

# America

OCTOBER 2022

THE JESUIT REVIEW OF FAITH AND CULTURE

## WAITING ON A DREAM

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# A NEW KIND OF SAINT: CATHOLICS AND CANONIZATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

**KATHLEEN SPROWS CUMMINGS**  
**OCTOBER 13, 2022, 7:00 PM**

The Hank Center welcomes Dr. Kathleen Sprows Cummings as its 2022 Teilhard de Chardin, S.J., Fellow in Catholic Studies. Dr. Cummings's lecture, "A New Kind of Saint: Catholics and Canonization in the 21st Century," is the Hank Center's marquis event of the fall. All are welcome.

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In addition to this course and conducting personal research, the Teilhard Fellow delivers one major public lecture which, in the spirit of Teilhard, reflects upon the connection each fellow sees among their work, the present moment, and the Catholic intellectual tradition.

## Fall 2022 Fellow: Kathleen Sprows Cummings, University of Notre Dame

Kathleen Sprows Cummings, Ph.D, is the William W. and Anna Jean Cushwa Director of the Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism and the the Rev. John A. O'Brien College Professor of American Studies at the University of Notre Dame. She is a professor in the departments of American studies and history at Notre Dame, and an affiliated faculty member in Gender Studies, Italian Studies, and the Nanovic Institute for European Studies.

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## My Fellow Americans

Standing before the majestic backdrop of Independence Hall in Philadelphia, President Joseph R. Biden Jr. addressed the nation on Sept. 1, saying that “Donald Trump and the MAGA Republicans represent an extremism that threatens the very foundations of our republic.” In a speech that lasted just a little over 25 minutes, Mr. Biden spoke of how “MAGA Republicans do not respect the Constitution.... They do not believe in the rule of law. They do not recognize the will of the people.”

The president will get no argument from me there. It is demonstrably clear that we face an unprecedented threat from within, one that’s been metastasizing for years. Partisanship begat polarization, which begat contempt, which now threatens violence. According to a recent survey by the Institute of Politics at the University of Chicago, “across party lines, over a quarter of voters—28%—agreed that ‘it may be necessary at some point soon for citizens to take up arms against the government.’”

This is clearly no ordinary time, and the president’s extraordinary message—part warning, part exhortation—was therefore welcome. But Mr. Biden also demonstrated why he is an imperfect messenger and why his words will likely fall on deaf ears. For starters, he should have denounced the members of his own party who are cynically supporting MAGA candidates in order to gain an advantage in the autumn election. That he did not undermined the moral force of his argument. But the speech was also an unwieldy twofer. By attempting to combine a statesmanlike appeal to our better angels with a partisan appeal to his policies, Mr. Biden did neither fully. His eloquent appeal to the American spirit was quickly followed

by a pedestrian recitation of what he views as his policy achievements. Most Americans will have applauded the first part. Some will have applauded the second. He needed to deliver a speech that everyone could applaud throughout.

To be sure, every president has to wear several hats: head of state, head of government, head of party. That’s why it is important that a president be clear in his or her own mind—and that he or she make it clear to the audience—just which hat he or she is wearing at a given moment. At times Mr. Biden appeared to be talking to all of us; at other times he appeared to be talking only to his base. This just confused things, as in passages like this one: “MAGA forces are determined to take this country backwards,” Mr. Biden said. “Backwards to an America where there is no right to choose, no right to privacy, no right to contraception, no right to marry who you love.”

MAGA forces may want to restrict access to abortion and contraception, and they may oppose same-sex marriage—but that’s not why they are an existential threat to the constitutional order. There are many Americans who hold similar views and yet are not attempting to overthrow the republic. I fear that Mr. Biden’s failure to make such distinctions is why half the country will have tuned him out. That’s a missed opportunity. We know that nearly a third of those who voted for Donald Trump in 2020 are willing to consider a different candidate in 2024. Did this speech convince any of them to do that?

To be fair, Mr. Biden did make it clear that he was not lumping together all Republicans: “Not every Republican, not even the majority of Republicans, are MAGA Republicans,” he said.

“Not every Republican embraces their extreme ideology.” This is a useful and necessary distinction, but seven words, even when spoken by a president, are not enough to undo the damage already done. As Eve Fairbanks recently observed in *The Washington Post*, Democrats in recent years “have called Trump supporters bigots, cultists, ‘psychotic’ and developmentally injured, ‘pathological,’ stricken by ‘mental shortcomings,’ and ‘akin to drug addicts.’” It’s not just Democrats who engage in name calling, of course, but their name calling is more consequential. That’s because the Democrats need to actually change minds. They need to convince the 30 percent of folks who voted for Trump, but might not vote for him again, that the Democrats actually care about the things that they care about.

Most of the people who voted for Trump are not the MAGA maniacs Mr. Biden is worried about. They are not intent on bringing down the republic. They also distrust parties and politicians, and they are therefore more likely to discount Mr. Biden’s warning. But those voters are not the Trump voters interviewed by the media or the ones we see in our newsfeeds or in our imaginations. The Democrats and never-Trumpers are obsessed with the loud and visible element of Trump voters who can never be persuaded. They should be focused instead on those who could be. I wish President Biden had delivered a speech that truly spoke to all of us, but I especially wish he had delivered a speech that spoke to them. For the stakes are high and the time is short.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Matt Malone, S.J.  
*Twitter: @americaeditor.*

Cover image: An internally displaced Afghan woman at a camp on the outskirts of Kabul June 20, 2019.

CNS photo/Omar Sobhani, Reuters



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New U.S. Cardinal Robert W. McElroy of San Diego, center, and other new cardinals attend a Mass with Pope Francis in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican on Aug. 30.

CNS photo/Paul Haring

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# THE ALBERT GNAEGI CENTER FOR HEALTH CARE ETHICS



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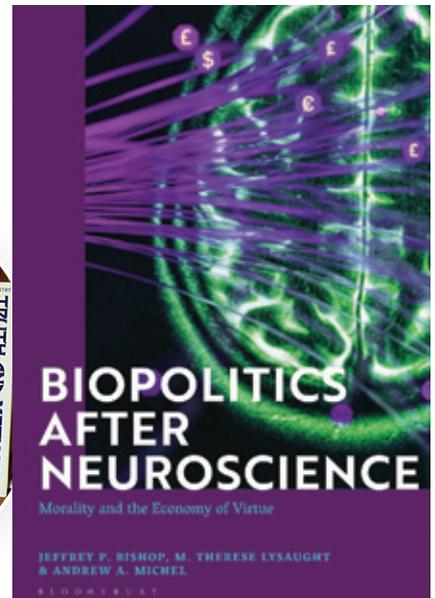
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JEFFREY P. BISHOP,  
M.D., PH.D.



Jeffrey P. Bishop, M.D., Ph.D. is professor of health care ethics, philosophy, and theological studies and holds the Tenet Chair in Bioethics at Saint Louis University.

This book offers a provocative analysis of the neuroscience of morality, critiquing contemporary neuroscientific claims about individual morality and notions of good and evil. Winner of a 2021 prize from the Expanded Reason Institute, it connects moral philosophy to neoliberal economics and successfully challenges the idea that we can locate morality in the brain. Instead of discovering the source of morality in the brain as they claim to do, the popularizers of contemporary neuroscience are shown to participate in an understanding of human behavior that serves the vested interests of contemporary political economy. Providing evidence that the history of claims about morality and brain function reach back 400 years, the authors locate its genesis in the beginnings of modern philosophy, science, and economics. The book concludes with a call for a humbler and more constrained neuroscience, informed by a more robust human anthropology that embraces the nobility, beauty, frailties, and flaws in being human.



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## Can school vouchers help Catholic schools fulfill their mission?

In September, all Arizona students became eligible for vouchers—approximately \$6,500 each for students in grades 1 to 12 and \$4,000 for kindergarten students. Arizona thus became the 17th state, along with the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, to have a school voucher program. In the September editorial, *America's* editors wrote: “Through state initiatives like Arizona’s new school program, more parents can have a real choice about where to send their children each new morning. Other states would do well to follow that lead.” Here are some of our readers’ reactions, edited for length and clarity.

This is an incredibly disappointing stance that is making me rethink subscribing to **America**. No taxpayer money should go to religious institutions, period. Yes, Catholic schools should do their best to provide scholarships to lower-income students, but vouchers and “school choice” are morally wrong. They do nothing to improve the quality of public schools and force taxpayers to subsidize churches.

**Katie Hayes**

I accept the premise of the editorial’s headline that Catholic schools cannot be reserved for the affluent. But the conclusion that taxpayers should take care of the problem is not the only or even the most obvious, optimum, or most prudent solution. This might put us Catholics further down the treacherous trail of government contracting.

**Charles Erlinger**

I have served as a trustee of three organizations whose philanthropic mission is, essentially, aid to Catholic schools. In the Diocese of Cleveland, pre-K enrollment in Catholic schools has increased dramatically, Catholic schools are reopening and the Cristo Rey program has been an outstanding success. In no small measure this is attributable to vouchers and the generous financial support from members of the diocese. Let the money follow the child.

**John Walton**

Many of those educated in the Catholic system have made enormous contributions to their communities as adults regardless of their Catholicity. I find it difficult to understand why one would not want better for every child and accept the choice of parents without penalty. In a country of this magnitude, can we not conceive of variety and choice in education? Complaints regarding the limitations of Catholic schools in serving all needs must be viewed in light of budgetary concerns. Why be so negative about a system that works so well for children, even if it does not have the capacity to serve all?

**Maureen O’Riordan Lundy**

I would be supportive of this if Catholic schools were required to be inclusive of all students—including those with significant cognitive and physical disabilities. These students often need extensive services—special education teachers, physical and occupational therapy, speech therapy, vision services etc., which public schools are required by law to provide. Public schools do not have the option of saying, “Sorry, we can’t provide the services your child needs,” as can be done in Catholic schools. If a school is receiving public funding, then all students should be accommodated.

**Ellen McElwee**

Regardless of the benefit to Catholic schools, I want public tax dollars going to public schools. Public schools are required to take all students. They teach a secular curriculum untainted by fundamentalist religious ideas. We have enough difficulty getting public schools adequately funded. We don’t need to be taking tax money away from them for any reason.

**Lisa Weber**

Catholic and private schools are essentially asking for public money to do the same thing public schools do, but without accountability to the public, and without having to follow the same rules. The Catholic Church is a church, not a school district. Pass on the faith in the parish where people willingly choose to be and give of their wealth.

**Joseph O’Leary**

I recently sat down with a good friend who attended public schools. His parents bought him a brand new Mustang convertible in high school. He told me, all these years later, that he would’ve given up the car to attend my Catholic high school. He was popular and attended a highly respected suburban public school, but he can see the long-term difference.

**Ken Dillard**



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2018

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Atmospheric and Climate Sciences

2017

**Dr. Olufunmilayo Olopade**

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2016

**Dr. Anthony S. Fauci**

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2015

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2014

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2013

**Dr. Sylvester “Jim” Gates**

Physics, University of Maryland

2012

**Dr. Ahmed H. Zewail**

Nobel Laureate for developments in femtoscience, Chemistry, Cal Tech

2011

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2010

**Dr. Robert G. Webster, FRS**

Professor of Virology; Department of Infectious Diseases, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital

## On Immigration, Catholic Social Teaching Demands More of Us

When summer ended, Gov. Greg Abbott of Texas had bused around 9,000 migrants to Washington, D.C., and New York City in an expansion of the state's Operation Lone Star initiative. That plan was launched in March last year to "secure the border" between the United States and Mexico. The Republican governor recently began sending migrants to Chicago also, another city governed by Democrats. According to the governor's office, the initiative has also led to nearly 300,000 migrant apprehensions and more than 16,400 felony charges by Texas authorities.

"We began Operation Lone Star to do the job Washington would not do," Mr. Abbott said on the anniversary of the initiative, praising the work of law enforcement.

In August, Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York and Msgr. Kevin Sullivan, executive director of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York, met privately with a number of the migrants who had arrived on buses from Texas. Catholic Charities assisted 1,500 of the 6,000 migrants who reached New York by the end of August. Together with their partners, the agency has provided food, clothing and connections to other services like shelters and immigration attorneys.

"Our perspective is not a political perspective. Our perspective is not 'How did we get in this mess?' Our perspective is simply to help," Cardinal Dolan said, noting the archdiocese would also make scholarships available to the children to go to Catholic schools. "[Jesus] is the one who said to us, 'When I was a stranger...an immigrant, you welcomed me.'"

The number of immigrants coming to the U.S. southern border clearly has disproportionate effects on Texas

and other border states. One pressing reason for immigration reform is to allow the burdens of migration at the southern border to be more equitably shared across the entire country.

Yet Mr. Abbott's rhetoric about "the job Washington would not do" addresses only a small part of the moral challenge posed by immigration. When people arrive at the U.S. border fleeing violence and persecution in their native lands, all citizens, no matter their political affiliation, have a duty to care for and welcome them.

Through July, a record 609 migrants had died crossing the border. In August, a 5-year-old girl and a 3-year-old boy drowned in the Rio Grande. This summer, 53 migrants died in a tractor-trailer in San Antonio. It is unconscionable that their deaths have not generated a level of urgency to address our shattered, dysfunctional immigration system.

Those who coldly blame migrants themselves for these tragedies either do not understand the threats they face in their home countries, callously pretend that extreme poverty is not a real life-or-death issue or have so deeply dehumanized migrants that they are unmoved by their suffering.

Nativist rhetoric has once again gripped our national consciousness. A recent NPR/Ipsos poll found that half of all Americans believe the nation is experiencing an "invasion." Backing legislation that recognizes the human dignity of immigrants and refugees is now seen as a political risk by many politicians and their consultants. Many Republicans in Congress turn up the volume on their anti-immigrant talking points, fearing primary losses. Some Democrats in competitive districts avoid addressing immigration altogether. And fear is precisely the

problem. Politicians may fear losing elections, and too many citizens seem to fear migrants and asylum seekers themselves.

But the people who face legitimate fears are the asylum seekers. They fear the loss of their very lives because of extreme poverty and organized crime at home.

In Central America, teenage boys are forced into gangs and young girls into prostitution. Everyone endures the chaos and violence engendered by gangs. El Salvador and Honduras regularly suffer the highest homicide rates in the world.

A long-term pledge of time and resources will be required to address properly the push factors driving migrants north, but that is a commitment Americans seem unwilling to make. While President Biden vowed to invest \$4 billion in Central America to address root causes of migration, the proposal has yet to be brought to a vote in the House.

Voters, more concerned with the economy, inflation, health care and climate change, have enabled this congressional inaction. If immigrants and asylum seekers do come up in political debates, they are featured as scapegoats for rising drug overdoses and higher crime rates.

Apathy or hostility toward our migrant brothers and sisters must end. The current asylum system—undermined during the Trump administration—perpetuates an underclass of undocumented immigrants by denying equality to migrants and asylum seekers. "Better than Trump" is not adequate. While Republicans have consistently impeded progress on comprehensive immigration reform, blaming them does nothing to save lives at stake. People of good will must stand with migrants and demand

more from Congress.

Congressional leaders certainly need to hear from their constituents, but that is not enough. To address this crisis of indifference, a conversion of heart is required.

Parishes should sponsor border experiences that allow U.S. Catholics to understand the contemporary migrant experience.

They can also support ongoing efforts by Catholic organizations on the border, like the Kino Border Initiative, Hope Border Institute, the Humanitarian Respite Center and the work of Catholic Extension and Jesuit Refugee Service/USA.

With the threat of Covid-19 waning, parishes can host town halls and help facilitate a much-needed dialogue. These town halls may help dispel myths surrounding immigration. As noted by the Cato Institute, for example, migrants are not taking American jobs, do not exploit the welfare system and are not a major source of crime.

Families can add migrants and refugees to their prayer before family meals, recognizing that often it is migrants who grow and produce their food. Catholics can keep immigration reform in their hearts during eucharistic adoration. Individual Catholics can take to social media and share true immigrant stories and confront common myths.

“The presence of migrants and refugees represents a great challenge, but at the same time an immense opportunity for the cultural and spiritual growth of everyone,” Pope Francis said in his World Day of Migrants and Refugees message this year. “Openness to one another creates spaces of fruitful exchange between different visions and traditions, and opens minds to new horizons.”

These spaces of exchange will not create themselves, and Catholics cannot sit idly by while migrants and asylum seekers die on our southern border. We must demand much more of our government leaders, but we must also demand much more of ourselves. The lives of our brothers and sisters depend on it.

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## Make friends at your local bar without judgment. Jesus will understand.

The meme popped up on my Facebook feed, shared by a friend and liked by a lot of people. It said: “Jesus didn’t dine with tax collectors and sinners because he wanted to appear inclusive, tolerant, and accepting. He ate with them to call them to a changed and fruitful life, to die to self and live for him. His call is transformation of life, not affirmation of identity.”

It would take some time to explain how bad this meme is, starting with its answering a claim no one ever makes. Does anyone think that Jesus did what he did because he “wanted to appear inclusive,” or to impress others? But those sharing this quote are not really talking about Jesus. They are accusing people today of pretense and virtue-signaling, and of abusing Jesus’ example as a way to excuse sinners and their sins.

Some in the Catholic world feel a need to make sure that judgment is always pronounced whenever mercy is offered. By this thinking, sinners—or at least certain categories of sinners—must never be allowed to forget their offenses. How will they sin no more if they don’t feel condemned?

The judgmentalism is bad, but I think the worst thing about the meme is that it effectively denies Jesus’ humanity. Real people like other people. If Jesus became human, then he became a man who had friends. With the disciples most closely, as St. John Henry Newman explained, but with many others as well.

When I came across the “Jesus didn’t want to appear tolerant” meme, I was in our townie dive bar, having spent a couple of hours sitting with my young friend who believes in crystals and three kinds of aliens (one that looks like birds), and my older friend, a retired cop. I had also talked with

the 30-something programming whiz who shares very intricate conspiracy theories, the man who admits to drinking a lot but prides himself on getting up the next morning and doing a good job at work, a huge young man who once asked if I could get him a girlfriend and then if he could sit on my lap (which baffled me until he called me “Santa”) and several other people who use the F-word in a creative variety of ways. All friends. Not close friends, but friends.

Some of these people live (I am sure, but I don’t ask) in irregular sexual relationships, as Catholics understand it, and perhaps enjoy illegal substances as well as substantial amounts of alcohol. Though many of the older patrons grew up Catholic, no one, as far as I can tell, ever goes into a church.

I like them all. They’re likable people. In fact, I like them better than most Catholics I know.

They are the same kind of people, I’m guessing, that Jesus ate with. I think that Jesus ate at his equivalent of our dive bar because he liked the people. Not just loved them, but liked them, enjoyed them for themselves, took pleasure in their company and felt happy just hanging out with them.

If I read them right, those who share the “Jesus didn’t dine...” meme picture Jesus as purely divine. The Jesus they imagine is always on, always about being God; and being God means pronouncing judgment first and then forgiveness. Always, if you will, making the sales pitch. They deny Jesus’ humanity and don’t imagine him doing normal human things for normal human reasons.

But Jesus did not eat with sinners solely to call them to a changed and fruitful relationship. That would be slightly inhuman; more calculat-

ing and transactional than loving. He loved them completely and perfectly, and he proved it at the cost of his life.

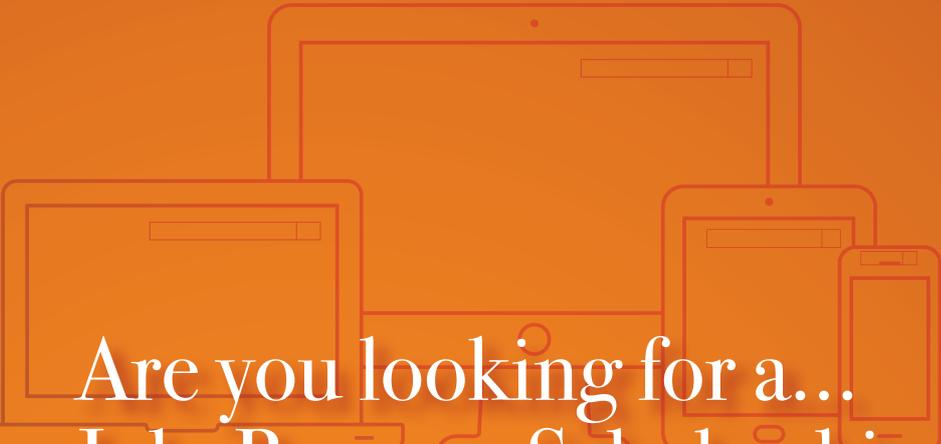
I have felt the meme’s judgment myself. Some feel that a respectable Catholic doesn’t hang out in dive bars without an explicit religious purpose. He doesn’t go just because he likes the people, as well as the beer, the food and the games on TV. He must make clear from the first meeting that the other people at the bar must change, and that his relations with them depend on their doing so.

If outsiders to a place like our dive bar want to evangelize, they will want to begin with friendships. You will listen to a friend because he likes you and you like him. You are not so likely to listen to someone who says he loves you but doesn’t like the person you are. The people at my bar would know, should anyone like that venture into the place—if they weren’t just slumming, there to gawp at the amusing natives—that they were there to get something, to bag a soul.

The bartender said to me one night, “I’ve got a very good bull-t detector.” She would know—everyone there would know—who doesn’t want to be friends, who sees the guy on the next barstool as a target, an object, a thing. My friends there would tell such people: Don’t tell me you want to see me in heaven when you don’t much care for me on Earth.

—  
David Mills, a former executive editor of *First Things*, is the associate editorial page editor of *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*.

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America

# Despite suffering at the border, interest in immigration reform wanes

By J.D. Long-García

AP Photo/Cregory Bull/AP Photo/Cregory Bull

A majority of Americans—52 percent—now believe the nation is experiencing an “invasion” on the southern border, and 49 percent say that migrants are responsible for an uptick in U.S. drug overdoses because they are transporting fentanyl and other drugs. Those are among the findings of an NPR/Ipsos poll released in August that suggests support for immigrants is diminishing.

These shifting perceptions—often based on political rhetoric and a misunderstanding of the facts on the ground—may help explain why there has been little if any movement on immigration reform in Congress.

The American Dream and Promise Act, for example, passed by the House last year, would create a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers—adults who as children were brought into the country without documentation—and other individuals who now have temporary legal status. Despite broad bipartisan support, the measure is not expected to be brought before the Senate before the midterm elections.

The Farm Workforce Modernization Act likewise passed the House, but it is not expected to be approved by the Senate despite bipartisan support. Supporters argue the measure, which creates new opportunities for legal migration, would alleviate shortages of agricultural workers and lower the cost of food.

While the impasse on immigration reform continues in Washington, efforts to reduce opportunities for asylum claims are pushing some migrants into life-and-death decisions at the U.S.-Mexico border.

At least two Trump administration policies have pre-

vented asylum seekers from pleading their cases in the United States: the Migration Protection Protocols and Title 42.

The Migration Protection Protocols, commonly known as the Remain in Mexico policy, required asylum seekers to be returned to Mexico to await their day in court. The Biden administration attempted to end M.P.P. repeatedly, but those efforts have been blocked in court. This summer, the Supreme Court ruled that the administration could end the program, and M.P.P. was finally shut down in August.

Immigration advocates considered the court ruling a victory, if one limited in scope. Joanna Williams, executive director of the Kino Border Initiative, said her organization has helped around a dozen migrants from Nicaragua enter the United States after M.P.P. ended.

But two single mothers who fled persecution in El Salvador were disappointed to learn that the program’s official end would not allow them to move on from the border camp in Nogales, Mexico, where they have been living since January. Ms. Williams had to explain that the end of M.P.P. did not affect the status of migrants from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras or Mexico.

For Dylan Corbett, executive director of the Hope Border Institute, the end of M.P.P. called to mind those who were turned away because of the program in the past. Many gave up and returned to precarious conditions in their home countries. Others decided to make dangerous crossings outside the asylum process. “And we know that some people did lose their lives,” he said.

In June, 53 migrants died in a tractor-trailer in San

Antonio, Tex., a tragedy Mr. Corbett sees as demonstrating the “index of desperation” that governs the risk-taking among migrant people. In August, a 5-year-old girl and a 3-year-old boy drowned days apart in the Rio Grande. In fact, a record 609 migrants have died crossing the border through July.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection reports nearly two million encounters with unauthorized migrants this year. While the crossing numbers have unquestionably been on the rise, Mr. Corbett noted that individual migrants often make multiple attempts to enter but are repeatedly turned back by Border Patrol agents.

“I understand that the border becomes politicized, but people [in the United States] need to understand that [migrant] people are coming in need,” Mr. Corbett said. “It’s not something we don’t have the capacity to respond to. It’s a moral call to solidarity. And as a country, we’ll be better off if we accept people with compassion and dignity.”

Under Mr. Trump, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention invoked Title 42, a health ordinance used to summarily expel immigrants since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. While M.P.P. affected more than 70,000 people, Title 42 has led to the expulsion of two million people since it began to be invoked in March 2020.

“Title 42, in many ways, is a lot worse” than M.P.P., Mr. Corbett said. “But the intention of both programs was to essentially make life as painful as possible for people who are approaching the border seeking protection. Both administrations are guilty of using those programs in tandem to expel as many people as they could.”

The Biden administration has not done enough to end Title 42, according to Luis Guerra, a legal advocate with the Catholic Legal Immigration Network. “We’re now stuck in this limbo...that could have been avoided if they would have moved quicker and more decisively,” he said.

Mr. Guerra, who regularly works in Tijuana, just south of San Diego, said there are two ways that migrants and asylum seekers attempt to enter the United States. The first is through a port of entry.

“Right now they would just flat out be denied entry,” he said. He has seen immigration officials at the international line walking among cars seeking to identify presumptive asylum seekers and using Title 42 to turn them back before they can reach U.S. soil, where they can make a legal claim.

When migrants are denied legal routes, many make the second choice, a dangerous entry into the United States across desert terrain or border waterways. Border Patrol agents who intercept them often use Title 42 to return

them quickly to Mexico, Mr. Guerra said.

Ending Title 42 is important for building a more compassionate and realistic border policy, but it is only the first step, according to Ms. Williams. “We need to look at this in a more long-term way and in a more complex way,” she said.

The Kino Border Initiative serves meals to 200 to 300 people a day, she said, and the shelter has been at capacity each day over the last month.

The effort is stretching staff capacity, but “we’re going to be O.K.,” she said, adding that when they run out of the prepared meal, the cooks just make quesadillas. “No one is going to go away hungry.” She described it as a “daily miracle of the loaves and the fishes.”

Kino’s adaptability to changing border conditions is a stark contrast to the lack of progress at the congressional level. According to Don Kerwin, the executive director of the Center for Migration Studies in New York, it has been 33 years since Congress passed a major immigration reform legislation—the Immigration Act of 1990—and the last general legalization legislation passed in 1986.

“There’s just been a lot of political dysfunction and bad faith about the immigration debate, period,” Mr. Kerwin said. Migrants have been transformed into “political instruments.”

The NPR/Ipsos survey suggests anti-immigrant rhetoric is working. Fewer Americans today—56 percent—said immigrants reflect an important aspect of national identity than in 2018, when 75 percent believed that. Slightly more—46 percent, up from 42 percent in 2018—now support building a wall along the southern border. Ms. Williams found the poll “striking, almost shocking,” suggesting that many of the positions supported by the people surveyed were “just factually incorrect.”

She supports stronger efforts to evangelize those Americans through authentic encounters. “I don’t think that we often allow enough space for transformation in our society,” she said. “We can wax poetic about politicization, but what are we really doing to give people the opportunity to meet Christ and be transformed by Christ?”

Over the long term, walls and border enforcement are not going to solve the problem, Mr. Corbett said. “We need to imagine a system that is completely different. We need to put policies in place that are welcoming, that are humane and that break through this logjam of politics.

“In the meantime,” he said, “we have to fight for the dignity of the undocumented and the restoration of asylum.”

—  
J.D. Long-García, senior editor. Twitter: @jdlongarcia.

## RECORD APPREHENSIONS AT THE BORDER, BUT MANY REPEAT OFFENDERS

By July southwest border apprehensions for fiscal year 2022—ending in September—had already hit 1.94 million, the highest number ever reported by U.S. Customs and Border Protection. But in a June report, agency officials said that the large number of expulsions during the pandemic had contributed to a higher-than-usual number of migrants making multiple border crossing attempts, “which means that total encounters somewhat overstate the number of unique individuals arriving at the border.” In 2020 and 2021 repeat offenders represented 26 and 27 percent of all border apprehensions.

Misleading information or politically charged rhetoric about immigration has taken root among a significant portion of the American public, according to a recent survey conducted by NPR/Ipsos poll researchers. Overall, perceptions about immigrants and immigration policy depend heavily not only on one’s party affiliation but also their media consumption, though just 13 percent of all respondents listed immigration as their top concern; inflation was the top concern of 58 percent of respondents.

**54%** believe it’s at least somewhat true that the United States is experiencing an invasion at the southern border. Republicans—**76%**—believe this more than Democrats—**40%**—and independents—**46%**, and **91%** of Republicans who cite Fox News or other conservative media as their main news source accept the invasion narrative.

**51%** support giving legal status to undocumented or illegal immigrants brought to the U.S. as children, down from **65%** in 2018.

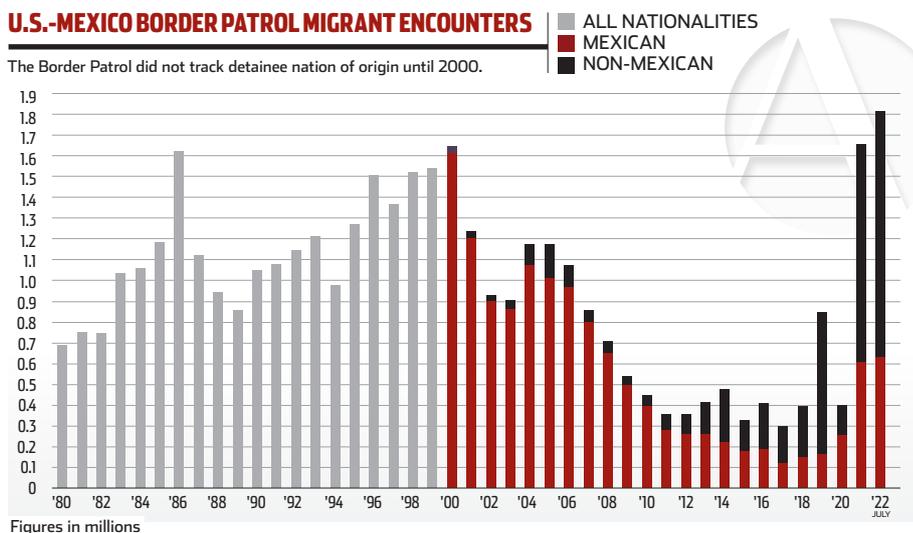


CNS photo/Adrees Latif, Reuters

Jefferson, an 8-year old boy from Honduras, is questioned by a border patrol agent on Aug. 26 after crossing the Rio Grande into Roma, Texas.

### U.S.-MEXICO BORDER PATROL MIGRANT ENCOUNTERS

The Border Patrol did not track detainee nation of origin until 2000.



Figures in millions

**46%** support for building a wall or fence along the entire U.S.-Mexico border; pre-pandemic, a majority opposed the wall.

**56%** believe that immigrants are an important part of American identity, sharply down from the **75%** who believed that in 2018.

**35%** believe that there is a “deep state” effort to open U.S. borders to more immigrants, including **58%** of Republicans, **30%** of independents and **19%** of Democrats.

**50%** believe it is at least somewhat true that migrants bringing fentanyl and other illegal drugs over the southern border are responsible for the increase in drug overdoses and deaths in the United States, including **70%** of Republicans, **35%** of Democrats and **45%** of independents. Conservative news watching-Republicans are most likely to believe this—**89%**—compared to **64%** of Republicans whose primary news source is something else.

Source: NPR/Ipsos poll; U.S. Customs and Border Protection.



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## In Asia and the Amazon, the synod on synodality promises lasting change

While Catholics around the world have probably heard a lot about what has proved to be a controversial synodal process in Germany, less attended to has been the impact of the synod on synodality on other parts of the Catholic world. In Asia, the significance of such a process being convened in the first place should not be overlooked, according to Christina Kheng, a consultant for the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific.

The frank dialogue at the heart of the synod, a challenge anywhere, is particularly difficult, she said, in a “culture notorious for not speaking candidly.” A native of Singapore, Ms. Kheng teaches pastoral leadership at the East Asian Pastoral Institute in Manila and served on the Commission on Methodology for the synod at the Vatican.

In an Asian context, she said, “the lack of synodality is not just ecclesial; it’s in the family, it’s cultural, it’s societal.”

“To me, it’s quite remarkable that [synod participants] were able to name the issues that were important and that would have been otherwise difficult to say,” she said. In dioceses across Asia, laypeople called for greater transparency in church structures and improvements in governance and leadership—and even better homilies from their priests.

“The unique thing about this synod is the process itself,” Ms. Kheng said. “It’s really engaging with the topic by doing the topic, so becoming the church that we want to be by starting to take these actions.”

The theologian Adelson Araújo dos Santos, S.J., lives in Rome but maintains strong contacts with “my hometown,” the Archdiocese of Manaus in Brazil. During Holy Week this year, Father Araújo dos Santos visited a remote community in Brazil’s Acre State, which borders Peru and Bolivia. “I was surprised to see that even there, at that ‘end of the world,’ the synodal process was already taking place,” he said.

At Mass on Palm Sunday, the parish priest reminded parishioners not to forget to put their suggestions for the synod in the “synodal box,” a glass box placed by the entrance of the church.

“I believe that all this is typical of a style of church marked by creativity and spontaneity, which are very much in keeping with the nature of the Brazilian people,



CNS photo/courtesy Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines

Filipino bishops join in prayer before the National Synodal Consultation in Tagaytay City in July.

particularly in the Amazon,” he said. This also reveals “the harmony of the episcopate and the majority of the clergy in Brazil with the vision of Pope Francis.”

“Obviously, this does not mean that there are no resistances and places where the synodal process is not happening or is moving slowly,” he said, “but I would say that this happens more where certain groups that call themselves conservative or traditionalists are strong”—people who “most of the time oppose everything that comes from the current pontificate.”

As in Europe and the United States, in Asia enthusiasm for the synodal process was mixed—well-attended in some dioceses, a token process or ignored altogether in others, Ms. Kheng said. Some bishops and clergy were on board with the synod from the beginning; others were hesitant or resisted the process.

“People are afraid of chaos...disequilibrium,” she said. “Pope Francis talks about the Holy Spirit disturbing the status quo, and naturally, there was some hesitation to get into that process.”

In patriarchal Asian societies, women and the young are not often asked their opinions, Ms. Kheng said. In India, women were reduced to tears during listening sessions, she said, because they were so touched to have finally been invited to participate in a dialogue about the direction of the church and to have “the experience of being given a voice.”

In the end, Ms. Kheng said, the synod itself has modeled a way of being church that laypeople in Asia may be unwilling to relinquish once this synod on synodality ends.

Kevin Clarke, chief correspondent. Twitter: @ClarkeAtAmerica.



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# TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE?

## After a long silence, Pope Francis urges 'dialogue' in Nicaragua



Pope Francis broke his silence on Nicaragua on Aug. 21, calling for “open and sincere” dialogue amid the Ortega administration’s ongoing persecution of the Catholic Church. In his greetings after the Angelus prayer, he said, “I am following with concern and sorrow the situation created in Nicaragua,” while holding out hope that dialogue could “find the bases for respectful and peaceful co-existence.”

The words failed to pacify the pope’s many critics in Nicaragua, however, who wonder why he waited so long to intervene as the church endured escalating attacks at the hands of the Sandinista regime. Other critics in Latin America have expressed exasperation with Pope Francis for not condemning the authoritarian regimes of Nicaragua, Venezuela and Cuba. In these countries, protests have been repressed, the church has been persecuted, and millions have migrated.

The pope’s intervention followed the arrest of Bishop Rolando Álvarez of Matagalpa, who was detained after a raid on the diocesan curia on Aug. 19. He was placed under house arrest in Managua, while the others arrested in the raid were tossed into El Chipote, a notorious lock-up holding political prisoners.

Some called the pope’s response too little too late. Others said it was too weak. A few even referred to Pontius Pilate, using the word *ponciopilatismo*, which in Latin America has come to mean washing your hands of a situation and could be interpreted as “both sides-ism.”

Andrés Oppenheimer, whose column on Latin America

in *The Miami Herald* is widely read in elite circles in Latin America, wrote, “It’s hard to decide what is more outrageous: Nicaragua’s dictator Daniel Ortega’s decision to shut down seven Roman Catholic Church radio stations and hold a bishop and his aides under house arrest, or Pope Francis’ total silence about these attacks on his own people.”

Human rights groups also questioned the pope.

“Considering Ortega’s record of repression, what else is needed for Pope Francis to pronounce forcefully on the abuses in Nicaragua?” tweeted Tamara Taraciuk Broner, deputy director for Human Rights Watch.

“It is time for Pope Francis to stand firmly on the side of the Nicaraguan people.”

Proponents of Pope Francis’ approach say he is acting much the way his predecessors did when dealing with countries controlled by authoritarian governments or hostile to the Catholic Church. The pope also must play a diplomatic role, they say, while avoiding bellicose statements.

“Not even St. John Paul II chastised the Castros in Cuba,” said Rodolfo Soriano-Núñez, a Mexican sociologist, who studies the Catholic Church in Latin America. Nor did popes publicly criticize military dictatorships in countries like Chile and Argentina—where bishops and priests were murdered—or even condemn the Soviet Union, Mr. Soriano-Núñez says.

“Popes are never going to go against specific governments because it never worked out” in the past, he said. “I do not see Pope Francis meddling in any specific country’s

A masked youth holds up the Nicaraguan flag from the roof of the Metropolitan Cathedral in Managua in May 2019, during a service commemorating the government's suppression of protesters in 2018.



AP Photo/Alfredo Zuniga, File

politics, not even Argentina.”

A Jesuit in South America, who did not wish to be named, added, “The pope cannot take confrontational positions without putting Catholics in those countries at risk, particularly when some of them are carrying out educational programs, such as in Nicaragua with universities and Cuba with the little pastoral work that is authorized.”

But the pope’s relative silence on Nicaragua has caused consternation in the Central American country, where the church came into conflict with the Ortega regime in 2018 after opening its parishes to the injured during protests and later accompanying the families of political prisoners. Mr. Ortega and his wife, Vice President Rosario Murillo, regularly brand priests “terrorists” and have amped up the repression in 2022.

Bishop Álvarez has been the most outspoken prelate in Nicaragua after Bishop Silvio José Báez, who left the country in 2019 for his own safety. A source in Nicaragua says many expect Bishop Álvarez to experience the same fate as Bishop Báez, unless Pope Francis intervenes.

David Agren contributes from Mexico City. Twitter: @el\_reportero.



Pope Francis before the tomb of St. Celestine V.

CNS photo/Vatican Media

## GOODNEWS: At the tomb of Celestine V, Pope Francis urges mercy and humility

The day after Pope Francis created 20 new cardinals, he prayed, on Aug. 28, at the tomb of Celestine V, the pope who abdicated five months after his election in 1294. Contrary to speculation in the media, however, he gave no indication that he intends to resign himself.

Celestine, the hermit monk, was elected pope on July 5, 1294, and resigned from the papacy on Dec. 13 of that same year, the last pope to do so voluntarily before Benedict XVI. Francis, in his homily at the Basilica of Santa Maria di Collemaggio in L'Aquila, Italy, praised Celestine for this gesture of humility, which, he said, cannot be understood by the logic of this world.

“Erroneously,” he said, Dante Alighieri, the famous Italian poet, had presented Celestine in the Divine Comedy as the man who “made the great refusal,” whereas “Celestine V was not the man of the ‘No,’ he was the man of the ‘Yes.’”

Pope Francis insisted that “there is no other way to do the will of God except by adopting the strength of the humble.” In the eyes of humanity, he said, “the humble appear weak and losers, but in fact they are the true winners, because they are the only ones who trust completely in the Lord and know his will.”

Pope Francis told his audience, “The strength of the humble is the Lord, not strategies, human means, the logic of this world, calculations.” In that sense, he said, “Celestine V was a courageous witness to the Gospel, because there was no logic of power that was able to imprison or control him.”

“In him,” the pope said, “we admire a church free from worldly logic and a total witness to that name of God which is mercy. This is the very heart of the Gospel because mercy is to know that we are loved in our misery. They go together.”

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



# THE LONG ROAD HOME

After the withdrawal of U.S. troops, thousands of Afghan refugees sought a permanent home in the United States. Too many are still waiting.

By J.D. Long-García

Whenever Bibi dared to drive a car, the neighborhood boys in Kabul would point at her and jeer. While it was legal for her to drive at the time—before the Taliban came back into power—women driving were still shunned culturally in Afghanistan.

Bibi and her family hosted me for dinner this summer at their home in Tucson. Her mother, Fatima, served kabuli pulao, a delicious rice dish, along with mantu, which is like dumplings. She also prepared perfectly seasoned chicken drumsticks. The family shared with me how they fled Afghanistan, where they lived in a much bigger home, and how they nevertheless prefer their life here in the United States, where they are in the process of seeking asylum.

“For women, life is different,” said Bibi, who is 19. “Because here in the U.S.A., I work. In Afghanistan, I cannot work. In the U.S.A. I can have a driver’s license, but in Afghanistan I cannot drive.”

Bibi and her family, given their pending asylum case and their connections in Afghanistan, asked that their real names not be used. After all, they might not get asylum, Bibi said.

“We are afraid of the Taliban,” she said. “In the U.S.A. we are safe, but in Afghanistan we have our own house. If the Taliban see us [in the media], maybe they will take our house, or burn it down.”

Bibi began learning English while still in Afghanistan. Her father worked for the government. Her head was not covered as she spoke to me. Neither was her mother’s. Her father, Noor, who sat next to her, sees things differently than many

Afghan men, she said. In Afghanistan, she said she could not dress or act the way she does in the United States.

“If the girls go to school, or if they drive, they bring shame to their parents,” she said.

The family is among the more than 75,000 Afghans currently in the United States who are hoping to resettle here. The government has granted most of them humanitarian parole, a temporary permission to be here, but they are hoping to become permanent residents. Some Afghans in the United States, including some who worked with the U.S. military, have special immigrant visas. Those are also temporary. In the months to come, Bibi’s family and others like them will need help negotiating the complex U.S. immigration system to find a path toward permanent legal residency. Many faith-based organizations are among those working to provide assistance. Returning to Afghanistan is simply not an option.

### **A Delicate Alliance**

The withdrawal of the U.S. military from Afghanistan in September of last year marked the end of a two-decade presence in the country. Military personnel arrived in the country in October 2001, the month after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11. The U.S. government believed the Taliban were abetting Al Qaeda, the group led by Osama bin Laden that was responsible for the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

The modern Afghan state was established in 1880, though its official independence came in



Evacuees from Kabul, Afghanistan, board a military aircraft during an evacuation Aug. 19, 2021.

CNS photo/Staff Sgt. Brandon Cribelar, U.S. Marine Corps, Handout via Reuters



# 'If you're fearing for your life, applying for asylum is a very opaque process that can be really stressful.'

1919, when the country signed the Treaty of Rawalpindi. In 1979, the Soviet Union sent 80,000 troops to invade Afghanistan. Over the next 10 years, the Soviets attempted to install two regimes that were resisted, in part, by the U.S.-sponsored mujahideen. In 1992, a civil war began between warring factions of ethnic tribes of Pashtun, Tajik and Uzbek. The Taliban gained control of Afghanistan in 1996.

Growing up in Afghanistan, Noor remembers a cycle of years of peace followed by years of violence. The U.S. involvement in the country, he said, led to the longest period of peace he can remember.

Chaos ensued across the country as the U.S. military pulled out. A terrorist group known as ISIS-K attacked the Kabul airport, killing dozens of people. News coverage depicted Afghans clinging to the outsides of large military planes as they prepared for takeoff. The Afghan president, Ashraf Ghani, fled the country as the Taliban took over more quickly than anticipated.

Bibi's family, like many others in Afghanistan, saw the turmoil coming. They spent four days outside the airport, waiting for a flight out, without food or water. They did not have anywhere to lay their heads when they slept, Bibi said. They flew to Qatar, where they spent 15 days in a refugee camp. Then they spent more than a month in Germany before arriving in the United States.

Like many who have humanitarian parole, the family is applying for asylum in the United States. Catholic Community Services of Southern Arizona is helping them

with that, as well as with cultural orientation courses, food stamps, cash assistance, rental assistance and paying their electric bill.

"It's a lot of work and you need good legal representation to move that type of case forward," Rachel Pollock, director of resettlement services for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, said of applying for asylum.

The U.S. bishops' Migration and Refugee Services is one of nine national resettlement agencies. Their network of about 60 organizations has resettled more than 13,000 Afghans in the United States. William Canny, executive director of the office, said multiple agencies and denominations pulled together and collaborated to welcome Afghans in a way he had not seen since the United States welcomed Vietnamese refugees following the Vietnam War.

As they fled to the Kabul airport, many Afghans destroyed documents that would have caused their lives to be in danger if they had been obtained by the Taliban. In many cases, those papers documented participation as human rights activists, journalists, lawyers or women attending the university. But because of their loss, many Afghan immigrants now lack the proof of their activities that is critical for evaluating their asylum cases.

Still, Ms. Pollack noted, the U.S. government recently cleared certain hurdles for Afghans with special immigrant visas.

"But there's still a lot of uncertainty for people. It's a big, bureaucratic system that can be very confusing for newcomers," she said. "And if you're fearing for your life, literally, applying for asylum is a very opaque process that can be really stressful after these folks have gone through what they've gone through. It's a difficult time for them."

## **A Broken System**

It could be a lot easier if Congress passed the Afghan Adjustment Act, according to Christopher Ross, vice president of Migration and Refugee Resettlement Services for Catholic Charities USA. The Senate and House introduced the measure on Aug. 9, which would provide a legal pathway to permanent residency or citizenship for Afghans with special visas.

"This is why people are so frustrated with our immigration system," Mr. Ross said of the delays and red tape faced by asylum seekers. "Our government brought people over here because they were fleeing persecution. They assisted our military. They were brought here and are new community members."

The Afghan Adjustment Act, or something like it,



Afghan refugees are processed at Ramstein Air Base in Germany Sept. 8, 2021.

CNS photo/Olivier Douliery, pool via Reuters

would expedite the process greatly, he said. And given the number of applicants currently awaiting approval, legislation that streamlines the process would greatly lessen the burden on service agencies like Catholic Charities.

Such a measure is not without precedent. In 1966, the Cuban Adjustment Act paved the way for Cuban refugees to become lawful permanent residents. Similarly, in 1998, Congress passed the Haitian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act, which provided a path to legal residency for certain Haitian nationals who were paroled into the United States.

Afghan parolees “are regarded as operation allies, they were in the trenches with the U.S. and various military and state department and intelligence capacities,” said Don Kerwin, executive director of the Center for Migration Studies in New York. “To treat them as something less than full refugees, to deny them a path to permanent residence and full refugee benefits, it would be an extraordinary injustice.”

According to Mr. Kerwin, the United States was not meant to utilize humanitarian parole as often as it has done since the passage of the Refugee Act of 1980. That act established a formal process for bringing refugees into the United States and has led to the entrance of more than

three million refugees into the country over the last 40 years.

From 1980 until 2016, the year before Donald J. Trump took office as president, the United States resettled more refugees each year than all other countries combined. The Trump administration, Mr. Kerwin said, severely cut back the U.S. refugee program. A third of government resettlement offices—100 out of around 300—closed during Mr. Trump’s presidency.

But enough time has passed that Mr. Kerwin believes we should expect more from the Biden administration by now. While Mr. Biden set the refugee cap at 125,000 for 2022, as of June, only 15,000 refugees had been accepted into the United States. For comparison, 110,000 refugees were resettled during the entire year of 2016.

According to the United Nations refugee agency, 85 percent of Afghan refugees are in Pakistan and Iran, where more than two million Afghans have been displaced. The agency estimates that women and children make up more than 80 percent of those forcibly displaced within Afghanistan.

“Certainly people who are coming into the U.S. from various countries around the world, including across our southern border, face huge challenges in making their



# 'I'll just make a new tree, a new branch of my family here. And that's how we will grow.'

claim for asylum and being successful. Afghans have the same problem,” said Joan Rosenhauer, executive director of Jesuit Refugee Services. “We can’t forget how many people never made it out of Afghanistan and how much they’re suffering and struggling now.”

## Welcoming Communities

Some local communities have forged ahead to help meet families’ immediate needs in the absence of larger government programs. That includes the efforts of the Rev. Rock Fremont, pastor of Shepherd of the Hills United Church of Christ in Phoenix, Ariz. His church teamed up with a Lutheran church, a Community of Christ congregation and a Mormon ward to care for an Afghan family of 10 through Lutheran Social Services.

“Through this ministry of accompaniment, there is also formation or initiation into a deeper witness, to asking larger questions,” Pastor Rock said. “Not only teaching someone to fish, but then, beginning to ask deeper questions like who owns the water.”

Volunteers with larger vehicles help transport the family’s children to and from school. The family also has a newborn baby, so the volunteers are always on the lookout for formula. Some will visit the mother of the family to help her learn English.

While the faith communities can help the practical needs of resettlement, Pastor Rock said spiritual matters are left completely up to the family.

“A lot of these families don’t want to connect with the mosque because they’re familiar with religious tension back home,” he said. “Just like a lot of Americans, they have been deeply wounded by religious institutions.... So they don’t want to connect, at least not right now.”



The father of the family has a job now and has bought a minivan. But his \$450 weekly salary is not enough to cover the family’s expenses, including the \$2,800 monthly rent for their home. The skyrocketing price of housing has complicated resettlement efforts nationwide.

The faith communities Pastor Rock is working with would like the family to stay in their current home, at least through the end of the school year. It is a pleasant neighborhood, and the children have made friends there.

“What that means is that our congregations are going to have to pick up the payments on the lease,” Pastor Rock said.

Both Noor and Bibi also have found jobs. Bibi works as a stocker, and Noor works at a bakery. That in itself has been quite an adjustment. “I used to work simply with a pen,” Noor said of his job with the Afghan government, which he held for 38 years. Bibi spent her days as a university student.

The jobs they have in the United States are relatively





Afghan refugees arrive at Dulles International Airport near Washington Aug. 27, 2021.

Kaech, executive director of Phoenix Refugee Connections, said refugees are often placed in low income housing that is not always safe. “I’ve heard stories, just recently, of women getting their head coverings torn off and one guy got shot in the foot,” she said. “Money is stolen and people get robbed.”

In her work, she has heard of families driving in circles around the Kabul airport last year for two days straight, waiting for the gates to open. One man she met recently told how he had to decide whether to bring his nephew with him on the plane. The man could not get hold of his brother before he left, but he and his nephew had to take advantage of the small window of opportunity they had to leave and be safe.

“So now they’re here and his dad is back in Afghanistan,” Ms. Kaech said. “There’s very little chance that he’ll see his son soon. It’ll be a very, very long time.”

Over the last 19 years, she has helped Christian communities who want to be more welcoming to refugees. She and her husband are also foster parents for unaccompanied refugee children. Their foster son, who is 18, is about to move into a dorm at a university.

“I’m trying to prepare myself for this,” Ms. Kaech said. “He’s ready, and I’m excited for him. But I’m going to miss him... He wants to change the world, and he has a really beautiful heart—a servant’s heart.”

Her foster son, Ali, who asked that his real name not be used, fled Afghanistan when he was 12. In his hometown, Ali and his father ran a grocery shop that sold to local residents. Since it was next to a military base, they also sold to American and Afghan soldiers. The Taliban did not like that.

“They threw a rock wrapped in paper [with a message] to warn us one time. And then they came in person to warn us, ‘You should not continue selling stuff to them because you are helping them,’” Ali recalls them saying. “But that brought a lot of business for us, so my father continued selling to them.... It was our only source of income.”

His father went out of town one day, and he never returned. Ali and his family searched for him for months but never found him. One day, when Ali was headed to the family’s shop, he got a call warning him not to come. The Taliban were there looking for him. He told his mother, who sent him immediately to stay with family members in another city. His mother then sold everything they had to pay

common among the refugee population. Refugees tend to get hired for positions that do not require language skills, like cleaning rooms at a hotel or working at a car wash.

Noor showed me pictures of his old office on his phone. In some of those pictures, he sat at his desk holding his pen. In others, he was speaking with his direct reports. Then he showed me pictures of his office after it was destroyed by the Taliban in 2018. Even on the small screen, I could see a bomb and bullets had reduced his wooden furniture to splinters. The insides of cushions spilled onto the shattered glass that covered the floor.

At the time, Noor was part of a group that discovered the Taliban were bringing weapons into the country from Pakistan. That is why, he explained, they shot up his office.

### Further Challenges

Although the Taliban is not an immediate threat in the daily lives of Afghan refugees in the United States, they still may face challenges to their safety and well-being. Mary

for Ali to leave the country.

“In a situation like that, you already know what’s going to happen,” Ali said. “With little kids, [the Taliban] will take you and put a vest [with explosive] on you. And they will say, ‘This is what you have to do to save your family.’ They will force you to do what they want you to do. They put a key around your neck and tell you it’s the key to heaven. [They say,] ‘If you go and explode yourself near to one of the bases, you will go to heaven.’”

Ali said the Taliban would assume a person like his father, who ignored their warnings, was an American spy or ally. “People who do that, they torture them to death. That’s what they do,” Ali said. “I’ve never heard from my father since that time. I was hoping I would hear from him sometime, after the Taliban came back into power. It’s been six, seven years now that I’ve been missing him. I don’t think he’s alive anymore.”

Ali made his way to Indonesia, where he lived in shelters and orphanages for a few years until a United Nations program brought him to the United States. Catholic Charities placed him in several foster homes before he eventually met Ms. Kaech and her husband. With them he finally felt at home again.

His mother is back in Afghanistan with his three younger siblings. “They’re in imminent danger,” Ms. Kaech said. “And of course, his sister is not able to go to school anymore.” Ali sends \$500 a month back to his family in Afghanistan.

“They don’t want women to go outside,” Ali said of the restrictions enforced by the Taliban. He worries for his sister especially.

“They want [women] to stay home and do chores and stuff. They don’t hold any rights,” he said. “During the war, there were [Taliban soldiers] who went to houses and would take your daughters as their rewards, for fighting to restore Taliban control.” Ms. Kaech said they had applied for humanitarian parole for her son’s family to come from Afghanistan, but she had little hope that it would be approved.

It is a far different landscape for Ukrainians under a program established by the Biden administration in April, she said. “You can sign up to sponsor a Ukrainian family and bring them here for humanitarian parole. And it’s easy. And if my son’s mom....” Ms. Kaech’s emotions forced her to pause. “If my son’s mom had a Ukrainian passport, she’d be here next month. He hasn’t seen his mom in years. She hasn’t seen the hair on his face.”

Ms. Kaech does not take issue with the policy toward Ukrainians, but finds it unjust that the United States has



An Afghan refugee family walks past temporary housing on Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst in New Jersey Dec. 2, 2021.

different policies for different countries. “People are fleeing the same threat,” she said. “They’re fleeing death and the hands of people who have power over them.”

Ali wants to become a U.S. citizen and eventually bring his family to the United States. “I want to see my brothers and sister grow up,” he said. “I want to see my mother smile at me again and to be in the same house. That’s what I want for my family. I want my brothers to go to college. I want my sister to get a good education.... I’ll just make a new tree, a new branch of my family here. And that’s how we will grow.”

### A New Home

The week I visited Noor, Bibi and Fatima, we were joined by Chris Rightmer, a case worker with Catholic Community Services of Southern Arizona. Bibi calls Mr. Rightmer her “Father No. 2.”

She was preparing to test for a high school equivalency diploma at the time, and the family had an asylum interview later that week 100 miles north, in Phoenix. Mr. Rightmer gave Bibi tips on how to find G.E.D. sample tests online. He also chided her for not making the hotel reservations for herself, which the family needed for the asylum interview. Their case worker made the reservation for the



CNS photo/Evelyn Hockstein, Reuters

Afghan refugees at Dulles International Airport in Dulles, Va., board buses Sept. 2, 2021, that will take them to a processing center.

family instead.

“He should have taught you how to do it,” Mr. Rightmer said. “What do I tell you in the cultural orientation class? I don’t give you fish. I teach you to fish. Did you learn how to make a hotel reservation and how to do transportation?” She said she did learn. The case worker taught her, she said, but Mr. Rightmer did not seem convinced.

Throughout the evening, our conversation covered a variety of topics, including the numerous languages spoken in Afghanistan. The family speaks Dari, for example, but Pashto and Urdu are also quite common. The nation is made up of numerous ethnic groups, with Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara and Uzbek being the most populous.

Bibi was born after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, and after the U.S. military began to arrive in Afghanistan. When Mr. Rightmer explained that the United States came to Afghanistan to find Osama bin Laden, Bibi seemed surprised.

She had been talking about how, when the American military returns to Afghanistan, the country would be at peace again. “We would be safe,” Noor added. Mr. Rightmer explained it was unlikely the U.S. military would return.

Later in the evening, the conversation shifted to their

future life in the United States. Once he is more proficient in English, Noor would like a job where he can use more of the skills he used working for the government in Afghanistan. Bibi also thinks a lot about the future.

“My first dream is to support my family,” Bibi said.

“That’s not a dream,” Mr. Rightmer interjected. “That’s an obligation.”

“In Afghanistan, it’s a dream. Really, it’s a dream,” Bibi responded. “I want to be a doctor in the future. I want to live in California, have my own house, my own car and live with my parents.”

But what about returning to Afghanistan?

“Nobody wants to go to Afghanistan again because we would just be hiding from the Taliban,” she said. “They will kill us. They know my father. Really, we don’t want to. We know the Taliban will kill us.”

J.D. Long-García is a senior editor at *America*.

Hear more about Ali’s experience leaving Afghanistan and finding a new home on the “Church Meets World” podcast. [americamagazine.org/podcasts](https://americamagazine.org/podcasts)

# MAKING PART-TIME WORK

*Flexible Catholic workplaces are not just good for parents. They are good for the church.*

By Laura Loker





“She’s becoming cuter and cuter, but...she’s continually at my side, and it’s difficult for me to work. So to make up for lost time, I work on my lace until ten o’clock at night and wake up at five o’clock in the morning.”

Replace “work on my lace” with “catch up on work emails,” and this note could have been written by any number of modern-day parents. In reality, however, it was penned in 1874—by St. Zélie Martin about her flourishing lace business and the then 18-month-old St. Thérèse of Lisieux. (The quote appears in *A Call to a Deeper Love*, a collection of letters from Sts. Zélie and Louis Martin.)

The familiarity through the ages of the tension between the work of motherhood and paid work outside the home might be comforting if it were not so difficult. On a practical level, the conversation today usually gravitates toward parental leave policies—or the lack thereof. Neither the United States nor the Catholic Church is leading the way in this area. In an ongoing survey of diocesan maternity leave policies, the Catholic women’s publication FemCatholic has confirmed just five that offer a fully paid 12 weeks.

But even modest amounts of paid leave are out of reach for many Catholic workplaces, which often struggle financially. “Parishes and dioceses would love to do more, but sometimes you can’t,” admitted Regina Haney, executive director of the National Association of Church Personnel Administrators. For some Catholic organizations, it is as much a matter of priorities as it is of budget. FemCatholic notes in their report that larger diocesan assets do not necessarily correspond to more generous leave policies.

On an emotional level, new motherhood can stir up dueling desires. Faced with both family finances and tiny toes, with stimulating adult conversation and sleep deprivation, with email overload and wobbly first steps, new moms find themselves occupants of two different worlds, the professional and the personal. For many women, participation in the former can help retain some semblance of a pre-baby identity, while the latter can feel wonderfully full but also enormously overwhelming.

For Catholic women, there is also the spiritual dimension at play. Rachel Harkins Ullmann is the executive director of the Given Institute, which offers professional and spiritual development opportunities for young adult women. The two questions she most often gets from participants in Given programming, she said, are: “How do I integrate my spiritual life into my professional life?” and “How do I balance being a mother and a work life?”

There is no single correct answer for either question,



# If Catholic workplaces are successful in cultivating good working conditions, they will be rewarded by high-quality applicants.



of course. Some moms prefer to opt out of the workforce entirely, at least while their children are small. Others find that with the right support, full-time work is not only desirable but an important element of their personal calling. Still others are bound by financial pressure, needing to work full time if only to net a fraction of their pay after child care costs.

Yet there are plenty of mothers who do not fall neatly into the stay-at-home or full-time-working categories. There are those who want to be at home with their children during the week but also have a desire to stay active professionally, those who need to contribute to their household income but not to the extent of a full-time salary and others who want the flexibility afforded by fewer hours of paid work to help maintain the rhythms of daily life with children.

In other words, if given the opportunity, many mothers would jump at the chance for part-time work. So while Catholic employers still have a long way to go in figuring out sustainable maternity leave policies, most are missing another easily implemented opportunity to support women and families more generally: offering part-time, flexible jobs.

## Finding a New Balance

Marie Dooley is a mother of five in Fleetwood, Pa., and she has been working part time for the Catholic Church since their first child was born in 2012. Initially, the work arrangement was not her decision; the parish she was working for prior to her first baby had to scale down her position to save money. But part-time work has since become her preference. After that first job, she has continued to seek out other part-time parish jobs—first in youth ministry and currently as a director of religious education.

For Ms. Dooley, who homeschools her children during the day, the flexibility and reduced hours of her arrangement have made her work/life balance sustainable. “If I would have done full time, I think I would have reached a point where it would have been too much—just, realistically, wanting to be with my kids as much as I could,” she told me. “I think it would have been a struggle.”

Typically she is in the office on Sunday mornings, Tuesday evenings and the occasional Saturday morning. Other evenings after the kids are in bed—she is a night owl, she said—she works from home. All told, she works between 15 and 20 hours a week.

Beyond the benefit to her parish religious education program and the boost to her family’s finances, Ms. Dooley said working helps her feel more well-rounded as a person

in an otherwise intense season of motherhood. “I know some people will go out with their friends and that’s their break from their family, and I always joke, ‘Oh, going to work is my break,’” she said. Sometimes it feels like work, of course, but mostly she is grateful for the opportunity to serve others outside her home. “I think the key is not to hate [the work],” she added.

It is not hard to imagine what moms and their families stand to gain. For mothers who want both to be at home with their children and to use their gifts professionally, part-time work can offer an attractive solution, whether the arrangement lasts until their youngest children are in kindergarten or the children are out of the house entirely. For those who would otherwise be home alone with their kids most of the day, work—even if it is fully remote—can offer them social ties in an isolating time.

And then there are the moms who, feeling stretched by full-time work, might scale back if they were able. In one Pew Research Center study, full-time working parents were much more likely than part-time or stay-at-home parents to say they always feel rushed—and those who always felt rushed were more likely to say they find parenting stressful and tiring all the time. Notably, this data comes from well before the Covid-19 pandemic; the picture today is likely much worse.

“We’re collectively naming for the first time that to have a family and work full time is not sustainable,” said



Annie Selak, theology professor and associate director of the Women's Center at Georgetown University. "I think it's brought to the forefront that the amount of work required to do well in jobs is more than nine to five, and the amount of work required to be a good parent cannot fit neatly into the before-nine-a.m. and after-five-p.m. category."

Many mothers, Dr. Selak included, hope that workplaces will offer more support and flexibility for full-time working parents. Others are addressing the problem by "leaning out." The Atlantic reported last year, switching from high-powered careers to part-time jobs or consulting work.

Not all part-time work is flexible—nor are all bosses accommodating—but many arrangements are doable with little to no child care, especially remote work. For families who need or want more of a financial cushion, but not necessarily the hectic schedules of two full-time working parents, such arrangements can be a real boon. And while stepping back in any capacity will likely constrict long-term earning potential, it is easier to break into full-time work again after having worked part time than after not working at all. (Whether that should be the case, as well as the effect of our culture's diminishment of the value of care work, merit their own discussions entirely.)

While it is not a preference—or even an option—for every mother, part-time work offers distinct benefits to families. What about benefits to employers?

### **Attracting—and Keeping—Young Employees**

In today's environment, employers' ability to retain talent is shakier than ever. Amid the Great Resignation, employees have been voluntarily leaving their jobs in record numbers, reaching a 20-year high in November 2021. Underlying the exodus is a desire for better benefits and flexibility. According to a recent Pew study, the top five reasons workers quit their jobs in 2021 were low pay, a lack of opportunity for advancement, feeling disrespected at work, child care issues and not enough schedule flexibility.

Catholic employers would do well to take note. If they are successful in cultivating good working conditions, they will be rewarded by high-quality applicants—and loyal employees. This is not just good for parents; it is good for the church.

Caitlin Morneau is the mother of two young boys and director of restorative justice for the Catholic Mobilizing Network. "I've done nearly every combination of hours—full-time, part-time, remote, in the office—probably that you can imagine at some point in time in the last four years," she told me.

When I spoke to her, she was working full time. But in other seasons of her family life, whether she was welcoming a new baby or going to grad school, her workplace accommodated her requests for work-from-home flexibility and reduced hours. Because of her dedication to the organization's mission and its family friendliness, Ms. Morneau loves her work—and she does not plan to leave the job any time soon.

The late business psychologist Frederick Herzberg suggested that there are two types of factors that influence job satisfaction: motivation factors (alignment with company mission, for example, or sense of purpose and growth) and "hygiene" factors (such as salary, good or bad management and schedule flexibility). It is reasonable to imagine that many employees of Catholic organizations are attracted by their employer's mission—serving the church, the poor, the marginalized.

But for parents, the hygiene factors sometimes must outweigh the motivation factors. I asked Ms. Morneau to imagine what she would have done if her employer had not been so accommodating. She is not sure she would have stuck around. "What I fear is that I would have taken the job that offered the right flexibility, or was in the right location, or paid the right amount," she said, "but I didn't feel as connected to the mission."

"I think [the lack of flexibility] comes from an old traditional model that is kind of becoming outdated in today's world," reflected the mother and multimedia producer Bridget O'Boyle, who loved but left her diocesan job when it became too hard to manage amid family life. "And we've got to progress as a church in terms of the flexibility that we allow for employees, or we're not going to get young people. We're going to lose the young perspective in church offices and diocesan offices, because they're going to go work for Microsoft or they're going to go work for Google, where they work from home 24/7 and they get awesome benefits."

Employers may think that getting those hygiene factors right requires having abundant funding, but sometimes creative thinking can create what cash cannot. Reimagining a role or two as part-time job shares, for example, is a budget-friendly way to offer family friendly work. Not only do employers get the work done for a comparable cost; they benefit from two sets of skills and experience—not to mention access to the vast talent pool interested in such opportunities. Multilevel marketing companies have identified—and often exploited—the largely untapped resource of stay-at-home moms, some of whom you probably see on social media feeds selling beauty products or dietary supplements. Meaningful, professional, flexible work oppor-

tunities from the church could help provide an alternative that helps both parents and the larger flock.

In many ways, the Covid-19 pandemic has ushered in a new era of flexibility. Many Catholic employers—often brick-and-mortar institutions—were forced to accommodate remote work amid lockdowns and persistent safety concerns. Ms. Ullmann of the Given Institute hopes that Catholic employers will capitalize on the moment to ask important questions about how best to manage their employees in a digital-first environment.

“How do you manage your workforce that’s working from home? How do you keep up strong, tight relationships when you don’t see your coworkers in person as often as you used to? Because there is a friction there—there is,” she said. “So if the church could get ahead of that, and the church could be a leader in these strong workplace initiatives—oh my gosh, we would be getting the best talent out there, right? People would be flocking to come work for us.”

### **Facing the Challenges**

There are hurdles to making these opportunities a reality, as well as challenges once they are realized. The first hurdle is a big one: the culture of overwork in Catholic workplaces, particularly those that are oriented around ministry.

Anna Brown—identified here by a pseudonym because she did not feel comfortable speaking openly about her former employer—worked in what was supposed to be a part-time capacity running several ministries in her parish. However, over time the job ballooned into more responsibilities and more hours than she was getting paid for. The parish’s unrealistic expectations created a lack of balance that began to affect Ms. Brown’s family life negatively. “I can’t take phone calls [about work for the parish] when I’m cooking dinner or changing diapers,” she told me. “I mean, I did. But it was stressful.” As her family grew, it became more and more difficult to make the arrangement work.

In retrospect, Ms. Brown wishes she had had more intentional conversations with her boss about her family’s changing needs—and, indeed, that such meetings had been the norm for working parents. “You know, you come back from maternity leave, have a meeting and [your boss could] say, ‘Okay, now you have two kids in your family. How are you doing? How is that feeling? What has changed?’” she said. “What do you need as a family? What are the struggles, and how can we make this work? Because we like you, and we want to keep you.”

Ultimately, she left the parish behind for another part-time job with clearer expectations and boundaries. She now provides emotional and spiritual support to end-of-life patients. Since taking the new job, life feels less chaotic



# There are plenty of mothers who do not fall neatly into the stay-at-home or full-time-working categories.



in comparison.

Most of the women I spoke to were familiar with experiences like Ms. Brown’s, whether it was their own or that of family and friends. “I don’t see part-time work [in the church] being truly part-time often,” said Ms. Ullmann. “I would say that [for] almost every woman I know who has a part-time job—unless she very clearly has negotiated the boundaries of her work responsibilities—it goes far beyond a part-time job. And then, unfortunately, the woman isn’t paid for the work that she’s truly doing.”

“There’s a sense that if you sign up to work for the church, you’re signing up to sacrifice,” echoed Dr. Selak. “You’re sacrificing pay, you’re sacrificing career trajectory, advancement, but you’re also sacrificing bounds and family time and things like that.”

Contributing to the issue is the same financial strain that keeps many Catholic workplaces from offering paid maternity leave. When a position is part time, it may be that way simply because there isn’t room in the budget for a full-time salary and benefits, not because the amount of work required by the role is correspondingly smaller.

And yet, tight budget or not, it is up to the leadership of the organization—whether that is a parish, diocese or nonprofit—to set the tone of its employee culture. Ms. Morneau, for her part, is grateful that her bosses are mothers themselves. “Because there was that experience in the leadership, there was the ability to know what it looked

like to support it,” she said.

Not everyone has been so fortunate. Many of the women I spoke to had stories of bosses—most often men—who, in regard to an employee’s family needs, were oblivious at best and uncaring at worst. Ms. Brown explained that parish life can be especially tricky because of its regular turnover in leadership. “You get hired under one pastor and it’s great,” she said, “and then a new pastor comes in and it sucks.”

Even in the best of circumstances, however, balancing work and family life is still difficult. To squeeze work time into early hours of the morning or during children’s naps and other margins of the day is to accept a certain level of unpredictability and subsequent frustration. And when working hours are scattered throughout the day, maintaining boundaries between work and family life is challenging. “There are some days where I’m like, ‘Yeah, this is working great!’” said Ms. Dooley. “There [are] other days where I’m like, ‘Something’s gotta give.’”

Furthermore, “part-time” doesn’t always mean “flexible.” For those for whom every hour of work requires child care, net earnings may be underwhelming. Likewise, it is worth noting that not every field is well-suited to remote flexibility—and the ones that are tend to be white-collar, higher-level jobs.

“I see an absolute tie to socioeconomic status and flexibility in work—to have a salary position versus an hourly position is a huge difference,” said Dr. Selak. “Being able to control what time I start work and what time I leave work is indispensable to my ability to parent, and that is something that if I were hourly I would not be able to do, or I would do at a huge personal expense.”

## The Right Opportunities

At present, finding part-time opportunities is difficult. As of this writing, searching “part-time” on CatholicJobs.com yielded just under 130 results that were part-time positions or mentioned considering part-time candidates. (For context, the total number of job listings was over 1,300.) The vast majority of job listings did not mention or even have the potential for remote flexibility. Most positions were in ministry, education or office administration.

CatholicJobs.com is by no means exhaustive. Some large Catholic employers, like the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, post most of their openings on their own job boards. (When I checked, all positions except internships available at the U.S.C.C.B. were full-time.) And if there are deficiencies in the site itself—while users can browse by field or location, there are no dedicated “part-time” or “remote” categories—they are at least in part reflective of the

types of job listings their customers submit. (I reached out to CatholicJobs.com for input on this article; they did not respond.)

Mainstream job boards, however, are a different story. Most notably, The Mom Project connects moms with family-friendly opportunities. Users can look for part-time and/or remote jobs or contracts within their fields, even specifying the number of hours per week that suits their needs. As a registered user myself, I get a handful of relevant part-time opportunities each week by email—hardly the volume of, say, ZipRecruiter, but all much more appealing.

In the church, the situation feels a little like the proverbial chicken and egg. As long as there are not many part-time jobs available in Catholic organizations, there will not be additional resources for job-seekers to find them.

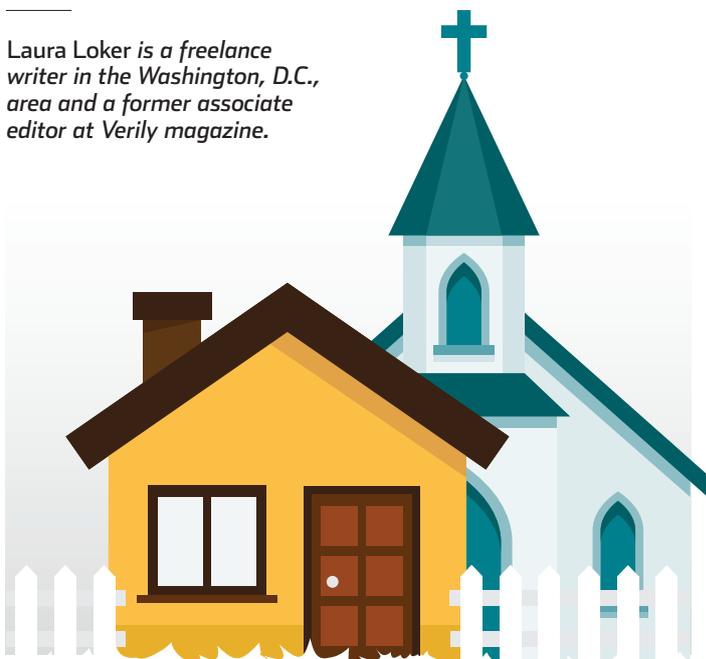
All hope is not lost. Even if parents are not seeing the jobs they want, they can still apply to full-time openings and make the case for their preferred schedule in a well-worded cover letter. Smaller, more nimble organizations may be happy to accommodate the right candidate or divide the position in two.

Ultimately, however, an increase in child-friendly work will require the same impetus as better maternity leave policies: a considerable culture change.

“Catholic organizations have a responsibility to take the consistent ethic of life seriously, not only in the missions that we serve, but in our internal office practices,” said Ms. Morneau. “This means creating conditions for human flourishing for women and families on their payroll.”

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Laura Loker is a freelance writer in the Washington, D.C., area and a former associate editor at Verily magazine.



# Life After Roe v. Wade

## Laws will never be enough to create a prolife culture

By Destiny Herndon-De La Rosa

The other day I was rushing out the door when I realized I had not brushed my teeth. I was in a huge hurry, so I grabbed my toothbrush, ran it under the faucet and proceeded to scrub my pearly whites with just water and the bristles. That is when I stopped, looked myself in the bathroom mirror and said out loud, “Anything worth doing is worth doing correctly.” I grabbed the tube of toothpaste and brushed my teeth...correctly.

This phrase is one of my mother’s favorites. I heard it 1,000 times growing up, and it runs through my head like an endless mantra whenever I am painting a bedroom wall or doing some other menial, tedious task. Whenever I want to give up on a project or cut corners or give in to exhaustion, I always repeat to myself: “Anything worth doing is worth doing correctly.”

My mother’s saying usually affects small, day-to-day things in my life, but every once in a while, her words have big implications. Lately they have had big implications for my work at New Wave Feminists. New Wave Feminists is a politically independent and religious agnostic pro-life feminist group that subscribes to a consistent life ethic, or “CLE.” The CLE is grounded in the belief that every human being should live a life free from violence, from the womb to the tomb.

Its practical application means we work with pregnant migrant mothers at the U.S.-Mexico border, with single or pregnant parents across the United States, and with heartbreakingly young victims of sexual violence in Uganda, many of whom have become pregnant as a result of sexual assault. The legality of abortion in each of these places is all over the map, but here’s the thing: Our work in these



CNS photo/Dave H. Beebe, The Catholic Spirit

different parts of the world, in communities separated by thousands of miles, language and culture, never changes, because as distinct as they are—geographically, culturally and legally—the fear women feel when facing an unplanned pregnancy is universal.

Women need support and resources when that second line shows up on a pregnancy test. Their first thought is not to wonder how their senator, president or prime minister feels about abortion. They care that their family might kick them out if they remain pregnant. They care that their partner is going to leave or, worse, resort to violence if they do not abort. They care that they lack the social and economic resources—housing, employment, child care—to raise their child. Women need safety and security, food, clothing and shelter.



Marie Keating of St. John Neumann Parish in Eagan, Minn., holds a pro-life sign at a rally in downtown St. Paul on June 24, 2022.

### Laws Are Not Enough

At New Wave Feminists, we understand that many believe laws are necessary to lower the abortion rate, but we also know they are not sufficient. What about a pregnant woman's particular needs? What are the deficiencies when it comes to meeting those needs where she lives? We have to remember that a service that might be available to a woman in Seattle might be impossible to access for another in rural Mississippi or Kampala. For example, in Uganda, New Wave Feminists funds prenatal care and corrective procedures for young women giving birth and healing from violent assaults. We also sponsor their education so they will be able to provide for themselves and their children. In South America, safe housing is the number one resource mothers need to provide security for their children; otherwise they can become easy prey for traffickers looking to

use them as the price for a roof over their family's heads. Here in the United States, housing, health care and transportation are the key resources we help women find.

Abortion laws—at either extreme—do not directly change any of that. Laws cannot love you. Only people can do that. So we build relationships with these women. We ask women what barriers are standing in their way and are potentially preventing them from continuing their pregnancies and then, one by one, we work to remove each of those hurdles.

Sometimes a scared young woman only needs to be told that she is strong enough to choose life for her child. Other mothers simply need assistance with their phone bill or new tires for their car so they can keep a food delivery job. Other women are sometimes starting from scratch and after going to the housing authority at two months preg-



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# Sometimes a scared young woman only needs to be told that she is strong enough to choose life for her child.

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nant, discover there is an 18-month- to five-year-long wait-list.

The needs women face run the gamut. Some are small and easy to provide, while others are going to require significant systemic changes that I know feel overwhelming to many of us because we live in a patriarchy—a world built by men and for men, one that was never designed to accommodate the realities of female fertility. Changing those foundational realities is going to take time. But while we are voting on policies that create an equitable society for women and children, our work does not end at the ballot box. That is the easiest form of action.

The real work at the heart of what our organization does is helping the pregnant woman in our community with her \$50 phone bill, or chipping in a few bucks to send a teenager on the other side of the world to trade school, or helping charities and ministries provide safe shelters for the invisible and often forgotten (or even worse, politicized) pregnant mothers at the border who are fleeing violence and just trying to protect their children the same way any one of us would. We must value all of these lives, inside and outside of the womb. Parts of that can feel daunting, I understand. But there is absolutely something, big or small, that every single one of us can do to contribute to a truly sustainable global culture of life. *This* is the reality many women and their unborn children are facing. For a woman to truly have a *choice*, her basic needs must be met.

An abortion is often the result of a series of breakdowns. Something failed. Something went wrong. Often, there is a plethora of failures from numerous people, programs and systems that all contribute to a woman's decision to abort. This decision is frequently mislabeled as a "choice," when in reality, for far too many women, it is not a choice at all, but rather something she sees as necessary for her very survival.

No one ever dreams of the day they will finally be able to get an abortion. It is not fun and it is not run-of-the-mill health care. Advocates often compare it to the unpleasantness of an appendectomy or having wisdom teeth removed—but abortion is infinitely more significant. It impacts the mind, body and spirit in a unique way. No one wonders how old their wisdom teeth would be had they not had them removed. They do not wonder what their life would look like now if only they had been able to keep their appendix.

The inability or unwillingness of people to be intellectually honest about these differences prevents many women from processing their decision to abort, because while many know (or feel) the impact it had on them, they are made to feel silly for harboring complex or nuanced thoughts about the experience of abortion. But those thoughts are always there, right below the surface, because we know abortion should not exist. It is never an action one wants to take, and always a decision made under duress.

I know this because I speak to women frequently. I hear the fear in their voices and see the pain in their hearts as they grapple with what to do next after becoming pregnant. I try to tell them their lives are not over. I know this personally because I became pregnant at 16 and now have an amazing 21-year-old son to show for it. But I also know that the *only* reason he is here, and our lives were able to flourish, is because I was privileged enough to have a village of people helping me.

That is what I want for all women—exactly what I received. I want women to have housing, food, clothing, quality health care and loving people who can step in and help them even if it means driving over at three o'clock in the morning to give a mother some relief from a colicky baby. That is the sisterhood. That is the village. That is the pro-life feminist vision that must become a reality in our communities.

Since abortion was declared a constitutional right in 1973, the pro-life movement has focused on overturning Roe. In June this happened. Over the past 49 years another part of the movement, perhaps less visible than political fights hashed out on the front pages, has worked

tirelessly to create a “culture of life,” or a world where pregnant women don’t feel a *need* for abortion because there are support systems in place make it unnecessary. These grassroots organizations have worked to make abortion unthinkable through direct action, offering practical resources to pregnant women in need—including diapers, cribs, car seats and formula. While that’s all wonderful, even they know it is not nearly enough. For so many of the women they serve, their actual needs are so much bigger.

In order for abortion-vulnerable women to truly feel like they can “choose life,” they need big-ticket items like assistance with housing, child care and transportation—and if they live in rural areas, medical services that they can actually access. All of these are things resource centers would no doubt love to provide, but the funding has simply not been there. When most are struggling just to keep their doors open, providing additional services is out of the question. Yet they already have the facilities, the heart and the staff to accomplish this big vision of a world without Roe. They simply need the funding and training to make this vision possible.

So, where does that leave us? While the legality of the abortion is going to be mixed across all 50 states, many of our communities need to bolster existing support networks—at the community, state and federal levels—to prepare for the reality of a post-Roe world, especially in states that have the strongest restrictions. For decades the movement has been working to address the supply side of abortion, but it cannot be to the detriment of addressing the diverse factors contributing to the demand side of abortion. The good news? Stepping up these efforts in whichever state you live in, no matter the law of the land, will ultimately help women and children not just to survive but to thrive.

The violence of abortion can never be the answer. The answer must be communities coming together to support and celebrate these new lives through our resources, time and talents. Yes, these are the very support systems that should already exist! The mantle of the grassroots side of the movement must now be taken up in pursuit of concrete legislative action. We have our work cut out for us. We must address this coming crisis of crisis pregnancies head on, and prepare a multitude of creative solutions *now*.

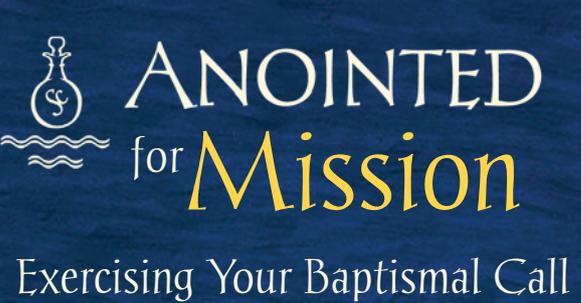
When the maternity homes are at capacity, and government housing becomes even more scarce, what then? When we have thousands of parents who need help with child care, how will we help to provide that? When moth-

ers need to take time off work after giving birth, will we support policies like expanding paid family leave? These are the questions we should be asking ourselves now.

The pro-life movement has spent the last 49 years working toward this moment. We must take the necessary measures to map out what a truly post-Roe “culture of life” looks like. We cannot cut corners or get sloppy. My mother’s words ring truer now than ever: “Anything worth doing is worth doing correctly.” And helping women and children thrive is absolutely one of the most noble things worth doing.

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*Destiny Herndon-De La Rosa is the founder and president of the pro-life organization New Wave Feminists. She is also a frequent op-ed contributor for The Dallas Morning News. A version of this essay originally appeared in Church Life Journal, an online publication of the McGrath Institute for Church Life at the University of Notre Dame, and is reprinted here with permission.*



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# 'GOD WAS WITH US'

*I have crossed deserts and climbed walls to protect my son from violence in Colombia.*

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By V. A. García

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In Paul's Letter to the Romans, we read, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Rom 8:28). We humans are capable of dreaming—that is, we can create great goals for our lives. Sometimes we cannot fulfill our projects, but other times it is possible. But we always hope we are working toward God's greater good.

In my own life, I have had the opportunity to fight for my dreams. I have tried, and tried, and tried again. But now, this fight isn't for my dreams, but for the most wonderful human being, God's gift for me—a part of me—my love, my son.

I am fighting to build a life for us here in the United States. Let me tell you why.

I am a Colombian woman in my 30s. I was born in the city of Bogotá. I'm a hard worker, entrepreneur and single mother; my son is currently 12 years old. It is very difficult to tell our story since it stirs up many feelings in me, but it is important to me that the world knows that anything is possible with God's help.

It all began because safety and public order are increasingly complicated in my country, Colombia. The neighborhood where I grew up is now called a "risk zone." For the past few



CNS photo/Jorge Duenes, Reuters

A general view from Tijuana, Mexico, shows a section of the border wall between Mexico and the United States on Aug. 1, 2022.

years, insurgent gangs have recruited children who are 11 years old and older. They force the children to be part of their gang, take them to training camps and teach them how to manipulate others. The gangs train the children to become people capable of fighting for the gang's own goals. This is why my son's life was at risk—these gangs could have easily recruited him.

I finally decided that we should flee after a group of eight gangsters entered our house at about 3 a.m. and threatened us with weapons. They tied our hands to our feet and took everything we had. The only thing they said was that we had to leave. It was clear to me at that moment that I needed to ensure my son's safety.

Once we were free, my mother asked other people in our neighborhood if they knew the names and addresses of the aggressors. We got the answers. We knew who was behind the violence. But when we reported the incident to the police, they told us not to submit the report. They said the gangs were dangerous and could harm my brothers and son again. The police advised us to leave it alone. Many officers support these gangs by taking bribes and collaborating with them. It is useless to try to denounce

the groups when there is no law. It is a real cry into the void.

In the spring, six days after the horrific event, we left Colombia and headed to the United States. We flew to Panama and then to Mexico City. Then we took a three-day bus ride from Mexico City to the border with Mexicali. We were met with more corruption among the immigration agents in Mexico. They charge migrants money to pass checkpoints; if you don't give them money, you can't cross. These payments are not official government requirements but simply motivated by greed.

The immigration agents stopped the bus and told everyone to get off. They rummaged through our things, taking whatever they wanted. I had hidden our money in my underwear so they didn't take away everything from me; otherwise, we wouldn't have even made it that far. Despite all the terrible moments we went through during that time, God accompanied us.

Once we arrived at a spot where the Colorado River runs through Mexico, we went to another town by truck. We stayed at a hotel in a tiny village. Being there is something I cannot describe. We sensed spirits of fear, death



# NOT JUST ONE MONTH. ALWAYS!

By Mario J. Paredes

Every year, from September 15 to October 15, we celebrate **HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH IN THE UNITED STATES**. A national celebration established by presidential proclamation, Hispanic Heritage Month recognizes the influence and contributions that the community of men and women of Hispanic origin have made to the development and progress of this Nation.

This celebration, in addition to the well-known celebrations across the United States, is an important opportunity for us, within our Hispanic communities, to ask ourselves about the present of our past and, more importantly, about our future in the United States. We should reflect on our rich heritage and on the preservation of the history, culture, customs, beliefs, values, and language that we have received from our ancestors and countries of origin and that we brought to this great Nation for the continuation of this legacy that we are affecting right here and now. But, above all, we must ask ourselves about the present and future of our Hispanic identity—our heritage—that we are building in the United States.

Data from this Nation's latest population censuses show the numerical strength of our Hispanic presence in today's North American society. But the numerical growth of our Hispanic community should correspond, simultaneously, to an increase in the quality of our political, cultural, academic, religious, sports, and economic presence and in our participation in the institutions and spaces where this Nation's destiny is decided.

The analyses emerging about what happened during the pandemic—which continues—show the fragility of the human condition, the weaknesses of the world and North American community, and, for that matter, the enormous fragility of the Hispanic community in the United States. Our conditions of poverty, overcrowding, and lack of knowledge and resources paint us as a very vulnerable community and one that has been impacted by the pandemic. Amidst the dominant society and culture,

Hispanics and Latin Americans show the highest rates of contagion and mortality.

In addition to the important lessons that the pandemic leaves to all humanity, Hispanics in this Nation must awaken from our resignation and lethargy and ask ourselves about our real personal and community living conditions in this country. We must ask ourselves about what has been achieved and our common goals that have yet to be reached, what we have built and what we lack, our current existence and our will and what should be, our daily lives and our dreams that we have carried to this point and that should continue to inspire our daily lives.

In addition to the pandemic, our current context historically and socially, politically and economically is conditioned by internal political conflicts (especially the conflict between the traditional political parties) and by large and very serious external shifts and conflicts (such as Russia's invasion and war against Ukraine). These are great social changes and serious internal and external conflicts that shake all humanity and that, therefore, cannot leave us unmoved.

All of this demands that the Hispanic community in the United States embrace the best of its heritage and values. The current situation in the United States demands of Hispanics identity, cohesion, training, work, effort, clear goals and leaders who—well-trained in all fields of social and academic areas—are worthy representatives of Hispanic interests in this Nation.

Hispanics cannot remain second-class citizens. And if this is who we are, it is because we allow it. The Hispanic community cannot continue to be part of the national political chessboard that dominant minorities use politically and electorally at their whim and convenience. Our destiny can no longer be defined, conditioned, and determined by others. Hispanics must become—at last—the agents of change, protagonists, and builders



# THE DR. RAMON TALLAJ FOUNDATION HONORS THE ROLE OF PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIANS WITH TWO NEW BOOKS

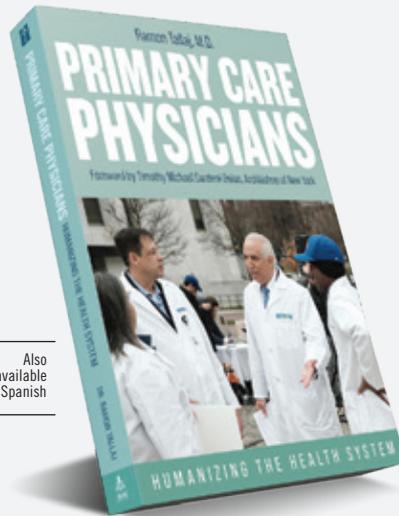
of our own present and near-future of this Nation.

Enough with ephemeral and short-sighted struggles and conquests. Enough with electoral deception, passivity, and resignation. The present and future of our Hispanic heritage must live up to and correspond to the greatness of our origins and our past and to the very greatness of this Nation in which we now live and in which—with all our deeds, words, achievements, and attitudes—it is incumbent upon us to show the pride of our Hispanic heritage, not just one month a year, but always.

*Mario J. Paredes is the CEO of SOMOS Community Care, a network of 2,500 independent physicians — mostly primary care physicians — who care for nearly one million of New York City's most vulnerable Medicaid patients.*



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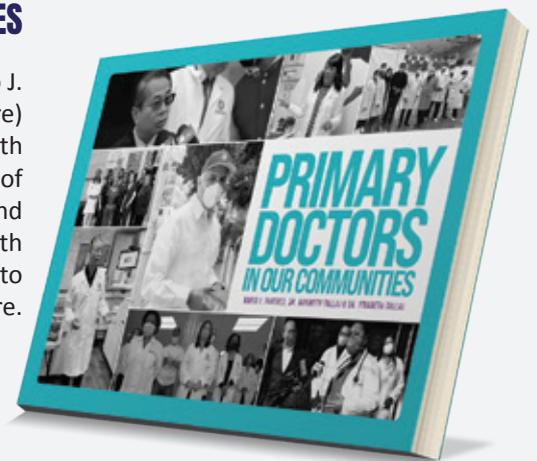
## PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIANS HUMANIZING THE HEALTH SYSTEM

This book constitutes an in-depth analysis about the present healthcare system in the United States, including current statistics concerning public health spending compared to other developed countries.

The preface of the book is written by Timothy Michael Cardinal Dolan, Archbishop of New York, who praises the role of SOMOS as a revolutionary organization that provides medical care to immigrants and to the poorest and most vulnerable.

## PRIMARY DOCTORS IN OUR COMMUNITIES

A bilingual work authored by Mr. Mario J. Paredes (CEO of SOMOS Community Care) and doctors Nayibeth Tallaj and Yinabeth Tallaj. This book features a series of interviews with primary physicians and specialists who work in New York City with communities who hardly have access to personalized and preventive medical care.



The Foundation will launch these books during a fundraising event on October 21<sup>st</sup> at the Union League Club. For more information, please visit [dramontallajfoundation.org](http://dramontallajfoundation.org)



# YOU CANNOT IMAGINE THE FEAR IN OUR HEARTS SEEING THE WALL

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and evil—but those feelings happen when you find yourself in a cartel-run town. We started being followed by some people, and we knew we were in trouble. My family split up to lose them. We had so much fear and anxiety. When we tried to leave the town, they told us we had to pay or die, so we agreed to a payment.

But God was always with us.

Then we finally reached the U.S.-Mexico border. You cannot imagine the fear in our hearts seeing the wall. Its height makes you feel like you are in a forbidden place, something really dark. We walked until we found a spot where the border became a river. We went over the first wall using all our strength and gripping the bars with our hands. Then we climbed a second wall. But there were no border patrol agents. It reminded me of when God parted the Red Sea for the Israelites. We intended to surrender but had no way to do so. The only thing we heard was a helicopter that flew over, but it was as if they did not see us.

We walked along the river and saw many baby clothes and the clothing of adult men and women who passed before us. At first, it was very shocking to see so many things discarded. But people shed their items because walking in the beating sun is exhausting, and your body gets depleted. The less weight you carry, the easier it is to walk. That is why many people who arrive in the United States on a similar path only have what they're wearing. When I think about all the people who walked through the desert for days or passed through the Rio Grande, it gives me chills. I kept thanking God we were O.K. during such a sad time in our lives.

We followed the river until we had to leave the path. The only thing we found for miles was a journalist who interviewed us. He gave us water. I tried to use his phone to call immigration so we could present ourselves to them and seek asylum, but they never arrived.

We walked for seven hours until we reached Yuma, Ariz. We were so tired, sunburned, thirsty and worn out; even our underwear was ripped from the journey. But once we were in Yuma, we thanked God because we officially had a chance at a life in this country of opportunity. God was always leading us, just as he led the people of Israel when they left Egypt, guiding them day and night.

We met another migrant family along the journey, and they introduced us to the people at a Catholic Worker house in another state. To this day, the Catholic Worker does an excellent job assisting us. They give us food and housing and helped me enroll my son in school. They are helping me with resources to locate an attorney to establish my asylum petition and fix my situation in this country.

I never imagined myself being an asylum seeker and living without official documentation until I can find a good lawyer. Although some parts of this journey were my plans and thoughts, I know others were God's plans for us. He has helped us, and his mercy is renewed daily. I am grateful because, in the middle of everything, I do not feel like someone who has done something wrong. I just came so I could offer my son a life of opportunity. I hope that he can fulfill his dreams of playing soccer, maybe eventually at a university or even as a professional. In our country, he cannot play at all.

The only thing I ask in my prayers is that we win our asylum case. I pray for a permit to work and that this country of opportunity will allow us to prove we are grateful human beings and want to contribute good things.

I know my son will represent the United States as his homeland proudly. I dream of seeing my son graduate from school, that the United States will allow him to study at university so he can become a professional who contributes to the community.

In Jos 1:5, we read, "No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, I will be with you; I will never leave or forsake you."

No matter what happens, I will show this same steadfast love of and protection for my son. A mother's love overcomes any fear or wall that may arise.

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*V. A. García is the pseudonym of a Colombian woman in her 30s. She loves to cook, sing, dance and accompany her son to soccer practice.*

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# REIMAGINING GODPARENTS

*The church needs a new understanding of what this role can be*

By Ted Kennedy Jr.

Last year, at the age of 59, I chose a new godmother.

A year earlier, my godmother and aunt, Jean Kennedy Smith, had passed away. Jean and I had built a lifetime of memories and confidences—we had worked closely on expanding arts opportunities for people with disabilities—and her loss left me facing an emotional and spiritual void.

My relationship with Jean could not be replaced, but it was important for me to build another unique relationship with someone who embodied integrity, a deep spirituality and a profound gratitude for life. Gradually, an image of a potential new godmother formed in mind: my Aunt Ethel Kennedy.

My Aunt Ethel and I have long shared a special bond. Our dinners together are filled with stories and followed by songs. (Ethel loves when I croon a current Broadway hit or an old Irish ballad.) We love sailing together on Nantucket Sound, and she pretends to act surprised when I ask her to take the helm, which I always do. We have laughed together and mourned together. I have always deeply valued her unique perspective and guidance, especially during difficult and painful times. I feel that my Aunt Ethel possesses more wisdom, compassion, faith, gratitude and acceptance than

anyone else I know.

Yet I hesitated to ask her to take on this new role. As our family's matriarch, my Aunt Ethel has a host of other family responsibilities. And she has many children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren who already require her love and attention. I did not want to burden her or add to her already long list of obligations.

But the more I thought about it, the more I realized that she was the one person in my life who embodied the kind of faith that I most admire and respect. I decided to write a letter and ask her to be my godmother.

One evening, before one of our fireside suppers, I decided to read the letter out loud to her. Aunt Ethel was seated in her usual spot on her blue couch, with her dog, Rascal, resting by her side. I stood up and pulled the handwritten letter out of my shirt pocket. I cleared my throat. With tears beginning to well in my eyes, I read her my letter. I explained how much I loved and cherished her, and how I hoped she would consider this new, special role of godmother.

I will never forget the love and emotion that both of us felt when she enthusiastically accepted. I was overwhelmed with joy.



## The need and desire for spiritual guidance, love, support and personal mentorship does not end when we reach adulthood.

their godparents, through death or disconnection, while others cannot recall ever meeting their godparents. It is a role that means different things to different people, but the Catholic Church has a specific understanding of it. For infant baptisms, typically a godparent is a close friend or relative of the child's parents. They are chosen to bear witness to a child's christening and are expected to guide the child in their character development and spiritual formation. And in the early church, godparents would vow to bear legal and financial responsibility for their godchild in the event of neglect or the death of the parents.

But too often, we understand the godparent/godchild relationship to extend only through the godchild's, well, childhood. I believe that our Catholic community needs to expand our current notion of this holy relationship for those of us baptized as infants in order to emphasize that the role is one that lasts—and is needed—for a lifetime. If we fail to do this, we will be missing out on an enormous opportunity to strengthen our spiritual and intergenerational bonds.

The need and desire for spiritual guidance, love, support and personal mentorship does not end when we reach adulthood. All of us continue to need help with difficult decisions and personal challenges throughout our lives. When the active role of a godparent ends, whether through apathy, estrangement or death, we should feel free to ask another person to take on that role. It is a beautiful way to acknowledge, honor and celebrate an individual who already has opened their heart and, by embracing this new role, can make an important difference. My experience in forging this new relationship already has deepened my relationship with my new godmother and fortified my sense of connection to my Catholic faith.

This is not to say that our relationship has suddenly shifted in a short period of time. But there is definitely

My Aunt Ethel suggested that we should somehow formalize our new relationship and I agreed. We invited our family and some close friends to attend Mass together, after which we both offered a testimony of love for each other, as well as our hopes for our new spiritual relationship. (We were blessed to have Matt Malone, S.J., of America Media, to lead us through this ceremony.) We concluded the service by asking everyone present to join together to renew our baptismal promises, which united us with one another and reaffirmed our relationship with our larger Christian community.

### A New Beginning

As I have shared this story with a broader group of family members and Catholic friends, many have been surprised to learn of my status as a new godson. They had never imagined it was even possible, as an adult, to choose a new godparent after losing an old one. I also shared my story with several priests. They told me that they could not recall a single instance when an adult has invited someone to become their new godparent.

Some of my friends described mourning the loss of



Ted Kennedy Jr. (left), Matt Malone, S.J., and Ethel Kennedy in Hyannis Port, Mass., in July 2021. Family and friends gathered to honor Ms. Kennedy's new role as godmother to Mr. Kennedy.

a new feeling of being united and a deeper sense of trust and confidence. There is a security and comfort that comes from being able to speak honestly and be vulnerable with someone in the context of this relationship. Aunt Ethel has shared with me that she feels the same.

There are many ways the Catholic Church can seek to expand our current and too-often limited concept of a godparent, whether that means helping people to find new godparents from among a parish community, celebrating a Mass for godparents and godchildren or offering lectures on the history—and possible future—meanings of the role. But we need not wait for institutional change to take this step. If you are lacking a godparent, you can think about honoring a person in your life with an invitation to this new relationship right now. All members of our faith community deserve a chance to seek out and identify a spiritual mentor and a respected, loving presence.

These days my Aunt Ethel and I still do the same things we have always done—sharing dinners and songs, hopes and dreams—but those times together now feel even more special, because we now share this unique bond with each other.

*Ted Kennedy Jr. is a health care attorney and long-standing advocate for the rights of people with disabilities.*

## A Nun Leaves the Veil

*For M.H.*

By Julia Alvarez

Before, Christ held each cell in you  
 like a strung rosary, and your arms  
 were prayers, your walk in the dark halls  
 supplication, your lips mumbled  
 name after name as if you were practicing  
 a foreign language you would speak in heaven.  
 But you were woman, ached for the wave  
 that lifted itself toward you in the wood.  
 At the crucifix crossroads, you stood still  
 and wondered if the world just down the road  
 were not for you. Months later  
 converted lover in a man's arms,  
 you listen to his music, eat his food,  
 and think of Jesus with his wine and water  
 as of a child busy with his playthings.  
 After years of looking up to heaven  
 you're half surprised you need not go that far,  
 only as high as his eyes to see light.  
 Old habits cover you with their dark skirts  
 and veils of an abstract bride,  
 and to undress takes time. Lie with him  
 as you are. This is the word made flesh,  
 the difficult communion, Bethlehem in your bed.  
 Let Magdalen out of Mary, men from Amen.  
 There are roses in the thorny crown, pick them!

*Julia Alvarez is a novelist and poet whose most recent books are the novel *Afterlife*; a children's book, *Already a Butterfly*; and the poetry collection *The Woman I Kept to Myself*. She lives in Vermont.*



## HELP THE TRANSFORMATION CONTINUE

Father Malone has announced that he will step down as president and editor in chief this December. In recognition of his accomplishments over the past decade, the Board of Directors created the Jesuit Legacy Fund, to honor his leadership and the transformation of America Media.

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# 'We Made a Conscious Commitment'

*Brother James Boynton takes over a Jesuit high school with deep roots in Detroit*

By Maurice Timothy Reidy

*Brother James James Boynton, S.J., was named the 30th president of University of Detroit Jesuit High School and Academy in July after serving as interim president for seven months. He is one of the first Jesuit brothers to serve as president of a Jesuit secondary school. He has worked in a variety of roles at the school, including as teacher, department chair, advancement officer and principal. I spoke to Brother Boynton about what it means to run one of the few Catholic high schools in the city of Detroit and how being a Jesuit brother shapes his leadership style. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.*

**M.T.R.:** *U. of D. Jesuit was founded in 1877. How has the school changed over time? Has it changed along with the city?*

J.B: How has the school changed with the city? I would actually like to flip that question on its head and make the point that we haven't changed.

There were once over 30 Catholic high schools in the city of Detroit. But after the Detroit riots in 1967, and slowly following it, all of those schools closed. U. of D. Jesuit is the only school of the original schools before the riots that is still in the city. All the rest went to the suburbs. And so, we made a conscious commitment, a strategic decision to stay in the city of Detroit and to be committed to the city. Had we moved outside the city to the suburbs, we'd probably be three times the size we are right now and wouldn't look anything like we look right now.

Just a point of clarification, there are now two other Catholic schools in the city, Detroit Cristo Rey High School, sponsored by the Basilian Fathers, and Loyola High School, sponsored by the Jesuits. But of those original 30, we are the only one left.

***That decision to stay has really formed the identity of the school in a big way in the last 50 years.***

That's correct. It forms who we are, our identity of being Jesuit Catholic. Being in the city of Detroit and the diversity that comes with that, not only our student body, but our faculty and staff—that is a huge part of who we are. We are racially and economically diverse, and that's a big part of our strength. And [our student body] is now over a third African American and other minorities.

***What are some of the biggest challenges you're facing as you begin your tenure?***

This year, we're back in the classroom 100 percent. I don't want to be naïve and say that Covid is behind us, but our response to Covid has grown and changed and developed, and we're able to more or less live normal lives now. I'm not sure that anyone realized the psychological effect that Covid would have on not only students, but also faculty and staff, and that's still there.

***What are some of the most exciting things happening right now?***

Under the vision of our last president, Ted Munz, S.J., we purchased a recreation center that was abandoned for 15 years just north of the school. It gives us another means to be committed to the city of Detroit and to interact with our neighbors and partner with the community. This community center, which was closed, is now open and available to the members of the community, not just to our students.

***Could you speak a little bit about how you decided to be a brother?***

I joined the Jesuits at age 20. And then it was during the 30-

Brother James Boynton greets an incoming freshman at University of Detroit High School and Academy.

day long retreat, the silent retreat, that I clearly saw Jesus as my brother. And that's how I want to relate to other people in the world, with the people that I minister with, that I live with, my family, friends and community.

To this day, that's how I see myself relating to people. And I love it. Being a brother in the Society of Jesus, in a way it's the road less traveled, but it's a really cool road.

***How will your identity as a Jesuit brother inform your role as a leader of the school?***

Well, a priest is in front of the people, preaches, does the sacraments and ministry. A priest acts, according to the Latin term, as an *alter Christus*, in the place of Jesus Christ. And I think that's wonderful and I love that.

I want to be Jim Boynton. I want to be me. It allows me to fully be me and to lead from within. We have a leadership team here of eight people. And I know that I'm the president, and I know that they all report to me; but we sit around the table. I don't sit at the head of the table. I don't always lead the meeting. I don't always open it up with a prayer. Other people do that.

***You were recently part of a group of Jesuit brothers who met with Pope Francis. What was that like?***

We talked about all the issues you talk about with young people today, whatever the issue might be, anything from Covid to mental health, to sexual identity, to you name it. The Holy Father said when he was a soccer coach, he said, he always told the kids, "Follow the ball or lose. Know where the soccer ball is going and go there." So, be there at the important junctures of these kids' lives and help them, help them to kick that ball.

He also said, "Beg for joy in your prayer." And he said, "If you do that, you can have consolation even if everything's not perfect and everything's not right." And I thought those were good words of advice. Not to have fear in the future. Go forward even if you don't know where you're going. But go forward.

—  
Maurice Timothy Reidy is deputy editor in chief of **America**.

**JESUIT SCHOOL SPOTLIGHT**

*Jesuit School Spotlight is underwritten in part by Jesuit high schools of the USA East Province of the Society of Jesus.*

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# MEMOIRS OF CATHOLIC GIRLHOODS

By Mary Gordon

People who know me even slightly are shocked when they hear me say that I have a lot in common with Kellyanne Conway. How can I, a left-wing feminist who went into four years of mourning at Donald Trump's election, feel any kinship with the woman who arguably made his election possible? How can I, a person who prides myself on being devoted to precision of language, have any connection with the author of the phrase "alternate facts"?

But my early life is eerily similar to hers. We were both raised in families presided over by a working mother, a grandmother and aunts (we both have Aunt Ritas and Aunt Maries). Our households lacked fathers. Ethnically, we are both a mix of Irish and Ital-

ian, although in my case, my father, a Lithuanian Jew, enriches the broth. We are both products of Catholic education through high school. We were both ambitious, with almost no one around to guide us through luck or peasant wisdom to the goals we only dimly apprehended. We both got further than anyone might have predicted. We are both unafraid of standing up to powerful men.

Conway's publication of her memoir, *Here's the Deal*, prompted me to consider more closely our similarities and differences. I tried to make sense of them in the only way I can make sense of anything: by forming it as a narrative (albeit one without "alternate facts"). What would the shape of my narrative be? Its

Mary Gordon and Kellyanne Conway came of age in radically different Americas and radically different Catholic Churches.

focus could be the historical and the cultural.

### Growing Up

Though Conway and I are both American and Catholic, we came of age (I am 18 years older than she) in radically different Americas and radically different Catholic Churches. The president of my formative years was JFK; hers was Ronald Reagan. Conway traces her attraction to politics to the time Reagan made a campaign stop in her hometown. In his speech, the visiting president even sang the praises of a local hero. “America’s future,’ Reagan said, ‘rests in the message of hope in songs of a man so many young Americans admire, New Jersey’s Bruce Springsteen.’” (Did Reagan actually listen to what Springsteen was saying about America?)

“Since I was co-captain of the field hockey team and had been New Jersey Blueberry Princess, I was among the handful of young people who got a chance to meet him,” Conway writes in *Here’s the Deal*. “It wasn’t any more than a polite hello and a handshake. But I was hooked.”

I wasn’t Blueberry Princess—or, God knows, captain of my field hockey team—I only got to touch Kennedy’s sleeve when he stopped at my home town. But I imagine that I found in him what Conway found in Reagan: “a leader who was aspirational and accessible. Patriotic. Resolute.” In my case, Kennedy’s words, “Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country,” were stamped on my imagination and my soul.

If we were raised in different Americas, we were raised in a different church as well. The pope of my young years was Pope John XXIII: the roly-poly Italian whose family brought him sausages from home, the one who opened the windows of the church. Hers was the lean and mean Pole—Pope John Paul II—a champion skier who made it his business to shut the windows tight.

Even as children, our way of being Catholic was very different. My way was to be insufferably pious; serious to a degree that must have made people want to slap me. I was obsessed with virgin martyrs. At 12, I wrote a book called *God’s Young Friends* about saints who had died young. One of them was Dominic Savio, and following his example, I held a crucifix in front of boys who were using “foul language.” I repeated Dominic’s words: “Say it in front of Him.” In his hagiographies, Dominic’s Neapolitan boys fell to their knees. My neighborhood guys said it in front of Him.

Conway’s descriptions of her childhood Catholicism focus on its social and communal aspects: weekly novenas, Sunday Mass, youth club. Although she thinks of herself as an “outsider,” she seems much more supported by her family and community than I was. Her grandmother and aunts seem nicer than mine. My grandmother was a tough, no-nonsense Irishwoman who had come over to America by herself at age 17. My aunt Rita was the coldest person I have ever known, with a well-honed talent for humiliation, particularly of the child she shared a home with.

And because Conway enjoyed sports, she was not an outlier in her community, as I was. My preferred sport was turning pages. I was happiest in books; reading was the only time I felt really at home. That I was a reader and she was not explains another aspect of the difference in our Catholicism: I was devouring *Lives of the Saints* in my childhood while she was working on booths for the parish fair. Her Catholicism is an outgrowth and extension of ethnic identity: to be Irish or Italian is to be Catholic. I found myself becoming a Catholic who wanted a world where people had never heard of Padre Pio but knew about Sartre and Matisse.

Her high school yearbook mentions her ambitions: “kissing Rick Springfield, being the best lawyer, wife and mother.” Mine were to be published in *The New Yorker*, live in the Village and be fluent in French. If I had wanted to kiss a singer, it would have been Leonard Cohen.

The two issues that estranged me from the church for more than a decade—“*Humanae Vitae*” and the Vietnam War—were old news by the time Conway was in high school. I came of age in the New York of Cardinal Francis Spellman, the architect of the American church’s response to Vietnam. In those years, to be Catholic was above all to be anti-Communist.

She was thrilled to have a private audience with Pope John Paul II. I was once offered the opportunity to meet him; not a fan, I refused. I said to the person who tried to facilitate that, “The pope and I have nothing in common but a publisher.” My husband, not drawn to the kind of smart-mouthing that Conway and I both enjoy, begged me never to put those words in print. Too late.

If I didn’t have an audience with the pope, I did have an encounter with Daniel Berrigan, S.J., to whom I, a pushy 16-year-old, showed my poems at a reading of his own poetry. He wrote to me after, saying I was a real poet. I knew I had to rethink Vietnam, and there was no turning back.

### Catholic Identity

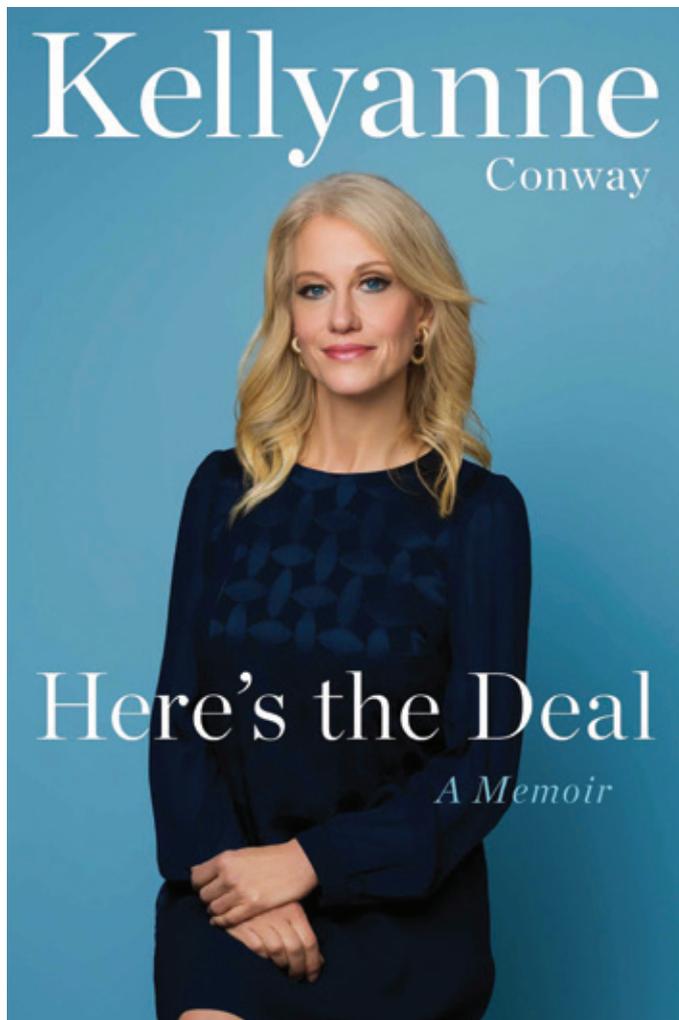
Conway is eager to identify herself as Catholic, particularly in her position on abortion, and certainly in speaking about her wedding (not in her parish church but in the basilica in Philadelphia). It is clear that she made the most of her Catholic connections. But when the hierarchy says something critical of any of Donald Trump's positions—on immigration, for example—she dismisses them “respectfully,” basically saying (on EWTN, no less) that the bishops don't know what they're talking about.

Conway was comfortable in the Catholic educational system; I was determined to escape it. Though she was valedictorian of her high school class, Conway was waitlisted when she applied to Georgetown. In a profile of Conway in *Cosmopolitan* in January 2017 by Kristen Mascia, Conway's high school English teacher said of her, “I didn't think she was a deep thinker. But I do remember that she would argue her point relentlessly. You would pray to God that the bell would ring.”

She was instead accepted at Trinity College. In the bad old days when Catholic girls were forbidden to apply to non-Catholic colleges (my high school refused to send my transcripts to Barnard. I had to have the Barnard admissions office call and shame them into doing it), Trinity was an elite school for smart middle-class girls. By the 1970s, it had changed its mandate to be more inclusive, “less selective” in Conway's words. She didn't apply to George Washington or American University.

I knew I wanted to be a writer, and I chafed under the agenda-based approach to the arts that seemed to me inseparable from Catholic education. I believed I couldn't get what I needed unless I could be some place with a lot of Jews—preferably the Glass family from J. D. Salinger's fiction, with whom I was obsessed. Because of them I made my way to Barnard, the women's college of Columbia, where Seymour Glass had gone.

I can go just so far in being a neutral narrator. There is nothing in me that can empathize with the streak of cruelty that is everywhere present in the pages of *Here's the Deal*. This is a person who makes a point of being grateful for her Catholic school training. One suspects she was absent on



Threshold Editions  
512p \$30

certain days when the nuns discussed the importance of being charitable to others. Conway is consistently comfortable mocking the physical appearance of those she believes have attacked her, or writing them off for being unmarried and childless—and therefore unable to make judgments on her or her family.

This is a rhetorical strategy that extends beyond *Here's the Deal*. Responding to criticisms of her Inauguration Day outfit, she repeats and expands upon in *Here's the Deal* an insult she first delivered in an interview with *The Hollywood Reporter* in 2017: “Sorry to offend the black-stretch-pants-wearing women of America with a little color. I apologize to everybody out there who no longer wears anything that snaps, buttons, or zips.”

### Different Responses

If my narrative centered on the emotional and psychologi-

cal aspects of my characters, I would concentrate on the response of Conway and myself to growing up fatherless. My father died when I was 7, and that loss more than anything has marked my life. My “Rosebud moment” occurred when relatives said to me, “You don’t have to be sad, your father is happy in heaven.” Something in me refused to accept that and rebelled silently. I determined that I would never accept anything that was clearly untrue. The five years after my father’s death were a fugue state of gelatinous misery.

Conway had her miseries too, but she won’t allow them to go by that name. Her treatment of them in her book is revelatory of her ability to present two contradictory versions of the same story without batting an eye, certainly without noticing the contradictions.

Arguably, the way one begins a book is an important move. This is how Conway begins hers:

I have an early memory of my father. The two of us are eating pancakes together, sitting at the kitchen table like normal families do, acting as if the scene was certain to repeat itself a million times over. So here’s what’s strange about that father-daughter breakfast: I’m not sure if it really happened or if it’s only wishful thinking on my part. But I cling to that early, early memory of us because it’s the only one I have.

After that, she doesn’t see him for nine years; then he shows up at her confirmation. “Then I had to decide whether to invite him into my life. I said yes, got myself a father and a half brother, and learned the value of forgiveness, redemption, and second chances,” she writes. “He quickly became a cool dad, taking my friends and me to arcades, scary movies, and Phillies games.”

There’s a major gap between the pancake episode, with which she begins her book, and the “no problem” response to her cool dad. She refers to painful memories with which I could readily emphasize: the uneasiness of being the only one without a father in her Catholic school class, the mortification when everyone else was making Father’s Day cards and she had to make hers for an uncle. But she never adds anger or sorrow to anything she says about her father.

She got the “no problem” tone not only from her mother, whose husband left her for another family, but also from her grandmother, whose husband did the same. But in her grandfather’s case, there was more than

simple abandonment. As reported by Kevin C. Shelly in *Philly Voice* in 2017, a 1992 New Jersey Organized Crime Commission report on the hidden influence of organized crime in bars named James DiNatale, Conway’s grandfather, 26 times. He is repeatedly identified as a mob associate, though there does not appear to be any record of DiNatale being charged, let alone convicted, of any crimes.

He was known as “Jimmy the Brute.” In fact, “The Brute” is engraved on his tombstone.

But Conway’s mother insists that he got the nickname because he once lifted two heavy truck engines, not because of his Mafia connections. “My father was a good man,” she told *The Daily Mail* in April 2017. “He helped anyone who needed help. If someone needed money he would be there—and it would always be on a handshake not on paper.”

Anyone wondering why Kellyanne Conway was so skilled at defending Trump’s indefensible behavior and policies might note that this book portrays her as one of the third generation of women who believe that “men just do those things,” and no accountability need be demanded of them; it’s a woman’s job to make them look good.

I think I am luckier than Kellyanne Conway. There is no Donald Trump in my life.

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*Mary Gordon is the author of numerous novels, memoirs and literary criticism. Her most recent novel, Payback, was published by Pantheon in September 2020.*

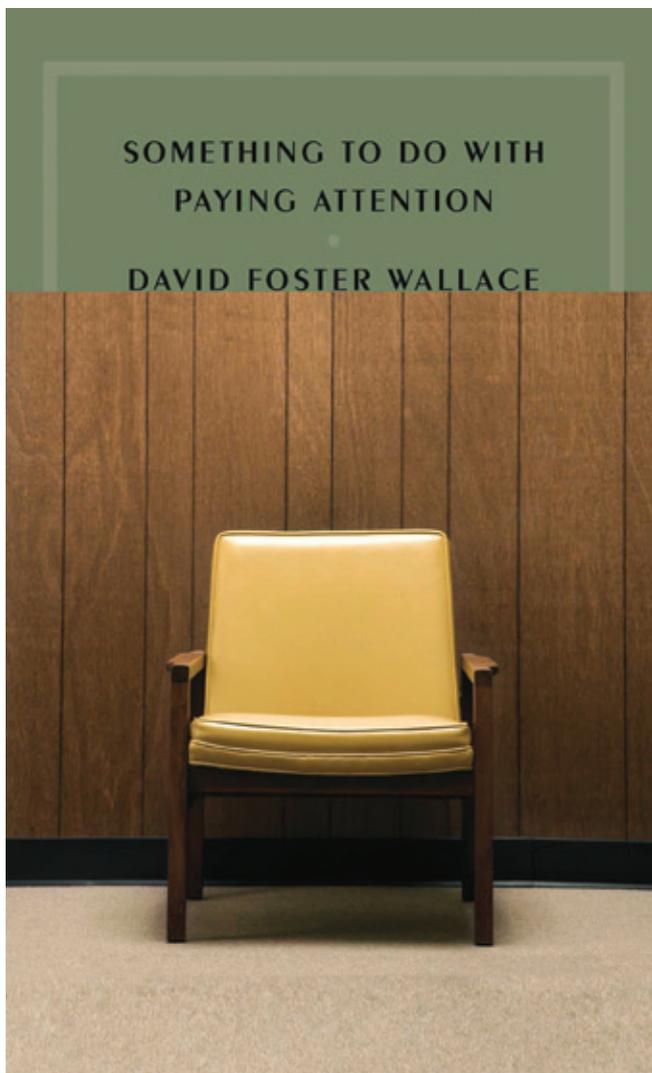
## DAVID FOSTER WALLACE'S DENOMINATION OF JOY

"We—under our own nihilist spell—seem to require of our writers an ironic distance from deep convictions or desperate questions, so that contemporary writers have to...make jokes of profound issues."

— David Foster Wallace  
review of Joseph Frank's *Dostoevsky*

"'Irrelevant Chris' is irrelevant only on the subject of himself?"

— David Foster Wallace notes for *The Pale King*



McNally Editions  
152p \$18

David Foster Wallace strung gallows humor throughout much of his final, unfinished novel *The Pale King*. A short section entitled "IRS Worker Dead for Four Days" queries "why no one noticed that one of their employees had been sitting dead at his desk for four days before anyone asked if he was feeling all right." The deceased's supervisor supplies the painful punch line: "He was very focused and diligent, so no one found it unusual that he was in the same position all that time and didn't say anything."

*Something to Do With Paying Attention*, a stand-alone novella culled from *The Pale King's* 1,100 pages, is decidedly not devoted to bureaucracy's banal hilarities. Instead, it renders the improbable-but-believable reformation of "Irrelevant" Chris Fogle, a self-described 1970s "wastoid" who discovers his calling to the I.R.S. when he mistakenly wanders into a DePaul University tax class taught by a "fearful Jesuit."

The priest summons his students to a new species of valor found within the invisible army of I.R.S. accountants. Here, stripped of fanfare or histrionic pomp, heroic feats are accomplished by "you, alone, in a designated work space. True heroism is minutes, hours, weeks, year upon year of the quiet, precise, judicious exercise of probity and care—with no one there to see or cheer."

In the wake of his own father's horrific accidental death on a Chicago Transit Authority train, the restless Fogle finds solace and direction through the priest, the "first genuine authority figure I had ever met." The priest was someone who proved that "real authority was not the same as a friend or someone who cared about you, but nevertheless could be good for you...." Such authority, though not "'democratic' or equal... could have value for both sides."

Judith Shulevitz of *Slate* considers Fogle's experience "the most unusual conversion experience in confessional narrative," and she may be right. But Wallace weighs down the graceful arc of conversion, making us wonder whether grand retellings of impactful past events are reliable or driven by self-delusion. The text is tempered by contrapuntal tensions; almost constantly the reader is pulled in two directions—sincere belief and resigned skepticism—inducing a kind of elevated attention.

Wallace deliberately parallels "Irrelevant" Chris Fogle's own dramatic reorientation with the conversion story of his college roommate's girlfriend. "Fervent Christians," Fogle claims, "are always remem-

bering themselves as...lost and hopeless and just barely clinging to any kind of interior sense of value or reason to even go on living before they were ‘saved.’”

According to the roommate’s (nameless) girlfriend, prior to her conversion, she too was a “wastoid.” Listless, one day she wandered into an evangelical service just as the preacher announced that “there is someone out there with us in the congregation today that is feeling lost and hopeless and at the end of their rope and needs to know that Jesus loves them very, very much.”

In her shared dorm lounge, the girlfriend describes her spiritual rehabilitation, her certainty of being unconditionally known and loved. Fogle pushes back, reminding her that “pretty much every red-blooded American” during the “late Vietnam and Watergate era felt desolate and disillusioned and unmotivated and directionless and lost.” To him the preacher’s proclamation that someone in the congregation “is feeling lost and hopeless” dovetails with a drugstore horoscope, whose “universally obvious” prophecies exploit that “special eerie feeling of particularity and insight.... Most people are narcissistic and prone to the illusion that their problems are uniquely special.”

Here, just as Fogle’s college-age sneering reaches the high point of demystification, his grown-up, retrospective self questions the motives of his youthful, knee-jerk nihilism. In hindsight, Fogle concedes, he “actually liked despising” the convert, a sport that sharpened his own cynicism and delivered the dopamine rush of feeling “superior to narcissistic rubes like these two so-called Christians.”

Like a latter-day Augustine looking back at adolescence, “Irrelevant” Fogle finds that he—though a “feckless” failure—was somehow “nearly always the hero of any story or incident I ever told people,” something that “makes me almost wince now.”

But the central question that the novella leaves artfully unanswered is whether Fogle’s own “conversion” from nihilist to accountant was founded on premises as vulnerable as those advanced by the “so-called Christian.” Fogle’s arc, too, opened on the “lost and hopeless.” Wasting away slouched on a couch, spinning a soccer ball on his finger while watching “As The World Turns,” Fogle became lucidly cognizant of the world turning around him, of people “with direction and initiative” who didn’t squander hours readjusting the antenna with hopes of siphoning televisual treats.

“Whatever a potentially ‘lost soul’ was, I was one—and it wasn’t cool or funny,” says Fogle. At once he knew, “sitting there, that I might be a real nihilist”—a condition defined by being, “in a way, too free, or that this kind of free-

dom wasn’t actually real—I was free to choose ‘whatever’ because it didn’t really matter.”

Then Fogle stumbles across the Jesuit lecturer (that the Jesuit is a substitute teacher underscores the chance nature of the encounter). A priest whose hands help turn unleavened bread into the Light of the World, he is also an expert on advanced taxation—combining in one person both the secularly dull and the sacrosanct sublime. While Wallace describes the Jesuit as “pale in a way that seemed luminous instead of sickly,” the priest’s focus is entirely this-worldly.

A Ciceronian orator of impressive stature, the priest displays the “same burnt, hollow concentration” as veteran soldiers who have seen “real war, meaning combat.” The A/V projector in the dimmed DePaul classroom lights his face from below, “which made its hollow intensity and facial structure even more pronounced.” With absolute poise, the Jesuit delivers a “hortation” of haunting, exhilarating pathos. Accounting, a supposedly soul-crushing job that demands submission to incalculable boredom, is, he insists, the site of “true heroism.”

True, “no one queues up to see it.” True, “there is no audience.” But “enduring tedium over real time in a confined space is what real courage is.” This is because, declares the priest, “the less conventionally heroic or exciting or advertising or even interesting or engaging a labor appears to be, the greater its potential as an arena for actual heroism, and therefore as a denomination of joy unequalled by any you men can yet imagine.” Souls “called to account” spend their lives “serv[ing] those who care not for service but only for results.”

This peroration marks a high point in the novella: after that the story keeps at bay any unconditional celebration of Fogle’s “calling.” It does not glorify the vocation of the I.R.S. employee. Fogle’s own sentiments eerily echo those of a traditional religious convert. He concludes that “much of what the father said or projected”—about the liberating “loss of options,” about the “the death of childhood’s limitless possibility”—“seemed somehow aimed directly at me.”

In establishing an affinity between the novella’s two conversion narratives, Wallace juxtaposes the emotional subjectivism of the girlfriend’s fundamentalism with a distinctly Catholic devotion to reasoned truth (“Please note,” the priest clarifies, “that I have said ‘inform’ and not ‘opine’ or ‘allege’ or ‘posit.’”) If Fogle finds authentic authority and ethical self-abasement within the structures of the I.R.S., though, he lacks the reliably transcendent religious categories by which the pale kingdom he enters must be measured. The fateful speech gains persuasive power from the

priest's cadence and "carriage" rather than his priestly collar. Does Wallace thereby mean to alert us to the distance between moral and spiritual conversions? The Jesuit's diagnosis of Fogle's false freedom is absolutely accurate, but does he unduly spiritualize secular work? When "Irrelevant" Chris Fogle enters the service in search of the Jesuit's promised "denomination of joy unequalled," he seems destined to come up short, as only the beatific vision could bestow such peerless bliss.

Celebrating "Irrelevant's" deliverance from "wastoid" nihilism, moved by a priest's perfectly pitched hard truths, we yet have reason to fear that during the happy holidays, Fogle wears a face akin to the "exhausted and disheveled" I.R.S. recruiter who appears late in the book. In the novella's final, mysterious metaphor, the recruiter receives the aspirant Fogle's filled-out forms with "the exact kind of smile of someone who, on Christmas morning, has just unwrapped an expensive present he already owns." To the posthumous end, Wallace animates our attention: What rich gift does the recruiter already possess, and does it write off—in the balance sheet—his bedraggled appearance?

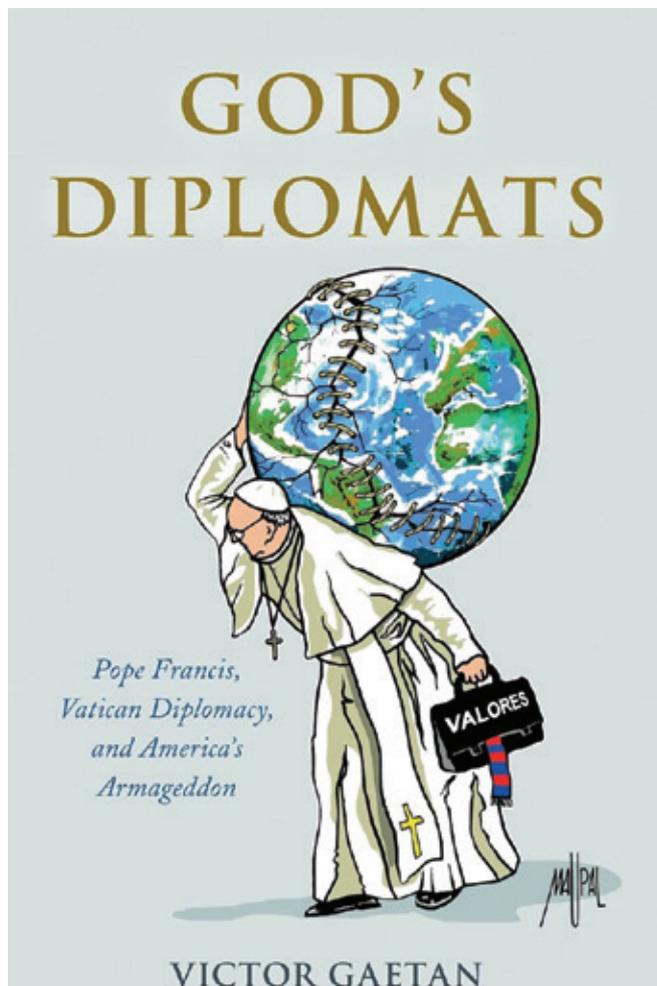
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Joshua Hren is founder and editor of Wiseblood Books and co-founder of the Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing program at the University of St. Thomas in Houston, Tex. His books include the novel *Infinite Regress* and *Contemplative Realism: A Theological-Aesthetical Manifesto*.

## WHEN POPES PLAY PEACEMAKER

Pope Francis' responses to the Russia-Ukraine war have been loudly and widely criticized: He fails to name Russia as the aggressor, critics say, and inaccurately blames NATO for Russia's invasion. His attempts at peacemaking—as when he invited a Russian woman and a Ukrainian woman (who, *nota bene*, were already friends) to lead one of the Good Friday Stations of the Cross together—put Ukrainians in an awkward position and seemed to betray the pope's naïveté about the situation.

What these criticisms miss, though, is the diplomatic framework within which Francis is making these decisions, one that dates back to papal representatives at Constantine's Council of Nicaea in 313 A.D., and has been honed over the centuries, outlasting some of history's greatest empires. It is an approach that confounds and frustrates because it does not operate from any economic or military interest, and because its primary goal is peace through dialogue, which runs counter to the complex dance of pres-



Rowman & Littlefield  
476p \$49

tures and negotiations that nation-states use to jockey for power on the global stage.

Victor Gaetan expertly introduces readers to the history of this approach, and to how Pope Francis has employed it, in his book *God's Diplomats: Pope Francis, Vatican Diplomacy, and America's Armageddon*. An experienced international correspondent who has reported for Catholic News Service, the National Catholic Register, Foreign Affairs and **America**, Gaetan bases his book on extensive interviews and research, including documents from the Vatican archives and from WikiLeaks.

The chapter on the Holy See's diplomacy in Kenya, in particular, pieces together breadcrumbs of information to tell the story of how, with a push from the pope at his 2015 visit, Catholics were able to convince President Uhuru Kenyatta and former Prime Minister Raila Odinga to commit to collaboration, thereby ending a yearslong political standoff. This could not have been accomplished without the nation's bishops working together despite their ethnic divisions; nor without various Catholic charities earning the church trust among Kenyans; nor without Catholic parliamentarians who, Gaetan reports, ghostwrote "significant parts" of the commitment between Kenyatta and Odinga, "Building Bridges to a New Kenyan Nation." Gaetan points out that the document takes its name from one of Pope Francis' guiding diplomatic principles: Build bridges, not walls.

Gaetan's other case studies in the book have already proven prescient: The first examines how Rome was able to keep open its relationship with Moscow through the 2013 Maidan Uprising in Ukraine, a relationship that now, with Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill's endorsement of President Putin's invasion of Ukraine, is again under threat. Likewise, the chapter on the church's peacemaking efforts in South Sudan, including the iconic image of Pope Francis kissing the feet of that country's warring leaders, provides essential background information for the pope's now-postponed visit to that newest African nation.

In the first part of the book, which precedes the case studies, Gaetan distills 17 centuries worth of diplomatic history into a 100-page introduction to the key operating philosophies of Vatican diplomacy. "It's almost too obvious to mention yet remarkably significant," Gaetan writes, that "the Holy See has neither economic nor military interests. It's easier to be helpful to foreign colleagues when no material competition exists." Why is it the Vatican's mission to be helpful to foreign colleagues? Because, he writes pithily, peace is the "*raison d'être* of God's diplomacy."

Later, he examines what makes Pope Francis' unique pastoral approach fuse particularly well with the ideals of dialogue, human development, religious freedom and the

common good that have historically animated Vatican diplomacy. Gaetan examines Francis as "manager, missionary, and mystic," pointing out how the pope's experience as religious superior of a Jesuit province during Argentina's Dirty War and then as Archbishop of Buenos Aires prepared him to clean up financial corruption and navigate volatile political situations while focusing the missionary work of his priests on the needs of the marginalized.

A powerful spiritual vision undergirds these practical tasks of government, Gaetan writes: Francis' "conviction that Catholicism allows opposing thoughts to be held together in tension: the universal and the particular, God and man, grace and freedom" supports his vision of a unity in "reconciled diversity" through which no one emerges a winner or loser—an approach key to diplomatic negotiations.

Less obvious may be another of Francis' key spiritual and diplomatic beliefs: "Time is greater than space." Francis—and the Vatican—are willing to be patient, "to work slowly but surely, without being obsessed with immediate results" ("The Gospel of Joy," No. 223).

Gaetan examines how these ideas have played out practically throughout the Francis pontificate, painting along the way a picture of Vatican diplomacy as a well-oiled machine, incredibly discreet but extremely knowledgeable, working around the clock with the commitment one would expect from a group of diplomat-clerics with no family responsibilities and the conviction that their work is a mission from God.

Gaetan also contextualizes some of the biggest international gestures of the Francis pontificate—for example, when he unexpectedly climbed down from the popemobile to pray at the wall dividing Bethlehem from Jerusalem. "For Francis," Gaetan writes, "lofty thoughts must land—in expressive gestures and acts of solidarity; in the practice of talking, walking, eating and being with others; in joint agreements rather than proclamations. That's what we see from him, step by step, in his stabilization of relationships in the Middle East."

Despite featuring "America's Armageddon" in the title, Gaetan does not delve much into the significant frustration Pope Francis and the Vatican's diplomatic corps have caused in Washington, D.C. This is my only significant criticism of the book: While Gaetan takes up the question in the book's first 15 pages, I would like to have found a more comprehensive treatment of how the approach of this "manager, missionary, and mystic" is viewed in the United States, particularly after so many interesting case studies.

One situation in which Francis' approach has been deeply unpopular among some U.S. officials is the Vatican's controversial deal with China on the appointment of bishops. Former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo fa-

mously published a harsh criticism of Vatican-China dialogue on the eve of his visit to the Vatican. While that move may have won Pompeo political points in the United States, it cast a shadow over his meeting with Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin. Gaetan provides a fascinating overview of the approaches past popes have taken to dialogue with the Communist superpower, noting that even the anticommunist crusader John Paul II did not end dialogue with China after the 1989 massacre in Tiananmen Square.

“If there is one country that similarly preoccupied John Paul II, perplexed Benedict XVI and then engrossed Francis, it is China. Clarity and consistency in his diplomatic approach brought Francis the farthest in defining a *modus operandi* with Beijing,” writes Gaetan. But, as in many cases of the Vatican’s long-game, dialogue-first diplomacy, “The fact that it has required negotiating with a regime some consider an enemy has delivered plenty of daggers as a result.”

“Dialogue is a risk,” writes Gaetan, quoting Pope Francis. “But I prefer the risk to the sure defeat of not talking.”

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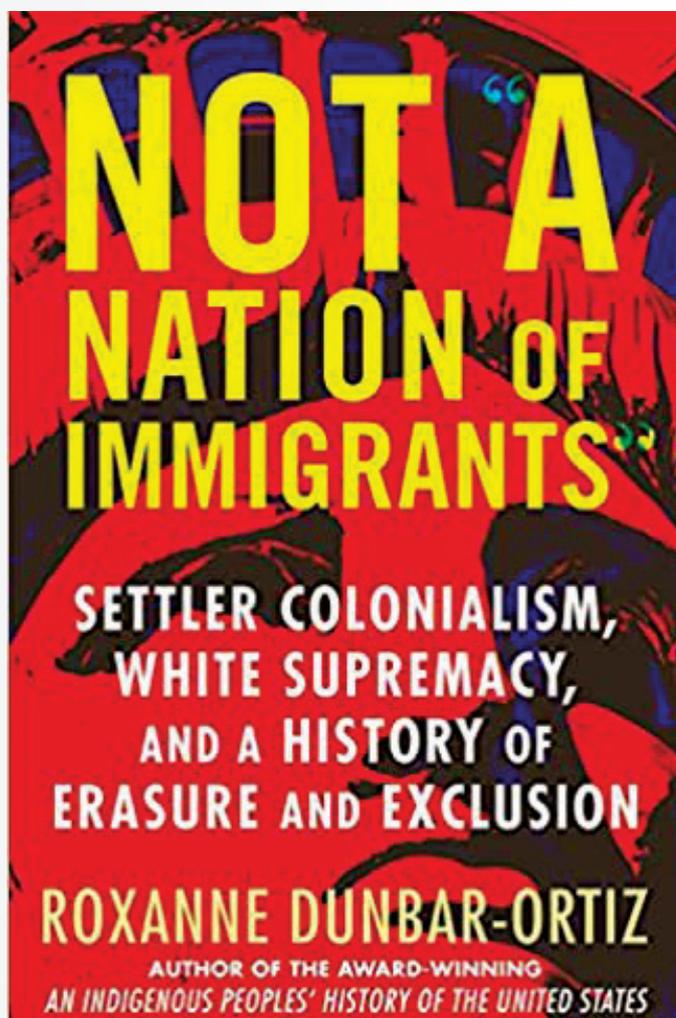
Colleen Dulle is an associate editor at *America* and co-hosts the “Inside the Vatican” podcast.

## A DIFFERENT HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

Pope Francis and President Barack Obama were among the dignitaries who gathered at Washington’s Cathedral of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in September 2015 for the canonization of the Spanish-born Franciscan priest Junípero Serra, best known for his 18th-century missionary work in what would become California. “Father Serra’s sainthood has been controversial,” *The New York Times* noted, because “he is seen by many Native Americans as a colonialist who helped establish a system of Spanish subjugation and helped carry disease into their communities.”

On the other hand, *The Times* added, “many Latino Catholics celebrated Father Serra’s canonization as a mark of legitimacy for all Hispanics.”

The intersections of history and ethnicity, and race



Beacon Press  
400p \$27.95

and power, have since become only more fraught and more complicated, an evolution illustrated (sometimes unintentionally) in Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz's provocative *Not "A Nation of Immigrants": Settler Colonialism, White Supremacy, and a History of Erasure and Exclusion*.

To Dunbar-Ortiz, whose previous books include *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* (2014), the Serra canonization was an end result of "the process of rooting the US founding with 1492," as well as of "the Roman Catholic Church in the United States [becoming] Americanized." For centuries, immigrants fell into an "Americanization process...that suck[ed] them into complicity with white supremacy and erasure of the Indigenous peoples," she writes. Dunbar-Ortiz calls for "all those who have gone through the immigrant or refugee experience or are descendants of immigrants to acknowledge" the far-reaching consequences of what she and others call "settler colonialism."

Dunbar-Ortiz's style of activist scholarship has catapulted her to a new level of prominence in recent years. Her work was one of the inspirations behind Raoul Peck's 2021 HBO documentary series "Exterminate All the Brutes," and it has been featured of late in media outlets ranging from *The New Yorker* to *Teen Vogue*. In 2017, the Lannan Foundation, a family nonprofit "dedicated to cultural freedom, diversity and creativity," awarded Dunbar-Ortiz its Cultural Freedom Prize, citing her work as an "activist with the global indigenous people's movement for national sovereignty," as well as her work with "social movements for women's equality, and for the rights of oppressed nations in Central America."

John F. Kennedy's 1958 book, *A Nation of Immigrants*, serves as a springboard for Dunbar-Ortiz. Generations of readers have uncritically regurgitated not just Kennedy's phrase but also certain underlying assumptions that, Dunbar-Ortiz writes, represented a "benevolent version of U.S. nationalism," serving to justify both American diversity and white supremacy.

Sadly, much of the historical analysis Dunbar-Ortiz offers up is difficult to dispute. Just four years before Kennedy's celebration of immigrants, President Eisenhower launched the deplorable "Operation Wetback" to "round up and deport more than a million Mexican migrant workers." It was merely the latest indignity along the southern U.S. border in the wake of the "military invasion and annexation of half of Mexican territory" a century earlier.

In the mid-19th century, of course, slavery had become "the economic bedrock of the United States," and desperate, starving European immigrants had begun arriving in unprecedented numbers. Building on the Australian schol-

ar Patrick Wolfe's concept of "settler colonialism," Dunbar-Ortiz argues that as destitute and despised as these immigrants may have been, they ultimately were incentivized—by naturalization laws explicitly referring to "white persons"—to reinforce the American violent style of imperialist capitalism across the continent and around the world.

The consequences, especially for people of color, have been not only awful but also enduring, as illustrated by more recent U.S. misadventures in Central America and a refugee border crisis that endures to this day.

While these parts of Dunbar-Ortiz's book are compelling and convincing, others are more muddled.

In fact, long before the idea of the U.S. as a nation of immigrants "was hatched in the late 1950s," as Dunbar-Ortiz puts it, the concept had its adherents—from J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur to "The Melting Plot" playwright Israel Zangwill. Similarly, references to the "American Dream" as a "meme" or a "concept invented in 1931," are likely to send some confused readers to Dunbar-Ortiz's footnotes—or at least to Google.

When Dunbar-Ortiz refers to the infamous New York City draft riots, meanwhile, she not only gets their month wrong but also overlooks a crucial component of this violent episode. It is true that many "Irish American Catholics engaged in riots" and that much "of their anger went into attacking and killing Black people." But the July (not June) 1863 violence also coincided with annual celebrations of British Protestant victories over Catholics in 1690s Ireland.

Such toxic displays of upper-class Anglo chauvinism—transported from the Old World to the New—also accelerated immigrant rage, some of which was aimed at challenging the dominant culture rather than reinforcing it. Scholars intent on analyzing immigrant complicity in American racism sometimes unwittingly reinforce cherished right-wing myths about past newcomers that they were generally docile, assimilable and not disruptive at all.

Dunbar-Ortiz also ignores the biases of past (so-called) progressives and even radicals whose presence on the "right side of history" deserve a bit more scrutiny. *Not "A Nation of Immigrants"* notes that even after the nativist 19th-century Know-Nothing Party faded, its "ideological tendency continued in US politics, becoming dominant in the mid-twentieth century in opposition to the civil rights movement and immigration, including among white Catholics when they were no longer the target." This century-spanning sentence elides several crucial points, including the fact that the anti-immigrant Know Nothings were by and large absorbed into the anti-slavery Republican Party. This then pushed millions of "white Catholics" into

the arms of the pro-slavery Democratic party.

So, yes, one of the “unspoken requirements for immigrants and their descendents to become truly ‘American’ has been to participate in anti-Black racism and to aspire to ‘whiteness.’” But this process was actually exacerbated by anti-slavery Radical Republicans—the progressives of their day—who themselves refused to include immigrant Catholics in their definition of what an American was.

The consequences of this (if you will) illiberal progressivism have been substantial. One could argue that they linger to this day, including each time a U.S. senator asks a judicial nominee if he or she is now, or has ever been, a Knight of Columbus.

It is also worth noting that Dunbar-Ortiz’s disdain for “nation of immigrants” rhetoric is shared (for different reasons, of course) by conservative groups such as the neo-nativist Federation for American Immigration Reform. In 2018, the Trump-appointed director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services even removed the phrase “nation of immigrants” from the organization’s mission statement.

The move was blasted by many activists, including devotees of America’s traditional commitment to diversity. These are the kinds of people who, according to Dunbar-Ortiz, flocked to Lin-Manuel Miranda’s musical, “Hamilton,” for its “immigrant story with an inspirational message to counter the toxic resurgence of nativism that would soon bring Donald Trump to the presidency.” But the Broadway musical was more chic than radical to Dunbar-Ortiz, who has harsh words for Miranda, “Hamilton” and Alexander Hamilton, the immigrant founding father.

“Multiculturalism,” she writes, is little more than “the mechanism for avoiding acknowledgment of settler colonialism.”

Dunbar-Ortiz rightly notes, contrary to what many devotees of Fox News might believe—that it was actually 19th-century immigrants who pioneered and benefited from “identity politics.” The end results of those politics gave us, according to *Not “A Nation of Immigrants,”* “urban police forces [that were] virtually all white and mostly Irish American” as late as the mid 1960s, as well as “six of nine Supreme Court justices [who] were Catholic while two were Jewish” (as of 2019).

If nothing else, these issues certainly produce strange bedfellows. After all, one staunch critic of police departments that were “occupied by Roman Cath-

olics” was Hiram Evans, leader of the 1920s Ku Klux Klan.

To her credit, Dunbar-Ortiz holds rightward-drifting immigrants past and present to the same standard. If America’s “settler colonial foundation is to be eradicated,” she writes, the “desire to relieve the non-European migrant or descendants of enslaved Africans from responsibility is understandable, but not sustainable.”

But this raises important questions about just how inclusive or broad-based a movement with the goal of “eradicating” America’s colonial foundation can be.

Perhaps immigrants who admire St. Junípero Serra (like, say, the immigrants who gave us Antonin Scalia or Samuel Alito) have been sucked into white supremacist complicity. Perhaps, also, they have legitimate questions about anticapitalist movements, especially those with well-documented hostilities to religion and faith-based activism.

In the end, *Not “A Nation of Immigrants”* is a fierce diagnosis of what continues to tear America apart. As for what can actually build us up, perhaps we can look to the Gospel of Mark—“Whoever is not against us is for us”—for a subtle but important variation on the antagonistic or inflexible discourse that prevails all across the political spectrum these days.

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*A regular America contributor, Tom Deignan has also written about history and immigration for The New York Times, The Washington Post and National Catholic Reporter. He is working on a book about Ellis Island and America.*

## SPORTING STRUGGLES

Americans love the odyssey of the triumphant athlete. Inevitably, the story chronicles some success, a downfall, then a stubborn struggle, followed by our hero's final victory. It is a tale told in thousands of sports memoirs, by everybody from Rafael Nadal (*Rafa*, 2011) to Grant Hill (*Game*, 2022) to Michael Jordan (*Driven From Within*, 1994) to Mary Lou Retton (*Creating an Olympic Champion*, 1985).

In recent years, these accounts have become more confessional. Athletes of the Instagram age reveal drug addictions, financial difficulties and broken love affairs, or describe upbringings controlled by helicopter parents obsessed with their elevation. See: the Williams sisters, Tiger Woods or those Manning test-tube quarterbacks.

But beyond the tell-alls and *mea culpae*, there is one last, and most difficult, boundary to cross: The Great Athlete admits they weren't always able to love the game. In a violation of the ultimate rule preached by coaches everywhere, they acknowledge that often their heart just wasn't in it, or that they didn't have the right mindset to want to compete. Recall the headlines made by Simone Biles when she withdrew from the individual all-around gymnastics final at the 2021 Olympics in Tokyo. Biles said she didn't have the mental health she needed to compete. "I say put mental health first," she said. "Because if you don't, then you're not going to enjoy your sport."

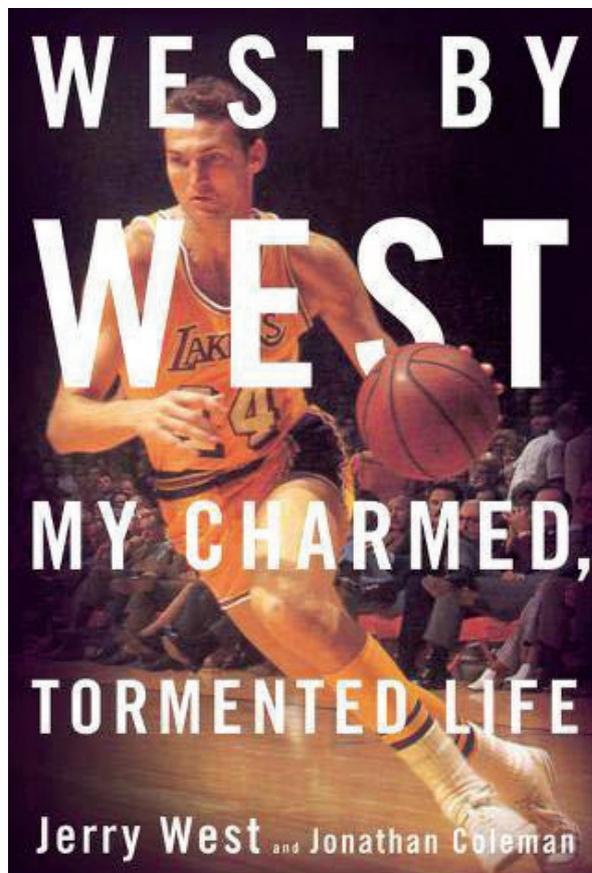
We watch sports in part because we need heroes, and we need our heroes to be as emotionally invested in their battles as we are. If they are, we are willing to forgive all kinds of sins. Fans can knock Barry Bonds or Lance Armstrong for taking performance-enhancing drugs, but they did it because they wanted the same triumph we wanted.

But in many cases you play a sport professionally not because you still love it, but because you were very good at it when you were young and it has become how you are able to make your way in the world. This blurs the earnest, idealistic passion we assume of heroes and opens the doors to a complexity that American culture has always tried to keep out of bounds. If we admit to darkness in the heart of our shortstop, we ourselves are tainted. And then, certainly, we are all in trouble.

Only a few sports memoirs have ever crossed that line. Because reality is, in fact, complicated, they are worth considering in depth.

The best I have read is *West by West* (2011), by Jerry West, the great basketball player from rural West Virginia who starred for the Los Angeles Lakers in the 1960s and 1970s. Here's how he describes the complicated place of basketball in his heart:

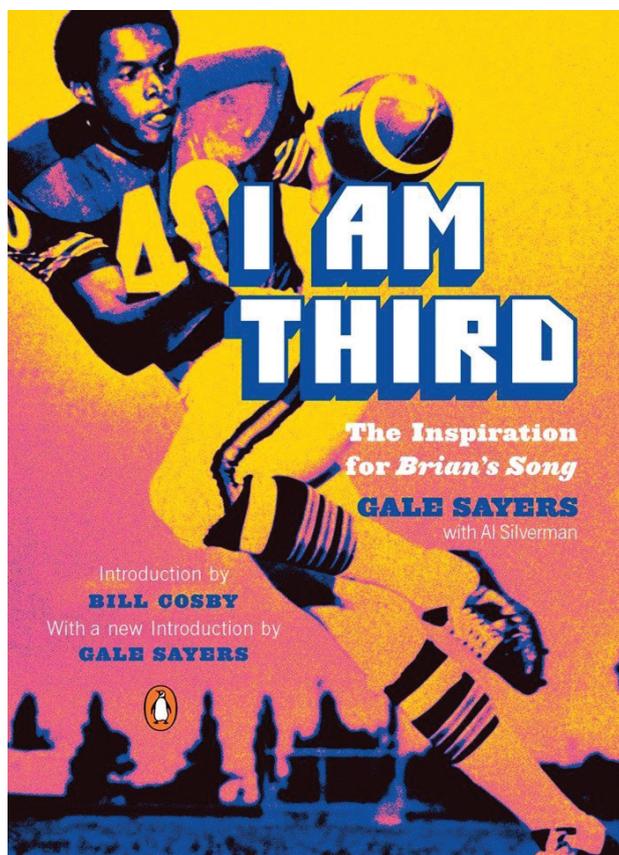
Basketball is, and always has been, a huge, huge part



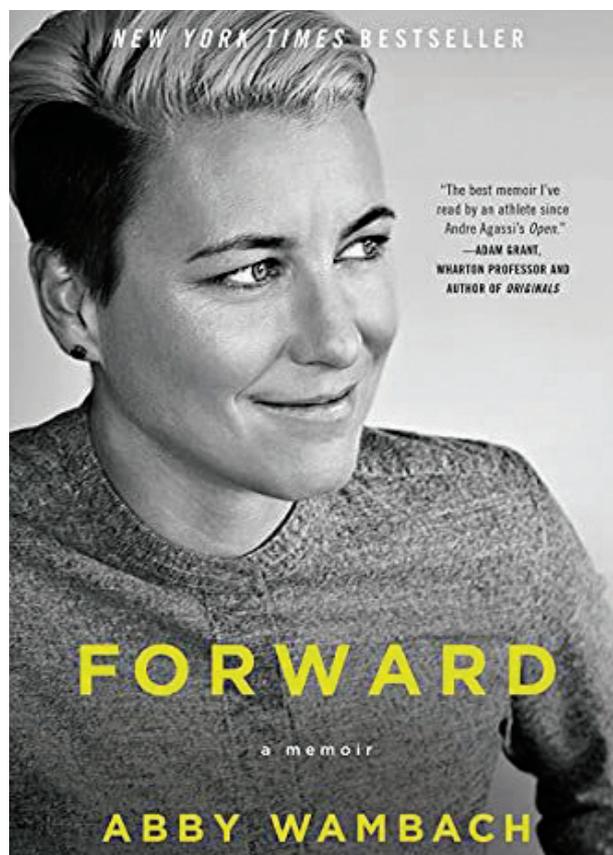
Little, Brown and Company  
352p \$27.99

of me, the canvas I tried to paint each time I stepped on the court and never stopped trying to perfect. It's been my life. It's been my love. I've hated it. Been frustrated with it—and delighted with it—beyond tears. There's been the allure of the damn basketball (though I am convinced it chose me, not the other way around). And there has always been a constant battle for me to try to find the satisfaction that I should have got by now (should being one of the trickiest, most dangerous words imaginable). It was really hard to find, and even harder to hold on to. It was almost like I was tormented.

West's memoir, written with Jonathan Coleman, is a unique feat of confessional literature by a pro athlete. He chronicles his dirt-poor childhood, abuse by his father and losing a beloved brother in the Korean War, all of which left him scarred and troubled in his heart, even as he lit up Los Angeles and partied with Frank Sinatra. No wonder his honest account was exploited by the writers of "Winning Time," the recent HBO show about the Lakers teams of the 1980s. In the TV show, West is portrayed as a hellacious hillbilly with little control of his emotions. West has asked for a retraction



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and threatened to sue the makers of the show. But because he, unlike his teammates, wrote that book, he made himself vulnerable to that kind of portrayal.

West's book built on some earlier confessional sports memoirs, including Jim Bouton's *Ball Four* (1970), Bill Bradley's *Life on the Run* (1995) and Gale Sayers's *I Am Third* (1970). Although less celebrated than many memoirs, Sayers's book remains a fascinating self-examination by a great Black athlete. Sayers was a running back for the Chicago Bears from 1965 to 1971. The book was turned into the movie "Brian's Song," about Sayers's friendship with Brian Piccolo, a teammate killed by cancer in 1970. But that relationship is only one sweet, funny chapter in *I Am Third*.

Sayers reveals conflict, self-doubt and apathy in his inner life. He admits that sometimes when he looks in the mirror he doesn't like himself: "Sometimes I hate myself because I have been lazy, because I have put things off, because I have been mean to my [wife] and family. Sometimes, though, after I have had a helluva game I look in the mirror and say, 'You're a bitch.'"

Like West, Sayers grew up poor, in Omaha, Neb., to parents who struggled with alcoholism. He went on to play football at the University of Kansas, where his speed earned him the nickname "Kansas Comet." In *I Am Third*, Sayers, who

died in 2020, conveys an awareness of his own struggles with meaning, partly through the collaboration of his then-wife Linda, who writes part of the book and appears in dialogues.

Linda: What are you thinking about?

Gale: Thinking? If I've got my music on, I'm thinking? You say I'm not relaxing, you say I'm thinking about things.

Linda: But you are.

Gale: Am I relaxing when I have my music on?

Linda: Like me, when I'm sitting down in the evening, I'm—

Gale (annoyed): Different strokes for different folks.

Linda (remaining calm, but with a hard edge coming into her voice): Most people find something to lose themselves in.

Gale: I lose myself in my thoughts and my music, and you should accept that. You should accept the fact that people relax in different ways. And that's the way I relax, and you say I'm not relaxed. If I say I am, why do you want to say I'm not relaxed? You don't know....

Linda: Some people don't want to tell themselves



# HIDDEN MERCY

## LOYOLA COMMUNITY BOOK CLUB: BOOK SIGNING AND DISCUSSION WITH MICHAEL O'LOUGHLIN

**Michael O'Loughlin**, award winning reported and national correspondent for America Magazine, will discuss his book *Hidden Mercy: AIDS, Catholics, and the Untold Stories of Compassion in the Face of Fear* (2021)

In conversation with Dr. Claire Noonan, Director of Mission Integration, and Fr. Richard Prendergast, Pastor of St. Gertrude Church, O'Loughlin paints a tapestry of those quiet heroes who, in the height of the AIDS crisis in the 1980s, responded to human suffering with absolute heroism. A community event hosted by the Hank Center, St. Gertrude Church, and Loyola's Office of Mission Integration.

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the truth.

Gale (becoming sarcastic): And you say I'm one of those people, huh?

Linda: You are.

He is one of those people and, at some point, in many situations, we are, too.

A more modern incarnation of this dynamic, with a much different origin story, is recounted by the U.S. women's soccer star Abby Wambach in her book *Forward* (2016). Wambach was the youngest of seven children in a Catholic family outside of Rochester, N.Y. Her mom named her Mary Abigail after the Virgin Mary. She was a rebellious child who happened to be brilliant at playing soccer, particularly scoring goals. Her mom, who with a large brood was surely desperate to keep Abby occupied, pushed her to stay with soccer. And it worked, more or less.

As a child, Wambach writes, she knew she was "incapable of falling in love with the game itself—only with the validation that comes from mastering it, from bending it to my will." Wambach recounts her struggles with addiction to drugs and alcohol, including a D.U.I. arrest in 2016, a failed marriage and her attempts to come to terms with her homosexuality, among others. But even more painful is the question of who she is beyond soccer. Will you still love me, she seems to be crying through the book, when I'm not scoring goals?

She does more than score goals, of course. During Wambach's tenure, the U.S. women's national team rose to fame and won a world title in 2015. She became the team leader and one of the most famous athletes in the nation, leading the national team in scoring goals. Her signature move: the diving header.

Like West and Sayers, Wambach realizes that success is not enough to create self-acceptance and self-fulfillment. In *Forward*, she writes that she will never be able to shake soccer, but that it needn't be everything, and maybe she can integrate it with the rest of herself. "I can't deny [soccer] any more than I can deny the labels I've claimed in this book: fraud, rebel, wife, advocate, addict, failure, human—all of them," she concludes. "They'll always be there, stitched into my psyche, even as I make room for new labels, ones I've yet to discover and claim."

It is that openness to a new way of loving and being loved that might save her, and, maybe, us. Maybe we can learn to love our heroes better.

---

John W. Miller is a Pittsburgh-based former *Wall Street Journal* staff reporter and co-director of the PBS film "Moundsville."

## One by One They Fall

By Paul Mariani

---

One by one they fall, the leaves, one by one.

The sugar maples first, then, by the back door

to the old garage, our red-berry-sour

kousa dogwood aflame in the setting sun.

And now those damson lilacs along the road

and, look, our new dawn redwood, where our

catalpa all those years we've lived here stood.

And, yes, the cherry apples and the shad...

Here, now, the furled leaves bid adieu

as they slip silently from the dappled branches

of our copper beech again, as if on cue,

dropping day and night one by one. Take

in their beige silk-crisp texture as each unlatches

and the rising wind twists them in mini avalanches

and rest among the hollyhocks. And hostas too.

Then think how in time those branches will shake

their way to bud and leaf again come spring.

Call it the silent language of our stalwart trees

that stay rooted there through drought and freez-

ing storms, signing their years with ring on ring.

Why is it that we find ourselves coming back and back

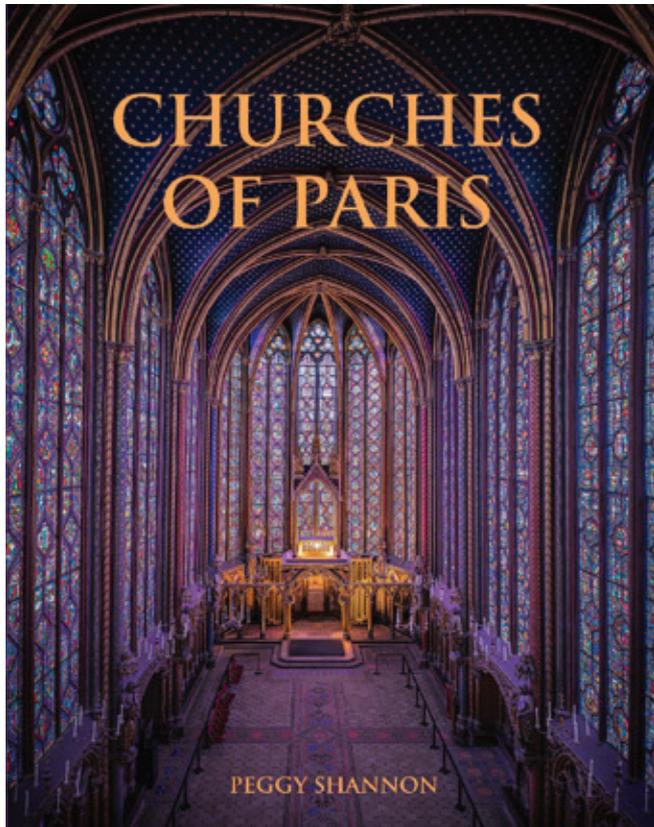
to them? What is it these gentle giants have to say?

Where would we be without them, our world lack-

ing leaves, like words gone silent as they lose their way.

---

Paul Mariani is a former poetry editor of *America* and university professor emeritus of English at Boston College.

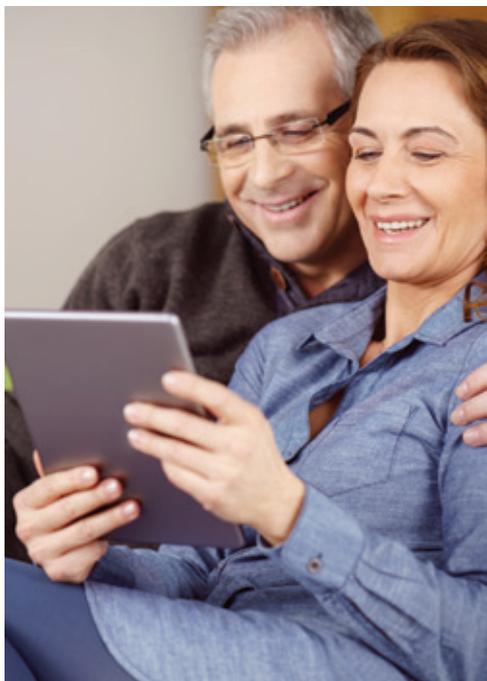


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Matt Malone, S.J., and America Media Board members at an event in which Father Malone was presented the cross pro piis meritis 'Pro Merito Melitensi' of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta.

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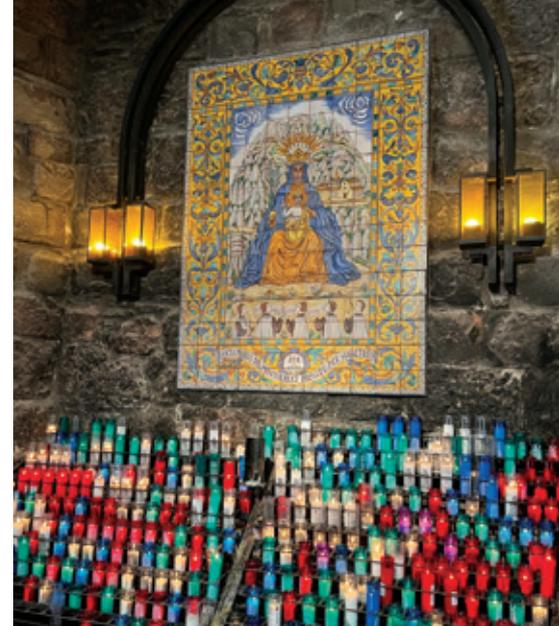
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Father Matt Malone celebrates Mass in the Conversion Chapel at the Sanctuary of Loyola with our Spain pilgrims. A mosaic of the Black Madonna in Montserrat.



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James Martin, S.J. celebrates Mass at this year's Outreach conference.

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## The power of persistence

As highlighted in the September print edition of *America*, parables offer us opportunities to compare ourselves and others to elements within the story. We might assume that God is often represented as a person in a position of power within a story, but this is not always the case. In the parable of the persistent woman and the corrupt judge (Lk 18:1-8, read on the 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time), the woman most clearly exemplifies God, and we should strive to be like her.

In the parable, Jesus describes

a judge who does not fear God or humanity. Instead, he misuses his position of authority and does not deal justly or equitably with his community. The woman in the story is described as a widow who consistently advocates for justice. She calls on the judge to “render a just decision for me against my adversary.” Her persistence eventually convinces the judge to deal justly and honestly with her.

The woman’s advocacy for justice is consistent with Jesus’ message and ministry, which often focus on those

who are disenfranchised and on the margins of society. As a woman and a widow, this woman would have had very limited access to justice, as men would have had legal standing above her. Yet the Gospel offers an important, countercultural image of a woman fighting for herself and successfully overcoming corruption. This woman embodies the Gospel message of justice and equity, and we should be inspired to do the same.

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### TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (C), OCT. 2, 2022

Confronting violence in our midst

### TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (C), OCT. 9, 2022

The necessity of gratitude

### TWENTY-NINTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (C), OCT. 16, 2022

Seeking and promoting justice and equity

### THIRTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (C), OCT. 23, 2022

Another reminder about humility

### THIRTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (C), OCT. 30, 2022

Hospitality and generosity are foundational to the Gospel



### Meet the Author

Jaime L. Waters teaches at the Boston College School of Theology and Ministry. She is an associate professor of Old Testament.

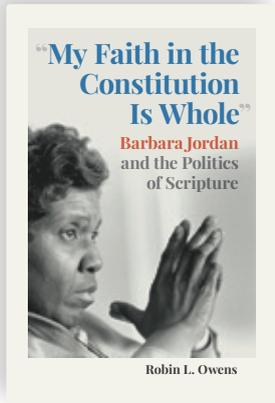
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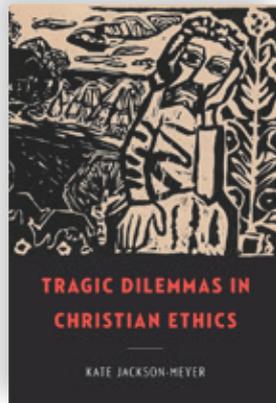




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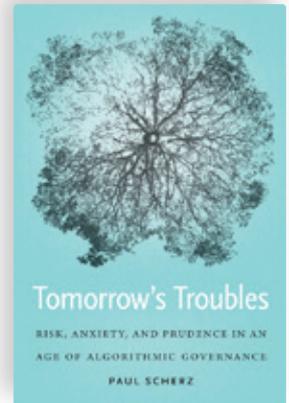
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## Could've/Could've Not

By Faiz Ahmad

The ways of apathy are many:  
in the first instance, you could've

not noticed the crumpled fabric  
lying in the mossy earth of our

hostel courtyard but since you did,  
you could've chosen not to think

beyond the fact of its peripheral  
presence, but you did ruminate,

a momentary sleuth tracing the hues  
and patterns to its owner, and still,

you could've chosen to be ignorant  
to the demand that such a recognition

may've placed on your limbs, but  
your hands did carry my bath-towel

across the flight of stairs to the fourth  
floor, and then you could've simply

knocked at my door, handing over the  
spoils of a violent wind, and I would've

been profuse in my thanksgiving, and  
that would be that, but you chose the

course of holy obscurity, anonymously  
placed it along the cloth line opposite

to my door as it hung before, and to this  
day I do not know who you are, my

neighbour to the left or my neighbour  
to the right, just the memory of this

act of irreducible goodness lingers,  
like some obdurate presence in the

mossy earth in a corner of my mind,  
demanding, in the first instance, an

acknowledgment that it exists.

*Faiz Ahmad is a graduate in biological sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, India. His work appears in Poetry Daily, Denver Quarterly, Poetry Northwest and other publications.*

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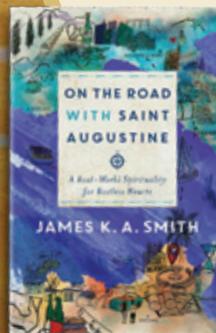
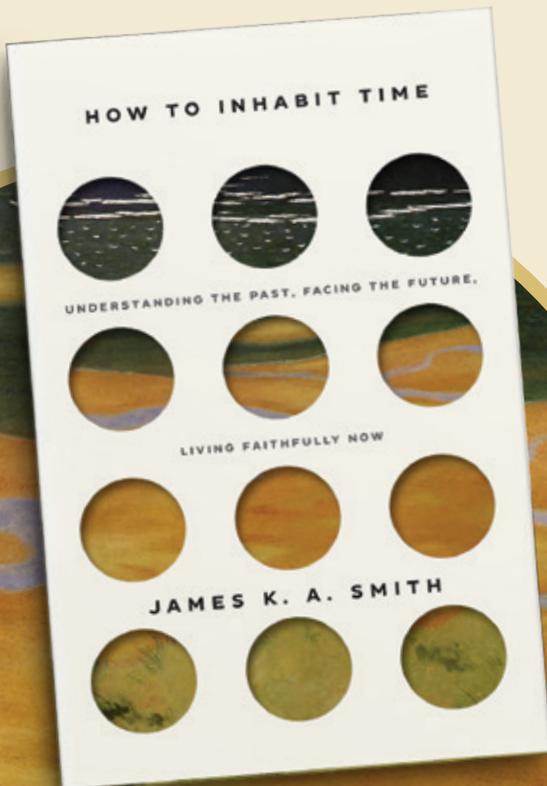


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# A Diverse Sisterhood

*How new immigrants are enriching women's religious orders*

By Thu Do



When I left Vietnam to study in the United States, I was able to stay with the Dominican Sisters of Mary Immaculate Province in Houston before heading to Spring Hill College, a Jesuit school in Mobile, Ala. The province, which has grown to about 100 professed members, was founded in 1975 by sisters who had fled war-torn Vietnam.

Later, I learned that the Congregation of Dominican Sisters is just one of nearly 400 international religious institutes founded elsewhere that have extended their mission to the United States in recent decades. They have helped to change the demographics of religious life in the United States significantly.

While previous generations of women religious came from largely white families whose European ancestors came to the United States in the 19th and early 20th centuries, new members of religious orders are increasingly the children or grandchildren of immigrants from Catholic countries outside of Europe, including Mexico, Nigeria, the Philippines and Vietnam. They come from families in which devotional practices and religious engagement are often more visible than in families who have long been in the United States, and these practices are influential in their vocational discernment.

The increased diversity in U.S. religious life can be seen in a comparison of fully professed members of religious institutes with those still in formation. Over the last decade, about seven in

10 members in formation have been white, compared with nearly nine in 10 members who have professed perpetual vows. Women religious of color make up 13 percent of the full members, but they make up three in 10 among members in formation, which means that women of color will make up an increasing share of sisters at religious institutes. Many of these new members are not native English speakers; there are dozens of different languages spoken among them, most commonly Spanish and Vietnamese.

In addition, there are sisters ministering and studying at international institutes that, starting in the mid-1960s, have established missions in the United States. Some institutes come here to escape persecution in their home country, like the Dominican Sisters from Vietnam. Others come to minister to immigrants from their homeland, as did many sisters who came from Europe in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Still others arrive with a desire to evangelize American culture, which they see as worldly, materialistic and lacking in spirituality.

In light of these changes, religious institutes are generating a variety of creative responses—from restructuring governance by merging with other provinces or institutes to collaborating with other religious institutes and lay colleagues in educational and health care ministries. Demographic changes are also leading religious institutes to reassess where their motherhouses should be located and how they can include younger, foreign-born, and cul-

turally and ethnically diverse sisters in their leadership.

This cultural shift in religious institutes' membership and leadership resembles the period when Irish and Italian institutes established missions in the United States. But today it is increasingly likely that the majority of an institute's membership will hail instead from India or Kenya.

The Catholic community in the United States has seen many changes, but as someone who has lived with and studied about women religious of all ages and backgrounds in the United States, I feel certain that the enrichment and leavening of women religious will continue as it has in past centuries.

This feeling was affirmed on one occasion during my doctoral studies, when I attended a Mass celebrating vows at a women's religious institute in the Midwest and was surprised to see that a sister from Vietnam was the provincial superior receiving the vows of their new members. Wearing petite-size clothing and speaking English with an accent, she was leading a province of relatively young and mostly white members. I thought, "What a day of joyful celebration!"

Thu Do, L.H.C., a member of the Sisters of the Lovers of the Holy Cross of Hanoi, is a research associate at the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, Georgetown University. She is the co-editor, with Thomas P. Gaunt, S.J., of *New Faces, New Possibilities: Cultural Diversity and Structural Change in Institutes of Women Religious*, published by Liturgical Press.

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