. For all the rumors of infidelities and squabbles, some of which are inevitable in any long marriage, theirs was a love match—itsself a historical oddity among royalty. She once famously called him “her strength and stay.” There’s a lesson there, too, from those 74 years of marriage. Our lives are not defined by the big promises we make but by the thousands of little ways in which we keep them. Philip promised at the queen’s coronation “to be her liege man of life and limb and of earthly worship.” But most of the way he made good on that vow was by simply showing up, being present, making sure his hand was there whenever she reached for it.

The principal advantage of a constitutional monarchy is its seeming permanence—its role as a symbol of continuity amid constant change. A monarch furnishes a direct connection to a people’s history and to its future, and a link to what is fundamentally important about both. At the end of the day, however, like all creaturely things, monarchies come to an end. That day will probably not be any time soon for the British monarchy, but it will surely come. It has endured for 1,000 years, but even 10 centuries is nothing like forever.

Prince Philip’s passing reminds us that only God is unaffected by time and space. Monarchy can do no more than symbolize permanence or immortality—it cannot guarantee it. That is the job of the King of Kings.

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

Pope Francis celebrates Easter Mass in St. Peter's Basilica on April 4.

Cover: iStock



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CNS photo/Paolo Galosi, pool

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Have you returned to Mass?

As vaccination rates continue to rise across the United States, many are beginning to resume in-person worship, according to a recent Pew Research Center survey. **America** readers weighed in on whether or not they had begun attending Mass in person, and why.

We have not, for a variety of reasons. One is that we have discovered a fulfilling and vibrant Zoom Mass community led by a priest we know well in another state, and we are loath to give that opportunity up. Will people like us who have found physically distant communities see our commitment to our local parish weakened? I think that will remain an open question for some time.

Jeff Johnson

I haven't and I'm still trying to figure out why I don't feel compelled to get back in the practice of attending in person. It's more complicated than just being cautious about being exposed to/spreading the virus. I regularly stream Mass on Sundays, but haven't been as faithful to that as when I physically attended. I'm chagrined to say I don't really miss the Eucharist. I still pray the rosary when I take a daily walk and managed to fairly faithfully pray the Divine Office during Lent. I don't feel far away from the Lord—in fact, I feel sometimes that I have drawn closer. Perhaps this is a desert experience that will produce a renewed devotion to a vital part of our faith.

Anthony Perito

I have not started regularly attending Mass. My husband and I have kids that range in age from sullen teens down to wild toddlers who try to vault over pews, lie on the floor, roll under kneelers and occasionally lick the walls. Pre-Covid, Sunday Mass was purgatory. When I saw the re-opening guidelines, with all the safety precautions that require detailed following of directions and keeping one's hands to oneself, as well as the removal/barricading of all our former timeout spaces, I knew our family as a group was going to be unwelcome for a long time. While the online Mass has many drawbacks, we can attend together as a family, even the dog.

Maria Skowronek

I went back to Mass in person on the first Sunday of Lent. I had been watching an online Mass every Sunday prior to that, one that was as spiritually as satisfying as a virtual

Mass could be. I felt the lack of receiving the Eucharist though, and was glad for the opportunity to attend in person once I was fully vaccinated. My parish follows all the recommended protocols about masking and seating, so I feel relatively safe.

Anne Kiefer

My family has been going to Mass weekly since our parish reopened in the Fall of 2020 with a bunch of precautions—advanced reservations, spaced seating, masks, hand sanitizer at entry and before reception of the Eucharist and designated entry/exit locations. We felt a disconnect without that physical presence (ours, and that of the Eucharist), but we knew we could still attend online, and God would still be there.

Jason McKean

Our parish opened up again on Pentecost weekend of last year. They had good protocols in place, and people were pretty good at following them. We felt safe returning. It had seemed like a long 11 weeks that we were without Mass.

Katherine Nielsen

I am going back to regular Sunday Mass and daily Mass since I am now fully immunized. I feel safe that if I do catch the virus the effects will be less severe or hopefully nonexistent. I will continue to wear a mask and practice social distancing.

Kimberly Sherrill

For the most part, our parish has done a wonderful job. Two blessings have come from the pandemic. First, I have been able to serve as a eucharistic minister to fill a critical need. Second, I have helped our priest distribute “drive through” Communion. Never have I felt closer to my fellow parishioners, who need not only the Body of Christ, but human connection. As much as a sacramental need, there is a hunger for a familiar and friendly face.

Paulette Risher



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Considering that, including his teaching career before taking office, he has spent a total of 34 years as part of the Xavier nation, it's no surprise his roots are planted so deeply within our community. What's even less surprising is all the ways he's helped the university grow during those years.

While he's blazed an incredible trail these last two decades, Fr. Graham has also brilliantly paved the way for the next president.

Though he will be missed as president, he'll always be cherished as family.

xavier.edu/graham-by-the-numbers

Time for a U.S. Plenary Council?

For the first time in history, in 2020 fewer Americans belonged to a church, mosque or synagogue than did not belong. Only 47 percent of U.S. adults now identify as members of a traditional religious home, down more than 20 percentage points in only two decades. Much of the decline correlates with a rapidly accelerating growth in “nones,” those who express no religious affiliation. Among people who belong to a specific church, the decline in Catholics (to 58 percent from 76 percent) was twice as much as among members of Protestant denominations (to 64 percent from 73 percent).

The decline in church affiliation is also steeper according to age—only 36 percent of millennials belong to a church, compared with 58 percent of baby boomers and 50 percent of Generation X—as well as education and political affiliation. Non-college graduates showed a more pronounced drop in church membership than those with college degrees, perhaps reflecting the church’s struggles to reach the working class. And both Democrats and political independents have seen greater declines in membership numbers than Republicans did.

Any one of these patterns of decline, in isolation, could be used to argue for a particular diagnosis and proposed remedy on the part of religious organizations seeking to evangelize—or simply to stem the tide of departures. The “rise of the nones” could suggest that the problem is a general dynamic of “secularization” that needs to be met with a more robust public apologetics and renewed emphasis on catechesis; this could dovetail nicely with blaming the steeper decline among younger generations on failures in catechesis or on chang-

es in theological emphasis and church discipline following the Second Vatican Council.

Alternatively, the recognition that religious doubt now leads more quickly to abandonment of church membership, rather than lukewarm practice in the pews, could be used to argue for a renewed focus on smaller communities of more intense practice to serve as leaven within a world that is more ignorant of any kind of faith. Or it could lead to demands that the church more quickly respond to the signs of the times by modifying its teachings and practices on any number of issues where it is seen as out of step with the prevailing culture, treating disaffiliation as a kind of testimony against the church’s presumed failure to listen to what the Spirit has been saying through the sense of the faithful.

On the political front, the relatively more stable churchgoing of Republicans could suggest that the problem is hostility toward religion in politically progressive circles, meaning the church might need an even greater emphasis on defending religious liberty against threats from government intrusions. Or the greater decline among Democrats could suggest that the church’s tendency to find common cause with the Republican Party because of the bishops’ focus on abortion as a pre-eminent priority among social issues is functioning as a scandal and stumbling block to those who reject other Republican positions, or Republican candidates, as immoral.

The steeper decline among those without college degrees does not lend itself as easily to sweeping diagnoses and prescriptions, which might explain why it has generally received less notice and discussion. Yet any

implication that for some reason, the consolations of faith are more available to those who are already at greater material advantage in our society ought to cause believers in the Gospel to spend sleepless nights wondering if we are more in touch with the rich man feasting than with Lazarus, outside his gate.

Regardless of the sufficiency of any explanations or proposed reforms, this pattern of decline in church membership and religious practice, already decades long and apparently now sharply accelerating, ought to convince everyone concerned with evangelization that our existing responses have proven woefully insufficient. The problem is not that one group within the church has the right diagnosis and the rest of the church is failing to listen to them. The problem is that the whole church needs to recognize more deeply that we—both communally and individually—are struggling more and more to evangelize the contemporary world. Increasingly, the message of the Gospel is being heard as an unnecessary imposition or a mere absurdity rather than as the good news of freedom from sin and death and the inauguration of God’s kingdom of justice and peace.

However we are moved to preach the Gospel, and whatever reforms we believe are necessary for the church to evangelize more effectively, Catholics must begin with a thorough examination of conscience about our existing efforts. Even more, we must listen to other Catholics, to those outside the church and to those who have left the church in order to learn how those efforts have been failing. Perhaps the best and most effective witness the church could offer to the world would be openness to such conversion as an

expression of our abiding faith, rather than continuing to insist that our existing analyses are sufficient.

The editors of this magazine have published countless “What is to be done?” editorials and essays on this topic since its founding; in our first issue on April 17, 1909, the editors fretted that “our Christian dogmas are coming to be the subject of scoffing doubt” and decried “the loose manner in which the vital doctrines of Christianity are handled among us to-day.” No doubt they would be deeply dismayed by the religious landscape we survey today. But in recent years developments in other areas of the church have suggested a new possibility. What if we followed the example of the bishops of Germany, Australia, Ireland and elsewhere and called for a regional gathering of Catholics—from all corners of the local church—to discuss the flaws and future of evangelization? In addition to acknowledging the value of subsidiarity in our decision-making, it could also truly open our ears to hear what has worked and what has failed to work for the people of God.

The task before the Catholic Church in the United States is an enormous one. It will require the talents and the toil of every part of the church. An event like a plenary council or other national gathering could be an effective catalyst for creative new approaches.

Whatever form it takes, the data is clear: It is essential that the church reorder its pastoral priorities and initiatives and align them with a new evangelization to meet the unique challenge of 21st-century America. The U.S. church must not fail to meet this moment. “We have to find a new way,” Pope Francis said in his 2013 interview in **America**, “otherwise even the moral edifice of the church is likely to fall like a house of cards, losing the freshness and fragrance of the Gospel.”

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‘Lead us not...’ On Asian women as sexual objects.

After an unprecedented rise in reported anti-Asian hate crimes during the coronavirus pandemic, including many attacks on elderly Asian-Americans in New York City and elsewhere, the news of a shooting spree that killed eight people in the Atlanta area on March 16—six of them Asian women—was infuriating and exhausting. “How long, O Lord?” I ask, echoing the lament of the psalmist and the cry of many others in the Asian-American community.

The media were quick to look for reasons behind the shootings that mostly targeted Asian women.

“These Asian women and their massage parlors were a ‘temptation for him that he wanted to eliminate,’” said a Cherokee County sheriff, referring to the statement made by the suspected shooter, Robert Aaron Long, while in police custody. News reports included descriptions of Mr. Long, one of them from a former roommate, as a devout Christian raised in the Southern Baptist Church who struggles with sexual addiction.

Temptation. A familiar word for anyone raised in the Christian tradition. “Lead us not into temptation,” we are taught to pray. But in Atlanta the bodies of Asian women were reduced to just that: a temptation, something to be eliminated for the sake of preserving white male innocence.

As we mourn the deaths of these eight individuals, we must resist our own temptation to see Mr. Long’s sexual addiction as an excuse that we can use to erase the racially motivated nature of the shootings. The killing of women who are seen as mere “temptations” demands our internal reflection on the American Christian culture(s) around sexuality, sin and temptation.

What we saw in Atlanta is a direct and inevitable result of the harmful theologies of American Christian purity culture. It is the same purity culture that enabled my evangelical Christian high school principal 10 years ago to tell me, a 14-year-old Chinese-born girl, to change out of my short dress to avoid tempting my male classmates and teachers. This same purity culture is what enables our society to blame women for being victims of sexual violence, asking them why they were out alone at night and effectively excusing the behavior of their aggressors.

The seeds of this harmful ideology were long ago planted in the Catholic Church, as when St. Augustine, in his *Confessions*, cast blame on the women in his life for causing him to fall into sexual sin, or when 11-year-old Maria Goretti was canonized for her devotion to chastity when it is her resistance to sexual violence—and not the virtues of female virginity—that ought to lie at the center of her legacy.

This purity culture that blames women for their experiences of unwanted sexual attention, when combined with structural racism, perpetuates hypersexualized stereotypes of women of color within our popular imagination. The Jezebel stereotype, rooted in an American misreading of the biblical character of Jezebel, portrays Black women as innately promiscuous. As Patricia Hill Collins detailed in her book *Black Feminist Thought*, the Jezebel stereotype has even been used as a legal defense on behalf of white men who have assaulted Black women.

Similarly, the hypersexualized Latina stereotype permeates U.S. film and media, while Asian women are repre-

sented as sexually submissive and exotic objects of desire. When the reductive “China doll” stereotype of Asian women is mixed with ideologies that already relegate women to a place of blame for men’s desire, the violence in Atlanta is its tragically foreseeable result.

For us as a country and a church, memorializing the lives of these six Asian women means reckoning with the harmful, and even deadly, theologies of sexual shame and objectification that permeate our Christian moral imagination. It means refusing to allow women to be blamed as “stumbling blocks” for male sexual sin. It means committing to new practices and catechesis that affirm the inherent goodness of the human body. It means re-examining the ways we speak of sexuality in our own church spaces and redirecting these conversations so that sexual desire is distinguished from sexual violence.

“Lead us not into temptation,” we must pray. But the temptation from which we must be delivered is not the bodies of vulnerable Asian women. Rather, we are called to resist the temptation to reduce Asian women and other women of color to disembodied objects of male desire. We are called to resist the temptation to falsely direct blame for the Covid-19 pandemic onto our Asian-American brothers and sisters, as well as the temptation to continue treating Asian-Americans in this country as a perpetual other.

And deliver us from evil.

Flora x. Tang is a doctoral student in theology and peace studies at the University of Notre Dame, where she studies theology and the sacraments in the context of post-traumatic situations.

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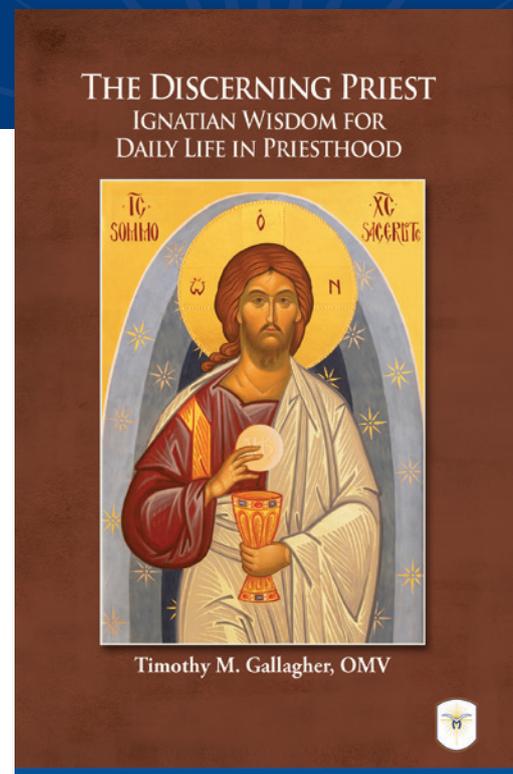
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With a \$100 million pledge, Jesuits and descendants of enslaved people begin a path toward healing

By J.D. Long-García

The names of the 272 enslaved people sold by the Society of Jesus in 1838 to raise money to keep a struggling Georgetown University open are inscribed in a bill of sale: “Isaac, a man sixty five years of age, Charles, his eldest son, forty years of age, Nelly his daughter, thirty eight years of age, Henny, a girl thirteen years of age, Cecilia, a girl eight years of age, Ruthy, a girl six years of age...”

Their journey to plantations in Louisiana would take three weeks.

Most of them were under 20, and more than 80 were under 10. The bill of sale and the records kept by the Jesuits made the formation of the Descendants Truth and Reconciliation Foundation possible, according to Joseph M. Stewart, a fifth-generation grandson of Isaac Hawkins, one of the enslaved persons sold in 1838.

“It identified our ancestors and gave us the ability to organize into an association,” he said.

The foundation is a partnership between the descendants’ group, known as GU272 Descendants, and the Society of Jesus. The leaders of the foundation said its collaboration with the Jesuits addresses a specific historical injustice but more broadly seeks to offer a model that might accelerate racial healing and advance racial justice in the United States. The Jesuits have pledged to raise \$100 million for the effort, but the foundation has a long-term goal of raising \$1 billion.

“This is the only effort of organized descendants and

a large religious organization within the Catholic Church,” said Mr. Stewart, the acting president of the association. “We don’t think this has ever existed before.” The foundation will support the education of descendants for future generations and provide direct relief to the impoverished, the infirm and elderly.

Timothy Kesicki, S.J., president of the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States, said shame can sometimes stand in the way of recognizing the ongoing sin of racism. “I don’t believe that as a country or as a church, we have seriously reconciled with the sin of slavery,” he said.

Learning, for example, of infants who were born into slavery, treated as someone else’s property, can lead to feeling of shame and fear, Father Kesicki said, but confronting those hard truths can also lead to conversion and hope.

“We should be ashamed, but we can’t live in that,” Mr. Stewart said. “We need to let shame be a motivation for doing the right things to change the sin that was committed against humanity and against people, and truly against the Catholic Church, which is supposed to be representing God in all of this.”

Mr. Stewart grew up attending a little church in Louisiana. He had to sit on the other side of the church from white parishioners.

“I was able to do that because the first thing that meant something to me was that I believe in God. It wasn’t saying

Photographs of descendants of enslaved people who were sold by Georgetown University and the Maryland Jesuits to southern Louisiana in 1838.



Claire Vail/American Ancestors/New England Historic Genealogical Society via AP

I believe in all these people who are sitting on the other side of the church, who didn't want me sitting on that side of the church," he said. "If Catholics want to be a part of living up to God's [vision of] one humanity, then we have to start moving from shame to positive action to dismantle the legacy of slavery and mitigate the impact of racism."

While attending Mass recently, Mr. Stewart, 78, reflected on how little he has heard about racism from the pulpit. "In all those years, I have not heard a sermon where a priest stood at the altar and took issue with racism in the church," he said, "where a priest said, 'No more Blacks on that side and whites on this side.' That we're all God's children."

Joseph Brown, S.J., a professor at Southern Illinois University's Department of Africana Studies, compared the process of racial reconciliation to the sacrament of confession. "The first thing you have to do when you go to confession is say, 'Father, forgive me, for I have sinned.' If you don't do that, you haven't started the sacrament."

Father Brown credits Father Kesicki for being open to a different approach and taking the steps of the sacrament of confession. In 2017, before 100 descendants, Father Kesicki formally apologized for the 1838 sale and took responsibility in the name of the Society of Jesus.

"He stood there and did exactly what he was called to do, in all humility," Father Brown said. "And because he did it correctly, in the most Catholic way possible and in the most social justice way possible, the descendants were able to say, 'Thank you. Now let's get busy.' And they did."

He also said that Mr. Stewart's now-famous slogan, "Nothing about us without us," is part of addressing racial injustice and bringing about healing. Father Brown also recalled Thea Bowman's 1989 statement before the U.S. bishops, "I come to my church, fully functioning."

"That sentence alone shapes the entire conversation and the entire dynamic that we have to be about," he said. "I come to my church; you didn't let me in. You didn't allow me to sit here. It is my church. Black hands built the buildings. We know this. It's not about: 'We're going to make room for you in our church.'"

Father Brown suggests the church needs to move be-

yond "us and them" language. "The descendants are moving along and they have done something that is absolutely grace-filled," he said. "They're not saying, 'Give us money.' They're saying, 'Use your money and your connection to make sure that we repair the damage.'"

Gregory Chisholm, S.J., is the pastor of the parishes St. Charles Borromeo, Resurrection and All Saints in Harlem. By the time he joined the Jesuits in 1980, he said, he had learned how to work in a white world. He estimated that fewer than 20 Black men have reached final vows in the order since then.

"It becomes more incumbent on the Black man or woman to be able to integrate into a white society," Father Chisholm said. "The Black man or woman ends up developing the kind of double consciousness that W. E. B. DuBois used to talk about. Or the bilingual character that some more contemporary commentators will talk about."

Being bilingual in this sense refers to a person from a minority community speaking to the majority in one way, but speaking to his or her own community in another way. People of the majority do not have the experience of trying to fit into a larger white society, so they can underestimate the challenges faced by a person of color.

"The reason it is hard to bring people to the table in order to engage in the challenge is that they don't really have to; they don't have to come to a better experience of what it's like to be Black," he said. "They are entirely insulated from those concerns."

The Descendants Truth and Reconciliation Foundation offers a path to overcome this segregation and work toward transformative change and bring about racial healing, Mr. Stewart said.

"Our goal is to work together and invest in the future; it's not about fighting anymore. We've been fighting for 400 years, and we hope this foundation will give us a way forward," he said. "If we believe in God, then we owe it to him to take action. And we can't continue to go to church and claim to be God's children if we think we're better than others of God's children."

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A This article inspired the latest episode of **America's** podcast "Church Meets World." To hear interviews, sound design and commentary from the editors on the podcast, visit www.americamag.org/podcasts.

Minimum increase, maximum impact?

The parliamentarian of the U.S. Senate ruled in February that a plan to increase the federal minimum wage could not be part of the Biden administration's Covid-19 relief package, the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan. Now supporters of a national raise for low-income workers have returned to Congress to push for a long-sought increase to \$15 an hour.

It has been 11 years since U.S. legislators last voted to raise the minimum wage. It was bumped to \$7.25 in 2009 and has languished there ever since. According to the Economic Policy Institute, after adjusting for rising costs of living, a full-time federal minimum wage worker today earns 18 percent less than what her counterpart earned 11 years ago—\$15,080 annually in 2021, compared with \$18,458 in 2009.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has long supported a minimum-wage hike. In a joint letter to Congress with Catholic Charities USA in 2015, the bishops argued: “An economy thrives only when it is centered on the dignity and well-being of the workers and families in it.... A full-

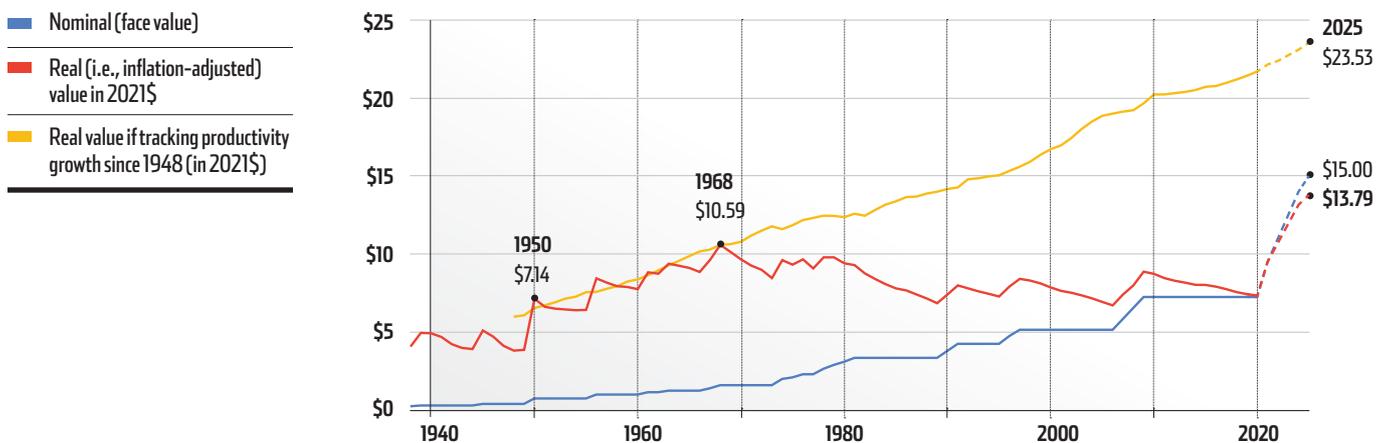
year, full-time worker earning the federal minimum wage does not make enough to raise a child free from poverty.”

The current proposal to raise the federal minimum to \$15 by 2025 would move millions of U.S. working people out of extreme poverty and would disproportionately boost wages for Black and Hispanic workers and women. But that wage hike would still result in a salary far below what the church considers a just wage—that is, one adequate to shelter, feed and otherwise support a family while providing enough income for savings and family recreation.

Many argue that the federal minimum was not intended to be more than a stepping stone or training wage for U.S. workers, downplaying its shortfall from what the church considers just. That dismissal blithely ignores the explosive growth of low-wage jobs in the American economy. For many workers, the minimum wage does not represent a temporary stop on the way to more gainful employment but a wage ceiling that traps them in poverty.

Kevin Clarke, senior editor. Twitter: @ClarkeAtAmerica.

The economy can afford a much higher national minimum wage



A call to action for the 117th Congress

2009: The last year the federal minimum wage, \$7.25, was increased.

\$22 an hour: The wage workers would receive now if the minimum wage had been raised at the same pace as productivity growth since the late 1960s.

32 million: The number of workers—**21% of the U.S. workforce**—whose earnings would increase by 2025 if the Raise the Wage Act is passed by Congress this year.

\$10.59: The 1968 hourly rate adjusted for inflation—**46% more than today's minimum of \$7.25.**

\$3,300: the annual pay increase for a full-time minimum wage worker—a total of **\$108 billion in additional wages in 2025 to affected workers.**

3.7 million people—including 1.3 million children: The population that would be lifted out of poverty by 2025 with a hike to **\$15.**

Stan Swamy, S.J.,
depicted (center) with
other detained activists

America Media/Jesuit Conference of South Asia

Why is Father Stan Swamy still being held in a prison in India?

Months after his arrest for allegedly inciting violence and conspiring to overthrow the Indian government, Stan Swamy, S.J., was on March 22 again denied bail. Father Swamy is being held in Taloja Central Jail in Mumbai by the National Investigation Agency, India's counterterrorism task force. He was arrested last October at Bagaicha, the Jesuit social center where he lived and worked on the outskirts of Ranchi, the capital city of the State of Jharkhand in eastern India.

The N.I.A. alleges that Father Swamy and the 15 other people accused with him are guilty of sedition. Rejecting Father Swamy's application for bail, Judge Dinesh E. Kothalikar of the N.I.A.'s special court said Father Swamy and those detained with him "hatched a serious conspiracy to create unrest in the entire country and to overpower the government."

Lawyers for Father Swamy, who celebrated his 84th birthday on April 26, had applied for his release on humanitarian grounds because of multiple and serious health concerns, including Parkinson's disease.

The allegations against Father Swamy have been roundly rejected by his brother Jesuits, who say it is his work defending the territorial claims of Adivasis, India's indigenous people, and other vulnerable communities that has made him suspect in the N.I.A.'s eyes. In a statement dated March 31 from the Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat of the Society of Jesus in Rome, Xavier Jeyaraj, S.J., wrote: "What is happening [in India] especially in the last few years are not stray incidents" but "indicative of a malaise and erosion of democracy."

While thousands have been similarly charged and arrested, only a comparable few are actually convicted, he explained. "Our prisons are bursting at the seams," Father Jeyaraj said, leading to the "deprivation of even the basic amenities" among prisoners.

Under the social media banner #StandWithStan, pro-

tests continue both on line and in person worldwide against the detention of Father Swamy and his 15 co-accused, many of whom are activists, educators and intellectuals who have long fought for the rights of people oppressed in India's caste system, especially the Adivasi and the Dalits, members of India's lowest caste. But the international attention appears only to have strengthened the N.I.A.'s resolve to keep the accused behind bars.

At the center of the allegations is the accusation that Father Swamy and his co-accused incited caste-based violence that left several injured and led to the death of one person at a protest on New Year's Day 2018 in Bhima Koregaon, a village in the Pune District of the State of Maharashtra. Father Swamy has repeatedly denied any involvement in the violence in Bhima Koregaon, "a place where I've never been to in my life," he said in a video recorded days before his arrest. His detention by Indian counterterrorism forces followed a two-year-long period of interrogation, raids of his home and seizure of his personal property, including electronic communications devices.

The N.I.A. has claimed that Father Swamy not only incited discontent and violence with his speeches and writings against the Indian government but that he also had links to the Maoist Communist Party of India, a claim he also denied. "What is happening to me is not something unique happening to me alone," he said in his video interview. "It's a broader process that is taking place all over the country. We are all aware how prominent intellectuals, lawyers, writers, poets, activists, student leaders—they're all put into jail just because they expressed their dissent or raised questions about the ruling powers of India."

Ricardo Da Silva, S.J., *associate editor*.
Twitter: @ricdssj.



Delays and misinformation thwart vaccination efforts in remote Amazon communities

With 63,000 deaths and 2.5 million confirmed cases of Covid-19 by early April, the nine-nation Pan-Amazon region has become an epicenter of the coronavirus pandemic in South America. Covid-19 immunization campaigns must overcome enormous difficulty to reach indigenous groups and the villages of Quilombola people, the descendants of enslaved Africans who escaped and established remote communities.

The most serious challenge is the limited vaccine supply. In Ecuador the vaccination campaign is advancing slowly, according to the apostolic vicar of Puyo, Bishop Rafael Cob García. “The church has infrastructure in the Amazonian region,” he told **America**. “We can help in vaccination, but we’re waiting for the government’s plan.”

According to Bishop Cob, indigenous groups of the Amazon have been “forgotten” by the current leaders of the Pan-Amazon region. “We know that indigenous and other traditional groups are at the end of the list of political concerns,” he said.

In Iquitos, Peru, vaccines seem a distant promise. The apostolic administrator, Miguel Fuertes, O.S.A., said he has been emphasizing the need for informational campaigns about vaccine safety. “Part of the society opposes the vaccination, and some people say that they will refuse to take a shot when the doses arrive.”

Government officials had to block off the Colombian Amazon after an outbreak of a new Covid-19 strain in nearby Manaus, Brazil. According to the Rev. Héctor Henao Gaviria, who heads Caritas Colombia, the government allocated a first shipment of 45,000 doses to the Colombian Amazon, a significant attempt to reach the region’s 265,000 inhabitants.

Although conditions in Leticia, Colombia, have not reached the level of the chaos just across the border in Brazil, Covid-19 has penetrated even the most remote indigenous areas. “There has been a huge underreport of such deaths,” Father Henao said.

The Rev. Yilmer Alonso Pérez, who leads the local Caritas office, said that in Colombia “most of the population... is Catholic and understands the need to take a vaccine.” But “on the Brazilian side of the border, the evangelical population is larger and there are more difficulties.” There have been multiple reports of Christian missionaries, particularly in the Brazilian Amazon, convincing communities to resist immunization efforts.

According to Claudemir Nogueira da Silva, leader of a federation of indigenous organizations in the region of the Purus River in Brazil, some villagers have been turning back vaccination teams.

“That’s the case of the Jamamadi people, for instance.



CNS photo/Bruno Kelly, Reuters

An Indigenous man receives the AstraZeneca/Oxford Covid-19 vaccine in Manaus, Brazil, on Feb. 9, 2021.

Some of them were influenced by a Baptist missionary and just don't want to take the vaccine," he said.

In February, a group of 399 Jamamadi carrying bows and arrows forced a group of health care professionals to go back to their small plane and leave without vaccinating anyone in their community.

Mr. da Silva, a member of the Apurinã people, said that many have been discouraged by misinformation. "People say it has a chip that will kill the person over time. They also say it's demonic," he said.

The Indigenous Missionary Council of the bishops' conference in Brazil (known as C.I.M.I.) is also concerned about the dozens of indigenous groups that live in total isolation in the rainforest. "The Brazilian state must guarantee that [these indigenous communities] remain isolated, particularly during the pandemic," said Luis Ventura, a lay missionary at C.I.M.I.

Isolation, according to Mr. Ventura, is the best "immunization" in the case of these indigenous communities. But illegal incursions on what should be restricted territories of these indigenous communities by miners and loggers create a continuous risk for them.

Eduardo Campos Lima contributes from São Paulo, Brazil.



Querétaro City gang members gather at the state youth secretariat on March 20.

Photo courtesy of Nacidos Para Triunfar

GOODNEWS: In a country plagued by drug wars, keeping faith with Mexico's youth

In Querétaro City, an urban center in Mexico's industrial heartland about 130 miles northwest of Mexico City, representatives from 16 gangs agreed in February to a municipal cease-fire that would put an end to their constant turf battles. The payoff for gang members? New job and educational opportunities courtesy of the municipal government.

It was a rare bit of good news in a country that last year suffered a record 40,863 murders. A nonprofit group called Nacidos Para Triunfar played a crucial role in bringing gang members and civic authorities together. N.P.T. is the brainchild of Juan Pablo García, a former gang member himself who has spent the better part of the last two decades helping vulnerable youths build a better future. He founded Nacidos in 2010 after years as a social worker for the Archdiocese of Monterrey.

His faith continues to play a central role in his mission to get gang members off the streets and closer to society's mainstream. "My faith is my base. My tripod, so to speak," Mr. García told **America**. "It's what moved me forward."

Gang outreach like Mr. García's is often overlooked in Mexico, where investments in militarized anti-gang efforts have been prioritized. "These kids don't have goals; they're more exposed to drugs all the time." But "the issue of gangs and violence is something that has unfortunately been neglected for many years by every government in power," Mr. García said.

"I think I can provide an answer to the problem," he added, "If the government would only look." He believes Mexico could be a model for all of Latin America by building a nationwide program to focus on the problem. "These kids want to succeed in life," he said; "governments can help them."

Jan-Albert Hootsen, Mexico correspondent.
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U.S. nursing homes were broken long before Covid-19

We live in the era of aging, and our capitalist economy is struggling to cope. The Covid-19 pandemic has killed over 160,000 residents and staff members in nursing homes around the United States, almost a third of the total U.S. deaths from Covid-19 thus far. Those numbers raise questions about our treatment of older adults and the utilitarian cruelty of a system that sometimes puts profits before people.

“Covid has laid bare the reality that our elder care system is broken and inadequate,” said Sarah Moses, an associate professor of religion at the University of Mississippi and the author of *Ethics and the Elderly: The Challenge of Long-Term Care*. “Covid didn’t create a crisis, it exposes a crisis that was already there.”

There are around 1.4 million Americans living in nursing homes, roughly half of whom are long-term residents paying an average cost of \$100,000 a year. This \$100 billion-plus sector of the economy boasts revenues greater than those of all of America’s professional sports leagues combined. Families routinely liquidate savings to pay for care.

What do we get for all that money? An industry that could not keep its customers safe.

When Christopher Seum died at 74 of Covid-related causes on Dec. 19 at a nursing home in Cameron, W.Va., he had not seen his family in five months. “My mom and I tried to get out there, but they had a Covid outbreak, so they wouldn’t let us,” his son David Seum told me. As his father’s health declined, it felt like “all we had were bad choices,” David said.

By exposing the disadvantages of nursing homes that

warehouse large numbers of residents, the Covid-19 crisis is forcing all of us to ask essential questions: How can we keep older adults involved in society even if they are not adding to the gross domestic product? How can we learn to enjoy the company of people as they lose their memory, functions and personality and enter what Shakespeare called “the second childishness”? And how can we recognize success when the final outcome is always death?

How did we get here? For millennia, human life expectancy was somewhere between 30 and 40 years. In 1900, it was still under 50 in the United States. And in 19th-century America, the aging were almost always kept at home until they died. Those without families were packed into almshouses, poor farms or asylums.

The discovery of penicillin, the invention of vaccines, improvements in nutrition and the proliferation of soap led to broad improvements in life expectancy. That increase has underpinned an explosion of population growth around the world, to around eight billion today from 1.6 billion in 1900.

By 2050, one out of five Americans will be over 65, and people who live to 65 can now expect to live 20 more years. “In the years ahead,” President George W. Bush’s council on bioethics wrote in 2005, the increased aging “of most advanced industrial societies will be unlike anything seen in human history.”

Aging societies have been slow to adapt. The passage of the Social Security Act in 1935 provided income for the aged that propelled the development of privately paid “old age homes.” After World War II, hospitals added beds for

Families of Covid-19 victims who died in nursing homes in New York State gathered in front of Cobble Hill Health Center in Brooklyn on Oct. 18, 2020, to share photos of loved ones and to demand that Gov. Andrew Cuomo apologize for his response to outbreaks in nursing homes during the pandemic.

long-term care. The arrival of Medicare and Medicaid in the 1960s triggered a boom in nursing homes, as old-age homes realized they could make money by offering medical services billed to the government.

A handful of companies built sprawling chains that controlled hundreds of centers and thousands of beds, causing observers to sound the first alarms about dehumanizing treatment. “Increasingly, the elderly depend on persons—professional caregivers, planners and designers of facilities for the elderly—who function at some emotional distance from them,” wrote the ethicist William F. May in his 1986 essay “The Virtues and Vices of the Elderly.”

The problem with for-profit nursing homes is that they incentivize size. “The way you make money is to scale, but when you’re running a facility with 12 residents, you don’t get scale,” said Howard Gleckman, a senior fellow at the Urban Institute. “The real question [for policy makers] is not so much ‘How do you make a better nursing home?’ It’s ‘How can we find alternatives for those who can get better care outside of nursing homes?’”

A growing body of research suggests offering practical home support that combines nursing, therapeutic and handyman services can keep people happy and independent longer. In my own family, when my grandmother Pat was no longer self-sufficient, the family considered putting her in a long-term care home. Instead, my Uncle Earl moved her into a cozy room in his basement in suburban Baltimore and learned to take care of her. Sometimes, as they drank Scotch together, they would call me late at night, and we would all share a giggle. She died a couple of years later, but I recall that time as a special and extended goodbye party that was full of love.

But not every family can afford the cost—or time. “Caring for an aging parent is a rewarding thing to do, but it’s also a costly thing to do, financially and emotionally,” said Mr. Gleckman. “And the fracturing of American families has also hurt,” he added. “Half of children are born to single mothers, so the connection is not there to fathers, and what happens when those fathers need care? The idea of a family taking care of a parent is not what it was.”

For people whose families cannot take care of them, there are movements that try to replicate the intimacy of family care. The nonprofit Green House Project, for example, founded in 2003 by Dr. Bill Thomas, offers a set of

guidelines for long-term care that emphasizes the social dignity of every member. Its goal is to move away from the institutional model to smaller residences for the aged. Its network includes 300 centers in 32 states.

The Green House Project includes a long-term care facility in Memphis called Ave Maria, which has nine cottages and 100 beds staffed by skilled nurses. In each cottage, the rooms are laid out around a central community living space. “The priority has to be helping folks age with dignity,” said Frank Gattuso, Ave Maria’s executive director.

As he watched other members of his generation die of Covid-19, 79-year-old Joe Hajdu, who lives in a Pittsburgh-area senior living facility operated by the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, wondered about the place of older people in society. “I’ve been reading about indigenous cultures among Native Americans and Asians where they really value elders,” the retired Methodist minister told me.

What we value is youth and money. And even though Mr. Hajdu might enjoy reading, playing the piano, talking politics with his wife, Cathie, and making wisecracks, he knows that our society is built around income-earners.

In his latest encyclical, “Fratelli Tutti,” Pope Francis writes that the elderly have been relegated to “a sad and lonely existence,” part of a society-wide attitude that “it is all about us, that our individual concerns are the only thing that matters.” A truly human and fraternal society, Francis wrote, “will be capable of ensuring in an efficient and stable way that each of its members is accompanied at every stage of life.”

In the United States, Mr. Hajdu has concluded, “there just doesn’t seem to be that kind of focus here. With our American individualism, we’re just not as focused on the common good.”

John W. Miller is a Pittsburgh-based writer and co-director of the PBS film “Moundsville.”
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A This article is part of a series on Catholic social teaching and the modern economy. Read more at americamagazine.org/moral-economy.

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March 11 marked one year since Covid-19 was declared a pandemic. At **America**, we mourn the loss of all who have died and the millions of lives devastated by this global health crisis that has especially affected the most impoverished in our world. To honor the more than 2.5 million people who have died worldwide of complications related to Covid-19, on March 12 we held a virtual prayer service to remember in prayer, poetry, video and song our loved ones who have died.

To watch, visit [americamagazine.org/we-remember-them](https://www.americamagazine.org/we-remember-them).

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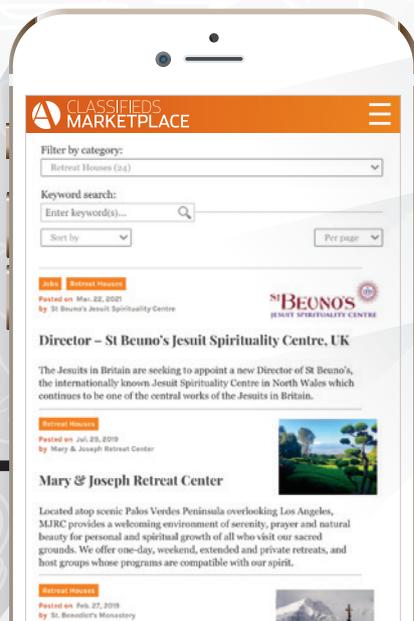
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WOMEN AT WORK

By Serena Sigillito

There's more than one way to be a Catholic feminist



When Amy Coney Barrett was nominated to the Supreme Court last September, the media and the public alike rushed to scrutinize not only her legal credentials and jurisprudential philosophy, but also her religious faith. The evangelical writer Katelyn Beaty wrote an especially thoughtful op-ed for *The New York Times* titled “Why Only Amy Coney Barrett Gets to Have It All.” Ms. Beaty asked: “If Judge Barrett’s Catholic faith and indisputable career accomplishments make her such a young heroine of the Christian right, why doesn’t the traditional Christianity to which she adheres encourage more women to be like her?”

To Ms. Beaty, the answer is clear. There is a troubling “reason few Christian women can simultaneously pursue career ambitions and family life in the ways Judge Barrett has: In traditional Christian communities, women are often asked to sacrifice the former at the altar of the latter.” Beaty concludes that “evangelical and traditional Catholic communities must find ways to honor and affirm the ambitions of half their members.” On this point, Ms. Beaty is unquestionably right. She is wrong, however, to assume that the experiences of women raised in Catholic and evangelical communities in the United States are interchangeable.

The Catholic Church is a global faith, with believers all over the world who profess the same creed and celebrate the same liturgies. Yet the universality of the Catholic Church makes room for religious orders, parishes and families to live out their faith through a vast array of cultural traditions and charisms.

Even within the United States, the Catholic Church encompasses countless subcultures, which send very different messages to young women about femininity, family life, marriage and careers. Some traditional communities go too far in one direction, enforcing rigid gender roles that can be

iStock

There is a beautiful message within church teaching on the feminine genius and the nature of vocation.

overly restrictive, even oppressive or abusive. These communities can attract significant attention in the media, yet in fact those communities are in the minority. It is actually more common for Catholics to absorb and echo the values of their surrounding culture. In doing so, they fail to offer a real, appealing alternative to many secular visions of what it means to live the good life. We fail to provide a model for how to obtain a healthy balance between an individual's ambitions and a family or community's needs. This, too, is a failure—one that hurts both our daughters and our sons.

It is important to listen to and learn from the stories of women who have been harmed by both traditionalist and modernist distortions of the church's teaching. Church leaders, parents and teachers must strive to avoid both extremes. Fortunately, Catholicism gives us the theological and philosophical tools we need to do just that. There is a beautiful message within church teaching on the feminine genius and the nature of vocation—one that today's women and girls desperately need to hear.

Ethnic and Socioeconomic Factors

Before delving too deeply into philosophical debates about work and motherhood, it is important to note that, for many women, any such debate is irrelevant; they simply face practical questions of survival. The daily reality is that many mothers—both single and married—must work to provide for their families' basic needs.

Attitudes about gender roles are also deeply shaped by cultural norms, which can differ among ethnic communities. Like the demographic makeup of the United States as a whole, the composition of the U.S. church has shifted significantly in recent decades. The Public Religion Research Institute reported in 2017: "The Catholic Church is experiencing an ethnic transformation. Twenty-five years ago, nearly nine in ten (87 percent) Catholics were white, non-Hispanic, compared to 55 percent today. Fewer than four in ten (36

percent) Catholics under the age of 30 are white, non-Hispanic; 52 percent are Hispanic." The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University found that as of 2013, 6,332 parishes (35.9 percent of all parishes in the United States) "are known to serve a particular racial, ethnic, cultural, and/or linguistic community." Of those, 4,544 (69 percent) serve Hispanic or Latino Catholic communities.

Ashleen Menchaca-Bagnulo, a professor of political science at Texas State University, who was raised Catholic by her Mexican-American family in Texas, said, "I don't think the idea that God wouldn't want women to work outside of the home was one that I ever encountered until I was in college, when I started to be exposed to more affluent and more orthodox circles." As she grew up, Dr. Menchaca-Bagnulo took for granted that women would work, as her mother and grandmother did. "It wasn't such an angst-filled issue," she says. "I don't even think it was talked about."

Dr. Menchaca-Bagnulo, who is now the mother of two young daughters, said the gender roles she absorbed from her family and community were "very clear" but "also kind of fluid." In other words, "the women are very feminine. And the men are very masculine. But there's a lot of shared interests and responsibility. There's a lot of group activities." As she progressed through college and graduate school and encountered different Catholic circles, Dr. Menchaca-Bagnulo was surprised at some of the gender-based separation she encountered. In these circles, separate spiritual activities for women and men were common, as was more informal social separation: "The men talk together after dinner, and the women talk together after dinner."

Traditional Gender Roles

To Dr. Menchaca-Bagnulo, the expectation that mothers should stay home with their children felt like "a status thing," reserved for those who could afford to have only one working parent. Growing up, there had been "no expectation that your wife wouldn't work." But in the more affluent, white, self-consciously intellectual and orthodox Catholic circles she encountered, she said many people did have that expectation, whether it was "moral or economic or both."





Photo courtesy of Ashlee Menchaca-Bagnulo

Ashlee Menchaca-Bagnulo, pictured here with her daughter, is a professor of political science at Texas State University. She was raised Catholic by her Mexican-American family in Texas. “I don’t think the idea that God wouldn’t want women to work outside of the home was one that I ever encountered until I was in college, when I started to be exposed to more affluent and more orthodox circles,” she said.

In healthy Catholic communities and families, a strong emphasis on the importance of motherhood can serve as a salutary corrective to broader American culture, which tends to devalue caregiving and exalt professional success over self-sacrificial love, especially among the middle and upper classes. In unhealthy communities and families, however, that emphasis on self-sacrifice can be used as a tool to wield power over women.

The faith should never be used to manipulate a person into staying in an abusive situation. But, unfortunately, sometimes it is. “I was raised that my goal in life was to get married and raise kids,” said Grace Parker, who asked to use a pseudonym for her family’s privacy. Ms. Parker, who is white and grew up in Texas, said she “didn’t get a single ounce of recommendation from [her] parents for pursuing a course of study that might build a fulfilling and worthwhile career.”

She was encouraged to pursue an education, but her studies were only “for fun.” In fact, Grace was actively discouraged from becoming financially independent. “There was not a single conversation with my parents in which they asked me what I planned to do to make money when I got out of college,” she remembers. “Instead, there were multiple conversations in which they forbade me to get a job during college in case I liked making money more than I liked school.” After graduation, her parents encouraged her to move back home, since she was still single, but again forbade her from getting a job. They agreed to pay for her

master’s degree in education with the understanding that “all I was going to be allowed to do with it was tutor the Catholic community homeschool children.”

Sometimes these messages come from the surrounding Catholic community as well. Growing up in Arizona, Diana Tyler’s family went to what she described as “a pretty good parish—standard Catholic stuff.” But in addition, Ms. Tyler, who asked to use a pseudonym, said her family was part of “a charismatic Catholic group,” a covenant community that she now regards as a cult. She said that at talks for teens, leaders emphasized “stuff about controlling women,” telling the girls that they must dress modestly in order to keep men from sinning. “While we were taught the body was good, my own body was treated as shameful,” she said.

Ms. Tyler said that in the covenant community, “single women over 30 were considered pathetic. Most of the women did stay home and have kids. Some did have jobs, but they were all ‘little,’ and the attitude was patronizing. You could be a woman with a career—but never a high-powered one.” She remembers that “the general feel was that women were the helpers, not the main event. Women were the wives of men, not half of humanity.” If these messages had been countered by a healthy family life, they might have caused less damage. Sadly, in Ms. Tyler’s case, the culture in her religious community only made things worse, fueling a deeply abusive situation at home.

It was not until she left her parents’ home that she began to understand the depth of the dysfunction in both her

The Catholic faith should help young women internalize the truth that they possess innate dignity.

family and her faith community. In college, Ms. Tyler was violently sexually assaulted. Her immediate reaction was, “I need to go to confession.” This was a wake-up call for her. As she put it, “if a survivor’s first thought the morning after is ‘I need to go to confession,’ then something is very, very wrong with the way they were raised and taught.” Ms. Tyler has since left the Catholic Church and is estranged from her family, who disowned her after they found out that she was living with her boyfriend.

Mere Moralism

On the other end of the spectrum, Sara Rennekamp, who grew up in Wisconsin, told me that she was always encouraged to pursue a career. In fact, in her education and faith formation, there was an assumption that a career should be a young woman’s priority, and that getting married and having children should be put off for another day. She sums up the attitude this way: “Your 20s are yours to do what you want with them, and then you get married in your 30s.” But, she says, “Following that rubric, there was very little about my 20s that prepared me for my 30s.”

When it came to both vocational guidance and character formation, the church didn’t offer Ms. Rennekamp anything different from the messages she got at her public school. Although her family was very involved in their parish—going to Mass weekly, attending religious education classes and singing in the folk choir together—Ms. Rennekamp feels there was something missing. “My formation had very little to do with a relationship with Jesus.” Instead, “it was more a kind of moralism. You know, ‘Be a good person’ type of thing.”

When Sara was in high school, news broke that the priest assigned to her parish, whom she liked and admired, had been credibly accused of sexual abuse. This revelation, along with the wider sexual abuse scandals of the early 2000s, made Ms. Rennekamp question the church, and her religious formation did not give her the tools to grapple with these deep betrayals. She remembers thinking, “If any

religion is good enough, and the end goal is just to be a good person, then why in the world would I be in a religion that has *these people* in charge?” The church’s teachings on gay marriage and abortion also troubled her. Concluding that “these teachings seem completely cruel,” Ms. Rennekamp went away to college, stopped practicing her faith and became, in her words, “very anti-religion.”

By age 24, she was living in Washington, D.C., and, as she put it, “really living the casual relationship lifestyle.” As she had been taught, Ms. Rennekamp was pursuing independence and a career. “I was living for myself,” she says. “I had the job, I was having fun with friends and then hooking up with guys.” She had everything the world had told her would make her happy. And yet, she says: “I was just utterly miserable. And I didn’t really know why. It was just kind of this latent anger and sadness just brewing in me.”

One day, through a providential series of events, Ms. Rennekamp found her way to confession with a priest who ended up introducing her to a woman named Anne. Week after week, Anne had Ms. Rennekamp over for dinner. Anne, who is in her 50s now, is single and has no children. She and Ms. Rennekamp forged a deep friendship as they worked through Ms. Rennekamp’s objections to church teaching. Anne “did a lot of the heavy lifting,” Ms. Rennekamp remembers, by “just creating a relationship and answering the questions in love.” Because Anne “was very, very successful and very, very smart,” she also “stood athwart” the stereotypical idea that “Catholic women are supposed to wear denim skirts and have 10 kids and home-school them.”

The church teaches that all women are called to motherhood. Not all women, though, are called to be physical mothers. Some, like Anne, receive others in a spirit of openness and receptivity, accepting and nurturing them as persons and helping them to grow as children of God. By building a relationship with Ms. Rennekamp, Anne helped her encounter Christ’s love for her. And simply by being who she was, she made Sara question her notions about what it might mean to be a faithful Catholic woman in the modern world. Anne’s “witness and her vocation as a single woman in my life was huge,” reflects Ms. Rennekamp gratefully. “That was used so marvelously and so beautifully by God to bring me back to him.”

All Extremes Hurt Women

Seeing women as merely “the wives of men” or equating the submission praised by St. Paul with codependency and subservience distorts the truth and beauty of church teaching. Rather than teaching young women that they



When Mary Daly Korson reflects on her upbringing, she emphasizes how much her parents' love and respect for one another was evident to their children and how the two worked together to decide what was best for their family.

must follow a rigid set of rules, parents and church leaders should encourage them to grow in love of God, developing their own gifts and discovering the personal and professional vocations that God has in store for them. The Catholic faith should help young women internalize the truth that they possess innate dignity and are worthy of respect and love. It should be a weapon against abuse and an antidote to trauma, not another set of chains keeping them from breaking free.

Ms. Tyler's covenant community was rooted in the Catholic Charismatic renewal, which took place after the Second Vatican Council, but the gender roles she was taught were based on older cultural stereotypes. Communities with more traditional liturgical leanings can also fall into this trap. From a traditionalist perspective, is easy to assume that when it comes to sex and marriage, what is old is good and what is new is bad. It is true that contemporary gender ideology is opposed to the Catholic vision of the human person. It is not true, however, that defending church teaching requires that we reject all of the advances of feminism. Indeed, Pope John Paul II called upon Catholics to proclaim a "new feminism."

Still, there is a reason that Pope John Paul II thought a *new* feminism was needed. The type of feminism that is most prominent in our society is based on a deeply flawed vision of the human person. When churches, parents and schools uncritically absorb and echo its message, as Ms. Rennekamp's did, they too err. When Catholic communities slide to this secular extreme, they risk encouraging young women to accept those premises of second-wave feminism that are false. These messages push young women to reject their own bodies and base their self-worth in social status and recognition while they ought to be growing in confidence in their worth as beloved daughters of God. Even if they remain nominally Catholic, these women

miss out on the richness of the church's tradition and the encounter with Christ that Catholicism offers.

Duties of Parents

So if we should not be telling women they are required to be stay-at-home mothers, and we should not be pushing them to put their careers above all else, what *should* we do? How can parents avoid falling into one of these extremes?

In a section titled "The Duties of Parents," the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* affirms that, first and foremost, "Parents must regard their children as *children of God* and respect them as *human persons*" as "they educate their children to fulfill God's law." The central way that they do this is "by *creating a home* where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule" (emphasis in original).

The church rightly emphasizes the importance of seeing each child as a unique person, with specific gifts and challenges, who will be called to love God and serve God through their own particular vocation. As parents strive to love one another and their children, showing tender attentiveness to one another's needs, they are giving their children their first and most powerful lesson in what it means to live out one's vocation. Single or divorced parents, too, can strive to show their children how to follow God in love and trust, and how God longs to give his grace to all of us, healing our wounds and leading us to himself.

It is not easy, but many families are quietly living out this middle way. When Mary Daly Korson reflects on her upbringing—first in Chicago and then in Louisville—she emphasizes how much her parents' love and respect for one another was evident to their children. Although her mother stepped away from her career as a physical therapist to stay at home with her children, Ms. Korson says, "it was never understood as, like, 'My husband's career is first,

Many families are quietly living out this middle way.

and I'm supposed to be at home with the children.' It was more, 'We're in this marriage, we're a team, and we're making decisions about what's best for the family, in regards to what our respective gifts and talents are, and this is how we've discerned it's going to be.'"

Focusing on the unique gifts and vocation of each member of the family, Ms. Korson's parents taught their daughters and sons that they had a responsibility "to nurture our talents and to do well in the world, to glorify God." They always emphasized that "careers and education are important, but they are secondary to your primary vocation, whether it be marriage or the celibate life." In their own lives, Ms. Korson's parents quietly but consistently put their family and faith first, getting up early or using the kids' naptime to pray daily, saying the rosary with their kids and bringing everyone to Mass and confession regularly. Through their actions, they showed their children the importance of building a relationship with God through prayer, one that would sustain them through whatever their futures may hold.

Beauty in Diversity

Leo Tolstoy was wrong about happy families—they are not all alike. They are each wonderfully different, made up of unrepeatable human persons whom God has chosen to love one another and help one another grow in love for him. The church's teaching on vocation reflects this truth.

Some families are drawn to more traditional life choices and styles of liturgy, while others are called to follow a more unconventional path or prefer to worship God in a more contemporary style. When it comes to the roles of women, there are harmful extremes at both ends—traditional and modern—that should be avoided. Yet ultimately parents should feel empowered to help their children explore the many ways of living out God's call in their lives. And parents can do this knowing that simply by living out their own vocations they can teach their children to know,



Photo courtesy of Sara Rennekamp

Sara Rennekamp, left, forged a deep friendship with Anne, right, who helped Ms. Rennekamp to work through many questions about church teaching. Anne became the godmother of Ms. Rennekamp's daughter.

love and serve God.

Parents of girls should take special care to help their daughters see womanhood as a gift and an essential part of their identity, whether or not they fit cultural stereotypes of femininity. After all, the church teaches that all women have special gifts that our culture desperately needs, both at home and in every other sphere of life. As St. John Paul II wrote in his "Letter to Women,"

[I]n giving themselves to others each day women fulfil their deepest vocation. Perhaps more than men, women *acknowledge the person*, because they see persons with their hearts. They see them independently of various ideological or political systems. They see others in their greatness and limitations; they try to go out to them and *help them* (No. 12, emphasis in original).

The world needs women—physical mothers and spiritual mothers, married women, single women and religious sisters, working women and homemakers—to build "a civilization of love." For as the *Catechism* tells us, love is "the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being," both male and female, for we are "created in the image and likeness of God, who is himself love."

Serena Sigillito is the editor of *Public Discourse*, the journal of the Witherspoon Institute. She recently completed a year-long Robert Novak Journalism Fellowship focusing on contemporary American women's experiences of work and motherhood. Follow her work at serenasigillito.substack.com.

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"Now more than ever, we must guarantee an outlook in which AI is developed with a focus not on technology, but rather for the good of humanity and of the environment, of our common and shared home and of its human inhabitants, who are inextricably connected."
--Pope Francis

SPIRIT & THE MACHINE

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FROM DEATH INTO LIFE

By Cecilia González-Andrieu

Our society has had a near-death experience. Will we emerge from it ready to live fully?

The decontamination station was set up by the front door. It included a box of disposable surgical masks, blue hospital booties and a generously sized bottle of hand sanitizer. At home, my family and friends had learned to follow this ritual against contagion five years before Covid-19 made it the norm in households around the world.

Chemotherapy and radiation were destroying my cancer cells—as well as my immune system. Long before our now-too-familiar lockdowns, I spent the better part of a year in isolation with my family, venturing out only to medical appointments. I was grateful that my doctors had allowed visits from friends, students and the Sisters of Saint Joseph, who are my neighbors and brought me the gift of Communion. During their visits, the always plain-spoken Sister Maria Lai suggested I keep notes about what I was learning. As a practiced spiritual director, she encouraged me to live into the possibility that what was revealed through my illness might flower into spiritually valuable insights.

None of us were sure I would survive. Cancer is that



way. But I did recover, thanks to access to quality medical care that is out of reach for the majority of our world. During my treatments, that awareness of my first-world privilege became a demanding companion that opened windows into other questions I had not tried to answer before. Today, five years from those tough days spent in the chemo ward, I wonder if the strange realities of quarantine, illness and catastrophic events hold clues for us all about our times. Once again, maybe this is a propitious time to talk about what we are learning from the moment we are living through.

Practicing Avoidance

Sister Maria is not the only one urging consideration of these larger questions. From the new film “Soul,” to “Coco” and “A Ghost Story” in 2017, to the complex films of Krzysztof Kieslowski, Alfonso Cuarón and Terrence Malick, and even to the classic and hope-filled “Groundhog Day,” the arts and popular culture have often invited audiences to contemplate their mortality. These films share the ultimate goal of awakening us to joyfully loving and abundant living.

As the screenwriter Ron Austin warns in his book *In A New Light: Spirituality and the Media Arts*, most of us “don’t really know how to see or listen.” This inattentiveness keeps us from embracing others and entering the dynamics of personal and societal transformation. Mr. Austin argues that one of the most important functions of the arts, especially films, is to take us through experiences of vulnerability, brokenness and mortality and to lead us to the insights these re-

veal. In this, the arts can be a vital part of how we approach religion. As St. John Paul II wrote in his “Letter to Artists” in 1999, “Human beings, in a certain sense, are unknown to themselves,” and so “[f]aced with the sacredness of life and of the human person, and before the marvels of the universe, wonder is the only appropriate attitude.” Thus, we who are alive are often not living at all. And those who face mortality with honesty have the potential within them to awaken to the wonder of life in truly revelatory ways.

It does not take much to see that mainstream American culture works incessantly at obscuring our mortality and the vulnerability of our societal constructions. We worship youthfulness and invest vast amounts of money in strategies that help us feign it. We closet away our sick and elderly in what we euphemistically call “homes.” We define normalcy as a state where every part of our body works flawlessly, leaving little room for anyone who needs our world to adapt to them and facilitate their being among us.

We glamorize unattainable levels of what some of us unilaterally determine as physical perfection, shamelessly selling the possibility of desirability and wealth that come with it. In doing all this, we neuter the power of vulnerability, fragility and our need for each other, instead seeking an imagined autonomous individuality and the kind of dominance that will hold us accountable to no one. The implosion of our present society in the United States—which has exposed poverty, inequality, racism and violent nativism—is the logical consequence of our studied alienation from our own humanity. St.



We who are alive are often not living at all.



John Paul II was right: We don't know ourselves at all.

Such bewildering resistance to attending to the fragility of existence represents the opposite of the insights about being human that are a natural part of the Christian story. We like to assert that God is teaching us—in God's solidarity with all flesh in human history through the person of Jesus Christ—how it is that despite brokenness, life erupts in all its glory. But for many, many months, countless numbers of our fellow humans have been living through a Calvary of sorts.

Over two million have lost their lives in less than a year to something unexpected, unknown and unrelenting. However, and most incongruously, rather than opening ourselves up in compassion, many of us have done everything we can to avoid acknowledging our fragility, our dependence on each other and, most sinfully, our responsibility for one another. Religious traditions, the arts and the experiences of suffering human beings all invite us to realize something, yet it seems that we are hell-bent (and I do mean hell) on missing it. We have had a near-death experience of earth-shaking magnitude. Will we emerge from it awake and ready to live fully the abundant life Jesus came to bring with and for one another?

The Assaults

The list of events that have rained destruction on our world lately is long. We start with the sexual abuse scandal in the Catholic Church, the revelations of manipulation, violation, cover-up and normalization of acts that destroyed the lives of the most vulnerable members of our community, our children. From there we take in the relentless victimization of women through domestic violence, systemic exclusion and the silent complicity of our entire culture. As our gaze widens even farther, we are forced to reckon with the racism that prevails in many white churches, pointed

out movingly by Martin Luther King Jr. six decades ago as he addressed fellow clergy members from a jail cell in Birmingham.

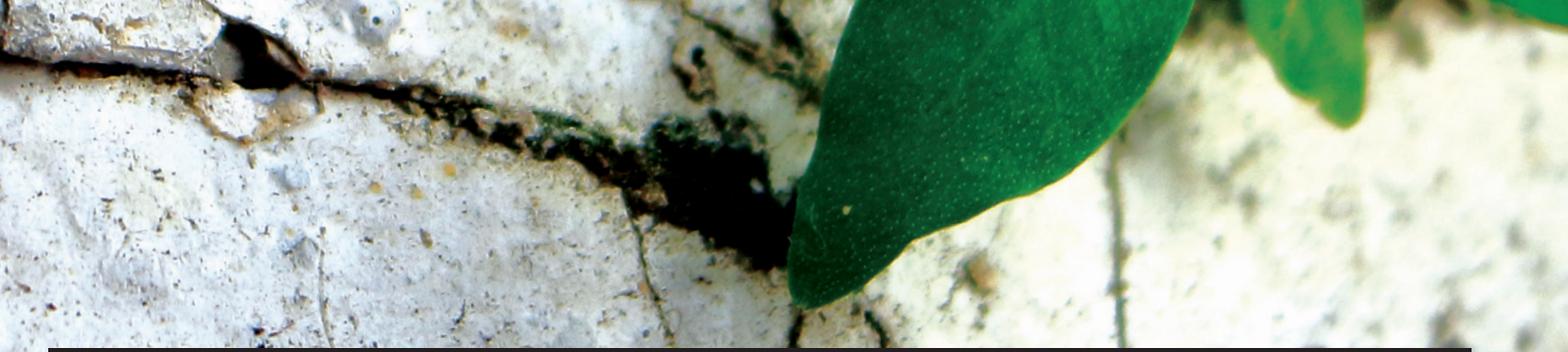
In words that sound as if they were written today, he warns in his "Letter From Birmingham Jail" in 1963 that instead of being allies against racism, too many congregations and their leaders "have been more cautious than courageous and have remained silent behind the anesthetizing security of stained-glass windows." All of these painful experiences should have been enough to bring us to our knees in humility, lead us to acknowledge our brokenness and then raise us up in solidarity. But there was so much more to come.

A microscopic virus seemingly jumped from non-human communities into ours, using our bodies to spread death and disease to every hemisphere. The inadequacy of health care systems was exposed, economies crumbled and, as always, the vulnerable of the world paid the highest price.

And then there was Jan. 6, 2021, when the world's self-proclaimed model democracy suffered a violent and deadly insurrection against its laws and lawmakers. Our country, which had lost much of its moral high ground with the election of Donald Trump and the years of lies he unleashed, now lived through the bloody results of electing so-called leaders for whom wielding unbridled personal power was the only goal.

And then there is climate change. Its effects are already catastrophic and caused in large part by our unrepentant greed.

This is not one hill of Calvary, it is many: humanity crucified and humanity doing the crucifying. This hill of suffering and death is at the center of our Christian story for a reason. When Christ could have been our model, we instead chose to become his executioners. When God came to show us how to love,



we instead killed that love on a cross. Is not the same story playing out today? In the United States, many of us have felt safe and far from the kind of suffering many other humans across our planet live with every day. Privileged and powerful, we have refused asylum to the desperate, access to health care to the sick, healing regulations to our agonizing environment and food and housing to the poor.

We thought we were so powerful that we could set our own terms for reality. How is that working out for us? Has God perhaps done as Mary promised and “dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart” (Lk 1:51)? Can we take this moment of absolute vulnerability to imagine who we can be as a people? Coming close to death in so many ways, can we embrace a new life?

I have no predictions about when the coronavirus might be eradicated, or when our economies might recover. I cannot see ahead into what may happen to our glaciers and to other species, but I can say this about our own species: We have the potential within us to learn and to change. The Cross was not a way to expiate our sin; it was the emblem of our sin so we may never forget it, and with hearts broken and open sin no more.

Rediscovering the *Magis*

In my hospital chemo ward, I found out that faith cannot be predicated on things always going right. As Pedro Arrupe, S.J., learned in solitary confinement as a prisoner of war in Japan during World War II, faith grows expansively into unconditional love when it faces suffering with honesty. “Alone as I was,” wrote Father Arrupe, “I learned the knowledge of silence, of loneliness, of harsh and severe poverty; the interior conversation with the ‘guest of the soul’ who had never shown himself to be more ‘sweet’ than then.”

After cancer, I had to learn what it was to be alive after facing mortality, and the only way to do that was to live fully into the *magis*. James Martin, S.J., sums up this Latin term from St. Ignatius, so central to the Ignatian way of being in the world, as wanting “to do the more, the better, the greater for God. Not for ourselves.” St. Ignatius leads us to this insight as he encourages us to ask every day, “What more can I do for Christ?” If as a world we have come so close to

death and yet still have the chance to pull ourselves back from the brink, how do we discover the *magis* and live by its demands? Let us add direction and purpose to our resolve, and let us give ourselves some *magis*-inspired goals.

We must become an encountering people. The notion that an abundant life is one lived in encounter is a central teaching and hope of Pope Francis. The disasters of our time point us in this direction resolutely. As forced isolation turned us toward screens and away from each other, perhaps our new life can include fewer screens and an intentional seeking out of others in the flesh, in the sounds, smells, colors and feel of truly being alive. When we open our eyes to what is beyond us, we can experience heartache and be moved to action on climate change as glaciers melt. When we seek unvarnished truth that sees the suffering of others, we can be moved by our outrage to enact legislation to provide health care to the sick and to the immigrant a home.

Broken by division, as an encountering people we will want to know one another as together we dismantle racism. In this new lease on life we have been given, we must discover the truth of the philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer’s exhortation, that “to reach an understanding with one’s partner in a dialogue is not merely a matter of total self-expression and the successful assertion of one’s point of view, but a transformation into a communion, in which we do not remain what we were.” A people of encounter is a people always involved in the project of building lasting peace, where care for the other is demanded just because we have finally seen someone’s face.

We must become a kenotic people. There is a strangeness to the Greek term *kenosis*, which in the New Testament appears only in verbal form: *kenōō*, “to empty.” The concept of *kenosis* speaks of long ago, and it speaks of the otherness of Jesus, whose everyday acts were always countercultural. How often do we empty ourselves enough to allow the space to contemplate the fact that we are not made for ourselves and our own survival? In the solidarity of shared fragility, we can see ourselves decentered and all held together by the Spirit. When we try to undergo *kenosis* ourselves, it can help us discern the ultimate goal: to continue to love and work for a suffering creation, to do the



A people of encounter is a people always involved in the project of building lasting peace, where care for the other is demanded just because we have finally seen someone's face.

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work begun by Jesus as he envisioned God's reign.

Scholars tell us that St. Paul wrote his letter to the young church of Philippi that gives us the theology of *kenosis* while he was in prison, facing possible execution. Paul was jailed so many times that three different locations for his writing are possible, and yet (so paradoxically as to require us to pause) scholars also refer to this letter from prison as "the letter of joy." In prison, Paul discovers that when we face our powerlessness and open our hearts fully to the Spirit, we become astonishingly free. In our wounded emptiness, we make room for grace. Before he puts forward his meditation on Jesus' self-emptying, Paul exhorts the community: "Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but [also] everyone for those of others" (Phil 2:3-4).

A people that is kenotic is always in the act of examining its motives, of removing all illusions of power, of becoming least—and rejoicing in being the servant to all in a life devoted to giving.

We must become a cosmic people. In the encyclical "Laudato Si'," Pope Francis writes of the attitude of boundless and integral love toward the entire cosmos found in the life of St. Francis of Assisi. Our contemporary Francesco describes how for his namesake, "each and every creature was a sister united to him by bonds of affection. That is why he felt called to care for all that exists" (No. 11).

Pope Francis sees a direct connection between St. Francis' way of living in the world as an ever-expanding love that breaks all boundaries and the saint's "refusal to turn reality into an object simply to be used and controlled" (No. 11).

Our cosmic kinship comes from seeing this relatedness and living into it. In describing ourselves as cosmic, we refuse to allow claims about the dominance of humanity over the rest of creation to absolutize what cannot be absolute, and to assert domination over a creation that is not ours but God's. In seeing ourselves as a cosmic humanity, we are called to reach out constantly in search of an ever-widening circle of "us," which includes not only the human race but all that God made and declared good (Gn 1:31).

We must become a people that values beauty. Finally, coming awake to our desire to be alive we come to its fullest representation: beauty. If we place being beautiful as a marker for the human race, this requires us to hold together the one and the many and to seek wholeness as a way to express our exuberance and fruitfulness. We become beautiful when we are abundant, not miserly, when we welcome difference rather than fear it, when we enjoy encounter and express ourselves in ever-widening circles of cosmic communion, becoming open and inviting to the whole world. Fyodor Dostoyevsky famously said "beauty will save the world" and St. John Paul II echoed him. What could that mean to a world that is experiencing unrelenting calamities?

Beauty is not an idea; it is visible and felt; it engenders love within us and invites us to it. Similarly, the absence of beauty repels us—and is also a very efficient way for us to notice what is wrong and needs our attention.

Beauty—in its presence or its absence—is therefore an ethical marker, a pointer, an assurance of being on the right path or of having terribly failed. The year 2020 was, for many, one lacking beauty in almost every sense. Be-

AMERICA'S GUIDE TO RETREATS

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



Bellarmino Jesuit Retreat House

420 W. County Line Road, Barrington, IL 60010
Ph: (847) 381-1261; Email: info@jesuitretreat.org
Website: www.jesuitretreat.org

Bellarmino Jesuit Retreat House is located on 80 acres of rolling meadows and wooded countryside 40 miles northwest of Chicago. Bellarmino offers silent retreats for men and women based on St. Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*. Other offerings include day-long spirituality programs, 12-step recovery retreats, and directed retreats. Learn more at jesuitretreat.org.



Benet Hill Monastery

3190 Benet Lane, Colorado Springs, CO 80921
Ph: (719) 633-0655 ext. 132; Website: www.benethillmonastery.org

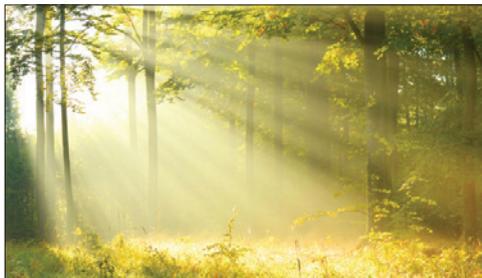
Come away to pray, listen, think, reflect, rest and enjoy the hospitality of the Benedictine sisters in the beautiful Black Forest of north Colorado Springs. In summer or winter, walk the Labyrinth or prayer paths in the quiet peaceful forest. We offer spiritual direction when requested. Please visit www.benethillmonastery.org for more information.



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18150 Bethany Center Drive, Lutz, FL 33558
Ph: (813) 960-6313; Email: ddebrino@bethanycenterfl.org
Website: www.bethanycenterfl.org

Bethany Center is a place of spiritual renewal, gathering and education. We are located in the Tampa Bay area on a 200-acre wildlife preserve. Our retreat and conference facility provides meeting spaces, overnight accommodations, and catering services with generous hospitality in a spiritual atmosphere. We welcome all faith traditions as well as professional organizations.



Campion Center Conference & Renewal

1319 Concord Road, Weston, MA 02493
Ph: (781) 419-1337; Website: www.campioncenter.org/programs

Campion Center is a convener of Ignatian conversations extending Jesuit hospitality to all, especially those who have drifted away from God or are adrift in the world seeking reconciliation, personal meaning, and a connection with God. We offer a special outreach to refugees, those experiencing homelessness, suffering from addiction, and people whose dignity has been violated.



Cloud-Bearing Mountain Christian Retreat & Training Center

1714 Mountain Brook Road, Bovina, NY 13740
Ph: (607) 326-0052; Website: www.cbmountain.org

Located in the beautiful Catskill Mountains of New York State and grounded in the ancient Apostolic faith, Cloud-Bearing Mountain provides training in contemplative prayer and the Christian spiritual life. We offer individual and group silent directed retreats, and other programs aimed at knowledge of God through intimacy with Christ.



Ignatius House Jesuit Retreat Center

6700 Riverside Drive NW, Sandy Springs, GA 30328
Ph: (404) 255-0503; Email: retreats@ignatiushouse.org
Website: www.ignatiushouse.org

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Jesuit Center for Spiritual Growth

P.O. Box 223, 501 N. Church Road, Wernersville, PA 19565
Ph: (610) 670-3642; Email: mleonowitz@jesuitcenter.org
Website: www.jesuitcenter.org

The Jesuit Center for Spiritual Growth, situated on 240 acres in Wernersville, Pa., is a place of natural beauty, welcoming quiet, and spiritual sustenance. We offer a variety of retreats and programs based on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius for Roman Catholics, Christians of every denomination, and seekers.



Jesuit Retreat House on Lake Winnebago

4800 Fahrwald Road, Oshkosh, WI 54902
Ph: (920) 231-9060; Email: office@jesuitretreathouse.org
Website: www.jesuitretreathouse.org

Jesuit Retreat House on Lake Winnebago, Oshkosh, Wis, offers preached retreats; five-day and eight-day directed retreats; and a hermitage year-round, for all who want to relax in one of our 60 bedrooms, with private bathrooms, and in the silence of 23 lakeshore acres, with plentiful prayer and common space.



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Ph: (513) 248-3500; Email: reservations@jesuitspiritualcenter.com
Website: www.jesuitspiritualcenter.com

Celebrating over 90 years of retreat ministry, the Jesuit Spiritual Center, located outside Cincinnati, sits on 37 beautiful acres along a scenic river, providing a tranquil place for prayer and renewal. In the Ignatian tradition, overnight conference retreats and week-long personally directed retreats are offered year-round. Visit www.jesuitspiritualcenter.com for our complete retreat listing.



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4801 North Highway 67, P.O. Box 185, Sedalia, CO 80135
Ph: (866) 930-1181 ext. 122 or (303) 688-4198 ext. 122
Website: www.sacredheartretreat.org

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Springbank Retreat Center for EcoSpirituality & The Arts

1345 Springbank Road, Kingstree, SC 29556
Ph: (843) 382-9777; Email: springbank@springbankretreat.org
Website: www.springbankretreat.org

Fall 2021 Sabbaticals: Sept. 15-Dec. 8. Programs focus on healing, nourishing and empowering women. Four-, eight-, and 12-week programs provide spiritual and physical renewal and ways of relating with Earth, self and all beings. Surroundings are conducive to quiet prayer and contemplative solitude. Morning and afternoon programs allow time to walk, rest and work with clay, basketry or watercolors. Spiritual direction, massage and healing body work available.



“

Those who face mortality with honesty have the potential within them to awaken to the wonder of life in truly revelatory ways. ”

Continued from Page 34

cause of this experience, we know exactly what the absence of beauty looks and feels like in particular moments. We know what is wrong, missing, in need of healing. If we hold ourselves to the requirement of being beautiful, then exclusion, animus, bickering, blame and all other forms of ugliness quickly become obvious signs of abject failure. If we are to be beautiful, we must replace these with inclusivity, compassion, mercy and forgiveness.

Beauty is not difficult to spot, but as the theologian Alex García-Rivera expressed it, “beauty must be loved to be known.” Beauty will call us to it in our very hearts and ask from us love to keep it alive. And when it is heartbreakingly absent—as during many of these moments that will inevitably continue to come—the heartbreak will call us to the type of radical transformation that welcomes beauty back, that allows us to see it when it is there, and that fills our hearts with love again.

Beauty is every moment when we make present the reign of God.

When we embrace these markers of transformation, we will be able to say that after we were broken, we rose again ready to live out the *magis*, *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam*.

Cecilia González-Andrieu is a professor of theological studies at Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, Calif., and a contributing writer for *America*.

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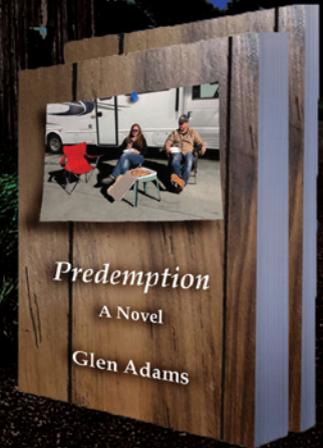
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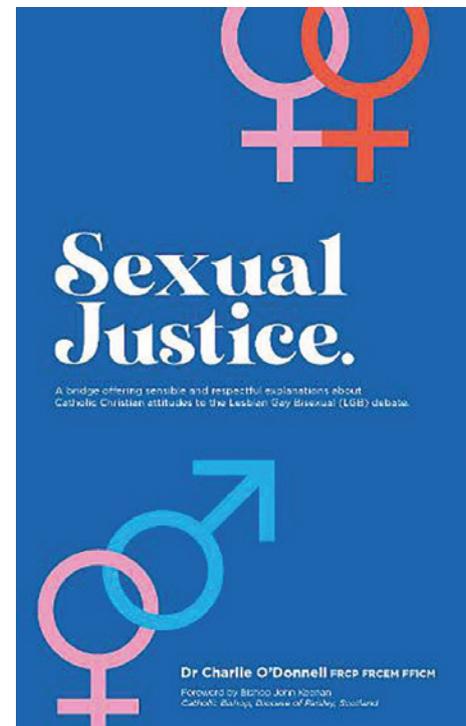
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THE CHALLENGE OF SPEAKING TO A DIVIDED NATION AND CHURCH

The task of communicators is to listen in charity and to tell the truth

By Thomas J. Reese

These are challenging times. Not only is our country divided; our church is as well. Such times are especially challenging for Catholic journalists, preachers, teachers and other communicators who must work and minister in this world. How does one speak to a divided nation, a divided church? How do we heal these divisions?

The divisions in our country have been evident over the past year, most prominently during the presidential election, during the nationwide protests against police violence and most recently in the assault on the nation's Capitol on Jan. 6. These divisions are not going to disappear magically during the tenure of the new president.

Our divisions are deep on issues like racism and economic inequality, as well as on education, cultural values and lifestyles. There are divides between the young and the old, between urban and rural, between men and women. We do not listen to the same music or the same news pro-

grams. While our pluralism is one of our greatest strengths, it is also a challenge to our national unity.

Likewise, our church is divided. We have remarkable ethnic diversity in the Catholic Church in the United States, with parishes everywhere made up of people of European, Latin American, Native American, African and Asian heritage. This is both a blessing and a challenge.

The sexual abuse scandal has also caused a rupture in the church, as the laity has been rightly outraged by the hierarchy's failure in the past to deal appropriately with bad priests. Many are also upset with the hierarchy because of its political stances or refusal to advance women to ordination.

Our church is also as politically divided as the nation is. Half of U.S. Catholics voting in 2020 cast ballots for Donald J. Trump; half voted for Joseph R. Biden Jr. We have Catholics who emphasize the pro-life teaching of the church above all else; we also have Catholics who empha-

Joseph R. Biden Jr. is sworn in as the 46th president of the United States as his wife, Jill Biden, holds the family Bible at the U.S. Capitol in Washington on Jan. 20, 2021.

size the church's teachings on justice and the environment. Some Catholics have more in common with conservative evangelicals than with their fellow Catholics, while others have more in common with liberal Episcopalians than with their fellow Catholics.

We have Catholics who want the church to change the world, while others simply want a quiet place to pray and be consoled.

Nor is it only the laity who are divided; so are bishops and priests. We see bishops arguing with one another in public. Meanwhile, our parishes are run very differently by different pastors. As a result, many people vote with their feet (really with their cars) when it comes to where they attend Mass. They no longer go to the closest parish; they go to the parish where they feel at home with the priest and the community. And many more, although nominally Catholic, simply do not go to church.

Others have left the Catholic Church entirely. About one third of those raised Catholic have left that church. These ex-Catholics make up over 13 percent of the U.S. population; if they were to get together to form a church, they would be the

second largest denomination in the United States, behind only the remaining Catholics.

The First Task: Listen

What are communicators to do in the face of these divisions? The first job of a communicator is to listen. Listening is just as important a ministry as preaching. We must listen before we speak or write. The first lesson in Communications 101 is "know your audience." What are their worries, what moves them, what do they love, what people and events have shaped their lives? What are their questions?

When I was a young priest, my parish had a prayer group that would discuss and pray over the Scripture readings for the coming Sunday. The participants were not theologically sophisticated, but their thoughts and reflections helped me when I sat down to prepare my

homily. I could speak to their concerns because I had first listened.

Journalists also must listen to their sources to truly understand what they are saying, to know how to quote them accurately and fairly. If journalists are not sympathetic with their interview subject after the fact, then they have not asked the right questions. In the mid-1980s, when I was researching my book *Archbishop: Inside the Power Structure of the American Catholic Church*, I found that every archbishop I interviewed had something worthwhile to say, something worth quoting—even the archbishops with whom I disagreed both theologically and pastorally. If we ask the right questions and listen, we will be privileged to see into the soul of our interviewee.

In this year's message for World Communications Day, Pope Francis tells journalists to hit the streets, to meet people face to face: "to spend time with people, to listen to their stories and to confront reality, which always in some way surprises us."

Listening is not just useful in helping us to communicate better: It is itself a healing art. Listening is a sign of respect to those who feel left out and disrespected. Many of those who are alienated in our nation and our church feel disrespected. They feel that no one cares. This applies to victims of racism when white people dismiss their concerns by saying, "But everything is so much better than it was." It applies to workers whose factories have closed when they are told, "Just move to where there is work" or "Get retrained."

It applies to women who ask why they cannot be priests. It applies to gay men and women who want to know why they cannot be with the one they love. It applies to undocumented immigrants and their children who fear deportation. It applies to the victims of abuse of every kind when they too often hear, "Just get over it."

But it also applies to those who ask other questions about neuralgic issues: Why do things have to change? Why are you causing confusion? Why can't I go to a Latin Mass? Why are transgender people in the girls' bathroom?

Smart politicians, smart clergy and smart communicators know the importance of listening. After you listen, people are more likely to listen to you. Experts have repeatedly told bishops that one of the best things they can do for victims of abuse is to listen to them. They need to be heard. They need to tell their stories. They need to be listened to.

Listening is Godly. God spends most of his time listen-

CNS photo/Kevin Lamarque, Reuters

While our pluralism is one of our greatest strengths, it is also a challenge to our national unity.

ing to our prayers. Prayers are healing because we get to talk, and God listens.

Separating Fact From Fiction

When, after listening, we do finally speak, we need to separate fact from opinion. Journalistically, we speak of separating news from opinion. When I was younger, there was a clear separation in the newspaper between the news section and the editorial page. No more.

Two things have destroyed the news business: the internet, which took advertising revenues from print outlets, and Rupert Murdoch, who with Fox News broke down the wall separating news from opinion. When Fox News saw its ratings go up, CNN and MSNBC quickly followed its example.

In the old days, opinion was a brief dessert in the newspaper after a substantial meal of facts and news. Today, news and facts are subservient to opinion. We eat dessert without the nourishment of facts. As a result, the whole country is on a sugar high. No wonder we are bouncing off the walls.

At the same time, we should not be afraid of a variety of opinions, if they are expressed sincerely and respectfully. From 1998 to 2005, when I was editor in chief of **America**, I got in trouble because people in the Vatican and among the U.S. bishops did not like some of the opinions we published. We always had articles on both sides of a topic, but that did not matter. They wanted only their opinions expressed.

Theology and pastoral practice cannot develop without discussion and argument. We need to learn how to express the Christian message in a way that is understandable in the 21st century. We will not do that with 13th-century language.

Just as Augustine and Aquinas took the best intellectual thought of their times, whether it was Neoplatonism or

Aristotelianism, and used it to explain the faith to their generation, so too we must take the best thought of our time to explain the faith to those who will live in the 21st century. Terms like *transubstantiation* do not have much meaning if you do not understand Aristotelian metaphysics. Saying that homosexuality is “intrinsically disordered” means one thing to a Thomistic philosopher and something entirely different to a modern psychologist.

Under Pope Francis, things have changed. At the first synod of bishops in his papacy, he encouraged the participants to speak freely, even to disagree with him. He cited the example of St. Paul, who took on St. Peter at a meeting in Jerusalem when the early disciples debated whether converts to Christianity had to be circumcised and follow Jewish dietary laws. Luckily, Paul convinced Peter and James, and the rest is history.

If Peter and Paul could argue, if Pope Francis can welcome disagreement, then as Catholics we must learn how to deal with differences of opinion the way a family does, not the way politicians do.

Speaking the Truth in Love

Finally, as communicators we must speak the truth. This exhortation should not be needed for Christians, but we know that the truth has at times been suppressed by the church, especially when it came to sexual abuse by members of the clergy. The recently published “McCarrick Report” shows that bishops lied even to the Vatican.

Fear of scandalizing the faithful was the rationale for lying to the faithful, but the faithful were even more scandalized by the cover-up. Fear of lawsuits led to stonewalling by bishops and chanceries on releasing information about abusers, but the stonewalling motivated juries to increase payouts. Outlets like The National Catholic Reporter that tried to expose the scandal were roundly condemned for trying to destroy the Catholic Church, yet clerics in charge of the church did more to destroy it than anyone else. The church’s credibility was severely damaged by the lies and cover-up. As they say in Washington, the cover-up is worse than the crime.

As Catholics, we must truly believe that “the truth will set you free.” Truth-telling can also mean speaking like the biblical prophets, challenging people with facts and opinions they do not want to hear. But how do we give people facts and opinions that they do not want?

In his World Communications Day message, Pope Francis asks who will inform people about the lack of Covid-19 treatment in the poverty-stricken villages of Asia,

Latin America and Africa: “Social and economic differences on the global level risk dictating the order of distribution of anti-Covid vaccines, with the poor always at the end of the line,” he writes. “The right to universal health care [is] affirmed in principle, but stripped of real effect.”

Even in the developed world, he laments, “the social tragedy of families rapidly slipping into poverty remains largely hidden; people who are no longer ashamed to wait in line before charitable organizations in order to receive a package of provisions do not tend to make news.”

Being a Catholic communicator is a vocation that requires listening, knowing the difference between fact and opinion, being open to a variety of opinions, truth-telling, courage and humility. You must have the courage to tell your listener that he or she is wrong while having the humility to know that you can be wrong too. Like a prophet, a communicator must “comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.”

The ministry of communications is part of the ministry of the Word. Sometimes it requires a challenging word; at other times it requires words of comfort. Isaiah and Jesus knew how to do both. We can only pray to follow in their footsteps.

Pope Francis concluded his 2021 World Communications Day message with a prayer:

Lord, teach us to move beyond ourselves, and to set out in search of truth.

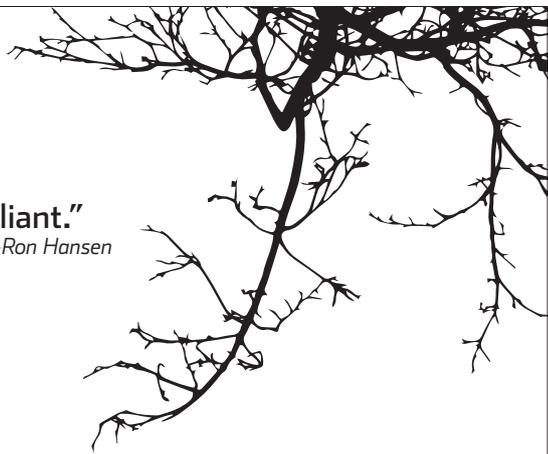
Teach us to go out and see, teach us to listen, not to entertain prejudices or draw hasty conclusions.

Teach us to go where no one else will go, to take the time needed to understand, to pay attention to the essentials, not to be distracted by the superfluous, to distinguish deceptive appearances from the truth.

Grant us the grace to recognize your dwelling places in our world and the honesty needed to tell others what we have seen.

Thomas J. Reese, S.J., is a senior analyst for Religion News Service and was editor in chief of *America* from 1998 to 2005. An earlier version of this article was given as a talk to the 77th Annual Salesian Guild meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio on Jan. 24, 2021.

“Brilliant.”
—Ron Hansen



O DEATH, *Where is thy sting?*

A MEDITATION ON SUFFERING



Creatively weaving together meditations on the poor of El Salvador, the Toronto L’Arche community, the attacks of September 11, and various other encounters, Hoover confronts, denies, and reclaims theology,

philosophy, art, and personal stories to grapple with the eternal, vexing question of the presence of God in human suffering.

Joe Hoover, SJ, is a Jesuit brother working as a playwright and actor, as well as poetry editor at America Media. He is from Omaha, attended Marquette University, and lives in a Jesuit community in Brooklyn.

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Coming in 2022: Pilgrimages to the Holy Land, Spain and France

Dear Friends:

America and the Catholic Travel Centre invite you to come on pilgrimage with us! We have three exciting and enriching pilgrimages to the Holy Land, Spain and France planned for 2022.

Deepening our spirituality alongside our readers is an important part of our ministry here at **America**. We structure our pilgrimages as a retreat, with ample time for prayer and reflection, as well as faith sharing with your fellow pilgrims. Mass is also celebrated together, and we build in time for conversations with **America** editors and staff.

By joining us on pilgrimage, part of your registration fee directly supports a scholarship fund for Jesuit educators and religious who might not otherwise be able to participate. With your support they are able to share their experience with their students and communities for years to come.

All of us are looking forward to a brighter 2022 and to formally restarting our pilgrimage and travel program in the months to come. In consultation with the Catholic Travel Centre, our pilgrimage partner, we are planning the following pilgrimages:

Walking in the Footsteps of Jesus in the Holy Land: February 24-March 6, 2022

- Under the leadership of Father James Martin, S.J., and Father Matt Malone, S.J., we'll walk in the footsteps of Jesus. It is a profound experience to see and pray at the sites where Jesus was born, lived, preached, died and rose from the dead. We'll visit Bethlehem, Nazareth and Cana, stay on the banks of the Sea of Galilee, explore Jerusalem and celebrate Mass at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

A Journey Through Ignatian Spain: April 24-May 2, 2022

- As we journey through Ignatian Spain under the leadership of Father Matt Malone, S.J., we will celebrate the life and spirit of the Jesuits' founder, St. Ignatius Loyola. Our path will follow the adventures and challenges of his life and his companions. We'll follow the Ignatian maxim to find God in all things by traversing Pamplona to Javier (Xavier), the home of Francis Xavier, visit Loyola, stay in the mountains of Montserrat, celebrate Mass in Manresa near the River Cardener, enjoy the gorgeous countryside, all while viewing the architectural wonders of Barcelona and savoring delicious Spanish cuisine.

A Pilgrimage to Our Lady of Lourdes and Journey Through Ignatian Paris: Fall 2022

- Led by Father James Martin, S.J., and Father Matt Malone, S.J., we'll walk with Our Lady in Lourdes (where she appeared to St. Bernadette Soubirous) and celebrate Mass in the grotto, as well as explore the Paris of St. Ignatius Loyola with visits to Montmartre and Sainte-Chappelle, among other sites.

We know that travel in the post-Covid world is going to require greater flexibility in terms of airlines, hotels and daily itinerary, but rest assured that **America** is committed to coordinating meaningful and spiritually fulfilling experiences for all pilgrims.

Space is limited, so please let us know you are interested as soon as you can by sending an email to our pilgrimage coordinator, Michelle Smith, at msmith@americamedia.org.

We hope you'll join us on one or more of these pilgrimages in the months to come!



Rev. Matthew F. Malone, S.J.
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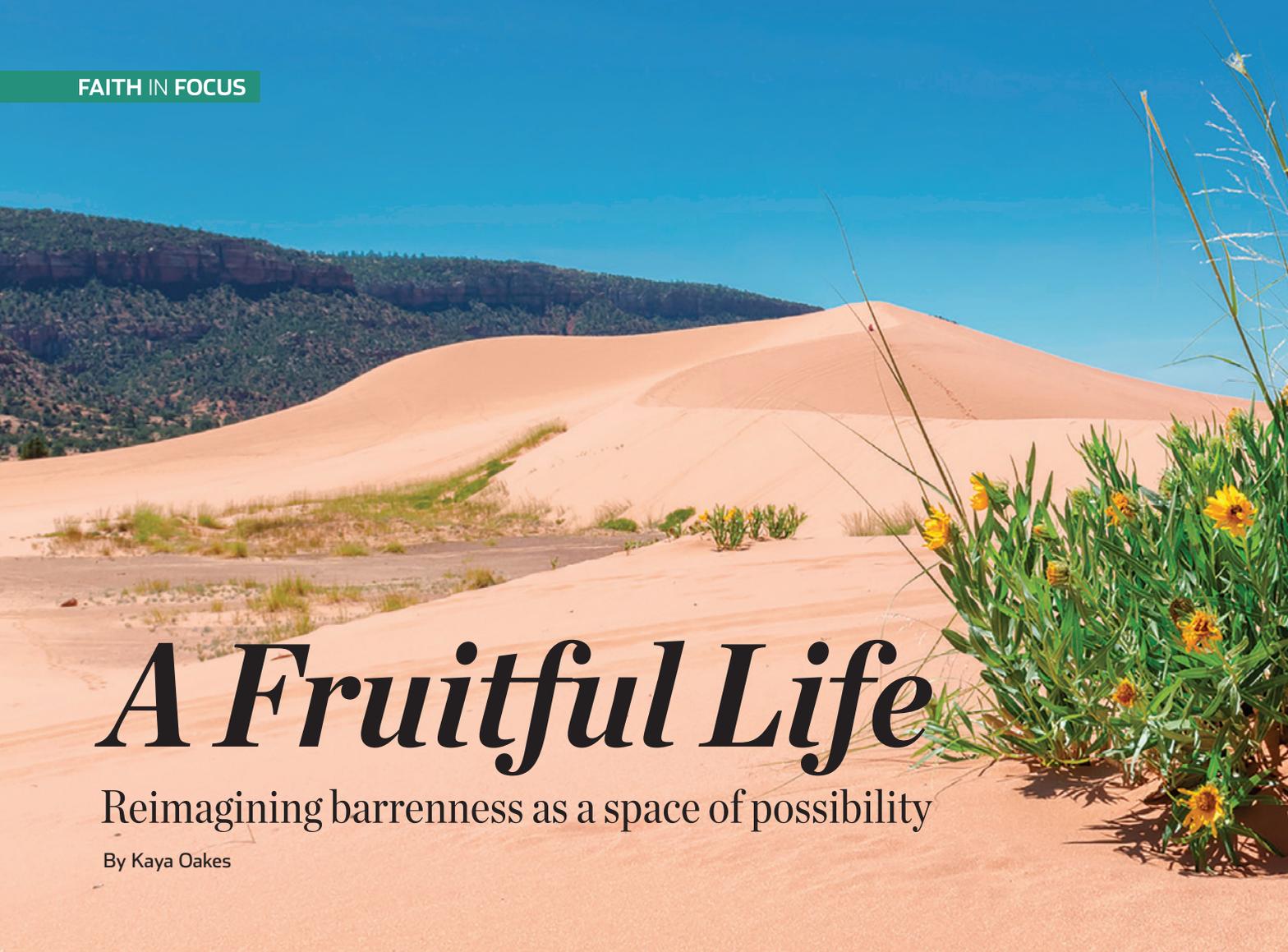
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A Fruitful Life

Reimagining barrenness as a space of possibility

By Kaya Oakes

A few years ago, I was at a Sunday Mass at a church where a friend was serving as a deacon. It was Mother's Day, and at the end of the service, every woman in the congregation who was a mother was asked to come forward to receive a flower. Roses, I think. Red ones. As women filtered out of the pews around me and the priest smiled and waved them forward, I remained seated, sharing an embarrassed smile with the woman next to me. It was really nobody's business that we did not have children, but now everyone around us knew. I am stoic by nature and do not cry easily, but shame welled up inside of me, and so did a burst of unexpected tears. Embarrassed, I gathered my things and left.

Two years later, I had a hysterectomy. Hysterectomy is major surgery, with potential consequences ranging from early menopause to increased risk of heart disease if the ovaries are also removed. No one goes through it cavalierly. After three decades of severe monthly pain and heavy bleeding, I went to the emergency room one night and was told that multiple large cysts on my ovaries were beginning to rupture. After a series of follow-up scans and biopsies, it

was clear that I needed surgery, which I had in May 2019.

My surgery took place about six months after the Vatican issued a follow up to its 1983 document on hysterectomies. This update took up the question of whether or not a uterus that is "no longer suitable" for procreation can be licitly removed from a woman's body. According to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, a "defective" uterus, one that cannot support a pregnancy, can be removed without sterilizing a woman, because she is effectively already sterile.

The document does not go into the medical reasons why a woman would undergo a hysterectomy, but they are far from uncommon. After cesarean sections, a hysterectomy is the second most common surgery women go through, with half a million being performed annually in the United States. For most women, hysterectomies are a last resort after enduring years of crippling pain and severe bleeding from conditions like adenomyosis, fibroids, or because of cancer in the uterus, cervix, fallopian tubes or ovaries.

I have a condition called endometriosis. The condition



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causes the lining of my uterus to leave deposits on the internal organs as it sheds, and these deposits swell and bleed. They can also cause the kind of ovarian cysts I had. Endometriosis causes infertility, severe pain and heavy bleeding, which in turn can lead to anemia, fatigue, digestive issues, and in some cases is linked to an increased risk of cancer. One in 10 women has it, but it is difficult to diagnose, so many assume their pain is normal. I also had fibroids, problems with my uterine lining and a cervical polyp. In other words, my uterus was not only “no longer suitable”—it had never really worked properly. I was barren, and by the time I had the surgery in my late 40s, I had mostly made peace with that.

But my church kept reminding me that this barrenness made me an outlier. It was not just the Mother’s Day celebrations. It was also the constant talk about Catholic “supermoms,” the focus on families with children, the praise of fertility and fecundity as the true measure of womanhood. As the daughter of a mother who worked full time, raised five children and was widowed at a young age, I recognize

that bringing up a family really is a superpower and that mothers do incredible things. But women who don’t have children—and are not women religious—also have many gifts to give the church and the world. I know we exist, and I know we’re not alone. But we are hard to find in the Catholic imagination.

Catholics are accustomed to thinking about celibate, childless clergy and women religious, and we are accustomed to celebrating that choice. Celibate clergy can talk about how not having children frees them up to share love with more people and to be self-sacrificing, but in my experience, conversation among parish groups for women always focuses on children in one way or another. The first question I am always asked when I attend a new parish is whether or not I have kids, which is always an awkward, embarrassing and, frankly, invasive moment.

There are as many reasons why a woman may not have children as there are women, and I do not think interlocutors about my fertility really want to sit through a list of my medical woes. We are increasingly aware, for example,

The first question I am always asked when I attend a new parish is whether or not I have kids. 🍀🍀

that it is not O.K. to greet someone by saying they look like they have lost weight. They may, after all, have cancer or be recovering from Covid-19, or they may have an eating disorder. They may be grieving or depressed. Why, then, do so many people persist in beginning conversations by asking women if they have children? In her book *The Mother of All Questions*, the writer Rebecca Solnit says her comeback to this question is “Would you ask a man that?” and that this response usually ends the conversation. But she also writes that asking if a woman has children “assumes there is only one proper way for a woman to live.”

So like many other women in my situation, I have had to recast my understanding of barrenness to see it as a space of possibility. It took the help of a Jewish friend to get there.

Over the past year, as I have been working on a book about social and religious expectations of how women should be, I have also participated in a writing group made up of women who do not have children. This was just a coincidence—we never set out to make it exclusive. But I have found the group to be a helpful place to think through ideas about women who are outliers. And as I wrestled with the problem of failing to find examples of childless women in the Bible, one of my friends suggested I look into Queen Esther and the Purim story.

On the feast of Purim, the Scroll of Esther is read in synagogues as Jewish people celebrate her key role in their delivery from annihilation. Discovering that a pivotal figure like Esther, who saves her people from death, also happens to be childless, can help us understand that childlessness in Scripture cannot be understood only as a curse. For some of the women in the Hebrew Bible, childlessness ends when God “opens their wombs.” But for others, the absence or presence of children is simply never mentioned (and this in a book obsessed with lineage), yet these women

are honored and celebrated as heroic figures, prophetesses and deliverers of their people. Perhaps Esther never had children, but instead the Jewish people of Persia, saved by her quick thinking, become heirs to her legacy.

Miriam, the sister of Moses and one of the major prophetesses, is associated with Miriam’s Well, a miraculous spring that kept the Israelites alive during the Exodus. Since the 1980s, Jewish feminists have added a cup of water to the seder table to celebrate Miriam’s *mayim hayim*—the “living water” Jesus will later drink from when it is handed to him by a woman, also at a well. Letty Cottin Pogrebin says that for Jewish women, Miriam, who led her people through the parted waters of the Red Sea by singing and dancing, “introduced the notion of radical change as worthy of celebration.” And unlike her brother Moses, it is never mentioned that Miriam had children.

In the New Testament, Jesus first appears after his resurrection to another Jewish woman, Mary Magdalene, who runs and tells the male apostles what she has seen. This means that the earliest embodiment of Christianity is in a single, childless woman. Like Esther and Miriam, if Mary Magdalene ever had children, they are not mentioned, and that frees her up not only to be an apostle, but to spend time with Jesus to build a relationship of deep trust. Unfortunately, that relationship has been imagined by everyone from Nikos Kazantzakis to Dan Brown as carnal and regenerative, rather than platonic. Because what could two childless people possibly get up to other than sex and reproduction? But feminist theologians would rather meet Mary Magdalene as she arrives: alone, unencumbered and ready to reinvent herself.

A shrine in Saint-Maximin-la-Saint-Baume, France, is believed to be Mary Magdalene’s last resting place. According to local lore, she arrived there in a boat without oars or sails and later spent her days in a cave, ministering to those who managed to find her. For centuries, the more common teaching in the Catholic Church, despite a lack of evidence, was that Mary Magdalene was a repentant prostitute whose only option for redemption was to seek forgiveness from a man. Imagine if we had learned, instead, that she arrived in a new country of her own volition, shaped her own reinvention and led her community through dangerous times.

No woman deserves to be seen as one-dimensional. There are as many kinds of mothers as there are women without children. We must not reduce motherhood to pious clichés. We must recognize all the complexities that

come with having children as well as the fact that the moral and ethical and psychological complexities all women must negotiate are not solely determined by their ability to procreate. If I was embarrassed and ashamed on the day the church called mothers up to the altar for flowers, imagine how much more painful that experience might be for the woman struggling with infertility, the woman with ovarian cancer or the woman whose child has died.

Our Catholic faith, rooted in the faith of people who lived in the deserts, has sometimes missed out on the complexities of women's lives. But those who look at a desert and see lifelessness have missed the genius of creation that allows cacti to store water in their flesh, gives people the vision of building their homes in the side of cave walls, helps every kind of crawling and leaping thing to adapt. Like everything alive in the desert, women who live without children adapt and survive. Sometimes it strikes me that this is what Esther, Miriam, Vashti, Judith, the midwives Shiphrah and Puah, Dinah, the unnamed daughters of Zelophehad, Deborah, Yael, Tabitha, Anna the prophetess, Mary and Martha of Bethany, and many of the women in the early church like Lydia, Junia and Phoebe—none of whom are described as mothers—had to do to survive in their own era. Any woman trying to recreate herself when others have looked at her and seen only emptiness may instead find other ways to nurture and care for the world around her.

Perhaps that does not earn us a flower, but that does not mean we cannot grow.

Kaya Oakes, a contributing writer for *America*, teaches writing at the University of California, Berkeley. Her fifth book, *The Defiant Middle*, will be released in fall 2021.

Virus

By Michael Cadnum

My memory
plus my travels add up
to you, with your lovely
laugh, and your stewardship of
the field from the highway to the creek—
even the crows know you're here.
The bare agates of the stream-bed are
as smooth as eyes

in a land
I cannot know. I am a microdot,
the letter between A and B, the number
between zero and emptiness.

The snake is a word unwriting itself.
The killdeer flies by nearly falling.
But I am absent. What did I just say?

Silence multiplied by silence equals
absolute peace over
and over, a treasury of white noise.
Your clothing keeps the memory
of your limbs. The glove keeps the shape

of your grip. What was I keeping
when you reached your hand
to my not-yet? This is where I end.

It's true, you dreaded the legend,
alive without living. Did I ask
a question? The drought has
no feelings, but the green

grass around the sprinkler head thrives.
I am this fresh quiet,
this door latch, this welcome mat,
the sowbug like a fossil ending everything.
And beginning. I'm home.

Michael Cadnum is the author of nearly 40 books, including the *National Book Award* finalist *The Book of the Lion*. His poetry collections include *Kingdom* and the forthcoming *The Promised Rain*.



To See Perfectly

What the conversion of St. Ignatius can teach us today

By Jean Luc Enyegue

In 1597, on the same day that she went completely blind, a woman from Mallorca named Noguere was touched by the relics of Saint Ignatius. She reported that a scent of roses filled her with a sweet consolation. The acute pain in her eyes suddenly subsided. She began to see things faintly, and the next day she saw perfectly. This healing was one of the supporting miracles for the canonization of St. Ignatius Loyola.

This year, beginning on May 20 and continuing until July 31, 2022, the Society of Jesus worldwide, and the entire Ignatian family, celebrate St. Ignatius' spiritual journey from the 500th anniversary of his conversion in 1521 to his canonization in 1622. In the context of this Ignatian Year, Noguere's story helps explain conversion as a process of recovering from blindness to better sight.

On May 20, 1521, in a battle at the Spanish town of Pamplona, a cannon ball broke one leg of Iñigo López de Loyola, and wounded the other. With the incident, Iñigo had reached the bottom of what had been a rather shat-

tered existence marred by loss and insatiable ambition. The man wounded in Pamplona was a 26-year-old orphan, who lost his parents at an early age. One of his brothers died in war. Another ventured to the Americas and never returned home. By the time of the battle of Pamplona, his new master and stepfather, Juan Velásquez de Cuéllar, the chief treasurer of the crown, who had introduced Iñigo to the court decorum and diplomacy, had lost his privileged position.

Ignatius' conversion took place during his long recovery from his injuries, as he read about the lives of the saints, like Francis and Dominic. Ignatius' dreams transferred from heroic feats on the battlefield to heroically serving Christ. The bull of canonization on March 12, 1622, reported that Ignatius was called from worldly honors and earthly military service to a holy life that led to the founding of the Jesuit order and, ultimately, the consolation of souls worldwide.

While the general theme of this jubilee year is conver-



“Ignatius Convalesces at Loyola,” by Albert Chevallier-Taylor (1862-1925). St. Ignatius Church of the Sacred Heart, Wimbledon, England, © Jesuit Institute

sion, the underlying invitation related to this conversion is to “See everything new in Christ.” (2 Cor 5:17). To see “perfectly,” like Noguere, or to see everything new, like St. Paul, is to first acknowledge some form of blindness. Then, when touched by Ignatius’ relics—which is to say, once inspired by his experience and spiritual tradition—we will be able to let God console us, and so embrace our present and future with renewed hope and faith.

Our world faces new challenges. Covid-19 alone has shattered our normal ways of life. We need faith to be able to see anew. The 34th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus in 1995 declared that “without faith, without the eye of love, the human world seems too evil for God to be good, for a good God to exist. But faith recognizes that God is acting, through Christ’s love and the power of the Holy Spirit, to destroy the structures of sin which afflict the bodies and hearts of his children.”

The congregation was significant in part because it took place at a moment of self-examination for the Society. It was a moment in which, as Jesuits, as the congregation wrote, “we faced our limitations and weaknesses, our lights and shadows, our sinfulness.” Yet amid the brokenness of the world, the Jesuits, “also found much that was wise and good.” They

were able to see everything new, and recommitted themselves to “follow this Christ, the Crucified and Risen Lord, in pilgrimage and labor.”

The conversion of Ignatius was not completed instantly, following his fall in Pamplona. This incident, however, set a new course for his life. It turned his life upside down and forced him into self-examination. Out of this spiritual awakening, Ignatius had a burning desire for holiness and a zeal to do great things for God, which ultimately led him to a lengthy process of self-surrender.

The appeal of this conversion today is that when confronted with a hopeless situation, Ignatius created greater intimacy with God. As he renewed his relationship with God, he was able to refocus his unsettled existence. Ignatius put God at the center of his life. He could look at the world not with fear, but with hope and the desire to set it on fire with the love of Christ.

This Ignatian Year is not limited to Ignatius’ conversion but culminates with his canonization. His cause

was bolstered by miracles attributed to his intercession, like Noguere’s recovery of sight through the use of relics. Though the language of relics and miracles itself might seem at odds with the extreme rationalism of our world, all of us are tasked to make these “relics” and miracles meaningful for our own time. As heirs of the Ignatian tradition, we are the guardians of Ignatius’ spiritual “relics.” We remain indebted to the rich Ignatian tradition, which, though rooted in medieval Christianity, boldly embraced the modern world. The opportunities offered by the world of Ignatius’ time shaped the Society of Jesus, which in turn helped transform the church and the way it reached out to the world.

Miracles are still a part of our spiritual practice. When faced with a tragedy, an incurable disease, the loss of a job, a beloved friend or sibling, we may pray to God in the secret of our hearts to intervene. The true miracle might not be the immediate realization of our wishes or prayers for various needs. It is, instead, the consolation that grows out of the deepening of faith in God. The miracle is to believe that for those, like Ignatius, who believe in God and trust in God’s care and providence, there is no accident, no tragedy or failure that they cannot overcome. The bottom that Ignatius hit in 1521 became a stepping stone for greater adventures, self-realization and success. The church considered Ignatius’ journey from 1521 to 1622 exemplary for others.

In Africa and its growing church, there are ample reasons for hope, but also for despair. Celebrating a jubilee reinforces our hope that things can change for the better. The sick can be healed. Peace can be restored. The joy of the Gospel can blossom. The kings of Spain, France and Bavaria were able to put aside their bloody rivalries to push for the canonization of St. Ignatius. Like them, all Christians can help build a peaceful global community and create new networks of solidarity and friendship for the greater glory of God and the service of the poorest among us. To see all things new is to renew our commitment to Ignatius’ original vision of spiritual depth, love and service of the church and society.

Jean Luc Enyegue, S.J., is a Jesuit from Cameroon. He obtained his doctorate from Boston University and is the director of the Jesuit Historical Institute in Africa, based in Nairobi, Kenya.



Photo courtesy of Miguel Blancarte Jr.

‘I Realized That It Was My Purpose to Help Others.’

How Jesuit values led one Cristo Rey alum to fight for health equity

By Kevin Christopher Robles

In 2020, Miguel Blancarte Jr. became the director of Covid-19 Response and Community Outreach at Esperanza Health Centers in Chicago, Ill. The organization’s five sites provide bilingual health services to primarily minority communities irrespective of immigration status or economic situation. Since the onset of the pandemic, Mr. Blancarte has been instrumental in organizing Esperanza’s efforts to aid the city’s residents.

Mr. Blancarte attended Cristo Rey Jesuit High School on the Lower West Side of Chicago, the founding school in the Cristo Rey Network of affiliated college preparatory institutions. The Cristo Rey Network created a corporate work study program that gives students experience in corporate environments. On five school days a month, students work an entry-level job at organizations like American Express, HarperCollins, JPMorgan Chase and others. Mr. Blancarte credits the program for much of his continued success. He received his B.A. in political science from Brown University in 2009 and graduated from Georgetown University with a joint M.B.A. and M.S.F.S. in international business and policy events in 2018. This interview has been edited for clarity and length.

How would you describe your time at Cristo Rey, and what was it like being part of the corporate work study program?

One of the drivers behind me going to Cristo Rey was my mother. My mom fell in love with the corporate work model and she tried selling it to me. First, I wasn’t necessarily so keen on it because of where my friends were going to be going, but ultimately I made my way to Cristo Rey. And I’m extremely glad that I did.

My first corporate work study program placement was with Brinson Partners, now part of U.B.S. Global Asset Management. I was working in one of the nicest buildings in the city of Chicago, the Rookery Building, and it was very different from anything I had ever experienced.

My dad went to school until the third grade, and my mom until the sixth grade. I’m a first generation American. I went up to Brinson Partners and got to meet so many different folks, and it was an eye opening experience. It exposed me to the downtown area and corporate America and to a different type of work than was available in my community.

I grew up in a predominantly Latino community. A lot of them are first generation Americans or migrants. Even Cristo Rey was mostly Latino. Downtown, I saw white folks, I saw black folks, I saw Asian folks. It was an experience that really awakened me.

What kind of work did you do?

A lot of it was clerical work. My first year, I worked in the records management department. I also worked in the

Miguel Blancarte Jr., left, stands with Ivonne Sambolin, director of community engagement at the Chicago Department of Public Health, at a Covid-19 testing event in the city's Humboldt Park neighborhood.

marketing department of a law firm, and even human resources. It was entry level, but it was experience I received that allowed me to see how processes and different systems work. I definitely enjoyed it.

The people there also wanted to help me. As a teenager, you're very new to a lot of things. You want feedback and guidance, and my coworkers definitely provided that. They made me see what else was out there. Even managing records or doing H.R., you get to see how all of this works.

How did you bring the experience of doing corporate work study at Cristo Rey with you to college and beyond?

Jesuit values and that tradition were very prevalent at Cristo Rey. When I was growing up, I always tried to do the right thing and help people, but it was going to a Jesuit school like Cristo Rey that made me realize how important those values really were to me. As I became a young adult and I started formulating myself a little more, I realized that it was my purpose to help others.

I remember in third grade my teacher said, "Miguel, you would make a great lawyer." That was the first time a person mentioned that career to me. It always stayed in the back of my head, especially since people kept telling that to me. I thought that I was going to go to law school, but life kind of happens, right? I can continue helping others but I don't need to be an attorney. I don't need to be in a courtroom. My Jesuit education helped me realize that, too.

It was at my time at Georgetown that it all came together for me. The School of Business and the School of Foreign Service had a program that I felt was tailored to me. I fell in love with it. Doing an executive education program at Georgetown, everything came full circle: the education I received at Cristo Rey, the importance of the corporate work program, connecting my purpose with what I wanted to be doing. The program at Georgetown made me realize how important the Jesuit tradition of finding solutions to social problems was to me.

Can you talk about how you started working in community health in Chicago?

Last year in May, Chicago announced that they would be doing community-based testing for the coronavirus. They noted that the first site they were going to open was literally going to be across the street from me. So, I said, "I want to help. I want to do something." I showed up even before they opened and said I wanted to volunteer.

At first, it was simple stuff: helping the elderly, delivering

food to families, things like that. They ended up offering me the position of site director. I wasn't expecting it. At the time, it was the zip code that was most affected by Covid in the entire state of Illinois.

I did a lot with that site and it was extremely successful. In August, I got a visit from the federal government. They'd heard about the great work I'd been able to do. At the time there was no blueprint for this. There was no roadmap. I had to figure it all out on my own. I was asked to replicate what I did at other sites and throughout the city.

Now [at Esperanza Health Centers], I deal with everything from testing to vaccine distribution. We're really focused on bringing health equity to our communities. Being in my community, paying it forward, helping out others—it's just extremely rewarding. I work every day, seven days a week, even holidays. But what drives me are the values that I got from Cristo Rey and from my time at Georgetown.

You're also not the only Cristo Rey graduate in your family. Your sister also went there and she became a nurse in Chicago, right?

Yes, her name is Alma Yvonne Blancarte. When I started working for the testing site, she was a nurse at Lurie Children's Hospital and now she's doing Covid-related work at Rush University Medical Center, where she also went to grad school.

I didn't realize that Esperanza and Rush were finalizing a grant together, and this grant binds my sister and me. She's doing it from the Rush side and I'm doing it from the Esperanza side. So, we've kind of been working together on a couple of different projects addressing public health.

And it made me feel good about our family. She's working for one of the major hospitals, I'm working with a federally qualified health center. She received the Pfizer vaccine; I received the Moderna vaccine. It was all very serendipitous. We're two siblings cut from the same Cristo Rey cloth with different experiences and trajectories but are working together now.

Kevin Christopher Robles is a Joseph A. O'Hare, S.J., postgraduate media fellow at **America**.

Jesuit School Spotlight is a new monthly feature focusing on Jesuit middle and secondary schools from around the country. It is underwritten in part by Jesuit high schools of the Northeast Province of the Society of Jesus.

Frederick Wiseman's latest film, "City Hall," is a portrait of the city of Boston. Mayor Marty Walsh, at the podium, appears here at the Greater Boston Food Bank.



Finding Stillness in the Films of Frederick Wiseman

By Elyse Durham



Zipporah Films

These days, it's hard to sit still. With the pandemic, its economic fallout, waves of civic unrest, not to mention a polarizing election, 2020 gave us many good reasons to be in constant search of distraction—to be twiddling our thumbs and glancing anxiously

over our shoulders, all at once.

Small wonder, then, that so many of us retreated online, to colorful digital worlds like TikTok and Animal Crossing. Cut off from our communities, yet still barraged by bad news, binge-watching and world-building

became our sources of sanity. But, despite the respite we found in virtual landscapes and endless entertainments, I wonder how these habits have changed us. Has the trauma of the past year cost us the ability to be present in the moment at hand, to be still?

Entertainment itself isn't a vice. The need for recreation is human: We labor, we are tired, we must rest. But perhaps what our era needs more than 15-second TikTok videos and yet another rewatch of "The Office" (yes, I did that too) is art that can truly refresh, art that can restore and challenge, art that can help us find stillness again. Art, for instance, like the films of Frederick Wiseman.

When describing Wiseman's documentaries to the uninitiated, it is tempting to begin by establishing what they are not. They are not entertainment—at least, not in the way that a sitcom is entertainment. They aren't especially story- or character-driven. They aren't action-packed or flashy or brief (most are two or three or even four hours long). They don't feature interviews or voice-overs or, with little exception, music, unless music happens to be playing in the locale being filmed.

Lest this paint too drab a picture, let me also say that Wiseman's meditative and expansive documentaries are anything but dull. He has the ability to make a garbage truck's route feel thrilling (more on that in a moment). But make no mistake: These films contain no ginned-up drama à la reality TV. Rather, Wiseman's patient, deliberate lens on everyday life reveals glory in the stuff of the mundane, the glory that is always there so long as we have the patience and courage of heart to see it.

Frederick Wiseman's patient, deliberate lens into everyday life reveals glory in the mundane.

An Attitude of Wonder

Wiseman debuted as a filmmaker in 1967 with “Titicut Follies,” a stark depiction of a Massachusetts mental hospital so alarming to viewers that it was banned until 1991. Now well into his 90s, Wiseman has made 45 documentary films, each depicting everyday life in a particular location—department stores and welfare offices, nuclear bunkers and monasteries, hospices and zoos. This dossier is impressive enough, but Wiseman’s greatest feat is something far more ethereal, something found in every single one of his films: a sense of stillness achieved not just through long shots and hefty running times but through an underlying attitude of wonder.

After all these years, Wiseman has his process down to a science: He and a skeleton film crew (91-year-old Wiseman still holds the boom mic himself) encamp on the chosen locale, capturing hundreds of hours of film from which Wiseman will later string moments into scenes and scenes into vignettes and vignettes, somehow, into a narrative. The result? Documentaries that are dense yet meditative works of art, one part nature film, one part hu-

man drama and several parts magic.

Wiseman’s latest film, “City Hall,” illustrates his ability to take the stuff of C-SPAN and spin it into gold. Released late in 2020, “City Hall” reveals the wealth of services that Boston’s municipal government lavishes on its residents. Wiseman follows city employees as they trim trees, guard the elderly against phone scams and inspect decrepit apartments for rats. He encamps in meeting halls and conference rooms during countless gatherings, never appearing on screen himself or even alerting viewers to his presence. Here, as in all his films, Wiseman is a transparent eyeball.

In one of the film’s tenser scenes, a group of well-dressed cannabis entrepreneurs fields questions from residents of the poor neighborhood in which they plan to open a dispensary. One resident asks the entrepreneurs point blank how they, personally, intend to give back to the community. “We already don’t have police available in the evening hours,” another says, dubious of the entrepreneurs’ security plans. “There’s a lot of trauma in this neighborhood.” Wiseman lets these people speak for themselves. He doesn’t insert his own thoughts with voiceovers or

contextualizing placards. Instead, he bookends intense scenes like these with dreamy shots of pristine brick streets in wealthy neighborhoods—moments that are, on the one hand, chances to come up for air, and on the other, subtle commentary on Boston’s well-documented income inequality.

One of Wiseman’s chief virtues is patience. He is fond of lingering when our attention might be tempted to wander, or when things turn uncomfortable and we might want to look away. The tenacious viewer, aware that Wiseman chose each scene over hundreds of others, is always rewarded—sometimes with humor, sometimes with pathos, sometimes with the simple satisfaction (and the lowered blood pressure) that comes from keeping still.

In one sparkling sequence, Wiseman makes magic of a moment as mundane as they come. Garbage men pick up bags of trash and toss them into the back of a trash truck. As the scene continues, the truck is tasked with digesting heftier and heftier objects—a bulky box spring, a weighty mattress. It is surprisingly thrilling to watch the truck’s hydraulic jaws snap big things in half. But I doubt I was the only viewer who felt concern for the truck when an entire metal grill was lifted into its maw. In this scene, Wiseman gives us the chance to experience the world as children do, as something wondrous and unfamiliar (and slightly frightening). Stopped in our tracks, we wonder if a mere garbage truck can chomp a propane grill into pieces. (Spoiler alert: It can.) If you had told me, before I watched this film, that any filmmaker could have me cheering for a garbage truck, I would not have believed you. But it happened.

No Caricatures

When it comes to Wiseman's human subjects, he has the rare gift of capturing their humanity in all its raw, troubling glory without resorting to caricatures. In one sequence, his careful editing contrasts a man's buffoonish attempts at dismissing a well-deserved parking ticket ("I didn't even know anybody lived down there!") with a tired new father's humble petitions for the same ("I know I was wrong").

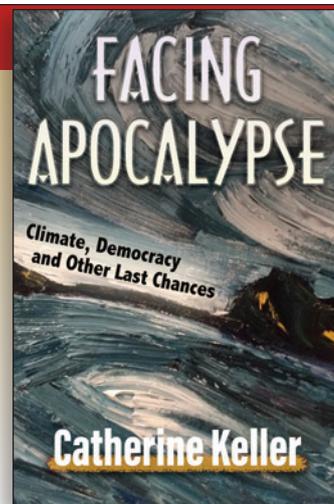
Marty Walsh, Boston's mayor at the time of filming (President Biden recently tapped him for secretary of labor), is also painted humanely. As much as "City Hall" is a portrait of the city of Boston, it is also a portrait of Walsh, whose ongoing appearances throughout the film become something of a punchline. (My husband, seeing Walsh suddenly appear yet again toward the end of a scene, cried, "He's *everywhere!*") After the last few years, it's healing to watch a civic leader enact his duties with grace—let alone serve Thanksgiving dinner to a gathering of Goodwill employees. But Wiseman lets Walsh be a person, too. He includes one scene in which Walsh admits to making arrogant mistakes on the campaign trail. In his portrayal of people as well as places, Wiseman demonstrates the irreducibility of life.

"City Hall" becomes especially captivating viewing when paired with Wiseman's other most recent film, "Monrovia, Indiana" (2018). The cynical viewer may be tempted to dismiss the depth of "City Hall" as an accident of location—after all, there's always bound to be *something* interesting going on in a city the size of Boston, even if it's just a herculean trash truck. But no viewer will remain able to doubt

Wiseman's skill after watching his compelling portrait of a town the size of a postage stamp (population: 1,610).

"Monrovia" features much of what you would expect to see in a small town: church meetings, cornfields, working farmers. But here, too, Wiseman refuses to be reductive. He takes the time to provide a rich and complex account of the town's character. On the surface, the stakes at a meeting of the Monrovia Town Council may appear to be low. But feelings run high—as they do everywhere when it comes to hometowns—and when one council member declares she hopes Monrovia never quadruples in size, we might be tempted to laugh (even quadrupled, Monrovia's population would be less than one percent of Boston's). But we may also wonder at the vehemence of her response, at how it feels to know a place so well and to love a place so much that you can't bear to see it change, even if stasis will kill it.

As one watches more of Wiseman's films (I have seen about a dozen of them), one begins to realize the deep respect he has for his subjects. He dedicates the same attention (and screen time) to a Monrovia Lions Club meeting as he does to a mayoral assembly in "City Hall," even though one meeting's agenda includes a billion-dollar budget and the other the allocation of a single park bench. And this is why Wiseman's films are an exercise in stillness. You don't get the impression that he is always looking over his shoulder, waiting for something more important or even more interesting to come along. His contentment is one reason he has been able to build up such a formidable and fascinating body of work. He behaves as if whatever is in front of



CATHERINE KELLER

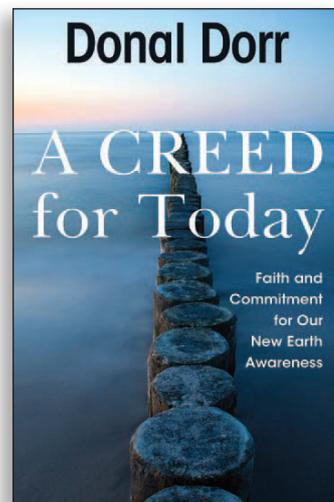
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Frederick Wiseman looks, and he teaches us to look, too.



Adrien Toubian

his lens is the most interesting thing in the world. And, often, that is just what it becomes.

This is not to say that any of Wiseman's films are accidents of circumstance. Over the years, Wiseman has described his films as works of fiction, explaining that he carefully constructs a narrative for each, choosing what to film, what to keep and what to leave on the cutting room floor. Last year, after the release of "City Hall," The New York Times dubbed Wiseman "The Great American Novelist." Inasmuch as a novelist weaves a compelling story from the stuff of real life, helping us see our world in new ways, The Times may be right.

I lived in Boston for four years. Before that, I lived in southern Indiana, just minutes away from Monrovia. I thought I knew both of these places well. But examining them through Wiseman's lens showed me that I hadn't really been paying atten-

tion at all. Had I ever paused to admire the austere Brutalist beauty of Boston City Hall? Had I ever appreciated the leafy verdance of the Indiana cornfields, whose presence had made me feel like a bumpkin? Had I even taken the time to appreciate either locale as places in and of themselves, as more than mere extensions of myself?

This is why, even (and especially) in times of great trouble, we must take the time to be still. If we don't take the time to be still, to truly notice each other and our surroundings, we become weary and harried, like the characters in Thornton Wilder's haunting play "Our Town." Late in the play, a young woman dies and asks to revisit moments from her childhood. As she watches her family hurry through their daily routine, she laments, "We don't even look at each other!" Distraught, she asks the play's narrator if anyone really looks at life, moment by

moment. "No," he replies. "The saints and poets, maybe. They do some."

Wiseman looks, and he teaches us to look, too. His films evoke the sort of wonder that can make us see our own lives with fresh eyes, to ask ourselves what he would find if we invited his camera crew into our world.

I was thinking of this the other day when I paused outside my apartment door to watch birds clustered on a telephone wire. I saw them silhouetted against a clear blue sky and wondered, *Is this a Wiseman moment?* (As if in response, one of the birds immediately relieved itself.) But this was the wrong question to ask. Every moment is, and invites us to be present. And that is enough.

Elyse Durham is a fiction writer and journalist from Detroit. Her work has appeared in *Christianity Today*, *The Cincinnati Review* and *Bearings Online*.

Pentecost

Adelanto Detention Center Hunger Strike

By Renny Golden

We drove the Cajon Pass rose-blue valley
toward the Mojave Desert's wind farms.
A topography without mercy.
Emptiness, jackrabbits, a prison.

Inside are Salvadoran mothers, Cameroon
women who crossed rivers, jungles, checkpoints.
They sit before us in colored jumpsuits.
We are there because we, too, are useless,

old women, invisible. We listen until
the guard watching signals, until we
carry home stories dark as the last light
on wine-bruised San Gabriel mountains.

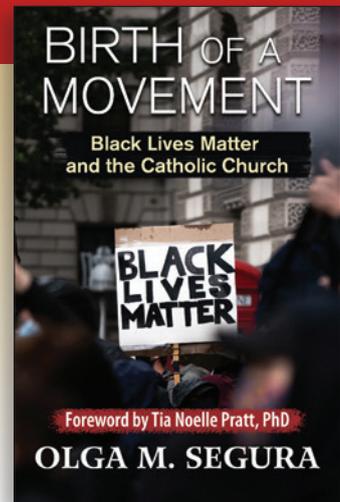
We phone lawyers with 90,000 cases.
Plead. Pay bonds for the rare miracle of release.
Sit in court, helpless. Witness their timidity,
watch bailiffs take them away weeping. Lambs.

When the virus blew its mortal breath
into their cinder block space, extremity
entered with its thud of terror and sympathy.
Now they are at the mercy of the merciless.

Call it solidarity or ingenuity or compassion.
Across languages they pantomime.
Someone, call her Maria Luisa, says,
If I am to die, let it be in refusal.

With gestures she signals *no eat*.
Reprisals will follow as certain as hunger.
Some will cave, but not all. Not all.
All witness a spirit they didn't expect, recognize.

Renny Golden is a poet and activist. Her book *Blood Desert: Witnesses 1820-1880*, was named a *Southwest Notable Book of the Year 2012*. Her latest book, *The Music of Her Rivers*, was a finalist for the *New Mexico-Arizona Book Awards*.



OLGA M. SEGURA

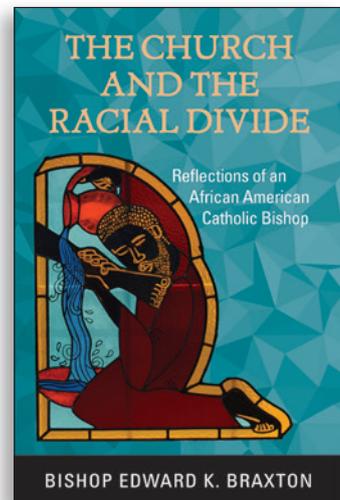
Birth of a Movement

*Black Lives Matter and
the Catholic Church*

Shows how “by embracing the values of BLM, Catholicism can begin to embody the values it preaches but often fails to practice.”—From the Foreword

by TIA NOELLE PRATT

978-1-62698-420-2 176pp pbk \$20



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*Reflections of an African
American Catholic Bishop*

Urges readers to acknowledge
difficult truths with openness to
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Criminal Injustice

By Mary Gibbons

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Read this book. You will be stirred, and maybe you will feel a bit uncomfortable. That is a good thing.

Reuben Jonathan Miller's work of narrative nonfiction, *Halfway Home: Race, Punishment, and the Afterlife of Mass Incarceration*, mixes personal memoir with science, sociological data and anthropology as it describes the brutal effects of the carceral state in the United States—particularly on Black people.

Criminal justice reform is on the lips of almost anyone running for political office these days, regardless of party affiliation. But on the streets of Chicago or Detroit or Ann Arbor, Mich., where Miller walked for years to gather his data and stories, one would be hard-pressed to find it in action. There is a massive lack of connection between the platitudes like “We must do better” and the Black children and adults who have had their entire lives transformed by a “war on crime” now

several decades old.

Using firsthand interviews with about a dozen men and women after their incarceration and release, Miller cuts through the noise about criminal justice reform to lay bare what life is really like on the other side of a prison sentence. Informed by his experience as a Black man who grew up poor in a segregated Chicago, as well as the lives of his own family members touched by the carceral state, Miller is able to coax the hopes and dreams, fears and terrors out of his interview subjects. The result is a searingly honest view of life after incarceration.

Do you have a roof over your head while you are reading this review? Are you housed in a place that feels safe? The majority of men and women leaving prison each year do not share those settings or that safety. Some of Miller's subjects, including his older brother, Jeremiah, walk

us through their journey of looking for housing. Miller lets them guide us through his ethnography of the community while expertly weaving in social science, empirical data and reflections on public policy to reveal the traps laid for them.

In Chicago, for example, there are more than 50 policies that bar people with criminal records from housing. (The same trend can be seen across the country, thanks to aggressive policies enacted under President Clinton in the 1990s.) The cruelty and negative impact of those policies are clear to see. If you are on parole or probation, it is a crime to be homeless. If you are living in public housing or your private landlord does not permit anyone with a criminal history to be in your apartment, you can be evicted for trying to help out a loved one by letting them stay with you. Some men and women languish in prison for months (or years) after their parole

Halfway Home
Race, Punishment, and the Afterlife of Mass Incarceration
By Reuben Jonathan Miller
Little, Brown
352p \$29

was scheduled to begin because they have nowhere to live.

Miller talks to a halfway house director who gets hundreds of applications every year for between 20 and 40 beds. Miller himself says no to his brother's request to stay with him because he could be evicted from his rented house for having his brother stay there. His brother ends up sleeping in a parking lot from time to time in Ann Arbor while he awaits trial.

This landscape exists for every person leaving prison or jail, and it is often one they have to learn to navigate alone. Want to get a job so that you can pay for an apartment that is not public housing? Good luck if you have a criminal record, even if all you hope to obtain is a minimum-wage job. Want to watch your child graduate from kindergarten? If you were in prison for over a year, your parental rights may have been terminated during your stay, and your child may no longer be yours.

Want to vote for a politician who may be able to make a change in your community? Sorry, a criminal record often revokes your voice in elections. Want to get on track with a new lifestyle and focus on your health? You are far behind the rest of us, as incarcerated persons are more likely than anyone else in the United States to contract communicable diseases and illnesses. Just look at the number of Covid-19 prison deaths in the United States to see the outsized impact this pandemic has had on those behind bars.

The men and women we meet through Miller find themselves re-

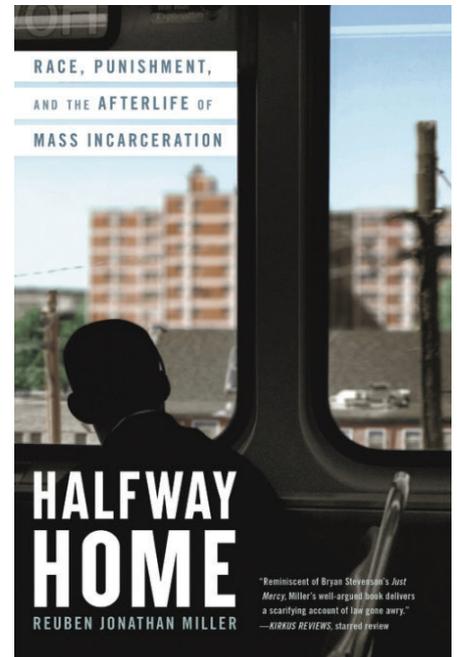
jected time and again in their efforts to establish safe new lives after incarceration. This makes *Halfway Home* a tough book to read. It should be.

It is an indictment of our society, the one with an ever-increasing wealth gap, the one that let me take out six figures in federal student loans because I am considered a "trustworthy candidate" but didn't let Yvette, one of Miller's subjects, continue to work for her town because of an uncovered 10-year-old drug conviction, despite her excellence at her job.

I am not a stranger to the data points and the policy arguments for criminal justice reform and for the abolition of our current carceral state. As both a criminal defender and family defender for the last five years, I have watched the government's prosecutions tear apart Black families, force evictions and traumatize Black children. But at the end of the day, I can still close my files and go home without those stories following me. Miller brings us along on the car ride home, then shows us the musings on the couch and the celebration on the corners.

Halfway Home is an intimate portrayal of a vulnerable population; it is also important and necessary. Until there are laws and frameworks that clear the minefields of post-conviction life, we are all complicit in setting up our neighbors, our brothers and sisters, for failure. Until that culture of rejection turns into one of reception, this book will be necessary.

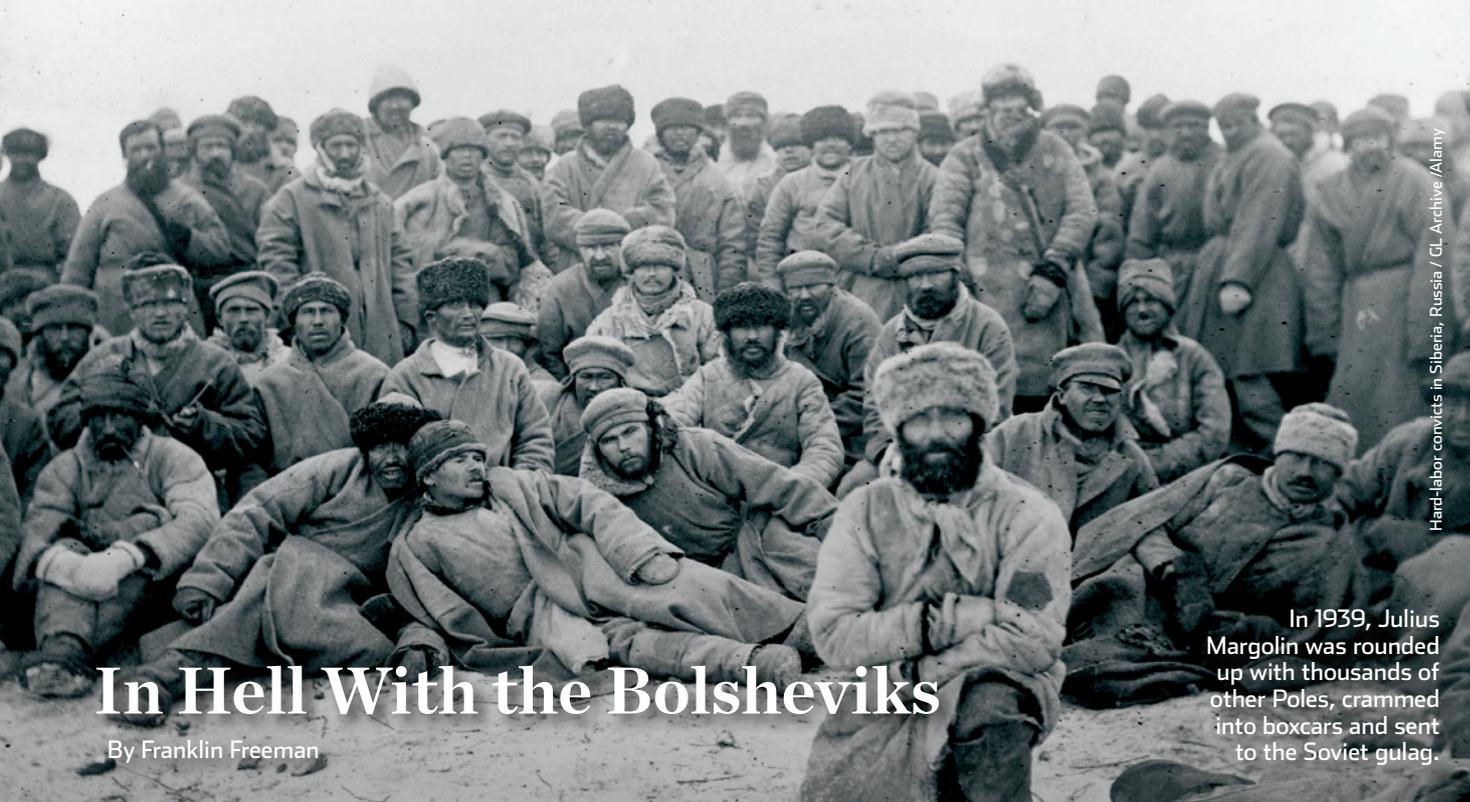
Miller does not apologize for having a dog in this fight. His proximity to his subjects and the world of



mass incarceration, he believes, gives him the ability to communicate how this social situation feels in a forceful and straightforward way. I could not agree more.

I could not put this book down because I felt so connected to the author, his story and his subjects' stories. I will be thinking about it for a long time.

Mary Gibbons is a public defender based in Brooklyn, N.Y., who has worked in the criminal justice systems of New Hampshire and New Orleans.



Hard-labor convicts in Siberia, Russia / Cl. Archive / Alamy

In Hell With the Bolsheviks

By Franklin Freeman

In 1939, Julius Margolin was rounded up with thousands of other Poles, crammed into boxcars and sent to the Soviet gulag.

Julius Margolin (1900-71), a philosopher-writer, after having barely survived five years in the Soviet gulag with other *zeks* (a Russian slang term from the abbreviation of the word *zakliuchennyi*, meaning “convict, a prison or forced labor camp inmate”), found himself stuck in Marseilles for three weeks in 1945, waiting for a ship to Palestine. He had two books by Jean-Paul Sartre with him, *Nausea* and *Being and Nothingness*.

Margolin’s time in the gulag profoundly influenced his experience of reading these two books. He remembers in *Journey Into the Land of the Zeks and Back* that Sartre’s “world was quite simply not the one in which I lived, and I resolutely refused to submit to Sartre’s ‘nonbeing.’” Later he asks, “How could [Sartre’s philosophy] help my friends whom I had left in Russia in the camp hell, and whom it would have been so easy for me to *néantiser* [turn into nothingness] according to Sartre’s prescription?”

In other words, Sartre had written of life in the West as an existential

hell, but Margolin had lived in an actual hell, that of the Bolshevik concentration camp. He had left a wife and child behind in Palestine to seek work in his native Poland; unfortunately, he did so in September of 1939 and was swept up in the German invasion from the west and the subsequent Soviet invasion from the east. After attempts to get home ended in vain, he found himself on the Soviet side of Poland. Because he didn’t have a Soviet passport and the Soviets didn’t recognize his Polish one (because Poland no longer existed), he was rounded up with thousands of other Poles, a mix of Gentiles and Jews, and crammed into boxcars sent to the gulag in northwest Russia.

Margolin’s memoir of his five years there reminded me of Varlam Shalamov’s two books *Kolyma Stories* and *Sketches of the Criminal World: Further Kolyma Stories*, and of Solzhenitsyn’s three-volume work, *The Gulag Archipelago*. Margolin’s work is not as well-written as theirs: Shalamov was the equal of Hemingway, and Solzhenitsyn brings Tolstoy to mind.

Yet Margolin’s lesser talent as a writer (though he is no less passionate) makes Margolin’s book more affecting, at times, as a record of the hell of the gulag.

But he wrote for a world that did not want to hear him. The West had been allied with the Soviet Union in the war, and many Jews in Palestine and elsewhere were still hopeful about the Soviet Union. Further, the world did not want to read more bad news. After the Allies had ripped out what Margolin calls the “thorn” in the body politic of Hitler’s concentration and extermination camps, few wanted to read of camps that were worse, in terms of population and duration, even if not dedicated to genocide.

But now we have the first English translation of the book, and in our current political climate it behooves people on both sides of the political aisle to read it. It reiterates what Shalamov and Solzhenitsyn describe: the severe malnutrition combined with absurd work quotas; the ravages of the *urki*, or criminals whom the camp command-

Journey Into the Land of the Zeks and Back

A Memoir of the Gulag

By Julius Margolin (trans. by Stefani Hoffman)

Oxford University Press

648p \$39.95

ers often allowed to run the camp interiors; the arbitrariness of the sentences prisoners received.

Almost all of them (except the *urki*) were innocent of any offense; the Party had set quotas for how many people from each district should go to the gulag, and Russian prisoners of war were always given 10 years on principle. Margolin mentions a middle-aged man sent to the camps for three years because he had murdered his wife, and a younger man who, for sweeping a floor for German occupiers, was given 20 years.

Where Margolin's book differentiates itself from Shalamov and Solzhenitsyn is in the depths of one man's experience. Shalamov shares his experience in a shattering series of stories, but one comes away with a kaleidoscopic view of the Far East gulag. Solzhenitsyn tells the epic story of the gulag as a whole: his personal story, but also the historical and political development of what he calls "our sewage disposal system." Shalamov spent 17 years in the gulag, Solzhenitsyn 10; Margolin, there for five years, wrote a more concentrated and distilled work.

Trained as a philosopher, he also makes occasional philosophical and psychological asides. In fact, he wrote several philosophical works in the camps, but they were destroyed by guards. In Chapter 32, "The Doctrine of Hate," Margolin tells of how he wrote it and gives a précis of what he wrote. "That man," Margolin writes, meaning Stalin, "hates, which means that some kind of inner weakness develops into hate, the result of some organic problem. Some kind of lack, defect, or

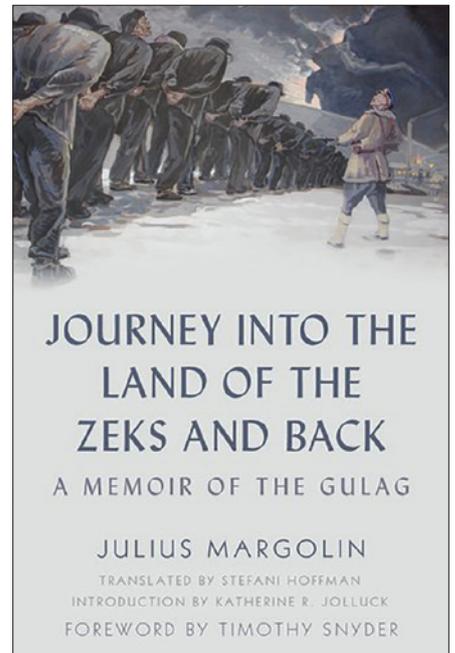
unhappiness may remain within the bounds of his sense of self, but it may also spread to his social milieu and be transmitted to other people."

Hitler, Margolin says, must have felt himself to be "deeply hurt." "Had he wanted the truth, he would have found a real cause, but the truth was too much for him to bear. He therefore began to search for external guilty parties." He goes on to explain:

All haters are great unmaskers. Instead of a mask, however, they tear off live skin, the true nature, and they replace reality with a creation of their inflamed fantasy. Hatred starts with an imaginary unmasking and ends with real flaying, not in theory but in practice.... It is sufficient to compare the tirades of *Mein Kampf* with Lenin's passionate polemics and his thunderous charges against capitalism to sense their psychological affinity. It is the language of hate, not of objective research.

We hope, Margolin concludes, to assuage our own suffering with our hate, and restore "mental equilibrium." But this possibility is imaginary, and the result is "eternal mental anguish."

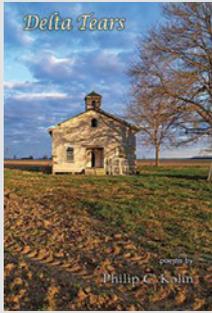
Hannah Arendt wrote in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* that "dwelling on the horrors" of the concentration camps, although not helpful in forming political programs, can help us determine if a political movement is prone to totalitarianism. Concentra-



tion camps sprang up as soon as both Lenin and Hitler came to power. Their present-day prototypes in the West are warnings.

The left, when it strives for utopia, comes up with communism; the right with fascism. Both ultimately produce concentration camps where, as Arendt said, people are "superfluous." Hell can be other people, as Sartre said, but as Margolin describes in his latter chapters, lovers know their temporary heaven. It is the ultimate irony that the two movements of the 20th century that tried to create heaven on earth—one of a future workers' paradise, the other of a nostalgic harkening back to a glorious nationalist past—ended up creating instead the hells of the concentration camps.

Franklin Freeman, a frequent contributor to *America*, lives in Maine.



Delta Tears
By Philip Kolin
Main Street Rag
100p \$15

Sin and salvation in verse

At its best, poetry is like prayer; it is an act of contemplation. *Delta Tears*, a stunning new book of poetry by Philip C. Kolin about the Mississippi Delta and its tragic history, reads like the fruit of a lifetime of contemplation, of acute attention to the echoes of history and eternity in the natural world, of the recognition of glimmers of grace that cut through the dark.

A distinguished emeritus professor of English and emeritus editor of *The Southern Quarterly* at the University of Mississippi, Kolin has called Mississippi home for over 40 years. Building on previous collections, like *Reaching Forever* and *Emmett Till in Different States*, the poems in *Delta Tears* blend ecotheology and Scripture with pleas for social justice. In this light, the Mississippi Delta emerges as not only a meeting place of different states, but as a place where history converges with the current moment. Immanent reality touches the transcendent, and trauma and redemption are inextricably intertwined.

The opening poem describes the Mississippi River as “part corpse, part redemption.” The river winds its way through each of the book’s six sections, each poem a communion of salvation and sacrifice: “the taste

of trees [that] flourished on this land” is inseparable from the Black bodies “bludgeoned and betrayed,” hung from tree limbs and buried in “the longest tear duct in America.”

In the book’s first section, “That Old River,” the ancient voice of the Mississippi echoes Christ’s “before Abraham was, I am”:

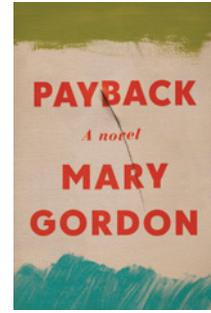
*I am the Father of Rivers
geology’s darling
millennia flow through my
kingdom*

Section two, “Centuries of Tears,” chronicles in painful detail the history of slavery and sharecropping. The cries of Exodus and Isaiah mix with those of the Middle Passage and Parchman Prison.

Kolin seeks lighter notes of hopeful lyricism in the rhythms of the seasons and the blues. Pain is alleviated by the hope of “a prophet’s promise/ of fertility, a season’s renewal,” and in musical sanctuaries “where you meet the funk-loving Jesus,/ scoffing at that sign that says ‘Negroes and dogs not allowed.’”

History’s pilgrimage toward redemption culminates in the final poem, “Mary, Mother of the Delta.” This shrine of healing is an image of *Delta Tears* itself: a space of confession, reparation and contemplation of “a new baptism and spirit and place.” This collection is a brilliant companion as we move out of the Easter season into life anew.

Jessica Schnepf is a doctoral candidate in English literature at The Catholic University of America and founder of the CUA Contemporary Catholic Writers Group.



Payback
By Mary Gordon
Pantheon
352p \$27.95

Victimization trumps forgiveness

The veteran novelist and short-story writer Mary Gordon has an esteemed track record of finely crafted, troubling stories that touch on basic questions about belief, eternity, female vulnerability and the human propensity to sow injury rather than beneficence. With her ninth novel, *Payback*, Gordon entwines many of these same themes into a compelling consideration of the cult of victimization and its impact on social concepts of justice, forgiveness and healing.

Most of the plot of *Payback* involves the Rhode Island art teacher Agnes Vaughan’s decades-long remorse for having failed an unlikable but vulnerable student. The student, Heidi Stolz—later reincarnated as Quin Archer—spends 40 years orchestrating “payback” for the wound Agnes’s callous response inflicted, after the student suffered through something horrific on a trip to New York City. Heidi quits school, leaves home and ekes out a marginal existence, all the while seeking revenge against her onetime art teacher.

Succumbing to the divisive philosopher Ayn Rand’s advocacy of selfishness and rugged individualism, Heidi/Quin eventually becomes the host of an Arizona-based

reality television show that helps victims of abuse and wrongdoing to confront their tormentors—a kind of trash television where the “owed” win a humiliating form of justice.

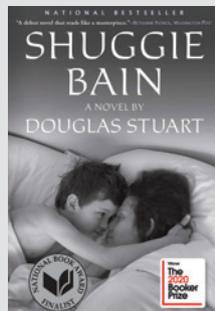
This “glorification of victimization,” coupled with the rise of reality-based programming, is equally skewered in *Payback*. “Reality TV: there was nothing real about it,” Gordon writes. “It was an invention, a shape-making, as fictional as any fiction, more so because it denied its fictiveness, made a fiction of truth and a truth of fiction.”

Gordon’s Heidi/Quin character is fascinating in her pent-up and single-minded aggression.

A secondary part of the narrative focuses on Agnes in the 40 years since the initial fallout with Heidi. The former teacher winds up in Rome, where she becomes a wife and mother while working as a restorer of paintings and sculpture. If this plot development seems contrived to display Gordon’s fascination with Italian art treasures, it also provides the author a landscape on which to project her thoughts about concepts like salvation and an individual’s purpose in the universe.

Readers familiar with Gordon’s earlier fiction will almost certainly warm to *Payback*. It is not only replete with the author’s brilliant sentences and compelling paragraphs, it also offers complex characters who inevitably force readers to consider ideas well beyond the mundane.

Michael Mastromatteo is a Toronto-based columnist and book reviewer for Catholic News Service.



Shuggie Bain
By Douglas Stuart
Grove Press
464p \$17

Uncompromising

Douglas Stuart’s *Shuggie Bain* is a cold, damp, bleak read—a long march of a novel marked by glimmers of tenderness on pages filled with pain. In other words, Stuart’s novel is an appropriate winner of the Booker Prize for the desolate year in which March seems never to have ended.

Our protagonist, Shuggie, is a child coming of age in Glasgow in the Thatcher era, wanting against his nature to be a normal boy. His mother, Agnes, is a depressed alcoholic. At one Alcoholics Anonymous meeting, she reluctantly introduces herself, and someone cuts her off: “*Ego sum in flammis tamen non adolebit*,” [he] said. ‘I am on fire, I do not burn. It’s Saint Agnes’s lament.’”

Over the course of the novel readers will find themselves grinding their teeth as they watch Shuggie and his family on fire, going through one brutal episode after the next. But this novel is one of tender resilience, a resilience that keeps you turning the page. Stuart finds a way to make his depressed characters anything but depressing.

Shuggie is loved—by his mother, his brother Leek and his Grandfather Wullie, family members with noses “large and bony, too severe to be Roman,” inherited from the coast of Donegal, that sit on their faces

“like a proud monument to [their] Irish Catholic ancestors.”

Wullie’s rough, mastiff-like exterior starkly contrasts with the soft contours of his persona. We imagine “his thick arms a tapestry of faded blue ink from his wrist to his shoulder meat” holding his grandson’s little hand as they walk into town. “They walked slowly, swinging between them the Daphne dolly that Shuggie treasured so much.”

When Stuart allows himself to be affectionate and sentimental, he endears himself and his characters to the reader. He lets joy and humor live in a world we should find joyless and humorless.

Stuart does not compromise his characters’ difficult dialect for ease of readability. He forces the reader to speak words on the page aloud, to struggle with harsh Glasgow slang.

“Agnes listened to the man flattening his vowels, spitting out the story as if he were angry, using short familiar words that the Glasgow people had made up. She felt she knew him down to his particular tenement because of how he spoke.... He would never be able to escape the weight of his own accent.”

In embrace of this accent, Stuart creates a novel of queer, working class, Irish Catholic resiliency. It is a prime example of a literary tradition indelibly marked by its relationship to colonialism. Unsurprisingly, once again the Irish diaspora produces one of the year’s best English language novels.

Ciaran Freeman is an art teacher at Gonzaga College High School in Washington, D.C., and is a former O’Hare fellow at America Media.

Be Bold

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER (B), MAY 2, 2021
 READINGS: ACTS 9:26-31; PS 22; 1 JN 3:18-24; JN 15:1-8

In the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, we hear about Saul (later called Paul) and his introduction to the apostles. Saul had previously been a persecutor of Christians, but after a vision and encounter with Christ, he has a conversion, a change of heart and attitude (Acts 9:1-19). In today's reading, the apostles are understandably suspicious of Saul, knowing his past actions, but Barnabas is apparently familiar with Saul and vouches for him. As Saul continues his new ministry, he "spoke boldly in the name of the Lord." What does it mean to speak boldly?

Earlier in Acts, Luke describes some of the apostles speaking boldly and praying for boldness (see Acts 4:13, 29-31). This practice helps them spread the good news, especially through healings and wondrous signs. After the apostles pray for boldness, they are filled with the Holy Spirit, and their first action is to offer help to people most in need, which we heard about on the Second Sunday of Easter. The boldness of the apostles is manifest in their generosity, sharing wealth and making sure people's needs are met. Bold speech on behalf of God must be coupled with bold actions for people in need of physical and spiritual care. Today's second reading, from 1 John, expresses a similar idea, affirm-

ing, "Let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth."

In the Gospel from John, Jesus speaks metaphorically to explain relationships: The Father is the vine grower, Jesus is the vine and the disciples are the branches. Jesus as the vine helps to link his followers with the Father. Moreover, it is the Father who cultivates the vine and enables the branches to bear fruit, discarding those that are not productive.

John uses this imagery because it was likely congenial to his audience, who were familiar with the agricultural work of viticulture. Moreover, he alludes to Old Testament images that describe God's hope and plan for his people. Several of the prophets compare Israel to a vine or vineyard, often using the image to express disappointment at Israel's infidelity. For instance, in Jeremiah God condemns Israel for worshipping other gods and failing to keep the commandments: "Yes, I planted you as a choice vine, from the purest stock. How then did you turn degenerate and become a wild vine?" (Jer 2:21). Isaiah, too, criticizes Israel as an unfruitful vineyard: "For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the people of Judah are his pleasant planting; he expected justice, but saw bloodshed; righteousness but heard a cry" (Is 5:7).

'Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit.' (Jn 15:5)

Praying With Scripture

What can you do to speak and live boldly?

How do you spread the good news?

In what ways can you foster right relationships with God and with others?

John, however, uses the vine image to emphasize especially the positive outcomes. Jesus states that those who remain in him, understanding and living out the Gospel, will bear fruit. Being "in Christ" is active. It is not simply belief in Christ; rather, it is an active pursuit of justice. The end of the reading reiterates the connections and positive outcomes by affirming that by bearing fruit and living as Jesus' disciples, they bring glory to the Father.

Today we are reminded to speak and live boldly. We should reflect on how faith in Christ requires action, especially on the part of those most in need. Living boldly is about living in a way that is consistent with the Gospel message of love of God and neighbors.

Be Loving

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER (B), MAY 9, 2021
 READINGS: ACTS 10:25-48; PS 98; 1 JN 4:7-10; JN 15:9-17

Why should we love one another? Today's second reading and Gospel help us to answer this question. But the even more pressing question is *how* should we love one another?

In the New Testament, the Gospel of John and the three letters of John share stylistic features, emphasize similar theological points and address problems that affected early

Christians. Because of their commonalities, these texts collectively are referred to as the Johannine literature, and they likely emerged from the same community.

Love permeates the second reading. The community members are called “beloved” (*agapetoî*), and they are told to love one another (*agape*) because God loves them. Moreover, the passage makes the simple, direct, yet profoundly complex statement: God is love. The way to understand what that means is to look at Christ’s death, understood as a selfless act of love. As the text continues (which we will hear next week), 1 John affirms that imitating God’s love with our own acts of selfless love allows God to live in us and divine love to be perfected (1 Jn 4:12).

In the Gospel, Jesus proclaims that his followers must keep the commandment to “love one another as I love you.” Moreover, Jesus declares that selfless love comes from a willingness to sacrifice one’s life for others. In the Gospel narrative, Jesus is arrested

soon after this proclamation, so he is preparing his followers to understand and interpret his crucifixion as an example of selfless love (*agape*).

Unfortunately, the world is filled with much hate. Not only are many people not living selflessly, but they are living with hatred and disregard for others. Even worse, many claim to be followers of Christ while spewing hatred toward others. The love that is envisioned by the Johannine community may be difficult, but it is essential that we all work toward it. The readings proclaim that we come to know God by being like God.

As to the question of how we can show selfless love, we might reflect on Martin Luther King Jr.’s ideas about love and the Beloved Community: “Love is creative and redemptive. Love builds up and unites; hate tears down and destroys.” King’s vi-

‘Love one another as I love you.’ (Jn 15:12)

Praying With Scripture

What can you do to promote love in the world?

How can you confront and combat hate?

How might Martin Luther King Jr.’s Beloved Community be realized?

sion of the Beloved Community was grounded in love, reconciliation, dignity and respect for all. Poverty, racism, violence and the conditions that stem from these evils are intolerable. By working to end hate and division, fighting conditions and practices that dishonor others, we show our love for one another—and we come to know God by being more like God.

Be Confident

In today’s Gospel, Jesus offers a prayer just before he is arrested. While the Synoptic Gospels record the agony in the garden, when Jesus’ followers fall asleep as he prays not to be crucified, John has a different tradition regarding Jesus’ final moments with the disciples. In John, Jesus prays primarily for his followers, not himself. Within the prayer, we are given important information about how Jesus understands their future work.

Jesus asks the Father in heaven for protection for the disciples, which reveals the perils of discipleship. Jesus wants them to be safe from those in the world who hate him, and them

by extension. Likewise, Jesus asks that they are protected “so that they may be one just as we are one.”

Most scholars believe the Gospel of John was written toward the end of the first century, over 60 years after Jesus’ crucifixion. John reflects some of the inner conflicts that likely emerged after Jesus’ death. Jesus’ prayer for his disciples to be one reflects such divisions within the community. John depicts Jesus calling instead for unity, just as he is united with the Father in heaven.

Importantly, at the end of the Gospel, Jesus says that his followers are sent into the world “consecrated

SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER (B), MAY 16, 2021
READINGS: ACTS 1:15-26; PS 103; 1 JN 4:11-16; JN 17:11-19

‘When I was with them, I protected them in your name.’ (Jn 17:12)

Praying With Scripture

How do you promote truth in the world?

What do you do when you have doubts?

How do you help people who lack certainty in their faith?

in truth,” calling on them to spread the good news openly and honestly. At the beginning of John, Jesus is called the true light (Jn 1:9). Early in his minis-

try, Jesus interacts with Nicodemus and emphasizes that those who seek truth will come to the light (Jn 3:19-21). Now, at the end of his ministry, Jesus reaffirms the importance of truth as an element of the continued work that is entrusted to the disciples.

The second reading explains how that truth comes about through love,

by which “God remains in us.” Divine love is truly perfected within the community and empowered by the Holy Spirit, and acts of love enable the good news to be spread truthfully.

As we near the end of the Easter season, today’s Gospel is a reminder to be confident in faith, knowing that God is present in the world. Jesus’ fi-

nal prayer offers instructions for the continued proclamation of the good news while imploring the disciples to be confident that Jesus has assured their care. As we continue to spread the Gospel today, even when confronted with hatred and animosity, we too can be assured of God’s love and protection.

Inspired by the Spirit

READINGS: ACTS 2:1-11; PS 104; 1 COR 12:3-13 OR GAL 5:16-25; JN 20:19-23 OR JN 15:26-16:15

Fifty days after Easter we celebrate the feast of Pentecost, which commemorates the coming of the Holy Spirit. Today’s readings focus on the role of the Spirit in sustaining the community after Jesus’ death and resurrection, reminding us how the Spirit continues to empower believers today.

In the first reading, from Acts, the Spirit symbolically comes in the form of tongues of fire representing the many tongues (languages) the disciples are able to speak in order to spread the Gospel to people from different regions. Often this scene is interpreted as showing the apostles receiving the Spirit, but Luke does not explicitly say who “they” are in the house. The previous chapter describes men and women disciples praying together with a crowd of 120 people (Lk 1:14-15), so Luke may envision all of these believers receiving the Spirit and sharing the Gospel with the larger world. The Spirit enables “the mighty acts of God” to be communicated to and be understood by diverse groups.

There are two options for the second reading, each highlighting how the Spirit empowers believers. In the

First Letter to the Corinthians, Paul speaks of spiritual gifts like wisdom, understanding, healing and prophecy. Like the first reading, Paul affirms the Spirit’s role in helping people to gain knowledge and insight. In the reading from Galatians, Paul discusses acts that are opposed to the Spirit, including idolatry, jealousy, anger and drunkenness. He highlights actions that hamper a community and instead calls on people to “live by the Spirit” in order to foster fruitful relationships with one another.

Both options for the Gospel reading are from John. Before his death, Jesus promises the disciples that he will send the Holy Spirit to them as an advocate, a helper, especially on the difficult road ahead. Jesus offers comfort, reassurance and guidance for the community to thrive, even after his departure. After the resurrection, Jesus appears to his followers and breathes on them saying, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” John invokes the powerful imagery of God breathing life into the first human in the Garden of Eden (Gn 2:7), with Jesus now animating the Christian movement by the power of the Spirit.

Especially on Pentecost, we re-

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim. (Acts 2:4)

Praying With Scripture

How does the Holy Spirit inspire your work?

What can you do to spread the Gospel?

Do you look for ways to increase your knowledge and understanding?

member the important role of the Spirit in guiding and sustaining faith after Jesus’ resurrection. The sacraments of baptism and confirmation are also occasions when we receive the Spirit and spiritual gifts are affirmed and strengthened within us. We should deepen those graces by praying for the guidance of the Spirit to permeate our lives. Just as the early Christians understood the Spirit as a powerful force that inspired their work, we too should pray for the Spirit’s presence and influence in our lives.

Today is an opportunity to reflect on the relationships among the persons of the Trinity: Father, Son, Holy Spirit. Especially on the Solemnity of the Holy Trinity, we are invited to pray about the relational nature of God, and we can find inspiration to strengthen our relationships with God and one another.

St. Elizabeth of the Trinity, a Carmelite nun from France, offers us a prayer about her love of the Triune God:

O my God, Trinity whom I adore, let me entirely forget myself that I may abide in you, still and peaceful as if my soul were already in eternity; let nothing disturb my peace nor separate me from you, O my unchanging God, but that each moment may take me further into the depths of your mystery! Pacify my soul! Make it your heaven, your beloved home and place of your repose; let me never leave you there alone, but may I be ever attentive, ever alert in my faith, ever adoring and all given up to your creative action.

St. Elizabeth's mystical encounter with the Trinity can inspire us to pray for our own close relationship with God. Likewise, today's Gospel reminds us that a close relationship with God requires us to share our experiences with one another.

The last four verses of Matthew make up today's Gospel reading. The disciples encounter the risen Christ on a mountain, where they

are commissioned to spread the good news. Jesus gives them authority and mandates them to make disciples throughout the world, baptizing in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The encounter has echoes of the giving of the law on Mount Horeb (Sinai), as is recalled in the first reading from Deuteronomy.

At this point in Matthew, Mary Magdalene and another Mary had encountered an angel at the empty tomb who proclaimed the resurrection, invited the women to witness the empty tomb and instructed them to inform the disciples (Mt 28:1-7). Then, the women met the risen Christ and "embraced his feet and did him homage" (Mt 28:9). Jesus reiterates the angel's command, asking the women to tell the 11 disciples to go to Galilee where they will see him. However, even when the Eleven obey these instructions and see Jesus, "they worshipped but they doubted."

These various instructions and reactions are worth close consideration. Obviously, the risen Christ could simply appear to the disciples. Why have the women encounter Christ first and then tell the others? Embedded in the resurrection account is the spreading of the Gospel in action. The women are the first Christian witnesses, and they model behavior for discipleship. They encounter Christ and react with a mix of fear and joy, physically prostrating themselves in worship. Importantly, they cannot keep their experiences to themselves, as they are twice told to tell the others.

When the Eleven encounter Christ, they worship but also doubt the resurrection, a reaction record-

'Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations.'
(Mt 28:19)

Praying With Scripture

How do you live out the Gospel message of making disciples throughout the world?

Where do you encounter God?

How do you reflect on the mystery of the Holy Trinity?

ed in more detail in John's story of Thomas's doubting (Jn 20:24-29). The disciples mirror how the Gospel would be received, with some accepting and others doubting the message. As in his encounter with the women, Jesus informs the other disciples that they cannot keep the message to themselves. They must make disciples in the name of the Holy Trinity, teaching so that others would come to know God on account of their Christian witness. Today's feast and Gospel remind us to pray to encounter God in our lives and share those experiences with others through our words and actions.

Jaime L. Waters teaches Scripture at DePaul University in Chicago. She is an associate professor of Catholic studies.

Thank You, Marty Baron

How The Boston Globe helped the church

By Eileen Markey



Marty Baron, editor of The Boston Globe when the newspaper exposed the Catholic hierarchy's systemic coverup of sexual abuse of children by clergy, retired from journalism at the end of February. Catholics owe him a debt of gratitude. He told us the truth.

Mr. Baron spent his final working years at The Washington Post after a half-century career, in which he served at several of the nation's premier newspapers. But he will be best remembered for launching the Globe's investigation of sexual abuse by members of the Catholic clergy, which won a Pulitzer Prize in 2003. An outsider in parochial Boston, not beholden by ties of kin and culture, he greenlighted an expensive and difficult investigation.

The Globe revealed the breadth of sexual abuse by clergy in the Archdiocese of Boston and the lengths to which church leaders went to cover it up. The investigation led to a reordering of Catholics' relationship with ecclesiastical authority. It also made possible revelations of sexual abuse in other institutions, and the #MeToo movement flowed from the space for truth-telling about sexual abuse that Mr. Baron blew open.

The impact of the Globe's reporting was epochal, said James McCartin, associate professor of theology at Fordham University and a historian of American Catholicism. "I think this is the story of the church so far in the 21st century," he said.

"I don't think there is anything else like this, an example of this magnitude, changing the shape of a religion," agreed Kathleen Holscher, associate professor and director of the religious studies program at the University of New Mexico, who has studied sexual abuse by clergy in the Navajo Nation. "After 2002, one is living in a world that requires reckoning with a broken church."

Before 2002, newspapers across the country, including Catholic publications, had been writing about individual sexual abuse cases. But the Globe series exposed the church hierarchy's pattern of obfuscation and secrecy that placed a higher premium on the reputation of the institution than on the safety of children. Mr. Baron was willing to spend money on a full-time investigative reporting team and willing to fight in court for the release of sealed settlement records and correspondence. These efforts unraveled a systematic conspiracy of coverup and lies.

"For decades we were out there screaming and no one was listening," said David Clohessy, national director of the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests. Mr. Clohessy credits the Globe series with protecting tens of thousands of children by forcing a social reckoning with child sexual abuse. "It is always tempting to ignore and minimize evil, and Baron's work made it impossible to do that," he said.

It is that dedication to the truth—even awful, world-shattering truth—that Catholics should be grateful for.

"It was a very powerful demonstration of what a free press can do," said Tom Roberts, former editor of The National Catholic Reporter, who had been covering instances of clergy sexual abuse for decades.

Mr. Baron is Jewish. The Catholic story is not his story. But his courage has a sacramental quality to it. There is a quest and a revelation, clarity against fog, faith in the power of facts. In the wretched light of truth, we can see—and try to fix.

Mr. Roberts compares this kind of journalism to the Ignatian examen, in which one welcomes desolation as a kind of message. "We know that any human individual or institution is going to go through times of great difficulty," he said. "We don't get the benefit of those kinds of troubles and difficult times unless we meet them and deal with them and in our case take advantage of the spirituality that grounds us to help us out of these things."

Mr. Baron led the team that forced us to see. Twenty years later, we are still grappling.

Eileen Markey teaches journalism at Lehman College and is the editor of an anthology of the work of the investigative reporter Wayne Barrett.

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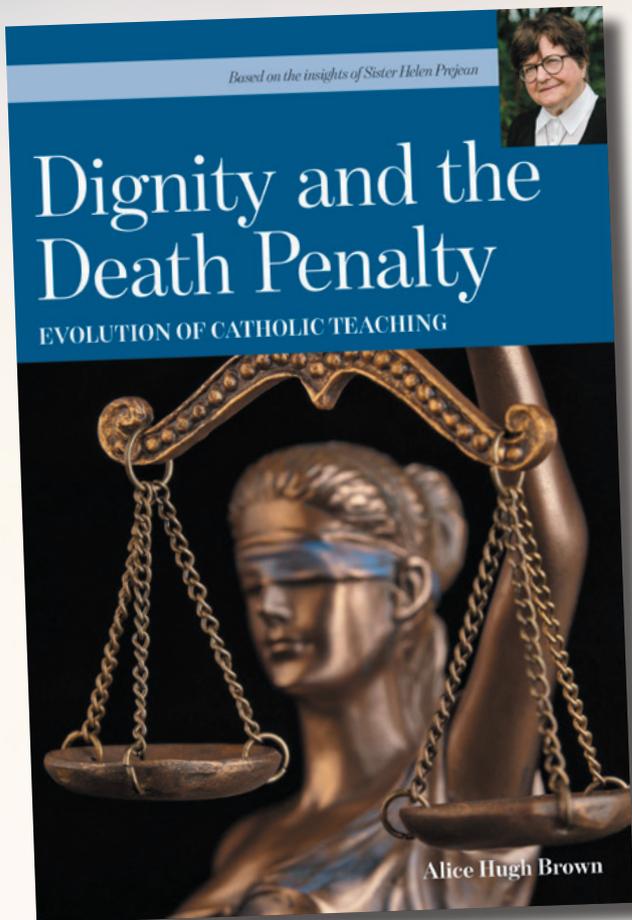


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