

America

MARCH 2022

THE JESUIT REVIEW OF FAITH AND CULTURE

CITIES OF GOD

CAN URBAN PLANNING
IMPROVE OUR SPIRITUAL
HEALTH?

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**LENTEN
REFLECTIONS**

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Unequal Impact

Environmental Racism and Faith Based Resources in Restorative Justice

Featuring:

Jose Aguto, Executive Director, Catholic Climate Covenant

Chanelle Robinson, Theology Department, Boston College



Chanelle Robinson



Jose Aguto

Climate change and Restorative Justice are deeply connected. From workers' rights, to land and water use, to pollutant loads in neighborhoods, people of color are exposed to far greater environmental health hazards than others. Join the Hank Center and special guests for a conversation on these vital topics. Part of The School of Environmental Sustainability's Sixth Annual Climate Change Conference.

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The Imagination of a Catholic

In the summer of 1997 or thereabouts, while I was studying contemporary British politics at the University of Oxford, I had the occasion to undertake a private tour of the Palace of Westminster, home of the Parliament of the United Kingdom, the bejeweled neo-Gothic extravagance that, along with its clock tower and Big Ben, has become a nearly universal symbol of all things British.

The building is a triumph of Victorian engineering that took more than three decades to complete, most of those years devoted to completing its sumptuous interior, especially the rooms of the upper house. The floorplan of the building resembles that of a cathedral laid on its side. A long, straight corridor, resembling a nave, intersected by a central lobby approximately where the bay of a cathedral would be, connects the House of Commons to the House of Lords. The long walk from the lower to the upper house culminates visually in the canopied throne at the west end of the House of Lords's chamber, the most richly decorated piece of furniture in the building and situated roughly where the high altar would be located in a cathedral.

On first impression, especially to this American mind, it all felt like a beautiful but idolatrous folly, a daring yet disturbing display of some strange British shintoism—until I stood before the throne and gazed down that long corridor. From her position there, the monarch can see all the way down to the House of Commons and into its chamber, where the speaker of the House of Commons sits in the mirror position to that of the monarch. At the annual state opening of Parliament,

the queen looks down that corridor and then summons the House of Commons, led by its speaker, to the House of Lords, where she then officially opens a new parliamentary session.

As I saw what the Queen sees on that day, the building made more and better sense. For this building was not constructed merely to house the chambers and offices of Parliament but to enact a liturgy, a secular pageant, specifically the state opening of Parliament. Like a cathedral, Westminster was built for one occasion, for one purpose. When members of Parliament progress from the House of Commons to the House of Lords, it is more than a long walk; it is a procession through the symbols of hundreds of years of political history. The “liturgical” feel, then, is not an accident, but neither is it irreverent, for the architecture and design are not proposing a new religion or alternative deity. Rather, they reflect a pre-existing reality, specifically, a Christian imagination.

And that brings me to Augustus Pugin, the man who helped design the Palace of Westminster. He is usually credited with designing only its interiors, but his contribution was far greater. While Charles Barry is said to be the building's principal architect, most scholars now believe that Pugin was the man primarily responsible for both inside and outside. But Barry got the credit because Pugin was a Catholic; and like all Catholics in early 19th-century Britain, he was barred from much of public life. So Barry was kind enough to allow Pugin's designs to be submitted in Barry's name.

Eve Tushnet observes in this issue of **America** that “to the extent that our cities are built for autonomous in-

dividuals, they are built against friendship. If we are to renew the city's possibilities as a haven for friendship...we will need to look more deeply at who we are, what helps us flourish.” Augustus Pugin thought much the same way, and so in the heart of the British capital he enshrined his version of Britain's national story, so the country and its politicians would not forget “who we are, what helps us flourish.”

“In pure architecture the smallest detail should have a meaning or serve a purpose,” Pugin wrote a friend shortly before his untimely death at the age of 40. In other words, public design, art, architecture—these things count for a great deal, for they express (or fail to express) that intuitive sense of the good, the true and the beautiful that must form the basis of a lasting community.

Perhaps the politicians in London have forgotten that lesson. The Palace of Westminster is crumbling after decades of neglect. Relocating Parliament and renovating Barry and Pugin's work will cost billions of dollars and take more than a decade to complete. The politicians don't want to spend the money because of deficits accrued during the pandemic lockdown. Yet the more important question is whether Britain still has the imagination needed to aspire to great and beautiful things, as it did when Pugin first went to work building a new parliamentary palace amid the charred ruins of the old.

As with hearts, so too with nations: A lack of imagination is the most dangerous deficit of all.

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



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CNS photo/Vatican Media

Pope Francis walks with children during an audience with members of the Casa dello Spirito e delle Arti Foundation at the Vatican, Feb. 4. The foundation sponsors projects for people with disabilities, refugees, prisoners, single mothers and those recovering from addiction.

Cover: iStock

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Listening to those who have left religion behind

In the February issue of *America*, the editors argued that the church should face rising religious disaffiliation in the United States by reaching out to those who no longer affiliate with Christianity. The best way to reach these “lost sheep,” the editors wrote, is to involve them in the lead-up to the Synod of Bishops in 2023. The editorial received more than 120 comments online, many of which detailed experiences of feeling abandoned by, or disillusioned with, the institutional church. Many questioned whether the synod would have any influence on the church. To promote a spirit of listening, which is so integral for a synodal church, here are some of those responses:

Without being dramatic, it is a penance for me to attend Mass now. What possible relevance does it have to my life today? I call to mind St. Thérèse of Lisieux, who showed up anyway, fell asleep, swung her legs, got distracted...but knew that God understood. I show up anyway. I endure the lousy music and the sermons that go on and on.

Lori Milas

To begin with, do not refer to those who have left the church as “lost sheep.” Use adult language. It is hard to have a meaningful dialogue with others when one is casually dismissed in this condescending manner.

L. Kenney

I was delighted when Pope Francis was selected as the successor to former Pope Benedict, because I believed that his leadership might lead to a transformation of the church and its hierarchy. Unfortunately, there seems to be much opposition to such a transformation, particularly within the American church. I believe that the synodal process was designed to facilitate transformation, but little information has been provided to elicit general involvement.

Elizabeth G. Flynn

I know—it has been repeatedly demonstrated—that as a single woman I am dismissed and belittled by everyone from my parish pastor to the archdiocese. If I had had a child, even outside of marriage, or even an abortion, more care would be taken of me. I believe in my faith, not in the hierarchy of men.

Kathleen Thomas

I was a Catholic for 75 years. In the past year, I have realized that the church that I used to belong to no longer exists in the United States. American bishops have exchanged their moral authority for political authority. They put more faith in the former president than they do in the pope. I

used to donate heavily to the church. I now do my best to convince people that donations to the church should not be tax deductible, just like donations to any other political organization.

Bob Whylee

Personally, as a gay man, I can't respect myself and be a part of an organized body that argues to the highest court in our land that people like me can be legally fired from our jobs just because I've committed the crime of incorrectly existing. Why would I support a body that is actively pushing for policies harmful to my life?

Perhaps the question should not be, “Why do people leave?” but more, “Why should they stay?”

Justin H.

I came back to the church because I found the right parish for someone like me. Years later, I hang on now, because of my loyalty and love of that very parish and those who minister there.

I have always believed that the strength of the church lies in its diversity at the parish level. Whether you are a radical reformist or a pre-Vatican II traditionalist, there is a parish waiting with its support. The fact that the church is open-minded enough to allow for this spectrum speaks well of its governance.

Stephen Golden

I'm fearful for the success of the synodal process. In my parish there have been two listening sessions. I learned there were 10 people in attendance at the first session and there were 20 at the session I attended. This is a large parish. Why weren't more parishioners interested?

The people who were in my breakout group all attend Mass regularly and are active in the church. Where were those on the margins?

Carol Killian

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The Path Toward a ‘New Normal’ Must Be Pursued Together

As the world begins to emerge from the most recent surge of the Covid-19 pandemic, how do we return to normal? And what should *normal* mean?

The feeling that we are ready for the return to normal is as much a product of exhaustion as of progress. While there is much to be celebrated, especially the unprecedentedly rapid development of vaccines, the coronavirus remains both present and dangerous. The costs and burdens of mitigation measures, especially as they affect young students and their parents, have also become clear. A conversation about how to relax various pandemic protocols coexists with more than 900,000 total Covid deaths in the United States and with hospitals still filled to capacity in many areas.

People who are vaccinated are largely protected from severe disease and hospitalization; but for the unvaccinated and those with increased risk factors, Covid is still a deadly disease. Combined with the increased transmissibility of the Omicron variant, this means that many health care workers are still in the trenches of the pandemic even as vaccinated people can cautiously begin to treat Covid as a risk similar to the seasonal flu. And the ongoing burden of the pandemic is borne disproportionately by those who are already economically disadvantaged, whose work often requires more direct contact with members of the public and who have fewer resources and options to weather disruptions to child care and other practical arrangements caused by quarantines after positive test results.

One important lesson to take from these two years of pandemic is that the ability and willingness to sustain mitigation practices are limited

resources, which must be stewarded as carefully as stockpiles of masks and medications. Failure to recognize this in the early days of the pandemic unfortunately opened up divisions that were ripe for exploitation. The politicization of public health guidance and cynical efforts to use the pandemic to further divide us into ideological tribes spent down resources of trust that are difficult, if not impossible, to renew quickly.

As formal Covid mitigation protocols are relaxed, it will be important to avoid worsening this tribalization. The temptation will be to either hold onto maximum precautions even in the face of smaller risks, or to abandon all precautions, even the least onerous. But even while Americans may disagree about the balance of caution and risk, we need to be united in refusing to impute motives of malice or ignorance to those who think differently.

Everyone, including those who tend toward great caution and those who favor a speedy return to normal, must be willing to prioritize among various goals. For example, encouraging vaccination is far more important than maintaining social distancing guidelines in all spaces; so, too, keeping in-person schooling for young children is far more important than ending mask mandates in all public spaces.

The church will also face any number of practical questions on the way back to normal, especially at the parish level. Pastors and lay ministers will have to balance the relaxation of various mitigation practices with continuing care for those who are still at heightened risk, even as the coronavirus becomes endemic. They should also take the lead in encouraging pa-

rishioners to be patient and generous with one another even when they are not on the same page about how comfortable they are in returning to Mass or, eventually, ceasing to wear masks.

One important contribution the church can make is to continue to remember in public prayer those who suffer and are at risk from the coronavirus. Our society will need ways to continue to mourn the lives lost to the pandemic, and those who remain on its front lines need ongoing support in their labors and comfort for the trauma they face on a daily basis.

Last September, Pope Francis counseled that the world must not return to its previous “sickened normality,” but instead must aspire to the normality of the kingdom of God, where “the blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor.”

This call, which Pope Francis has reiterated throughout the pandemic, is for the world to use the experiences of these past two years as a kind of examination of conscience. The sickened normality the pandemic laid bare is that of inequality and lack of solidarity; it has been exploited, as he has said more recently, through an “infodemic” of misinformation and a “distortion of reality based on fear.”

While those who perpetuate these lies bear the greatest responsibility, there is also the need for a sober appraisal of why responses to such misinformation have so often been ignored. The spiritual question that must be asked is why fear has become so seemingly attractive and trust so seemingly impossible. Misinformation must not merely be corrected but also confront-

ed. And the truth that it obscures must not only be explained clearly but also explained in a manner that invites trust.

For those who provide platforms for public discourse, these questions require a reckoning with their own responsibility to the common good that cannot be answered by neutrality between truth and lies. And those with public authority and influence—including public figures in the church, both lay and ordained—must ask themselves how they have used their voices and, even more crucially, how they have responded to those who have undermined trust and exploited divisions.

As society begins to build the “new normal” of emergence from the pandemic, efforts to rebuild and strengthen trust and solidarity are of as much importance as the ongoing distribution of vaccines and vigilance against coronavirus variants. While the timeline is not certain, figures of authority, particularly within the church, have a responsibility to bridge the fissures created during the pandemic. Healing society of these wounds will prove even more challenging than finding a cure for the virus.

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I am the kind of Catholic presumed to oppose Francis. I love and support him.

In March 2013, I watched on television as a man few of us had heard of asked us to do something for him. He asked for our prayers and bowed his head. In March 2020, this same man walked into an empty St. Peter's Square, flanked by an icon of Mary and the cross of the Lord. In a world beset with troubles, isolation and sickness, he offered us *his* prayers.

Much has taken place in the papacy of Pope Francis, but we should remember these images. They are a key to his papacy and to the renewal of the church. He was a pope asking for prayer, a pope offering prayer.

I am the kind of Catholic who is supposed to be a Pope Francis foe. I think the felt-banner Catholicism of the 1970s was a disaster, discarding much of the patrimony of the church while ignoring the letter and the spirit of the Second Vatican Council. I firmly believe that we are not to “get with the times” but to renew the church by returning to the sources of our faith: the tradition as transmitted by the magisterium and the whole people of God.

And for these reasons, I support Pope Francis.

Pope Francis confounds our expectations because our expectations tend to be shaped by the world. For many on the political left, his papacy is the time to create a new church conformed to the times as a spiritual non-profit agency. Rather than seeing the lines Francis draws, many proclaim his initiatives to be “steps” in the right direction, steps toward crossing the lines of Catholic teaching.

Far more painful for me has been the response to Francis from many of my fellow traditionally minded Catholics. A theologian described “Tra-

ditionis Custodes,” the pope’s recent *motu proprio* restricting the use of the extraordinary form of the Latin Mass, to me as a bad-faith reaction to “three people on Twitter.” The good news, according to some of the pope’s foes, is that Francis will die soon enough. Having myself learned from Catholic traditionalists how important it is to be committed to the papacy, I find it dizzying and dispiriting to hear the vitriol launched at our current pontiff.

Let me highlight three forms of Francis’ traditionalism. First, to actually be a traditional Catholic means supporting and carrying out the reforms of Vatican II. Francis guards this tradition from those who think Vatican II is optional or regrettable. It is neither; it is an essential guide to being Catholic in the modern world and a hermeneutical key to understanding the fullness of our 2,000-year tradition.

Second, one of the tasks of the pope is to send missionaries out to the world. Gregory sent Augustine to England, Honorius sent Dominicans to Poland, Paul III sent missionaries to the Americas, and Francis sends *us* out “to reach the fringes of humanity.” Many of us can be too keen on closed doors, national identities or a Donatist vision of a smaller, purer church. But the essence of the Gospel is spreading the Gospel. For Francis, the inner life of the church is going to those outside of the church. What are we to do? Invite them into the church, for it is within that they can fully encounter Christ. This might not sound all that new, but then Francis is pretty traditional.

Finally, at the heart of Francis’ traditionalism are the images I used in opening this essay: a pope asking for prayer, a pope offering prayer. This is

the *lex orandi* of Francis’ papacy, the law of prayer that shapes his ministry and teaching. In his annual “Urbi et Orbi” address in 2020, Francis called us to “prayer and quiet service.” He reminded us to be confident in these, “our victorious weapons.” In the face of a global pandemic, Francis has the confidence that prayer and works of mercy are the paths to victory.

This confidence is essential to the Petrine office. Just as Peter relied on Jesus, the pope teaches us that we must rely on the Lord. Francis teaches that “by ourselves we flounder: We need the Lord, like ancient navigators needed the stars.”

Yes, I worry about the Synod on Synodality. I am concerned that too many see it as a chance to radically change the church (as in the disastrous German synod), and that the synod will diffuse ecclesial authority in ways that undermine doctrinal unity. What we need is not a different church but the church more fully actualized. And yes, I struggle with what seems like a lack of priority on liturgical reverence and doctrinal clarity. But when I pay attention to the pope’s teaching, I find time and again his message: “Embrace the Lord in order to embrace hope.”

Pope Francis is praying for us; let us pray for him. Let us share his confidence in Christ. Let us join him in guarding the tradition and preaching the good news.

Terence Sweeney is an adjunct professor of philosophy at Villanova University and theologian in residence at the Collegium Institute at the University of Pennsylvania. Twitter: @TerenceJSweeney.

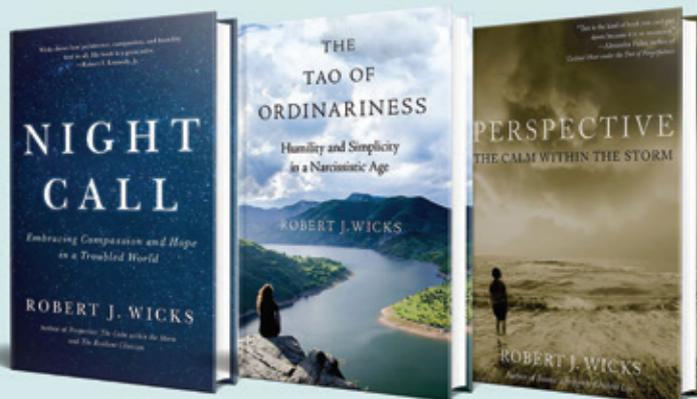
The Simple Care of a Hopeful Heart: Mentoring Yourself in Difficult Times

By Robert J. Wicks

The Simple Care of a Hopeful Heart by psychologist Robert J. Wicks helps readers navigate the challenge of self-care in a difficult world. In the book, Dr. Wicks addresses a fundamental question both simple and challenging: How can we learn and grow from the changes, stress, and even trauma, that we must face in today's uncertain times?

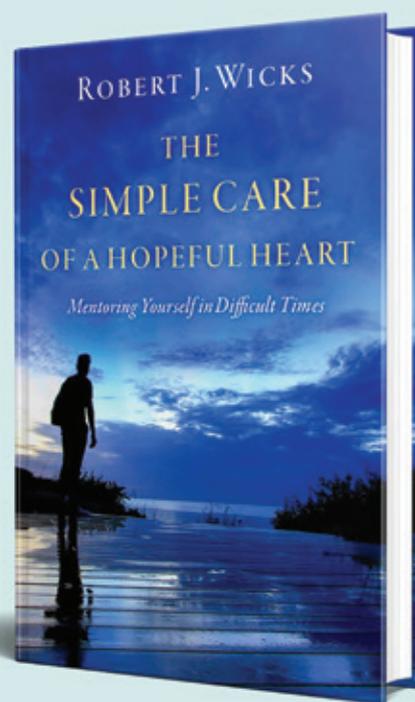
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- *Showing readers how to take better advantage of both the “downsides” and “upsides” of the various events in one’s life
- *Filled with practical steps and intriguing questions that help readers incorporate the approaches offered into their daily routines



Dr. Robert J. Wicks has lectured on the importance of resilience, self-care, the prevention of secondary stress, and maintaining a healthy perspective in 20 different countries around the world as well as at the Mayo Clinic, Yale School of Nursing, the North American Aerospace Defense Command, Boston Children's Hospital, Harvard Divinity School, the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, the U.S. Air Force Academy, and to Members of Congress and their Chiefs of Staff. He has written and edited dozens of books, including *Night Call*, *Perspective*, and *The Tao of Ordinarity*.

For more information or to book Dr. Wicks for a speaking engagement, visit www.robertjwicks.com



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This Catholic high school is 70 percent Latino—four times the national average—and still growing

By J.D. Long-García

J.D. Long-García

Mia Solorsano is a senior at St. John Paul II Catholic High School in Avondale, Ariz. Her high school did not exist before she was a teenager.

Ms. Solorsano grew up in the West Valley, one of the fastest-growing areas of the Phoenix metropolitan area. And Phoenix is the fastest-growing major city in the United States, surpassing Philadelphia as fifth largest in the nation in the latest census. Leaders of the Diocese of Phoenix, responding to that growth, opened the high school in 2017. Run by Dominican sisters, St. John Paul II enrolls about 330 students and could reach as many as 400 next year.

It comes as no surprise to residents, but about 70 percent of the school's students are Latino—well above the 17.4 percent of students who are Latino in Catholic schools across the nation as a whole, according to the National Catholic Education Association.

Experts estimate that the majority of Catholics in the United States today under 18 are Latino, like Ms. Solorsano, and more than a third of the teachers at John Paul II are Latino.

“It helps,” Ms. Solorsano said. “Being able to have a teacher who is Hispanic, so she understands my culture, and Catholic, so she understands my faith—the teacher understands where I’m coming from.”

Ms. Solorsano is a cradle Catholic, but she said her faith became more important to her in seventh and eighth grade, thanks in part to the youth program at nearby St. John Vianney Church in Goodyear, a suburb of Phoenix. There she met Stephanie Salinas, who was a youth minister and the director of religious education at the parish. Ms. Salinas now teaches digital media, speech and digital photography at John Paul II.

“I love working with high schoolers,” Ms. Salinas said. “But having a predominantly Hispanic community that now makes up the majority of the student body here, I want to be part of it. I’m a Hispanic young adult from this area. So I feel like students relate to me in that way.”

A student once told her, “Ms. Salinas, we finally have a young Hispanic teacher that is from here.” For her, that meant a lot.

“I thought that was really cool because, yeah, you can make something out of yourself even if you’re from the West Valley,” she told **America**. “I’m not different. I have the same resources that they have. And they can choose what they want to do. I can be that bridge for them.”

At lunch, students often gather in her classroom, where they work on projects and chat with her.

“My parents are immigrants, so when I was applying



J.D. Long-García

Students like Mia Solarsano, left, appreciate having teachers who know both her faith and her culture, like Stephanie Salinas, right.

to college, I had to figure it out on my own,” said Ms. Salinas, who moved to the West Valley from California with her family when she was 15. “I tell [the students] I can help them. A lot of times our parents don’t have the knowledge of how to get financial aid and scholarships, what deadlines look like or even the information they need to provide for forms. Those conversations have nothing to do with graphic design or speech, but it’s important to relate to them.”

Ms. Salinas said her faith is important to her as well, and she incorporates it into her lesson planning. She said cultural devotions and traditions help capture the essence of Catholicism. But at the same time, she said, the reasons behind the traditions were not always explained to her when she was a child.

“For these young people, when they see their teachers living out their faith, it’s not like, ‘This is just what my parents are telling me to do,’” Ms. Salinas said. “There’s beauty, there’s truth, there’s goodness that people are attracted to. So they start to understand this is something they can make their own, too.”

Making faith “their own” is a key aspect of the ethics program at John Paul II. Ross Helland, the assistant principal of academics, believes the school’s ethics program sets it apart from other schools. It includes semesters spent studying the dignity of the human person and principles of ethics and bioethics, as well as a service component.

“If a student is being told, ‘You have to believe this,’ they’re going to revolt against it,” Mr. Helland said. “We want our students to have a true, authentic belief in what

it is that we’re teaching. We don’t want to force it. We want them to actually come to that belief on their own.”

The ethics class is a student favorite, he said, because students are given the freedom to think. He also noted the community attends Mass each week at St. Thomas Aquinas Church next door and regularly spends time in adoration on campus.

Mr. Helland explained that nearly all the students at John Paul II receive some form of financial help. Administrators make a point of helping families with financial aid applications and offer help in English and Spanish.

“There’s a misconception of barriers [to Catholic education], and it comes from lack of knowledge,” said Ms. Salinas, who has a child enrolled in a nearby parochial school. “Someone thinks of Catholic education and says: ‘Expensive. Can’t afford it. Not for me. Not our demographic.’ But the majority of our students here are blessed to have scholarships and grants and financial assistance.”

School administrators, she said, have made it a point to welcome Latino students. The Dominican sisters began teaching at St. John Vianney’s parochial school, which is mostly Latino, while the high school was being built.

Matthew Gonzales, John Paul II’s director of admissions and marketing and a West Valley native, said he loves finding a way to enroll students from families who did not think it was possible.

“When [immigrants] come here, they don’t realize they can get a Catholic education for their children,” he said. His wife, who was born in Mexico, grew up thinking

Catholic education was available only to the wealthy.

“When we say Latino or Hispanic, it encompasses a whole group in which there is a lot of diversity,” Mr. Gonzales said. That diversity includes first-, second- and third-generation immigrants, and families that are a mixture of backgrounds, he said. Some families mostly speak Spanish at home, and others speak mostly English.

Mr. Gonzales, a father of six, did not attend Catholic school as a child. But he and his wife have made a point of enrolling their children.

His parents did not read to him as a child, he said, and he was raised mostly by his grandparents. But his grandparents were not able to help him with his homework, both because of the language barrier and because of their limited education. His grandfather worked the cotton fields in the area. His mother spent time in jail.

“I saw that growing up, and I knew that I didn’t want that for my family,” Mr. Gonzales said, adding that his mother did work hard to help him on his journey to college. “I want my kids to grow up knowing Jesus Christ, to know that they are loved and to go out and love others. When they’re in Catholic education, I can see that happening.”

According to Ms. Salinas, the students are “not settling for the stereotype” of what their lives should be, given their humble means. “They are applying themselves and always wanting to be better.”

Ms. Solorsano, who will graduate this spring, is a good example. She was a finalist for Questbridge, a nonprofit that connects high-achieving, low-income high school students with selective colleges, and has applied to numerous universities, including Creighton University and the University of Notre Dame.

So far, she said, she has been accepted to Notre Dame. She aspires to be a neurosurgeon.

“I’ve known what I wanted my career to be since seventh grade,” she said. “Coming to JPPII, I’ve been able to fine-tune it to know exactly what I want, what I need to do in order to be able to pursue and achieve that career in the future.”

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

LATINO CATHOLICS: THE CHURCH—AND CATHOLIC SCHOOL POPULATION—OF THE FUTURE

More than half of school-age Catholics in the United States are Latino, but only 4 percent of those children attend a Catholic school. According to one scenario described by the University of Notre Dame’s Alliance for Catholic Education, if Catholic schools in the United States were to enroll between 5 percent and 10 percent of all U.S. Catholic Latino children, “we would never close another school.” Unfortunately, Catholic school enrollment of Latino students has remained stagnant for decades.

62 MILLION: THE U.S. LATINO POPULATION IN 2020, THE NATION’S LARGEST AND YOUNGEST ETHNIC MINORITY POPULATION, UP FROM 50.5 MILLION IN 2010. THAT 23% INCREASE WAS FASTER THAN THE NATION’S OVERALL GROWTH RATE (+7%), BUT A SLOWER INCREASE THAN IN THE U.S. ASIAN POPULATION (+36%).

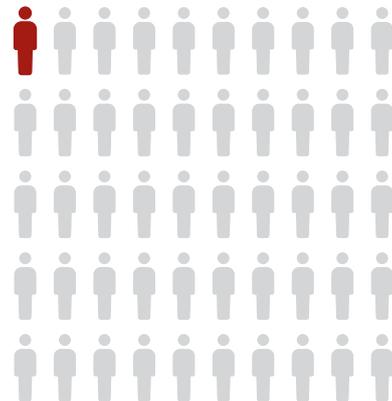
29 MILLION: THE NUMBER OF LATINOS WHO SELF-IDENTIFY AS CATHOLIC—**47% OF ALL LATINOS** AND **42% OF ALL CATHOLICS** IN THE UNITED STATES, THE LARGEST ETHNIC COMPONENT OF THE U.S. CHURCH. THEY ACCOUNT FOR **71% OF THE GROWTH** OF THE CATHOLIC POPULATION IN THE UNITED STATES SINCE 1960.

LATINO STUDENTS IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

As of 2020, nearly **1 in 5** Catholic school students are Latino



Only **1 in 50** Latino school-age children are **enrolled in Catholic schools**.



60% PERCENTAGE OF CATHOLICS UNDER THE AGE OF 18 WHO ARE LATINO. OF THESE, MORE THAN 90% WERE BORN IN THE UNITED STATES.

1,626,291: TOTAL CATHOLIC SCHOOL K-12 ENROLLMENT

- ▶ **294,359—18%**—ARE LATINO STUDENTS.
- ▶ **342,950—20%**—ARE NON-CATHOLIC.

Sources: Pew Research Center; National Catholic Education Association; Boston College, “Catholic Schools in an Increasingly Hispanic Church” and “Examining Pathways to Increase the Presence of Hispanic Teachers and Leaders in Catholic Schools”; University of Notre Dame’s Alliance for Catholic Education.



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MORE THAN READY. LOYOLA READY.

President Nayib Bukele of El Salvador holds forth during a meeting at the Presidential House in San Salvador on May 3, 2021.

El Salvador Jesuit calls Bukele's Bitcoin project 'The City of the Seven Deadly Sins'



Nayib Bukele broke through decades of bipartisan rule in El Salvador with a decisive victory in the 2019 presidential elections. President Bukele enjoys strong popularity, but his government faces accusations of authoritarianism and corruption. Mr. Bukele's boldest move has been his decision to accept the digital currency Bitcoin as a national currency alongside the U.S. dollar.

David Incauskis, S.J., met in San Salvador with José María Tojeira, S.J., former director of the Central American University's Human Rights Institute, to find out more about Mr. Bukele's rise to power and his controversial policy decisions.

What was the country like in 2019? Where did Nayib Bukele come from?

Nayib Bukele emerged out of a context of increasing public disappointment with the main parties—the Nationalist Republican Alliance, known by its Spanish acronym, Arena—and the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (F.M.L.N.).

Mr. Bukele is the son of a business executive; he had some progressive ideals. He began his career in politics in the town of Nuevo Cuscatlán, close to the capital, where he served as mayor. There he had some administrative success that drew people's attention.

He left the F.M.L.N. and negotiated a bid for the presidency with a far-right party known for its corrupt practices. Yet because of people's frustration with both of the discredited main parties, his eventual electoral triumph was massive.

How has Mr. Bukele responded to the pandemic?

The government ordered an extended family "lockdown" period, and its response to anyone who broke that confinement was harsh. But many people liked this move because it gave the impression that Mr. Bukele was protecting the population. The pandemic made him politically stronger.

The result was a triumph so big in the midterm elections in 2021 that his party ended up with two-thirds of the seats in Congress. He would no longer have to negotiate with other parties; he now had almost absolute power. After this electoral victory, a period of much stronger authoritar-

ianism began that in turn provoked a protest against him.

Mr. Bukele's "Bitcoin City," a new Bitcoin-fueled center for finance, commerce and transportation, seeks to accelerate economic development in El Salvador. You've called it the "City of the Seven Deadly Sins."

The city was initially founded—or better said, it was initially announced, because there's nothing there yet—with enormous fanfare. There's a stage. There's smoke. Suddenly, the president appears. It's the pride of a power almost deified.

Then there's greed in the sense that he promises a huge amount of money without creating any jobs. He's set on multiplying money in the least human way possible. True wealth is generated by labor, not by speculation. Money multiplied through speculation is nothing more than the desire to have money. It's greed.

You've offered a lot of criticism of Bukele's government. Has he done anything that you approve of?

El Salvador has succeeded in getting 70 percent of its population vaccinated. That's not bad compared with other countries in the area. At the start of the pandemic, El Salvador had only 120 mechanical respirators. Now, through donations and purchases, we've tripled the number of respirators. In a country with few resources, Mr. Bukele has managed the pandemic well.

He's also done other things to take advantage of the pandemic to reinforce his popularity.

How should the Salvadoran people respond to the present moment?

In a country like ours, which has been through a civil war, it's very important to foster dialogue, but it's difficult under Mr. Bukele because he has an imposing, authoritarian attitude. The present regime governs by force, but force, either from government or armed revolution, is not the solution in El Salvador.

*This interview was edited, condensed and translated from Spanish to English by David Incauskis, S.J.
Twitter: @LibTheoPodcast.*

GOODNEWS: Amid economic crisis, São Paulo's vicar for the homeless fights for dignity for the poor



In Brazil, an ongoing financial crisis, exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, has led to an unemployment rate of 13 percent and rising poverty and homelessness. In São Paulo, the country's largest city, an estimated 66,000 people live on the streets, seeking refuge in public spaces—under bridges, in neighborhood squares and on sidewalks.

Because of the ubiquity of smartphones, the Brazilian public has become more aware of the problem of violence by private security and São Paulo police against people who have been economically displaced, and denunciations of those attacks have become common. Social media has also made another kind of aggression against homeless people more evident: the implantation of spikes and other devices in public places to repel homeless people.

Many middle-class Brazilians pass by without even noticing this so-called hostile architecture, or residential or public space that is designed to discourage lingering or resting. (It is worth noting that the phenomenon is not limited to Brazil; it has been observed all over the world.) But one Catholic priest has made it his mission to report every instance of it that he becomes aware of.

The Rev. Júlio Lancellotti is an experienced human rights advocate and the Diocese of São Paulo's designated vicar for street people. He has been posting images he finds himself, or that are sent to him by supporters, of spikes and other elements of hostile architecture gathered from cell-

phone photos or video from all over Brazil.

Father Lancellotti's posts sometimes include graphic videos of aggression against the homeless. On Dec. 20, for example, he posted a clip of a man being beaten by private guards in a market in Belém, in Pará State, where he had been discovered sleeping.

He labels such incidents with the same word he uses to categorize the intent of hostile architecture: *aporophobia*, the rejection or hatred of the poor.

Public buildings, shops, restaurants and even churches have been the object of Father Lancellotti's internet crusade. More than 349,000 people follow him on Twitter, and he has even more followers on other social media platforms.

"When we make those denunciations, we face hostile reactions, at times even from people connected to the church," he told **America**.

"Once he told me that the more his struggle advances, the more he is attacked," said Fernando Altemeyer Jr., a religious studies professor at the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo. Politicians "usually hate him," Mr. Altemeyer said, "because they do not understand that Júlio's point of view is the point of view of the destitute—and you need to take a few steps downstairs if you want to grasp its meaning."

The social and financial deterioration in Brazil is an



CNS photo/Paul Haring

Luciney Martins

The Rev. Júlio Lancellotti distributes food for the homeless in front of São Paulo's metropolitan cathedral.

obstacle for the reintegration of the newly homeless in the formal economy. And now they cannot even beg on the streets for help. All across Brazil, state and civic organizations have been urging Brazilians to cease giving money to the homeless.

Father Lancellotti argues such campaigns are a way of “criminalizing the poor.”

“They punish the poor people instead of trying to transform their reality.... That is aporophobia,” he said.

In the end, Father Lancellotti remains optimistic that a humane response to the homelessness crisis could be transformative for Brazil. His efforts have clearly raised awareness of the problem among some segments of Brazilian society. Legislation has even been introduced in the Brazilian Congress and in some states and cities with the aim of forbidding the use of architecture and urban design that is deliberately unwelcoming to people without housing.

“We have to move from hostility to hospitality,” Father Lancellotti urges.

Eduardo Campos Lima contributes from São Paulo, Brazil.



The dome of St. Peter's Basilica. The Vatican projects a deficit of US\$37 million in 2022.

The Vatican, claiming improved accountability, budgets with Covid-19 impact in mind

Juan Antonio Guerrero, S.J., the Spanish Jesuit who is the prefect of the Vatican Secretariat for the Economy, said in January that “the most notable feature” of this year’s budget “is cost containment,” given that “revenues are still lower than in the pre-pandemic period.”

In an interview with Vatican News, Father Guerrero said the Holy See’s budget for 2022 is much bigger than previous years, with an operating income of US\$823 million (compared with \$265 million in 2021) and an operating expenditure of \$885 million (compared with \$336 million in 2021), and a deficit of \$37 million (compared with \$55 million in 2021).

He explained that the significant increase in both income and expenditure occurred because the budget’s parameters for 2022 expanded to include 30 new entities. They include the Bambino Gesù pediatric hospital in Rome, the Holy See pension fund, the fund for health assistance, the four major Roman basilicas, and the sanctuaries of Loreto, Pompei and Padua. Father Guerrero said the aim is to include in future budgets all the entities linked to the Holy See, ensuring a “more complete picture” as well as “greater transparency and greater control” of the Holy See’s finances.

“We are very dependent on uncertain income,” he said, “which we see decreasing every year in this time of pandemic.”

Improved transparency and accountability should help improve the Holy See’s fundraising success, according to Father Guerrero. He told Vatican News: “We are well aware that we have made major mistakes in financial management, which have undermined the credibility of the Holy See. We seek to learn from them, and we believe we have remedied them so that they will not happen again.”

“Slowly, the culture is changing,” he added. “We are working in the right direction.”

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

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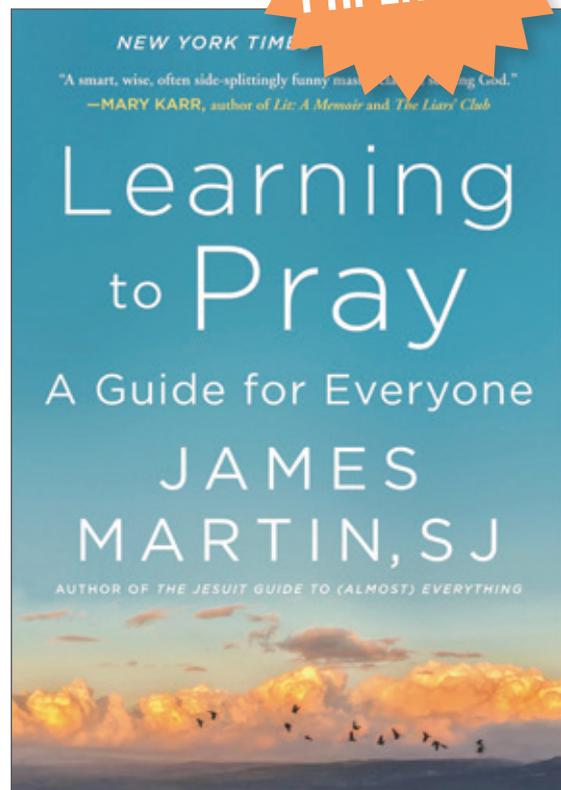
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ASHLEY MCKINLESS, CO-HOST OF “JESUITICAL” AND EXECUTIVE EDITOR

A native of Arlington, Va., Ashley graduated from the University of Virginia in 2012 with degrees in religious studies and economics. Since joining **America** in 2013, she has traveled to Central America to report on migration, Chicago to tell the story of families who have lost loved ones to suicide and Wyoming to profile a Catholic school that has more horses than smartphones. Today, as head of **America’s** assignment desk, Ashley ensures that top Catholic news and thoughtful analysis are delivered to readers’ inboxes each day.



ZAC DAVIS, CO-HOST OF “JESUITICAL” AND ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Born and raised in the Buckeye State, Zac arrived at **America** in 2015 upon graduating from Loyola University Chicago. In addition to co-hosting “Jesuitical” every week, in his time at **America** Zac has reported a short documentary on the Catholic Church in China and regularly writes about the intersection of faith and culture, whether it’s in politics, Netflix or sports. Zac is also **America’s** director of audience engagement. If you have engaged with any of **America’s** digital content, Zac’s hands have probably touched it.



BUILDING FRIENDSHIPS

The way we construct our cities is vital to our mental, physical and spiritual well-being

By Eve Tushnet

In 2016, The Washington Post published a feature on four 99-year-old women who had been friends since the closing days of World War I. Their city shaped their lives; the city built their friendship: “Growing up in Southwest Washington, [the friends] were part of the landscape, in the same way that her house and her street and her church were.” The tight social bonds forged in that “patchwork of tenements and alleys in the shadow of the Capitol” were so close partly in self-defense.

The city was segregated, and people like Leona Barnes, Gladys Butler, Ruth Hammett and Bernice Underwood relied on one another for more than just another pair of hands on the double-dutch ropes. Two of the friends’ families shared a house at one point. They were family to one another. They met in a neighborhood where many homes did not have indoor toilets—a neighborhood soon to be razed in “slum clearance.” But Leona Barnes recalls, “It was a fine neighborhood.... If you took sick, the next person

would know about it. We were very close, closely knitted. That’s one thing that we miss. The neighbor on either side, they’d make you nice hot soup. It’s not like neighborhoods of today where sometimes you don’t know your next-door neighbor.”

People live in cities for the opportunity to have connections like these. They should be the easiest places to make friends. Unlike the suburbs, which were explicitly designed around the car, the city offers the three conditions that foster friendship, as the sociologist Rebecca G. Adams told The New York Times in 2012: “proximity; repeated, unplanned interactions; and a setting that encourages people to let their guard down and confide in each other.” Cities have row houses and corner stores, sidewalks and skate parks, buses where friends might meet and parks where they might stroll or chat.

But our cities are not living up to their promise.

Classical philosophers like Aristotle and Cicero



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viewed friendship as fundamental to civic life. Friendship was meant to fill the public square; in a sense, friendship creates public life, as one of the primary ways people move beyond domestic concerns into the broader life of the city. And yet our own cities fail to foster friendship precisely because they are too often planned around the needs of the same kind of person who served as the ideal citizen of much ancient philosophy: male, respected and privileged, unencumbered by poverty or by dependents who need his care. To the extent that our cities are built for autonomous individuals, they are built against friendship.

If we are to renew the city's possibilities as a haven for friendship, we will need a new image of what it means to be a friend and neighbor. We will need to look more deeply at who we are, and what helps us flourish.

A City's Strength

Chuck Marohn, founder of Strong Towns—an organization that strives to help citizens build exactly what its name suggests—tells the story of his daughter's first day of kindergarten. The girl returned to their suburban home

full of excitement, exclaiming, "Dad, I've met the most wonderful person! I think she's going to be my best friend!" The new friend, as it turned out, lived "directly across the street"; they had lived within a frisbee throw of one another for years, but only met when the girls started school.

Mr. Marohn and his wife bought a home where they did precisely because they hoped their kids would flourish there: "It's a safe location, there's a lot of room there, there's a lot of places for them to play; we thought this would be a wonderful place for kids to grow up." But as he began to feel the isolation of a neighborhood built for cars, not random encounters, he drew a different conclusion: "The way we have arranged ourselves on the landscape is so isolating from each other that we can actually exist 500 feet from my daughter's best friend and not even know she was there.... How many of us have best friends that we've never met and never will meet because we just don't have the opportunity?"

The suburban landscape can feel like a pointillist painting, in which the isolated dots of color cannot cohere into a portrait unless you have a car to draw the line link-

ing A and B. But even amid the contemporary city's density, it is easy to stay separate. I recently moved to an English basement apartment right across the street from a friend. We both work from home, but the only time I have seen her since moving in was when we made a date to get lunch at the corner *pupuseria*. This is partly chance, but partly design: My apartment has a small side stoop, but it is hidden from the street behind a tall privacy hedge.

Privacy is one reason we build in ways that fail to fulfill the city's promise of connection. Order is another. Many local governments, fearing an appearance of "disorder" if too many people sleep or live in parks and other public spaces, renovated to incorporate "anti-homeless" design. Cities removed benches and other seating from some areas, or replaced normal benches with benches that are divided or even slanted to prevent people from sleeping on them. These public areas are now hostile to the poorest and intentionally uncomfortable for everyone. How long are you going to hang out with your friend in a space where you cannot sit down or have access to a bathroom?

A Place of Rest

On a recent bus ride through a gentrifying stretch of downtown Washington, D.C., I overheard four women lamenting that they could no longer meet at the local park for fear of both disorder and of police surveillance—despite the fact that they had done nothing to warrant such surveillance. It is a common complaint. The public spaces available to poorer people are often both crime-ridden and overpoliced. Poorer people's friendships attract suspicion and surveillance—and may even get them in trouble with the law, if police see men or boys hanging out and think, *gangs!* The criminalization of the normal friendships and relationships of men of color through broad "gang injunctions," like the one enforced in Los Angeles against any "association" between suspected gang members, has fueled backlash. In 2020, the city settled a lawsuit by limiting these injunctions and allowing people to challenge their designation as gang members in court.

Here in Washington, D.C., the trend toward "anti-homeless" public spaces has been countered in some plazas and parks, which kept their flat benches and added public toilets. These places bustle with activity, as people sleep in the sun, friends chat, and children shriek and play. But where these spaces are lacking—or on days when they are icy or blazing hot—people turn elsewhere.

In search of safe, comfortable places where they can spend hours just enjoying one another's company, many Americans turned first to indoor malls. Malls generated their own culture, becoming a destination in themselves, because they were indoors and full of seating. They were pretty and light-filled and fun. They had security guards, but rarely did they attract heavy police attention. They were also oriented toward buying and selling, and controlled by private owners. Malls have not been replaced, but, as the writer and photographer Chris Arnade notes, many of their social functions, especially for lower-income people, have been adopted by another kind of commercial establishment: McDonald's. When Arnade began traveling across the United States in 2014, he discovered that the Golden Arches are home to a flourishing ecosystem of retiree gatherings and low-income celebrations. The old folks "name their group with variations of a self-deprecating theme: In suburban El Paso it is the Old Folks' Home, and in rural New Mexico it is the Morning Brigade." Younger people came to Mickey D's to use the wifi, charge their phones and celebrate their weddings; they got coffee there after a night in jail or scoured tables for a discarded newspaper so they could do the crossword.



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Our cities are not living up to their promise.

The popularity of McDonald's as a low-income social hub suggests a need that is not being filled by parks or public libraries. It is a place where you can talk and hang out, or just sit quietly, with bathrooms and something to eat and drink, where it is cool in summer and warm in winter, where you can be thrown out if you get wild but probably will not be disturbed if you are just tired or talkative or drunk. A place where somebody's in charge, somebody's responsible, but that person does not have a gun or a pair of handcuffs or the ability to take away your housing or your kids.

How We Move Through the World

Residents of cities are affected not just by whether or not they offer places to rest but also by how we are able to move within them. Jamie Kralovec, a professor in Georgetown University's Urban and Regional Planning program, notes that when Pope Francis was archbishop of his hometown of Buenos Aires, the archbishop made a point of riding the bus with his people. Professor Kralovec notes that the bus offers not only "environmental benefits, but...social friendship benefits that are possible when we share our daily commute." He acknowledges all the reasons people avoid public transportation when they can. Here in Washington, D.C., half the trains were recently pulled from the system because of mechanical faults, while bus service has been cut back because of driver shortages. But he still suggests, "People who are in a position to consider public transit but don't should reconsider the invitation."

It is an "invitation" we may no longer have the choice to refuse. Because the story of friendship in the city is also a story of climate change. Climate change adds urgency to the need for public spaces that are cool in summer and warm in winter. Climate change may make us notice that



We need a new image of what it means to be a friend and neighbor.

communal kitchens and other shared facilities, features of “co-housing” arrangements, can reduce energy usage.

Eric Klinenberg, author of *Heat Wave: A Social Autopsy of Disaster in Chicago*, makes the starker argument that climate disasters kill people whose neighborhoods lack social cohesion: “Throughout the city, the variable that best explained the pattern of mortality during the [1995] Chicago heat wave was what people in my discipline call social infrastructure.... Turns out neighborhood conditions that isolate people from each other on a good day can, on a really bad day, become lethal.” After Superstorm Sandy, as well, “residents of neighborhoods with low levels of social cohesion—as measured by how much people said they trusted their neighbors—reported longer recovery times.” Klinenberg gives the bottom line: “People are realizing that when the floods come or the heat wave settles, neighbors are the true first responders.”

Neighbors have, for some, been a kind of first responder during the Covid-19 pandemic. When the Urban Design Forum invited proposals for “life after coronavirus,” documentary filmmaker and storyteller Di Cui looked to the mutual aid networks that sprang up in the early days of the pandemic: “Well-resourced college students are talking to empty nest seniors. Block residents are helping their neighbors working on the frontline to take care of their children while they perform their duties. These interactions are precious, because people get to connect with others on a personal and intimate level, especially with those who they might not have the opportunity to do so in a normal world.”

A Church of Encounter

How do we foster a world in which this type of connection is typical, rather than the exception? The Catholic Church may be able to help. As Catholic demographics shift, requiring some churches and other institutions to close or change hands, Catholic leaders might think about what people use and what they long for. What if a convent became a low- or no-cost laundromat, with ample seating, a coffee machine and a chapel? What if it became a pay-what-you-can coffeehouse? What’s the closest thing to a McDonald’s that the institution can afford?

Active parishes, too, can weave themselves more tightly into the fabric of the neighborhood by providing space for friendship with one another as well as with Christ. Jamie Kralovec notes, “From my own experience, when the church is also the site of a farmers’ market on Sunday in addition to being the place where people come for worship, this adaptive use of spaces creates a potential for friendship.” In my neighborhood, you can tell it is Sunday because the carts selling blouses or flowers or *paletas* (Mexican-style popsicles) are pulled up at the front steps of the church. People mill around, greeting friends, playing with children, enjoying cheap treats. The presence of the priest and the atmosphere of joy and prayer make the church—which sits on the western edge of a mixed and sometimes violent neighborhood—an oasis of peace.

Churches that are more active and involved in the neighborhoods around them might help people form friendships that draw them closer to Christ. But where do they go when the Mass-going crowds disperse? To foster deep friendships, we may need to reimagine homes.

‘Zoned for Single-Family Housing Only’

The biggest way housing can foster friendships is just by having more of it. Almost everyone I spoke to acknowledged the need for more and denser housing—for a shift away from the “zoned for single-family housing only” model. Density fosters the unexpected encounters that build friendships. But the design of the housing can also make a difference.

One change is simple and already happening. In 2020 Spike Carlsen declared in *The Wall Street Journal*, “The Forgotten Front Porch Is Making a Comeback.” Carlsen quotes “Claude Stephens, founder of a tongue-in-cheek group called Professional Porch Sitters Union Local 1339,” who says “a porch is ‘the only place where you can feel like you are outside and inside at the same time; out with all of the neighbors and alone reading a book.’” Carlsen blames the car, as well as changes in housing design, for the decline



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A band plays on the front steps of a house in Athens, Ga., during Porchfest 2021, a neighborhood music festival.

of the porch: “Enclosed in a metal cocoon, you could speed past people whom you would have stopped to interact with if you’d been on foot.... [F]ront porches gave way to backyard decks, hidden from the street.”

But the porch provides social space—and the “eyes on the street” that can deter crime. And so, Carlsen notes, “Twenty-five years ago, 42% of new homes in the U.S. were built with front porches; by 2004, the figure had risen to 52%, and today it’s about 65%.” For some, the pandemic led to more porch socializing—after all, where else was there to go? In 2020, in communities across the country, Mardi Gras became “Yardi Gras,” celebrated with “porch parades” in which houses decorated with flowers, beads, masks, and wild papier-mâché creations replaced floats. And Aristotle would be pleased (maybe!) to learn that the front stoop could be a public square for the poor. During the pandemic, the Crown Heights Tenant Union organized what they called “stoop court”: Small groups of masked tenants, gathering on the stoop with signs reading CANCEL RENT, offering support to tenants during online Housing Court hearings.

Courtyard-style housing, which has arisen again and again in contexts as diverse as the compounds in Accra, Ghana, and California’s bungalow courts, uses architecture

to draw neighbors closer to one another. In courtyard-style homes, multi-family dwellings or small single-family houses are arranged around an inner courtyard or garden. These community-based designs may be especially important to people seeking greater social support.

Leslie Kern, an associate professor at Mount Allison University in New Brunswick, Canada, and the author of *Feminist City: Claiming Space in a Man-Made World*, praises cooperative housing “designated for specific groups, for example, for low-income women, women with disabilities, seniors or teen mothers. In the pre-neoliberal days there were more of these innovative projects. Even today, where there are examples of housing that is not purely oriented to the traditional nuclear family, those are the kind of spaces that can facilitate lasting friendships as well.” Professor Kern praises the Canada Cohousing Network, which promotes housing with “individual living units but communal cooking, recreation, garden, and social facilities.” She notes that this kind of cohousing is popular with senior citizens. “But for families as well, the idea is that this permits a certain sharing of care work,” says Professor Kern. “Which is another kind of feminist value for how one might reimagine housing and the city itself.”



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This balance of privacy and community care shapes the Community First! Village in Austin, Tex. The village offers people experiencing chronic homelessness “permanent, supportive housing through a combination of unorthodox housing types: micro houses, canvas-sided cottages, and recreational vehicles,” along with health care, job opportunities and communal spaces. The village opened in 2015 but last year had a massive expansion of 1,400 houses. Little homes, connected by stone paths, are surrounded by flowers and decorated by their owners with Christmas lights or cow horns. Many of the residents use communal kitchens and shared bathroom and laundry spaces; there is also a community market, a memorial garden and even a community forge and a labyrinth for meditation.

Community Building

No style of housing will work in every setting. Everybody who has ever shared a bathroom with a stranger knows that communal living can breed conflict and mistrust. Communal housing, with shared work and (especially) shared child care, has a long history of experiments—and failures.

But areas in which zoning regulations heavily favor single-family housing are built for one vocation (marriage and parenting) and one life stage (the middle—younger people are priced out and older people are isolated). As urbanists seek to shift regulations in a direction more friendly to multi-family homes, “mother-in-law apartments” and other forms of housing that would bring people physically closer to their neighbors, one Catholic institution is forging friendships across different life stages and vocations. Mount Mary University, a Catholic women’s college in Wisconsin, will soon open a dorm in which senior citizens, including retired women religious, will live alongside students who are single mothers. The retired sisters and the student moms can eat together and take classes together. There will be on-site child care and a medical clinic, as well as a combination hair and nail salon, and a chapel.

Housing can build community, and the tightest community will always be of people you live not just near, but with. Right now, Leslie Kern notes, not only zoning restrictions but bank loan policies make it more difficult to finance a home purchase if you are in a nontraditional kinship arrangement. Banks (understandably) do not view friendships as sufficiently stable, and contemporary society (less understandably) has no mechanism by which friends might signal lifelong commitment.

If we want some friendships to be treated as forms of kinship by the institutions that shape so much of our com-



The tightest community will always be of people you live not just near, but with.

mon life, we will likely need some way of singling out which friendships we will sacrifice for. Christian societies had various ways of distinguishing between what you might call “normal” friendships and devoted, committed friendships in the past. In some medieval and early modern Western Christian societies, heads of household could pledge to become kin to one another. They shared “a common purse and a common table” (uniting their finances and their homes), and often took on religious obligations to one another’s family. Without some ceremony, some framework, some *name* for the role the closest friendships play in people’s lives, we likely see fewer committed friendships; and those friendships that do have this depth may struggle to find practical arrangements that can support the friends’ caregiving for one another.

Where Friendships Flourish

Friendship goes unrecognized in many official documents. And while this institutional invisibility has major disadvantages for those who long to share their lives with a friend, there is also something poignant in the human tendency to live and love in the margins, in the hidden places. So many of my childhood friendships took place in back alleys, in the unofficial and neglected places where adults were near enough if something went terribly wrong, but far enough away that we felt our freedom—the hush in which friendships flourish. The urbanist writer Addison del Mastro offers a paean to “nooks and crannies”: “When I go to a town and walk around, in the classic towns where you have streets on a grid and not just linear development along the road, there’s a sense of three-dimensionality to the



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space—back lots, the back of a house backs onto something else. You can go behind stuff. Nobody goes behind a strip mall; it’s like, ‘What are you doing there?’”

Studded throughout Washington, D.C., are vacant lots, where locals sit on the broken walls or use the chain-link fences to rig makeshift canopies. Under the canopies they lounge in repurposed office chairs and deck chairs, chatting and fussing, contemplating the weather, enjoying the public life of friendship in a part of the city that does not do much to welcome their friends.

Mr. Del Mastro has written about the ways immigrant groups repurpose strip malls, turning them into spaces for social life as well as shopping. Here in Washington, the sidewalks in some neighborhoods are lined with sellers of hats, books, perfume, sliced mangos, and whole fruits and vegetables. The more there is to do on the sidewalk, the more people linger and wander. Mismatched chairs and unofficial vendors turn any sidewalk into an anarchic version of the European piazza.

Jamie Kralovec of Georgetown University connects these anarcho—piazzas to Pope Francis’ language of “encounter”: “It’s a good thing when people create spaces. We call this in urban planning ‘placemaking.’ The culture of a place that is facilitated by a mix of uses makes it easy for people to engage each other and encounter each other, either spontaneously or in a planned way. How do we create and introduce some of those charmed encounters, where human diversity is on full display, and make it easy to experience it?”

Maybe we need to start by giving up some of the things we think we need. The features of cities that foster friend-

ships most often involve the absence of many of the goods Americans value most: autonomy, control, safety, order and comfort.

All of these are goods. But they are not goods that come without tradeoffs. Pursuing these goods above the goods of community and solidarity has left us lonely and overwhelmed. Mr. Del Mastro argues that in building car-centered suburbs, “We bought our way out of friction and inconvenience—but that’s not sustainable,” neither financially nor emotionally. “And if it is the case that what we think of as good urbanism is just an accident of having been poor, what does that mean? Because people do yearn for that. Some of the most loved places in America are [the result of an inability to buy more privacy and comfort]. But people say, where am I gonna park?”

The friendships we need most from our cities are not the equal partnerships of strong, respected, autonomous individuals. The normative human experience is not wealth or independence. We are vulnerable and interdependent, and many of us are exposed to suspicion and disrespect. We need order, but not too much. We need safety, but not punitive surveillance. We need comfort, but not at the expense of unplanned, messy, difficult encounters. We long for control, but we cannot idolize it if we want to live in a world that enables us to love one another more fully.

*Eve Tushnet is a contributing writer to **America** and the author, most recently, of **Tenderness: A Gay Christian’s Guide to Unlearning Rejection and Experiencing God’s Extravagant Love.***

YOUNG, HIP, LAY—& STILL LEARNING

15 LESSONS FROM FIVE YEARS OF 'JESUITICAL'

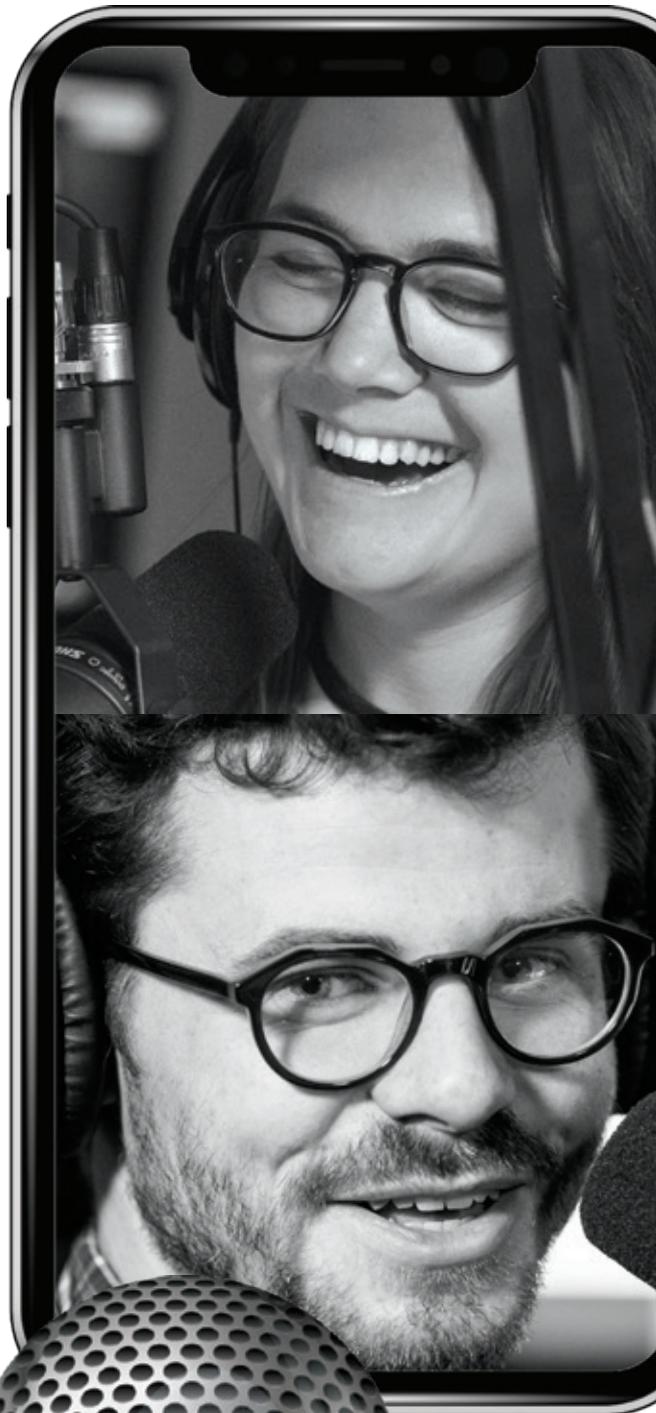
By Ashley McKinless and Zac Davis

It was a little over five years ago when one of us, we are not sure who (the origin story remains disputed, and given it was set in a bar over drinks, it is likely to remain unresolved), uttered the words that everyone in media has at least thought to themselves in the past 10 years: “We should start a podcast.”

In a flourish of juvenile, blind confidence, we three founding hosts of “Jesuitical” (our former cohost, Olga Segura, now an editor at The National Catholic Reporter, is someone to whom we remain deeply indebted for making the first three years of the show with us) assumed that we could just turn on the microphones during our normal, daily conversations, and other people would clamor to hear what we had to say.

Dear readers and listeners: We were wrong. Those first pilot episodes were unfocused, uninteresting and, frankly, painful to listen to. You might still think the show comes across that way, but we promise you, we used to be so much worse.

Yet we had an inkling that something was missing from the Catholic podcasting space. We imagined there must be thousands of young people out there who were involved in campus ministry or did Jesuit Volunteer Corps or always went to the same last-chance Sunday Mass with their college friends and who now found themselves in a new city with a perhaps



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lackluster parish and hungry for Catholic community and spiritual nourishment. Taking a page from our Jesuit colleagues, we sought to meet these theoretical young people where they were: on their smartphones.

So, to mark our five-year anniversary, we are looking back on what we have learned from our guests—Catholics and non-Catholics vastly smarter and more interesting than we are—to help us and our listeners navigate the modern world as people of faith.

Lessons About Young Catholics

1. Young Catholics need formal and financial support from the institutional church.

Molly Burhans, the founder of GoodLands—an organization that helps the Catholic Church leverage its landholdings to further its mission—was recently profiled in *The New Yorker* for her heroic efforts to fight climate change. Ms. Burhans is a devout Catholic whose ecology is rooted in her faith. And Pope Francis has clearly made caring for our common home a priority for the church with his encyclical “*Laudato Si’*.” And yet, most of the support Ms. Burhans has received in her ministry has been from the secular world.

After Ms. Burhans created the first global map of the Catholic Church’s landholdings, Pope Francis approved a plan for her to move to Rome and establish and run a Vatican cartography institute on a trial basis. There was just one problem: It came with no staff and a very modest budget. So Molly declined the offer. She has since submitted a new proposal. All the while, Molly continues to receive awards and offers from some of the most prestigious environmental groups in the world.

Career paths for lay vocations are not obvious. The default view tends to include only a) academia, b) youth and young adult ministry, or, c) uh, I don’t know, here’s the password to our social media account. Go crazy, kid.

Unless we figure out how to incorporate young, lay Catholics and their talents and passions more fully into the formal structures of the church, the church is going to experience “brain drain” of people like Molly Burhans and so many others.

“I would have no self-respect, honestly, if I had stayed working for the Catholic Church as long as I had with the amount of resources I’ve had.”

– Molly Burhans, Episode 195, Oct. 29, 2021

2. Young people are leaving the church—but it is not for the reasons you think.

A bunch of people with gray hair sit in the parish hall listening to a speaker. Inevitably, someone raises their hand during the Q. and A. session and bemoans the fact that young people just are not interested in church anymore, that their adult child has drifted away, and they do not know what to do about it.

Luckily, the Springtide Research Institute, whose executive director, Josh Packard, spoke with us, is looking for the answers. The institute is devoted to studying young people’s feelings toward religion. They found that a young adult who had five adults who cared about them was far less likely to engage in high-risk behavior. The same principal could help to connect young people to the church.

“[Millennials are] not leaving the church. They were not raised in it to begin with. They don’t have anything to leave, but instead they’re going to be building things. And they’re going to be doing that with the bits and pieces and fragments of the institutional lives that have been left behind for them.”

– Josh Packard, Episode 172, March 12, 2021

3. Stop putting young adult Catholics at the “kids table.”

In 2018, over 300 young people from all over the world went to the Vatican to help prepare the meeting of the Synod of Bishops on young people. One of those delegates, Katie Prejean McGrady, had spent a lot of time working with young people in the church as a speaker, writer, youth minister and high school theology teacher. (Katie now hosts a daily radio show on Sirius XM). We talked to Katie about what it was like to dialogue with bishops about youth and young adult ministry, and what changes she wanted to see in how the church welcomes young people.

“A lot of times young people are relegated to the cheap seats, when it comes to Catholicism. They’re either the problem to be solved, they’re the kids that made a mess in the parish hall or they’re the ones that can clean up after the adult gathering.... They’re just kind of put into this separate category rather than [being recognized as] an active part of the life of the church. I hate the term ‘youth Mass.’ It’s Mass—and young people just happen to be engaged more in the work of the liturgy. But why can’t that happen at the 9 a.m. Mass?”

– Katie Prejean McGrady, Episode 75, Sept. 14, 2018



DESTINY HERNDON-DE LA ROSA,

who became a single mother at age 16, is the co-founder of New Wave Feminists, a pro-life, pro-woman group that promotes a whole-life ethic.

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EPISODE 91

Lessons About Social Justice

1. *Being pro-life means a lot more than opposing abortion.*

Fairly or not (we would argue not), the pro-life movement in the United States is often disparaged as being merely pro-birth, or worse, anti-woman. Helen Prejean, C.S.J., challenges the misconception. Sister Prejean has said she “stand[s] opposed to all killing: war, executions, euthanasia, killing of children, unborn and born.” She has been fighting to end the death penalty for four decades and has done more than any other American to awaken the nation’s conscience to the hidden horror of state-sanctioned executions.

“One person on death row is too much suffering. The torture of putting a human being in a small cell—and they begin to count the days to their death, one day after the other—it’s just unspeakable. And people are oblivious to it. People don’t go into prisons. People don’t go onto death row. They don’t talk to the people who can say to you: “Today is Tuesday, and by Saturday, I’ll be dead. They’re going to kill me Friday night.” And for conscious, imaginative beings, that is mental torture. And because people are so far from it, they don’t think about it. They don’t recognize it as being against human rights.”

– Helen Prejean, C.S.J., Episode 87, Dec. 14, 2018

We also spoke with Destiny Herndon-De La Rosa in January 2019, right before the March for Life she was planning to attend—and the Women’s March, a worldwide protest for women’s rights first held on Jan. 21, 2017, the day after Donald J. Trump’s inauguration. She was one of few people we knew who attended both marches, but she says both were about defending the dignity of women. Destiny, who became pregnant at age 16 and chose to raise her child as a single mother, is the co-founder of New Wave Feminists, a pro-life, pro-woman group that promotes a whole-life ethic.

“I think the most dangerous thing we ever did was make abortion a partisan issue. This is a human rights issue; it’s something that everybody should care about. And so we keep linking it to one political party that has some questionable other activities [and] people say, ‘O.K., well that’s not whole life. That’s not pro-life all the way.’”

– Destiny Herndon-De La Rosa, Episode 91, Jan. 18, 2019



2. *Racial justice today requires accountability for past injustices.*

In 1838, the Jesuits who ran Georgetown College sold 272 slaves to pay off the school’s debt. In 2004, Onita Estes-Hicks, a cradle Catholic from New Orleans, was preparing for a family reunion when she discovered that she was a descendent of two of those enslaved persons—Nace and Biby Butler. Then, in 2017, Tim Kesicki, S.J., then-president of the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States, formally apologized for the sale, a small first step in an ongoing journey of healing and reconciliation—a journey that Onita says still has a long way to go.

“It seems to me, given the violence that was rendered toward the families in 1838, it would not be expecting too much to have a penitential prayer included at every Mass at Georgetown [and] in Jesuit churches throughout the country. That’s the sense of reparations I would like to see. I don’t know the extent to which the Jesuits have introduced the slave sale in their universities and high schools, but they are top-notch educators, and I think something could be done in the high schools and in universities so this becomes a part of [our] living history.”

– Onita Estes-Hicks, Episode 105, May 31, 2019

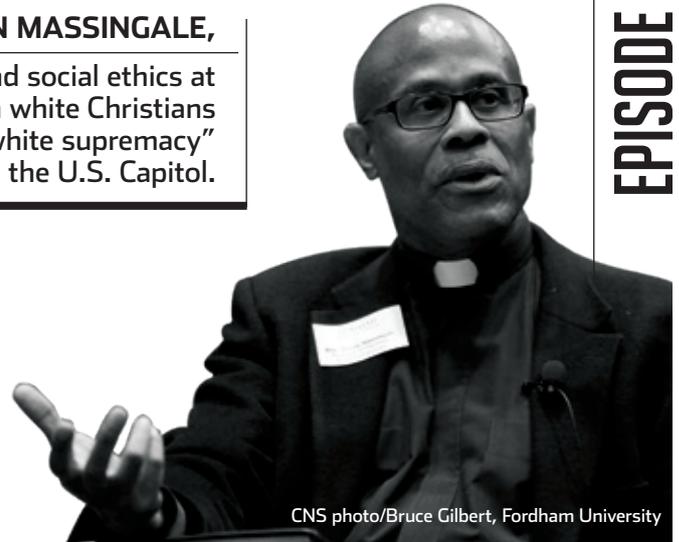
Following the murder of George Floyd and the global protests for racial justice his death inspired, we spoke with Anthea Butler, a historian of African American and American religion. In a moment of national reckoning, Professor Butler challenged Christians to resist complacency and put their faith into action.

“There are elements in our faith that obviously give us



THE REV. BRYAN MASSINGALE,

a professor of theological and social ethics at Fordham University, has called on white Christians to confront the “cancer of white supremacy” that led to the attack on the U.S. Capitol.



CNS photo/Bruce Gilbert, Fordham University

the tools and the impetus to fight racism. It's really that the organized structures and the people doing it right now are just really not living up to that.... And let me put a finer point on it and say that it is not enough just to have faith and say that you want to do better. It requires change. I think that we forget that repentance means that you turn away; you cannot simply be sorry about something. You have to do something about it, and the doing is the part that everybody seems to fall down on.”

– Anthea Butler, Episode 150, Sept. 25, 2020

3. Catholics should not be afraid to get political—but the Gospel trumps political ideology.

Simone Campbell, S.S.S., is not afraid to get her hands dirty in the world of politics—or to use the “sister card” when it might lend greater heft to a cause she cares about. The leader of the Catholic social justice group “Nuns on the Bus,” Sister Simone has traveled the country with her fellow sisters, calling for just economic and immigration policies—a vocation, she says, that has deep roots in her religious order.

“Our foundress was the first woman in the Hungarian parliament, so we’ve always known that there is an intersection of charity and justice. Margit Slachta, S.S.S., said there are four levels that Sisters of Social Service were supposed to work at. The bottom level is direct service. The second level is group work—like in a settlement house. The third level is movement work—things like the anti-nuclear movement. And then because she was in the legislature, she thought legislation was the top level, the pinnacle. But she said that the legislation wouldn’t be any good unless it’s connected to the other three, and direct service would be less effective unless it was connected all the way through up to legislation. And for me that has always been a big motivating thing, to know that we hold a piece of the process of government.”

– Simone Campbell, S.S.S., Episode 37, Oct. 27, 2017

On Jan. 6, 2021, the day supporters of President Trump attacked the Capitol Building, the Rev. Bryan Massingale, a professor of theological and social ethics at Fordham University, wrote that the assault was a consequence of, among other factors, “the complicit silence and active support of religious leaders who refused to confront the

cancer of white nationalism that this president endorses.” When we spoke to him the following week, he reissued his challenge to Catholics who choose party over faith.

“The social doctrine of the church is very explicit that Christians may have political loyalties and belong to political parties. But our political loyalty must always be a critical one and must always be subjected to the light of the Gospel—whether we are Democrat, Republican, socialist. That ideology cannot be our ultimate identity or ultimate frame of reference.”

– The Rev. Bryan Massingale, Episode 164, Jan. 15, 2021

Lessons About Spirituality

1. Honest prayer is good prayer. (Related: There’s not a “right” way to pray.)

Though we were initially reluctant to do this, one of the three segments on “Jesuitical” involves us talking about our prayer lives. It is the part of the show that is most difficult for us, both because prayer is difficult and because talking about it for an audience is embarrassing and terrifying. Luckily, we have spoken to a number of spiritual masters—like our colleague James Martin, S.J.—about how to get better at finding God in our lives (and better at talking about it).

“The best prayer is the one that works best for you. That’s kind of a zen answer; but it’s true.”

– James Martin, S.J., Episode 31, Sept. 15, 2017

Luigi Gioia is an Anglican priest, scholar and author, whose book, *Say It to God: In Search of Prayer*, was chosen as the Archbishop of Canterbury’s official Lenten book for 2018. It is filled with down-to-earth, practical advice about prayer.

“Talking to God like you would talk to someone who is with you, walking by you, and sharing with him or with her

whatever really comes to your mind, whatever is important for you, whatever frustrates you, whatever makes you rejoice, [this] is the essence of prayer. Prayer is really talking to someone who is there and who is infinitely, deeply interested in everything that happens in our lives.”

– Rev. Luigi Gioia, Episode 50, Feb. 23, 2018

2. Your conception of God will change throughout your life. That is O.K. (and necessary).

Richard Rohr, Franciscan, author and spiritual guru, is an inspiration to millions of spiritual seekers. Though, to be honest, we had only surface-level knowledge of his work. But after we spoke with the comedian Pete Holmes about how much his life had been changed by Father Rohr’s wisdom, we knew we had to go straight to the source.

“Most Western spirituality, reflecting Western civilization, has been a spirituality of climbing, achieving, performing, perfectionism, of proving yourself worthy to an always demanding God. And what Jesus reveals is not a spirituality of ascent but a spirituality of descent. [Or as St. Therese of Lisieux put it] you come to God much more through your mistakes than through achieving personal perfection. That’s a 180 degree turn from the way I was raised to understand Christianity. That’s the big switch. When that hit me already as a Franciscan novice, when I was 19, that changed everything. And much of the rest of my life has been trying to understand that more deeply.”

– Richard Rohr, O.F.M., Episode 169, Feb. 19, 2021

3. Give spiritual direction a try—and do not worry if it does not fit the usual mold.

One of the biggest lessons we’ve learned from the show? You (or at least we) cannot live out our spirituality alone. Every week, we talk with our (now former) colleague Eric Sundrup, S.J., about what’s going on in our spiritual lives. In the telling, the explaining, the retelling and listening, God’s presence becomes abundantly clearer. God is relationship; God comes to us in relationship, too. And so, if you have never tried spiritual direction, do not be afraid to try it out (and try it out again if it does not work out, with a different person and a different method).

“One of the key components to remember in spiritual direction...is the primary conversation is actually between you and God. The director is there to repeat and reflect, to point out where God is alive and active and what’s going on,

and what they see in the stories that someone shares.... I’ve found that are people afraid to ‘break up’ with their spiritual director, and I encourage people, ‘If this isn’t working, if my personality or my style doesn’t fit, don’t hesitate to go find another spiritual director.’”

– Eric Sundrup, S.J., Episode 104, May 24, 2019

Lessons About the Institutional Church

1. Women are already serving and leading the church. But their gifts are not yet fully recognized.

In a feature story for **America** in September 2021, Colleen Dulle, an associate editor and the host of America Media’s “Inside the Vatican,” profiled women who had risen to new heights in the historically cleric- and male-dominated Catholic hierarchy. Under Pope Francis, a historic number of women hold positions of leadership at the Vatican. But has he done enough?

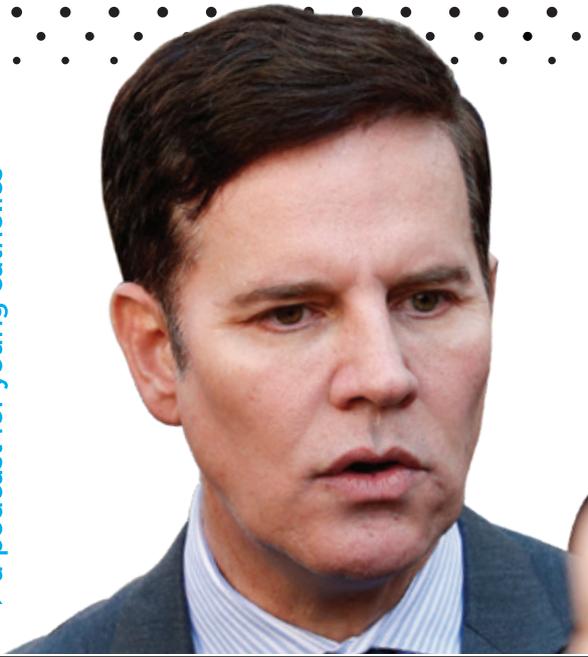
“I’m definitely among those who is sort of cheering when there is a new [woman appointed at the Vatican] every few months. But there was a quote from one woman who was appointed a few years ago that has always stuck with me. She says, ‘I can’t wait until this is not a story.’ I fall there: I can’t wait until this is not a story, but we’re not there yet.”

– Colleen Dulle, Episode 191, Oct. 1, 2021

While Pope Francis has created two commissions to study the history and theological underpinning of women deacons, ordination to the diaconate is open to only men. But Casey Stanton is not ready to give up on what she considers her call to ordained ministry. A co-director of Discerning Deacons, a project to engage Catholics in the active discernment by the church about women and the diaconate, has heard countless stories from women who share this calling—and she wants the church to hear them, too.

“There were three women on our little parish staff who all would have discerned a diaconal vocation if the door was opened. So that was part of the constellation for me: ‘Oh, we’re all out here. We’re just invisible somehow. And what would it mean for our church leaders to have an encounter with our call? And could that be an occasion for conversion, for learning something new about who can be ordained to what in our church?’”

– Casey Stanton, Episode 190, Sept. 24, 2021



CNS photo/Remo Casilli, Reuters

2. *The sexual abuse crisis is not over—and the church needs to listen to survivors.*

When Juan Carlos Cruz first came forward with the allegation that he had been abused by the notorious priest predator Fernando Karadima, the church in Chile disregarded the accusation, with one cardinal even saying it was hard to believe Juan Carlos was a victim because he is gay and “might have liked it.” And when Pope Francis visited Chile in 2018, the pope called allegations that a bishop had covered up Father Karadima’s abuse “slander.” But Juan Carlos refused to remain silent, and his advocacy for abuse victims eventually got him a private meeting with the pope—and an apology.

“I feel [I got] some of my dignity back. But at the same time, when I met with [Pope Francis], I told him: ‘I cannot be the exception. I have to be the norm. Not that every survivor has to come and see you and greet you—and I am honored that you did that with me—but everybody needs justice’.... It’s important that other survivors believe and know that someone will hear them. The church has to change that paradigm, that way of thinking that the survivors are enemies of the church and want to destroy the church. Quite the opposite. There are a lot of people who have been destroyed by the church.”

– Juan Carlos Cruz, Episode 87, Nov. 30, 2018

Hans Zollner, S.J., has dedicated his life to protecting children from the horrific crime of sexual abuse. A psychologist and Jesuit priest, he has guided the church’s efforts to bring healing to survivors and to prevent such abuse from happening again. Despite the progress the



EPISODE 87

JUAN CARLOS CRUZ,

a survivor of clerical sexual abuse, says the church still needs to listen to the pain and anger of all victims of abuse.

church has made in recent decades, he says Catholic leaders must go deeper in their encounter with the pain and anger of survivors.

“From the side of the victims, the biggest obstacle [to healing] is that they have encountered a good number of church representatives who have not listened to them. Most victims, survivors that I’ve met only request that they be listened to with an open mind, open ears and an open heart. And many of them didn’t encounter that attitude but encountered a legal approach, a psychological approach, a coldness and the rejection of any requests of a personal encounter.

So the biggest obstacle is that some church leaders did not really sit down, take time, be quiet and take on whatever victims wanted to express, be it rage, anger, sadness, accusations. Because this is for almost all of them the starting point of some journey of reconciliation.”

– Hans Zollner, S.J., Episode 103, May 17, 2019

3. *We need to pay attention to, and be in relationship with, the capital-C church, without letting it dominate our spiritual lives.*

We sometimes joke that our faith lives were better before we knew the names of any bishops. And while church politics and intra-Catholic culture wars can be disheartening at times, we have had the great blessing to interview several bishops on the show. It was a stark lesson that “the bishops” or “the U.S.C.C.B.” is a very different reality than the individual person of “Bishop So-and-So.” One of those prelates is Bishop Frank Caggiano of Bridgeport, Conn. Bishop Caggiano has been putting into action Pope Francis’ call for a “listening church.”

More than one thing can be true: 1) Bishops are our shepherds and teachers. 2) They hold almost all the authority in the church (which feels maddening at times). 3) They are our brothers in Christ, baptized the same way we



EPISODE 197

BISHOP FRANK CAGGIANO

of Bridgeport, Conn., has been putting into action Pope Francis' call for a "listening church."



CNS photo/Vatican Media

all were, who want to listen to us and share in the mission of the church with us.

In other words, believe it or not, bishops are just people, too.

"I think what animates Pope Francis in large part is this beautiful, basic theological idea of communion—that we're all linked together, all humanity is linked together because we're all made in God's image and likeness. And among believers we're linked together by grace and the Holy Spirit and in baptism. And so, we could disagree, we could even fight, but we're all in this together to be partners in mission. We all have a role to play in preaching the Gospel and moving the mission of the church forward. So I think it is a concept that for young adults, in particular, resonates so deeply because no one wants you to speak for them."

– Most Rev. Frank Caggiano, Episode 197, Nov. 12, 2021

Lessons About Interfaith Dialogue

1. Dialogue does not mean compromising on your beliefs (and it can be a lot of fun).

It is a poorly kept secret that we borrowed generously from the Jewish podcast "Unorthodox," from Tablet Studios when thinking about the format and spirit of "Jesuitical." The hosts of that show, Stephanie Butnick, Liel Leibovitz and Mark Oppenheimer, give their always funny, often irreverent takes on the "News of the Jews" (see "Signs of the Times") and talk with one Jewish and one gentile guest about politics, food, movies, identity and so much more. The hosts of "Unorthodox" taught us that you can be unapologetically Jewish (or Catholic) and still engage with people of other faiths as long as you are authentic, curious and entertaining.

"Each week we have a Jewish guest and a 'Gentile of the Week.' And the Gentile of the week gets to bring a question to us, and it's something that they know about in

advance, so they can think about it, and we usually try to get the question in advance so we can give a real answer. And those have become some of the most interesting and complicated and thorny and theological discussions that we have on the show.

Because when you have a Jewish guest, we have a common language, right? Whereas with our Gentiles, there are so many things that you kind of want to know about people that you just never felt like you could ask."

– Stephanie Butnick, Episode 120, Nov. 22, 2019

2. Catholics must reckon with the church's past (and present) antisemitism and Islamophobia.

In the fall of 2021, Unorthodox's Mark Oppenheimer joined us for a more somber conversation to mark the five-year anniversary of the massacre at the Tree of Life synagogue. On Oct. 27, 2018, a gunman murdered 11 people attending Shabbat services—the deadliest attack on the Jewish community in U.S. history, and one far too few Americans remember.

"One of the kind of humbling things or kind of poignant and sad things is how many people have said to me over the last three years, 'Oh, you're writing a book on Pittsburgh. What happened there?' And even after I say, 'Oh, the shooting,' there's still this beat where most people don't realize there was a shooting there.... And that includes a lot of Jews, especially secular Jews or Jews who are not synagogue-goers. It includes almost every Gentile. [And] I think that part of what's going on there is that Jewish life doesn't count for quite as much as other lives in the current political discourse.... People love Anne Frank, but most Americans are not particularly concerned with the ongoing institutional safety of elderly synagogue-attending Jews on a Saturday in Pittsburgh."

– Mark Oppenheimer, Episode 193, Oct. 15, 2021

Jordan Denari-Duffner remembers an anti-Muslim chain

LIEL LEBOVITZ,
MARK OPPENHEIMER
& STEPHANIE BUTNICK



are the hosts of “Unorthodox,” the universe’s leading Jewish podcast, and the podcast big siblings of “Jesuitical.”

email that was sent around her Catholic community when she was younger and thinking: How could these faithful, loving Catholics not realize that this message was wrong? In the years since, Jordan has written two books and many articles on Catholic-Muslim relations, drawing upon her experience living and studying among Muslim neighbors in Amman, Jordan. She seeks to help others examine their prejudices in order to more faithfully live out their calling as Christians.

“One of the issues that I’ve noticed in Catholic circles is that a lot of Catholics will read books about Islam that are not by Muslims. It will be by people who maybe are Catholic or from a different faith tradition or of no religion, who sometimes set up an us-versus-them dichotomy in their presentation of Islam. And I think it’s really important to learn about Islam from Muslims themselves.”

– Jordan Denari-Duffner, Episode 184, May 28, 2021

3. Catholics must be involved with interfaith dialogue, because our culture is increasingly interfaith.

Eboo Patel, the founder of Interfaith Youth Core, a nonprofit organization that promotes interfaith cooperation, is worried about religious illiteracy in the United States. Ignoring religion, he said, is like “going to medical school and not learning about the circulatory system.” It is precisely in our divided times that Eboo believes we need to draw upon the diverse religious traditions of this country as a source of a more fundamental unity.

“There is a whole set of things that religious teaching offers to citizenship in a diverse democracy. One is, religious traditions have this capacious idea of who belongs. In Islam, it’s that all of us carry the breath of God. In Christianity, it’s that we are all created in the image of God. And so there is this sense that we are all sacred and we’re all sanctified.

Religions also, unsurprisingly, have different doctrines. I, of course, consider the Prophet Muhammad, may the peace and blessings of God be upon him, as the final prophet. That is not the way members of the Church of

EPISODE 120

JESUITICAL
▶ a podcast for young Catholics



Matthew Lipson Photography, courtesy Stroum JCC

Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints view it. [But] religions have teachings about crossing divides and reaching out and working with not just your opponent but your enemy. Jesus’ famous dictum ‘Love your enemy’ is central to that. All of these things help us live in a diverse democracy, where there are really profound disagreements and cavernous divides, which is exactly what we are experiencing at this moment.”

– Eboo Patel, Episode 156, Nov. 6, 2020

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A Crisis of the Common Good

By Bill McCormick

*How can we make the common good
something more than a slogan?*



Ismael Parra/Unsplash

Volunteers at a food bank prepare groceries for distribution.

Pope Francis, Father Sosa wonders if we feel any sense of urgency to act upon this problem.

Father Sosa's appeal to the common good is at once traditional and subversive. It is traditional insofar as the common good has been one of the fundamental concepts of political thought and practice since the time of the ancient Greeks. Within Catholic circles, it has been a privileged notion for centuries and has received heavy emphasis in scholastic thought.

Father Sosa's praise of the common good is subversive, however, insofar as its stock has sunk in recent centuries. The common good has been defined in increasingly economic terms in modern times, depriving it of much of its robust meaning. And our current moment would seem to be an inauspicious time to reverse that course, given that we live in a world in which there is little confidence in politics and little hope for political consensus.

This is not the end of the story, however, for the common good has enjoyed a small renaissance of late. It has been invoked, for instance, in two areas: first, in efforts to fight Covid-19, and second, within debates about the future of American conservatism.

The danger with invocations of the common good, of course, is that they risk becoming a performance. As Yuval Levin has argued, rhetoric has become the substance of U.S. politics in recent years, a trend exacerbated rather than created by Donald J. Trump. Performing on social media, television and elsewhere allows one to posture as though one were fighting for a solution, but too often it becomes a substitute for the hard, slow work of governance. Performative embraces of the common good or the use of the common good as a rhetorical tool do little to advance the common good as a political aim. At best, they claim the mantle of the common good for a narrow vision of the good. At worst, they reinforce the ideological connotations of the term. In such circumstances, the "common good" is just another tool of power.

How is the common good not yet another abstraction that assures we do not address real problems? How can we prevent it from becoming a rallying cry for those who feel they have accomplished something by merely pronouncing the term?

In some ways the answer is in Father Sosa's own statement: a shared sense. The quest for the common good is not simply a concept; it is an activity. And if we do not experience the pursuit of the common good as a shared activity—as common—then it has little hope of reforming us or our society.

What is the greatest challenge facing the world today? The answer from Arturo Sosa, S.J., superior general of the Society of Jesus, may surprise you: "In my opinion, the greatest challenge is that humanity has not developed a shared sense of the common good."

This answer comes in *Walking With Ignatius*, a book-length interview with Father Sosa conducted by the journalist Darío Menor. For Father Sosa, at the heart of many of today's challenges is the ongoing struggle to find what unites us. Like Pope Francis, he worries about individualism and certain forms of collectivism, particularly populism, which cut people off from the common good. And, like

The Common Good: How Common Is It?

How can we make the common good something more than a slogan? A primary method is to ensure that its pursuit makes a difference in how we view our neighbor—that is, that it helps us come to see others precisely as our neighbors.

Catholics often imagine the common good in distinct but easily confused ways. One prevalent understanding of it is as a set of conditions that allows each of us to pursue our own individual goods. This definition, with differing emphases, structures much of our social life and imagination in the West, and it is not always bad. But too often this imagination of the common good exists as a defense of individualism: for the few to profit at the expense of the many, as Pope Francis notes in “Laudato Si” and St. John Paul II notes in “Centesimus Annus.”

It is also important to notice what that definition excludes: the idea and experience of social cooperation being anything other than instrumental. Left out, in other words, is the notion of an intrinsic common good, whereby we are built up into a society of virtuous, holy people—a genuine community.

The common good, if it is truly common, unites us as a society in activities for a common purpose. And that unity as a society is precisely part of what makes it good. It orders us in reason toward justice, creating social bonds that can be strengthened by charity.

What this description suggests is that we often struggle more with the notion of “common” than with the notion of “good.”

Christians as Citizens and Neighbors

How can Christians find opportunities to actualize what is common about the common good? The common good will be real when we experience connections between our individual lives and our common life, when we can name concrete places where and activities in which we have that experience. And so in some ways, our problem is more practical than theoretical.

Many Christians today in the political realm are split between “bottom-up” and “top-down” approaches to re-invigorating our sense of the common good: in short, either enacting the “Benedict option” or seizing control of the administrative state. This dichotomy makes sense when one thinks of Christians as citizens, caught in a mass society between the individual and the collective.

But when one thinks of Christians as members of the church, one sees that they are situated in a space between

the “top” and the “bottom.” Churches are “intermediary” institutions in classical liberal thought, existing as go-betweens between the state and individual. Even if that conceptualization is inadequate, at least it conveys that ecclesial forms of life are close enough to be guided and animated by individuals but big enough to enable common life. They are spaces, in other words, where individuals can learn to be agents within a bigger community.

Parish life, religious life, ecclesial lay movements—there are many spaces in which Catholics can renew their commitment to the common good as a shared pursuit. The most obvious of these is the parish.

This emphasis on the pursuit of the common good as an activity has two possible benefits: to emphasize what is common about the common good, and to ward off the risk of performative invocations of it. It does not eliminate those risks, of course. The challenge of recovering the common good is practical as much as conceptual, and even spiritual: to allow reflection and practice to inform one another mutually in a contemplative exercise toward the kingdom.

Where should Christians start? The need is so great that Christians could start almost anywhere, but I would suggest starting with clerical sexual abuse. It is the crime by which we Christians have hurt people the most in the most profound way. And the church has done so as a community, whether it knows that or not. Perhaps, then, the church should come together as a community too.

The process of coming to terms with clerical sexual abuse will not be easy. The political scientist Dan Philpott of Notre Dame has described it as “an integrated portfolio of restorative practices”: common activities of healing, truth-seeking, reconciliation—and perhaps even forgiveness.

The exercise would be an admission, even an embrace, of powerlessness, of poverty. It would be a moment of conversion for all involved. For it forces upon us an unavoidable question that Philpott frames well: “Does the Body of Christ—*qua* the Body of Christ—offer a response to the sex abuse scandals?”

CNS photo/Don Dell, S.J.



For Arturo Sosa, S.J., the superior general of the Jesuits, there is a special role for the "Ignatian family" in helping the common good become a reality.

Every parish has survivors of clerical sex abuse. Perhaps the person next to you in the pew at Mass is one such person. What better way to rebuild the parish than to start where its wounds run deepest?

The Society of Jesus and the Common Good

As Father Sosa suggests, there is a special role for Jesuits and the "Ignatian family" in all of this. The Society of Jesus brings many gifts of value to such service: above all, a flexible desire to serve wherever the greatest fruit is to be had. If I am right, then the greatest fruits would involve showing that the pursuit of the common good can be truly common and truly formative, not merely performative.

In societies where many avoid politics as a contest of power-hungry ideologies, the challenge for partisans of the common good is that the quest for the common good is non-ideological, or trans-ideological. That is not easy, especially since most people are influenced by ideologies. Being honest about that will be important.

At its best, Ignatian spirituality aspires to the capa-

cious universalism of its inspirer, St. Ignatius Loyola. That has more than a little relevance for the problems of today; "Humanity has not developed a shared sense of the common good," Father Sosa tells us.

It can be hard to imagine how humanity could recover that sense. To the extent that the church desires to capture the aspiration for the unity of the human family, then we can be sure that the fulfillment of that unity will come, if in God's time and by his grace alone.

And to the extent that those influenced by St. Ignatius Loyola aspire to serve such great dreams, then let us be bold to imagine cooperating with God's grace.

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SEALED WITH THE GIFT

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Catholic Mass on North Carolina's death row was often an oasis in the desolation of my confinement. None who attended were especially pious or reverent. Washing hands prior to service, not cursing in front of the priest and participating at all the appropriate moments proved challenging enough. Then there was the singing. I generally like to sing and did my best to stay in tune, but most of the guys spoke or mumbled hymns through gritted teeth, as if the act of making a joyful noise in prison was painful. Sometimes it is.

When I arrived on death row in 1999 and began attending Mass, there were eight of us: me, Angel, Elias, Eric, Jeff, Mule, Pat and Terry. We were a small group of Catholics in a prison dominated by Protestant Christians and Muslims. For decades, the Protestant chaplains refused to acknowledge Catholicism or provide services to anyone claiming the faith. When Angel got to death row in 1996, upon discovering the anti-Catholic sentiment, he wrote a letter to Pope John Paul II and expressed his desire to practice Catholicism, receive Communion and give his confession to a priest.

Angel never received a direct response from the Vatican, but several months later the prison chaplain grudgingly announced that priests from the Church of St. Francis of Assisi in Raleigh would begin conducting Mass for us.

We met on Thursday afternoons for roughly an hour. Seated at steel tables in the dayroom of the church block, so designated because all religious services were held there, we sang, read and discussed Scripture. We received the Holy Eucharist and tried to develop our faith in God.

I was not new to Catholicism. My siblings and I had all been altar servers at two Catholic parishes in Maine. Mom taught Sunday school classes for children. She had strong opinions about other parishioners and, for a while, pushed back against what she saw as the falsity of their faith, but the seeming hypocrisy grew to be too much. She tried other churches in the area; none seemed to fit. Ultimately, we stopped attending because she did. Given the chance to opt out, as children we chose the free Sunday.

Jeff came from a background similar to mine—white middle class—and his parents had attended St. Francis of Assisi Church since the time it was founded in Raleigh. Jeff and Eric, a Costa Rican immigrant who was a Vietnam veteran and former Army captain, were the only members to have received the sacrament of confirmation prior to their incarceration. Our consistent attendance at Mass prompted Father Dan to offer Angel, Pat, Terry, Elias, Henry and me a chance to be confirmed. We all accepted.

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At first, I attended Mass on death row to escape the noise and cigarette smoke on my block, where people shouted to be heard over the television, slammed dominoes on tables, squabbled, laughed, cursed and made thinking impossible in the crowded space. Not that many people at the prison wanted us to think. Not the guards who carried out executions. Not the doctors who participated and liberally prescribed opioids and toxic levels of psych meds. Not the nurses who gave out extra pills. And certainly not us.

Catholic Mass became a respite in the way an A.A. meeting in a church basement sobered some alcoholics. The priests mainly cared that we kept coming back and were respectful, knowing we had little time and not wanting to drive anyone away. It did not matter that Pat grinned and made faces while we sang, or that Terry was so heavily medicated he mistook pop psychology for Scripture (“God helps those who help themselves”), or that Eric was ready to argue with everyone. Father Dan and Father Mark were patient. They politely corrected misunderstandings and answered (most of the time) obnoxious questions, even though we knew better. *No, Catholics don't worship Mary, they venerate her. Saints are not ghosts and the Holy Spirit is not a saint or a ghost. Yes, even the people Mule called “heathens” could enter heaven by the grace of God.*

We sat in a horseshoe around two tables with the priest at the top, me on his left, then Elias, Angel, Jeff, Pat, Terry, Mule and Eric. Father Dan gave the six of us who wanted to be confirmed a study guide and a book about choosing Catholicism as adults. Mule (he was called “Henry” only at Mass; even guards called him Mule) and I lived on the same cell block and studied together when there was a lull in the noise and when we were not high, neither of which was often. My questions continued, some of them earnest and genuine; others would have embarrassed my mother. Jeff jumped in on the more philosophical discussions with the priests, ready to argue a secular or scientific point. Angel largely said nothing, only interjecting if some historical fact was in dispute. Sometimes we directed questions at each other, shared bits about our background in the church, and got off topic, but the priests gently brought us back.

“Okay guys. Let's profess our faith.”

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Though I went to Mass as a refuge from jail life, I remained defiant and angry inside. Faith in God was a question in my mind that would not be easily answered. I think Elias, an older man, saw this in me. During our discussions he mostly listened, sometimes commenting but always attentive. One day, after seeing me make the Sign of the Cross with my left



I WAS ONE OF THE YOUNGEST PEOPLE ON DEATH ROW AT THE TIME, TURNING 21 A MONTH BEFORE BEING SENTENCED TO DEATH.



hand, he pulled me aside after Mass.

“Lyle,” he said, his Jordanian roots heavily accenting his English, “Why you make the Sign of the Cross with left hand? This is bad. You should make it with the right.” He demonstrated until I nodded. “Good. You seem a nice boy.” Elias patted me on the shoulder, stern but pleasant.

I was one of the youngest people on death row at the time, turning 21 a month before being sentenced to death. This meant I got called “boy” a lot, especially by the older guys from the South. Elias acknowledged my youth, but was not disrespectful, just kind.

Elias was generally quiet and unobtrusive. A machinist in the Jordanian Army before immigrating to the United States, he had a knack for finessing the few items we could possess. Elias would, for example, sharpen a disposable razor purchased from the canteen for 15 cents. Where I might use one a few times and throw it away, he re-used a disposable razor for months. Elias had a pair of black dress shoes he polished every day, only wearing them to Mass or when he had visitors. When the bottoms wore out, he re-soled them with cutouts from a plastic-rubber trash can. After the prison banned personal shoes and he had to send them to a friend, Elias was disgusted.

“Why do they do this? These people—they have no mercy. Praise God I have learned better.”

Elias was convicted and sentenced to death for killing his wife in the midst of a bitter argument over her cheating.

He pleaded guilty, but the district attorney charged him with first-degree murder, which, in North Carolina, until 2001, mandated a capital trial. Elias did not know this when he pleaded guilty. But the district attorney knew it. So did Elias’s attorney; but there was no offer of second-degree murder. Elias did not try to justify his actions, expressing only remorse and sorrow for his children, for whom he prayed at every Mass.

...

After 12 weeks of study, Elias, Pat, Terry, Mule, Angel and I received the sacrament of confirmation, the rite that sealed our entrance into the Catholic faith as adults. Bishop F. Joseph Gossman presided, wearing heavy, burgundy vestments and carrying an oak staff curled at the top like an unfurled fern. He greeted us like long lost sons, not grown men on death row. Father Dan and Father Mark served the bishop, one lighting incense in a brass censer while the other held a book containing the rite’s liturgy, prayers and vows.

We were allowed use of a small conference room for the occasion, barely big enough to contain eight death-row prisoners, two priests, the bishop and chaplain and a guard. It was nice to have a little privacy for what was a special moment in a place devoid of them. Elias looked harried and nervous. Pat cracked jokes about the bishop’s garb and asked to borrow his staff. Terry talked quietly with Eric while struggling to stay awake. Mule and I stood in a corner watching everything get set up, laughing at Terry when he fell asleep as Eric talked about the military. Jeff and Angel watched the priests and spoke to each other in Spanish.

Pursuing faith in God while elected leaders and the courts invoked the same God to kill us—“eye for eye, tooth for tooth”—was difficult at first. It is like digging into rocky soil looking for a place to plant a seed and finding more rock. Then the shovel breaks and it refuses to rain. Part of the effort is desperation, a need that folds the body around it until ordinary thought becomes impossible.

Some people mock prisoners who experience come-to-Jesus moments, claiming it is a pretense—anything to save one’s neck and gain compassion from a secular world. Maybe there are a handful of people who mistakenly believe that works. They are usually the same people who learn about prison from TV shows and films. I returned to my Catholic upbringing, professing a faith I did not completely feel, because I was suffering and needed answers from God. *Why have you allowed me to suffer? Why did you abandon me?*

As a child, when I was an altar server, the priests often sent me on errands that required crossing before the altar. A giant crucifix hung suspended from the ceiling and every time, no matter how much of a hurry I was in or whether

or not the church was empty, I genuflected and made the Sign of the Cross with my right hand. If I forgot, my feet stopped of their own accord and brought me back to kneel. This ingrained obedience and reverence to a God who often seemed absent had waned over time, but enough remained to continue seeking him out. I knew no quick answers would be forthcoming, but at least I was not alone. Others searched for the same reason, digging in the rocky ground of our lives even when it seemed impenetrable. Elias, Mule, Terry, Pat, Angel and I, in receiving the sacrament of confirmation as adults, affirmed our dedication to that struggle.

The lessons taught to us by the priests were simple. Love one another. Love God. Forgive one another. Read the Word of God. Repeat. How we interpreted that in our daily lives varied: I listened, Pat laughed, Terry and Eric reminisced; Angel dispensed kindness, Jeff charity, Mule devotion, and Elias compassion. Together we prayed, learned and shared our strengths while connecting at Mass and beyond.

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Sometimes reality cuts so deeply and savagely you feel the cold numbness of loss before any blood appears. It was like this the day of an execution. First, the executioner's meal appeared behind the large windows of a locked office. Two long tables laden with food for a picnic—several two-liter bottles of soda, large bags of chips, dips, cold cuts, cookies, paper plates, Solo cups, plastic utensils and a colorfully frosted sheet cake. Death row prisoners filed by the display on the way to and back from the chow hall. Staff claimed all that food was snacks for guards serving the execution shift, but sheet cake is a strange snack unless you are the executioner celebrating a job well done. I had already witnessed over a dozen such celebratory meals and knew enough to mentally prepare for what was to come.

Mule was put to death Sept. 13, 2003.

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The hardest discussions at Mass were the ones that never took place. After Mule's execution, Father Dan's homily was short and fell into a bottomless silence. None of us wanted to be there, and nothing was said for several minutes. Being confirmed did not alter our despair nor make it less necessary to keep grief on a tight leash. More executions were scheduled for the year. In some ways it was easier to embrace fatalism, the inevitability of death. It made talking about an execution a frivolous exercise for the living. We were already dead.

Finally, Elias spoke. "Father, you know, it's hard to live in this place. They have no mercy. They kill us—young, old, black, white, sick, healthy—then call it justice. Prison is enough, but still they kill us. Where is the church, Father?"

It may have been the hardest question any of us asked. Father Dan attempted to explain the disconnect between Vatican teaching and America's love affair with capital punishment. That devout Catholics could be totally against abortion, contraception and embryonic stem cell treatment, yet support the death penalty was baffling. I felt that the U.S. bishops were too quiet on the matter, appearing more like bureaucrats than disciples of Jesus Christ. In the early 2000s, the loudest and most consistent voice cutting through Catholic hypocrisy and calling for the right-to-life from conception to natural death was not the pope, cardinals or bishops, but a nun from Louisiana. Sister Helen Prejean's advocacy for the men and women on death row forced anyone who kneels before the cross to answer a question: Can you really be a Christian, a follower of the Son of God, and support the death of your neighbor?

The governor would have to answer this question when Elias received his execution date in 2005: Nov. 18.

At his final Mass with us, before being taken to death watch for the final 72 hours of his life, Elias received the sacrament of the anointing of the sick. When it came time to say prayers and intentions, my friend prayed for his children and asked for mercy, as he always had. Then he spoke to us: "Thank you, brothers, for being with me. For accepting me. Peace be with all of you and your families." After the service we each gave Elias a hug and said our goodbyes.

I was naïvely hopeful that then-Governor Michael Easley would commute Elias's sentence. There was reason to believe he might, since Elias's adult children, who were also the children of the woman he killed, advocated for clemency. They met with the governor and begged him to spare their father, saying they did not want to lose another parent to the same murder.

Elias's children also spoke with the local media, again pleading with the governor to show mercy. They pleaded with the district attorney who prosecuted Elias, rightly arguing that as victims of the crime, they should have a say in the punishment. Absent from their public pleas was any support from a victims' rights group, which would have bolstered their cause.

Elias Syriani was put to death on Nov. 18, 2005.

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Pat had a fairly insouciant attitude about executions, including his own. "There's no need to get worked up over it. It's gonna happen whether I want it or not." Before he left for death watch, and after his final Mass with us, Pat cracked jokes about going to see the big leprechaun in the sky. "I'm part Irish and they're executing me on St. Patrick's Day—that has to count for something."

Patrick Moody was put to death on March 17, 2006.

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Celebrating the Last Supper often feels like a distant flourish of faith passed down over 2,000 years. Connecting to its true meaning is a tenuous act made even more difficult by faulty institutions and flawed human beings. Early in my faith journey I thought the answers to my questions lay beyond my reach. But then I grew up on death row. In less than seven years, I lived while 33 human beings, some of whom were friends and brothers, were exterminated. It changed how I understood life and death, a terrible knowledge that drew me closer to God. Slowly, I have come to realize we were never abandoned. The answer had been there all along in the eucharistic prayer:

For on the night he was betrayed
he himself took bread,
and, giving you thanks, he said the blessing,
broke the bread and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take this, all of you, and eat of it,
for this is my body,
which will be given up for you.
In a similar way, when supper was ended,
he took the chalice,
and, giving you thanks, he said the blessing,

and gave the chalice to his disciples, saying:
Take this, all of you, and drink from it,
for this is the chalice of my blood,
the blood of the new and eternal covenant,
which will be poured out for you and for many
for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this in memory of me.

When I was a kid, as an altar server I had to watch the priest during this prayer. As he raised the bread, then the wine, my task was to ring a set of brass bells. "Ring them as hard as you can," one priest told me. "Make sure everyone hears them." Many years later on death row, sitting at a table and watching the priest perform this rite, I still knew the exact moment at which the bells rang. The clangor crashed into the bottomless silence, banishing despair and defeating death if only we believed. That sound was not just an answer to our suffering, but an end to it. Clear in its reminder. Absolute in its purity. Certain in the promise of eternal life.

Lyle C. May is on death row in North Carolina for two counts of first-degree murder; he contests the convictions and sentencing. He is a prison journalist, an Ohio University alumnus and member of the Alpha Sigma Lambda honor society. This article is written in memory of the Catholic Community of St. Francis of Assisi confirmation class of 2000, Central Prison, North Carolina.



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To Be Alive Now, in This Moment of Constant Grief

By Devin Kelly

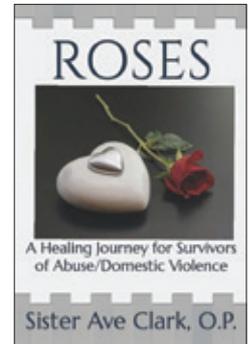
I could say anything about the rain. How, when split & shorn into a thousand tiny droplets, it sounds like a finger run against a forehead. I could say something about the rain the night a husband talked to us three young men he called his boys about his wife, who called us her boys, & who had died months before, & who had died young. I could say I forgot the rain. It was out there, though, out there, where each streetlight burned a fresh hazel of gold around what seemed a thousand waterfalls suspended. I could say that, yes, & when the father turned to me & said *you know something about poetry, right?* I know I said yes, & when he began, his giggle a high octave just above grief, an octave, one could say, to cover grief, to recite from memory the Cummings poem he recites from memory each night as a prayer, I could say I felt what rain feels the moment it touches earth, which is to say like a warm bath stepping over & on & then all the way through you. Sometimes someone, instead of saying *you wouldn't understand*, assumes you do, & when they open their mouth, you can see the rose red of their heart. & so, when he opened his eyes, it was raining in the room where we sat, which was inside the rain outside, which was inside this thing we call the world, which was inside space, which was inside time, which is a sort of place where everything happens all at once. So I could say something about the rain then being the same rain that fell the day I went to see his wife dying, his wife who I called my second mom, who, when I saw her, was so small she could have slipped inside a pillowcase, who was there then, & who is here with us now, in this poem, & in the room where this poem exists, the way you, reading this, close your eyes at night sometimes to feel less alone, & the way you are less alone, in that world inside a world, that world where everything is all right because nothing has happened yet, & nothing still happens, even now, & now, & even now longer.

Devin Kelly has published his work in *Longreads*, *The Guardian*, *LitHub*, *The Year's Best Sportswriting and other publications*, and has written two books of poetry. He teaches English at *Comp Sci High in the Bronx*.

This book is a gift to the people of God, especially those who need healing from abuse and domestic violence. Like a rose, survivors can bloom and arise to new life. Surviving can make you stronger, wiser and more hopeful; but most of all it can give you a compassionate heart to share with others. "I will give you a new heart and place a new spirit within you." (Ezekiel 36:26)

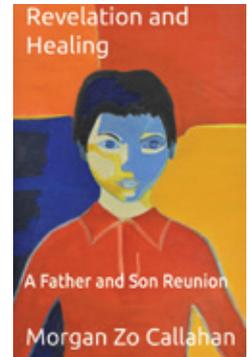
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Revelation and Healing: A Father and Son Reunion

recounts the author's slow journey from an adoption that left him longing for his biological mother and wondering about his biological father. Discovering, while in high school, his mother's identity, years later he found that of his biological father, Lionel Durand (1920-1961), a Black man born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Suddenly the author realized the source of his own immediate empathy as a boy with Martin Luther King Jr. and the civil rights movement he led. The author shares the often-shocking details of his adoption, and the therapies that brought him healing, therapies helpful not only to adoptees but to all who need healing from emotional suffering and losses of all kinds. With filial admiration, the author traces the life of his beloved father, Lionel Durand, friends with de Gaulle and Picasso, an internationally acclaimed newsman and journalist, who fought in the French Resistance during World War II, twice imprisoned, twice escaped, and whose struggles for peace and justice mirror those of our own day. Welcome to this reading journey and its wondrous surprises.



Cover painting by Lionel Durand



Lionel Durand broadcasting for Voice of America

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Janez Sever, S.J.

‘There Are No Snow Days in Siberia’

A report from the only Catholic secondary school in Russia

By Thomas M. Simisky

Language often fails us. For instance, the school where I currently serve is located in the middle of Siberia. When I arrived here in September to take on leadership of Tomsk Catholic School, the only Catholic secondary school in Russia, I asked what seemed to be an obvious question given the local climate: “So, what’s our policy regarding snow days?” Quizzical looks. After further attempts to clarify what we do when it snows a lot or when temperatures drop to -40 degrees Celsius, I realized my words were not translating to a cultural reality. The reality is, there are no snow days in Siberia. Life just goes on.

“Preach the Gospel always; when necessary, use words.” This popular saying, often attributed to St. Francis of Assisi, consoles me in those moments when I cannot find the needed words. As a Jesuit, I have been blessed with various international experiences, many of which have required me to struggle to minister to people in languages foreign to me: Jamaican patois; Spanish for three years of my first studies in Bolivia and Chile; the great diversity of dialects and traditions gathered on any given Sunday doing Hispanic ministry in the United States. Maybe I should also count my years of high school teaching, as the minds of adolescents often seem like a far-away land.

Now I find myself with a new linguistic challenge: Russian. It is not an easy language to master, and I’m not getting any younger, but I have the confidence of knowing I’ve done this before and that the human brain really works wonders regarding language acquisition over time. I remind myself of the importance of nonverbal communication and also the old saying that people do not care how much you know until they know how much you care. High school students are particularly intuitive about whether you care about them or not. Therefore, my first and main task is to love those with whom God has placed me: students, parents, faculty and staff. That is the Gospel message.

All is new and opportunities abound. The local ordinary, Bishop Joseph Werth, S.J., of Novosibirsk, asked the Society of Jesus to assume responsibility for the parish and school of Tomsk in 2014. (The school educates students from kindergarten through 11th grade.) Given the recent transition, anything Ignatian is still relatively unknown in the school. Many of those concepts we take for granted in American Jesuit schools—the Spiritual Exercises, the Examen prayer, Kairos, community service, being men and women for and with others, finding God in all things—have not yet been woven into our school’s culture. Moreover,

Third graders enjoy an outdoor physical education class at Tomsk Catholic School in Siberia. The school educates students from kindergarten through 11th grade.

there are cultural obstacles. The word “Jesuit,” for example, has negative connotations in Russia, dating back to 19th-century disputes between Westernizers and Slavophiles. Furthermore, connecting with the global network of Jesuit schools is complicated by distance, expense and the fact that few of our teachers speak any language other than Russian. Where to begin?

My new motto has become, “Preach the Exercises always; when necessary, use words.” Until we build up a base of common Ignatian vocabulary and principles, we search for creative ways to help others experience the graces of the Spiritual Exercises through the language and religious imagination they currently possess.

One easy entry that makes sense to all is *cura personalis*, care for the whole person. Ignatian humanism has tremendous potential to heal the deep wounds that 70 years of dehumanizing Communist atheism inflicted upon society here. The state was god and the center of Communist creation. Ignatian humanism, indeed all of Catholic social teaching, prioritizes instead the dignity of the human person, created in God’s image.

And so, on Day One I began the shocking new practice of standing at the front door each morning to greet everyone by name. For the entire first week, staff kept coming up to me with worried looks: “Is there something we can help you with?” I would say that I just like saying hello to people. By the end of the first month, my daily presence became a new norm and a chance to further humanize the institution.

While morning prayer in the past consisted of reciting an Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be, I began shaking it up with Ignatian prayers and stories about Jesuit saints. Most important, I began giving Ignatian formation presentations at each quarterly faculty meeting, knowing that teachers can provide the multiplier effect. The real miracle of Jesuit education happens in the classroom through that student-teacher relationship.

Through all this, I trust that God’s grace and my enthusiasm for Ignatian spirituality will more than make up for those moments when words fail me. God always comes through when I ask for help. And so we continue to build up our mission team, knowing that Christ must be the principal and foundation of any efforts that will have meaningful, lasting success.

Discernment is ongoing as we navigate new terrain. Each step forward opens up new conditions of possibility. New companions on the journey appear in God’s time. My search continues for Russian speakers in our Jesuit schools who can share with our faculty and parents their experi-

ence of Ignatian education and how it has been a transformational experience for them. (Know anyone?). Gratitude fills my daily Examen prayer.

On these cold, dark, snowy days, as I watch our students trudging into the building all bundled up in their snowmobile suits, I laugh that the scene looks like a stream of little cosmonauts arriving from a frozen planet landscape to our international space station. And, yes, life goes on. Kids are kids. Smiles and laughing fill the air of the coat room as boots are clumsily pulled off, mittens drop, and the irrepressible goodness of God’s creation shines forth. Here we are, again contemplating the fourth week’s grace of divine love from the Spiritual Exercises: “Love is shown more in deeds than in words” (No. 230).

Thomas M. Simisky, S.J., is the executive director of Tomsk Catholic School in Siberia.

JESUIT SCHOOL SPOTLIGHT

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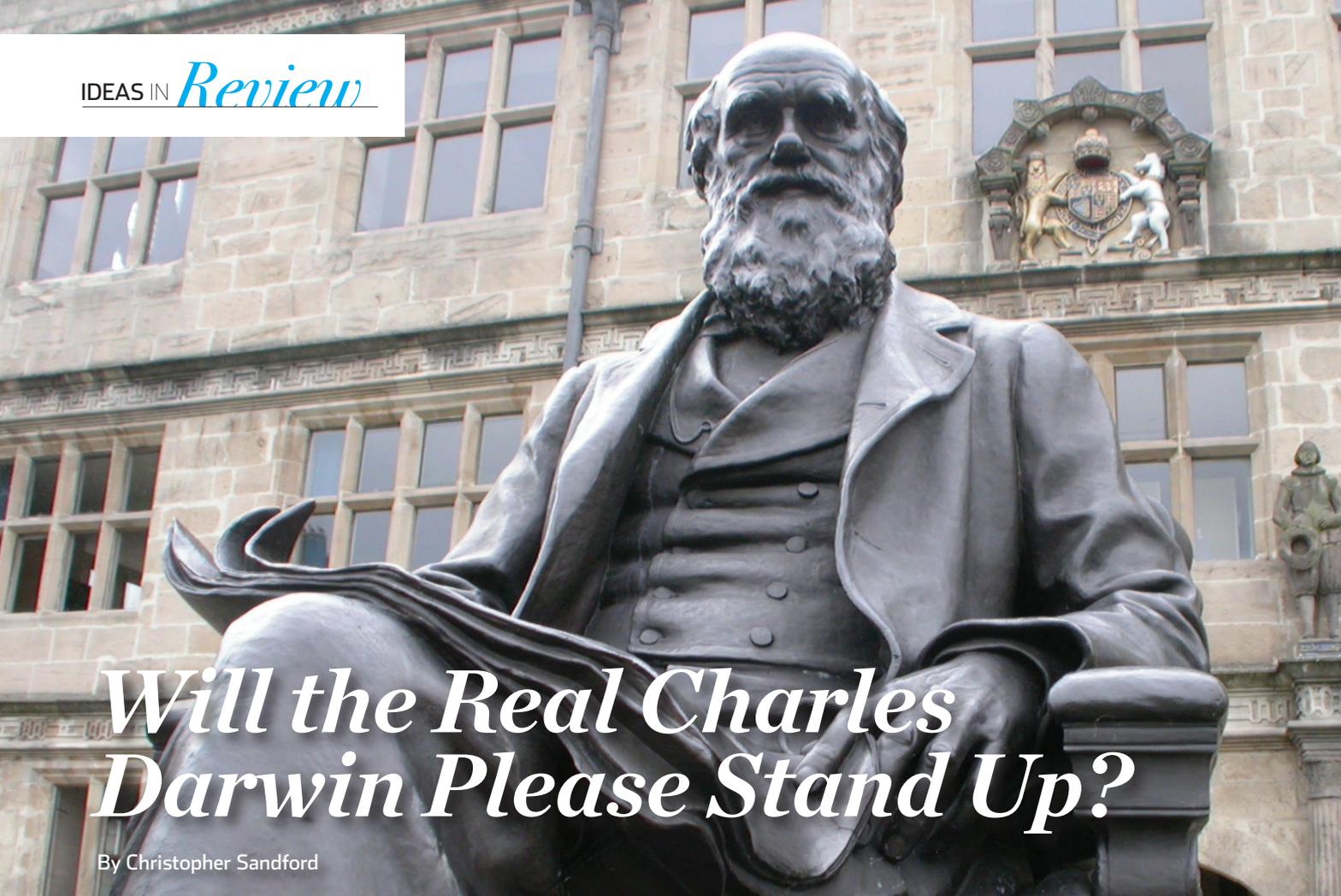
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Will the Real Charles Darwin Please Stand Up?

By Christopher Sandford

Was Charles Darwin a Darwinist?

This is a question we would do well to ponder in regard to Darwin's *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, which was published just over 150 years ago, in 1871. Darwin always described this volume as his "big book," in preference to his more famous *On the Origin of Species*. It was the first to deal at length with a recognizable theory of natural selection and also marked Darwin's first public use of the word "evolution." The book did not in fact originate the term "survival of the fittest"—the English philosopher-biologist Herbert Spencer had first used it in 1864—but it does offer an introduction to what later became known as Social Darwinism, or eugenics.

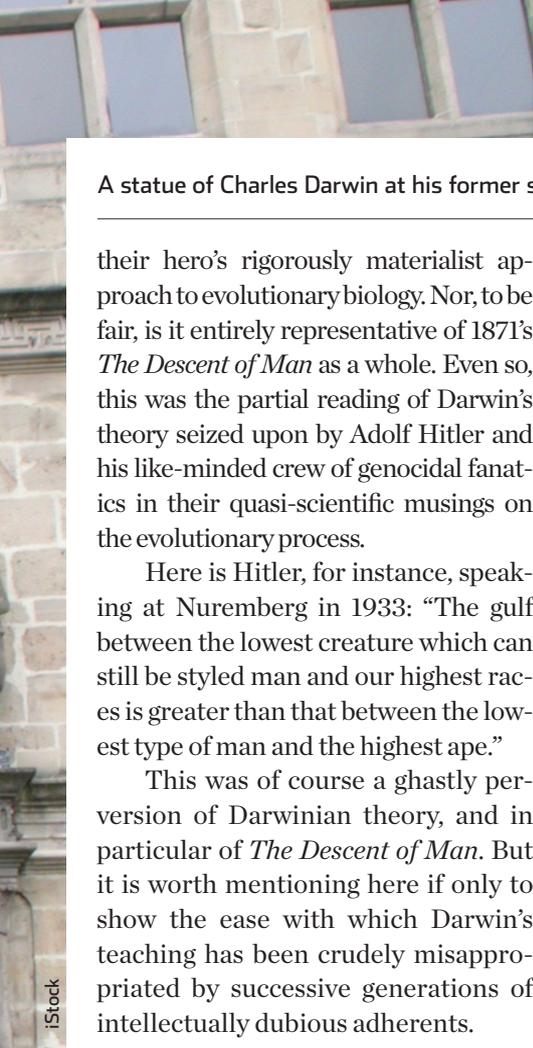
"With savages," Darwin wrote, in

perhaps the most striking passage in the text,

the weak in body or mind are soon eliminated. We civilised men, on the other hand, do our utmost to check the process of elimination. We build asylums for the imbecile, the maimed, and the sick; we institute poor-laws; and our medical men exert their utmost skill to save the life of every one to the last moment. There is reason to believe that vaccination has preserved thousands, who from a weak constitution would formerly have succumbed to small-pox. Thus the weak members of civilised societies

propagate their kind. No one who has attended to the breeding of domestic animals will doubt that this must be highly injurious to the race of man. It is surprising how soon a want of care, or care wrongly directed, leads to the degeneration of a domestic race; but excepting in the case of man himself, hardly any one is so ignorant as to allow his worst animals to breed. The aid we feel impelled to give to the helpless is mainly an incidental result of the instinct of sympathy.

This passage is not perhaps what most modern adherents of Darwinian thought have in mind when extolling



A statue of Charles Darwin at his former school, which is now Shrewsbury Library, in the United Kingdom

their hero's rigorously materialist approach to evolutionary biology. Nor, to be fair, is it entirely representative of 1871's *The Descent of Man* as a whole. Even so, this was the partial reading of Darwin's theory seized upon by Adolf Hitler and his like-minded crew of genocidal fanatics in their quasi-scientific musings on the evolutionary process.

Here is Hitler, for instance, speaking at Nuremberg in 1933: "The gulf between the lowest creature which can still be styled man and our highest races is greater than that between the lowest type of man and the highest ape."

This was of course a ghastly perversion of Darwinian theory, and in particular of *The Descent of Man*. But it is worth mentioning here if only to show the ease with which Darwin's teaching has been crudely misappropriated by successive generations of intellectually dubious adherents.

Forefathers

To take another example: Charles Darwin himself would almost certainly not have endorsed the views of many of his spiritual heirs today that the biblical story of creation and the evolution of the physical universe are mutually exclusive rather than twin manifestations of a divine act of self-revelation. It is a fallacy that never fails to strike me when I come to attend services in the nave of Westminster Abbey, just a few feet away from where Darwin lies buried.

Although Darwin published *On the Origin of Species* in 1859, his central contention that all life forms have descended over time from common ancestors did not come out of the blue. The evolving science of natural history was heading for a collision with the

Old Testament account of creation well before Darwin came by the social and anthropological insights he acquired from his seminal five-year voyage around the world on board the Royal Navy sloop HMS Beagle from 1831 to 1836.

In 1829, Charles Lyell, a Scottish scientist-philosopher, published *Principles of Geology*, a book that among other things established that the age of the earth was significantly greater than the 6,000-year span allotted by traditional biblical historians. Some years before that, William Whewell, an English historian, scientist and ordained Anglican priest, had conducted pioneering research into the age of mineral deposits of gemstones that similarly refuted the orthodox consensus that God had created all living things and their habitats in immutable form.

Darwin's fame has endured beyond that of either of his two predecessors, but his essential thesis is a logical, chronological development of theirs. Indeed, he acknowledged the intellectual debt himself by opening *On the Origin of Species* with a quote from Whewell's *Bridge-water Treatise* about the consistency of scientific evolutionary theory with a natural theology of a supreme creator establishing laws:

But with regard to the material world, we can at least go so far as this—we can perceive that events are brought about not by insulated interpositions of Divine power, exerted in each particular case, but by the establishment of general laws.

Fond of Beetles

Charles Darwin was born in Shrewsbury, England, in 1809, the fifth of six children. He was baptized into the Church of England, did relatively poorly at school and eventually won a place at Christ's College, Cambridge, with the plan of becoming ordained as an Anglican vicar. At Cambridge his friend and cousin William Fox introduced him to entomology—and more specifically to the joys of beetle collecting.

Even at that stage it was clear that Darwin had one of those minds capable of holding two (or more) opposing philosophical viewpoints at the same time. Through Fox he became friendly with William Whewell. Through Whewell, he met other leading theologian-naturalists, who for the most part saw scientific discovery as confirming the existence of God based upon both reason and the evidence of coherent design in the natural universe. He saw nothing contradictory in the concept of God acting through the material laws of nature. Darwin particularly admired the English clergyman William Paley's 1802 work *Natural Theology or Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity*, with its famous watchmaker analogy that an intelligent design of the universe implies a creator deity.

Certainly, Darwin's motivation when embarking on the Beagle was not to put himself forward as the de facto head of a new religion, devoted to the primacy of rational scientific thought over that of the Bible. That mantle landed on Darwin's shoulders only long after his death, conferred by successive generations who have used (and often misused) his central thesis that natural selection could cause species to evolve,

Darwin was honest enough to admit that nothing he had written could wholly replace orthodox religious faith. 💧💧

in order to discredit the orthodox belief in an omnipotent creator.

Darwin himself never endorsed the more combative rhetoric of the secularists. In a letter of 1879 to John Fordyce, the 70-year-old Darwin wrote:

My judgement [on religion] often fluctuates. Whether a man deserves to be called a theist depends on the definition of the term. In my most extreme fluctuations I have never been an atheist in the sense of denying the existence of a God—I think that generally (and more and more so as I grow older), but not always, that an agnostic would be the most correct description of my state of mind.

It seems reasonable to infer that by the word “agnostic” Darwin meant to convey not so much a lack of belief on his part as his fundamental uncertainty as a scientist as to the existence and nature of a supreme creator. Both *On the Origin of Species* and *The Descent of Man* contain extended passages that acknowledge the limits of scientific theory in determining the question of humanity’s ultimate origin. These were honest doubts that many contemporary Darwinists, Wallace perhaps foremost among them, found frustrating. Darwin again displayed this characteristic objectivity of thought when in 1867 he wrote to Ernst Haeckel, a

German zoologist-philosopher:

I know that it is easy to preach, and if I had the power of writing with severity I dare say I should triumph in turning poor devils inside out and exposing all their imbecility. Nevertheless I am convinced that this power does no good, only causes pain. I may add that as we daily see men arriving at opposite conclusions from the same premises it seems to me doubtful policy to speak too positively on any complex subject, however much a person may feel convinced of the truth of his own conclusions.

These are not the words of a scholar adamantly denying the consoling existence of God’s love so much as they are of a mind broad enough to recognize its own limitations in advancing an overall theory of humanity’s purpose on earth.

Deathbed Repentance?

In 1915, a 72-year-old British evangelist and Temperance Union activist named (perhaps aptly) Lady Hope came forward to claim that 33 years earlier she had visited Darwin on his deathbed, where she found him reading the Bible; while she was there, she claimed, he had taken the opportunity to repent of his earlier agnosticism.

“I was a young man with un-

formed ideas,” Darwin supposedly told his visitor. “I threw out queries, suggestions, wondering all the time over everything, and to my astonishment the ideas took like wildfire. People made a religion of them.”

In later years, Lady Hope’s story would be questioned both by Darwin’s family and many others. But some observers continue to believe it because it accords closely with Darwin’s known humility in acknowledging the challenges of seeking to accommodate an intellectually credible idea of creation to his own new theory. This was not a scholar who saw his crowning accomplishment in life as having “killed God.” Rather, Darwin struggled throughout to balance the extraordinary grandeur and variety of natural life with the pain and suffering inherent in the human condition.

Darwin was at all times honest enough to admit that nothing he had said or written over the years could aspire to wholly replace orthodox religious faith. “It seems to me absurd to doubt that a man may be an ardent theist and also an evolutionist,” he wrote at about the same time of Lady Hope’s reputed visit.

For many people today, Darwin has become a sort of secular deity, an icon for atheism who at a stroke swept away the antediluvian superstitions of his age and ushered in an invigorating new era of scientific logic and rationalism. A close reading of *On the Origin of Species*, however, strongly suggests that the work was not only an argument against the concept of miraculous creation but also a theist’s case for the presence of intelligent design, broadly in keeping with Albert Einstein’s subsequent aphorism that “God does not play dice with the universe.”

Unlike Lady Hope and others, I

would not presume to know what was going through Darwin's mind as he lay on his deathbed at home in England in the week following Easter in 1882. His last words were to his family, telling them, "I am not the least afraid of dying.... It is almost worth while to be sick to be nursed by you." But I believe he would have been surprised to learn that his life's work on the biology of animate or inanimate organisms would in time lead to a widespread rejection of the Bible and the denial of the idea—contained within *On the Origin of Species* itself—that God might have created the universe not by miracles, but through imposing a divine framework (what philosophers now call the "lawlikeness") by which species evolve.

Perhaps the final words on the matter should go to Harvey Goodwin, the bishop of Carlisle, who preached the sermon in Westminster Abbey on the Sunday following Darwin's burial there in 1882:

I think that the interment of the remains in this place is in accordance with the judgement of the wisest of our countrymen.... It would have been unfortunate if anything had occurred—or may yet occur—to give weight and currency to the foolish notion which some have diligently propagated, but for which Mr. Darwin was not responsible, that there is a necessary conflict between a knowledge of nature and a belief in God.

Christopher Sandford is the author of many books, including most recently *Zeebrugge: The Greatest Raid of All (Casemate)*.

Bronx River

By Richard Schiffman

A millrace where the waters churn
and plunge that turned a turbine once
which spun a shaft that drove
the great stone wheels around
that ground tobacco leaf to snuff.

The Bronx was still a woodland then
ribbed with rills of mica schist
and bouldered pasturelands,
a few rough farms bisected by this stream—
which jogs along nowadays beside its namesake highway.

A sudsy swill once, since restored
and clean enough for waterfowl to roost.
We came in every season, my dad's old haunt,
a leafing world away from the handball courts
on the Grand Concourse.

Today I'm back again to watch the river
tripping whitely over stones.
The glen, just greening now, dogwoods
in bloom, the blushing rhododendron.
I am neither happy nor sad.

This river knows my name.
It knows my father's name.
Everything flows and stays the same.
This is all I seem to know,
or need to.

Richard Schiffman is an environmental journalist, poet and author of two biographies. His poems have appeared in *The New York Times*, *BBC Radio* and on the "Writer's Almanac" podcast. His first poetry collection, *What the Dust Doesn't Know*, was published in 2017 by *Salmon Poetry*.

Suffering, Faith and Perseverance

In his new memoir, Ross Douthat relates how an experience of illness can lead to a search for answers to more transcendent questions.

At first blush, a 200-page memoir by someone suffering from an obscure, lingering but non-fatal illness might seem a bit of an indulgence. But in the hands of a newspaper columnist with a gift for insightful story telling, *The Deep Places* by Ross Douthat becomes a provocative read for both the mind and soul.

Subtitled *A Memoir of Illness and Discovery*, Douthat's latest is more than an exploration of the debilitating, demoralizing impact of Lyme disease. The author neatly relates how an experience of illness and suffering can lead to a search for answers to more transcendent questions, including the meaning of suffering and the gift of perseverance. Douthat also offers observations on how the medical community's emphasis on consensus in treatment protocols can leave some patients in a quandary.

The youngest Op-Ed columnist ever hired by The New York Times, Douthat previously worked as a senior

editor at The Atlantic. In addition to his New York Times gig, he serves as film critic at National Review. Douthat, who converted to Catholicism in his teens, has gained a reputation as a conservative-minded "pontificator." At least two of his six published works—*Bad Religion* (2012) and *To Change the Church* (2018)—have special resonance for Catholics with a concern for the future of the church and the papacy as a force for good.

On a recent "Jesuitical" podcast from America Media, Douthat described *The Deep Places* as "a radical exposure" story. It is also the author's most spiritual work to date. The book is especially effective in drawing the reader into the world of those who suffer from chronic pain, many of whom feel discounted, if not abandoned, by the established medical community.

The book traces the author's tortured path over a six-and-a-half-year period, beginning with the onset of

symptoms of Lyme disease, proceeding to seemingly endless physical and emotional travails, and concluding with Douthat's return to relatively good health.

Douthat describes the first few months of his illness, prior to being diagnosed with Lyme disease, in sobering terms. "I moved around the room like an acolyte tending to different altars—now planted on the toilet or hunched over it, now leaning heavily on the glass door of the shower, now standing at the sink staring at my haggard, puffy face."

Around the time of his diagnosis, Douthat was in the midst of relocating from Washington, D.C., to a rural property near New Haven, Conn. He and his family were moving into the geographic area that had become all but synonymous with the spread of Lyme disease in the Northeast United States. Douthat writes that he likely contracted the disease in the Connecticut countryside, with one

The Deep Places

A Memoir of Illness and Discovery

By Ross Douthat

Convergent Books

224p \$26

lowly tick bite unleashing a world of upheaval for the storyteller and his growing family:

But now imagine yourself as my wife, locked in a rambling house with a new baby and two daughters under six, with a sleepless, pain-racked, disease-obsessed husband who occasionally comes downstairs, strips off his shirt, and demands that you examine the red streaks on his back.... But insanity and paranoia and raw panic can envelop regions and cultures as well as individuals, and there's no necessary reason that a single parent, like, say, your own husband—couldn't also be participating in some kind of mass delusion, the self-reinforcing madness of the crowd.

Much of the drama in the memoir stems from the writer's efforts not only to seek treatment, but to convince his doctors that his lingering debilitations were not the result of stress or emotional instability. While most Lyme disease patients respond to four to six weeks of antibiotic treatments, an unfortunate few show no signs of relief after months or—in Douthat's case—years.

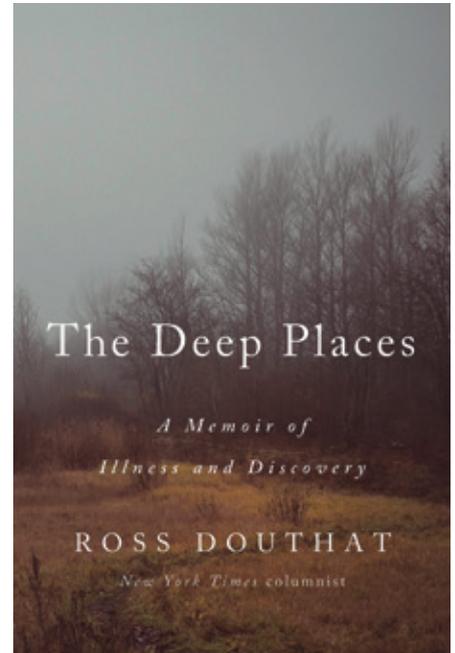
The struggle led him to seek out remedies beyond those recommended by mainstream medicine. The experience became a glimpse into how the medical community's reluctance to venture beyond long-established pro-

ocols can relegate atypical patients to a medical limbo:

The incentive structures forged by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) were a fascinating case study in how bureaucracy shapes science as much as the other way around, how without any conscious decision, let alone conspiracy, scientific research can end up pushed again and again down the same well-worn tracks. The narrow diagnostic criteria became the benchmark not just for doctors treating patients, but for researchers when they applied for public grants, so that Lyme research increasingly focused on only the most certain diagnoses and left all ambiguous cases and potential false negatives alone.

Douthat relates a watershed moment in his eventual recovery: a chance meeting with a Benedictine monk at a Chicago airport. The monk suggested that pain and suffering exist for purgation, refinement and redirection, rather than as examples of random, malicious misfortune. "Flying home, I told myself that the encounter with the Benedictine had been the turning point, the divine landmark on the journey back into the light," Douthat writes.

An even more compelling component drawn from Douthat's memoir is one man's pondering on the meaning and purpose of suffering—a version of the more clichéd question, "Why do



bad things happen to good people?" The illness and his relentless search for a cure, in both traditional medicine and some of its more esoteric offshoots, opened the writer's eyes to the vast amount of "hidden suffering" throughout the world:

So little in my education had prepared me for this part of life, the part that was just endurance, just suffering, with all the normal compensations of embodiment withdrawn.... And precious little in the world where I still spent much of my increasingly strange life, the conjoined world of journalism and social media, seemed to offer any acknowledgment that life was actually *like this* for lots of people—meaning not just for the extraordinarily unlucky, the snakebit and lightning struck, but all the people whose online and social selves were just performances, masks over some secret pain.

The author suggests that the real Christian answer to the problem of suffering should be at the front of the minds of all Christian believers, “because if God gave his son to the cross then a version of the same test is what every Christian should expect.”

By the conclusion of the book, Douthat is back to his old self, but with some Lyme disease battle scars in view. In the end, however, it was not necessarily a crisis of faith for Douthat, because while he did despair and wallow in his suffering, he held fast to the view that there was something to be gained from it all. “The purpose of illness in your life has to involve finding something,” he concludes, “finding strength in learning how to endure, finding virtue in how to live for others, finding some hidden truth in unraveling the mystery of what actually ails you. And not to yield is often the hardest task of all.”

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

Love in the Ruins

Tiphonie Yanique’s new novel *Monster in the Middle* unwinds the story of how a present-day couple, Stela and Fly, came to love one another. It opens with a “love letter” from unnamed parents addressed to their children, advising that all potential loves come with “baggage.” “Because listen, sweet ones,” Yanique writes, “you are not falling in love with that one person.” She explains, “When you meet your love, you are meeting all the people who ever loved them or who were

supposed to love them but didn’t love them enough, or hell, didn’t love them at all.”

Before Stela and Fly can meet, fall in love and choose whether to stay together, they have to be born, and Yanique tells their parents’ history first. As the novel unfolds in discrete chapters, many of which Yanique first published as short stories, it becomes clear she intends to show a sort of familial column of dominoes striking one another through the generations. The religions Stela and Fly practice, the people they are attracted to and the places they choose to live are influenced by the way their parents answered those same vital questions. Stela and Fly often react against their parents’ choices, but even in selecting the opposite path, they are still playing out a drama that began long before they entered the stage.

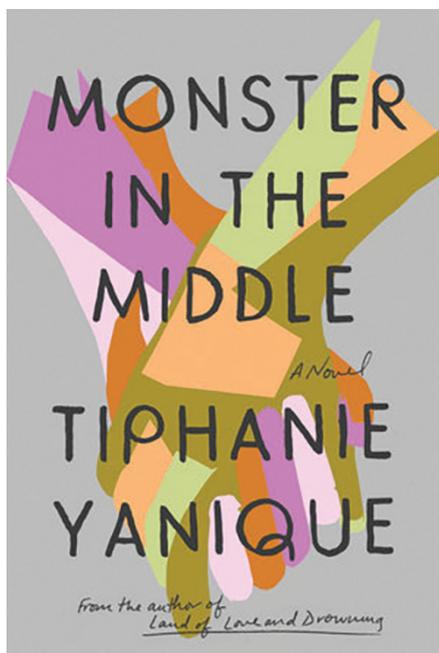
Tiphonie Yanique is an accomplished and versatile writer who was born in the U.S. Virgin Islands. She has published a short story collection, a poetry collection, a children’s book and a previous novel, *Land of Love and Drowning*, which won the Center for Fiction’s First Novel Prize. Yanique grew up Catholic and has spoken about her use of Catholic iconography in her writing. In a 2019 interview with *The New Yorker* after it published the story “God’s Caravan,” which became a chapter in *Monster in the Middle* about Fly’s childhood, Yanique said: “I think of myself as a religious writer. I think of myself, actually, as religious. Like, when I hear Christians talk about Christian fiction, I’m, like, Why aren’t they including me? Or Ann Patchett? Or Mary Gordon? I think it’s because we are raising questions about religion, in the tradition of what great re-

ligious thinkers have always done.”

Indeed, Yanique presents the religion of every one of her characters precisely, including its positive and negative aspects. Her characters adhere to some tenets of their religions and ignore others. Each of them turn to religion when they are seeking something: relief, acceptance, answers, continuity, transcendence. They turn toward love to answer those same needs.

Yanique begins with Gary Lovett, Fly’s father, a young Black man who flees San Francisco in the aftermath of its 1989 earthquake with Eloise, a white teenager he met at church. “He’d gone to all the churches,” Yanique writes. “Catholic, Seventh-day Adventist, Jehovah’s Witness, Latter-day Saints. He heard voices. From God or a demon, he didn’t know. Demon, he’d been mostly told. Exorcism had been suggested; Freudian analysis, too.”

Gary tries one religion after another, or sometimes simultaneously, seeking refuge from the voices in his head. But he remains perpetually haunted by them, just as he is haunted by Eloise long after she leaves him and he marries another woman, Ellenora, who becomes Fly’s mother. A picture of Eloise with her yellow hair remains forever on the family’s mantel, bothering Ellenora, who thinks, “Gone people have power.” Ellenora leaves all religion behind in reaction to her Southern Baptist upbringing and her manic husband’s religious meanderings, and Fly, captivated by an ecstatic experience with an itinerant preacher during a summer he spends in the South with his grandparents, chooses Christianity. It’s a rebellion of sorts within this family, even as Fly reflects, “As a teenage rebellion, Christianity



Monster in the Middle

By Tiphonie Yanique
Penguin Random House
267p \$27

sort of sucked.”

Meanwhile, Stela grows up in the Caribbean, the daughter of two orphans whose courtship began in a home for orphaned and abandoned children. “We march to Mass every Sunday without fail,” Stela’s mother explains, “Then the Vega Baja beach after, always. Like church and beach was both holy—same, same.” Just as in Fly’s family, a thread of mental illness weaves through the generations. Stela’s father Martin ended up at a children’s home because his mother was too unbalanced to care for him. After fathering Stela, Martin dies young, and Stela’s mom finds more lasting stability with her second husband, who helps raise Stela. Stela grows up smart and artistically talented, treasured by her family and boyfriend, enjoying a loving, ocean-oriented child-

hood. Yanique’s chapters set in the Caribbean are lush and sensual, wafting ocean breezes with every page.

Stela’s happy life is knocked off course when she travels to Ghana on a study abroad program. A fellow student from her college assaults her, and in her trauma she considers it might be a punishment because she hasn’t been going to Mass. She had stopped attending because she was bothered by a ritual they performed: “When the African priest brought out the statue of Jesus for the adoration...the African students had lined up to kiss the white feet. That had made Stela feel a kind of shrill sickness...she hadn’t wanted to be one of the Black people kissing the white feet of Jesus. And that pride of hers must be why she, Stela, was not saved by the Virgin Mary this night.” In the wake of this devastating violation, Stela makes a series of unfortunate romantic choices.

When Stela and Fly finally meet, in New York City just as Covid-19 is about to send everyone into lockdown, they have been thoroughly buffeted by blows of love, heartbreak, mental illness and trauma. And though they are established professionally (Fly as a musician and Stela as a science teacher), they still feel furtive when it comes to love. As they reveal themselves to each other and each comes to know the contours of the other’s damage, there is a fraught moment where they must choose to split apart or come together decisively, despite the messiness joining will entail.

When Stela is a teenager, she jumps from a cliff into the ocean at the urging of her boyfriend. It is a scene that becomes emblematic of the novel: Throughout the years it spans, *Monster in the Middle* shows

how the choice to love is always such a leap of faith, a heedless plunge into the unknown.

Jenny Shank’s story collection, *Mixed Company*, won the *George Garrett Fiction Prize*; and her novel, *The Ringer*, won the *High Plains Book Award*. She is on the faculty of the *Mile High M.F.A.* in creative writing at *Regis University* in Denver.

Andrew Sullivan: Catholic Writer

Considerable ink and energy have been spent in the pages of countless journals on that special creature known as the “Catholic writer.” Google the term and you will be inundated with search results from Augustine and Aquinas to modern giants both departed—Flannery O’Connor and Dorothy Day—and still among us: Alice McDermott, Garry Wills and numerous others.

Reading Andrew Sullivan’s collection *Out on a Limb: Selected Writing, 1989-2021*, prompted my recent Google search. I’d never heard Sullivan mentioned in those conversations about Catholic writers, so I wasn’t surprised when his name did not appear. But the omission prompted two questions: Why wasn’t he there? And why wasn’t I surprised?

The answer to both is obvious. Sullivan has unapologetically identified as both gay and Catholic for decades (he married his husband in 2007). But if that is disqualifying, the loss is clearly ours. Sullivan has written with such depth and insight about the experience of sexuality and faith

for so long that it is difficult not to see his journey as taking place on holy ground. If he is not sufficiently Catholic, it isn't because of doctrine or orientation; the fault is in our impoverished imaginations.

Not that Sullivan himself would care. He has spent his entire career as an outsider. He was an openly gay neocon Reaganite when that administration would not even mention the word AIDS. In 1989, Sullivan wrote a landmark essay making the case for the legalization of same-sex marriage back when many L.G.B.T. activists believed the idea was a pathetic capitulation to heterosexual norms. Sullivan has a clear comfort with contradiction that makes it difficult for readers to know where to place him. Is he a gay writer? A conservative writer? A conservative apostate? All we know for sure is that, according to Google, he's not a Catholic writer.

Out on a Limb documents a man thinking out loud and manifests all the contradictory qualities that have made Sullivan occasionally frustrating but invariably worth reading for years. A darling of the right in the 80s, he was later disavowed by Republicans for criticizing the G.O.P.'s farm mongering and intellectual dishonesty.

Sullivan's ability to be flexible in his thinking is disarming and rare among the pundit class. His arguments are intelligent and well constructed even when they have been misguided. Looking back, Sullivan now sees his "shamefully excessive defense" of George W. Bush's invasion of Iraq as his "greatest failure of judgment."

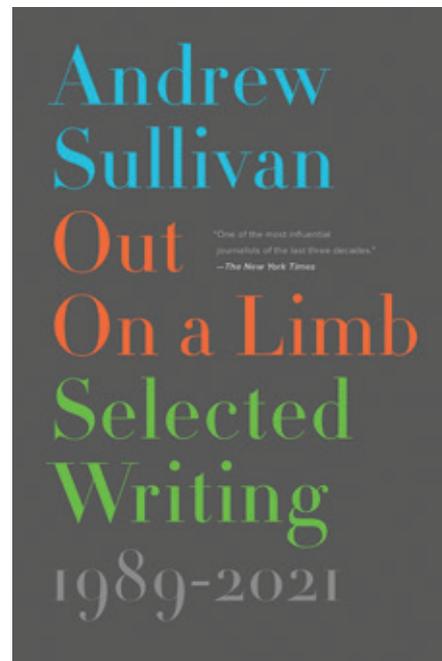
He can also be frustratingly blind to his own contradictions. Sullivan laments the devolution of conservatism during the 1990s and 2000s but

seems not to question the underlying principles of the Reagan/Thatcher axis that gave birth to that next generation. His fond recollections of that era sound at times like uncritical exercises in political fantasy, fueled by overheated Cold War fears and simplistic assumptions about the virtues of free market capitalism.

Sullivan's conservatism is grounded in the thinking of the British philosopher Michael Oakeshott (1901–90), who argued for a "politics of skepticism" that is nonideological and decidedly not utopian, generally preferring decentralized governments and minimal intervention. One wonders how that noninterventionist, epistemological humility regarding change translates among African Americans, Native Americans and others whose patience for justice has been measured in centuries. And how does it challenge market-based assumptions about economic justice in a world with disastrous wealth disparity?

Perhaps Sullivan's most glaring contradiction is that for all of the Oakeshottian texture and nuance he displays regarding L.G.B.T. issues, he seems remarkably tone-deaf on matters of race. In his more recent writing, he is quick to apply dismissive labels like "cultural Marxists" or to weaponize terms like "social justice" or "critical race theory." Sullivan is a veteran of these culture wars; but surely, someone who has experienced his own marginalization is capable of making more subtle distinctions with regard to the complex, deeply embedded issues of race and identity?

We know this subtlety is possible, because Sullivan's writing is at its most poignant and layered when dealing with his Catholic faith. In a 1994



Out on a Limb
Selected Writing, 1989–2021
By Andrew Sullivan
Avid Reader Press
576p \$35

article, he recalled confronting his emerging sexuality at 15 while in the Communion line. "‘Please,’ I remember asking almost offhandedly of God, after a quick recital of my other failings, ‘help me with that,!’" he writes. Sullivan didn't even have a name for the sexual awakening he was experiencing.

"Looking back, I realize that that moment at the Communion rail was the first time I had actually addressed the subject of homosexuality explicitly in front of anyone; and I had brought it to God in the moments before the most intimate act of sacramental Communion.... [Homosexuality] was also something inextricable—even then—from the core of my existence, it felt natural to enlist God's help rather than his judgment in grappling with it."

It was a profound moment of rec-

ognition that prefigured his understanding of sexuality and faith as core to his very being in the world:

Like faith, one's sexuality is not simply a choice; it informs a whole way of being. But like faith, it involves choices—the choice to affirm or deny a central part of one's being, the choice to live a life that does not deny but confronts reality. It is, like faith, mysterious, emerging clearly one day, only to disappear the next, taking different forms—of passion, of lust, of intimacy, of fear. And like faith, it points toward something other and more powerful than the self. The physical communion with the other in sexual life hints at the same kind of transcendence as the physical Communion with the Other that lies at the heart of the sacramental Catholic vision.... My faith existed at the foundation of how I saw the world; my sexuality grew to be inseparable from how I felt the world.

This is a Catholic writer.

Sullivan's evocative understanding of faith and sexuality reveals the heart of the cognitive dissonance so many of us experience in the Catholic Church. As I discussed eight years ago in these pages, Catholics are better situated than any other group on earth to embrace our L.G.B.T. brothers and sisters simply because—wittingly or unwittingly—we've been embracing them for years in our local church communities and schools. They are

our family, friends, neighbors, ministers and loved ones. They are us. God's mercy, forgiveness and grace have already been mediated to us through them in countless ways.

Given the complexity of what we understand about human sexuality, somehow Christians are expected to believe that God created our L.G.B.T. brothers and sisters with attractions and the ability to connect and love that is permitted as long as they aren't acted on. Can that be what God wants? Does their loneliness or desire for intimacy count for nothing? More important, how has the denial of this reality become, for some in the church, what all Christian thought and practice seems to rest on? If that is the sine qua non, did we need the four Gospels? To ask the L.G.B.T. population to deny a central part of their being is like attempting to expunge part of the mystery of creation because of our fear and lack of understanding. It is damaging to both us and them, and it is sinful.

I interviewed the novelist Anne Rice twice in the mid-2000s after she had come back to her Catholic faith. She was devout and very well read in church history and theology. She also had an adult, openly gay son. She believed that the church would get there, but it simply hadn't yet developed a theology of homosexuality that was consistent with our political, psychological, scientific and social understanding. "I think we will see theology that will embrace gays as the children of God like anyone else," she said. "Yes, we're an orthodox religion, but we do go through these changes.... We've been going through this long learning period with regard to gay people. It is part of the civil rights movement. It's

part of the scientific revolution.... I think that we will expand and see that our Scripture still has authority, even if we open the doors wide."

Fifteen years later, Rice's thoughts remain the best explanation I have heard on the issue. But what do we do until that theology is developed? For many, the doors still are not wide enough to welcome a writer like Andrew Sullivan. To those people I would simply say, "He's already inside, he's been here all along and, like it or not, he's far from alone."

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

A Medieval Tale of a Woman's Courage

Books about nuns are having quite a literary run this season, including *Matrix* by Lauren Groff and Claire Luchette's *Agatha of Little Neon*. Like these other titles, Marj Charlier's historical novel, *The Rebel Nun*, presents a woman's decision to join the convent not as a spiritual calling, but a last-ditch effort to escape other unpleasant options: marriage, prostitution, or poverty. This is certainly how the novel's narrator, Sister Clotild, describes the situation among a subset of her fellow religious sisters: "Like me, many of them had ended up in the monastery for its security, sustenance, and freedom from marriage, not for their piety."

Charlier based the novel, set in 613, on Gregory of Tours's *Ten Books of History*, which recounts a rebellion at the Monastery of the Holy Cross led

by a nun named Clotild and her sister compatriots. Charlier retells that story from the point of view of a nun, painting a detailed, sometimes painful portrait of womanhood in the early Middle Ages. The church declared females “unclean,” but as the story progresses, it becomes clear that this is the least of the nuns’ worries.

When we first meet Clotild, she is lamenting the death of the kind and loving Prioress Redegund. Clotild is the daughter of the Frankish king, Charibert, and his concubine; as a result, she has a potential claim to the throne. To protect herself from being murdered by jealous members of the royal family, Clotild joins the convent at age 13. “At the time I entered Holy Cross, my other options were limited by my gender and illegitimacy, and the danger posed by my stepmothers, cousins and half siblings,” she narrates.

Clotild learned “diplomacy and patience” from Prioress Redegund and hopes to be named the next prioress. Instead, Maroveus, the bishop of Poitiers, appoints a gluttonous, spiteful woman named Lebover as the new prioress. Lebover pilfers relics from the convent, deprives the sisters of basic provisions like food and firewood, and even requires the nuns to sleep in drafty corridors.

The seeds of unrest among the sisters are firmly planted at Christmas dinner when Clotild is forbidden to eat by Lebover, despite a bounty of food. The rest of the nuns refuse to touch their plates if Clotild is not allowed to eat. “It was the beginning of the rebellion,” she writes.

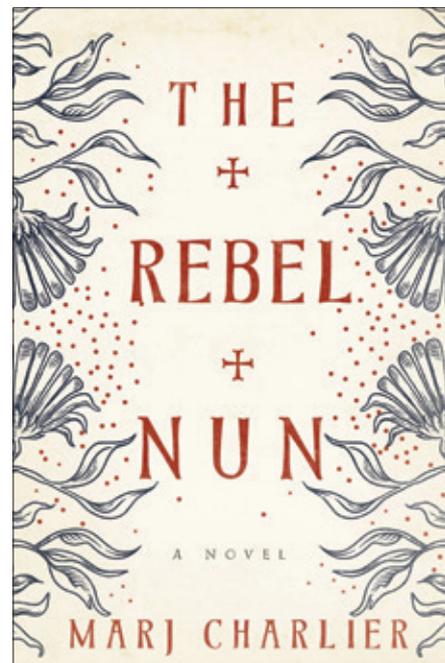
The sisters, bypassing the corrupt bishop of Poitiers, instead embark on a grueling journey to plead with Bishop Gregory of Tours to intervene and

save them from the cruelties of the new prioress—even though the very act of setting foot outside the monastery is grounds for excommunication. While awaiting an audience with the bishop to make their case, they seek sanctuary in the Basilica of St. Martin. Weeks, then months pass with no visit or acknowledgement from Gregory. They receive no support from the local community and many of the sisters are pushed beyond endurance. Some run away to find a husband, while others live on the street. Clotild wonders whether, during this time of suffering, “they had all experienced doubt at some point in the past three months as even Jesus had in the Garden of Gethsemane.”

She asks herself, “How were we, crouching obediently in our monastery doing Christ’s bidding of tending to the sick and poor? We were only praying to save our own souls. Surely, I thought, a woman’s life should amount to more than that.”

Eventually, the nuns who remain loyal to Clotild return to Holy Cross and prepare for battle with the help of Alboin, a handsome warrior motivated by a desire for vengeance of his own. Alboin explains that Maroveus excommunicated his brother, who, as a result, died by suicide. “I fear only the wrath of God if I do not avenge my brother’s death,” he explains. Almost immediately, passion sparks between Clotild and Alboin. As Alboin pulls her against his wide chest, Clotild reflects on the feelings his closeness evokes: “It felt nothing like sin.... I let go of my allegiance to the church’s morality. From then on, I would have to figure out my own path to redemption, and I would have to decide what redemption meant.”

The battle for control of the monastery is met with death, destruction



The Rebel Nun

By Marj Charlier
Blackstone Publishing
315p \$27.99

and, ultimately, the nuns’ defeat. Horrific scenes describe how soldiers cut down the lives of these helpless women. Clotild survives and is brought to trial, where the truth is turned upon its head as accusers claim that the nuns were “bloodthirsty and bellicose,” while Lebover is scarcely punished.

Readers may expect from the start that Clotild will not prevail, but this is of small consequence, as the book’s rich (if sometimes complex) narrative brings us fully into the mind of this strong narrator. Clotild is not merely doubtful about her Christian faith; she practices pagan rituals and admits that she has secretly reserved her soul for her grandmother’s gods. Though she finds some comfort in prayers while she is in the cloister, they are “simply ritual.” And while disdainful

of the church's patriarchal hegemony, she does give some credit to forms of Christianity that emphasize "selflessness, generosity, humility and other fine qualities."

Charlier reveals that women did possess a good deal of authority in the early years of the church and gives a history lesson: "The Council of Orleans gave power over the church to royal families.... The church councils, [took] away our right to be ordained, then prohibited us from administering...the sacraments." The writer also cites the Council of Nicaea, at which bishops denied women ordination and suggested they had no souls.

Clotild is a compelling character, a courageous woman and an exemplar of feminism in action. She is a leader of women and is insistent on gender equality. She hopes that the "church's

pernicious subjugation of women will run out of favor" so that her communities can "reclaim joy."

Despite these admirable qualities, Clotild, in some respects, lacked depth. Perhaps if she experienced more of an internal struggle regarding her lack of faith, or demonstrated concern over the fact that the rebellion resulted in the death of her dear friends (one wonders whether she had any survivor's guilt) the reader could root for her more. As compared with the narrator in *Agatha of Little Neon*, Sister Clotild does not undergo a significant personal transformation from the beginning to the end of the book. She is steadfast in her desire for rebellion throughout.

Nevertheless, *The Rebel Nun* resonates with many of the issues faced by the church in modern times.

Charlier writes, through Clotild: "To be Christian to Gregory of Tours was to believe in Christ, His resurrection, and His purpose on earth, not necessarily to act in ways we believe represent 'Christian' behavior today." One wonders what Clotild would make of the Catholic Church in the 21st century, where women are denied the power and privilege of the priesthood, and reckoning with clerical abuse moves at a glacial pace.

Flawed though she may be, Clotild's message of fairness, love and hope remains an important lesson rightly served up to modern Catholic citizens.

Patricia Lawler Kenet is a writer and attorney living in New York City. Her work has appeared in *The Washington Post* and other publications.

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On the Journey

An excerpt from The Word for the Third Sunday of Lent

The first reading for the Third Sunday of Lent reminds us to be open and receptive to encountering God in our everyday lives. The Gospel echoes the beginning and ending of Lent and reminds us of the necessity of growing along the way.

In the first reading from the Book of Exodus, we hear the story of Moses encountering God at the burning bush. Tending flocks in the desert, Moses likely was not expecting to have such a powerful experience. Yet at Mount Horeb the divine name is revealed, and Moses is commissioned to confront Pharaoh and lead the Is-

raelites out of captivity in Egypt. Moses' reaction is multifaceted, a mix of fear, uncertainty, curiosity and openness. When called by name, Moses responds, "Here I am" (Heb. *Hineni*), a statement showing attentiveness to God and a willingness to listen. The narrative reminds us that we may be inspired or called at any time in our lives, and we should respond with a desire to hear and answer God's call.

The Gospel reading from Luke helps us to look both forward and backward as we journey through Lent. Jesus speaks with his followers about Galileans who are suffering and dying

at the hand of Pilate, a foreshadowing of Jesus' own death. Jesus calls on those gathered to recognize the universality of death and not to think that they can avoid a similar fate. Jesus uses the events to affirm the realities of death and also to reiterate the need to repent from sins. These ideas are central to how Lent began on Ash Wednesday, offering reminders of our mortality and also our need to turn away from sin and believe in the good news. The Gospel then shifts focus to the parable of the fig tree, which offers hope that growth is possible if we invest time, care and resources.

Stay up to date
with 'The Word'
all month long.

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columns can be
found online.

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT (C), MARCH 6, 2022

Embarking on our Lenten journey with Christ.

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT (C), MARCH 13, 2022

The Transfiguration reminds us of the power of transformation.

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT (C), MARCH 20, 2022

Invest time and care in yourself and others to bear fruit.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT (C), MARCH 27, 2022

We need forgiveness and compassion to sustain our relationships with God and one another.



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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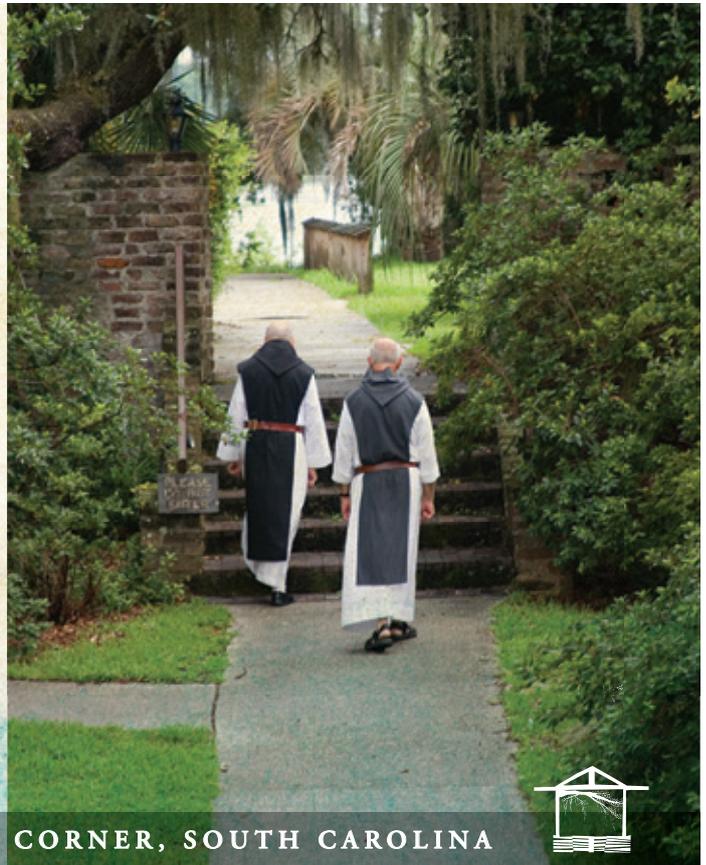
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SCHEDULE

FRIDAY, MARCH 4TH
7 PM

| PRAYER SERVICE |
PRESIDER:

Fr. Daniel Gustafson, S.J.,
Pastoral Year Priest,
Church of St. Ignatius Loyola,
New York

REFLECTION:
Adele Gallo, *Religion Teacher,*
Convent of the Sacred Heart

SATURDAY, MARCH 5TH
5:30 PM

| MASS |

PRESIDER/PREACHER:
Fr. James Carr, S.J.,
Chaplain & Religion Teacher,
Loyola School;
Superior, St. Ignatius Loyola Jesuit
Community, New York City

SUNDAY, MARCH 6TH
11 AM

| SOLEMN MASS |

PRESIDER/PREACHER:
Fr. Walter Modrys, S.J.,
St. Aedan's Church,
Jersey City, New Jersey
Novena prayers offered by
Fr. Mark Hallinan, S.J.,
Associate Pastor, Church of
St. Ignatius Loyola, New York

MONDAY, MARCH 7TH
7 PM

| PRAYER SERVICE |
PRESIDER:

Fr. Dennis Yesalonia, S.J., *Pastor,*
Church of St. Ignatius Loyola,
New York

REFLECTION:
Sr. Catherine Patten, RSHM

TUESDAY, MARCH 8TH
7 PM

| PENANCE SERVICE |

PRESIDER/PREACHER:
Fr. Michael Hilbert, S.J.,
Associate Pastor,
Church of St. Ignatius Loyola,
New York

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 9TH
7 PM

| PRAYER SERVICE |

PRESIDER/PREACHER:
Fr. Thomas Feely, S.J.,
Superior, Xavier Jesuit Community,
New York City



THURSDAY, MARCH 10TH
7 PM

| PRAYER SERVICE |
PRESIDER:

Fr. Mark Hallinan, S.J.,
Associate Pastor, Church of
St. Ignatius Loyola, New York
REFLECTION: Nicole Bedard

FRIDAY, MARCH 11TH
7 PM

| PRAYER SERVICE |

PRESIDER:
Fr. Daniel Gustafson, S.J.,
Pastoral Year Priest, Church of
St. Ignatius Loyola, New York
REFLECTION:
Concepcion Alvar, *Headmistress,*
Marymount School of New York

SATURDAY, MARCH 12TH
5:30 PM

| SOLEMN MASS |

Celebrating the 400th anniversary
of the canonization of St. Ignatius
Loyola & St. Francis Xavier
PRESIDER/PREACHER:
Fr. Dennis Yesalonia, S.J., *Pastor,*
Church of St. Ignatius Loyola,
New York



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Political Leaders: Heed Ignatius

Your words have consequences

By Linda LeMura



St. Ignatius seems to have anticipated the modern era, in which the art of conversation has been replaced by the warfare of the tweet, back in 1546. In a letter to his followers attending the Council of Trent, he instructed them on the art of dialogue. He reminded them to “be considerate and kind” and said that when stakes and emotions are high, they should work to be “free of prejudice” and to understand “the meanings, learnings, and wishes of those who speak.”

Since becoming president of Le Moyne College, the youngest Jesuit college in the country, it has been my privilege to engage with elected leaders in just these kinds of conversations. I never imagined, however, that so many could abandon this mutually beneficial cycle of challenge and counter-challenge in favor of inflammatory rhetoric and juvenile name-calling.

One example was an attack on Pope Francis from an elected official, U.S. Representative Claudia Tenney, last October. On Twitter, a platform devoted to small ideas and grand postures, Ms. Tenney responded to a photo of the pope shaking hands with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi by referring to them as “just two communists.” This tweet served no purpose but to heighten the incivility so sadly evident in our public discourse.

I could simply point out that even as this pope has defended the poor

and the rights of workers—so often exploited by unchecked capitalism—he has also praised innovation and celebrated individuality, the lifeblood of any healthy economy. But there is another issue, beyond the gross inaccuracy of some tweets. It is about the nature of leadership, and it casts into sharp relief the qualities that distinguish the leaders we strive to form at Jesuit institutions around the globe.

Leadership is responsibility. A true leader recognizes that their every word and deed, be it from lectern, pulpit or cellphone, has consequence. A real leader wields power with the gravitas it deserves, mindful of the potential to do great harm or great good. Leadership is the understanding that anything that drives people apart separates us also from the divine.

Jesuit colleges and universities teach our students that we are men and women working for and with others, united in a common humanity that transcends our wordy differences. We speak of “magis,” encouraging our students to strive for excellence, but we remind them that such excellence is to be used for the greater glory of God. At Le Moyne, we sum all of this up in the words “Greatness meets goodness.” This phrase captures the idea of leadership devoted to the common good rather than self-promotion.

The phrase might be lost on political leaders who have mistaken the schoolyard taunt for meaningful con-

versation, but that is almost beside the point. The lessons of St. Ignatius must govern my own response if I am to be the type of leader I wish to be. If I am to practice what St. Ignatius preached, I must resist the temptation to score political points and create disruption.

So in the future, how will I react to leaders with a penchant for uncivil tweets? I will assume they are more than what we hear in 120 characters. I will pray that they find a more productive way to speak and a more serious way to lead. I will work to heal the division they would sow, and I will imitate the example of our students, who, with integrity and compassion, work to mend a hurting world.

In other words, I will attend to what St. Ignatius described as *cura personalis*, or the care of the “whole person.” This teaches us not to reduce ourselves or others to a single dimension but to embrace the complexity of the human person. A leader imbued with *cura personalis* recognizes that every person, group, business or nation is made up of many parts, and that we are at our best and strongest when those parts act in harmony.

I will also pray that our elected leaders remember that our nation, in its youth, established its own expression of *cura personalis—e pluribus unum*.

Linda LeMura is the president of Le Moyne College in Syracuse, N.Y. She was appointed to the post in 2014.

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