

America

FEBRUARY 2022

THE JESUIT REVIEW OF FAITH AND CULTURE



THE SCHOOL YEARS AHEAD

The next decade may decide the future of Catholic higher education

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Of People and Pets

Pope Francis caused a Category 5 brouhaha on Jan. 6 during what was an otherwise thoroughly ordinary general audience at the Vatican. During the pope's catechesis that day, which was focused on St. Joseph, Francis ranked adoptive parenthood as "among the highest forms of love." So far, so good. But then, in an offhand comment, the pope seemed to suggest that adults who opt for pets instead of children are selfish and are part of the reason for a demographic winter in the Western world, in which pet ownership is increasing at a faster rate than childbirth.

I wrote "seemed to suggest" because what the pope said was more nuanced and, to my mind, entirely reasonable. First, as my colleagues at the "Jesuitical" podcast have pointed out, the pope was not suggesting that people who have pets and do not have children are selfish. Many childless people cannot have children, or they choose not to have children because they lack the means to care for them properly. Francis was not talking about them. The pope's point was that people who have the means to have children and instead choose to have only pets are exhibiting what he called a "denial of fatherhood or motherhood" that "diminishes us; it takes away our humanity."

When I glanced at the reaction these comments elicited, mainly from folks who were misinformed about what the pope said, I was inclined to think that the episode was just another intense but ultimately meaningless social media storm. But in the days since, I am beginning to think that the pope—inadvertently or otherwise—has struck a chord, maybe even more than

one. For one thing, as my colleague Zac Davis remarked, "issues over child-bearing are deeply personal and deeply fraught. They're complicated, they're messy. They involve lots of sacrifice and discernment." That's surely why the comments set off so many passionate reactions. (It is also why unmarried clerics are, at best, imperfect messengers regarding these matters).

Yet it also seems that at least here in the United States, our relationships with our pets does seem to indicate a deeper social and cultural reality that we should take some time to examine honestly. It's not an entirely new question. While touring the Mississippi delta in 1967, U.S. Senator Robert F. Kennedy told the assembled reporters that it was a moral crime that Americans should "spend \$75 billion a year on armaments and \$3 billion a year on dogs" when so many children were going hungry. That from a devoted dog owner.

Now that last word—owner—also seems important. When I was a boy, people "owned" a pet. The language of "adoption" and words related to parentage were mostly used in relation to people and not animals. This was a longstanding cultural-linguistic convention. On the PBS drama "Downton Abbey," for example, the Earl of Grantham is devoted to his hunting dogs, even at times outwardly displaying greater affection toward them than he does his own family. Yet he is only referred to as the dog's "master," never its "father" or its "dad"—for in his world, as in ours, a man is only father to his children, biological or adopted.

Language is analogous, of course, so no one really thinks that when a man describes himself today as a "dog dad," he is intending any kind of harm,

let alone suggesting that he is the biological father of his puppy. But the present age has rightly challenged all of us to recognize the terrible power of language to demonize and dehumanize. So perhaps we should pay more attention. Doing that would not mean that our pets do not or cannot mean a great deal to us; that they cannot reveal the goodness of God's creation to us; or, in some analogous way, even reveal God's love to us.

But it is also vitally important to remember that pets are not human beings. That, in fact, is why the death of a beloved pet can be so traumatic, for we are mourning the absolute end of a creature. Only human beings are made in the image and likeness of the creator and can therefore hope for immortality in the classically Christian sense of the word.

Language also matters because human experience tells us that a precursor to violence often involves using language to deny that unique and God-given dignity, to reduce people to mere ideas or obstacles. What Pope Francis has called our throwaway culture has produced all kinds of ways of doing that. Language is one of them. Regrettably, that is why there is an extensive list of words that in a single utterance can reduce someone to something less than human.

To put it another way, when dogs are treated like humans, then it is often only a matter of time until humans are treated like dogs. And if you're wondering where that might lead, then I suggest you reread any decent history of the 20th century.

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



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CNS photo/Jonathan Ernst, Reuters

Members of Congress participate in a prayer vigil on Jan. 6, the first anniversary of the attack on the Capitol by supporters of former President Donald Trump.

Cover: iStock

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Reflections on the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol

In the January issue, the editors reflected on the first anniversary of the attack on the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, the day “we and the world saw the United States, too, is a fragile democracy, as vulnerable to demagoguery and the exploitation of populist sentiment as anywhere else in the world.” But while 12 months ago, many voices from both sides of the isle united in condemning the violence, today it has become a partisan affair. “If our present officeholders are not up to the task,” the editors wrote, “then at the same time that they protest and critique incumbents, the American people should also prioritize electing better replacements, even when our constitutional house is not visibly on fire.” Dozens of readers responded to the editorial, including the following reflections:

The editors have given a task to the citizens of our country as though it were a routine term paper assignment.

The assumption is that the assignees are up to the task. Yet in a series of tests leading up to this assignment, the assignees have given scant evidence that they are prepared to complete the assignment. The evidence is that the assignees have registered for a course of citizenship that is way over their (our) heads.

I visualize a future historian, probably not an American—maybe German, Argentinian or even Greek—observing that like so many other societies in the past, ours tried representative democracy but just couldn’t cut it.

Charles Erlinger

I am a Democrat, but don’t like everyone from Liz Cheney to Lauren Boebert being lumped in the same stereotype, let alone my Republican neighbors. I think stereotyping fosters hate, and presumably that’s what we (Catholics) are against.

Sharon Friedman

What is the “right” afraid of? A bully and a liar? If we lose the vote, democracy will be over. It is way past time for my Democratic and Republican friends to stand up to Mr. Trump. Enough already.

Robert Rudy

Trump questioned the validity of the 2020 election results. Multiple Democrats have done precisely the same thing, dating back to the election of George W. Bush and continuing through the 2016 election. So if questioning election results amounts to promoting an insurrection, **America**, in fairness, should critique more than just former President Trump. Criticism should also be directed to the patent partisanship of the House Committee on Jan. 6, whose members were all chosen by a speaker who refused to seat the proposed G.O.P. committee members. How

would any of us like being tried by a jury hand-selected by a prosecutor who detests us? I’m looking for a balanced and fair approach, which **America** seems incapable of providing. I’d like less politics and more spirituality.

Patrick Robinson

Perhaps a key unaddressed issue here, Patrick, revolves around central questions: What are the implications of Jan. 6 for American democracy and does it signify the start of an ongoing attempt to subvert our elections? Many, perhaps like yourself, don’t think such questions matter. Others, like me, are very alarmed—some finding solace and strength from the Bible and spirituality.

Raymond Allain

Unfortunately, America’s poor educational system has created a large portion of the electorate that lacks critical thinking skills and is unable to distinguish fact from fiction. Despotism plays on ignorance and propaganda, and the world has, right now, a glut of propaganda internet tools that are unbridled.

Thomas Butler

Oh for heaven’s sake—the few hundred dimwits who invaded the Capitol in the Jan. 6 riots deserve to be prosecuted as they are. But claiming this was some kind of coup or insurrection, like the Bolsheviks storming the Winter Palace or the Confederates shelling Fort Sumter, is ridiculous and hysterical. Trump had his legal chance to show fraud was serious enough to have changed results in the four states that mattered and utterly failed to do so. Mr. Biden won fair and square, and Trump’s churlishness reminds most sensible conservatives why we were always wary of him.

Michael Gavin

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Why are so many Americans leaving religion behind? We should ask them.

A Pew study released in December found that 29 percent of Americans are not affiliated with any religion, up from 16 percent when Pew first asked the question in 2007. (The number of people in the United States who self-identify as Catholic has held steady at 21 percent.) But there is not merely a shift in how people express religion publicly. The outlook for personal spirituality is similarly bleak. According to Pew, almost a third of U.S. adults report that they pray rarely or not at all, up from 18 percent in 2007.

Young people in particular have distanced themselves from religion. Another survey, released by the Public Religion Research Institute last summer, found that an even higher share of 18- to 29-year-olds, 36 percent, do not associate with a particular religion. Younger Catholics have also told one research team that they are now less willing to attend Mass than before the pandemic began.

These statistics are no surprise; they confirm a longstanding pattern of secularization in the United States. Over the last half-century, academics from various disciplines have written at length (often in these pages) as they have attempted to explain this dramatic turn away from religion. Meanwhile, dismayed faith leaders and churchgoers alike have been left to ponder whether they are members of a dying species of those who look to God for an understanding of the world.

Depending on who is being asked, people have stopped going to church either because the liturgy is too stuffy and antiquated or because it is not as reverent as it used to be; the church has not done enough to listen to the faithful's concerns on

L.G.B.T., contraception and abortion issues, or it is already too accommodating on these fronts; the hierarchy either does not place enough emphasis on pastoral ministries, or it does not pay enough heed to doctrine. Underlying all of this, revelations of widespread sexual abuse and its coverup by religious authorities have significantly dampened the religious practices of American Catholics.

But just as often as certain Catholics look to specific issues of the institutional church to account for increasing secularism, others tend to explain it away by blaming it on the morality of nonbelievers themselves. Some believe people do not go to church because they are lazy, while others believe it is because church teaching is antiquated. If it is laziness, there is no point in trying to welcome back wayward Catholics; there is no cure for sloth. If it is outdated church teaching, the temptation is to say the church simply needs to get with the times, and the lost shall be found. Neither way of thinking offers much inspiration for the church's evangelical mission.

But what if there is a different way to look at the decline of religious practice in the United States? Have the "nones" consciously rejected religion, or have religious institutions failed to involve them and respond to their needs? Do they lack belief in God, or do they no longer see the church as representing the God they believe in? Has a mixture of all of these factors gotten us to where we are today, with both society and the church sharing some responsibility?

The only way to find out is by asking, and the Catholic Church is attempting to do precisely that. Pope

Francis announced that the meeting in 2023 of the Synod of Bishops—as the culmination of a three-year worldwide process—would focus on finding ways to make the church one that “walks together” instead of one that follows the lead of a select few. The pope is encouraging the church to envision itself more creatively as the body of Christ. The church should not be characterized by a hierarchy exerting its power over the laity, he has urged, but by charitable dialogue among all bishops, priests, deacons, laypeople and religious, as well as with the wider world.

Pope Francis has made it clear that the diocesan phase of this synod should not be limited only to people who show up to Mass every Sunday. Instead, the synod's preparatory document calls for listening not only within the visible structures of the church but also in encounters with “people who are distant from the faith” and with the “poor and excluded” (No. 29). Only by listening to those at the margins can the church truly be universal.

To that end, all diocesan leaders coordinating the first phase of preparation for the Synod of Bishops should make a concerted effort to reach out to those people who are disaffiliated with religion, especially lapsed or nonpracticing Christians. Many dioceses have already set forth detailed plans to include marginalized groups in the synod, but these efforts ought not to be limited to a handful of local churches.

The voices of the nones are crucial for understanding where the church has lost people on both the local and global levels—for how can we bring people back into the church if we do not even know why they left in the first place? By listening to those

who feel alienated from Christianity or even apathetic to it, the church will make great inroads in learning about those aspects of pastoral outreach that it needs to improve.

Just as the church has much to learn from these lost sheep, it also has much to offer them in return. Engaging nones in the synod offers a prime opportunity for evangelization—not through proselytizing but by demonstrating accompaniment and dialogue in practice, and by offering an example of how the church can live out its mission of helping the downtrodden and outcast.

In the months since **America** first reported how inconsistently U.S. dioceses were preparing for the synod, there has been some progress in solidifying plans for the listening phase. Going forward, U.S. dioceses must maintain this momentum. It is a massive and difficult undertaking, but the church in the United States must not succumb to the temptation to treat the synod as though it were merely another chore. Synodality should remain at the forefront of diocesan and parochial consciousness for years to come.

With a third of Americans estranged from organized religion, there is no time to lose. It is ultimately only God's grace that can bring people back to the faith. Even so, all members of the church have a responsibility to do as much as they can to bring God's people back to himself—and there is perhaps no better way to do this than through the current churchwide synodal process.

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Lessons from Notre Dame on ministering to L.G.B.T. students

A few years back, the Division of Student Affairs invited a guest to talk to staff members about his experience as a gay student at Notre Dame. The young man told us how growing up and experiencing same-sex attraction in a small town in the Midwest was lonely, and how he had come to Notre Dame with hopes that he would find a larger, more sophisticated community in which to come to know himself and his way in the world. But in a place he had hoped to be friendly and hospitable, he reported that students were quick to call anything objectionably out of the ordinary “gay,” and that any man considered insufficiently masculine was subjected to anti-gay slurs.

This was eye-opening for many of us. Another pastoral administrator and I set about creating a training session for all of our orientation weekend staffers to alert them to the danger that this story pointed out. Casual indifference to language and inattention to others’ experiences and dignity might be terribly, sinfully harmful. We had to do better.

Around that same time, a first-year student stopped by one morning for coffee and to ask me some questions about life. He wanted to know how to deal with a situation in which his significant other (whom he referred to in gender-neutral terms) was not ready to be physically intimate.

“What I’m saying is, it’s hard to be gay and Catholic, Father,” he eventually said.

“Well, I can understand that. But let’s maybe slow down,” I replied. “So you’ve decided the church is wrong about whether you can ever have sex with a member of the same sex. O.K., so when should you have sex with someone? You’ve only been here a few

weeks. We have attractive, well-adjusted seniors, men and women, straight and gay, who have yet to have sex. They’re O.K.! You’ll be O.K. My advice is, don’t worry about having sex until you’ve figured out not just what you think is wrong but what you think is right. I think the church is right, but we can keep talking and you’re welcome here despite our disagreement.”

That student and I maintained a very good relationship for the rest of our time on campus together, and he wrote me a touching farewell note about our walking together in faith and life here. He did this despite my commending church teaching to him, and despite his rejecting it (so far as I know). I did, and do, think very highly of him.

These two anecdotes have been prominent in my mind since the fall, when one of our campus newspapers published an essay calling for more clarity from Notre Dame on where it stands with respect to church teaching and human sexuality. The author wrote from a perspective endorsing that teaching. Another student newspaper then published a letter from a student castigating the essay as “hate speech.”

I asked some students what they found hateful about the essay. One answered that the author “doesn’t think [L.G.B.T. students] should have sex.” Well, true. So teaches the church, and so argue some smart and talented gay Christian thinkers and writers like Eve Tushnet and Wesley Hill. They are not hateful or self-loathing. Moral disagreement is a fact of life, and at a university in particular, we must learn to live with it in love.

The church’s teaching on human sexuality is simple enough: Sex is a

powerful dimension of the human person ordered toward procreation and the bonding of husband and wife, and expressions that willfully sever sex from its nature are immoral. But too often, many in the church have seemed to pay special attention to gay sex, ignoring the rigorous demands that chastity places on us all, gay and straight alike. To many L.G.B.T. people, this is a stiff-arm from the church, a sign of unwelcome, and has led to harrowing weekends like the one that the Notre Dame student shared with our Student Affairs group. We can and must do better to provide a loving welcome to every son and daughter of God we encounter and walk with them toward the truth together.

We can also challenge one another without thinking that disagreement—even about very important things like sexuality—is always a form of bigotry or hatred.

In the end, I find that few people make their decisions about sex solely based on anything I have said or thought. This is most understandable. When they ask my opinion, it is presumably because they want a presentation of the church’s teaching from someone they have come to trust, and because they also believe that dialogue and mutual accompaniment are possible. But to build and maintain such relationships, we need to fear one another a lot less and trust one another—and God—a lot more.

William Dailey, C.S.C., is a priest of the Congregation of Holy Cross and currently serves as the rector of Pangborn Hall, a student residence he moved into as a freshman at Notre Dame in 1990 and where he is now working on a book about faith and reason.

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After a life sentence for a predator priest, learning from a calamity in Cleveland

By Kevin Clarke



Four years after his ordination in 2017, the Rev. Robert McWilliams was sentenced last November to life imprisonment in a federal criminal court in Cleveland, after pleading guilty to a cascade of sex trafficking, sexual exploitation and child pornography charges. He was laicized in December. The McWilliams case came as an unhappy shock to Catholics in the Diocese of Cleveland and all over the United States, who might have hoped that years of enhanced screening would have put an end to the ordination of predators like Mr. McWilliams.

Mr. McWilliams entered the seminary system in Cleveland in 2008, six years after the abuse crisis had detonated on the front pages of *The Boston Globe* in an exposé authored by its Spotlight investigative team. Mr. McWilliams could not have been unaware of the fallout from that crisis and the greater scrutiny that candidates for the priesthood would draw because of it. Despite it all, he made it through to ordination and placement in a parish, where he soon began a process of internet “catfishing” and sexual extortion involving three teenage boys.

At sentencing, defense attorney Robert Dixon pleaded for leniency to allow Mr. McWilliams to “secure the therapy necessary to confront demons from his childhood and the addictions and heinous behavior of his adulthood.” Mr. Dixon did not describe those demons, but emotional traumas of childhood are among the issues that contemporary seminaries say they are able to uncover during formation to identify ordinands who warrant psychological interven-

tion or who may not be suitable candidates for the priesthood. Why were those demons not discovered during Mr. McWilliams’s formation?

The Rev. Thomas Berg, the director of admissions at St. Joseph’s Seminary and College in Yonkers, N.Y., believes the McWilliams case is one that should be studied and learned from, but not one that conclusively indicts the contemporary seminary system.

“Over the past 10 years, things have changed dramatically for the better,” Father Berg said. “The screening process is much more extensive, much more demanding, as many dimensions of the formation process have become.” Those changes “make it extremely more difficult for these kinds of behaviors to be hidden.”

The Diocese of Cleveland and its seminary leadership declined to speak with **America** about the McWilliams case but did agree to respond by email to specific questions.

The diocese said that it was a “false assumption” that someone “with proclivities like Mr. McWilliams can be ‘spotted’ before they are ever caught engaging in the act towards which they are inclined.” He was able to commit “his vile acts,” according to the diocese, “because he was a master of deception, not because anyone failed to notice something they should have noticed.”

But accounts from a fellow seminarian and parishioners where Mr. McWilliams served as a deacon, reported by the Catholic news website *The Pillar*, suggest a few incidents during formation that perhaps should have raised

concerns—among them his interest in “furry cosplay” and his self-appointed role as porn addiction counselor, as well as his ability to evade the seminary’s alcohol and internet restrictions.

A source familiar with seminary processes nationally, who asked to remain anonymous because he was not authorized to speak to the press, described a challenging balance that must be achieved by seminary formators—one that takes seriously the need to scrutinize candidates for psychological problems but also strives to create an environment of spiritual growth and personal truth-telling.

“The thing that you can’t have, of course, is that the major aspect of seminary is [focused on] trying to catch people that might be duplicitous,” he said. “If you do that, you turn it into a police state, essentially, or at least a heavily monitored place where formation becomes impossible.”

Contemporary seminarians feel “very managed already,” said John C. Cavadini, a theology professor at the University of Notre Dame, where he directs the McGrath Institute for Church Life. “They’re very conscious that they are being watched all the time. They’re often afraid to put down honest responses to rather innocent questions that they might be asked in formation meetings.”

As part of a seminary’s formation team, “Yes, I have to be vigilant for the church, and yes, I evaluate you,” said Father Berg, “but at the same time, I am here in your corner as much as I possibly can be.”

The late Rev. Donald Cozzens, who died on Dec. 9 a few weeks after speaking with **America**, was from 1996 until 2001 the rector of St. Mary’s Seminary in Cleveland, which Mr. McWilliams attended. He was perhaps best known for his book *The Changing Face of the Priesthood*, a prescient look at contemporary clerical life published just two years before The Globe’s reports brought national attention to the church’s abuse crisis.

Recalling his days as rector at St. Mary’s, he said, “The pressure [to secure ordinations] doesn’t come from, say, the bishop or the Catholic laity.

“The pressure comes from the system; the pressure comes from the history of the church. I don’t think there’s any bishop that would set a goal of the number of seminarians that will be recommended for ordination.

“But, boy, our seminaries are half filled compared to what they were when I was ordained 56 years ago,” Father Cozzens said. “Have we lowered the bar in terms of admissions and promoting men from year to year?” he asked. “I want to say no, we haven’t, but I’m not sure that’s an accu-

rate response.”

Though he acknowledged that St. Mary’s, like most seminaries across the country, has significantly beefed up its psychological testing and interrogating of candidates, Father Cozzens said that if he were rector again, he would re-evaluate those candidate screens, “and I would have this review done by outside experts.”

Father Cozzens was also concerned about a systemic guardedness and even dishonesty about issues of sexuality that prevent frank conversations within seminaries and among seminarians. “I think we need to have a renewed Catholic theology of human sexuality,” Father Cozzens said.

Some responses to incidents like the McWilliams case are already in motion. According to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the upcoming sixth edition of the *Program for Priestly Formation* “will focus more intensely on spiritual and human formation, especially during the Propaedeutic Stage of formation,” when questions about vocation and discernment are first raised with seminary formators or admissions directors.

Mr. Cavadini suggests the creation of a national body, perhaps modeled after the bishops’ conference’s National Review Board on Child and Youth Protection, which could wield authority over seminary practices and host regular audits that review reporting and protection procedures. The key, he argued, is to empower outsiders in that oversight role.

In its response to **America**, the Diocese of Cleveland defended its screening and formation practices and forwarded a summary of its screening protocol and practices. Assuming those policies were followed to the letter, saying precisely where the diocese went wrong about Mr. McWilliams is indeed a challenge. The fact of his crimes and his capacity to elude detection during formation, however, remain.

In 2021 the diocese hired a full-time psychologist, and it plans another external review of admissions protocol in the near future. But diocesan officials do not intend to take other measures at this time.

“In the wake of evil acts like those committed by McWilliams, it is natural for good people to want to believe that something could have been done to prevent them, if only people had simply tried harder or done more,” a diocesan spokesperson said in a prepared statement. “However, in a fallen world, marred by sin, evil is a reality that often cannot be predicted or prevented despite even the best efforts. Such was the case with McWilliams.”

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

U.S.C.C.B. child protection audit results

More historic abuse allegations, but few contemporary incidents reported in 2019-20

The latest annual audit of children protection sponsored by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection, released the same day Father McWilliams was sentenced (Nov. 9, 2021), reported that more than 4,200 allegations of sexual abuse by clergy were made between July 1, 2019, and June 30, 2020. The annual audit tracks not only new charges of abuse but also how well U.S. dioceses and eparchies are observing child protection protocols established in 2002 by the U.S.C.C.B. in accordance with its “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.”

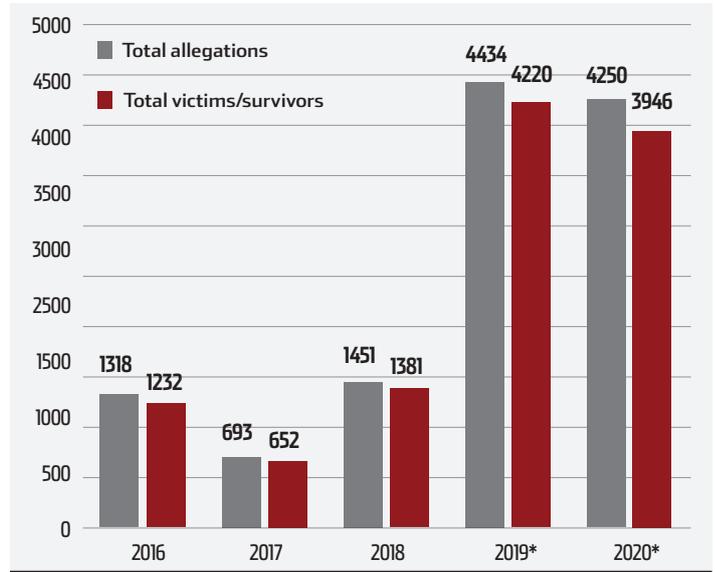
“Due in part to the changes in some state statutes of limitations regarding the time during which claims may be made and increased publicity, the number of allegations reported in 2019 was significantly high and this trend continued in 2020,” according to the report. “It should be noted that the vast majority of these reports were historical in nature.”



4,228 historic allegations of sexual abuse by clergy were reported in fiscal 2020, but 22 allegations involved current year minors—consisting of 13 males, eight females and one unknown. Six of the allegations were substantiated, seven investigations were ongoing, two were unsubstantiated, three were categorized as “unable to be proven,” and four categorized as “other.”

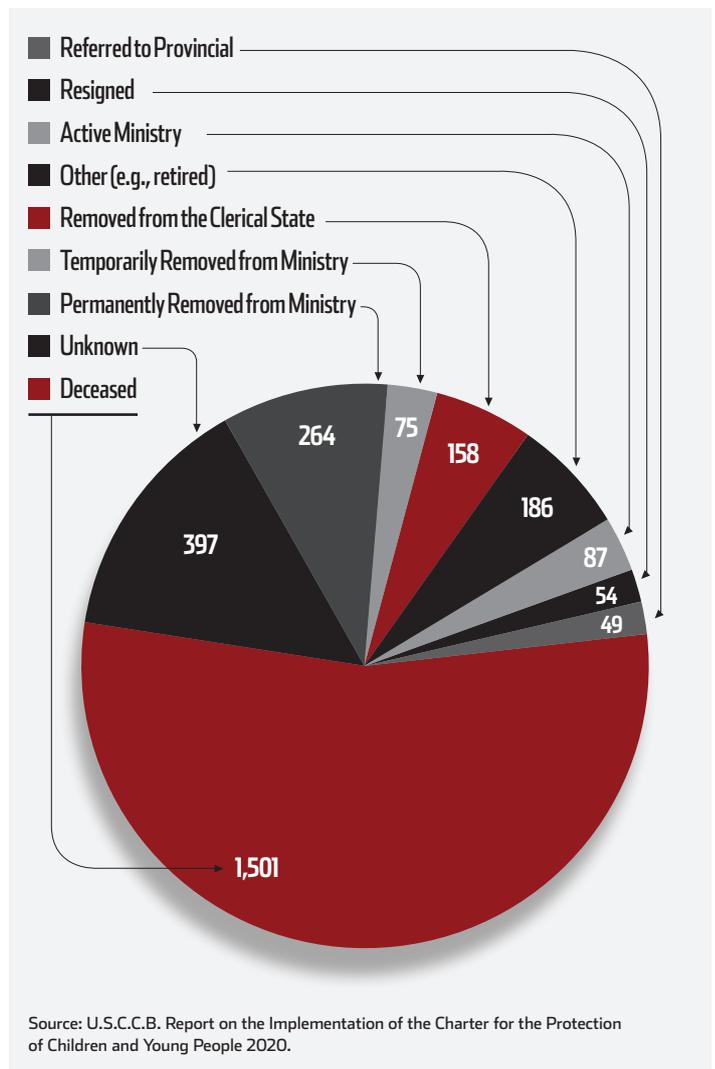
Despite unprecedented challenges because of the Covid-19 pandemic, auditors physically **visited 10 dioceses** and, using remote technologies, virtually visited 51 other dioceses and eparchies. Of the **61 dioceses and eparchies** included in the audit, 57 received a finding of “compliance” in implementing all charter mandates.

TOTAL REPORTED VICTIMS AND ALLEGATIONS 2016-20



* See text at left for explanation of the increase in allegations for these years.

STATUS OF ACCUSED CLERICS AS OF JUNE 30, 2020



Source: U.S.C.C.B. Report on the Implementation of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People 2020.



Inflation spike hurts poor the most

Accepting grocery donations at the St. Anthony of Padua dining room in Menlo Park, Calif., in November

CNS photo/David M. Phillips

Manuel Jeremías Ake's rent on his one-bedroom apartment in Inglewood, Calif., has gone up nearly \$500 since the coronavirus pandemic began. He lives there with his wife and their six children.

"I told my landlords I couldn't do it, that I'd be working just to pay the rent," he said. "Do you know what they told me? They said, 'If you can't pay, then you have to look for somewhere else to live.' What does a person do when he hears that? With six kids? Where am I going to go?"

Mr. Ake's eldest child is 16 and he has 3-year-old twins. His 9-year-old daughter has autism. His wife stays home with the kids, and Mr. Ake works at a dry cleaner.

Many of his co-workers have been laid off because of a downturn in business related to the pandemic, and his hours have been cut in half. Compounding the distress, consumer prices have gone up 6.8 percent over the last 12 months, the greatest rate increase in 39 years.

"All the prices are ridiculously high," Mr. Ake said. "We were struggling to buy what we could afford. But now, forget about it. I've never seen anything like this in this country."

Mr. Ake found some support at Catholic Charities of Los Angeles' St. Margaret's Center. Staff there helped him apply for government aid for rent and utilities and will help him address his legal status.

Inflation has been a challenge for low-income families, especially during the pandemic, according to Mary Agnes Erlandson, the director of St. Margaret's.

The working-class people St. Margaret's serves do not have the kind of jobs that allow them to work remotely during Covid, she said. The pandemic has meant a significant income cut. "The combination of the rising prices and the uncertainty of what will happen with government support for rent and utilities has been really, really difficult," Ms. Erlandson said. And when a family member gets Covid-19,

especially the breadwinner, it gets even more difficult.

Southern California families are also turning to local food banks more often to help them get through. Tom Hof-farth, who runs the food pantry at the St. Robert's Center in Venice, Calif., said it has been a challenge to get fresh fruits and vegetables. Organizations that donate food to the center tell him the diminishing availability of fresh produce is connected to supply chain issues.

"We can't know week to week the kind of stuff that we're getting," he said. "We get tomatoes with a few days left, bananas turning brown, so you have to use them right away."

St. Robert's provides food for the homeless on the weekend and helps low-income families, usually single mothers, with take-home meals during the week. Mr. Hof-farth tries to be resourceful with what he buys and collects because he knows that families use any grocery money they save to pay rent and utilities.

Judy Yerian, a board member at St. Mary's Place, said the need in her community has actually decreased significantly over the last 12 months, since many people have been able to get back to work after enduring job losses and layoffs in the early months of the pandemic.

Despite this lower caseload, "higher prices have been a heavier burden on our clients and a heavier burden to our generous contributors," Ms. Yerian said.

While she commended generous donors, Ms. Yerian said, with the higher prices things could get more difficult in 2022.

"What the community and the parishioners are giving us may not be as much," she said. Their dollar is not going to go as far either, she pointed out.

J.D. Long-García, *senior editor*.
Twitter: @jdlonggarcia.



As Latin American economies decline, U.S. again becomes destination of hope

Despite the journey's many dangers and difficulties, new migrant caravans at Mexico's southern border are regularly forming. They typically include large contingents of people from Central American states, but they have been joined in recent months by growing numbers of migrants from Haiti and Venezuela. At the U.S. border with Mexico, they converge with immigrants from other nations—lately including record numbers of Brazilians.

Over the past decade, nations like Brazil and Chile welcomed thousands of Haitian and Venezuelan migrants. But now, with economic and social deterioration even in those more affluent Latin American states, exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, immigrants are beginning to seek new options.

Latin America's "migratory reality is something unstable and unpredictable," said the Italian-born Paolo Parise, C.S., who heads Mission Peace, a welcome center for immigrants and refugees in São Paulo, Brazil. "With the crisis in Brazil," he said, "migration networks which had been asleep have been quickly reactivated."

Father Parise told **America** that a few years ago, human traffickers lingered around the Brazilian embassy in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, promoting economic possibilities in Brazil to potential immigrants. "Now they are doing the same around the U.S. embassy in São Paulo, trying to convince people to go to the U.S.," he said.

Conrado Zepeda, S.J., who directs Jesuit Refugee Service in Mexico, described Haitians as among the most vulnerable migrants moving north. About 30,000 Haitian families have been detained by the Mexican government in Tapachula, he said.

"While I was there, I met a family and greeted their kid in French. The child's parents then told me he doesn't understand it, since he was born in Brazil and only speaks Portuguese," Father Zepeda said.

About a quarter of the Haitians currently being arrested on the U.S.-Mexico border identify themselves to Border Patrol as Brazilian. Many have, in fact, obtained legal Brazilian residency or citizenship and arrive with children born in Brazil. That means, according to Father Zepeda, part of the phenomenon of the record number of Brazilians trying to get into the United States has origins in the political and economic crisis in Haiti.

In Haiti, conditions have become even worse since many of its nationals first fled to Brazil. Migration direct from Haiti to the United States has tracked the intensification of social turmoil that followed the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in July.

"The situation [in Haiti] is terrible," said the Rev. Wilnes Tilus of Les Cayes, a community in the south of Haiti. "Nobody feels safe anywhere. Most schools remain closed because of the criminal gangs."



CNS photo/José Luis González, Reuters

Haitian migrants head to the United States on a highway near Huixtla, Mexico, on Nov. 27, 2021.

In Central America, an economic crisis intensified by the pandemic, recent natural catastrophes—including two hurricanes—and the region’s widespread violence press many to attempt to escape.

German-born Joaquín Frank, S.V.D., helps run a migrant shelter in Salto de Agua in the southern Mexico state of Chiapas. Because of the pandemic, the number of guests at his shelter fell in 2020 to only 8,000 people. But by October 2021, “we already welcomed 26,000 people,” he said. “Eighty percent of them come from Honduras.”

The continuing sociopolitical meltdown in Venezuela has led many of its nationals to fantasize about living in the United States, said Elvy Monzant, the executive secretary of the Latin American and Caribbean Ecclesial Network on Migration, Displacement, Refugee and Trafficking in Persons. “Some time ago, everybody’s dream was to live in Chile. Now everybody wants to go to the U.S.,” Mr. Monzant told *America*.

The church is attempting to respond to what has become the world’s largest migration crisis, according to Mr. Monzant—surpassing even the Syrian diaspora—with seven million Venezuelans now displaced.

Eduardo Campos Lima contributes from São Paulo, Brazil.



CNS photo/Paul Haring

Pope Francis with Cardinal Oswald Gracias at the Vatican on Oct. 9, 2014

Cardinal Gracias confirms a vigorous schedule for Pope Francis

Pope Francis, who celebrated his 85th birthday on Dec. 17, is “looking well and in good health,” Cardinal Oswald Gracias, the archbishop of Bombay, said in an exclusive interview with *America* on Dec. 15.

“He has so many challenges, and there are people who are putting obstacles in the way,” he said. “But we can help him with our prayers. I thank God that he has a good inner spirit and the Jesuit training. I can say with confidence: There is no conclave on the horizon, nor resignation. He’s feeling very well.”

The Indian cardinal was in Rome for the first in-person meeting of Pope Francis’ council of cardinal advisors since February 2020. Cardinal Gracias said the council discussed synodality. “It is very dear to the pope’s heart,” the cardinal said. “The whole church is now geared up for that.”

The cardinal attended a recent synodal meeting in Mexico. “When I look at the life of the church in South America, I see tremendous possibilities,” he said. “People are leaving the churches in South America, but this is because of the lack of pastoral care, lack of priests, and this has to be attended to.”

Turning to Pope Francis’ decree “*Traditionis Custodes*,” which limited celebrations of the pre-Vatican II “Tridentine” Latin Mass, Cardinal Gracias said there have been “only really tiny pockets of resistance but nothing much in Asia,” unlike in North America and some other Western churches.

The cardinal provided an update on the new “Constitution on the Reform of the Roman Curia,” which is expected to be one of the pope’s major reforms. Cardinal Gracias said the document “is finished; it’s handed over to the Holy Father.” He said Francis “has been studying it very carefully. He wants it to be his own, not that of the council of cardinals.”

Gerard O’Connell, *Vatican correspondent*.
Twitter: @gerryrome.



By Charles C. Camosy

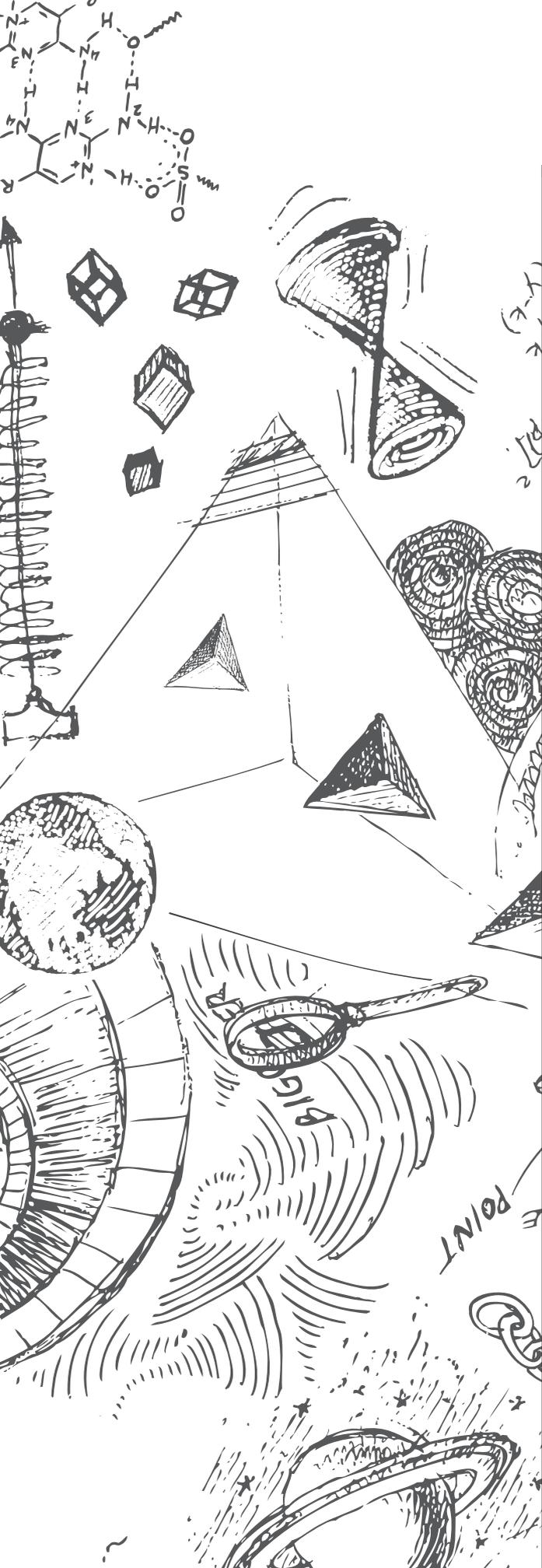
Catholic colleges and universities have a storied history spanning centuries. The coming decade might decide their future.

This past fall, I had the opportunity to debate the philosopher Peter Singer about the moral status of the prenatal child. The debate took place at Princeton University in front of hundreds of undergraduates who are enrolled in his massive course on practical ethics. It offered me an opportunity to make the case for prenatal justice.

But this yearly meeting is also a chance for me to take an enjoyable stroll across a beautiful autumn campus. Depending on the route, I can catch a glimpse of the prominent university chapel, still standing soundly amid the crashing waves of a sea of secularity. The building is a reminder of Princeton's historical connection to Christianity—indeed, of its founding as a seminary and close connection to the Presbyterian Church for the better part of two centuries. It is also a reminder that, although admirable work in theology and the study of religion still goes on in some corners at Princeton, the institution's fundamental character has changed.

Woodrow Wilson, perhaps best known in our current moment for his





deep-seated racism (including a policy of keeping Black students from attending Princeton), was responsible for ending the influence of the Presbyterians on the school's board of trustees. In part because of a commitment to so-called "pure" research, but also to make the faculty members eligible for retirement pensions from the Carnegie Foundation for the advancement of teaching, Princeton's board would go on to officially declare the school nonsectarian under Wilson's leadership.

The winds of dramatic change have continued to blow through our institutions of higher education, and in the first two decades of the 21st century it seems they have picked up speed; institutions are re-examining everything from the role of faith to the value of debates like the ones in which Professor Singer and I are engaged. Administrators, faculty and students are asking hard questions about the past and the future of our institutions, about mission, curricula and diversity. Catholic colleges and universities are not immune to these trends, and the college experience could look very different only 10 years from now. But what that means will depend on decisions being made right now in response to several anticipated social and cultural trends.

The Trends

The number of college-age students will drop dramatically, and those who choose to attend college will seek out low-cost degree options closer to home. This is the trend most predictors are focused on at the moment, and it has been the subject of many articles and books—including an important text by Nathan Grawe: *Demographics and the Demand for Higher Education*. Because of a combination of demographic trends that have been present for decades but accelerated dramatically during the Great Recession of 2008, there will simply be fewer college-age students in the United States over the next decade. The problem is likely to be especially acute in the Northeast and the Midwest.

President Biden's recent attempt to pass tuition-free community college provided by the federal government has failed—but the cultural trend is in the direction of this kind of public support. Especially in light of massive student debt and uneven distribution of the goods of higher education across social classes, more and more students will be looking for dramatically cheaper higher education alternatives over the next decade.

After the pandemic, desperately (and even mortally) lonely and disconnected students will be looking for more



As institutional connections to Christianity become frayed, other ideologies have gained ground.

and better interactions—a culture of encounter, if you will. But especially given the cost of the current dominant model, fewer will be looking for the experience of traveling across the country to live in what is essentially a country club. Particularly for students among Hispanic and other still-growing U.S. populations, the trend is likely to be toward more localized college experiences that permit and even encourage ongoing social ties with the student's family and community. Through virtual courses and other offerings during the pandemic, administrators, professors and students have become significantly more accepting of such learning modes, which offer greater flexibility regarding location.

The Covid-19 pandemic also has seen a demand from families for more control over what kinds of courses and programs are offered. This trend is already well advanced when it comes to primary and secondary education—and it is coming for higher education as well. Virtual school during the pandemic has spurred greater activism from many parents concerned about these issues, especially given the size of bills that these parents are paying.

Institutions' Christian connections will increasingly be questioned, and the classical liberal arts education will suffer. Ideological shifts taking place in higher education are also extremely important. Many colleges and universities continue to be affiliated formally with Christian churches, but there is powerful ongoing pressure on academic institutions to conform to a status quo that is ostensibly neutral (more often skeptical—or even hostile) when it comes to Christianity. In everything from faculty hires to debates about which topics or authors to include in the curriculum to what goes into the student handbook, assumptions like those that informed the secularizing approach of President Wilson at Princeton more than a century ago have now be-

come the norm across the country.

As I wrote for an article in *Church Life Journal* in 2018 describing in detail the crisis of Catholic moral theology, criteria for what counts as good scholarship, teaching and service have gradually ceased to have reference to Jesus or Christianity—even at schools formally affiliated with Christian churches.

As institutions' connections to Christianity become frayed, other ideologies have gained ground. Too often, Christian values are made to fit into those ideologies—not the other way around. Intersectional critical theory—sometimes referred to pejoratively as “wokeism” or the “successor ideology”—is very often at the center of this ideological shift.

Although the definition of this ideology is disputed (it is probably better described as many related things rather than as one consistent thing), one element most adherents agree on is that it embraces skepticism about classical liberal arts education grounded in traditional norms of academic debate. These norms are dismissed in various ways, but often with reference to their supposed connections to whiteness, patriarchy, homophobia/transphobia and more.

Intersectional theorists have much to contribute, particularly when it comes to structural sin and a consistent ethic of life. I have personally learned much about how to think about my whiteness as it exists with my own multi-racial family through their writings. But I have found that too often intersectional discourse focuses on tearing down perceived heretics and other opponents rather than working to find common cause with others who also want to lift up those discarded by our throwaway culture.

Open and honest academic dialogue will suffer. Those who wield power in the administration of higher education in the United States feel social and other kinds of pressure to enforce strictly the norms of intersectional critical theory—often by means of offices and initiatives related to diversity, equity and inclusion. These efforts are often responses to real suffering and prejudice, but too often they are executed in censorious ways that chill free and open academic inquiry about the contested issues of the day. This is true both for students (who can put grades and letters of recommendation at risk if they express an opinion out of step with this ideology), and even for tenured faculty, who fear being passed over for promotion, isolation and difficulties getting papers through peer review (and fewer and fewer professors will have the protections that come with tenure over the next 10 years).

There is a publicly shared sense that one must conform to the new ideology or face serious consequences—with



the result that many students and professors simply keep their heads down. I am certainly not arguing that this trend makes professors the primary victims of our day, but rather that it discourages the innovation, disagreement, argument, collaboration and transformation required to make progress. Authentic engagement across groups holding differing opinions on foundational topics is now rarely even attempted on these topics—much less achieved.

But we can also expect students and professors alike will push back against the fear tactics used to enforce the norms coming from this ideology. According to a Morning Consult Poll in July 2021, the millennial generation is the only one to support such a culture. But would you guess that the youngest generation, Gen Z (born between 1997 and 2008), is the generation most likely to reject it? And the youngest members of that generation—those who will go to college over the next decade—showed the lowest levels of support.

The Effects

How can we expect students, families and colleges and universities to respond in light of these trends?

Colleges and universities will compete by lowering tuition and cutting costs. Many schools, especially those serving more localized communities in the Northeast and Midwest, will face extreme cost pressures over the next decade as they compete fiercely for the limited numbers of students available. Peer institutions already have begun to compete with each other by radically lowering what they charge students—a move that has created an intense and (for many) catastrophic race to the bottom.

Given the increased pressure on higher education to become more localized and affordable over the next decade, there will be an opportunity for non-elite colleges and universities to make cost-saving cuts aimed at putting more focus on educating rather than administration. Bloated administration remains a primary driver of higher costs. To give just one example: The average university in the United States has more diversity, equity and inclusion administrators than it has tenure-track history professors. Unfortunately, responses to cost pressures are also likely to be focused on faculty, with the hiring of even more non-tenured adjuncts with ever-increasing teaching loads.

Education will become corporatized. As with demographic shifts, these kinds of cost pressures have been borne by many schools for some time. And though they would have grown even more serious over the next decade in any case, the game-changer will be brand-new competition from corporations like Google, Microsoft and Am-

azon. These corporations' well-funded general plan (I sometimes call it "from pre-K to cubicle") is to influence all stages of education and imbue it with the telos of job training. The next decade will see these corporations dramatically reduce the costs of post-secondary education—enticing students with things like "Google Career Certificates" and "Amazon Career Choice" programs that are local (and/or virtual) and tied directly to career paths.

Parents will seek alternatives to so-called "woke" universities. Furthermore, students and parents who have had enough of the dominant ideology in higher education—and the perceived cancel culture used to enforce it—will become less likely to support schools that remain beholden to this ideology. These institutions will therefore face even more challenges, especially in the parts of the country most opposed.

For decades the accepted narrative has been that when young people go to college they become more liberal. However, the current ideology is creating a new type of divide, one that can split young people and their families about more fundamental matters. This trend influences the very norms and expectations around how political differences should affect one's relationship with those who hold differing views. Parents will become significantly less willing to send their children to an institution if they think there is a realistic chance that they could lose their relationship with their child in the process. These tradeoffs, especially when combined with lower perceived prestige for higher education, will dramatically change the calculus of many parents over the next 10 years.

Some institutions will not last. Simply put, many at-risk colleges and universities will not be able to compete in this market. In what will be a dramatic and clear sign of the times, colleges and universities will shut their doors, and their former campuses will be repurposed by tech companies to support their new programs. The more traditional institutions that survive are likely to look quite different from the way they did 20 years ago. Except at wealthy, elite institutions, the humanities will decline dramatically; faculty members and even entire departments may disappear, especially as pressure brought to bear by corporate credentialing programs influences curriculum and the types of majors offered.

Institutions that find ways to serve U.S. Hispanic populations—especially in ways that allow local relationships with family and community to flourish—could be the exceptions that prove the rule. Non-elite institutions of higher education, if they are to survive, will focus on serving the needs of their particular local communities—with the

result that these institutions will look quite different from one another. In 10 years, higher education across the United States will be much more diverse in terms of approaches, ideology and perspectives than it is now.

The Opportunity

Within the context I have described, many smaller Catholic colleges and universities may find themselves at particular risk, and might understandably view this outlook as frightening. In one sense it is. Here is a sobering headline that appeared in 2019 in *Inside Higher Ed*: “A Jesuit University Without History or Philosophy?” The result of pressures like declining enrollment and rising costs on Wheeling Jesuit University led to the gutting of their liberal arts programs (including theology) and a focus on their profitable areas of study, like business and nursing. The result of this choice? The school survived, but the Jesuits rightly decided that it could no longer claim to be a Jesuit school. The school’s website name was changed from *wju.edu* to *wheeling.edu*.

It is terrifying to think that Catholic higher education could get broadly trapped into short-term, survivalist thinking, especially for those of us who have dedicated our lives to these institutions. But I also believe that most Catholic institutions will not need to adopt this approach. While some extremely vulnerable institutions—those whose finances might cause them to close in a year or two, for instance—may see no path besides the one Wheeling took, most can refuse to bend to the current trends in favor of thinking about their longer-term mission. Properly understood, the cultural and social trends (and likely results) described in detail above point to an immense opportunity for Catholic higher education.

For decades, many Catholic institutions of higher education have been slouching gradually toward the least common denominator in U.S. higher education and in the process following Princeton’s path toward losing their identity as religious institutions. But if Catholic higher education is going to compete in the medium and longer term, the marketplace over the next 10 years will push us to embrace what makes us distinctive. For what makes us distinctive will be in demand.

Millions of students and families have rejected and will continue to reject the move toward higher education as a kind of credentialing for working in the technocracy. They will instead insist on a higher education that helps young people engage and wrestle with great ideas—toward the goal of helping form them into virtuous and flourishing young adults. This is something that Catholic institutions of higher education have been doing for literally centuries. In the United States, many of our current Catholic institutions

came into being to put the fruits of higher education at the service of marginalized Catholic minorities. Might we be able to come up with analogues to the current situation of Catholics in the United States?

The likely backlash against intersectional critical theory (the seeds of which, again, are already sprouting—including among young people) could also provide a valuable opportunity for Catholic higher education. Discussions within a Catholic context about matters related to race, sex and gender would bring the resources of Scripture and Catholic tradition to the fore. But instead of fostering a cancel culture in search of heretics, Catholic colleges and universities that channel the church’s rich tradition would have a spirit of free academic inquiry in which opposing views are sought out, welcomed and given a fair and rigorous hearing.

I am thinking in particular of the example of St. Thomas Aquinas and other major figures of the era of scholastic philosophy who thought engaging opposing views charitably was so important that they conducted their inquiries into various topics by first engaging the views with which they disagreed. And then, rather than finding ways to ignore their opponent or create a strawman, they finished their argument by making sure each of the objections to their point of view had been specifically and generously answered.

I am also thinking of St. Robert Bellarmine’s response to the Galileo affair, in which he insisted that the church’s interpretation of Scripture would have to change if science could prove that such an interpretation was obviously mistaken. The Catholic intellectual tradition—not at all afraid of open and free inquiry—put its own teachings to the test in light of that inquiry. Seeking truth in this sense is one important way to go closer to God, the source of such truth. Catholic institutions should therefore not only hire faculty who disagree with church teaching but should protect such professors with tenure so that they can be free to push us in the search for truth.

Such a commitment to free and open academic inquiry, of course, does not mean that Catholic institutions are somehow value-neutral. On the contrary, this particular commitment comes out of our more general theological and ecclesial commitments. They will, of course, also have implications for school policies: everything from the right to unionize, the availability of contraception, paid family leave, funding of abortion, ecological concern, in vitro fertilization and the freezing of eggs, just wages and benefits and so much more.

But our Catholic commitments will need to go to an even more foundational place as well: a robustly theological articulation of the dignity and flourishing of the human person. As I argued in my most recent book, *Losing Our Dignity*, our



There is a publicly shared sense that one must conform to the new ideology or face serious consequences.

secularized culture (driven in large measure by a medical culture produced by higher education) has undermined the foundation for fundamental human equality. Without an appeal to fellow human beings sharing a common nature, one that reflects the image and likeness of God, there is no basis for the kind of equality our culture and laws assume as a foundational baseline. There is only the equality of human beings who happen to have certain actualized traits: autonomy, rationality, will, productivity, self-awareness and the like. Catholic institutions of higher education are needed to aggressively fight for the theological grounding of fundamental human equality, so that those who do not possess some or all of those traits are not stripped of their rights and dignity.

That vision of the dignity of the human person must also resist ableist and consumerist views of the person, which define us primarily by our capacity to produce capital. This plays out in multiple cultural spheres, but it is certainly present in the assumptions of the plans Google, Microsoft and Amazon have for higher education. There is no room in their model for inquiry about visions of the good and ultimate concerns—and still less about forming people in light of those goods and concerns. There is room only for supporting a vision of the human being as *Homo economicus*.

One of the ways Catholic institutions of higher education must resist this distorted vision of the person is by giving our students genuine options to engage goods that do not fit into the dominant U.S. American marketplace: friendship, spirituality, liturgy, embodied community, enchantment, mentorship, daydreaming and more. We do not need country club-style campuses to offer these goods to our students—and, in many ways, that kind of culture increases the likelihood they will not be able to engage them. Offering a genuine culture of encounter (especially with a focus on Jesus' command to see his face in the marginalized) not only fulfills a duty of all Catholic institutions to obey the commands of Christ. It offers anxious, depressed, lonely and disconnected students a much better chance at having something they will otherwise likely be denied by the broader culture: a meaningful life.

What, precisely, am I envisioning here? It is difficult to say—*because* it will require the revamping of most current Catholic institutions and, indeed, the creation of new ones. (The cultural move to create new institutions of higher learning is already underway. The secular University of Austin was just founded with the goal of fostering viewpoint diversity and genuine academic freedom.) These new Catholic institutions, again, will look different

in terms of how they serve their local populations. But a general approach avoids the extremes of raw capitulation to secularized norms on the one hand and refusal to have serious engagement with different points of view on the other. In a hyperpolarized time, a distinctively Catholic institution of higher education, while standing clearly for a particular vision of the good, will seek to become a place of authentic dialogue—again, not in spite of our vision but because of it.

This would be—of its very nature and quite intentionally—a countercultural move. Given that the culture to be resisted is so prominent and powerful in many of our Catholic institutions, it would certainly take courage to move them in the direction I have outlined here. And it would demand a different kind of courage to build new institutions. I know firsthand the frustration so many in Catholic higher education are feeling right now—and the palpable sense that we need to do something dramatically different.

But here is the bottom line: If Catholic higher education is to survive, we must spend the next decade being intentional and authentic when it comes to our mission and identity. This will not be achieved by vague appeals to social justice—nor by censorious ideological enforcement of church teaching in the classroom. It will be achieved by engaging the fullness of the Catholic intellectual tradition and practice of the church's social teaching, passing them both on to our students as cherished gifts, and making it clear we are doing this because we love them and seek their good.

If we fail to move in this direction, then the writing is on the wall. And many will one day walk our former campuses (owned by Google or Microsoft), notice the beautiful Catholic church, and be reminded of what was lost.

Charles C. Camosy, *associate professor of theology at Fordham University, is the author most recently of Losing Our Dignity. Follow him on Twitter @ccamosy.*

The solution to the culture wars on campus? Radical inclusion.

By Cecilia González-Andrieu

If the Covid-19 pandemic should teach us anything, it is that the unexpected will come at us. And when it does, we have a choice: to take care only of ourselves, what Pope Francis calls “the hyperinflation of the individual,” or to take stock, look at the suffering world and work for change that has the common good at heart.

Dr. Camosy’s analysis of the future of higher education, which unfortunately stokes divisions and uses vague references to “the culture to be resisted,” does not get us closer to envisioning the kind of work we need to do. Most fundamentally, I do not find a compelling reason in his essay for the “why” of higher education, which is where this conversation needs to begin. *Why should people of faith care if we have colleges and universities at all?*

The “why” of higher education today must go beyond the day-to-day of campus life or faculty politics. If, as is made evident by the kind of critical theories that are criticized by Dr. Camosy, higher education in the United States has for most of its history ensured the preservation and continuation of privilege based on race and class (remember the college admissions scandal?), then our current moment calls for new models that will reverse this. The model for today’s university must involve working for true societal transformation, equipping more of us to be thoughtfully critical and engaged in a shared civic life of genuinely communal concerns. It must involve inviting more of us into conversations that build a bridge across borders, continents, classes and races.

Higher education is at its best when it allows us to explore the many intersections where we can meet and discover “us-ness,” while celebrating the beauty of difference. This has been a focus of my own work, which resulted in the book *Teaching Global Theologies: Power and Praxis*. This expansive view of who we mean by us makes clear that the Catholic intellectual tradition we teach has to be reimagined to make room for the writings of the Jesuit martyrs of El Salvador, the forceful critiques of feminist theologies, the unceasing voices of economic and post-colonial analysis from the global South, and the ideas of our young people, who are forging courageous alliances in defense of planetary flourishing.

Our campuses have to make present the disenfranchised many, not by pigeonholing “Hispanics” as being well suited for small schools close to their homes, as Dr. Camosy sug-



gests, but by having the presence of young people from very dissimilar communities on all of our campuses, shaking us up, changing our spaces, creating a new reality steeped in solidarity. Higher education should be abundant, not a rare privilege for the few. If that means seeking partnerships with corporations or government wherever these are possible, so we can multiply resources, then let us do it. Let us seek a true culture of encounter where we can affect each other’s worlds. If Google wants to put funding into education, then perhaps we can work together so they will come to embrace the centrality of ethics. As we engage beyond our spaces, we can work to bring about the challenging work that Pope Francis describes in *Let Us Dream*, his book with Austen Ivereigh, as redesigning “the economy so that it can offer every person access to a dignified existence while protecting and regenerating the natural world.”

There are many ways that we are Catholic. We may be described pejoratively as “woke,” but my community of accountability, my students, want to be seen—and I want them to know I see them. Jesus’ extraordinarily countercultural practice was to invite outsiders to share the table and in that unlikely fellowship begin creating the kingdom of God. This radical inclusion is what gets us past pointless culture wars and into the Good News.

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



How do we prepare Catholic universities for success? Focus on the marginalized.

By Vincent D. Rougeau

As I reflect on the future of Catholic colleges and universities, I think Charles Camosy and I agree on his main thesis: “If Catholic higher education is to survive, we must spend the next decade being intentional and authentic when it comes to mission and identity.”

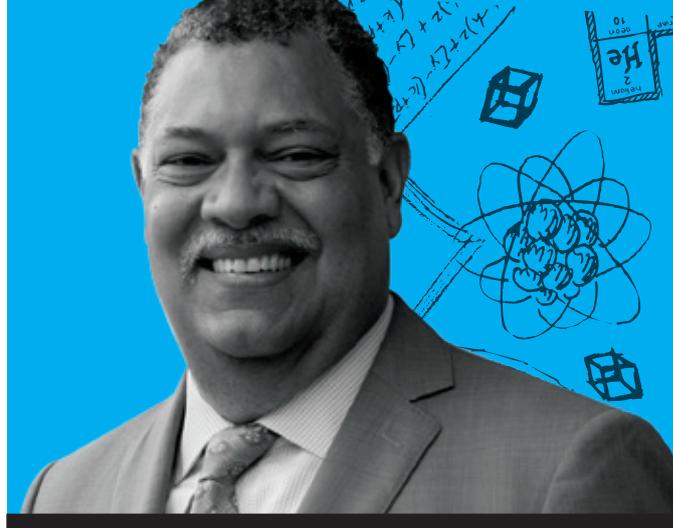
To secure a more promising tomorrow, institutional presidents should reclaim a commitment central to the founding of most Catholic colleges and universities in the United States: a special focus on the needs and the dignity of the marginalized.

The prevailing trends across higher education—demographic change, the need to control rising costs, the pressure to produce “job ready” graduates, and the desire for more local educational options—must not be seen as threats to Catholic higher education. Instead, many are opportunities that reflect our enduring missions. For example, we know the students who will attend our institutions a decade from now will be more diverse and in greater need of financial aid. Most Catholic institutions in this country were founded to educate immigrants, who tended to be poor and, as Catholics, were often unwelcome at most other colleges and universities. Then, as now, Catholic colleges provided a clear path to socioeconomic advancement, and a college degree remains the surest way to escape poverty.

These institutions embraced the liberal arts as preparation for lives of inquiry and exploration. Philosophy, art and literature may seem like relics in today’s specialized, tech-focused world, yet data support the long-term economic benefit of studying the humanities. Training in the liberal arts prepares students for graduate school, and provides them with the flexibility to change careers and the ability to advance rapidly within their chosen fields.

It is also important to consider the different positions and perspectives of “elite” and “non-elite” institutions. Discussions about higher education typically focus on highly selective colleges, even though these institutions serve a relatively small number of students. The pandemic may accentuate the need for more moderately selective, localized and affordable higher education options to better serve a greater number of students and their families.

Catholic colleges and universities, deeply embedded within primarily urban communities, are uniquely positioned to meet these needs. Our institutions encompass all



levels of selectivity. Many of us accept low-socioeconomic and Pell-eligible students at similar rates to secular institutions and provide substantially more financial aid. This does not represent ultimate success—we have much work to do—but these are areas where Catholic institutions can lead.

As we continue to create more diverse campus communities, there are a number of cultural trends and changes that need to be considered. Statistics show that Generation Z is composed of independent thinkers who are highly informed on such issues as climate change and sustainability, racial justice, immigration, poverty and income inequality. Most of these young people, particularly those from non-white backgrounds, welcome more honest and challenging discussions about race, history and social inequality, even when they do not agree with all the ideas being presented. Catholic colleges and universities need to engage in this dialogue, and they should do so from the perspective of the Catholic intellectual tradition and Catholic social teaching. This is particularly true if we are going to be attractive places to learn for young people in an increasingly diverse, multicultural society, and if we are going to be authentic representatives of a global church.

As Pope Francis has described in his book *Let Us Dream*, the lives and experiences of the marginalized have important lessons to teach our broader community about what is truly important. Catholic institutions must continue to support free and open academic inquiry, and a commitment to a fundamental equality grounded in our understanding of the worth of each person made in the image and likeness of God. And when we reclaim our founding commitment to the needs and dignity of the less fortunate, we can remain confident that Catholic institutions will continue to thrive.

Vincent D. Rougeau is the president of the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Mass. He previously served as dean of the Boston College Law School and the inaugural director of the new Boston College Forum on Racial Justice in America.



The current economic model for higher education is unsustainable. Catholic social teaching may point a way forward.

By Jessica Wroblewski



“Think outside the box.” That is what the faculty of Wheeling Jesuit University was told was necessary for the survival of the school by the first of several senior administrators hired from The Registry for College and University Presidents (“the nation’s Gold Standard in interim placements,” according to their website) in the final years that it operated as a partnership between the Jesuits and the local Catholic diocese in West Virginia. We were then presented with a series of spreadsheets and tables offering cookie-cutter solutions—a template for a smaller, skills-based core curriculum, metrics to assess the value of our departments and their various members, a new handbook—and were told we must fill and fit within them in order to meet the needs of the institution. This particular administrator had made a career of short-term “turnaround” placements, and apparently had used similar boxes to “streamline” programs and faculty at other institutions but had no experience with Catholic education or Ignatian discernment practices.

Two years later, a diocese-appointed administration at Wheeling eliminated the liberal arts altogether, which led the Society of Jesus to withdraw its sponsorship of the university. Charles Camosy briefly mentions Wheeling as an example of an institution “trapped into short-term survivalist thinking,” but he assures readers that most institutions will not need to adopt this approach if they lean into their distinctive identity.

As someone who witnessed this kind of survivalist thinking up close, I find myself frustrated with Dr. Camosy’s article, which underestimates the financial realities facing many, if not most, Catholic institutions and their students today. While Wheeling is unique in some ways, the fact that colleges and universities everywhere are experiencing similar pressures—and turning to similar consultants and strategies, like reducing core requirements, eliminating full-time faculty and staff and emphasizing “job ready” professional programs—was one reason why I decided not to seek another job in higher education when my position teaching theology at Wheeling Jesuit was eliminated. I was as likely as not to face similar dynamics wherever I went in higher education.

The Covid-19 pandemic already has revealed and deepened existing inequalities in the United States, including within higher education itself. While Camosy acknowledges the economic challenges, they seem marginal to his

concerns about the effects of secularism and intersectional critical theory on university life. But the economic problems facing higher education are systemic, and the current model is unsustainable. Education is a commodity subject to markets, and the financial pressures to attract students are real. Respectful engagement across differences is vital to the success of any organization, but for schools and families alike, financial pressures are inescapable (consider that the parents of the upcoming generation of college students may still be paying off their own education debt when their children graduate from high school). The key questions for many schools in the coming years will be: What is the cost of survival, and for what purpose?

I share Dr. Camosy’s sense that something radically different from the status quo is needed in American higher education, including a rededication to the common good and to dialogue. Given the immense economic and ecological crises—and the long-overdue racial reckoning—of our times, however, “engaging the fullness of the Catholic intellectual tradition” must be more than just intellectual. It must not only be part of the students’ curriculum, but a blueprint for running the university, including respecting the dignity of workers, practicing transparency and subsidiarity in decision-making and making a serious commitment to environmental sustainability.

Indeed, the Catholic intellectual tradition itself pushes toward incarnate love and solidarity, economic democracy, concern for the marginalized and care for our common home. Catholic universities must make a coordinated effort to engage bigger economic questions, like why a college degree is valuable and how to fund education. Making a commitment to practice Catholic social teaching within university operations and investments would be an excellent place to begin, but it will require creative and courageous coordinated efforts to engage broader economic structures—not to mention some deep discernment and prayer—for Catholic colleges and universities to move beyond the boxes in which they now find themselves.

Jessica Wroblewski is vice president for mission at Saint Joseph Academy, Cleveland, Ohio. She previously taught at Wheeling Jesuit University in West Virginia and St. Mary’s College in South Bend, Ind. She earned her Ph.D. in religious studies from Yale University.

The best way for Catholic universities to preserve Catholic identity? Hire Catholics.

By Pavlos Papadopoulos

If Charles Camosy and I were colleagues, we would find ourselves on the same side defending Catholic liberal education from its present assailants—including “the three A’s” of the neoliberal university: adjunctification, administration and amenities-driven bloat—and I likely would be Dr. Camosy’s ally in deliberations about how to weather the coming storms.

But in so doing, I would harbor significant reservations about his principles. Though he cites two doctors of the church as inspirations for the Catholic university of the future, Dr. Camosy himself apparently takes the modern, secular, liberal research university of the very recent past as his model for academia.

Dr. Camosy deplores the corruption of that model, praising its vestiges at Princeton University and expressing measured hope about new institutions, like the University of Austin. In so doing, he lauds the modern academy’s values of “viewpoint diversity and genuine academic freedom.” The suggestion seems to be: no “viewpoint diversity,” no “genuine academic freedom.” In other words, a real university needs some faculty members who disagree among themselves on fundamental matters, and at least some of these must disagree with the “particular vision of the good” that Dr. Camosy says a “distinctively Catholic institution” should propose. Throughout his piece, he cites the values of the modern research university in its own liberal terms: “authentic engagement across groups holding different opinions,” “open and honest academic debate,” “free and open academic inquiry.”

Shouldn’t it give us pause that the most recent product of the modern research university is intersectional critical theory? That a major organization dedicated to preserving the values of the modern university has chosen the name *Heterodox Academy*?

Dr. Camosy rightly praises St. Thomas Aquinas for “engaging opposing views charitably” and St. Robert Bellarmine for insisting that scriptural interpretations be adjusted to take into account indubitable scientific conclusions. But Dr. Camosy wrongly concludes that “Catholic institutions should therefore not only hire faculty who disagree with church teaching but should protect such professors with tenure so that they can be free to push us in the search for truth.” This does not follow, as his examples of Aquinas and Bellarmine demonstrate: the doctors of the church didn’t require their intellectual opponents to be their colleagues in



order to deeply engage with their ideas.

A blunter version of Dr. Camosy’s conclusion might be this: A Catholic university should hire people who do not believe in the teachings of the Catholic Church, or even those who are anti-Catholic, to teach their students, and should empower these same in university governance. Or does he mean that these professors would teach and publish, but not have a share in faculty governance, or cast a vote for faculty senate, or serve on committees, or chair departments, or have a voice in hiring decisions or shape the mission of the institution—all this, despite enjoying tenure? To do so would be to relegate them to a strange position: second-class citizenship, in one sense, but privileged to be relieved of the duties that many professors view as distractions from their research.

If colleges are concerned about mission, why not simply prioritize hiring practicing Catholics? Before this could happen, Catholic colleges and universities would have to wean themselves from government funding. (Wyoming Catholic College, where I am employed, does not accept government funding.) The whole endeavor of reading the classics of the Western and Catholic traditions assumes that their authors can speak to us across the ages. Why not simply focus on hiring Catholic faculty and study the thought of those outside the church when we choose (as we might read Machiavelli and Nietzsche), or invite them to campus for occasional debates?

Dr. Camosy notes that great courage will be required to reform existing institutions or create new, countercultural ones. It is indeed dangerous to introduce new modes and orders. The most courageous step that Catholic educational leaders could take in the next decade is to break with the decadent mainstream model for higher education, drink deeply from our own philosophical, theological and encyclical traditions, and then turn to the vital task of founding and refounding schools that are vibrantly and unequivocally Catholic.

Pavlos Papadopoulos is assistant professor of humanities at Wyoming Catholic College in Lander, Wyo.

Worried about the future of Catholic higher education? Look to our students for hope.

By Michael J. Garanzini, S.J.

I recently spent a day moderating a panel of seniors at St. Peter's University in Jersey City, N.J., who discussed the major concerns of their generation. The students had roots in Belgium and Morocco, the Philippines and Palestine. Their fields of study included math, education and international relations. We took up such topics as climate change, race relations, the plight of migrants, social and economic inequality in the United States and abroad and the future of work and job security. They were passionate about the need for major changes, disturbed by the level of poverty in their own city and the world, and eager to, as one student claimed, to "dream big because the problems need big solutions." It was a soul-lifting experience in a diverse Catholic university that encourages critical thinking to help students fulfill those dreams.

Students like these represent the bright future of Catholic higher education, but we in university administration must be sure our institutions adapt to help them thrive. Catholic universities may have an advantage if they do this quickly. Charles Camosy's article suggests a competitive advantage in the Christian and Catholic roots of these institutions. As president of Loyola University Chicago for 14 years, I saw firsthand the importance of an education based on a Christian anthropology that stresses the sacredness of each human being and the essential equality of all. I believe that an education that is grounded in Catholic social teaching and delivered in a community that offers the opportunity for the serious examination of diverse points of view and a chance for real community is precisely what will make a Catholic education distinctive and appreciated.

There is a great deal of wisdom in Dr. Camosy's arguments. For a decade now, many have predicted the closure or merging of smaller institutions, especially in the Northeast and Midwest. It is happening. Indeed, bigger has its advantages. Economies of scale will require that an institution be well-endowed financially or have sufficient importance to a community to drive it to find both the funding model it needs and the political support it requires to survive.

Many of us believe that the challenge facing Catholic higher education today comes down to mission integration and preservation. We see a rapid turnover in seasoned and dedicated leadership. In some leadership positions (which includes presidents, provosts and deans), we are experienc-

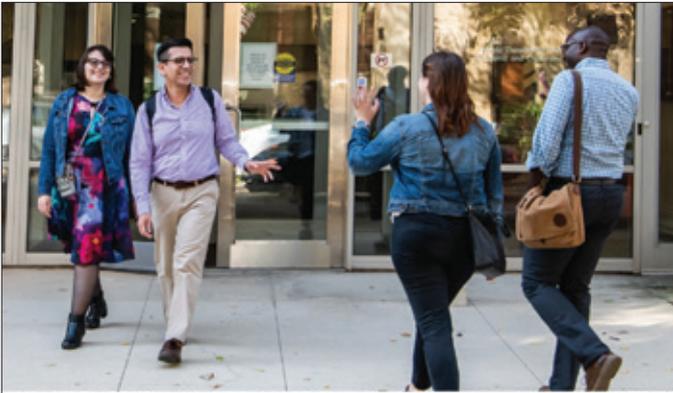


ing a 40 percent turnover since the pandemic began. Many of these seasoned leaders had anticipated retiring or returning to the faculty; some are retiring men and women religious. The pandemic has taken a toll on their energy and made the job more taxing and less rewarding. Whatever the cause, institutional wisdom and a deeply felt commitment to the mission of liberal and faith-based education could be lost if these men and women are not replaced by people with the knowledge and experience of formation within the Catholic intellectual tradition.

The ideological battles that we see today, especially among students, should not be a cause for alarm in themselves. Just a decade ago, older generations complained about the seeming lack of passion for causes of social justice among students in the millennial generation. The present intense battles over ideas could be healthy and necessary correction to a more complacent age that preceded the Covid-19 pandemic.

A Catholic university like St. Peter's, and so many others, has within its storehouse an antidote to this age's flirtation with nihilism. The students at St. Peter's were fortunate enough to be spared an overdose of this pessimism. There is the Gospel message of hope and renewal that, while not always made as explicit as it ought to be, seemed nevertheless to permeate their time at the university. These students were well aware of Pope Francis' call to defend the health of our planet and fight for those at the margins seeking their just share of the goods of our economy. These challenges have brought faith-based leaders and our universities to a re-examination of how they might collaborate. All of this is a solid basis for the hope that Catholic higher education can survive to offer society a crucial resource: young people willing to apply what they have learned to solve the problems of our world.

Michael J. Garanzini, S.J., is president of the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities.



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A COMMUNITY OF SONG

By Stephanie Saldaña

How the Taizé community in France is adapting to address climate change and sexual abuse and to empower young leaders of faith

Photo Courtesy of Cédric Nisi



Prayer in the Church of Reconciliation in Taizé, France, during the Covid-19 pandemic



“Iedere nacht verlang ik naar u, o God”

(My spirit yearns for you in the night, O God)

“Toi, tu nous aimes, source de vie”

(You love us, source of life)

“Sólo la sed nos alumbra”

(Only our thirst leads us onwards)

Some 70 religious brothers from all over the world are kneeling in long rows at the heart of the Church of Reconciliation, their white robes touching the ground. They sing softly, their masked voices drifting from German to French to Polish to English. Around them, hundreds of young people, also masked and sitting on white X's on the ground to keep their distance, join in, chanting, until I feel almost clothed in their vowels and consonants. The air takes on a hum, and in the midst of a terrible year—2021, the one we thought would be an improvement—something in the music, repeated over and over again, begins to break through layers of exhaustion and resistance. It almost feels like healing.

This is Taizé, the ecumenical monastic community founded by Brother Roger Schütz in the 1940s as a parable of communion, a hope that if Christians from different countries and backgrounds could gather on a hill in rural France and pray together, then this might serve as a sign that reconciliation is possible among churches and in the world. Brother Roger believed in the radical idea that little acts, like young people singing together in a church, really matter in history. That is what a parable does, after all—it points to a meaning larger than itself.

Today, in any given year, Taizé attracts tens of thousands of young people from around the world, who travel as pilgrims to this hilltop in France to meet one another, to sing and pray and to discuss what they feel are the most urgent issues of their time, from the climate emergen-

cy to refugees. Thousands of other Christians around the world who have never visited the monastery still recognize the sentiment behind it from the Taizé chants—songs like “Bless the Lord” and “Nada te Turbe” that pilgrims have carried with them from the monastery to parishes around the globe.

Now, during a rainy week in July, in the midst of a pandemic, I have traveled to Taizé to sit with brothers across three generations and discuss subjects as wide-ranging as the legacy of Brother Roger, how the community has adapted to Covid-19, the tragedy of abuse in the French church and what today’s young people feel are the most pressing issues of their generation.

But first, this singing. Morning, midday and night—a living source at the heart of the community, voices filtering into the green spaces outside, the verses repeating in my head until they become a subtext to everything else, a fiber holding the story together.

Ubi caritas et amor, deus ibi est. (Where there is charity and love, God is there.)

A Response to Crisis

Some communities are obscured by crisis; others illuminated. Taizé belongs to the latter. During the early months of the Covid-19 pandemic, when France locked down, the brothers separated into pods, living and praying in small groups so as not to put the older brothers at risk. With no visitors allowed, they broadcast their prayers online to Christians isolated around the world. Yet the lack of visitors had other consequences, as the brothers had no one to buy the goods they craft and sell in their shop—the monks take a vow of simplicity and live from the work of their own labor. So they began to sell their pottery in nearby markets. They bought chickens to raise for fresh eggs. They tended a garden.

When the French president announced a second lockdown, the brothers quickly sprang into action, inviting students studying online to spend the coming months living at Taizé instead of at home, an effort to stem what many were calling an “epidemic of loneliness” among the young. None of this should come as a surprise. After all, Taizé was created as a response to another global crisis, some 80 years ago.

It was September 1939 when Roger Schütz, then 24 years old, penned a letter to his friend from his theological studies, Etienne Burnand. “*Les tous derniers événements nous bouleversent,*” he began. “The recent events are wrenching. Since learning that Poland has been entirely invaded, I grieve inwardly. Another Christian na-

tion shattered by the invader. Truly, without exaggeration we can say: ‘Our soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.’”

One year later, Mr. Schütz followed up with another letter expressing his desire to “alleviate as much misery” as possible. He would cross from neutral Switzerland into war-torn France and search for a property to buy.

The son of a Protestant pastor, Mr. Schütz was still in the process of discerning his own religious vocation. He traveled to the hamlet of Taizé in Burgundy, near the demarcation line between the free zone and German occupied France, in one of the most de-Christianized regions of the country, and began to look for a house. The landscape could be called remarkable only in that it was unremarkable—open fields, a few stone dwellings. Some inhabitants were women left living alone after their husbands had died in war. He seemed drawn in by its simplicity. Yes, this would be it. He purchased a home.

On the surface, his decision appeared almost meaningless. What could one person—and one house in the middle of the countryside—do to alleviate the misery of a conflict in which millions were killing and being killed? But Mr. Schütz was inspired by a similarly “useless” act that his French grandmother, a Protestant, had carried out a generation earlier. During the First World War, widowed and with three sons fighting on the front lines, she had decided to pray each day in a Catholic church, without giving up her Protestant identity. It was a little thing, a private act of reconciliation. She was convinced that it mattered somehow.

Once Mr. Schütz settled into Taizé, he began to shelter war refugees, mostly Jewish, who were escaping the Nazis in occupied France. He prayed three times a day. He traveled back to Switzerland in 1942, and while he was gone, on Nov. 11, 1942, the German army occupied Vichy France, what had been the so-called free zone of France. The Gestapo arrived at Taizé the same day, and friends warned Mr. Schütz not to come back. By the time he returned to the village in 1944, he was accompanied by three friends from his theological studies, forming the kernel of what would eventually become Taizé, an ecumenical community of religious brothers dedicated to reconciliation in the church and in the world.

One of their very first acts after the war was to ask if they could welcome German prisoners interned in a camp nearby.

“That was a concrete sign of the word *reconciliation*—it was not only hiding Jews in the beginning, but then after the war it was very natural for Brother Roger to help these

Brother Roger founded the Taizé community in 1940. Today it is composed of over 100 members from 25 countries around the world.

poor Germans,” Brother Sebastien, a current member of the Taizé community, tells me. “For Brother Roger it was so normal that you help those in need. At one time it is Jews, at another time it might be Germans.”

It was what Mr. Schütz—who by then referred to himself simply as Brother Roger—would later call the “dynamic of the provisional,” the idea that history is constantly in movement. He believed that as Christians, we must remain awake to the signs of the times, present in reality, ready to let go of any attachments that might prevent us from engaging with those in need. If we want to understand how, we might look to Jesus as a model—he who was always responding to those who crossed his path.

The community of Taizé grew, with first Protestants and later Catholic brothers joining. Today it is composed of over 100 members from 25 countries around the world. In the 1960s, thousands of young people began to visit. When the Berlin wall came down a generation later, that number doubled. Today tens of thousands of young people—Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox and nonbelieving—continue making the pilgrimage to the hill in Taizé each year, gathering in the Church of Reconciliation three times a day, singing in English and French, German and Czech, Arabic and Polish, participating in this parable of communion with their song.

Yet history always has a way of breaking in, with all of its gifts and all of its brutality. In 2005, while thousands of young people were immersed in song in the midst of Taizé prayer, a young Romanian woman who was suffering from mental illness approached Brother Roger, then 90 years old, and stabbed him in the neck. A few of the brothers carried Brother Roger’s body out of the church as he died. The remaining brothers—perhaps sensing that this, too, would become a parable—stayed in the church with 2,500 young people, and they all continued to sing.

A Call to Trust

On my first morning at Taizé, I sit down with Brother Charles-Eugène in the grassy courtyard where the brothers often meet with visitors. He is 83 years old, with a gentle and weathered face, and speaks in careful French, smiling as he recalls first arriving at Taizé in 1958 as a 20-year-old student. At that time the community was still in its infancy, and Brother Roger was overwhelmed. Brother Roger asked Charles-Eugène to be his secretary, and he agreed, never guessing that he would serve in that role for nearly 50 years.

Now, he reveals that the early years carried great uncertainty. “We had difficulties from the very first day,” he remembers. “The most evident was in the relationship



Photo courtesy of Taizé community

between the churches.” While the early community received support from important Protestant pastors and theologians in France and Switzerland, there was doubt from others about the compatibility of Protestantism and monastic life. On the Catholic side, when the brothers arrived in Taizé and wanted to hold the prayer in the village Catholic church, the local bishop at first rejected the idea. For many years, the idea that Taizé wanted nothing more than to welcome Christians from all backgrounds to pray together as a sign of reconciliation remained impossible for some church leaders to comprehend.

“What did Brother Roger do?” I ask.

Brother Charles-Eugène laughs. “He did what he could do.”

This captures much of the spirit of Taizé, where the brothers like to speak of creating from whatever they have at hand—much like the boy in the Gospel of John who offers Jesus the few fish and loaves he has available, hoping that something might be done with them.

Even so, those early years were clearly trying for Brother Roger. “He was a man who suffered a great deal,” Brother Charles-Eugène tells me, quietly. “He didn’t show it very much. But he had such a keen sensitivity. The difficulties, the oppositions, resonated very deeply and intensely in him.”

“I think that when he spoke of ‘joy’ and ‘trust’—that’s another word that he used often—it’s not because he necessarily felt those things in him. I think it’s because it was like a call that he was giving to himself. When he spoke of trust, it was to say: ‘You, Roger, you must be a person of trust. You must go in that direction.’”

The word *trust*—the call to trust God, to trust one an-

Continued on Page 40

AMERICA'S GUIDE TO CATHOLIC SCHOOL EDUCATION

I have gone to Catholic school all my life, starting in a one room schoolhouse in the Philippines. Through hard work and patience, I ended up going to Regis High School in New York City, eventually leading me to Fordham University, another Jesuit institution. Needless to say, my journey through Catholic school was one of constant evolution and escalation, and it gave me a greater appreciation for the nuances of a Catholic education.

I can say with confidence that the strength of my faith life and my professional success have been directly proportional to the time I spent in Catholic school. Think back to your days in those hallowed halls, filled with school uniforms, weekday Masses, academic rigor, even just spending time with your friends outside of class. The Catholic school difference is one that builds character and develops personality. Supporting any of the schools in this brochure means giving more young men and women that same opportunity. Certainly, I never would have been able to become an O'Hare fellow here at America Media, striving and learning every day to be the best journalist I can be. That's the Catholic school difference. That's what your support can give others.

Kevin Christopher Robles, *former Joseph A. O'Hare fellow*



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Canisius is a Jesuit, college-preparatory school founded in 1870 for boys in grades 9 through 12. Canisius offers a challenging curriculum that provides a broad range of course offerings, plus inter-scholastic sports opportunities as well as dozens of music ensembles, teams, and clubs. At the heart of it all is a commitment to Christian Service in the Jesuit tradition.



Catholic Schools of Fairbanks

Ph: (907) 313-3062; Email: info@catholic-schools.org
 Website: www.catholic-schools.org

The only Jesuit school in Alaska, the Catholic Schools of Fairbanks has been educating students since 1946. Rooted in the Jesuit tradition and committed to forming young men and women for others, our PK-12 setting is a vibrant community where students encounter Christ, become Scholars, and are Family.



Cheverus High School

Ph: (207) 774-6238; Email: info@cheverus.org
 Website: www.cheverus.org

Cheverus High School is the only coeducational, Jesuit college preparatory school in New England. Students are challenged academically and encouraged to honor their own unique passions and gifts. Located in Portland, Maine, Cheverus is committed to cultivating excellence and forming young people into competent, intellectually curious, and socially conscious adults. At Cheverus, we prepare young men and women to be people for and with others.



Cristo Rey Atlanta Jesuit High School

Ph: (404) 637-2800; Email: admissions@cristoreyatlanta.org
 Website: www.cristoreyatlanta.org

Cristo Rey Atlanta Jesuit High School is a Catholic learning community that educates young people of limited economic means, of any faith or creed, to become men and women for and with others. Through a rigorous college preparatory curriculum, integrated with a relevant work study experience, students graduate prepared for college and life.


Cristo Rey Jesuit High School Baltimore

Ph: (410) 727-3255; Email: development@crstoreybalt.org
 Website: www.cristoreybalt.org

Our mission is to empower Baltimore youth to succeed in college, career, and life. We provide access and opportunity for students of religious, racial, and ethnic diversity to excel through rigorous academics, a corporate internship program, extracurricular activities, and faith formation. We transform lives in the Catholic, Jesuit tradition of faith, justice and reconciliation.


Cristo Rey NY High School

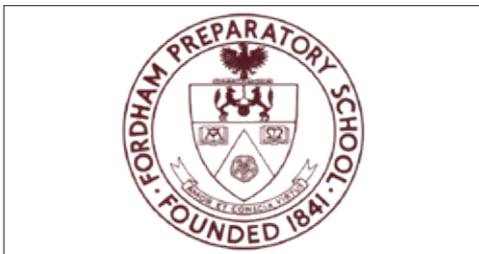
Ph: (212) 996-7000; Website: www.cristoreyny.org

Cristo Rey New York High School (CRNYHS) puts faith into action. We provide students from low-income backgrounds with a high-quality college preparatory education and real-life work experience that prepares them for success. CRNYHS collaborates with corporate partners and philanthropic donors to make the program extraordinarily effective and affordable for all families.


Fairfield College Preparatory School

Ph: (203) 254-4210; Website: www.fairfieldprep.org/america

Fairfield College Preparatory School is the Jesuit, Catholic School of Connecticut, forming young men of intellectual competence who possess the conscience to make wise decisions, a compassion for others, and a commitment to global justice. In a community of faith, our students develop their relationship with God and one another.


Fordham Preparatory School

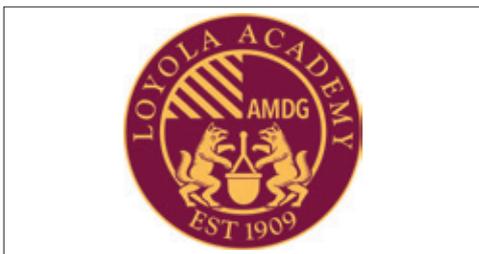
Ph: (718) 367-7500; Email: communications@fordhamprep.org
 Website: www.fordhamprep.org

Fordham Preparatory School is a Catholic, all-male, Jesuit, college preparatory school. Our commitment to education is shaped by the spirituality and pedagogical tradition of the Society of Jesus. Our mission is to form leaders committed to faith, scholarship, and service through a college preparatory education in the Catholic Jesuit tradition.


Georgetown Preparatory School

Ph: (301) 493-5000; Email: georgetownprep@gprep.org
 Website: www.gprep.org

As the oldest, Catholic boarding and day school for boys Grades 9-12, and the only Jesuit boarding school in the country, Georgetown Preparatory School provides an unparalleled environment for boys to thrive. Founded in 1789, the school offers service and immersion programs, a residential program with 120 students from 18 countries and 14 states, and nationally-recognized athletic programs. Prep's 90-acre campus features state-of-the-art facilities for academics, the arts, athletics, and spirituality. With small classes and a rigorous curriculum, our graduates develop into men of competence, conscience, courage, and compassion as they enter the world's most selective colleges and universities.


Loyola Academy

Ph: (847) 256-1100; Website: www.goramblers.org

Located outside Chicago, Loyola is a vibrant community committed to responding to God's call to be women and men for others. Founded in 1909, Loyola has a rich tradition of excellence in academics, athletics, and corcurricular opportunities. Annually, we welcome 500+ students per grade from 90+ zip codes, making Loyola the largest Jesuit secondary school in the nation.



Loyola Blakefield High School

Ph: (410) 823-0601; Email: communications@loyolablakefield.org
Website: www.loyolablakefield.org

Loyola Blakefield is a Catholic, Jesuit, college preparatory school founded in 1852, for boys in grades six through twelve located in Towson, Maryland. We offer an unrivaled learning experience — one that ignites a passion for learning and inspires leadership and service on behalf of a better world.



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Loyola High School New York

Ph: (646) 346-8129; Email: DMahon@loyolanyc.org
Website: www.loyolanyc.org

Loyola School is the only co-ed, Jesuit, and independent high school in New York City. As a Catholic, independent, coeducational, college preparatory, urban, secondary day school, rooted in the Jesuit tradition, Loyola School challenges its students religiously, intellectually, aesthetically, physically, and socially.

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McQuaid Jesuit High School

Ph: (585) 256-6112; Email: admissions@mcquaid.org
Website: www.mcquaid.org

Located in Rochester, New York, McQuaid Jesuit is a Catholic, Jesuit, college-preparatory school that inspires young men to realize their God-given gifts through the pursuit of excellence in all things, service to others, and a lifelong commitment to justice.

**Mother
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Middle School
A Jesuit Academy

Mother Teresa Middle School

Ph: (306) 569-6867; Email: info@mtmschoolregina.com
Website: www.mtmschoolregina.com

Mother Teresa Middle School is a Jesuit Nativity School that aims to break the cycle of poverty among disadvantaged youth and journeys with Indigenous communities toward Truth and Reconciliation. To find out more visit www.mtmschoolregina.com



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Regis High School

Ph: (212) 288-1100; Email: admissions@regis.org
Website: www.regis.org

Regis High School transforms Catholic young men through an academically exceptional Jesuit education in a caring community which inspires leadership, generosity and a lifelong passion for service as Men for Others. Regis is tuition free and merit based, giving special consideration to families in need of financial assistance.



Saint Peter's Preparatory School

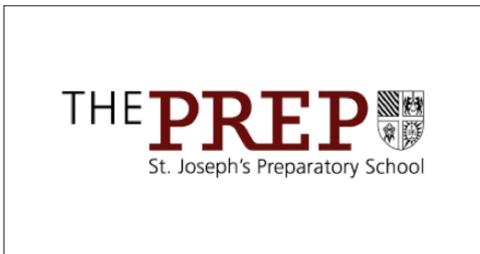
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Saint Peter's Prep is a Catholic, Jesuit college preparatory school, forming men of competence, conscience and compassion. Both enriched and challenged by its diversity, Prep is a community of learners seeking to find God in all things. Discover New Jersey's Jesuit high school, and why it's "Prep for Life!"



Scranton Preparatory School
 Ph: (570) 941-7737 Ext. 141; Email: admissions@scrantonprep.org
 Website: www.scrantonprep.org

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St. Joseph's Preparatory School
 Ph: (215) 978-1950; Email: admissions@sjprep.org
 Website: www.sjprep.org

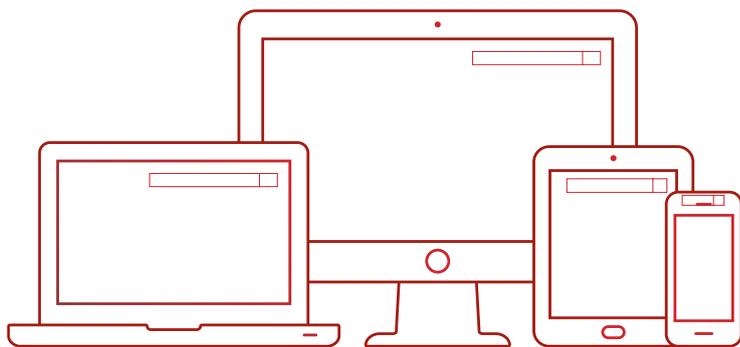
St. Joseph's Preparatory School, rooted in Catholic and Jesuit teachings, believes every student is blessed and gifted. The Prep encourages its students to discover, through serious and prayerful reflection, a sense of their self worth and a responsibility to share their gifts working with, and for, their fellow humans.



Xavier High School
 Ph: (212) 924-7900; Email: admissions@xavierhs.org
 Website: www.xavierhs.org

Founded in 1847, Xavier High School is an academically rigorous, Catholic, Jesuit, college preparatory school in New York City that educates intelligent, motivated young men of diverse backgrounds and means. Xavier teaches students to take responsibility for their lives, to lead with integrity, to act justly in service of others, to pursue excellence in every endeavor and to deepen their relationship with God. Ultimately, Xavier forms young men who will go forth to transform the world for God's greater glory.

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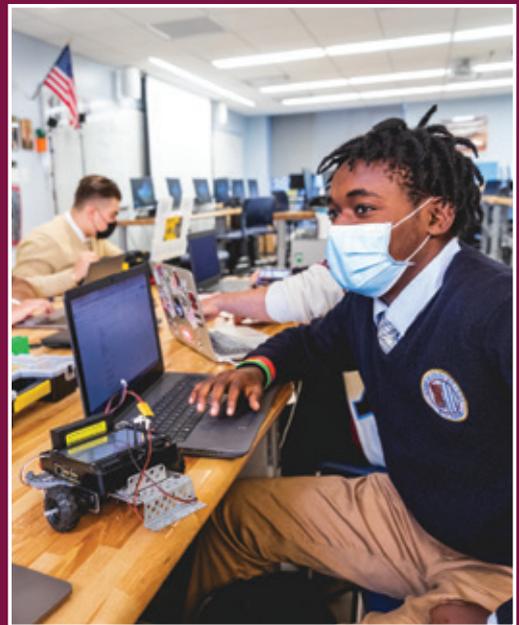
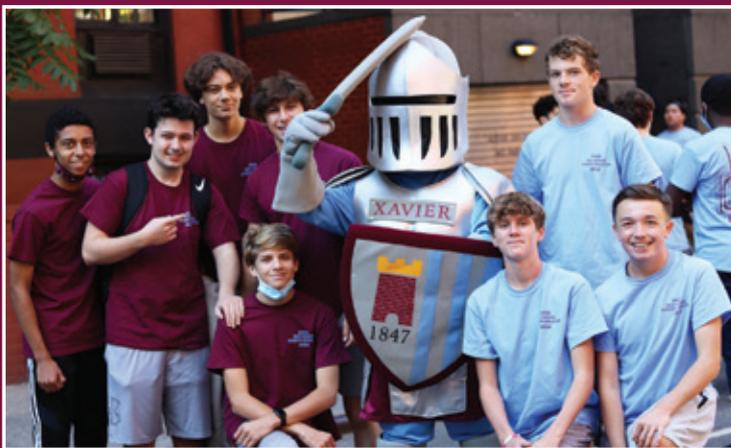
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1847-2022

XAVIER



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The word trust—the call to trust God, to trust one another—would become the foundation on which Taizé developed.

Continued from Page 33

other, and in a certain sense to trust that history will eventually move toward the good—would over time become the foundation on which Taizé developed. The hilltop became a place of friendship, the word *brother* intentionally used by the monks to create the idea of family.

“When I read the oldest texts that Brother Roger wrote, I think that what was primordial for him was the need to ‘come out of isolation,’” Brother Charles-Eugène tells me. “If you want to understand the life message of Brother Roger, it’s not first of all about young people, or ecumenism or monasticism, but it is this coming out of isolation. He had a play on words in French that he liked to say: ‘Love solitude but hate isolation.’ Solitude as a retreat, solitude with God on retreat—that’s good. But isolation is something different.”

Though Brother Roger initially envisioned a small monastic community, when thousands of young people, energized by the social movements in Europe, began to show up in the 1960s, the brothers chose to adapt.

“We experienced it a bit like the early monks,” Brother Charles-Eugène remembers. “If a person presents himself at the door, you must welcome him.”

At Easter in 1971, 6,000 young people registered to visit Taizé. The brothers were faced with a dilemma: The church had room for only 2,000.

“The only solution,” Brother Charles-Eugène remembers, smiling, “it was kind of crazy—but the good news was that the weight of the church didn’t rest on its walls, but on the columns.” They decided to break down the back wall of



The bell tower at the entrance to Taizé

Photo courtesy of Stephanie Saldana

the Church of Reconciliation, the church opened in 1962 at the heart of the community, and attach a circus tent to extend the interior.

The wall of the church came down. So, too, did resistance among the various church leaders. Pope John XXIII had already invited the brothers to the Second Vatican Council as outside observers, an early recognition of their ecumenical vision. Over the years, the community became friends with every subsequent pope. Today the prior, Brother Alois, is received in an annual private meeting with Pope Francis.

The community also shares close relationships with leaders of the Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox and Protestant churches, whose young visit by the thousands. Friends have included St. Teresa of Calcutta, the Orthodox theologian Olivier Clément, the Catholic theologian Yves Congar, O.P., and the former archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams.

Brother Roger decided early on that he would not form a separate Taizé movement, anxious not to pull young people away from their home churches. Instead, the youth who visited would be encouraged to refresh themselves so that they might return to their communities invigorated—whether they were Catholic, Orthodox or Protestant.

“One passes through Taizé as one passes close to a spring of water,” Pope John Paul II remarked when he visited Taizé in 1986. “The traveler stops, quenches his thirst, and continues on his way.”



Young people gather for Taizé meetings in Valencia, Spain

Photo courtesy of Taizé community

‘Looking in the Same Direction’

I find Brother Alois, the prior of Taizé, waiting for me in the house that Brother Roger purchased 80 years ago. Originally from Germany, he was appointed by Brother Roger as his successor while Brother Roger was still alive, and he has guided the community over the last 15 years through a series of social transformations in Europe. Taizé now holds weekly workshops with young people about the climate crisis, welcomes Muslims for annual sessions of dialogue, and—perhaps most strikingly—has sheltered families of Yazidi, Muslim and Christian refugees escaping war. At the same time, during a typical, non-Covid year, the monastery still regularly welcomes up to 100,000 young people whose days are filled with prayers and Bible studies, singing practice and workshops. In the face of the challenges these bring, Brother Alois calls the community’s desire to overcome boundaries a “motor that leads us forward.”

He is soft-spoken, thoughtful about the words he chooses, and careful not to be seen as a spiritual authority but simply as a brother in the community. He speaks of the young who visit as though they are his teachers, and his admiration for them is palpable.

I ask him about a recent statement he made to the journalist Marco Roncalli that, for the newest generation, “a word is credible only if it corresponds to a manner of life.” He nods.

“One concrete example,” he tells me, “is that young people are very much concerned with all of the questions

of ecology. And they *look* at us, asking: ‘How do you live?’”

“I’m astonished that they value even the small steps that we do,” he continues. “They do not say: ‘You have to change everything,’ but: ‘What are the steps that you do?’”

What emerges is a vision of Taizé as a common pilgrimage in which both the brothers and the youth are walking together, listening to one another and searching for deeper authenticity. “It’s not seldom that a young person here tells me: ‘Here, I can be as I am,’ Brother Alois says. “Here, nobody tells you what you have to believe or what you should do, but we listen to the Gospels together. We are all looking in the same direction.”

In all of this, Brother Roger’s original impulse to “come out of isolation” remains central. This is evident not only in the community’s decision to invite young people to live and study online at Taizé during the Covid-19 lockdown, but also in the “fraternities” that Brother Roger initiated early on and that still exist—small groups of brothers who travel from Taizé to live in some of the poorest areas of the world, from Bangladesh to Brazil. This year for the first time, Taizé created a fraternity closer to home, in St. Denis, a suburb in Paris.

“We don’t have the means to change situations,” Brother Alois tells me, “but we know that if we do not get into touch with the situations, then we will not find solutions.”

I ask him about the meaning of their monastic vocation. “Our vocation is to become brothers,” he answers simply. In some sense, this “becoming” feels like a synodal process, one of always listening: to one another, to the

Taizé was created as a response to another global crisis, some 80 years ago.

young, to those on the margins. After all, part of loving others comes in trying to know them.

He recounts the story of some brothers who, unable to sell their pottery at the monastery shop because of the pandemic, recently began to visit a nearby market to sell among the local merchants. One of these merchants approached the brothers at the end of the morning.

“It is good that you came here!” he told them. “Ahhh, you have finally come down from your hill!”

“It was a shock to the senses,” Brother Alois tells me, laughing. They were clearly grateful for the gentle invitation to encounter, to always come down from their hill.

Understanding Our Weakness

In many ways, these last years have been some of the most challenging in Taizé’s history. They have also been devastating for the Catholic Church in France. On June 4, 2019, Brother Alois stood in front of the Church of Reconciliation, crowded with young visitors assembled for prayer, and read from a letter he and the brothers had prepared.

“At a time when society and the church are attempting to shed light on sexual abuses and assaults,” he began, “notably towards minors and fragile persons, my brothers and I have judged it necessary to speak out as well.”

The community had learned of five cases of sexual assault by three different brothers at Taizé between 1950 and 1980. Two perpetrators already had died. A third had left the community decades before. Subsequently, accusations against two other living brothers came to light. The community reported those individuals to the authorities and both left the community.

“We recognize that these assaults committed in the past by brothers are also part of our history,” Brother Alois continued. “If I am speaking today, it is because we owe this to the survivors, to those close to them, and to all those who

seek at Taizé a space of trust, safety and truth.”

Brother Alois and the other brothers were determined to face the issue with transparency and to center their response on the survivors. They began to hold a weekly open meeting where the brothers could talk with visitors about the accusations of past abuse, give them space to ask questions and encourage any other survivors to come forward.

In the meantime, Catholics in France were reeling as a series of revelations emerged that well-known founders of religious communities like Jean Vanier, the founder of L’Arche, Marie-Dominique Philippe, the founder of the Community of Saint John, and Thierry de Roucy, the founder of Heart’s Home, had abused.

The brothers continued speaking out to the youth, one another and the press. They prayed for survivors in the evening prayer in front of thousands of young people. The brothers enforced strict safeguarding measures and continued their weekly meetings with pilgrims on the subject of abuse.

“The people who come here—they not only have the right, but they *must* know these things,” Brother Alois tells me with emotion.

After two years, the brothers felt confident that the young people had been informed of what had happened in the past and that no new survivors would come forward. It was only then that something unexpected happened at Taizé. The brothers decided to continue holding the meetings, and the young people kept showing up. For the most part, they no longer wanted to talk about what had happened at Taizé. They were ready to talk about abuse taking place in churches all over the world, sometimes in their own communities. They wanted to ask questions, to voice their anger, to grieve.

A door had, unexpectedly, been opened.

“The astonishing thing was that the trust of the young people toward us did not diminish,” Brother Alois tells me, “but it was growing. Because they felt that they knew more concretely our weakness, that we are not the perfect Christians who are teaching what is right to everybody, but that we are also on the way.”

Brother Benoit, a young French member of the community, tells me that their decision to speak openly saved the trust of the young people. “We also address some difficult topics such as clericalism, celibacy and the role of





Photo courtesy of Taizé community

A European meeting sponsored by Taizé in Valencia, Spain

women,” he adds, noting that the young people have strong opinions on these topics that must be heard. “Of course it is sad that we had to pass through this crisis ourselves to realize that we need to speak about these things—but today I’m very convinced that we need to continue, because as a place of pilgrimage for so many young people, these questions are very, very important.”

So they keep speaking, and listening. “*Wait for the Lord. Keep watch, take heart.*”

New Songs

When Brother Roger first founded Taizé, the brothers spent years fashioning prayers specific to their community. With no significant history of monasticism in the Protestant church, they turned to the French Catholic liturgical traditions, together with Protestant Huguenot hymns, for inspiration. The early prayer was sung entirely in French, and was by all accounts, beautiful.

Decades passed. Young pilgrims began arriving from all over the world. They stumbled trying to sing the songs. It no longer mattered that the prayers were lovely—they did not work. The songs were too long, too complicated, too French. Brother Roger felt that if the pilgrims could not participate, then something in the parable of communion became lost.

The brothers were prepared to scrap the prayers and rebuild from scratch. But it had taken years to create their prayer tradition, and they were not entirely certain that they would discover something new to replace it.

“It took a few years of almost emptiness,” Brother Sebastian tells me. “All of these young people were sitting in

the church and they couldn’t sing with us.”

They started with what they had. A French brother who loved Spain brought a text from Spain. Another brother brought an Alleluia from home. Slowly, they arrived at the idea of chants—brief lines from Scripture or sacred writings sung over and over again, until the words moved from mind into heart. It resonated with the Jesus prayer of the Eastern churches and the rosary of the Catholic Church. Visitors who came for a week could learn the songs quickly, but they were also nourishing enough not to bore the brothers who sang them all year long.

They invited the French liturgical composer Jacques Berthier to create further prayers, and soon songs like “Jesus, Remember Me” and “Ubi Caritas” found their way into the community and spread around the world. It became a way of listening to God through singing, the words breaking down resistance until we become aware of a deeper sense of self. In the communal prayer at Taizé, all the pilgrims sing, and as the chants change languages, those singers once on the margins might find themselves in the center, singing in their own tongue and trusted to hold the melody while others adapt.

Louder voices learn to soften to make room for quieter ones. As the songs build, tenor, bass and alto singers dare to break in, confident that others can hold the melody and the song will not fall apart. It becomes another parable of communion, separate voices enriching one another while holding their uniqueness, all of them engaged in a common song. Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox young people listen to God, and in this listening they find themselves hearing one another and perhaps even themselves in a new way.

But all of this took time. I keep thinking about those years between the old and the new, when the brothers and the youth stumbled together in uncertainty, not yet able to know that songs would emerge on the other side.

“The role of not having a solution but believing that there might be a solution—being open to a solution—that’s the thing,” Brother Sebastien tells me. “That’s linked with hope.”

From One Beginning to Another

On Oct. 9, 2021, at the invitation of Pope Francis, Brother Alois spoke at the opening of the Catholic Church’s two year synod on the theme of synodality. Appealing for a “dialogue that reconciles,” he encouraged Christians to be honest about our weaknesses. Quoting the theologian Larry Miller, he noted that it is that very self-examination that allows us to be enriched by the strengths of other Christian traditions in a “receptive ecumenism.” In other words, what looks like fragility might actually be courage.

“We all carry the treasure of Christ in clay vessels,” Brother Alois said, “and it perhaps shines more clearly when we humbly acknowledge what we lack.”

His words—reflecting the tripartite movement of listening to oneself, to others and to God—harkens back to Brother Roger’s original vision, when he founded Taizé in the belief that renewal is not meant to be embarked upon only once in our lifetimes. It is a dynamic, a way of being

Christian, of remaining attentive to the signs of the times. Sometimes history asks us to cross over a border. Sometimes it asks us to sing in new languages, or to knock down a wall.

“Whoever is on a journey towards God,” Brother Roger wrote, “goes from one beginning to another beginning.”

In time, maybe all of this becomes parable: the creating, the letting go, the grief. The long, uncertain waiting. The choice to start again, offering what little we have, in all of our broken voices, languages, histories. A room full of people, side by side, facing in the same direction, trusting that there will be music. There will always be music, if only we wait for it.

Stephanie Saldaña is a writer based in Jerusalem.
Twitter: @StephCSaldana.

Lines in italics are lyrics from songs sung at Taizé. The texts of the songs of Taizé copyright © Ateliers et Presses de Taizé, 71250 Taizé, France. This article was produced with the support of the Center for Religion and Civic Culture at the University of Southern California, the John Templeton Foundation and Templeton Religion Trust. Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of these organizations.



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‘Praying, Talking, Thinking, Discussing’

By Austen Ivereigh

A report from Latin America’s first continent-wide ecclesial assembly

It was no small irony that the Latin American church’s first continent-wide “ecclesial assembly” took place inside a silent, walled compound, far from any madding crowd. North of Mexico City in Cuautitlán Izcalli (in Náhuatl, “your house among the trees.”), for a week at the end of November, in the era of Covid-19 and Zoom, over 1,000 people—120 in-person assembly members, joined online by another 900 delegates—came together at the behest of Celam, the Council of Latin American Bishops’ Conferences, to discuss and discern.

The *Asamblea Eclesial* had been the pope’s suggestion, as was the location in Mexico, so that it could be under the “maternal protection of Our Lady of Guadalupe, patron of *Las Américas*.” The assembly began and ended with Mass at her basilica in Mexico City, but the gathering was in Casa Lago, named for the nearby Lake of Guadalupe, which belongs to the Mexican bishops’ conference. An unlikely Briton among the dozens of bishops, religious, clergy and lay people from more than 20 nations across Latin America, I had accepted Celam’s kind invitation to be an *asambleísta presencial* (an in-person assembly member) there.

The task? First, to attune our ear to the cry of the people, whose voices were captured in “a narrative synthesis,” a summary of a four-month listening exercise last year, to which some 70,000 people contributed, either as individuals or on behalf of their communities. Second, to hear from

church leaders, theologians and prophetic witnesses across Latin America, who gave talks and testimonies live or in videos that were streamed throughout the week on YouTube. Third, to gather in around 50 small groups—a few of us in Casa Lago, linking up with the majority Zooming in—to hear how the spirit could be calling the church in Latin America at this time. The time is now 15 years on from the groundbreaking Celam conference at Aparecida, Brazil, in May 2007, and eight years into the reform by St. Peter’s first Latin-American successor, whose pontificate has been inspired by the remarkable discernment and insight that took place at that Brazilian shrine.

It was Pope Francis, too, who suggested that this was the moment for the continent to take stock and revive that vision—only this time in a synodal way, with the people of God as the protagonist. The pope was adamant that the task was still to implement Aparecida, which many bishops had “put back on the shelf,” as Cardinal Leopoldo Brenes of Managua, Nicaragua, told the assembly.

Taking Aparecida Off the Shelf

True, the church in the great metropolitan belts of greater Buenos Aires, or in Texcoco and Tlanepantla on the outskirts of Mexico City, was profoundly reshaped by Aparecida’s call for a pastoral and missionary conversion. Yet many dioceses had remained stuck in old ways of

clericalism and moralism. In the face of this immobility, according to Jorge Lozano, archbishop of San Juan in Argentina and Celam's secretary general, the question had moved over time. It was no longer about how to ensure the bishops took up Aparecida's invitation, but instead, how to create space for the people of God to assume their calling as "missionary disciples." The point, in other words, was not to sit around debating Aparecida, like academics, but to enable the very thing whose absence was the obstacle to its implementation: the agency of the people of God.

In January 2021—Covid-19 had put the assembly preparations back a year—Francis sent a video message making clear this was to be a very different beast from a general conference of bishops: "It is something else: a gathering of the people of God, of laywomen and men, of men and women religious, priests and bishops—the people of God walking together. Praying, talking, thinking, discussing, and seeking the will of God." His point was that a missionary church—one that constantly goes out, alert

to new situations and contexts, ready to abandon old ways and to take on new ones when needed—is by definition one that allows for the participation of the whole body, as in the Acts of the Apostles.

For Rodrigo Guerra López, the Mexican philosopher who is now secretary of the Vatican's Commission on Latin America, this is the key for Francis. "The great majority of the Catholic population were never consulted in the run-up to Aparecida, and certainly not in the synodal way we are now all talking about," he told me outside the auditorium in Casa Lago. "It is always a challenge to take on what you have not experienced as your own." Hence this "new synodal organism," as Archbishop Cabrejos put it in his message on the assembly's first day, which was to be a "school of synodality," one that invited the people of God, with their pastors, to be the protagonists in the mission Aparecida called for.

There is an obvious parallel between the assembly that took place in late November and the current global "synod on synodality" that opened in Rome the month before. The premise of the new synod process—"the Church increasingly realizes that synodality is the path for the entire People of God," as the synod handbook puts it—is the fruit of the same papal discernment that is behind the assembly, namely that the church must now convert its authority and structures to create space and formation opportunities for

the people of God to participate, assemble and discern. By seeking to engage the whole people of God as a discerning subject, Latin America, not for the first time in this pontificate, is the "source church" of global Catholicism, providing concrete models and inspiration for the church elsewhere in the world.

Hence the presence, at the assembly, of the Synod of Bishops' secretary general, Cardinal Mario Grech of Malta, as well as the Synod on Synodality's *relator*, or chairman, Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, S.J., of Luxembourg. Cardinals Charles Bo of Myanmar, president of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (the equivalent of Celam), and Oswald Gracias of Mumbai, India, also came, wondering if such an assembly could be a model for the Asian churches in the run-up to their own general conference in October 2022 in Bangkok.

Kindling Missionary Conversion

We all had the same question: Could this ecclesial assembly of the people of God—not just bishops, but also religious, priests and lay people—prove to be a key factor in kindling a pastoral conversion? Do ordinary, baptized Catholics wake to their calling as missionary disciples when they are listened to and participate as subjects? Was this assembly a model for that, and could it work elsewhere—in Asia, Europe, the United States? If so, what implications might there be for the Synod on Synodality, to which the church was now being called?

Inevitably there were snags. Mauricio López, a leader in the Ignatian lay movement Christian Life Community, was the organizer at the heart of the assembly's discernment process. On the first day he invited us to move in our groups from the "I" (sharing) to the "you" (listening) to the "us," where we hear God speaking. But getting to the "I" was not easy. Well over half of the assembly failed to connect online to their groups, a problem that wasn't solved until day two of the four-day process.

The bigger problem was that the huge numbers of responses, summarized and deliberated on in a "discernment document" were largely ignored by the groups.

The listening itself had been limited by time, distance, Covid and inertia. A church that stretches from the Rio Grande to the south of Patagonia and embraces nearly half of the world's Catholic population had managed only 70,000 people directly taking part in the four-month listening exercise, although the number of people participating indirectly—for example in meetings that led to the submissions—was probably three times as many. But com-

pared with what was achieved in the Amazon Region alone prior to the synod of October 2019, when 87,000 people took part directly or indirectly, the assembly's consultation was hardly comprehensive. A key difference was that, unlike the synod listening operation, carried out directly by a team led by the Amazonian church network Repam, the assembly organizers had to work through bishops' conferences and dioceses.

One delegate told me that in her Central American country there was poor preparation, little communication and few priests who understood what was being asked of them. In Brazil, the world's largest Catholic country, the response was particularly poor: language differences, and a historic alienation from Spanish America reflected in the church's weaker links with Celam, were obstacles in addition to geography and Covid. As Cardinal Marc Ouellet, president of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America, put it delicately in his speech at Casa Lago, "the different churches of the region could not prepare equally" for the assembly.

Many of the gaps were filled by religious orders and their networks. Sister Maria Ines Vieira Ribeiro, for example, president of Brazil's Confederation of Religious, organized seven large meetings online in which over time 3,000 people took part both through meetings in their congregations and their parishes. Like everyone else I spoke to in Casa Lago who had been involved in the pre-assembly listening, Sister Maria Ines said the broader lack of response reflected a lack of time to build relationships of trust and confidence.

Listening on the Margins

Yet Peru showed how transformative the listening could be when it was taken to the margins. Archbishop Cabrejos had tapped Edinson Edgardo Farfán, O.S.A., a young Augustinian bishop who heads the prelature of Chuquibambilla in Peru's poorest region, Apurimac, to create a nationwide commission to support the listening exercise. Representatives from half of Peru's dioceses attended its launch in June to ask for training from a network of trained coordinators. They were thus able to reach the peripheries in a mix of Zoom meetings and visits to remote communities. What made Bishop Farfán happiest was "to hear about a religious sister at 12,000 feet altitude, in her village square, with people gathered round, no internet or electricity, just a battery microphone and recorder, taking people's testimonies."

People spoke of their sufferings—loss of jobs, pollution of their land by chemical companies, abusive employers—and time and again said they needed the church to stand with

them and listen to them. "To hear those voices, directly, was very special," Bishop Farfán told me. "They made us realize just how the people look to us, and what they expect of us. We asked, 'What kind of church do we want?' And the answers came back: 'A church that welcomes, that is joyful, that listens to people, that announces the Good News. Above all, a church that reconciles.' That's what people particularly emphasize. They need the church to mediate and negotiate on their behalf with powerful people and organizations."

Bishop Farfán is a convert to the synodal method. "People have really woken up" in the course of the listening process, he said, because it provokes contact, visits, meetings. One result is that priests often complain of heavier workloads as people start to make demands for formation involvement. This is precisely, Bishop Farfán says, what Aparecida called for: the permanent formation of lay people as missionary disciples who go out so that others may have life in Christ. The historically low levels of ecclesial commitment in Latin America, he says, are not because people are closed off to the church but because the church has not created the spaces to participate.

The listening process was most successful, unsurprisingly, in those dioceses where people are used to taking part in listening sessions. In Argentina, where more than half of the dioceses have had or are having synods, the pre-Mexico assembly listening was widely promoted, for example over community radios in poor areas, which discussed the questions on air and collected answers by WhatsApp.

Did people tire of being consulted? Father Pedro Brassesco, from the northern Argentine diocese of Gualeguaychú, said in his experience the opposite was true. "Because people feel listened to, and their concerns are reflected in pastoral plans and priorities that have been implemented, they become more engaged, not less." He recalled how, in Gualeguaychú, a listening process surfaced concern about growing levels of addiction, which led the diocese to encourage treatment programs, campaigns in homilies and catechesis for bans on casinos and parish-based efforts to combat addictions at their root. "The process of listening and participation awakens the sense of the faithful as subjects of mission and evangelization, not just objects," Father Brassesco says. "People realize they are members of the People of God, of this church, which means proclaiming Christ in their own community context."

This awakening is key. Aparecida described "a change of era," an epochal shift, one brought on by the social impact of technology and the globalized marketplace. People found it harder to belong to God, to creation and to each other; institutions no longer bound people and communi-

ties; faith was no longer transmitted, therefore, primarily through law, culture and custom, but as it was in the early church, directly, by witness, through the encounter with Christ and the testimony that followed.

This move from “a pastoral strategy focused on preservation to one that is firmly missionary,” as Aparecida put it, is, of course, the main challenge facing the church not just in Latin America but also—as “The Joy of the Gospel” makes clear—global Catholicism. The key factor in that “pastoral and missionary conversion” is the awakening of the people of God to its agency.

So the question had to be asked, at the end of the assembly, whether it had succeeded in that goal.

Did the Assembly Succeed?

Almost without exception, the delegates—made up of bishops (20 percent), members of the clergy (20 percent), religious (20 percent) and laypeople (40 percent)—were “ecclesial” people: heads of diocesan organizations or delegates of continent-wide church bodies, in general devoted to Pope Francis and the vision of Aparecida, indignant about clericalism, strong on justice, concerned to include minorities and for women to be ministers and leaders. They were uniformly interesting and impressive, and I felt completely at home among them, as I did among everyone at Casa Lago. But it was hard not to recall Francis’ warning against new forms of lay elitism in his January 2021 message, to be a sign of a “church without exclusion.”

Yet would a more diverse make-up of people have worked so well together on the mission entrusted to the small groups that week? Over four mornings, the 50 groups were asked to name urgent, continent-wide pastoral challenges and suggest means of meeting them. This was no small task, even without the technical problems. Yet skillfully managed with great warmth and charm, as a process it just about worked. The 236 sentences uploaded onto the site following two days of discussion were synthesized by the assembly organizers into 41, which—after further discussion and individual votes—ended up as 12.

Five of the “pastoral challenges” called for a more synodal, nonclericalist church emphasizing the participation of women, young people and lay people, while the remainder of the “challenges” prioritized victims of violence and injustice, the defense of life, care for the earth and minorities, reforms to seminary training and the importance of a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. It was a good list, but unsurprising. The pope had asked us, in his message at the start of the assembly, to listen carefully to each other and the poor, and to be open to the “overflow,” the creative pow-

er of the Spirit that opens new paths. But the process was too squeezed to allow much space and time for surprises of the Spirit. There were complaints that it felt rushed, too geared towards producing a result, and this was reflected in the absence of surprises in the final list.

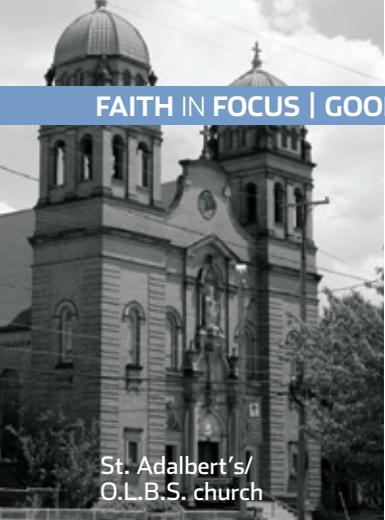
And yet the fact that the assembly happened at all was astonishing. In the time of Covid-19, to mobilize the church of an entire continent was an extraordinary feat. And for those taking part, it was transformative. People commented on the spirit of freedom and trust in the assembly and how thrilled they were to have been given the space to help create a new future for the church. It also seemed to be the answer, at least indirectly, to the challenge of implementing Aparecida. “With great gratitude and joy,” said the final message issued on behalf of the assembly, “we reaffirm that the way to live out the pastoral conversion discerned in Aparecida is synodality.”

Mauricio López said it had not helped that, contrary to what had been asked of the bishops’ conferences, the delegates they sent had mostly not been those who took part in the listening. “They did not come prepared in the sense of being affected by the listening process,” he told me. “We have to learn from this.” The methodology followed was that of an apostolic discernment in common, in the Ignatian sense, but was this what happened? No, agreed López, although it could turn out to be part of one over time. The fruit of the process was not only the 12 pastoral priorities, but the thick dossier of responses to the four-month listening and the discernment document reflecting on those voices. All these would go forward now, to be pondered in regional assemblies over the next year.

The real question, said López, was whether, at this time when the whole church as the people of God was called to be a discerning subject in the Ignatian sense, the assembly enabled this for the Latin-American church. “So if you ask me, Did this contribute to creating the discerning subject for the synod on synodality? Yes, I’m sure it did.”

What mattered was that the people of God had been asked to take part in shaping the future of the church. And that—within its many limits—was what the assembly had enabled. A new agency—yet old, because synodality was normal in the church’s early life—had been created. “There is no going back,” Archbishop Cabrejos said at the concluding press conference.

*Austen Ivereigh is a fellow in contemporary church history at Campion Hall, at the University of Oxford. His latest book is *Wounded Shepherd: Pope Francis and His Struggle to Convert the Catholic Church*, published by Henry Holt.*



St. Adalbert's/
O.L.B.S. church



Dionne Carmichael

COMMUNION IN CLEVELAND

This historically Black Catholic parish takes community to heart

By Kevin Jackson



Dionne Carmichael, front,
with Vel Scott, owner of
Vel's Purple Oasis

Photos by Deniz Demirer



Tim Willis's robots

I will be the first to admit it: I did not imagine giant red robots to be part of my first trip to Cleveland.

On the final day of my trip there in June 2021, I listened to a man named Tim Willis tell his story. Beside me stood my two companions from America Media, Erika Rasmussen and Deniz Demirer. All around us, on an otherwise unremarkable plot of land in east Cleveland, stood 15-foot-tall or 25-foot-long robotic contraptions, painted bright red and accented with yellow flames. Mr. Willis had been tinkering with them for decades. After dropping out of high school, he taught himself how to build these machines.

"Get this on camera!" he said, as he flipped a switch and his fire-breathing dragon came to life. We obliged, of course.

In addition to being a self-taught robot maker, Mr. Willis, now 63, had survived six bullets the previous year when he fell prey to a brutal gang initiation ritual. He showed us pictures of the wounds to prove it.

This man had been a complete stranger 20 minutes

earlier. But in Cleveland, as we had learned by this point in our trip, no one is a stranger.

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“YOU MET TIM WILLIS?” That was Ms. Dionne’s reaction.

You do not forget Dionne Thomas Carmichael. She electrifies a room with one of those deep-down laughs that clings to your soul. Her style is impeccable; no outfit is complete without a corresponding hat (today it is short-brimmed and denim). She is charismatic and kind and tough and gentle all at once. We told her about our interaction with Tim, and she knew all about him. “I’m so glad you met him,” she said again.

Ms. Dionne is a lifelong parishioner of the St. Adalbert’s/Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Parish in Fairfax, just down the street from Tim Willis’s robotic creations. Community and parish are tightly connected in the Fairfax neighborhood; although not a parishioner, Mr. Willis has been a friend of the parish community for years.

St. Adalbert’s/O.L.B.S. was the first Black Catholic parish in Cleveland, and we drove eight hours from New York City to Fairfax to make a short documentary on their history and rootedness. That was “the plan.”

What was not planned was the radical embrace the community extended to us, not for any merit of our own, but simply because we were there. In Fairfax, and especially at St. Adalbert’s/O.L.B.S., life is lived together. Everyone is welcome, without exception, and yes, that included the local robot engineer and three wandering filmmakers from New York City.

“Somebody knows somebody,” said Ms. Dionne. “You’re not gonna meet a stranger.”

In the end, we went to Cleveland to be reminded of what the church could look like if we all took the idea of community to heart.

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Phillis and Phillip Clippis have been parishioners at St. Adalbert’s/O.L.B.S. for decades. They are delightful people, and they sing the praises of their seven grandchildren and two great grandchildren as they welcome us into their home for lunch and an interview. Phillip works as a card dealer at Cleveland’s only casino. Phillis is the historian and record-keeper of St. Adalbert’s Parish and is writing a book about its history.

Though the community has a century of history under its belt, some of its most dramatic moments are very recent.

“In 2007 we got a new bishop” in the Diocese of Cleveland, said Phillis, “and he was sent to, a lot of people said,

close churches.”

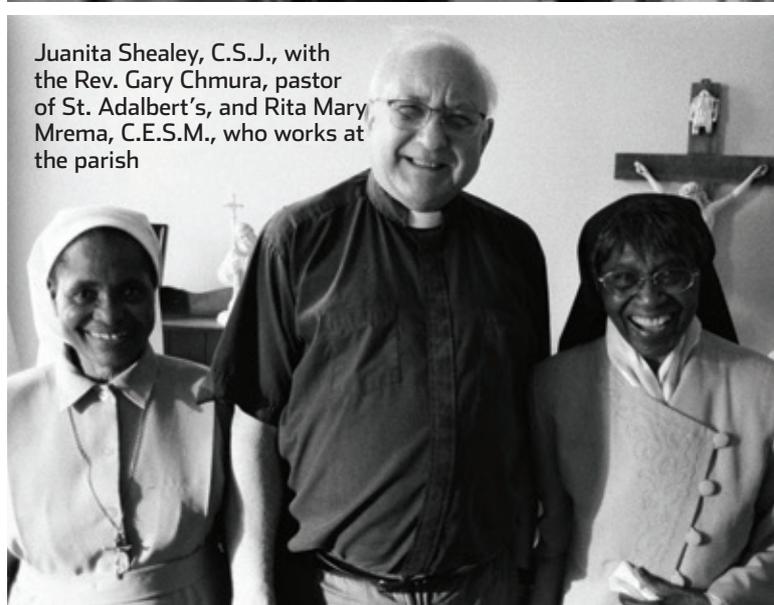
St. Adalbert’s/O.L.B.S. was on the bishop’s list of churches to “suppress,” which is a canonical term for a bishop’s decision to close a church when he believes it would be unsustainable for some reason. Suppression is different from a merger, in which the identity of two or more parishes is joined to create one new parish. So the suppression of St. Adalbert’s/O.L.B.S. meant that the parish would simply cease to exist, and parishioners would have to find other communities. The parishioners had meetings with the bishop to plead their case. Phillip told us the story:

“The bishop told me to my face in one of these meetings, he said, ‘Phillip, I closed my mother’s church in Boston.’ And I told him, I said, ‘I wouldn’t have closed my mama’s church. My mother would’ve had to *die* before I closed her church.’”

These are the kinds of people that make up the St. Adal-



Phillip Clippis at his home with Erika Rasmussen of America



Juanita Shealey, C.S.J., with the Rev. Gary Chmura, pastor of St. Adalbert's, and Rita Mary Mrema, C.E.S.M., who works at the parish



Phillis Clippis at home

ular places: St. Adalbert's/O.L.B.S., Vel Scott's Purple Oasis urban farm and garden, the family-run Fairfax Place skilled nursing facility. These gathering places take on a life of their own. When St. Adalbert's closed in 2010, the whole Fairfax community, not only the Catholics, lost one of those anchoring places.

And then, the miracle: After the parishioners waged a relentless appeal campaign for the better part of two years, the Vatican overturned the bishop's decision to close the parish. Phillis did the legwork, sending letter after letter to Rome until she had cardinals writing back to her. "We can *assure* you that we have gotten your information," Cardinal Sambini, the former apostolic nuncio, wrote.

"Some of us were just stubborn enough to say, well, nothing beats a failure but a try. So let's try," said Ms. Dionne.

The church reopened in August 2012. "After the celebration, it was time to get to work," said Ms. Dionne. People came from all around the community to scrub every inch of the church, which had been shuttered but otherwise untouched for two years. The cradle of Black Catholicism in Cleveland would once again see the light of day.

bert's/O.L.B.S. parish. It is unthinkable to such people, for whom bonds of family and community run deep, to close down a central community gathering place, much less their parish church. But ultimately, that is what the bishop did in 2010.

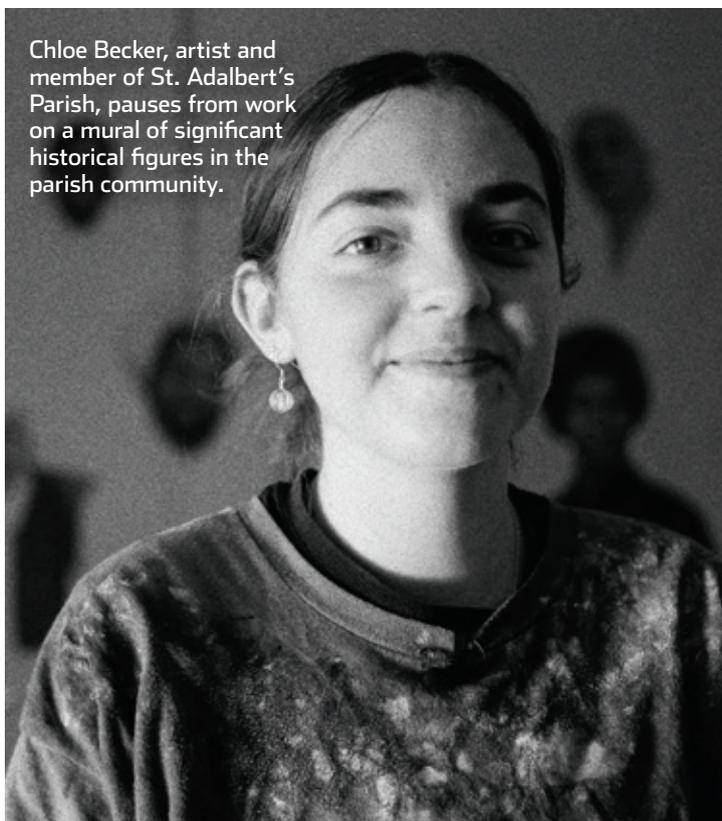
"To me, it was a done deal," said Phillip.

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Ms. Dionne offered us a choice between water or beer after we finished interviewing her at Josephine's Lounge, the nightclub she owns on 79th Street in Fairfax. It was just past 4 p.m., long before the club's opening time, in the heat of the summer day. With a few hours of work still ahead of us, we had to settle for the water. It came in a red Solo cup.

"Josephine was my mother," said Ms. Dionne, in reference to the bar's name.

For Ms. Dionne, there is no separation between work and family, friends and faith. They are parts of the same tune. But they are also rooted in very partic-



Chloe Becker, artist and member of St. Adalbert's Parish, pauses from work on a mural of significant historical figures in the parish community.

...

At Mass at St. Adalbert's on Sunday, I was called out by name. For someone holding a camera, this is typically not a good thing. "We welcome America Media—Erika, Deniz and Kevin—who are filming parts of the Mass today," the smiling lector said warmly.

We were welcome and we were family, because hospitality and family are the beating heart of the St. Adalbert's/O.L.B.S. community. Many parishes talk about being welcoming; this one does not have to. It is lived out in unspoken but deeply felt agreement among its members. It is not superficial but love-rooted. Everything about this community is love-rooted. In other words, they are Christians.

Coffee hour after Mass feels like a family reunion. Well, it *is* a family reunion—the first coffee hour since the pandemic started, and you can feel it. As a courtesy, we told people that we would be filming them, but it did not really matter. They are the same on- and off-camera. "You've gotta get one of these cupcakes," Phillip Clipps tells me. The apple pie flavor is delightful.

The community is small, but numbers are not the primary concern. I think, to some extent, that makes it prophetic. What will shrinking Catholic parishes look like in 20, 50, 100 years? What will their priorities be? Hopefully, this steadfast church in east Cleveland offers an example: Love and embrace everyone who enters your doors, immediately, without pretense and without exception. We might be surprised how many people would stick around for coffee hour.

Kevin Jackson is a video producer and former O'Hare fellow at *America*.

Deniz Demirer is a Polish-born writer, actor and filmmaker and is *America's* director of photography. His past work includes five feature films as a writer and director.

A Watch "This historic parish fought to stay open—and won," a short documentary about the St. Adalbert's/O.L.B.S. community, on America Media's YouTube channel: youtube.com/americanmag.

Sinnerman

By Michael Waters

Oh, sinnerman, where you gonna run to?
—traditional African American spiritual

First you see only shadows, sable bristles
Stippling the silty, ribbed floor, then
Glimpse the suspended apparitions.

Pencil-long, glassine so almost invisible,
Needlefish swept by my shadow
Quickly stitch tropical shallows.

How can creatures so sleek & barely real
Inscribe pure presence through still,
Colorless, estuarial pools?

My noon shadow folds absence into my body
Like black rice paper origami,
Then steals slowly outward at sunset,

A darkly famished silhouette
Whose hunger nothing can fulfill.
This sinnerman inhabits me.

No wonder the needlefish flee.

Michael Waters is the author of *Caw and The Dean of Discipline* and co-editor of *Border Lines: Poems of Migration*. He was a 2017 Guggenheim fellow.

A mural depicting Father Rutilio Grande and his companions, with a group of people sitting in front of it. The mural features a large central figure of a man in a dark suit, surrounded by other figures in various attire, including a woman in a red top and a man in a yellow shirt. In the foreground, several people are seated on a ledge, looking towards the camera. The background of the mural shows a rural landscape with a stone wall and trees.

Man of the People

Lessons of Rutilio Grande, priest and prophet

By Ana María Pineda

CNS photo by Edgar Romero

Rutilio Grande, S.J., and his two traveling companions, 15-year-old Nelson Rutilio Lemus and 72-year-old Manuel Solórzano, had been driving to the small town of El Paisnal in El Salvador to celebrate the novena for the town's patronal feast of St. Joseph when they were gunned down on the road on March 12, 1977, in Aguilares, El Salvador. Decades after the murders, the Vatican announced on Feb. 22, 2021, that it would recognize the three as martyrs.

The news of Father Grande's beatification was welcomed by many Salvadorans, who claim Father Grande as one of their own. Outside the country Father Grande is primarily remembered as a close friend of Archbishop Oscar Romero. Often overlooked is the fact that at the outset of the civil war in El Salvador, Father Grande was the first priest killed. Indeed, he was the first-born of the martyrs of this new era. His prophetic stance and his solidarity with the poor of his native country led directly to his death. His influence on the church of El Salvador and those who followed him on the road to martyrdom merits profound consideration.

What precisely can we learn from how he lived his life? What might it inspire us to do with our own lives?

A life's value is not determined by one's net worth.

Rutilio Grande's childhood was marked not only by

poverty but by the trauma of his parents' separation and the death of his mother; his five older brothers struggled to provide economic support for young Rutilio and his paternal grandmother. Rutilio never lost sight of his humble beginnings or forgot the religiosity taught to him by his grandmother, a people's faith. The simple joys of interacting with the people of the town and being part of the religious and cultural festivities remained with him throughout his life. He took pride in being Salvadoran. As an adult, Rutilio often described his mestizo identity as a *café con leche*, a mixture of coffee with milk.

As he always carried himself with dignity, he demonstrated that being born into poverty did not determine a person's worth. From personal experience, he understood not only the suffering of the poor but also the hopes and aspirations they cherished for themselves and their families.

During several periods early in his priestly life, Father Grande was assigned to minister in the seminary of San José de la Montaña in San Salvador. Encouraged by his studies at Lumen Vitae, a renowned catechetical and pastoral institute in Brussels, Father Grande transformed the traditional formation of the seminary by following the directives of the Second Vatican Council. To increase the pastoral sensibilities of the seminarians, he organized trips for them to visit families in the surrounding towns. There

the young men had the opportunity to experience firsthand how ordinary men and women were living.

Later, as a pastor in the town of Aguilares, Father Grande offered visionary pastoral innovations, including a collaborative team approach and a preferential option to minister in rural areas among peasant workers. Despite the many opportunities for higher education he had as a Jesuit, he never distanced himself from the town or people who shaped his life. Even long after his death, people remembered Father Grande's humanity and the ways he showed them a new example of priesthood. Father Grande's pastoral approach was paving the way to the creation of a new model of church in El Salvador.

We all have a missionary call.

In Aguilares, he invested his energies into new approaches to the formation of lay men and women. He sometimes said: "Now we're not going to wait for missionaries from the outside. Rather, we must be our own missionaries." In this effort, the young pastor and his Jesuit teammates began to visit people in both the rural areas and the towns. In time, their personal approach drew people to the celebration of the Eucharist, the sacraments and Bible study. Father Grande's ministerial approach was so effective that within a year he had 362 "delegates of the Word" participating in the evangelization efforts of the parish.

Gradually, as men and women who had little formal education reflected on the Gospel, they began to question the injustices they suffered. Campesinos were discovering the liberating spirit of the Word of God and learning how to incorporate it into their lives. Newly enlightened, the people sought out ways to organize themselves in order to demand what was justly theirs. Father Grande did not discourage them; rather, he continued to make them aware of the Gospel message and of the truth that God had not destined people to live in poverty.

At the same time, he was clear in how he understood his priestly ministry. He would often tell the people: "I don't belong to one political party or another. What I am doing is preaching the Gospel." But as the people gained greater understanding of their rights as human beings, they began to look for ways to secure those rights.

Father Grande also gave special attention to a liturgy transformed by the spirit and directives of Vatican II. His childhood engagement in the popular religiosity of his hometown of El Paisnal gave him great insight into and respect for how the faith was lived out by ordinary people. He felt that popular practices that the clergy had previously

dismissed as misguided forms of religiosity should be recognized as authentic expressions of faith.

He also understood that salvation history in the context of the modern world required that prayer and good works be integrated. Having taught courses on the constitution of the Republic of El Salvador in the minor seminary, he often incorporated that material in his sermons and eucharistic celebrations, linking constitutional rights to the Gospel message. All of these pastoral efforts inspired by Vatican II led the way in creating a new way of being church within the contemporary realities of El Salvador.

God transforms our wounds.

Those who knew Rutilio Grande in life consider that the most notable of his many contributions to the church in El Salvador was his work in aligning the church with the actual life of the people. But he also showed us what it means to be a saint, to be holy in the modern world.

Early in life, Father Grande had suffered a episode of catatonia from which he gradually recovered, but which had long-lasting effects on his health. Few people knew just how fragile his health was as an adult, when he dealt with ongoing bouts of depression and self-doubt.

His superiors in the Society of Jesus noted in his personal file that while Father Grande suffered from depression, he was "aware of that limitation, suffered because of it, but he did not let it control him." Father Grande learned to live with his condition by placing his trust completely in God, and by taking steps to help himself. Even in his fragility—or perhaps through it—this beautiful son of El Salvador accomplished great things for the universal church, the church in Latin America and especially the church in El Salvador, by living and giving his life for the faith. His fragility may have been a difficult cross to bear, but it highlights the beauty of his holiness, his saintliness.

In the final moments of his life, Father Grande rendered his complete surrender as the faithful son of El Paisnal and the church as he said, "Let God's will be done." Just as the people of El Salvador celebrated the beatification of one of their own on Jan. 22, their beloved "Father Tilo," let us join with them in crying out "*iPresente!*"

Ana María Pineda, R.S.M., is an associate professor of religious studies at Santa Clara University. A native of El Salvador, she is the past president of the Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians in the United States. Her latest book, *Rutilio Grande, Memory and Legacy of a Jesuit Martyr*, was published in January.



‘Reading and Writing Poems Slows Us Down’

How poetry can help form men and women for others

By Ciaran Freeman

*Editor’s Note: Joseph Ross, a poet who has taught English for 33 years, is now in his 10th year at Gonzaga College High School in Washington, D.C. His most recent book of poetry is *Raising King*. Ciaran Freeman, an art teacher at Gonzaga, interviewed Mr. Ross. The interview has been edited for length and clarity.*

What role can poetry play in helping to form men and women for and with others?

Reading and writing poems slows us down. It requires us to look deeply at the world around us. Poets who take their craft seriously develop a way of seeing. I try to grow this vision in my students, so they see more than just what is before them, so they see the “why” of what is before them. Langston Hughes once wrote that “poets who write mostly about love, roses and moonlight must lead a very quiet life.” That’s bold. He saw poetry as a way to transform the world. I do too. It is exactly how the poet should be in the world.

On the commitment to justice in Jesuit education, the former superior general of the Society of Jesus, Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., once said, “When the heart is touched by direct experience, the mind may be challenged to change.” What poets have touched your heart?

My patron saint is Langston Hughes. I return to his work all the time for insight into my own life, for the truth about my country and for hope to change our society. A living poet who has been a mentor and friend to me is Martín Espada. His new book, *Floaters*, just won the National Book Award. It’s a searing look at immigration. I have used his poems in my classroom for years, and they continue to inspire my students and me. Naomi Shihab Nye is a Palestinian-American poet who has a way of seeing the world’s beauty without ignoring the suffering. I return to them a lot.

How have you seen your students’ hearts be touched by a direct experience with poetry?

I am fortunate to see this all the time. Gwendolyn Brooks’s

Joseph Ross, an English teacher at Gonzaga High School in Washington, D.C., says that poetry "requires us to look deeply at the world around us."

"We Real Cool" is the perfect empathy poem. She is walking past a pool hall during school hours and sees seven boys in there playing pool. I would have written a judgment poem: Why are you cutting class? But she wants to know what they thought about themselves. She writes this beautiful poem: "We real cool. We/ left school. We/ lurk late. We/ strike straight. We/ sing sin. We/ thin gin. We/ jazz june"—and then this devastating last line—"We/ die soon." They know. They know what their lives are going to be. We have students who will read that poem and see some of their own attitudes about themselves in there. They see people they know in there. It happens every year. It's powerful.

"Widening the circle" is a phrase thrown around a lot today in Jesuit education. How have you worked to widen the circle of your curriculum in recent years?

We have to continually seek out authors in whom our students can see themselves. At the same time, I seek authors who will push our students to see beyond themselves. I have already mentioned Langston Hughes, Gwendolyn Brooks, Martín Espada and Naomi Shihab Nye. I would add Frank X. Walker, Lucille Clifton, Danez Smith, Leslie Marmon Silko, William Archila, Joy Harjo and Edwidge Danticat.

Poets are often thought of as recluses, but at Gonzaga, one of the most vibrant student clubs is Poets & Writers. What is the relationship between community and poetry?

Poets definitely need silence and solitude. That is where much of the work gets done. The poet has to sit down alone and face the page or the screen. But the poet also needs community. We have a wonderful poetry community here because our poets are humble and generous. We use a workshop process that almost always improves the poem. We sit with one poet's draft and go through a detailed process. The poet hears others read and discuss his poem. He just listens and learns how others understand his work before he talks about it. Then the poet rejoins the conversation and the fire really starts!

In 2018, Poets & Writers published Garden: Gonzaga Poets Respond to the Slavery Research Project. Can you tell me more about that book?

Some of our students, led by the history teacher Ed Donnellan, discovered Gonzaga's history with slavery and spent two summers researching it in the Georgetown University archives. When our poets learned about this, they couldn't stop talking about it. What dramatically changed

us was discovering the name of Gabriel, a young enslaved boy who worked here. We would later learn the names of more enslaved people too, but discovering Gabriel's name changed everything. They needed to respond. So, we took several months and created a chapbook of poems by students and faculty. It transformed us.

What were some of the lessons you learned from working on that project?

I learned to listen to my students! I also learned that the slavery research project affected our Black students in different ways than it did other students. Some of our Black students said things like "I never knew words could do this." For some of them, it was an experience of consolation. For other students, it was sometimes an experience of confrontation. That is what literature does. It consoles and confronts. When I saw both of those movements at work, I knew we were doing the right thing.

What do you find yourself returning to from that body of work?

I always go back to Joseph Wete '19, who wrote in Gabriel's voice and recounted how Gabriel worked while others learned. It's a powerful example of empathy. "I wiped soiled tables/ you sat and laughed... The garden grew/ I could not." His alternating description can move a reader who is willing to enter this brave poem.

More recently you and your students published Who is Really Free? Gonzaga Poets Respond to the Call for Racial Justice. What motivated that project?

After the summer of 2020, when George Floyd and others were murdered, protests for racial justice took place all over the country. When we returned to school in August, it was all our poets talked about. I realized nearly every poem we workshopped in our club had to do with race. The book began to take shape, and it has changed us.

One of our seniors, Kevin Donalson '21, wrote a poem in three sections, using the colors of the American flag. He described the red of "America's rage," the white of "privilege," the blue of the "sorrow and sadness/ filling each citizen's face." He closed with the question we all kept asking, "But in America,/ who is really free?" This is one of the most moving and well-crafted poems I know. It was written by a 17-year-old.

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



Broadway Embraces Black Writers

By Rob Weinert-Kendt

As anyone seriously following the American theater could tell you, much of the most exciting work made over the past decade has been authored by playwrights who are not white, from Lauren Yee to Alexis Scheer to Jackie Sibblies Drury. But aside from “Hamilton,” you would barely know this from the shows that have made it to the theater’s commercial capital, Broadway. By my count, fewer than 30 of the productions that have opened on Broadway over the previous 10 seasons were by non-white writers—less than a season’s worth, which is typically about 40 shows.

Of course, no theater anywhere has had a typical season for some time now. While a deadly pandemic raged across the country, a racial reckoning in the wake of George Floyd’s murder gripped international attention. Broadway theaters responded to the first crisis by shutting down for more than a year—a historic first—and, after reopening last fall, faced winter’s

Omicron onslaught with piecemeal postponements and cancellations that were still shaking out at press time.

Producers’ response to the Black Lives Matter moment, meanwhile, has been to program nearly as many plays by Black writers in the 2021-22 season as had appeared on Broadway in the entire past decade: 11 of them, versus just 15 between 2010 and 2020. This almost dizzying number has brought some of the most talented writers now working to their widest theater audiences yet, and in one case, showcased a writer long overdue for the spotlight. This is all cause for celebration.

But this bumper crop of Black shows has also raised some thorny questions about representation in a commercial marketplace still dominated by white tastes, let alone one that is only just awakening from a shutdown. It is always the case that art in this arena, fairly or not, gets value judgments based on commercial performance. But the implicit sense that

this panoply of shows must not only somehow make up for the previous scarcity of Black voices on Broadway but also make bank at the box office, lest producers shy away from similar gambles in the future, is a unique and unjust pressure. After all, most shows that make it to Broadway don’t make a profit, no matter who writes them, so why not take more chances on more diverse writers?

The result of this gamble so far has been as fascinating a season as I can recall, in which even the apparent failures have been interesting. It kicked off in September at the August Wilson Theater with Antoinette Nwandu’s “Pass Over,” a reimagining of “Waiting for Godot” with shades of Exodus and absurdism. As a play, it is a bit of a trick, a house of cards built atop a liberal audience’s shared preconceptions about police violence against young Black men. But its infectious trickster spirit, realized in a finely tuned production directed by



Brandon Micheal Hall, LaChanze and Chuck Cooper in a new production of Alice Childress's "Trouble in Mind" at the Roundabout American Airlines Theatre.

Joan Marcus

Danya Taymor, made it a fitting welcome back to Broadway.

Next was "Lackawanna Blues," a one-man show authored and performed by Ruben Santiago-Hudson, with live guitar accompaniment from Junior Mack, at Manhattan Theatre Club's Friedman Theatre. This old-school narrative about Santiago-Hudson's youth in a Buffalo, N.Y., boarding house, under the tutelage of a powerful matriarch called Nanny, was a quiet triumph, handily demonstrating why Santiago-Hudson, a stunningly versatile performer, has also been such a first-rate director (he has helmed a number of August Wilson plays, including "Jitney" on Broadway).

The next two shows that opened in this unofficial Black season, "Chicken & Biscuits" and "Thoughts of a Colored Man," offered, if nothing else, truth in advertising: Their titles give a fair idea of what to expect onstage. Douglas Lyons's "Chicken & Biscuits," which ran for seven weeks at Circle

in the Square, was a crowd-pleasing genre piece set at the funeral of a family patriarch. Highlighted by the performances of Norm Lewis as a kindly, bloviating pastor and Ebony Marshall-Oliver as a larger-than-life hairdresser, it didn't reach a wide audience and divided critics. But I wouldn't be surprised if its life in regional theaters is long.

Keenan Scott II's "Thoughts of a Colored Man" played like a sort of male version of Ntozake Shange's 1975 choreopoem "For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/When the Rainbow Is Enuf" (slated for a Broadway revival in March). It had bracing moments of connection, especially at the intersection of class and race, as in one striking late scene between an affluent gay man (Bryan Terrell Clark) and a bitter grocery clerk (Forrest McClendon). But despite a brisk staging by Steve H. Broadnax III, much of it felt to me dubiously poetic and awkwardly preachy.

Joining this roster of plays are Dominique Morisseau's gritty "Skeleton Crew," Jeremy O. Harris's tendentious "Slave Play," "MJ the Musical," a biomusical about Michael Jackson with a book by Lynn Nottage, and "A Strange Loop," a new musical by Michael R. Jackson (no relation). In the meantime, though, Nottage contributed one of the season's highlights thus far, the allegorical workplace comedy "Clyde's." Uzo Aduba starred in the title role as the officious boss of a truck-stop sandwich stand whose kitchen staff consists entirely of the formerly incarcerated. As these diverse workers bicker and bond over cuisine, aspiration and romance, the play's kitchen-sink realism gives way to something weirder and deeper. The author of both heavy dramas ("Ruined," "Sweat") and buoyant comedies

("By the Way, Meet Vera Stark"), Nottage has never interlaced her gifts as winningly.

Like "Clyde's," the season's best play was written by a Black woman adept at both comic and tragic registers. Alice Childress's "Trouble in Mind" was a hit Off-Broadway in 1955, but plans for a Broadway run were scrapped by white producers when she would not soften its satirical bite. In its much belated Broadway showcase at Roundabout's American Airlines Theatre, "Trouble in Mind" revealed itself as a masterwork of its time that also speaks, as classics do, to ours. The play follows a middle-aged Black actress, Wiletta Mayer, through the fraught rehearsal process for a terrible, ostensibly liberal play about the evils of lynching, bearing witness to the agonizing unseen labor borne by people of color in workplaces where their experience and voice isn't valued. It should go without saying that this is hardly a matter of ancient history.

Though director Charles Randolph-Wright's production pushed some of its points too hard, the play emerged unscathed. And as played by the actress LaChanze, who somehow miraculously combines dazzling sparkle with extraordinary gravity, Wiletta stands as both a figure of conscience and a corrective lens with which to view this transitional moment. "We have to go further and do better," she tells her colleagues after her show-down with a white director. As Broadway returns to in-person theater with Black artists at the forefront, we must recognize that this is the place where the work begins, not where it ends.

Rob Weinert-Kendt, an arts journalist and editor of *American Theatre* magazine, has written for *The New York Times* and *Time Out New York*.



Internal Worlds

Richard Powers's new novel imagines a world in which we can connect to the brain patterns of other human beings.

Richard Powers's new novel, *Bewilderment*, is a story of great love and the lengths one will go for it, but it is also a profile of grief and loss—grief for a person, a nation and a planet; personal, political and existential loss.

Set in a near-future American dystopia when climate change has intensified and the president continuously postpones the election but life otherwise goes on as normal, the book explores the relationship between Theo, an astrobiologist, and his precocious, emotionally disturbed 9-year-old son, Robin. The story takes place in the aftermath of the death of Alyssa, Robin's mother and Theo's wife of a dozen years, in a car crash.

Robin is said to have A.D.H.D., O.C.D. or Asperger's, and his father is resolutely against medicating him. Robin grieves for animals that are going extinct and for the planet, even staging a one-person protest at the state capitol; meanwhile, they both grieve for Alyssa, who was an animal

activist lawyer. The broader backdrop of summer flooding, immigration crises at the border and a president declaring national emergencies is all too plausible. Yet the experiment at the heart of the book will seem unfamiliar.

Moved to action after Robin gets into an altercation at school and cracks a friend's cheekbone, Theo agrees to let Robin study a brain scan left behind by Alyssa, Robin's mother, in an experiment conducted while she was alive. The idea is that Robin can learn the patterns and emotional states his mother left behind, which include ecstasy, from her neural patterns. "Scanning AI would compare the patterns of connectivity inside Robin's brain—his spontaneous brain activity—to a prerecorded template," Powers writes. Visual and auditory cues shape Robin's responses, rendering them more and more similar to the neural responses of his mother's brain template.

Robin is indelibly changed by the

treatment, which not only soothes his moods and tempers but swings him in the other direction, toward the beatific. Of the people whose brains he is training on before he begins training on his mother, Robin says, "I feel like they're coming over to my house to hang out or something. Like we're doing stuff together, in my head."

But after Robin becomes moderately famous (to the extent that he becomes a meme, as his image is used to promote the neurofeedback technique), the experiment runs afoul of regulators and is shut down, depriving him of the sensory experiences that help him achieve his calm, blissful state. He also loses the neural connection to his mother that seems to help him tap into memories and knowledge of his her. Predictably, Robin begins to slide back into his old, disgruntled self: "Enthusiasm and distress had become the same thing."

In a desperate bid to regain some calm and tranquility, Theo takes Rob-

Bewilderment

By Richard Powers

W. W. Norton

288p \$27.95

in on a trip to the Smoky Mountains, where he once honeymooned with his wife and where father and son enjoyed an earlier adventurous trip before the experiment began. Theo vows that when he returns he will take Robin to the doctor. The trip takes place in the glorious shadow of the galaxy's four hundred billion stars.

The book raises the bigger question of how we train ourselves, so to speak, through what we consume as readers and viewers: How are we conditioning ourselves to think and feel? But it also raises questions about the currently available treatments for children like Robin, and it raises the question of why Theo is so resistant to them, going to the extremes of the neurofeedback in the first place. What are the hazards, and do they outweigh the benefits? This is an area that the book overlooks, because of its very premise that Robin needs something other than medication, which seems demonized.

To be bewildered means to be perplexed and confused. There is much that perplexes the characters in this book, from how Theo and Robin can live without Alyssa to why a democracy has become authoritarian to why the world has not awakened to take action to save the planet. This state of confusion is punctuated by moments of happiness and excitement when Theo and Robin explore imaginary planets, lyrically described by the landscapes' relationship to the life forms that live on them. The book brims over with explorations of how life should relate to other life, and to what extent communication is possi-

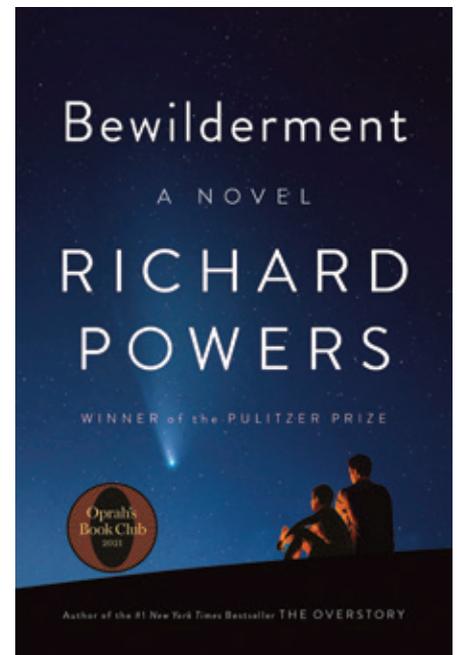
ble among life forms.

Powers's language is taut and spare, rendering what is sometimes devastating into something beautiful. In a meta moment, the book proclaims, "Brain science knew that even imagination could change our cells for real."

Pondering the extent of these changes and how they affect our identity as well as our relationships with others is part of the author's meditative work in this novel. Robin's so-called success in the experiment leads to unintended consequences in his behavior with everyone he interacts with, including strangers who recognize him once his identity is revealed. What is sacrificed by becoming a public example of what is possible? Should every possibility be considered an advancement? Does changing the life of one individual affect the trajectory of a species?

The novel has an urgency that propels the reader through it, as we turn the pages to find out what is happening to Robin as he evolves on a dying planet. Robin is fascinated by endangered species and passionate about saving them in any way possible. While homeschooling Robin, Theo muses: "He'd discovered, on his own, what formal education tries to deny. Life wanted something from us. And time was running out." Through Robin's eyes, we see the tragedy of climate change and species loss for what it truly is: a betrayal of the future of the next generations, but also a threat to the singular beauty and value of creation for its own sake.

The vastness of the universe is again and again contrasted with the



smallness of the human ambition to understand and explore it. But Powers imagines a world in which we can not only connect to the brain patterns of other human beings and measure that through functional magnetic resonance imaging, but also be tuned in to the patterns of the natural world. "Someday we'll learn how to train on this living place and holding still will be like flying," Robin's father thinks in *Bewilderment*.

Perhaps one day we will shift from destroying our planet to living in harmony with it and even experiencing its rhythms on a deeper level. In the opening line of the book, Robin asks his father about extraterrestrials: "But we might never find them?" A sense of yearning permeates the novel. We yearn to connect with those we have never encountered, but especially with those we have lost. Can science ever truly reunite us with them, or is that something that only the afterlife can do?

Cynthia-Marie Marmo O'Brien is a writer and educator in New York.

Hidden Glories

In an essay on “The Church of the Saints” in 1995 (later published in *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 3), Karl Rahner, S.J., remarked on the anonymity of the saints, especially the many saints whose lives remained hidden in their own times and places. “The greatest part of holiness must take place in silence, in being taken for granted and in forgetting about self,” he wrote, “so that even the right hand of the Church does not know what the left hand is doing.” Anticipating the praise of Elizabeth Johnson, C.S.J., of these “ordinary people in ordinary time” whose holiness witnesses to the presence of the Spirit in the church as much as the equally extraordinary “paradigmatic” saints do, Rahner suggests that while the church must know explicitly about some of its holy ones, “quite possibly (who can say?) [the church] does not know anything at all about many of her greatest glories.”

In his book *Hidden Mercy: AIDS, Catholics, and the Untold Stories of Compassion in the Face of Fear*, the journalist (and national correspondent for **America**) Michael O’Loughlin has named some of the greatest hidden glories of the Catholic Church’s responses to H.I.V./AIDS in the 1980s and 1990s in the United States. The book is the continuation of a project O’Loughlin began with his **America** Media podcast “Plague” and tells in detail the stories of Catholics—religious sisters, laypeople and clergy—who responded to the onslaught of H.I.V./AIDS. O’Loughlin has done invaluable work by excavating and preserving these stories—of healing Masses and caregivers, of Catholic institutions like Saint Vincent’s Hos-

pital in New York City and Most Holy Redeemer Parish in San Francisco—that met the challenge of the time and of ordinary Catholics being Christlike in extraordinary times.

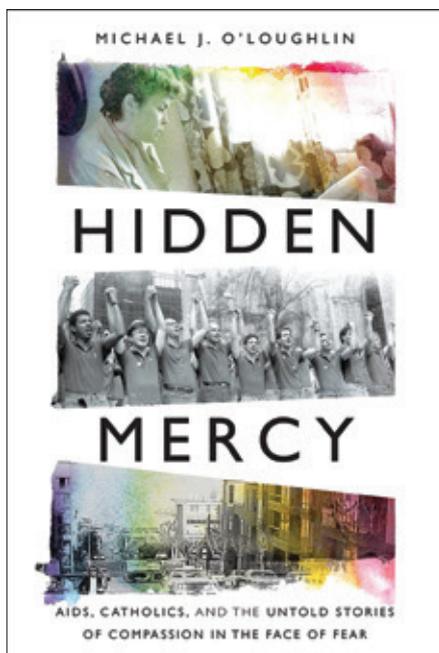
Three individuals provide the major threads around which the other stories are woven. The first is Carol Baltosiewich, O.S.F., a member of the Hospital Sisters of Saint Francis from Belleville, Ill. After an early hospice experience with a young gay man with AIDS who had returned home to Illinois to die, Baltosiewich recognized that H.I.V./AIDS would be coming to southern Illinois. More important, she realized that as a Catholic, a sister and a nurse she needed to help her community prepare and respond. With a fellow sister and the support of her community, Baltosiewich moved to New York for a short-term immersion in H.I.V./AIDS care. This led to an equally life-changing crash course in the realities of gay men’s lives before she returned to Belleville to create a space of acceptance and care for the inevitable advance of H.I.V./AIDS in her smaller community.

The second personality O’Loughlin highlights is the gay Catholic priest and iconographer William Hart McNichols. Many Catholics might already recognize McNichols’s work as an iconographer, which has been celebrated for decades and graces thousands of Catholic parishes and homes around the world. What may be unfamiliar to many is the story O’Loughlin tells of McNichols as a young Jesuit doing pioneering and heroic ministry to gay men with H.I.V./AIDS in New York during the height of the epidemic. For those of us used to the arid comfort of the southwestern landscapes that populate McNichols’s icons,

picturing him as an out, gay Catholic priest in the wildernesses of 1980s New York explains and adds to some of the fire of those images. Looking at his artistic, activist creations of that time and at the icons he paints today, one newly perceives that McNichols’s attention to the heavenly is grounded in his experiences of what was a kind of hell.

The third personality is that of the author himself. O’Loughlin’s decision to tell his story as a journalist and a gay Catholic is the source of both the beauty and the limitations of *Hidden Mercy*. This book is not a dispassionate academic investigation of this history, which awaits and warrants much more extensive treatment in Catholic studies and American Catholic history. Rather, O’Loughlin starts from within the more personal framework of contemporary podcasts in which the storytellers remain part of the stories they tell.

As a gay Catholic myself, I resonated deeply with O’Loughlin’s experience of the coming-out process of gay Catholics as always fraught and never finished, and with his experience of H.I.V./AIDS as a kind of cloud in the room of gay Catholic spaces. These were experiences never to be forgotten by our (far too few) elders who survived the plague, and yet experiences that, to those of us coming of age after the worst had passed, seemed at times like a hidden family secret, a tragedy remembered but unspoken and a source of pain to which we would never really have access. O’Loughlin’s careful attention as a journalist and his identity as a gay Catholic allowed him to uncover these stories of our community’s past, and to do so in way that draws the reader



Hidden Mercy

AIDS, Catholics, and the Untold Stories of Compassion in the Face of Fear

By Michael J. O'Loughlin

Broadleaf Books

281p \$28.99

into his own experience of this search.

For that reason, this book is not only about the untold stories of the Catholic Church in response to H.I.V./AIDS but is also fundamentally a book about the untold stories of gay Catholics and of gay Catholic fidelity to a church that often seems to reject them. O'Loughlin's paradigmatic figures, like McNichols and Baltosiewich, stand in for the hundreds of small acts of faith, hope and love by individual gay Catholics and by other Catholics who cared for them that have always been there, hidden, in the history of the church.

The stories O'Loughlin uncovers, though, inevitably leave some stories out. Because the book focuses on gay Catholics in relation to H.I.V./AIDS,

this is inevitably a story of gay male Catholics—an important story, to be sure, but only a piece of the wider stories of L.G.B.T.Q. Catholic holiness. The stories of the Catholic Church's responses to H.I.V./AIDS outside the gay male community similarly are less prominent. Further work would need to look more directly at where the church did and did not respond to H.I.V./AIDS in other populations, then and today, besides self-identified gay men. Nevertheless, O'Loughlin's openness and honesty suggest the value of this book not as a final word but as an invitation to further research, further documentation and further telling of these undertold stories.

I cannot conclude this review without noting the interplay of light and darkness in this text. O'Loughlin has lifted up stories of holiness and of light in the darkness that need to be told, of the church's hidden mercies and hidden saints of this time. But their light shines more brightly, if painfully, against the darkness of ecclesial failure that characterizes much of the period *Hidden Mercies* covers. O'Loughlin recognizes the "sadness [that] seems to accompany many of the people I interviewed." This is not only a story of a holy church but of a church that was missing in action in so many places where the church is not only a source of hope, but also of anger and disappointment. Among the individuals O'Loughlin profiles, it is often a story of leaving religious orders and leaving the Catholic Church. In short, this history is a history of suffering caused not only by the realities of H.I.V./AIDS, but by the wider church's failure in the face of the plague.

In a time when things have become easier for some (but not many)

people living with H.I.V./AIDS, and for some (but not many) L.G.B.T.Q. Catholics, we do well to look to these stories of light as a source of hope but also to remember, as a warning, the darkness in which their light shone.

Brian P. Flanagan is an associate professor of theology at Marymount University in Arlington, Va., and the author of *Stumbling in Holiness: Sin and Sanctity in the Church* (Liturgical Press).

An Inclusive Love

It is probably not necessary to tell **America** readers that the newest book by Greg Boyle, S.J., *The Whole Language: The Power of Extravagant Tenderness*, is a must-read. Many readers of **America** are likely no strangers to the beloved Jesuit priest and founder of Homeboy Industries, whose two previous books, *Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion* and *Barking to the Choir: The Power of Radical Kinship*, were New York Times best-sellers. Many have also experienced his crystal-clear teaching of how radical God's love is—everywhere, for everyone—in his talks and media appearances. But if you have not experienced the teachings or inspirational example of Father Boyle, or "G," as his homies call him (more on that later), please make space for this book.

The Whole Language shoots off like a rocket, quickly zigging this way and that through an almost dizzying amalgamation of parables, stories and lessons Boyle has learned from 37 years of gang ministry and his work with Homeboy Industries, the largest gang-intervention, rehabilitation and

re-entry program in the world. (All net proceeds of the sales of *The Whole Language* will be donated to Homeboy Industries.) The men and women Boyle employs and befriends—gang members he tenderly calls his “homies”—have lived through such immeasurable trauma, poverty and heartbreak that the task of healing—or interrupting—their pain is monumental. It is a task most people turn away from, dismissing the violence of gang-involved people as a poor life choice at best, evil and sociopathic at worst. *The Whole Language* invites the reader to reject that turning away. Its pace ensures our attention is kept as we try to devour Boyle’s wisdom.

Boyle’s simple answer to the boundaries that we have put up for ourselves is “extravagant tenderness,” a reference to “the whole language” in the book’s title. And that means love in all its multifaceted characteristics—a loss of defensiveness, an invitation and acceptance, a welcoming in. This could appear naïve coming from someone else, but here it is argued exceptionally through the stories of so many men and women who have been helped by Homeboy Industries, where inclusion and safety gave them the power to grow, to “be awakened to [their] fundamental goodness.” In one scene in the book, Boyle catches a homie coming in late to work; when questioned, he tells Boyle, “‘Oh, I went to my shoplifting class’—then holds up two thumbs—‘Passed it!!!’ I tell him, ‘Passed it? You coulda taught it!’”

I smiled broadly at this playful banter between Father and son—a playfulness that is quite intentional, a tool in the hard work of healing neural pathways that may be always ringing from the hypervigilance of gang

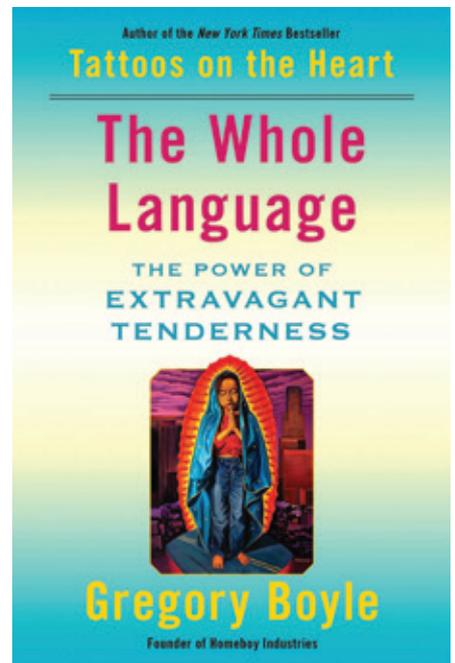
life and the trauma of violence. I also smiled at the real challenge this poses the reader: to suppress the instinct we may have to admonish bad behavior in the hope of helping someone. Instead, Boyle shows us how to wrap ourselves around another with tenderness and joy. “What was ultimately treasonous about Jesus was his inclusivity. He ignored boundaries,” Boyle writes. And so should we.

“We’ve mistaken moral outrage for moral compass,” Boyle writes. “Moral compass helps you see with clarity how complex and damaged people are. It is the whole language. Moral outrage just increases the volume and the distance that separates us. I suppose if I thought that moral outrage worked, I’d be out raging. But rage just means we don’t understand yet.”

He recounts an incident when 10 people were killed in a Texas high school shooting a number of years ago. Senator Ted Cruz said, “Once again, Texas has seen the face of evil.” But Boyle remembers the words of another commentator: “[A] teenage girl and fellow student of the shooter said, ‘The one who did this must have been carrying a world of pain inside.’ Understanding love is who our God is. Love this way announces the Tender One.”

I picked this book up at the end of a month or two feeling angry and despondent about the state of the world, and read that paragraph. Touché, Father G.

In between sharing intimate stories of the homies, Boyle intersperses lessons, parables and philosophy from thinkers ranging from Dorothy Day and Pedro Arrupe to Rumi and Kafka. There is space for all of it in his “mystic’s quest to be on the lookout for the hidden wholeness in everyone.” Boyle recounts a visitor to the offices of Homeboy In-



The Whole Language
The Power of Extravagant Tenderness
By Gregory Boyle
Avid Reader Press
256p \$27

dustries telling him that “this place...is the nerve center of hope.”

The Whole Language filled my cup with hope, and I will be returning to that well to drink again.

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

What Catholic Social Teaching Looks Like

In *For God and My Country: Catholic Leadership in Modern Uganda*, J. J. Carney gives us a glimpse of what Catholic social teaching looks like, not just in ideas but when it is incarnated. Carney, a theology professor at Creighton University in Omaha, Neb.,

presents six case studies of Ugandan leaders who have enacted the ideals of Catholic social teaching, and in doing so sheds light on a question the church has wrestled with for centuries: How, after the sputtering end of the confessional state, ought our church be involved in politics? Where should the modern church end and the modern state begin?

A hundred and one combative years lie between the Roman Catholic Church's two most diametrically opposed answers to such questions. It was in 1864, amid the decade that saw the final loss of the Papal States, that Pope Pius IX issued his "Syllabus of Errors." There he famously condemned the error of thinking that "the Church ought to be separated from the State, and the State from the Church." In the "Syllabus" we see the 19th-century European church painting itself as a castle under threat from the besieging forces of modernity. In response, it raised its drawbridge, barred its gates and ratcheted up discipline within its walls.

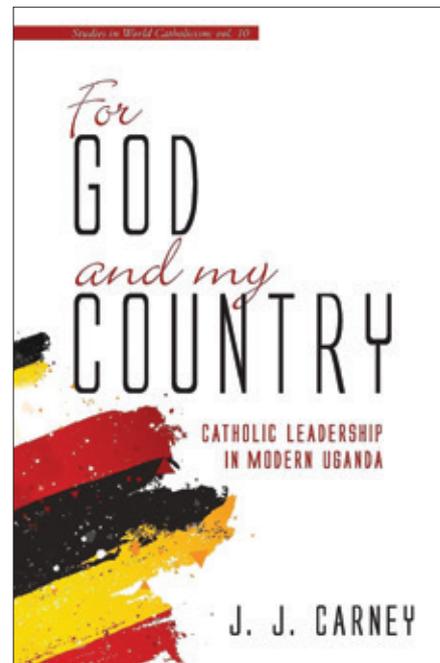
A century and a year later, at the end of Second Vatican Council's fourth session, Pope Paul VI promulgated the "Declaration on Religious Freedom," in which the church insisted not on its own rights, but on the civil right of religious freedom for all. Not only did the document make no mention of a return to an alliance of crown and cross (like the Spanish *nacionalcatolicismo*), but the council fathers emphasized that "a wrong is done when government imposes upon its people, by force or fear or other means, the profession or repudiation of any religion." Here was a global, 20th-century church emerging from behind its walls to advocate for the common good in the public sphere.

That this formal transformation of the church's understanding of its place in the modern world took a century to stabilize ought not surprise. Change often takes place in fits and starts, with many hesitations and half-reversals. Indeed, for many of those 100 years the church struggled to resolve a particular problem: how it could be publicly active without laying claim to the levers of state power.

Though there may seem to be an easy solution to those of us who look back from the 21st century, the fact of the matter is that the church had to find its own pilgrim way into understanding that separating church from state did not have to mean accepting public irrelevance. It took a long time for us to grasp that it was possible to both evangelically proclaim universal moral truths and renounce control of the state as the means for their realization.

On the theoretical level, markers in this evolution in self-understanding can be found in what may seem a surprising source: the documents of Catholic social teaching. What are "Rerum Novarum," "Quadragesimo Anno" and "Mater et Magistra," after all, but lessons in how the Catholic religion can be public without fusing church and state? But, like all that is best with the church, we can find evidence of this transformation not only in documents but also in people. And this is precisely the gift offered to us by Carney's fine new book on modern Ugandan Catholicism.

In one case study we are introduced to Benedicto Kiwanuka, who was not only Uganda's first prime minister but remains to this day the only one to facilitate a peaceful transition of political power in that nation. In another, Carney tells us the story of



For God and My Country
Catholic Leadership in Modern Uganda
By J. J. Carney
Cascade Books
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the Mother Teresa of Uganda, Rose Mystica Muyinza, a woman religious who lived a life of solidarity and charity on the streets of Kampala through her ministry to refugees, sex workers, people with AIDS and special needs children. And we learn about Rosalba Ato Oywa, a Catholic laywoman who has dedicated her life both to analyzing the root causes of violence in the country and to giving voice to those most affected by it.

Perhaps the most striking story, however, is that of Radio Pacis, a Catholic radio station dedicated not only to devotional programming but, as Carney puts it, to embodying "the social dimension of 'gospel values' [by] addressing questions of human rights, health, education, sports, family, gender relations, and civic education."

Launched in 2004, Radio Pacis now has a regular listenership of nearly 10 million people—many of whom are Muslim or Anglican.

Much of its success in establishing and stabilizing a Ugandan public sphere can be attributed to the station's attention to the common good in what is often a corrupt and politicized media landscape. Radio Pacis ministers not just to Catholics, but to all Ugandans, and in so doing has become a "sacred space that facilitates an elevated conversation on questions of human dignity." Indeed, with so many Catholic media outlets in the United States caught in an increasingly politicized spiral, Radio Pacis is a sharp counter-witness, suggesting that if we follow the directions it offers, Catholic social teaching can help us forge a new path.

This is not to say that the implementation of Catholic social teaching in Uganda has been a complete success. After all, despite such powerful witnesses as those featured in the book, Uganda's once-burgeoning democracy has devolved into what is at best described as a semi-authoritarian regime that has been ruled by the increasingly autocratic Yoweri Museveni since 1986. What such a devolution says about the power and possibility of Catholic leadership, Carney's book does not say. Nor does Carney make a suggestion as to whether the church ought to take up a more prophetic stance in such a circumstance.

These concerns notwith-

standing, Carney's entire book can make something visible to the reader that can be otherwise hard to see: that becoming more religious, and investing more deeply in our faith, can lead to deeper support for civil society—not withdrawal from it or coercive control over it. This possibility is difficult to keep in mind in part because after Sept. 11, 2001, and Jan. 6, 2021, we are inclined to associate public religion with anti-democratic activism. But this association need not be so tight. Being deeply Catholic can lead to being *more* dedicated to the good of all. Indeed, such dedication is precisely what Catholic social teaching calls us to think, to do and to be. This is a *political* Catholicism that is not "for us" but, as the Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemmann so elegantly referenced the Gospel of John, "for the life of the world."

Catholic social teaching, whether expressed in texts or enfolded in persons, is itself a politics. It is, in fact, the political strategy the church in the modern world spent a century developing. And it provides a glimpse of how such a strategy of being both Catholic and catholic—both uniquely ourselves and totally for the world—looks when incarnated in the lives of our Ugandan sisters and brothers, whom Carney describes for us in *For God and My Country*.

Patrick Gilger, S.J., is an assistant professor in the department of sociology at Loyola University Chicago, and America's contributing editor for culture.

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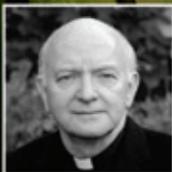
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Vinita Hampton Wright / PANELIST
Author, Editor, Retreat Director, Spiritual Director

Leaving

By Nora McGillen

I want to remember each breath
faint as the wings of a trapped butterfly.
I want to open the lids which sit at half-mast
over the eyes that have loved me.
I want to touch again your throat
intricate as an ancient parchment,
at that spot where the swallow rose and fell slowly.
I want to hold your head forever
where the hairline receded and the small white hairs
sprouted like snowflakes.
I want to take your essence and every memory
crumpled within it,
and carry it with me like a cross.
(In memoriam, Agnes McGillen)

Nora McGillen has previously been published in *Poetry Ireland*, *Cyphers*, *The Cormorant Broadsheet*, *Atlanta Review* and *America*. She holds a master's degree in poetry from Lancaster University and lives in Sligo, Ireland.

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A Complex and Nuanced Love: A Reflection for February

To prepare for Valentine's Day on Feb. 14, a reflection on love is in order. In the New Testament, *agape* is one of the Greek words translated as love in English. Although love is an emotion or feeling connected to pleasure, kindness and affection, *agape* love is more complex and nuanced. It is less emotional and more active, as it is related to how to behave in a loving manner. *Agape* is a selfless love that is modeled on God's love for creation, and it requires care for the needs of others.

We encounter *agape* love in the Gospels on multiple occasions, sometimes explicitly with the term but most often through Jesus' teachings and actions. For instance, when Jesus is asked what the greatest commandment is, he says, "You shall love the

Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments" (Mt 22:37-40). Relatedly, in Luke, after discussing these commands to love, Jesus tells the parable of the Good Samaritan to explain who a neighbor is and how to treat someone with *agape* love (Lk 10:25-37).

In the story, a person is beaten and robbed, and three strangers see the person in need. Two Jewish religious officials pass by, but when a Samaritan encounters the person, he anoints and bandages his wounds, offering time, care and financial resources to insure

the person's care. This selfless act exemplifies *agape*. It is noteworthy that the Samaritan shows *agape* while the religious officials do not, especially since many Jews at the time held negative attitudes toward Samaritans because of their diverse ethnic and religious traditions. The parable is a reminder that anyone and everyone should live out *agape* love.

The traditions of Jesus' healings and miracle stories demonstrate his *agape* love, and Jesus' sacrifice on the cross is the culmination of a ministry rooted in love. This month may be filled with acts of romantic love (Gk. *eros*) and love of friends (Gk. *philia*), but we should also use this time to find ways to live out *agape* love which is central to Christian faith.

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Proclaiming God's word is no easy task. Are you open to answering God's call?

SIXTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME (C), FEB. 13, 2022

Beatitudes with attitude. Luke's Blessings and Woes.

SEVENTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME (C), FEB. 20, 2022

Should we love our enemies? Yes, but we should also condemn their hate.

EIGHTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME (C), FEB. 27, 2022

God calls on us to increase our knowledge and understanding to enrich our lives. Wisdom literature can help.



Meet the Author

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

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The Truth About Diversity

None of us need to accept injustice

By Josephine Garrett



So much has happened, not just for me but for our country and our church, since I last wrote for **America**. In 2018 I shared my experience of religious discrimination, not being allowed to wear my religious habit while completing a mental health counseling internship. Today, I work in a secular private practice and see clients of all faiths, races and backgrounds.

One of the most joyful moments with a client is when we have that initial moment of authenticity, when we explore how we are experiencing our differences in the here and now. This often includes acknowledging the fact that I am a nun and my client is not—or that my client is white and I am Black, that I am a woman and my client is a man, or that I am much younger or much older than my client.

In my last reflection in these pages, I mentioned a struggle I faced at that time. Being able to connect with others felt like a form of success to me, but I had become aware that it was disturbingly easy to sacrifice integrity and authenticity to achieve these connections. Today, as relationships are threatened by the veil being pulled back on the realities of racism, classism, white supremacy and discriminatory practices in our country and in our church, we have to realize that connections that are the fruit of a lack of integrity, authenticity and sincere justice were never really connections at all.

Here's the thing. Diversity is required for unity. Let me say that another way: Unity is *impossible* without diversity. The final realization of the human race, that they may be one (Jn 17:21), will not be achieved without a justice that reigns in the midst of honored differences. Remember, we understand God to be three distinct persons who are united and fully realized in the midst of their distinction. Being made in the image and likeness of God includes a capacity and call to achieve communion with one who is not me.

So it goes for our daily lives. Without a sincere honoring of our differences, without justice in the face of differences, we have departed from the vision and hopes of God for humanity and for our neighbor. There is a quote by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. that has been troubling my conscience lately:

I must confess that over the last few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in the stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Council or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate who is more devoted to "order" than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is

the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice....

I am grateful for my troubled conscience. When I let my mind reflect on all the injustice that was the fruit of a coveted sense of order—or, in my case, a coveted sense of connection—and when I realize how such injustice is contrary to the heart of Jesus, my troubled conscience calls me back to God. That path back may include, for a time, a lost sense of connection or a lost sense of order, but this is because we are not accustomed to the vulnerability that can come with sincerely facing individual and communal brokenness. We do not fully know yet the peace of Christ that reigns in truth.

One of the best ways to celebrate Black History Month this February, in my opinion, is to cease to covet order and negative peace that is the fruit of tolerated injustice. Allow the tensions and struggles that have been covered by the moderate disposition described by Dr. King to come to the surface. Be close to Jesus in prayer and the sacraments as you do this, and we will surely continue to move the kingdom forward.

Josephine Garrett, C.S.F.N.,
*professed final vows with the Sisters
of the Holy Family of Nazareth in
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