

America

THE JESUIT REVIEW OF FAITH AND CULTURE

OCTOBER 2023

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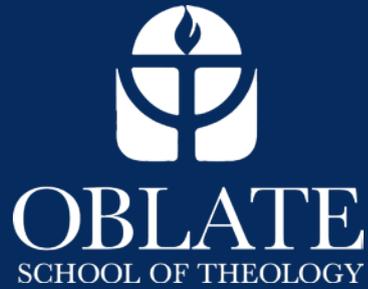
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With Great Spirit and Generosity

As I write this column, I have been back in the United States for just under a week after the first session of my tertianship in South Africa, about which I wrote in the June issue. I finished my long 30-day retreat, praying through St. Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises, just over two weeks ago.

As my fellow tertians and I were preparing for the retreat, Mags Blackie, who is both a chemistry professor and a trained spiritual director in the Ignatian tradition, came to spend a few days with us to help us refamiliarize ourselves with Ignatius' directions for making the retreat. Among the many things she reminded me about in the Exercises was this: "The persons who make the Exercises will benefit greatly by entering upon them with great spirit and generosity toward their Creator and Lord, and by offering all their desires and freedom to him so that His Divine Majesty can make use of their persons and of all they possess in whatsoever way is in accord with his most holy will."

In the Exercises, this is the "Fifth Annotation," part of a list of 20 annotations that Ignatius places before the content of specific prayer periods and meditations that constitute the retreat. This annotation—as with much else of what Ignatius writes—is unlikely to win any prizes for prose style, but it is filled with the force of his vision, his call for "great spirit and generosity."

Rereading it a few months ago, even though I am sure I had read it at least 30 or 40 times before, it changed the way I felt about approaching the retreat. As I explained to some Jesuit friends, in my last conversations with them before beginning the silence of retreat, I realized that while I had been eager for retreat, I was approach-

ing it ready to relax into it, following wherever God would take me. After re-examining the fifth annotation, beginning retreat felt more like getting ready to hike up a mountain: exciting and invigorating, but also a substantial challenge, demanding generous effort and energy.

Ignatius' almost overwrought language about spirit and generosity can seem, at first glance, as if it is merely a spiritualization of a more basic insight about discipline: You get out of something what you put into it. But in fact, he is saying almost the opposite: More important by far than what you get out of something is what you give to it, and most especially, what you give to God.

Because the other thing that is characteristic of Ignatius in the Fifth Annotation is the phrase "in whatsoever way." There are any number of outcomes possible for how God will work in the life of the person making the Exercises, and no specific goal is to be preferred in advance, except greater knowledge of and fidelity to God's will. What Ignatius is saying is that even such profound detachment from specific outcomes is both compatible with and energized by "great spirit and generosity." The more eagerly and generously we give ourselves to God, the more we will be able to be used by God and to cooperate with God.

In the short time since I finished the retreat, many people have asked me "How was it?," which is both a perfectly natural question and one that is basically impossible to answer. The most honest short answer I can give is that God was very good. Beyond that, trying to describe the retreat in any detail feels something like trying to explain the view of a beautiful landscape—summary description beyond "beautiful" does not do it justice, and

even very detailed descriptions are always less than the sum of their parts.

So instead of attempting to describe it, I will instead say that as I return from tertianship and retreat to my desk at the magazine, I still feel the force of the Fifth Annotation, that need for great spirit and generosity toward God, both in prayer and in the work of ministry to which we are called. As I have been catching up on everything my colleagues have been doing over the past three months, and looking forward to where the next months will take us, especially in coverage of the Synod on Synodality, I am grateful to have rejoined this hike already more than halfway up the mountain.

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A family mourns on Independence Day in Lviv, Ukraine, Aug. 24, as they visit the tomb of a relative, a Ukrainian serviceman who was killed in a fight against Russian troops.

OSV News photo/Roman Baluk, Reuters

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Cover image: A damaged statue of the Virgin Mary sits inside a church in Qaraqosh, Iraq, in May 2017. Once a predominantly Christian town, Qaraqosh was taken by ISIS in 2014 and then retaken from ISIS in October 2016. (Joel Carillet/iStock)

Can the Catholic Church change the world?

Study after study confirms that young Americans are leaving religious institutions. But the trend does not have to continue, according to Cecilia González-Andrieu, who unpacked the issue in **America** last month. Catholics must authentically and lovingly live out their faith in their everyday lives, she wrote. “When we fail to connect faith and action,” she wrote, “the reign of God seems very far indeed.” Our readers had a lot to say in response.

I can see how some young people would see the church as irrelevant, because it does not address the biggest crises facing God’s children today. Unfortunately, many Catholics, particularly the older, more established ones who likely provide a lot of support for the church, do not feel that it is the church’s place to get into economics and politics when the likely impact of that rubs against their ability to make money. Their faith is driven by their politics and economics, and not the other way around. So I am afraid that the Catholic Church is faced with alienating its future or its soon-to-be past members.

Paul Gulig

Thank you, Dr. González-Andrieu, for portraying the reality of church and how far we have strayed from the model Jesus lived and showed us. Jesus was all about relationships. How did so many within our hierarchical institution become so ego-driven as to fail to see that putting the institution before people betrays our God of love? With all my heart, I feel the Holy Spirit rustling in the wind, shaking up what might look like endings. In reality, I believe these are times of powerful new beginnings that are bringing about the energies of God’s love.

Dr. Geraldine Kerr

Thank you for your clear-eyed painting of today’s reality set in historical context, a very sobering picture to contemplate. Likewise, thank you for reminding us of the many opportunities to put our faith in action—in essence, to love. You connect the dots and clarify what our responsibilities are. Your references to the historical Jesus stripped of our contemporary perspective (seen through a glass darkly) are a wake-up call, a call to hope, a call to action.

Kathryn Buckley

The model we should follow is found in all the communities that are growing by leaps and bounds, the places where parishes, seminaries, convents and monasteries are full. Where it is standing room only on Sundays. Where flourishing youth groups, choirs, Bible studies, excellent guest speakers and, most importantly, adoration, multiple opportunities for confession and holy priests at the helm abound. These are the models of success that everyone should be imitating. These are the places that are truly changing the world one soul at a time. (Check out the millions who listen to Father Mike Schmitz.) Authorizing or enabling grave sins is a surefire recipe for zero growth. The answer is always the same: Return to orthodoxy and the people will come.

Patty Berdanier

Living the Gospel isn’t always as glamorous or visible as taking to the streets and making big gestures. But “there lives the dearest freshness deep down things...” in unseen work done by priests serving well beyond retirement age, sisters and brothers who continue the quiet work of prayer and service until God calls them, families who nurture and love a disabled brother or sister, or those who sacrifice to keep an aging parent or relative surrounded by family. These lives speak of discipline, self-sacrifice and are probably supported and maintained by a commitment to prayer and the sacraments. These quiet lives sustain us and may be our greatest teachers. These are the lives that call to us when we feel lost, that point to a better way, that are not dependent on particular programs or education or political climates. They go deeper than the confusions of the moment and simply open their arms to the immediate and proximate call for help. Their example gives the Lord five loaves and two fish.

Maureen O’Riordan Lundy



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The immigration stalemate becomes a political quagmire

Former President Donald Trump was noticeably absent from the first Republican presidential debate of the 2024 cycle, yet his influence could not have been more apparent—particularly on the topic of immigration. Among Republicans, the “invasion” on the U.S.-Mexico border has now led to calls for the United States to invade our southern neighbor.

During the debate in August, Gov. Ron DeSantis of Florida vowed to send troops into Mexico to fight the drug cartel. What else would newly excited voters who cheered for Mr. Trump’s “great border wall”? After boasting of the Trump administration’s efforts to curb illegal immigration and “asylum abuse,” former Vice President Mike Pence accused President Joe Biden of throwing “open the southern border.” He promised to partner with the Mexican military to “hunt down and destroy the cartels that are claiming lives in the United States of America.”

Support for aggressive anti-immigration measures transcends Republican presidential candidates. Last year, a poll suggested half of the country believes the country is being “invaded” at the southern border and that immigrants are bringing in drugs. Mr. DeSantis, Greg Abbott of Texas and other Republican governors have bused or flown asylum seekers from their southern border states to Democratic strongholds like California, Illinois, Massachusetts and New York. Asylum seekers have been used as pawns to score political points with the Republican base. Mr. Abbott’s border enforcement, including razor-wire barriers, demonstrates an utter disregard for the humanity of those who arrive seeking refuge. Most recently, the Freedom Caucus in the House of Representatives, in its continuing attempt

to push the Republican Party ever farther to the extremes on the issue of immigration, threatened to withhold support for any spending bills necessary to avoid a shutdown of the federal government unless they include additional border enforcement measures.

While the Biden administration should be praised for more welcoming policies, it has fallen far short of Mr. Biden’s promises from the 2020 campaign. Often the positive developments are no more than the incremental weakening of Mr. Trump’s harshest border policies. In some cases, Mr. Biden has reinforced the Trump administration’s restrictive approach to asylum seekers. As Bishop Mark Seitz of El Paso, Tex., wrote in *America*, the Biden administration policies have been “tepid and fear-driven and, in the case of the asylum transit ban, harmful.”

It is a frustrating stalemate, with one party doing too little to benefit immigrants and the other seemingly intent on persecuting them. Neither party has done anything in the last three years to move the conversation forward. The continued failure to pass the Dream Act, which was first introduced in 2001, exemplifies the quagmire. And government leaders have not enacted broad immigration-positive legislation since 1986, during the Reagan administration. Today the nation is no closer to reforming its dead-ly and broken immigration system than it was nearly 40 years ago. Our political parties appeal only to their most loyal voters, with a disappointingly inconsistent regard for humanitarian concerns.

Immigrants and asylum seekers come out of necessity. Life in their home countries has become unlivable for them. Some are farmers who, be-

cause of drought or climate change, can no longer provide for their families. In some places, industrial toxins have poisoned rivers and water reserves. Some migrants flee merciless gangs and drug cartels, killers whose vile influence corrupts all levels of government.

Some refugees, like those who fled Afghanistan, left their home countries because helping the U.S. government there made them the targets of tyrannical rulers. Today, even Afghans who risked their lives serving alongside the U.S. military face an uncertain future. Regrettably, their stories do not even register as talking points.

Neither a secure border nor a welcoming immigration strategy alone will solve our immigration crisis. If our migrant brothers and sisters are to live a truly dignified life, they must also have the choice not to migrate. They will only have that choice when the factors pushing them north are eradicated. An intentional U.S. foreign policy that addresses global trade, natural resources and agricultural business would be a step forward.

It is tempting to say that the United States has enough problems without concerning itself with those of other nations. But such an argument is not an option for a person of faith. For a good Catholic, it is impossible to say “America First” as a rejection of the rights and needs of our brothers and sisters across the border. Our leaders today fall far short of, for example, the welcome President Reagan gave to immigrants. He was proud they chose the United States. Today, our leaders fear the sensationalistic news coverage and attack ads and abdicate their responsibility to educate voters about immigration.

The United States needs to expe-

rience a *metanoia*—to repent and believe. Until then, there will be no justice for immigrants, neither here nor in their home countries. Our government leaders and the voters who supported them have perpetuated the cruel immigration apparatus of this country and must ask for forgiveness. Politicians and media personalities who have tapped into the irrational fears of the citizenry must also repent. Such rhetoric has further dehumanized immigrants and asylum seekers—who already live their lives on the margins. It exploits their lives as nothing more than fodder to ignite xenophobic audiences and entrenched voting blocs. After all, migrants allow certain American markets—agriculture, home construction, domestic labor—to operate at artificially low cost. Many Americans benefit from the migrants we demonize.

Americans must come to believe that they cannot prioritize the human dignity of any race, class or nationality above another. Everyone embodies that dignity equally and it is our duty to ensure all people can lead a dignified life. We must come to recognize that before we could comprehend our individuality, we were born into a family, which was part of a larger community.

“That is precisely why our society continues to alienate, abandon, and exclude the poor—because, face-to-face with the poor, one is forced to confront...the painful consequences of our failure to recognize [our] relatedness,” wrote the theologian Roberto Goizueta.

Indeed, we were related to immigrants before they arrived. Some have been here for decades and others came recently, but most appreciate the many blessings this country has offered them. Their gratitude can remind the rest of us of the benefits we enjoy. Their stories echo those of our ancestors, those immigrants who arrived in these lands in centuries and decades past. The recently arrived are not different. They are not “other.” We are all immigrants. Their story is ours.

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Catholicism can welcome new voices without being ‘dumbed down’

Bishop Robert Barron of Winona-Rochester, Minn., reflecting on the decline of the church in the West, recently argued in an interview with EWTN that “[w]e’ve dumbed down the faith for way too long,” and by doing so have created “an uncertain trumpet” for those seeking clarity. This is not a new claim for Bishop Barron, and it is not unique to him. There is no shortage of Catholics decrying a supposed loss of intellectual rigor in the Western church.

At one time, I was among those voices. My conversion to Catholicism began through my study of classical theology, and I can relate to Bishop Barron’s anecdote about purchasing texts from the Catholic intellectual tradition for his niece, whose comic-book-style high school theology book he found infantile. But all or almost all of the books generally included in this tradition are written by Western men, just like those I studied in college and graduate school. It is understandable why many in the church would not find this tradition compelling.

So we cannot simply return to the hierarchical framework (heaven over earth, mind over body, men over women over animals) perpetuated by classical Western theology, which has amplified the voices of those in power while silencing others.

Tellingly, the period in which many feel that theology has been “dumbed down” corresponds directly to the reforms following the Second Vatican Council. I suspect that a desire for theological certitude comes at least in part from the anxiety prompted by these reforms. In the chaos of life, we want to feel in control, to cling to something sure. But we cannot let this anxiety lead to a closed intellectual system that suppresses diverse voices.

God (who is truth) is not controlling or limited; God is relational and creative.

It wasn’t until I took a position in the Office of Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation with the School Sisters of Notre Dame that my conversion deepened and my understanding of truth began to expand. Women religious are among those who have taken up the mandate of Vatican II reforms to develop a theology consistent with their charisms, and they have experienced attempts to shut down what others determine are “violations” of Catholic orthodoxy.

One example is ecofeminist theology, which invites us to relate to God as the love that creates and sustains the world—present, as Pope Francis writes, “in the slightest detail in the seamless garment of God’s creation, in the last speck of dust of our planet.” Rejecting hierarchy and embracing interconnection, ecofeminism is embedded within the Christian tradition. But as Ivone Gebara, O.S.A., explains, in our patriarchal culture, God “has a masculine face” and is considered “a superpower.” In this context, ecofeminism is “considered a kind of heresy.”

Through the practical work of ministry—encounters with marginalized people, conversations with sisters overcoming their own marginalization in the church—I have learned to value the truth that comes from experience and encounter. There are many means of acquiring knowledge, and the Catholic intellectual tradition should incorporate them all. To limit the pursuit of truth to classical Western inquiry is to limit—and even distort—God’s revelation.

As the Cuban theologian Ada María Isasi-Díaz notes, solidarity must respect “the people’s ability to reason and to participate reflectively

in their own struggles against oppression.” I suspect this reveals why the Western Catholic intellectual tradition has been disregarded even by many Western Catholics: not because it has been dumbed down, but because it has been passed on in a top-down fashion. It thinks *about* us rather than thinking *with* us, to use Dr. Isasi-Díaz’s language.

Until the Catholic intellectual tradition includes the voices of those who have been marginalized, it will not have the power that Bishop Barron and I hope it will. And it shouldn’t. Without openness to diverse ways of knowing, our intellectual tradition closes in on itself and cannot approach the great mystery that is God. The traditional canon is certainly beautiful, but it should serve as a springboard to ever deeper questions; otherwise, adherents evangelize from a standpoint of abstract domination rather than encounter.

Sister Gebara’s exhortation is crucial: “Resist the temptation to allow the various dogmas we have created in the course of history to dull our cognitive faculties.... Be continually alert to the flow of life.”

Good theology is not about intellectual certainty but about turning attention to this flow. This is what I hope to teach my students. The Catholic intellectual tradition is rich, but it needs the voices that have been marginalized to reach its fullest potential.

Kathleen Bonnette is a mother of three serving in the Center on Faith and Justice at Georgetown University, where she also teaches theology. She is the author of (R)evolutionary Hope: A Spirituality of Encounter and Engagement in an Evolving World (Wipf and Stock).

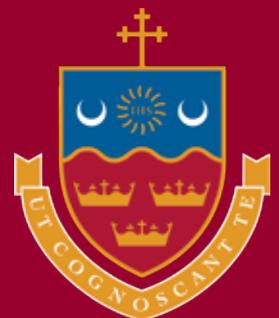
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GOODNEWS: The Evangelization of Welcome What the church can learn from a youth center in a poor Dominican neighborhood

By J.D. Long-García

Liony Batista runs a foundation to help vulnerable communities in the Dominican Republic. The outreach includes a youth center in Bajos de Haina, an impoverished town outside the capital city, Santo Domingo. The town is also known as Quitasueños, or “Dreambreaker,” because for years trains carrying sugarcane would pass through at night and wake up residents.

Mr. Batista’s foundation, Fundación Nueva Alegria, opened the youth center in 2015, offering teenagers classes that keep them busy but also offer future income opportunities. Instructors cover topics like sewing, barbering and hair styling, and how to make jewelry and accessories, apply cosmetics or repair appliances.

“It’s giving them a little extra money, so they can use it in their homes, help their parents buy food or whatever they want to buy,” Mr. Batista told **America**.

The children and teens of Quitasueños can also take

recreational classes, like hip-hop, dance and drama; and the center organizes summer camps in the mountains.

Oh, and one more thing. The young people learn about God.

“You were once young, and you’re not trying to knock them over the head [with religion],” said Mr. Batista, who is 63. Some aspects of the outreach, like fellowship and volunteerism, may not seem religious at first but are critical to building a community of faith with young people.

“You’re doing it as a process,” he said. “Now, we’ve gone a little deeper in the teachings of the Bible. But that’s not where we start. We go in stages.”

From MTV to Youth Ministry

Mr. Batista is the 11th child in a family of 15 children. His family moved from the Dominican Republic to the United States when he was 6. Now the father of four adult children,

Liony Batista, holding microphone, is the founder of Fundación Nueva Alegría in the Dominican Republic.

he worked a variety of jobs in his life before establishing Nueva Alegría, or “New Joy.”

Those jobs included youth ministry positions in several U.S. churches and nine years with Food for the Poor, a Florida-based humanitarian agency. He also worked for the television network MTV Latino, learning lessons he still applies in his work today.

Mr. Batista described a poster MTV Europe used for promotion in Germany that featured a person with “a lot of earrings” and “their hair looking weird.” Along with the image came a simple phrase: “Welcome home.”

“The message was that it doesn’t matter what you look like, who you are, you are welcome at MTV,” Mr. Batista explained.

“I still follow that model,” he said. “You’re welcome here at the youth center. We don’t know yet what you believe and what you don’t. That’s not important right now. What’s important is that you’re young and we want to try to pour love into your life. We want to try to get you out of the street.”

Naturally, given his background at MTV, music is also a part of the program offerings, but the youth center actually started as a sewing group. After Mr. Batista’s foundation started receiving donated materials to make purses, 15 girls formed a group to assemble and sell them.

Not long after it started, one of the girls asked Mr. Batista, “Hey, aren’t you going to have boys in here?” From there, the group grew to offer more classes and now has more than 100 students.

“It’s growing so fast,” said Mr. Batista. “We’re doing ministry that few churches know how to do with youth. We have the youth of everyone.”

That includes young people from other nearby churches, which he described as more rules-oriented.

“They’re telling them, ‘You can’t wear this or that, you can’t do this or that,’” he said. “The youth last four or five months in those churches before they wind up in my youth center. It’s too much pressure for them.”

Home Away From Home

The youth center is about much more than the classes themselves, of course. There is a lot of crime in the neighborhood, and having a safe place to go every day keeps the children and teens out of trouble.

Many of the kids are being raised by single mothers who work as live-in nannies or maids in the city during the week. That means children are often being raised by their grandmother or by their eldest sibling.

A typical meal in the neighborhood is often just rice

with eggs, said Mr. Batista. Now and then families might splurge for chicken, but pork and beef are not part of their diet. Sometimes Mr. Batista will take a group of kids out for dinner and a movie in a nicer part of town, an experience that is often completely new to them.

“There’s more to life than the barrio,” said Mr. Batista, who is like a father figure to many of the young people. “That doesn’t mean that barrio is bad. But in the future, you may want to go out into the university and meet people.” The barrio kids will need to “know how to talk to people,” he said.

Mr. Batista started a leadership formation program for students who wanted to do more at the center. That group includes Elvis Guzmán, who is 22 and has been involved with Nueva Alegría since he was 14.

“My godfather was involved with the youth center and he told me they were going to do a painting class. Since I really like drawing, I thought, ‘O.K., I’ll try it,’” Mr. Guzmán said. “When I went in, just [seeing] what was happening at the center, it called to my heart.”

Many of the kids in the neighborhood “don’t have anything to eat,” he said, and the foundation is there for them. Now Mr. Guzmán works at its warehouse.

“I want to give everything to support the foundation,” he said. “I feel like God is using me with the work I do here.”

Brandel Fernández, who is 19, has been with the youth group for the last seven years. He said the foundation helped him “with food, studies at school, so many things.”

He has learned how to be a barber, how to design T-shirts and how to fix telephones. “With God’s help, I’m going to start my own barbershop,” he said. “The youth group taught me about fellowship and how God is everything in this world.”

Making purses is what first attracted 17-year-old Benjali Delgado to the group six years ago. She was soon attending beauty classes and gathering information about how to start her own business.

She lives with her mom and said lack of money is what hurts families the most. Right now, she is thinking about attending a local college. The foundation has helped pay for her to take classes elsewhere in the meantime.

“The kids who are here are here to learn about God and not waste their time on the streets,” she said. “We want to get ahead, to receive a good education and that’s directed by God. Without God, we’re nothing.”

Finding a Path Home

Mr. Batista was on the ground helping out in Haiti with other relief workers the day after the 2010 earthquake. A

few months later, he felt God was calling him to do something else. “I can’t tell you it was like Moses and the burning bush or whatever,” he said. “I just felt in my heart that I had lost my direction.”

He started working as a consultant for Cross Catholic Outreach, an international development and relief ministry. In 2012, he went back to the Dominican Republic to spend time with his parents. His father, who was 92, passed away four months later.

Those months with his family convinced him to stay. His work with Cross Catholic and other humanitarian organizations inspired him to refocus his efforts in the Dominican Republic with Nueva Alegria, and the youth center became a critical part of its outreach.

Mr. Batista gets to know the entire neighborhood by serving the youth.

“We’re totally involved in their lives,” he said. “It’s not just come here and take a class. We know [their] parents. We know where [they] live.”

When a young person is absent from the center for a while, Mr. Batista will make a point of reaching out directly. “I tell them, ‘We do notice and we miss you. And I want you to come back. If there’s a problem in your house or something, let me know if there’s something I can do,’” he said.

Mr. Batista wants young people to see themselves through God’s eyes. “You’re not what people say about you,” he tells them. “If your mom tells you you’re not going to go anywhere, you can tell them that Liony Batista, the director of the youth center, says: ‘Mom, you are wrong. That is not what God says about us.’ And tell them to come talk to me because this is who you really are.”

J.D. Long-García is a senior editor at *America*. He traveled to the Dominican Republic with Cross Catholic Outreach. Twitter: @JDLongGarcia.

Dominican Republic at a Glance

While the Dominican Republic has made significant economic gains in recent decades and is now categorized as a middle-income country, more than 40 percent of Dominicans still live in poverty. The share of the population living on less than \$3.20 per day has declined from 14.3 percent in 2012 to 4.3 percent in 2021. The Dominican Republic has experienced rapid urbanization, with urban residency increasing 50 percent since 2007.

The U.N. World Food Program reports that food security has been affected by income inequality, poverty and lack of dietary diversity. Located in the Caribbean’s “hurricane belt,” the Dominican Republic suffers from recurrent natural shocks that disrupt food systems. Significant progress against poverty has been hindered by the Covid-19 pandemic.

According to a W.F.P. assessment, at the end of 2020 some 287,000 people in the Dominican Republic (3 percent of the population) endured severe food insecurity, while 4 million people (36 percent) faced moderate food insecurity. Seven percent of children under 5 suffered from chronic malnutrition.

Population: 10.8 million

40% of children under 14 are growing up in poverty

Life expectancy: 73

Urban population: 84% of total population

Per capita income (2022): \$10,121; compared with \$9,475 for Latin American and Caribbean nations

Remittances from outside the Dominican Republic (2022): \$10.3 billion—9.2% of gross domestic product

Religion (2018): Roman Catholic 44%, evangelical Protestant 13%, other Protestant 8%, Adventist 1.4%, other 2%, atheist 0.2%, none 29%, unspecified 2%

Sources: C.I.A. World Factbook, World Bank, U.N. World Food Program

Correction: Due to a production error, a number in the infographic on Catholic schools in the September issue was incorrect. According to the National Catholic Educational Association, the number of Catholic schools in the Mideast region of the United States fell by 10.6 percent from 2019-20 to 2022-23. Because a minus sign was inadvertently deleted in our print issue, it appeared that the number of schools rose by that amount.

Pope speaks out against ‘backward-looking’ critics in the U.S. church

In a conversation with Portuguese Jesuits in Lisbon during the World Youth Day gathering in August, Pope Francis spoke about the U.S. church after a Portuguese Jesuit brother, who had spent a sabbatical year in the United States, told him that he was greatly disturbed after seeing “many [Americans], even bishops, criticizing your leadership of the church.”

The pope recalled that “Vincent of Lérins makes the comparison between human biological development and the transmission from one age to another of the [deposit of faith], which grows and is consolidated with the passage of time. Here, our understanding of the human person changes with time, and our consciousness also deepens.”

He added: “The other sciences and their evolution also help the church in this growth in understanding. The view of church doctrine as monolithic is erroneous.”

He noted, however, that some people “opt out; they go backward; they are what I call ‘*indietristi*’ [backward-looking people]. When you go backward, you form something closed, disconnected from the roots of the church and you lose the sap of revelation...and then you take on criteria for change other than those our faith gives for growth and change. And the effects on morality are devastating.”

The pope offered some examples of the evolution of doctrine in the Catholic Church. “Today it is a sin to possess atomic bombs; the death penalty is a sin. You cannot employ it, but it was not so before. As for slavery, some pontiffs before me tolerated it, but things are different today.”

Just days later, during a flight to a pastoral visit to Mongolia on Sept. 1, Pope Francis seemed eager to put the comments behind him, acknowledging that he was aware some were upset by the remarks. “They got angry, but let’s move on, move on,” the pope told reporters.

The pope’s comments were revealed in the transcript of the conversation published in August in *La Civiltà Cattolica*.

Another Jesuit at the meeting in Portugal described his pastoral work with homosexual university students “very committed to the church,” explaining that “they often do not see in doctrine their way of living affectivity and they do not see the call to chastity as a personal call to celibacy, but rather as an imposition.”

He asked the pope: “How can we act pastorally so that these people feel...called by God to a healthy affective life that produces fruit?”

Pope Francis said: “I believe there is no discussion about the call being addressed to everyone. Jesus is very clear about this: everyone.



Pope Francis at his weekly general audience at the Vatican on Aug. 23

“The door is open to everyone, everyone has their own space in the church. How will each person live it out? We help people live so that they can occupy that place with maturity, and this applies to all kinds of people,” Francis said.

“What I don’t like at all, in general, is that we look at the so-called ‘sin of the flesh’ with a magnifying glass.... If you exploited workers, if you lied or cheated, it didn’t matter, and instead sins below the waist were relevant.”

Pope Francis added: “The most appropriate pastoral attitude for each person must be applied. We must not be superficial and naïve, forcing people into things and behaviors for which they are not yet mature or are not capable.”

Francis also went on to speak about transgender people. He recalled a Charles de Foucauld sister, Sister Geneviève, who attends the Wednesday general audiences and “also works a lot with people who are transgender,” Pope Francis said. One day she asked him, “Can I bring them to the audience?”

Francis responded, “Sure! Why not?” and so “groups of trans [people] come all the time. The first time they came, they were crying. I was asking them why.

“One of them told me, ‘I didn’t think the pope would receive me!’ Then, after the first surprise, they made a habit of coming. Some write to me, and I email them back. Everyone is invited! I realized that these people feel rejected, and it is really hard.”

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



AP Photo/Dolores Ochoa

Catholic bishops champion winning environmental vote in Ecuador

The Catholic Church played a key role in votes on the future of oil and mining in Ecuador that were held alongside the presidential and congressional elections in August. A proposal to cease crude oil extraction in Yasuní National Park passed with just under 60 percent of the vote, while the referendum to stop mining in the Chocó Andino, held only in the Quito metropolitan area, passed with 70 percent of the vote.

No clear presidential winner emerged from Ecuador's snap elections on Aug. 20. The two top presidential candidates are heading to a runoff on Oct. 15.

The church in Ecuador went all in on the referendums to stop drilling for oil in Block 43, inside the Yasuní, and to end mining in the Chocó Andino, a highland biosphere near the capital. The state-owned oil company, Petroecuador, currently produces 58,000 barrels of crude oil daily from Block 43.

Ecuador's bishops say the clear victories are a testament to growing environmental awareness and the impact Pope Francis has had through his encyclical "Laudato Si" and the apostolic exhortation "Querida Amazonia."

"The 'yes' vote is a vote for our common home in the Yasuní and the Chocó Andino," said the Most Rev. Geovanni Paz, bishop of the Diocese of Latacunga in the highland province of Cotopaxi. "It is an answer to the call Pope Francis has made to us."

The church worked through a series of networks, including the Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network (known by its initials in Spanish as Repam), the National Ecological Pastoral Network (Renape) and the Churches and Mining Network, to promote the votes to turn back mining and oil interests. It also collaborated with organizations and institutions across Ecuador's civil society.

"We worked with a large number of stakeholders. I think awareness was raised even more by what is going on in the world, with a drought in Uruguay, floods in Chile and fires in North America and Europe," said the Most Rev. Adalberto Jiménez, O.F.M. Cap., of the apostolic vicariate of Aguarico and also the president of Repam Ecuador. "People, especially young people, are opening their eyes to the destruction of our common home."

"I think that this result in Ecuador is a response to what Pope Francis asks from us," Bishop Jiménez said. "He is a beacon, the most important environmental defender because his vision is universal."

The oil block is part of the Ishpingo-Tambococha-Tiuputini oil field within the Yasuní National Park. The park, which covers nearly 2.5 million acres, is considered one of the most biologically diverse spots in the world and is home to several Indigenous peoples, including the Dugakaeri, Tagaeri and Taromenane, who live in voluntary isolation.

The referendum in Chocó Andino was the second on

Ecuadorean soldiers watch over a polling station in Ayora, Ecuador, on Aug. 20.

mining in Ecuador this decade. Residents in the city of Cuenca, in the Azuay province, previously voted to prohibit mining in zones that could affect water resources.

Carlos Tubay, a pastoral outreach worker for Repam, said the vote to limit oil and mining was achieved in the face of a massive campaign by industries and outgoing President Guillermo Lasso's government urging voters to reject the ballot initiatives.

"The state campaigned that we would lose billions of dollars by not extracting oil or minerals, but Ecuadorians opted to say 'yes' to life, 'yes' to the Chocó Andino, 'yes' to the Yasuní," Mr. Tubay said. "It was a protest vote, but also a vote to say there are other ways to live and protect our common home, which is what Pope Francis calls us to do."

The election was conducted amid a rising tide of violence fueled by rival drug cartels. Fernando Villavicencio, one of the eight candidates for president, had vowed to take a strong hand against the cartels. He was shot and killed in early August, the first presidential candidate to be assassinated in the country's history.

Lucien Chauvin contributes from Lima, Peru. Twitter: @Lucien-Chauvin4.



Workers outside a building of the Jesuit-run Central American University in Managua, Nicaragua, on Aug. 16

Despite threats and government harassment, 11 Jesuits carry on in Nicaragua

After a series of measures by the government of Nicaragua to confiscate property and revoke their legal standing, 11 Jesuits remain in the country to continue the work of the Society of Jesus. That is according to José María Tojeira, S.J., a spokesperson for the Central American Province of the Society of Jesus, responding from its offices in El Salvador.

Father Tojeira said two Nicaraguan-born Jesuits have left the country because of threats and harassment. Those Jesuits who remain, he said, face the threat of expulsion or detention if relations between the Society of Jesus and the government of former Sandinista comandante President Daniel Ortega and his wife and vice president, Rosario Murillo, grow any worse.

"Given practically the total absence of the rule of law in Nicaragua, anything can happen," Father Tojeira said, responding by email to questions from **America**. "But the Jesuits continue in their jobs in the midst of these difficulties."

Two of the society's legal identities have been revoked by the Ortega government—one connected to the Universidad Centroamericana in Managua and the other to the Asociación Compañía de Jesús de Nicaragua. Properties connected to those entities have already been confiscated by Nicaraguan officials.

Three other Jesuit registrations have so far not been affected. Father Tojeira confirmed that "two schools and Fe y Alegría," a Jesuit education initiative for the most at-risk primary school students, "thus remain active and with Jesuits working on them."

Father Tojeira, who previously served as rector of the Universidad Centroamericana in El Salvador and as provincial superior of the Jesuits' Central American Province, seems confident that whatever happens next in Nicaragua, a Jesuit presence will continue there. "We will remain to work for a true democracy—participatory, inclusive, one that defends human rights, that helps to escape poverty [and] injustice," he said.

He suggested that the contribution of the Jesuits to Nicaraguan society will likely become only more important after the accelerating authoritarianism of the Ortega-Murillo regime. What survives of civil society in Nicaragua, he said, "needs to be supported."

Kevin Clarke, chief correspondent. Twitter: @ClarkeAtAmerica.



"We received some food that really helped us, but what I value the most is the way they (JRS) approached us and cared for us, we received — and still receive — the emotional support we needed."

Abed, after the Syrian Earthquake destroyed his family home

"the more" *"the greater good"*

Magis: Magis refers to the philosophy of doing **more for Christ**, and therefore doing more for others. **Magis is the value of striving for the better.**

Each month **Magis Partners** make a lasting impact on the lives of thousands of refugees and displaced people around the world.

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A vital member of the JRS family working towards the "greater good" for refugees. A monthly gift provides sustaining support throughout the year, **ensuring that we can send more children to school, help refugees build their job skills, provide psychosocial support to families, and more.** With your reliable support, we can help meet the most urgent needs of refugees and displaced people.



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JRS supported 1.5M refugees and internally displaced people in 2022 located in the 58 countries where we work.

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A world where refugees and other forcibly displaced people attain protection, opportunity, and participation.

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Pope Francis

Our Programs:

As a Catholic organization and a work of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), JRS is inspired by the compassion and love of Jesus for the poor and excluded. **We believe that education, learning together, and sharing knowledge are vital ingredients to nourish hope in people.**

JRS believes that to journey with refugees is the most important way for us to express solidarity with them and our concern for their well-being. In a world where refugees are more than ever in need of welcome, protection, and justice, and yet are increasingly rejected, demonized, and denied their fundamental human rights, JRS offers accompaniment to refugees as a sign of hope and a way towards healing. **In even the most desperate of situations, we remain with refugees to assure them that the world has not forgotten them, and that they are not alone.**



Our Values:

Dignity

JRS believes in the intrinsic dignity of every person. We work with refugees and other displaced persons regardless of race, gender, religion or politics.

Solidarity

JRS is a work of the Society of Jesus, carrying out the Society's mission of faith and justice through humble and respectful service in solidarity with refugees from diverse cultures, nationalities and religions.

Participation

JRS upholds the principle of subsidiarity, endeavouring to be openly accountable for its work and transparent in its decision-making. We work in partnership with other religious congregations, humanitarian organizations, and with refugees themselves, encouraging co-responsibility, discernment, and participative decision-making.

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To learn more about JRS please visit jrsusa.org
anna.pigeon@jrsusa.org | (202)629-5906
1627 K Street NW, Suite 1100 | Washington, DC 20006



THE THREAD OF HISTORY

A displaced people, their lost city
and the dress that connects them

By Stephanie Saldaña





A view of Qaraqosh from the roof of the damaged Church of al-Tahira, May 2017

Stephanie Saldaña

The first time I saw Hana, she was standing at the back of a room, holding a dress in her hands. The dress resembled a quilt she could wrap around her body, and into that dress she had sewn a city. Inside that city she had sewn a world: with its own language, with fruit-bearing trees and with friends interlocking their arms and dancing. I had no way of knowing how immense that world had been or even that it was now both gone and saved. I had no idea that I would follow that dress as it would follow me.

That late October in 2016 seemed unusually cold, and I had not packed well. Even after more than a decade of living in the Middle East, I still forgot how frigid the autumn air becomes, especially in the barren areas along the desert. From my home in Jerusalem, I had traveled north and crossed the Sheikh Hussein Bridge into Jordan. Now, as my taxi headed south toward Amman, I watched out the window as green fields slowly gave way to the sprawl of the city. I studied the name scribbled in my notebook: Abouna Elian. On a subsequent page, I had written the name of a city, Qaraqosh, which comes from the word *blackbird* in Turkish. I was traveling in search of a city I had never seen. I was also trying to locate myself in a moment in history.

I was on the first leg of a journey that would eventually span nine countries—traveling to interview the women and men who had escaped war in Iraq and Syria, to learn what they had salvaged and brought with them. Women and men from Mosul and Al-Hakakah, Aleppo and Mount Sinjar: hidden historians carrying seeds, songs, recipes for rose petal jam, witnesses to communities uprooted and neighborhoods bombed. Muslims, Christians, Yazidis; women and men speaking Kurdish, Aramaic and dialects of Arabic unique to their cities.

‘No One Else Is Coming to Save Us’

My journey would begin by speaking with those who had escaped from Qaraqosh, a city in Iraq southeast of Mosul that had become synonymous with a tragedy. On Aug. 6, 2014, ISIS invaded Qaraqosh, and nearly the entire population, some 44,000 people, fled for their lives. Overnight, tens of thousands crossed the border to Iraqi Kurdistan to seek what they thought would be temporary shelter.

But ISIS remained in Qaraqosh. Months passed. Then a year. Much of Qaraqosh’s population began to scatter across the world, crossing borders and becoming refugees. Thousands traveled by plane to Amman, where they applied for visas at the embassies there in hopes of being resettled, largely in Australia. Almost all of them belonged to the Syriac Catholic Church; this was also the church to which I belonged in Jerusalem, where I lived with my husband and three children.

The sudden emptying out of Qaraqosh had shaken all of us. And so it had been the bishop of my own community in Jerusalem



'We left everything in a single night... everything.'

who had scrawled a name into my notebook after he flipped through his address book—*Abouna Elian*—referring to the priest in Amman responsible for pastoring the refugees of Qaraqosh. He asked that when I met Father Elian, I would send his greetings.

I arrived in Father Elian's office in Amman that October morning. I found him sitting behind a desk littered with papers. He offered me espresso, which he had learned to make as a seminarian in Milan, and as we sipped, we took a moment to accustom ourselves to our different dialects of Arabic.

"Are you from here?" I asked.

"No, I'm from Qaraqosh in Iraq," he answered. "I was born there, lived there for 27 years, became a priest, and then left to complete my studies in Italy. When I returned, I went to work in the seminary. And I was working there still when ISIS came."

He began speaking in a rush, describing the events of Aug. 6, 2014, the feast of the Transfiguration, when ISIS invaded the city. I struggled to follow, for he was speaking of how he escaped a place that I was just beginning to understand had ever existed.

"Qaraqosh was around 50,000 people," he continued. "Everyone left that first day, except for 30 or 40 of us who stayed. By the next morning, at around 2 o'clock, we looked around and said, 'Forget it. ISIS is coming and no one else is coming to save us.' At 4 o'clock in the morning we left."

"It wasn't just Qaraqosh that emptied out that day," he continued. "It was the towns of Bartella and Bashiqa and Karamles, the entire area of the Nineveh Plains around Mosul. We fled to Ankawa, a neighborhood in Erbil in Kurdistan, but others from our city escaped to Sulaymaniyah and Dohuk.

"In Ankawa, we stayed together, sleeping in the streets, in buildings and in churches, waiting. Then, last year I was sent to Amman to work with the refugees who were arriving here."

"Would you mind telling me a little bit about what Qaraqosh was like?" I asked. Father Elian nodded.

"The most important thing to know about us is that we were the largest Christian town in all of Iraq, and one of the most ancient Christian towns in the world," he said. "The language of our liturgy, of our traditions, and even our spoken language was Syriac, a dialect of the Aramaic language."

Father Elian pointed to a stack of papers on his desk. These were the files for all the refugees in his charge—men, women and children who had escaped the cities of Qaraqosh, Bartella, Bashiqa, Mosul and Baghdad in Iraq—along with cities like Aleppo, Homs and Damascus in Syria.

"Look at how many of us we are." He held up the pile of papers to show its weight. "We have 1,250 Syriac Catholic families here. Each one of those sheets of papers isn't for one person—it's for a family of four or five people. And the minute one family is resettled, another one arrives and takes its place."

We sat for a few moments in silence. I stood up to leave, and he shook my hand. "Come to the Mass on Saturday at 5, at the Deir Latin Church in Hashmi al-Shamali," he finished. "If you want to meet the people of Qaraqosh, you will find them there."

'This Is the Time to Begin Anew'

Four days later, I took a taxi to the Deir Latin Church in Hashmi al-Shamali in East Amman. I found a seat near the front of the church, watching as the pews filled up and the faithful extended into the back lobby. Nearly everyone was speaking a dialect of neo-Aramaic, a Semitic language that had centuries ago been the common spoken language of much of what is today the Middle East; it has now all but disappeared.

Father Elian approached the altar, followed by an assembly of deacons and altar boys and girls. All of them had become refugees. He began the liturgy in Arabic in deference to the country and the borrowed church in which they now found themselves, as well as to the scattered refugees from Mosul, Baghdad and Damascus among them who could not speak Aramaic.

"Today we begin a new liturgical year," Father Elian announced solemnly during the homily. "We ask ourselves: 'Who is Jesus to me?' In the Gospel, all the disciples give the wrong answer. Only Simon Peter says: 'You are the Messiah, the son of the living God!'" He paused. "We must also ask God to make our relationship closer. This is the time to begin anew."

The choir began to sing, and I listened as their voices filled the room with a song—not in Arabic, but in Syriac this

Row 1 shows the year when Hana completed the dress (and her full name, obscured on the photo to preserve her privacy); wheat and grapes symbolizing the Eucharist (and also reminding Hana of her father's fields); and Baghdeda, the name of Hana's city, sewn in Syriac letters (Aramaic was the spoken language of the town).

Row 2 shows the Church of Sts. Behnam and Sara, at left, and the Church of al-Tahira, with its red roof, the largest church in Iraq. Both churches were damaged by ISIS. Among the figures in the middle is St. Charbel Makhoul, a Maronite monk.

Row 3 shows musicians from the town of Bashiqa and a *dabke* dance, with women wearing the *shal*.

Row 4: The pink house, with a well and fruit trees, is Hana's own.

Row 5: Below three colorful lines crossing the dress, the last line is monochromatic, symbolizing Hana's exile. "Life will never be as colorful as it once was," she said, "but it will continue."



time, their community's own language.

I cannot quite describe what happened next. It was as if the space slowly began to be lit from the inside. One person after another began to sing along, first softly and then with more confidence, until the church was alive with the song of a people who—for a very brief moment—were home again.

The City Whose Song Had Been Saved

When the Mass was finished, I recognized the soloist from the choir walking in my direction. I introduced myself, and she shook my hand. "My name is Meena," she said. "I'm from Qaraqosh." I asked her how long she had been living in Amman. "For just a few months now," she answered. She pulled a phone from her pocket and scrolled to a photograph of a house. The roof and the second story had been charred black, like someone had set fire to it and then blown it out. "That's my home in Iraq," she said quietly.

By now, the rest of the choir had joined us and Meena introduced them: her sister Mirna, Alaa', Louis, and Was-

sim and Sonia, who were married. They were all refugees from Qaraqosh, and they spoke Arabic and English in addition to Aramaic, having been students at the university in Mosul.

"We left everything in a single night: our studies, our homes, everything," Wassim said. "I was an engineer. We waited to see if we could return, but ISIS destroyed everything."

His young wife, Sonia, who was pregnant, stood cradling her stomach with her hands. "We had been planning to get married in Qaraqosh," she added. "I lost all that I had, even my wedding gown."

"Were you all in the choir together in Qaraqosh then?" I asked.

Meena shook her head. "There were seven different Catholic churches in our city, and we were all members of different choirs. But when we arrived here, we found one another. We thought that we had lost everything. But then we understood that we could at least still save a church choir."



She saved something of Qaraqosh with what she made.

“Would you mind singing something for me?” I asked. They nodded, and we returned to the sanctuary, where they took their places in front of the altar. Meena stood at the center, and they pulled out their cellphones from bags and back pockets. With their liturgical books destroyed, these phones had become their hymnals.

They sang. Meena’s voice rang out clearly, leading them. I listened to them singing a language that could be on the edge of vanishing but was still alive in them, a song they had carried out of war and across borders. For a moment all of us were transported to that city whose song had been saved at the end of the world.

They finished. A silence held in the air. We walked out into the night streets together.

They shielded me from the onslaught of cars. Alaa’, one of the choir members who had been quiet until now, turned to me. “If you’re not too busy,” he said shyly, “we’d like for you to meet our families.”

The Dress

I followed the choir through the streets until we turned off into an alley and entered an apartment block. Alaa’ opened a door on the ground floor, and we all passed through. Inside, a dozen people had crowded around a television set to watch the news.

I took a seat and Meena sat beside me, translating from Aramaic so that I could understand.

“Is there something you’d like to ask people about?” Meena questioned gently. I had walked into what felt like sacred space, and I was hesitant to do anything but observe. I told her that if anyone felt comfortable sharing, I’d be grateful to hear a story that might help me to visualize Qaraqosh: something about their trees, their vegetables, their harvests, the names of their churches. Or if anyone had brought anything with them, like an icon, or perhaps even a dress.

“A dress?” Meena asked. I nodded.

“A dress?” she repeated, as though she might have misunderstood me, and I nodded again.

“You need to speak to my mother,” she said firmly. “She didn’t bring anything from Qaraqosh with her when we escaped. But she saved something of Qaraqosh with what she made.”

Meena called her mother from across the room. “Mama, show her your *shal!*” I turned to where her voice had been directed and glimpsed Hana for the first time, standing in the back of the room. She was perhaps in her 40s, with her brown hair pulled back in a ponytail, wearing a gray T-shirt and what appeared to be polka-dot pajama bottoms. When she heard her daughter’s request, she blushed. Others in the room encouraged her, until Hana disappeared and then reappeared, holding a plastic bag. She reached inside and pulled out a folded-up square of red and black checked fabric, which at first did not look like a dress at all but perhaps a tablecloth.

And there it was. Her dress. The *shal*. Already I could see threaded colors emerging. She was holding it inside out, so that as she unfolded it, I could glimpse what looked like scribbles: the outlines of what might be figures in pink and blue, purple and yellow, a deep shade of green; some pompoms of varied colors hanging on each corner; what almost looked like train tracks of alternating shades. She held it gingerly, still unfolding it, and with each unfolding more colors and figures leapt out—what might be trees, a heart—all of it still inside out and so giving the impression of a child’s drawing scribbled onto fabric. Finally the square unfolded in half, and as the center of the dress was half-revealed all was color—a line of triangles spanning the dress, the etchings of what looked like figures dancing.

I cannot tell you what even that glimpse felt like—for until then the room had been so heavy, and now into it had erupted this color. She turned the square around, until the front of the *shal* was finally facing me. Images came into focus: two embroidered churches. A house, a line of costumed human figures extending across the dress, holding hands and dancing. Trees. Animals. A word in a foreign alphabet. A saint. A well filled up to the brim with water.

Meena whispered: “This is our history.”

It took me a moment before I responded: “But how do you read it?”

Meena’s mother pointed to the top right corner, where she had sewn a word in Syriac in purple thread rimmed with yellow. “Baghdeda,” Hana read out loud. “The name of our town.”

“But you’re not from Qaraqosh?”

She smiled. “Qaraqosh is the Turkish name for our town—what others call it. But we call it by its ancient name: Baghdeda. You’ll see that I wrote it in Syriac letters.”



Christians take part in the Palm Sunday procession led by Syriac Catholic Patriarch Ignace Joseph III Younan in Qaraqosh, Iraq, on April 10, 2022.

CNS photo/Syriac Catholic Patriarchate

Hana continued, moving from right to left. She paused at two sheaves of wheat, sewn side by side on pale lavender stalks. To its left was a shining golden monstrance holding a Communion host, and farther left was a bunch of grapes, bursting out of the fabric in rich purple. Finally, two fish and a loaf of bread rested in a basket, a reminder of the scene in the Gospels when Jesus multiplied food for a crowd.

“Everyone in Baghdeda was Christian,” she said. “The wheat and grapes might symbolize the bread and the wine used in the Mass, but my father—may his soul rest in peace—was also a farmer. We grew grapes and wheat at my home when I was growing up.”

In the upper left-hand corner, a name had been carefully sewn in Arabic, along with a date: 2016, that very year.

“That’s my name: Hana,” she said. “I sewed it in Arabic because all of us also studied Arabic. We lived close to Mosul, and so we had to know how to read and write in Arabic. I was a schoolteacher.”

“And the date?”

“That was when I finished the dress,” Hana replied. “We had already escaped from Qaraqosh to Kurdistan. I understood by then that we would have to leave Iraq forever. I thought that this was something that I could carry with me. I started sewing there, for two months. I finished it here, in Amman, just a few weeks ago.”

My eyes settled on two large churches sewn into the center of the dress. The first had been stitched in great detail: a pink tower with what looked like a space for a clock, three golden crosses embroidered on top, and a long red roof with a dome on the opposite end.

“That’s the Church of al-Tahira,” she said. “That was the largest church in Baghdeda. Actually, it was the largest church in all of Iraq.”

She pointed to the second church, shaped like a star. “That’s the Church of Saints Mar Behnam and Sara.”

We continued down to the third panel. A series of dancers spanned the width of the dress. “That’s the *dabke*: what we danced for any joyous occasion,” she said.

It was such an act of attention: earrings and shoes, handkerchiefs, hands clasping one another. My eyes moved down the fabric to what appeared to be an almost fairytale-like pink cottage. Rain fell from a cloud above.

It was late into the night when we said goodbye and I walked into the cold streets alone. I had tried to write down all the details in my notebook, but I had not even thought to write down Hana’s last name. Then I remembered that she had sewn it into her dress, and I had taken a photograph.

I returned to Jerusalem, to my husband and two sons. To singing my 1-year-old daughter to sleep. To books in the library and bedtimes and bowls of cereal. Months passed. But the dress would not leave me.

Author’s note: Today, thousands of the inhabitants of Qaraqosh have returned to their homes in Iraq, where the political situation remains fragile. Thousands of others, like Hana, are resettled in countries around the world. Pope Francis visited Qaraqosh in 2021 during his pastoral visit to Iraq.

Stephanie Saldaña is a writer based in Jerusalem. She is the author, most recently, of *What We Remember Will Be Saved* (Broadleaf Books), from which this article has been adapted. Reprinted with permission. Some of the names of individuals in this excerpt have been changed to protect their privacy.

SCANDAL FATIGUE?

The complicated legacy of state investigations of the Catholic sex abuse crisis

By Kevin Clarke

Philadelphia is a “very Catholic city,” Barbara Daly will tell you. When you meet people in Philadelphia, “they don’t ask you what you do for a living.” Instead, she says, they ask what parish you belong to or what Catholic high school you attended.

This very Catholic city has been hammered in recent years by stories of the abuse of children by Catholic priests recounted in a series of grand jury reports, which culminated in a statewide grand jury investigation and a report released by the attorney general of Pennsylvania in August 2018. These events returned national attention to the church’s abuse scandal and inspired a flurry of similar investigations across the country.

Ms. Daly is the pastoral associate at St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Ambler, Pa., outside Philadelphia. Lots of folks in the area, she recalls, reacted defensively to the city and state reports. Some felt that prosecutors were piling on, that the church was not offered an opportunity to defend itself. Some saw an anti-Catholic bias at work or headline-chasing by politically ambitious district attorneys. The fact that a previous grand jury report, released in 2011 by the disgraced former district attorney of the City of Philadelphia, Seth Williams, imploded after the credibility of a primary witness came into question has not raised her esteem for such efforts.

“The acts which were committed against children and young people are horrible, [and] the church needs to be living in the truth in order to speak the truth,” Ms. Daly says. “But someone like a Seth Williams”—who was convicted on unrelated public corruption charges and disbarred in 2017—“does make it harder to believe that [prosecutors’] motives were pure.”

She describes as “a complete mess” the prosecution of Msgr. William Lynn by a succession of Philadelphia district attorneys. The priest’s conviction in 2012 on one felony count of endangering the welfare of a child was overturned twice before he accepted a “no contest” plea on a misdemeanor charge after serving 33 months behind bars.

“At the end of the day, people are jaded,” Ms. Daly says. “We swim in a sea of accusations and counter-accusations, news reports speaking to one reality while our parishes try to live something completely different. Who to believe? What to believe? Who knows?”

Her reaction to the idea of more such reports on clerical abuse still to come from other jurisdictions and other states? “We know about this. Why are they dragging this up again?”

The church has made great strides since the first accounts of abuse hit the national press, she says. “Every year we have safe environment programs. You have to train the kids; you have to train the parents; nobody can work here unless they have all their clearances. It’s just become part of our life,” Ms. Daly says of the protections.

“So I guess my question is: What good [do the reports] do at this point?”

What More Can We Learn?

Twenty-one years after the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People bound most U.S. dioceses to new commitments and policies for the protection of children, there are few Catholics in the United States who are not familiar with the institutional and personal failures that propelled those important changes. Most have heard near-identical



Storm clouds pass over a Catholic church in Pittsburgh in August 2018.

CNS photo/Jason Cohn, Reuters

stories emerge from dioceses across the country that depict patterns of dysfunction and obstruction, and that have typified the church's failures and its faltering response to its sex abuse crisis—moving abusive priests from parish to parish, hiding information until statutes of limitations expired and, finally, simply not reporting offenders to law enforcement or warning parishioners about predators in their midst. The problems were described in detail in studies the U.S. church itself commissioned in the aftermath of The Boston Globe's Spotlight exposé in 2002.

Missing from those church-commissioned reports were the personal stories of what actually happened to now-adult victims and survivors of abuse, and the impact those experiences had on their lives. Those scalding histories were included, however, in the Pennsylvania grand jury report that became a kind of template for others that have followed it.

BishopAccountability.org has been tracking and compiling news reports, data and analyses of the sex abuse crisis since 2003. According to its researchers, there have been 21 reports from grand juries, state attorneys and attorneys general at the municipal and state level from around the country since the organization began its mission. More are in the pipeline, with reports anticipated from New York, California, Michigan and, perhaps most significantly, from New Mexico, where the Congregation of the Servants of the Paraclete for decades ran a treatment center for priest abusers who were sent there from all over the United States.



Members of the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP) hold a news conference in front of the central office of the Diocese of Pittsburgh on Aug. 20, 2018.

CNS photo/Chaz Wuth

Why Read Another Attorney General's Report?

The new investigations have not yielded many indictments—the statutes of limitations for most of the crimes they uncover have long since expired and many of the accused have passed away. The reports have encouraged a number of states to revise civil and criminal statutes of limitation on offenses against children (although efforts to pass “look back” legislation have not succeeded in Pennsylvania). But Ms. Daly is not alone in wondering about the value of wading through these by-now grimly familiar accounts of disastrous decades out of the church’s past. Are we learning anything new?

Michael McDonnell, the communications manager for SNAP, the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, agrees that the prosecutors’ reports do not make easy reading—because of both their length and their content—but insists they remain prerequisites for “digesting the full scope of the decades of cover-up...to truly understand the impact that [the crisis] has had on individuals.”

At a minimum, the reports offer “a huge validation point” and new opportunities for healing for the victims and survivors, he says. “Often it’s like a discovery process”

in a lawsuit, he adds. “You’re able to see who was responsible for the transfers, who knew about it.”

The release in May of a report five years in the making from the office of Attorney General Kwame Raoul of Illinois once again brought decades of abuse of children by Catholic clerics to national attention. At the conclusion of an investigation that began under his predecessor, Lisa Madigan, in 2018, Mr. Raoul told reporters that 25 staff members had reviewed more than 100,000 pages of diocesan documents and conducted more than 600 confidential interactions with contacts. He said the time and resources devoted to the effort were a necessary component of some measure of justice for survivors of sexual assault by Catholic clerics and religious.

“Decades of Catholic leadership decisions and policies have allowed known child sex abusers to hide, often in plain sight,” Mr. Raoul notes in the introduction to the 695-page report, “and because the statute of limitations has frequently expired, many survivors of child sex abuse at the hands of Catholic clerics will never see justice in a legal sense.

“It is my hope that this report will shine light both on



The reports offer new opportunities for healing for the victims and survivors.

those who violated their positions of power and trust to abuse innocent children, and on the men in church leadership who covered up that abuse. These perpetrators may never be held accountable in a court of law, but by naming them here, the intention is to provide a public accountability and a measure of healing to survivors who have long suffered in silence.”

The therapeutic value of simply conducting the investigation also was touched on by the authors of the Illinois report. Many of the survivors who contacted the attorney general’s office were choosing to share their experience for the first time, they wrote, “still battling the pain and suffering” caused by the abuse they experienced, often decades ago.

Digging Deeper Than the Headlines

Familiar headlines suggesting the cover-up and concealment of abuse by church officials followed a press conference at the Illinois report’s release, and Cardinal Blase Cupich of Chicago quickly became embroiled in an unpleasant public relations battle with Mr. Raoul’s office over some of the implications of the attorney general’s findings.

James Geoly, general counsel for the archdiocese, says that in the aftermath of Mr. Raoul’s press conference, headlines and news stories created “the impression that we have abusers out there right now.”

“The report is not clear enough that there is not a single priest in ministry in the Archdiocese of Chicago with a substantiated allegation or an unresolved allegation—and [there] has not been [one] for decades,” he says.

Church officials felt blindsided by the manner in which the report was presented after years of institutional cooperation with the investigation, according to Mr. Geoly. Indeed, the attorney general’s narrative includes a number of expressions of appreciation for the cooperation of officials from Illinois dioceses.

But that apparently cooperative spirit disintegrated

rapidly into recrimination and finger-pointing after the report’s release to the public. The question of how to parse the numbers of the credibly accused played a prominent role.

At the time the investigation began in 2018, only two dioceses—Chicago and Joliet—of the ultimately six that were included had released names of accused clerics. As the investigation gathered steam and diocesan files were shared with investigators, all the dioceses began adding names to disclosure lists; they were often responding to recommendations from the attorney general’s office that led to expanded disclosures, for the first time including the names of deceased priests who had been credibly accused.

Press accounts seized on the gulf between the number of the first disclosures—103—and the final tally from the attorney general’s office of 451 credibly accused, together responsible for 1,997 victims. Mr. Geoly strongly objects to charges of diocesan concealment that have followed because of that fourfold increase, and says that the attorney general was “using some things that are mathematically true, but making them mean something they don’t mean.”

Since 2002, “every single allegation we’ve received... is immediately reported to law enforcement.” Chicago church officials even conducted a “look back,” he says, “where all the old historical allegations sitting in the files were found and also reported.”

This is the exact opposite of concealment, Mr. Geoly says, adding that if Mr. Raoul wanted to make the point that the names of some accused clerics were not posted on the archdiocese’s website, “he could have made it more clear that they were all previously reported to law enforcement.”

He was especially frustrated that virtually all of the “new” names of the accused released at the conclusion of the report were of men whose ministries fell outside the jurisdiction of the archdiocese—primarily members of the Christian Brothers, priests who were members of religious orders like the Franciscans, Jesuits and Dominicans, and “extern” priests, men working in the Chicago Archdiocese but who officially belonged to other dioceses.

It has been the practice of the Chicago Archdiocese, and many others around the country, to rely on religious orders to make disclosures of credibly accused clerics and lay brothers independently. That practice is explicitly deemed inadequate by the attorney general’s report, which includes a recommendation that Cardinal Cupich should consider barring from ministry in the archdiocese orders that do not release lists of offenders within their ranks. Despite his public differences with Mr. Raoul, Cardinal Cupich seems ready to accept that recommendation.



The church has made vast strides in putting the safety of children first and creating safe environments.

A report from the Maryland Attorney General's Office, released during Holy Week in April of this year, just a few weeks before the Illinois report, painted a similarly damning portrait of the past performance of the leaders of the Archdiocese of Baltimore. According to the report, over eight decades, more than 150 Catholic priests and others associated with the archdiocese had sexually assaulted more than 600 children. Few ever faced consequences for these criminal acts.

How to parse the numbers of accused abusers and manage the release of their identities was similarly contested by archdiocesan officials in Baltimore.

Responding to 'Shifting Goalposts'

Mr. Geoly argues that church officials have been contending with shifting goalposts since the abuse scandal first broke in 2002. First efforts, he says, focused on protecting children and identifying predators who remained active threats. Over time expectations about responses appropriate to the crisis have evolved, moving on to ideas of diocesan transparency and full disclosure that include posting names on diocesan websites of "credibly accused" clerics who may have been deceased for many years. That has led to some inevitable tensions.

"How much substantiation should there be before you publish someone's name and call them a child abuser?" Mr. Geoly asks.

In Baltimore, Archbishop William E. Lori has found himself contending with similar accusations of cover-up. Archdiocesan policy in 1993 required sharing allegations with law enforcement but not the more expanded disclosure that included deceased clerics and clerics from religious orders that has been deemed a superior practice since then. (Baltimore updated its disclosure list of credible accused offenders in June, following the recommendation of

the Maryland attorney general's report.)

In a letter to parishioners, Archbishop Lori defended church officials under fire because of past policies explored in the report: "Some members of clergy whose names have been tied more recently to media coverage focusing on a 'cover up' are, in fact, some of the very people who helped force a culture change that rooted out evil and shut out attempts to conceal the failures or hide abusers. How is it a cover up if you report everything to law enforcement?"

However they are classified or tracked, the sheer number of substantiated abusers uncovered by the Illinois and Maryland reports is sobering. The first John Jay College study of the scope of the problem of the clerical abuse of children, commissioned by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2004, found that during the time frame it evaluated—1950 through 2002—4 percent of all U.S. priests (4,392 out of 109,694) were credibly accused of at least one instance of sexual assault.

But in a number of Illinois dioceses, the percentages of credibly accused priests were much higher. Investigators report that in the dioceses of Peoria, Joliet and Belleville, more than 8 percent of priests and religious brothers have substantiated accusations as child sex abusers during the 1990s. And investigators in Maryland found that some parishes experienced the presence of multiple abusers simultaneously. St. Mark Parish in Catonsville, for example, endured 11 abusers between 1964 and 2004.

The reports depict previous eras of church leadership when protecting the church's reputation and rehabilitating pedophile priests seemed the primary focus. In contemporary times, however, Mr. Geoly insists that the church has made vast strides in putting the safety of children first and creating safe environments.

"Ever since the [Dallas charter in 2002], one strike and you're out: One substantiated allegation, and you're permanently out of all ministry," he says. In Chicago, since then, "we have never had somebody with a substantiated allegation in ministry."

That includes the infamous Daniel McCormack, he says. Mr. Geoly explains the Archdiocese's of Chicago's poor handling of Mr. McCormack as the result of a breakdown in internal processes that prevented accusations against Mr. McCormack—ordained in 1994, jailed and laicized in 2007—from being "substantiated" before his notorious return to ministry under the late Cardinal Francis George in 2005. But describing the McCormack case as an outlier will probably not reassure even the most fair-minded assessors of the archdiocese's performance.

Therein lies the rub for church officials attempting to



Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul discusses the release of a report revealing decades of abuse by Catholic clergy, on May 23, 2023.

O5V News screenshot/Twitter

correct what they perceive as inherent unfairness about the continuing investigations: Anything said defending the church in the aftermath of such reports sounds like an attempt to diminish the harm or breadth of the decades-long scandal. Meanwhile the church's own performance in some instances since the charter has left it open to new rounds of criticism.

Reporting the Truth

Peter Steinfels is the former editor of *Commonweal* magazine and a former religion reporter and columnist for *The New York Times*. He is the founder and former director, with his wife, Margaret O'Brien Steinfels, of the Center for Religion and Culture at Fordham University. In 2018, he wrote a comprehensive, critical analysis of the Pennsylvania attorney general's report, which *Commonweal* published in January 2019.

At the time he spoke to *America*, he was steeling himself to take on a thorough reading of the Illinois report and reserving judgment of it until then. But he does worry in general that such reports can be "destructive for the church."

It is always salutary to be horrified afresh by these crimes, Mr. Steinfels says, "but I don't think we're learning anything particularly new." He questions the usefulness of sweeping claims lumping together distinct eras, varying institutional practices and several generations of bishops in an undifferentiated indictment of "the church."

Who, he wonders, is performing the hard work of analyzing the claims and accusations included in attorney general or grand jury reports? "The bishops are in no po-

sition to really examine and publicly raise any questions," Mr. Steinfels says. "Their first responsibilities are pastoral; they need to in no way seem to be increasing the pain of survivors, nor say anything that might [seem to] rationalize or justify sex abuse of minors, or of any kind" of abuse.

And if bishops are unable to speak freely about potential mischaracterizations or misinterpretations of secular investigations—and the scorching response to Cardinal Cupich's attempt to challenge some of the attorney generals' findings suggest that assessment is accurate—who can perform that role?

"The media doesn't do its job on this, and the Catholic press does not do its job," Mr. Steinfels said, adding that everyone, it seems, is too ready to rebuke contemporary U.S. Catholic bishops.

He says the most serious impact of the attorney general reports "is that it convinces Catholics that the extent of sex abuse is still going on and that nothing has changed."

The idea of what constitutes a cover-up has "become utterly elastic," Mr. Steinfels says.

"I think a lot of [Catholics] just have not registered the fact that since the 1970s, the amount of sexual abuse has precipitously declined," he says. "And since 2002, when the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops belatedly grappled with its record on abuse and set new policies to protect children, the record in terms of dealing with allegations, though never perfect, is really pretty good.

"Who's to say that?" Mr. Steinfels asks. "The bishops cannot.... My old-fashioned attachment to truth makes me disturbed by that."

Be very curious and evaluate for yourself: What does this report really mean? What does it mean now?



A protester at a news conference held by members of the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP) in front of the main office of the Diocese of Pittsburgh on Aug. 20, 2018

A Report Worth Embracing?

Terence McKiernan, president of BishopAccountability.org, has probably made his way more deeply through the march of prosecutors' and grand jury reports than anyone else in the country. He believes the latest from Illinois is the best he has read so far—"streets ahead of most of the others."

He knows that most Catholics will probably not have the time, energy or emotional endurance for it, but he believes it would be a shame if they completely missed the Illinois analysis, which he describes as uniquely attentive to Catholic and diocesan sensibilities, written by a team that seems to grasp how dioceses actually work.

The Illinois investigators "really have talked in a very careful way at length with survivors," Mr. McKiernan says. "They have visited each of the chancelleries, sat down with the documents...and, unusually, they have actually interacted with diocesan officials in a very nuanced way."

The report's authors indeed take careful note to acknowledge the degree of cooperation investigators received from the Illinois dioceses, particularly the Archdiocese of Chicago. They offer praise for policy shifts they believed were useful and constructive criticism for policies and decisions they found wanting. Investigators cite church documents and quotations from Cardinal Cupich—even Pope Francis—as they build a grueling narrative of the crisis toward a section of specific and individualized recommendations on policy and practice in each diocese.

Mr. McKiernan finds some merit in Mr. Steinfeld's criticism of the Pennsylvania grand jury report's tendency to reinforce a misleading historical narrative of the abuse crisis. But he believes the Illinois study, which incorporates the church's own historical framing, answers "the Stein-

fels-type question" of how to depict the arc of the crisis.

"I can't control how people read the report," Mr. McKiernan says, but "it said explicitly that there was a bad period during which terrible things were done," then a post-Dallas period of improving standards and practices, and finally that "there still remains work to be done."

For his part, Mr. McKiernan regrets the combative tone taken by Cardinal Cupich immediately after the document was released and what he argues is a missed opportunity for the church in general. "I think that this was a report to embrace," he says.

"In my view, the way to approach this report if you're Cupich and the other ordinaries is: 'This is a thoughtful and well done report, and there are recommendations—we obviously can't accept them in a blanket way, but we're going to work with this. We want to improve things.'"

Study but Verify

Kathleen McChesney is a former detective and former F.B.I. executive, and the first executive director of the U.S. bishops' Office of Child Protection. Despite the grim stories and the depressing news accounts that follow the release of each of these state findings, Ms. McChesney remains confident that the dysfunctional hierarchies they depict are becoming impossible to find in the post-charter church. Now, "throughout the country, nearly every diocese and many, if not most, of the religious communities have procedures [to protect children] in place," she says.

In recent years, dioceses and religious orders around



The front page of The Philadelphia Inquirer on Nov. 4, 2018

the country have shown a greater willingness to reveal what had been hidden in archives and secret files that traced the internal adjudication of abuse claims and outcomes of internally managed investigations. To Ms. McChesney, this is important evidence of progress on disclosure and transparency; but to Mr. McDonnell of SNAP, progress is not coming fast enough and only coming at all precisely because of the intervention of secular entities like the attorneys general.

The Illinois report traces the scandal back to 1950; the Pennsylvania grand jury investigation report went back 70 years, he points out. “Why is it now, 2023, that we’re just really learning all about this?” he asks. “They’ve held on to these records; known abusers have been transferred time and time again. What makes us now believe that they’re doing better?”

To Mr. McDonnell, the reports demonstrate that dioceses and bishops “have not quite met the mark” on transparency and accountability and need to be monitored more closely. The bottom line, he suggests, for long-suffering Catholics—people not trying to deny the historical record but who may be weary of revisiting it—is that the effort remains worth accepting.

“Take in the pain,” Mr. McDonnell says, but “please take it a little bit at a time because it absolutely will affect you physically, mentally and spiritually.”

“Read it, but look at what’s happening today,” Ms. McChesney advises. “Put the two together.” The reports should encourage contemporary Catholics “to find out what is happening in their parish and diocese today and to

begin to ask questions if they have concerns.”

“I think that’s what should be a big takeaway,” she says. “Be very interested, be very curious and evaluate for yourself: What does this really mean? What does it mean now?”

Back at St. Anthony’s, Barbara Daly remains frustrated and angry about the scandal and “every bishop that covered up; every bishop that moved [abusive priests]; every bishop that turned a blind eye.”

For her and other church workers “in the trenches,” those decisions “cut the feet out from under the work that the church really is here for.”

Every time she hears of another diocese declaring bankruptcy to manage its costs related to abuse settlements, she finds herself wondering: “What else is not being done?... What about education, hospitals, schools, caring for the poor? That money would have gone there.”

Prosecutors and investigators will continue to do their jobs and issue their reports, Ms. Daly says, and the church should not shy away from whatever truth is revealed in them.

“But I want people to be thoughtful,” she says. “Do not make knee-jerk reactions. Don’t throw the baby out with the bathwater. Don’t decide that the entire church is a worthless endeavor.”

Kevin Clarke is *America’s* chief correspondent and the author of *Oscar Romero: Love Must Win Out* (Liturgical Press).
Twitter: @ClarkeAtAmerica.



Washington Auxiliary Bishop Roy E. Campbell and others walk to the National Museum of African American History and Culture on June 8, 2020, following the death of George Floyd.

CNS photo/Bob Reller

'GOD SHOWS NO PARTIALITY'

The synod, race and mutual conversion

By Jaisy A. Joseph

In his book *Synodality: A New Way of Proceeding in the Church*, the Venezuelan theologian Raphael Luciani notes how the synodal process is rooted in the Second Vatican Council's recovery of the ecclesiology of the local church. He further connects the importance of the local church with the specific synodal practices of listening. Pope Francis, states Professor Luciani, understands that:

the people of God must be listened to, in their particular place and time, "in order to know what the Spirit is saying to the Churches" (Rv 2:7). By listening to the people in their own places, each Church can find ways of proceeding that respond to the particular reality where ecclesial life and mission evolves.

These words beckon us to reflect prayerfully on what it means to be a local church in the United States today. What are the particularities of *this* time and *this* place that shape our ecclesial life and mission?

The U.S. bishops' "National Synthesis of the People of God," which emerged from the diocesan phase of planning for the Synod on Synodality, can serve as one source for discernment. Among the numerous wounds that the

synthesis mentions, including the enduring pain from the clerical sex abuse crisis and the presence of sociopolitical polarization in the church, racism has surfaced as an important theme for contemplation. The synthesis notes how "Catholic people of color spoke of routine encounters with racism, both inside and outside the Church" and "Indigenous Catholics spoke of the generational trauma caused by racism and abuse in boarding schools."

Throughout his pontificate, Pope Francis has called the universal church away from a culture of exclusion and toward a new way of seeing and listening cultivated by a culture of encounter. In the United States, Catholic theologians of color have reflected this new way of seeing and listening by specifically attending to the presence of Christ amid the wounds of racism. How might the local church of the United States become a powerful witness of the good news amid cries for racial healing and justice?

Pope Francis' Call to Mutual Conversion

In his homily at the vigil Mass of the first Pentecost of his pontificate, in 2013, Francis suggested that the word *encounter* is crucial to what it means to be a Christian, stating: "In this 'stepping out' [of ourselves] it is important to be ready for encounter. For me this word is very important.

Encounter with others.... Because faith is an encounter with Jesus, and we must do what Jesus does: encounter others." By imitating Jesus, the church is also meant to cultivate a culture of encounter that results in a new way of seeing and listening.

This new way of seeing is present in Pope Francis' latest encyclical, "Fratelli Tutti" (2020), where he leads the reader into a *lectio divina* of the parable of the good Samaritan. Of course, it is good to be like the Samaritan, who can see the full humanity of the person lying half dead on the side of the road—who is able to see the full humanity of one who would presumably deny him his own. However, Jesus is also teaching the scholar of the law, who would more readily identify with the dying traveler because of a history of racial strife between Jews and Samaritans, what it means to be on the receiving end of a loving gaze. In a culture of encounter, we are called not only to love the marginalized other, but also to receive love humbly from those whom we have maligned for so long. This capacity to both give and receive love is what leads to a conversion of heart.

In addition to calling the universal church to a new way of seeing, a culture of encounter invites the church to a new way of listening. The initial preparatory document for this global synod highlighted the mutual conversion of Peter and Cornelius in Acts 10 as a paradigm of this new way of listening. Here we witness Peter experiencing a strange vision in which a long sheet filled with animals of all kinds unfurls before him and he is given instructions to eat them. As a devout Jew, Peter is disturbed by these words and protests that he has never eaten anything against the traditions of his people. The voice speaks again and repeats the following words three times: "What God has made clean, you are not to call profane" (Acts 10:15).

Profoundly disturbed by the meaning of this vision and unsure of how to proceed, Peter has his doubts interrupted by the presence of three men who have been sent by Cornelius to find him. Experiencing the promptings of the Holy Spirit, Peter accompanies them to the house of Cornelius, where the latter had gathered his entire household to receive the apostle. As Peter crosses the threshold into the Roman centurion's house, he says, "You know that it is unlawful for a Jewish man to associate with, or visit, a Gentile, but God has shown me that I should not call any person profane or unclean" (Acts 10:28). Peter then listens to Cornelius tell of his profound spiritual encounter with a "man in dazzling robes" and immediately recognizes the presence of the resurrected Lord in this gentile's life.

This recognition leads to Peter's own deeper conversion regarding the vastness of God's love even among the colonizers who ruled over his land, and who ultimately

put Jesus to death. Stunned, the apostle exclaims: "In truth, I see that God shows no partiality. Rather, in every nation whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him" (Acts 10:34-35). In this account, we witness how both Peter and Cornelius are protagonists in the singular story of salvation. There is neither an *us v. them* exclusion in the Lord nor is one dependent on the other for his salvation. Rather, through the power of the Holy Spirit, both individuals experience conversion because they can listen and recognize the presence of the resurrected Jesus in each other's lives.

Peter's realization that God shows no partiality encourages us to ask how we may better develop a culture of encounter that recognizes the presence of Christ in the entangled and wounded histories that constitute both U.S. society and the U.S. Catholic Church.

Listening to Catholic Theologians of Color

In his book *A World Church in Our Backyard*, the Korean American Catholic theologian Simon C. Kim argues that the Holy Spirit was shaping the U.S. Catholic Church in 1965 through two moments that have yet to be fully integrated into our self-understanding as a local church. First, the Second Vatican Council, which concluded that year, opened the church to the world, becoming (as Karl Rahner stated) fully conscious of itself for the first time as a world church amid diverse cultures. Second, because of the civil rights movement led by African Americans in this country, the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 abolished the prejudicial quota system and allowed a greater number of immigrants from the Global South (those from Asia had been banned, and almost no immigration from Africa was allowed, from 1924 onward) to arrive and establish communities in the United States.

The simultaneity of these ecclesial and historical events, Father Kim argues, belong to one movement of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, he continues, there were two blind spots, one before and one after the council, that prevented the U.S. Catholic Church from fully seeing the Spirit in these "signs of the times." He argues that the first blind spot results from the inability of the U.S. bishops to fully acknowledge "what the Spirit was doing in their own society in terms of civil rights and race relations." He finds it remarkable that in the *votas* sent to Rome in preparation for the council, international issues such as the threat of communism received more attention than the issues of racial injustice that also occupied national consciousness in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

The second blind spot, Father Kim argues, appears in how the understanding of "world church" after the council was not prepared for postmodern realities. In the United States, the world church:

was understood as churches all over the world, but a church “out there,” not occupying the same spaces geographically. [But] in the postmodern world of migration and globalization, the world church was no longer a reality “out there” in different parts of the world. Rather, the world church would be coming to the backyards and neighborhoods of societies that were [presumed to be] culturally homogenous.

To move beyond these blind spots and see in a new way, the U.S. Catholic Church must acknowledge how pre-Vatican II immigration differed from post-Vatican II immigration and how this difference has ecclesial implications for our dioceses today.

Before Vatican II, Catholic immigration to the United States came mostly from Europe. A system of ethnic enclaves supported by national parishes protected these immigrants from the dominant culture while also simultaneously separating Catholics according to their heritage countries, like Ireland, Italy and Poland. In the ensuing decades, however, Catholics in the United States who were second- and third-generation descendants of immigrants from Europe eventually lost touch with their heritage cultures and merged into English-speaking, Anglo-conforming American parishes.

This experience of the “melting pot” has often been set as a model for post-Vatican II Catholic immigrants. However, what this implied vision of Americanization ignores is the racism that prevents Catholics of color from ever assimilating (or even desiring to assimilate) into whiteness. Because post-1965 immigration mostly comes from the Global South, the postmodern reality of the U.S. Catholic Church involves an unprecedented complexity of cultural relations that bear the wounds of racism and colonialism.

Furthermore, we must recall that the dominant narrative of the U.S. Catholic Church as an immigrant church ignores the fact that not all Catholics are immigrants or descendants of immigrants. Many Catholics were forced onto reservations, others arrived in chains, and some had the border cross them. (The assumption that they crossed the border voluntarily is in many cases not true.) Indigenous, African and Latinx Catholics were partaking of the Eucharist on this land long before the United States became a country. Yet their experiences often remain on the edges of U.S. Catholic consciousness. The Holy Spirit has been calling forth theologians from these communities to reflect and articulate how God is responding to the cries of God’s people from the underside of U.S. history.

Popular Religiosity

The Cuban American theologian Roberto Goizueta, for example, in his seminal work *Caminemos con Jesús*, notes how Latinx theologians and ministers have been bringing together the resources of their faith and of the academy to attend to their people and to express the presence of Christ encountered in popular religiosity. In a passage that moves me as much now as it did when I was a college sophomore, he vividly describes a Good Friday service at San Fernando Cathedral in San Antonio, Tex.

As the church community accompanies Jesus as he carries his cross through the streets of San Antonio, “[i]t becomes clearer than ever that this is not so much San Fernando’s celebration as that of the entire community.” One of the most moving points in the Stations of the Cross procession, Dr. Goizueta notes, occurs when Jesus falls for the first time, in front of one of San Antonio’s most famous Mexican restaurants. A woman in colorful garments comes out onto the second-story balcony to sing to Jesus the song “I Don’t Know How to Love Him.” Dr. Goizueta observes how “the deep sense of anguish and love reflected in her beautiful voice is felt by the entire crowd, who stand motionless as the mournful eyes of this woman, looking down at the fallen Jesus, meet his glassy, bloodshot eyes, glancing up at her.”

Here, as in Pope Francis’ writing, the loving gaze of Jesus becomes present in the 21st century, asking us if we can see anew and receive the love of the one we have dehumanized and marginalized for so long, asking us if we can love him whose body we continue to wound when we remain indifferent to the cries of our brothers and sisters.

In her book *Knowing Christ Crucified*, the Black Catholic theologian M. Shawn Copeland expands on this profound intimacy with Jesus by reflecting on the apophatic wisdom of the enslaved, which was passed down from generation to generation in the form of spirituals. These songs were simple but not simplistic, she notes, in conveying Gospel truths that disrupt any lie that offered false religious legitimation for the control of Black bodies through chattel slavery, Jim Crow segregation or mass incarceration. The enslaved were listening deeply whenever the Gospel was preached to them. She argues that Jesus of Nazareth captured the religious imagination and affections of the enslaved people in at least three ways:

First, Jesus identified with and preached the gospel to those who were poor and afflicted, oppressed and dispossessed: “*Did you ever see the like before, King Jesus preaching to the poor....*” The enslaved people understood the similarity of their condition with that of the Bible’s outcast and despised.



A culture of encounter invites the church to a new way of listening.

Second, Jesus was a man of word and deed: he does what he says that he will do: “*My Lord’s done just what he said, He’s heal de sick and rais’d de dead.*” The cures and miracles reported by the Gospels witness to Jesus’s continuing transformative power.

Finally, because Jesus himself was beaten, tortured, and murdered, the enslaved people believed that he understood them and their suffering like no one else. They believed that he was one with them in their otherness and affliction, that he would help them to negotiate this world with righteous anger and dignity. They were motivated not out of despair but out of love and faith when they sang, “*Nobody knows de trouble I’ve had/Nobody knows but Jesus.*”

These lines, sung from the depths of human misery before, during and after the birth of this country, reflect a profound understanding of Jesus. When heard with renewed ears, the spirituals invite the wider church to the same awe and humility that Peter expressed after crossing the threshold into Cornelius’s house: “In truth, I see that God shows no partiality.” Moreover, this humble recognition should be even more reason for solidarity among the baptized across racial lines.

In these encounters between faith and culture that have shaped the U.S. Catholic Church, death does not have the final word. The hope of resurrection resounds. Only by first taking seriously and practicing this attentiveness to our own interconnectedness across racial lines within the church can we become leaven in U.S. society and transform it through our redeemed relationships from within.

Crossing the Threshold of the Color Line

This new way of seeing and listening proposed by Pope Francis’ desire for a culture of encounter presents a unique opportunity for the local church in the United States to discern how the Holy Spirit is speaking to us in *this* particular place and *this* particular time. While the synodal efforts thus far present a good first step, much more work remains to be done.

In the U.S.C.C.B.’s “Strategic Plan” for 2021-2024, the bishops note how the tragic murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, led to a shift in their priorities. In addition to the global pandemic, nationwide protests presented “another cataclysmic series of events that would call for the Church to stand in solidarity with all those peacefully seeking racial justice.”

To this end, the strategic plan proposes a national Catholic anti-racism gathering for Catholic laypeople and clergy “with the goal of educating, raising awareness, and

having a forum for authentic and transformational conversion of heart and mind while building a capacity for understanding.”

A relevant model for such a gathering might be the unprecedented U.S.C.C.B. Convocation of Catholic Leaders in Orlando, Fla., in 2017. I had the privilege of attending this conference as a delegate of the Syro-Malabar Catholic Eparchy and was astounded by the way Catholics of color expressed themselves boldly and honestly in the sessions committed to issues of racism in the church.

Unfortunately, few white Catholics attended these sessions, and the discussions of race were relegated to a “people of color concern” rather than seen as a reflection of our broken relationality within the body of Christ. Discussions of racism in the church should not be seen as an act of charity or hospitality by the dominant culture, but rather as opportunities for encounter and mutual conversion led by the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

It is important, then, for this proposed national gathering to attract all U.S. Catholics to contemplate the sins of white supremacy and anti-Blackness that shape how Catholics relate to one another both in the church and to others in society. Moreover, those who attend this national gathering should be encouraged to follow up with their local parish and school settings through a continued process of synodal listening across racial differences.

Via the ecclesial habits that Pope Francis is inviting us to develop through a culture of encounter, may we come to see our profound interconnectedness with one another and listen anew such that we all become protagonists who are receptive to and converted by the presence of the resurrected Lord in one another’s journeys—so that when we reach our final destination on this pilgrimage, we may hear Christ say again, “Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear” (Mt 13:16).

Jaisy A. Joseph is an assistant professor of theology and religious studies at Villanova University in Pennsylvania. This essay is adapted from a presentation at “The Way Forward: Pope Francis, Vatican II, and Synodality,” a conference held at Boston College on March 3, 2023.

FOLLOWING FRANCIS

Lessons from studying the saint's closest friends

By Kathleen Brady

In times of reflection, when Francis of Assisi asked himself what would be the most important qualities for his followers to have, he would focus on one or another of the brothers who were already by his side. Then Francis would try to identify one trait that he found to be outstanding in each of them. He singled out Juniper's perfect patience. He rejoiced in the love of poverty that Bernard of Quintavalle possessed. He hailed the constant prayer of Rufino. Ultimately, St. Francis' list of desirable virtues came to include devotion to the Lord, simplicity, purity, friendliness and common sense, according to *The Mirror of Perfection*, a book of stories from Francis' earliest followers.

I, too, have a list of virtues that I prize. Mine, however, is a list of what I want to see in those I have to deal with when I am trying to get things done. My list includes brevity and getting to the point. Thus it is that many people annoy me; and yes, of course, this is the sin of judging others. Recently I was at a meeting where a founder of an organization I work with was supposed to present our goals. He fumbled, leaving out a key point that illustrated the cause of the problem we were trying to solve. Later he acknowledged that he had explained things badly, but I was quietly angry for days.

St. Francis would have handled this better, and I would have done well to follow his example. Francis usually found the best intentions and outcomes in each and all of his companions. This stemmed from his love for them and also from his often-expressed wish that they be joyful. His exhortations to joy appear throughout early biographies of his life, but they are particularly well-expressed in *The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul*, the second biography of Francis by Thomas of Celano.

Francis could be particularly encouraging when they seemed to stumble. Such incidents among his followers included, in one example, failing to share food, and in another putting the entire community at risk of being driven from the environs of Assisi.



Let us take the case of Bernard of Quintavalle. Before becoming one of Francis' first followers, he was a wealthy lawyer of Assisi. He was intrigued that Francis had abandoned his prosperous life to preach the Gospel and that he seemed so happy leading a life of poverty and prayer. But was the former merchant who he seemed to be? Bernard invited Francis to stay at his house so he could study Francis more closely. Bernard soon discovered that Francis authentically lived the Gospel as he urged others to do. Soon Bernard sold off his property and distributed his gains to the poor, giving his fine clothes to beggars and joining Francis to live under the open skies of Umbria.

Meanwhile, Francis, who had previously suffered from great loneliness, was so happy to have companions that he told them not to beg, but instead to devote their time to preaching and prayer. He feared that the mortifying task of asking for alms would drive off these untried followers whom he had so desperately longed for. Francis committed to begging for enough food for the entire community. However, he failed to gather sufficient sustenance and they barely had enough food to stay alive. Soon Bernard and the others insisted that they wanted to beg, too. In fact, according to *The Legend of Perugia*, another account by the early followers, they treated the task as a contest to see who would be the most accomplished beggar.

The first day, Bernard had some success, but he returned to Francis dejected, according to a manuscript found at the Royal Library at Munich early in the 20th century. He confessed that he was so starved that he ate what was edible as soon as it was given to him. He apologized for having nothing to share, but Francis told him he was wonderful. He announced that Bernard was a man of perfect faith. He had saved nothing for the future but had trusted in the Lord to provide, as the Gospel admonished. He declared that Bernard was an example to them all.

When his men were weakest, Francis was strong on their



A detail of a fresco depicting Franciscans, by Cimabue, inside the Basilica Inferiore di San Francesco, in Assisi, Umbria, Italy

A quarter century after Francis' death, when St. Clare, a friend of Francis and one of his first followers, saw Juniper at her deathbed, she asked him what messages he brought from the Savior, according to her earliest biography *The Legend of Saint Clare*. His words were described as "like burning sparks coming from his fervent heart." Whatever Juniper said, whether it was intelligible or not, Clare was described as taking comfort from him.

In loving his brothers unconditionally and without judgment, Francis made their foibles and missteps seem like the work of the Lord. Francis had faith in God, but faith in his brothers too.

Not surprisingly, Francis was right about the holiness of Bernard of Quintavalle. As *The Little Flowers of Saint Francis*, a 14th-century text with stories of Francis' life and followers, relates, after Francis sent him to preach in Bologna where he had been a student, he endured insults, often from bullying children. When a judge asked him who he was and why he had come to their city, Bernard drew from his tunic what he called the rule of Francis, the words from the Gospel telling them to sell what they had and give the proceeds to the poor, to trust in the Lord to provide, and to follow him.

The judge said that was the highest form of religious life he had ever heard and gave Bernard a place to live and serve God "in a suitable way." People soon sought out Bernard to touch him and hear what he had to say, but he found such admiration troubling and possibly tempting. He returned to Francis and asked him to send others to Bologna so that he could return to his simple Gospel life.

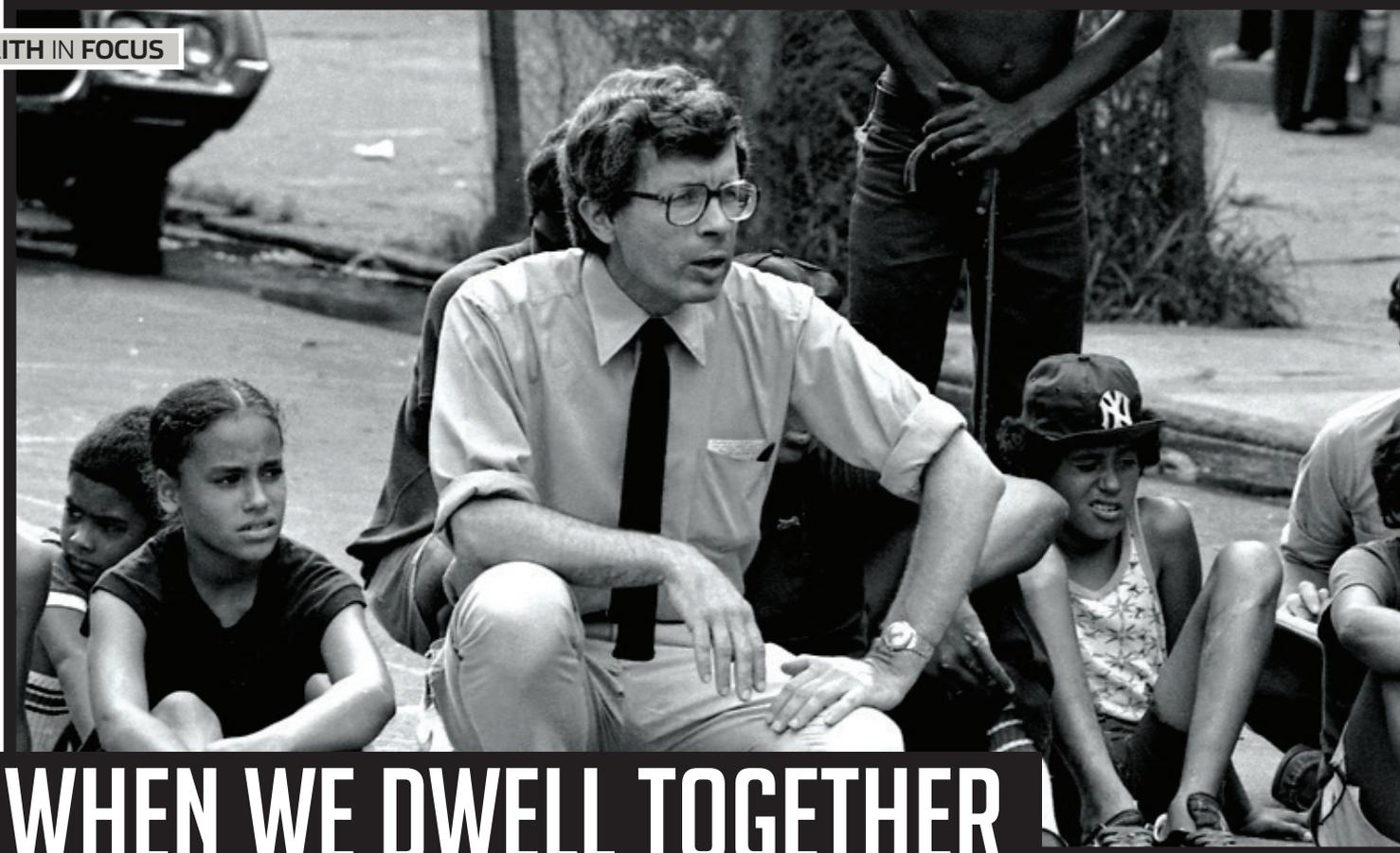
Following Francis' practice of seeing good in someone who may at times annoy me enriches my life and improves my personal and professional relationships. But I am most often like that pig farmer, holding on to my anger or frustration. It can take me time to remember, to let that feeling dissipate and follow Francis' approach. I am slowly learning to have patience for others, and hopefully, with myself.

Kathleen Brady is the author of *Francis and Clare: The Struggles of the Saints of Assisi*, winner of a Catholic Media Association award in biography in 2022. Her previous subjects include *Ida Tarbell* and *Lucille Ball*.

behalf. The night one unnamed brother awakened them all with his cries that he was dying of hunger, Francis had everyone arise and partake of what food was available so that their suffering brother would not be embarrassed by his outburst or his frailty. Francis, uncharacteristically, announced that it was as much a sin to harm the body as to coddle it.

He was a special champion of Juniper, who was good, loving and intellectually disabled. According to *The Chronicle of the Twenty-Four Generals*, an early history of the Franciscan Order by Arnald of Sarrant that tells his story, when an ailing brother said he had a craving for ham, Juniper promptly found a sow, hacked off its leg, and returned with his prize. A screaming pig farmer quickly followed, calling Juniper a madman. Francis, knowing this was a theft, told the swineherd that they would do anything he wished to make up for the loss. The man grew wilder. To no avail Francis sent Juniper to apologize, and he had to send him many times. As the situation dragged on, Francis began to fear that the incident would turn the area against the Lesser Brothers. At least outwardly, however, he had nothing but praise for the singular Juniper. He said the man's courage was outstanding in the face of difficulty. In time, Juniper's humble persistence and his sincere apologies appealed to the farmer's better nature and melted his anger. Deciding that he had been ungenerous, he roasted a pig and sent it to the brothers to apologize to them for his bad behavior.

Under Francis' influence, the brothers came to call their antic companion the Jester of the Lord. They watched after Juniper as best they could. Once he walked into the city of Viterbo completely naked, except for his underpants, which he wore on his head. Still, he was ever ready to work, and as Francis said, he was patient. He carried a stove because sometimes angry people would drive him from their city walls and into secluded places where he would have to cook for himself.



WHEN WE DWELL TOGETHER

How one man helped young people in the South Bronx find strength in community

By Eileen Markey

Orlando introduces himself, then swallows hard and blinks back tears. “He saved my life.” In a funeral parlor in Queens, N.Y., a crowd of people, mostly in their 50s and 60s, has gathered to mourn Edward Eismann, who died in June at the age of 91. Dr. Eismann—everybody called him Doc—founded Unitas Therapeutic Community, a program in the South Bronx that understands social connectedness as key to mental health. Drawing on Adlerian psychology of social purpose, he believed a child grows healthy caring for others: that empathy is restorative. Dr. Eismann structured Unitas around surrogate families—groups of teens and younger children assigned to care for each other in cascading mentorship that also supported birth families. As they spoke at the funeral home, those who had grown up in Unitas testified to its profound influence in their life.

Dr. Eismann arrived in the Bronx in 1967 to work at a community mental health clinic run by Lincoln Hospital. Frustrated that few people came through its doors, he began walking through the streets instead. The young white man stood out in a Black and Puerto Rican neighborhood. Children and teens asked him what he was about. He said

he was a doctor who helped young people with their worries. Day after day he left the clinic and sat on a stoop. Soon a group of young people were meeting with him regularly, relieved to play in the calming company of someone who wanted to hear their thoughts.

Meeting outdoors every day in the summer, as many as 100 children sat cross-legged in a circle on Fox Street, in front of St. Athanasius Church. In winter they met in the gym. They listened to stories and talked about their meanings. The older children got training in social work techniques. The circle became a place young people could bring their worries and fears, their joys and hopes. Together, they would work out their troubles.

“He was saying something to Black and Latino young men and women that nobody was saying to us at that time. And that was that we can be effective helpers of each other, and we can be like an emergency network,” said James Arana, who came to Unitas in 1974 at age 14, while the organization was still operating under the auspices of Lincoln Hospital. (It became independent in 1977.) “This was a unique idea for young people like me, when everything



Edward “Doc Ed” Eismann, at left, gathers with young people for the Unitas circle on Fox Street in the South Bronx in 1982.

could commit to each other. They possessed the ability to heal—themselves and others.

Unitas was part of a cluster of Catholic-related efforts that bloomed in the South Bronx in its hardest years, all of them built around a collective ethos. SEBCO, a nonprofit housing group founded by the Rev. Louis Gigante at St. Athanasius Church, and Mid-Bronx Desperados, associated with St. John Chrysostom parish, rebuilt the physical environment. South Bronx People for Change, an activist organization inspired by liberation theology, built political power. Unitas was for the soul, explained Severo Escalera, known as Papo, who joined as a sixth grader in 1971 and remains close to the organization.

Edward Eismann grew up in Brooklyn. A sensitive child with a perfectionist streak, he played piano with breathtaking beauty. He joined the Congregation of the Holy Cross to become a priest but left before final vows and earned a doctorate in clinical social work at Smith College. He never married, though he eventually adopted a son. Dr. Eismann spoke slowly, exuding a deep gentleness that was disarming, particularly on tough streets. “He could be on any block in the South Bronx and no one would mess with him,” said Mr. Escalera. “The gang members would get off the block when the circle was operating.” Dr. Eismann chose the name Unitas based on Psalm 133: *How good and noble it is when brothers and sisters dwell together in unity.*

“People heal by being together, people heal by telling stories,” said John Gill, a staff counselor at Unitas in the 2000s who is now a social worker in Oakland, Calif., using hip-hop in therapy. While the program never mentioned religion explicitly—it is a social service agency run on government funds—the work was deeply spiritual, said Marianne Kraft, who as principal of St. Athanasius School worked in close cooperation with Unitas for decades. “We didn’t use language about God, but it was about noticing that spark, that beauty,” she said. “At Easter he told a story, it was really the story of Emmaus,” she explained. Eismann broke bread into pieces, telling the children to hold it, waiting until everyone had bread. Then he told them to turn to each other and recognize how precious each was.

People who grew up in Unitas carry it with them. Mr. Arana, now a clinical social worker, leads trainings against sexual violence in Rwanda and Liberia, using Unitas methods. Mr. Escalera relies on skills he learned from Dr. Eismann to counsel neighbors. Wilson Martinez, a deacon, who worked as a counselor at Unitas in the ‘70s, sees it in

around us was saying, ‘If you’re Black and Latino, we can only expect the worst of you.’”

The South Bronx in that era was falling apart. The Cross Bronx Expressway, built between 1948 and 1972, had sliced across the borough, spewing exhaust and grime. White flight caused the population to crater. As New York’s economy deindustrialized, blue-collar jobs that supported previous waves of migrants evaporated. Heroin flooded the neighborhood, frequently brought home in the veins of Vietnam veterans in a community with disproportionately high rates of military service; there were few deferments from the draft for the poor.

Muggings and gang battles made the streets treacherous. Urban renewal projects had left piles of rubble but few new buildings. In many apartments, landlords failed to provide heat; some, unable to finance repairs because banks would not lend in neighborhoods of color, walked away from the buildings entirely. With firehouses shuttered to balance the city’s budget, fires roared through the neighborhood. Racist public policy created angry, frightened children and struggling families.

The South Bronx’s ills were structural. If its children were to survive, they would need to build up alternative social structures. If society had reneged on its social contract with the South Bronx, Dr. Eismann taught children they



Together, they would work out their troubles.

his ministry. Scores of others who once sat in the circle on Fox Street apply its lessons in their communities today.

Despite his transformative impact on so many lives, in his final years Dr. Eismann was tormented with what friends called scrupulosity, the psychological or spiritual condition of a hyper-active conscience. It hounded his daily decisions—what to eat, what to wear—and sent his mind rattling through the past. Had he done enough? Why hadn't Unitas solved all the problems? Was God displeased with him? He stopped playing the piano, finding no joy in it. For a man whose *obra*—his life's work—was community, the social isolation of Covid-19 was devastating. The deaths in recent years of a close cousin and his beloved dog destabilized him, friends said. Mr. Arana visited every other week from Massachusetts, Mr. Escalera even more often. Dr. Eismann's son arranged care and tried to offer comfort. But it was as though Dr. Eismann had been severed, unable to extend to himself the healing he taught others. His body frail and weakened, he died at the end of June.

Those who came through Doc Eismann's Unitas learned that in community there is strength. This did not change the economic conditions, but it showed that loving each other is powerful. In the simple funeral parlor where his wake was held, the grown children of the South Bronx, sweet burly men and women on whose faces were written a lifetime of care, sat in rows. Then they pushed their chairs to the edges of the room until, like little children again, they formed a circle. They faced each other. His work had been mighty, they said. They would praise Doc, commending him home. This was the communion they had learned to enact.

Eileen Markey teaches journalism at Lehman College and is at work on a book about the people's movement that helped to rebuild the Bronx in the 1970s and '80s.

POEM

LITTLE BROTHER

By Jennifer M. Phillips

America, my young brother,
you are keeping bad company these days,
swapping bravery for bravado,
racketing night after night.
You have grown too big for your own house,
fists too eager, voice too loud.

Every morning the jays arrive
with their stormcloud-colored shoulders,
their dapper uniforms in hues of blue,
staking claim among the seed
and sending off the sparrows
with lancet beaks and eyes
until there is nothing left—
tyrants of this empire of insatiety—
taking pleasure but no joy.

My brother, when did rage become your station?
In rage's mayhem-blaze,
on constant guard, you stand outside yourself
And every Other is backlit as your rival,
every rival as your enemy.
Raging, you can forget you are so afraid
of everyone,
teetering on the I-beam
over your own ruined city,
daring anyone to take your weapons
or your hand,
wondering how far you must walk out
to stop hearing your mother weep.

Jennifer M. Phillips has had work published in several journals including *America*. Her two chapbooks are *Sitting Safe in the Theatre of Electricity* and *A Song of Ascents* (Orchard Street Press 2022).

AMERICA'S RETREAT DIRECTORY

Finding time for a retreat can seem overwhelming. Finding a location for one, even more so. Our list of retreat houses can help guide your search. But first, let's begin with the basics.

What is a retreat and why should I go on one? Simply put, a retreat is an extended period of prayer, often offering periods of silence or opportunities for faith sharing. At a retreat house, a team of spiritual directors or speakers can help you find God.

What sort of retreat should I look for? There are many types of retreats, so you can choose a style that fits your spirituality. On a directed retreat, a person meets daily with a spiri-

tual director to discuss what is coming up in one's prayer life. A guided retreat may focus more on one topic (say, women's spirituality) and can offer presentations and opportunities to meet with a director. Preached retreats consist of listening to spiritual talks and praying on your own or sometimes in faith sharing groups.

How can I find a retreat that is a good fit for me? The retreat houses in this guide are good places to start. They offer the chance to connect with trained professionals who may be able to help you find a location and style of retreat that works for you or to connect with a regular spiritual director.



Bellarmino Jesuit Retreat House
420 W. County Line Road, Barrington, IL 60010
(847) 381-1261 • jesuitretreat.org • info@jesuitretreat.org

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



Holy Cross Retreat Center
600 Holy Cross Road, Mesilla Park, NM 88047 • (575) 524-3688
HolyCrossRetreat.org • programs@holycrossretreat.org

Holy Cross Retreat Center has completed its second hermitage. Both provide a beautiful, comfortable place for prayer, sabbatical, or creative work with space for an individual or a couple. Come to southern New Mexico and appreciate our Franciscan hospitality in the hermitage. To learn more about Retreat ministry visit HolyCrossRetreat.org or call (575) 524-3688.



Jesuit Retreat Center
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**'SHE WAS STARTLED BY WHAT THE ANGEL SAID
AND TRIED TO FIGURE OUT WHAT THIS GREETING MEANT'**

By Katie Yen

Is what I thought when the hummingbird buzzed behind me in the garden,
The beating of its wings tickling my ears and seizing my heart as I wondered at the sound,
Me on my knees with my hands in the earth, caught unaware by the flicker of its jeweled collar
As it flashed in the sunlight, disappearing into a zipper in the sky
Before I could catch my breath and behold its beauty.

I am eager for it to reappear, but only catch glimpses before I decide
That the only way it will come to me is if I am still.
That is the only way to gain its trust.
I force myself to slow, to slow and wait, and my mind wanders

To that mysterious creature, and I wonder if this is indeed the fairy of lore
That appeared to simple minds as they walked through the forest in search of
Berry treasure while ever wary of danger, or if these were the spirits
Like the kind worshiped in the days of pantheism and ritual sacrifice,
Or even the era of spontaneous generation,
When one saw flickers of sparks pass by and swore it must be magic, but

Perhaps the angel Gabriel was in fact a hummingbird, and when he spoke to Mary
It was not with words but the beating of wings, humming a song, a promise, a secret,
The same way that a hummingbird whispers new blessings into the ear of each and every
Flower blossom it visits

But as I consult the internet during my meditation,
I am informed that there are no hummers at all in the Middle East,
Though their closest counterpart might be the Palestine Sunbird,
Which hovers to sip nectar but is not at all as graceful

Though this does not deter my theory, but instead makes it all the more spectacular,
And therefore, all the more believable,
That God sent a tiny angel with a chinstrap made of feathered jewels,
Shimmering there in the candlelight
As it divulged to one girl
The greatest secret in the universe

Katie R. Yen's journalism has been published in Edible East Bay, and her poetry has appeared in Fathom, Third Coast, Snarl and Apparition Lit.



Ireland's Dirty Laundry

By René Ostberg

From the late 18th century to 1996, thousands of women and girls in Ireland were sentenced to unpaid labor in the convent-run workhouses known as Magdalene laundries, many of them for “sins” like becoming pregnant outside marriage or being poor or too pretty. In 2013, the Irish government formally apologized for its role in the laundries, but the apology was not the watershed moment it should have been.

Apart from a poorly administered redress scheme for survivors, many questions of accountability remain unanswered. Religious archives remain closed in Ireland, and the government appears unwilling to pursue any further inquiry into its own culpability. The full story of the Magdalene laundries remains literally walled off.

In recent years, several books have attempted to piece together what really happened behind the doors of power. On the literary end are Emer Martin’s novel *The Cruelty*

Men and Claire Keegan’s novella *Small Things Like These*. On the academic side is a new collection of essays, *A Dublin Magdalene Laundry: Donnybrook and Church-State Power in Ireland*, edited by Mark Coen, Katherine O’Donnell and Maeve O’Rourke. Despite their different approaches, they all present a powerful picture of what true accountability for church and state abuse looks like.

Emer Martin’s novel is a fierce indictment of the collusion in 20th-century Ireland between church and state and the betrayal of its citizens after the country gained independence in 1922. *The Cruelty Men* follows the O’Conaill clan, an Irish-speaking family who are forcibly resettled from their home on the southwest coast of Ireland to a farm all the way across the country in County Meath. The move sets in motion the family’s separation from each other, beginning with the parents from the six O’Conaill children. Left to fend for themselves on their new farm, the children



Gabrielle O'Gorman, in red, is seen at a Stand4Truth demonstration in Dublin on Aug. 26, 2018, when she was 73. As a teenager, Ms. O'Gorman was sent to the laundry run by the Good Shepherd Sisters in Limerick.

CNS photo/courtesy Gabrielle O'Gorman via Global Sisters Report

function and the Irish diaspora. *The Cruelty Men* in particular offers a searingly unsentimental view of modern Ireland. Martin was partly inspired by the exposé by Mary Raftery and Eoin O'Sullivan of Irish industrial schools, *Suffer the Little Children* (1999), as well as government reports released in 2009 that investigated church abuse of children, known as the Ryan Report and the Murphy Report. As Martin writes in her book's acknowledgments, "None of the trials my fictional characters endured are exaggerations. The system was brutal." (Her latest novel, *Thirsty Ghosts*, a continuation of *The Cruelty Men*, will be published this year.)

Claire Keegan likewise responds to recent revelations of abuse with her novella, *Small Things Like These*. Set in the 1980s, the story tells of a coal merchant and devoted family man, Bill Furlong, who performs an act of courage that challenges the church's system of abuse. While making his coal deliveries one Christmas season, he visits the local convent, which runs a laundry. There he makes a horrifying discovery. The people in the small town neighboring the convent aren't entirely unaware of what happens to the girls and women who labor there. But Furlong appears to be the only one unable to look the other way.

Keegan's spare, elegant storytelling highlights important details that are clues to the mystery of Furlong's courage. He was the illegitimate child of the maid of a well-to-do Protestant widow. Rather than send the mother and child away and out of sight, the widow takes the unusual course of letting them stay on in her home. This may partly explain Furlong's actions as an adult. But his working-class status and his being a Catholic coming up against his own church suggest risks that make his action even more courageous.

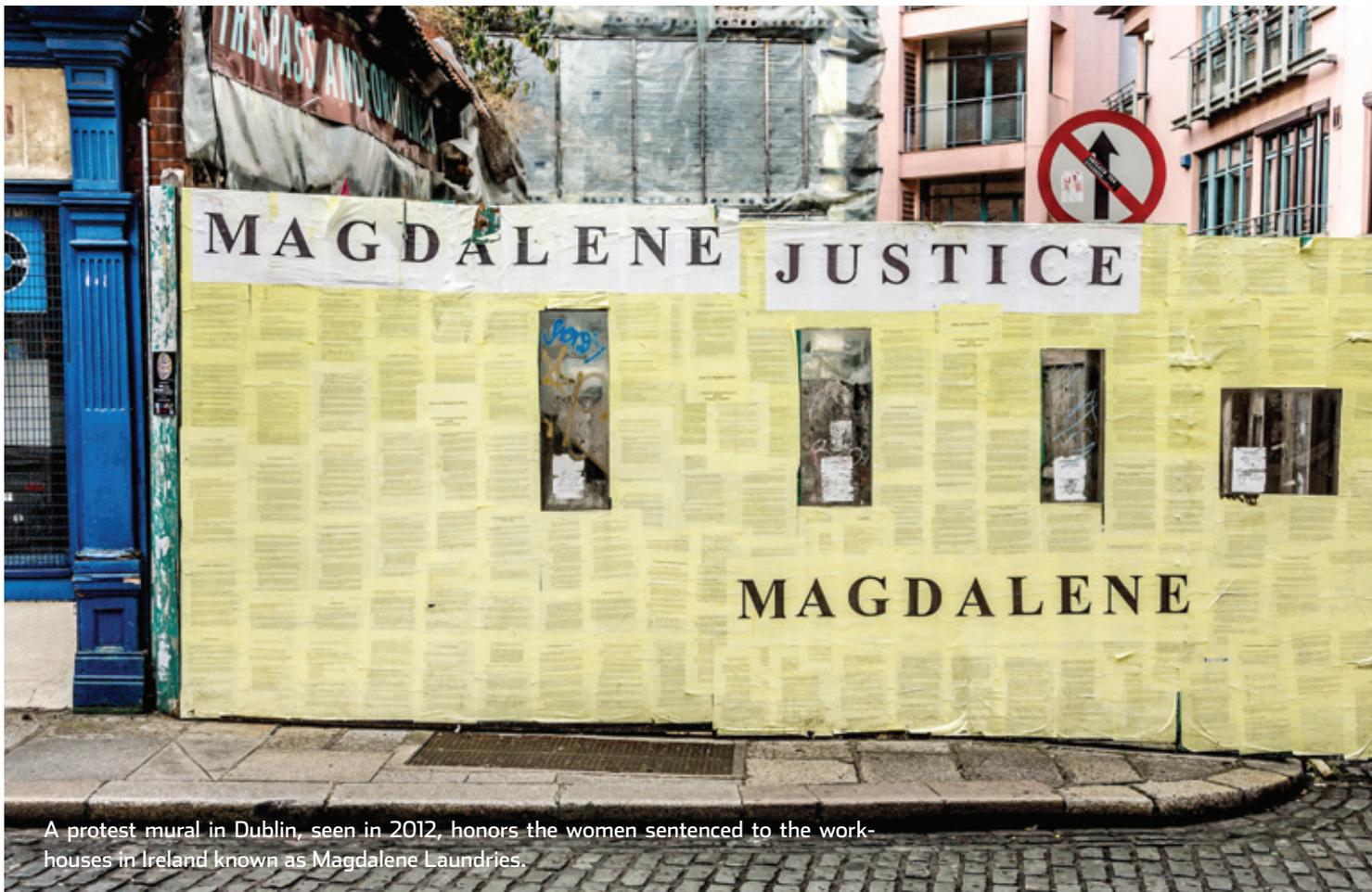
The book ends with a note about the Magdalene system and the government's report on mother and baby homes released in 2021. Keegan also credits Catherine Corless, a local historian who uncovered evidence of a mass grave on the property of a mother and baby home run by the Congregation of the Sisters of Bon Secours in Tuam, County Galway. Published in 2014, Corless's findings revealed that nearly 800 children died in the home, and many were buried in a septic tank. Like the fictional Bill Furlong, Corless was a local who had heard many rumors about the mother and baby home but had refused to look the other way.

While these works of fiction credit official reports and journalists' investigations to flesh out their stories, activists and academics continue to pressure the Irish church and government to allow access to records that could reveal the full story. *A Dublin Magdalene Laundry: Donnybrook and Church-State Power in Ireland* offers 11 essays that focus on

live in constant fear of being snatched by "the cruelty men," government agents who seek out poor or orphaned children to turn over to the church in exchange for money.

Soon enough, the family is torn apart. One brother, the autistic Pdraig, is secretly turned over to the cruelty men by the eldest brother and placed in an asylum. One sister emigrates. Another becomes pregnant and spends her life shuttled through institutions, ending in a laundry. The eldest sibling, Mary, finds a happy station in life working for a middle-class family and manages to get the youngest O Conaill, Seán, an education with the Christian Brothers so he can become a priest. But soon it becomes clear that Seán, too, has undergone a form of institutionalization, which further breaks the family. The novel's ending sees the next generation struggling to restore their family bond.

Born in Dublin and now based in California, Martin specializes in contemporary stories of exile, family dys-



A protest mural in Dublin, seen in 2012, honors the women sentenced to the workhouses in Ireland known as Magdalene Laundries.

the Donnybrook Magdalene Laundry in Dublin, which was run by the Religious Sisters of Charity, to reveal the wider system of church and state institutionalization in Ireland. Donnybrook was chosen because it was the first laundry to undergo a transformation from being managed by laypeople to being controlled by a convent. Thus, it “provided a template for what would become the archetypal Irish Magdalene laundry, owned and overseen by nuns.”

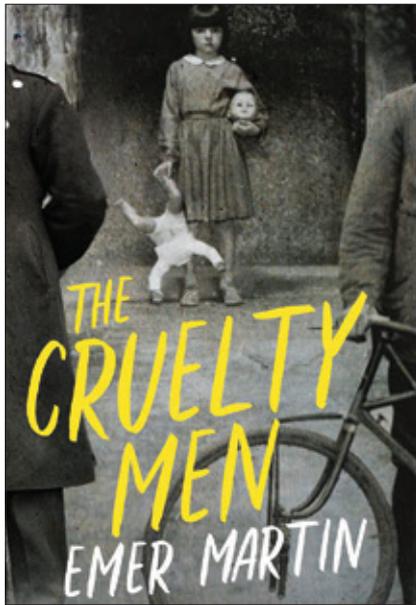
Two of the book’s editors, Katherine O’Donnell and Maeve O’Rourke, are members of the survivor-led advocacy group Justice for Magdalenes Research, along with co-founders Mari Steed and Claire McGettrick and Professor James M. Smith of Boston College. O’Rourke is also a lawyer and a professor at the Irish Centre for Human Rights at the University of Galway, and O’Donnell is a history professor at University College Dublin.

The co-editor Mark Coen, a law professor at U.C.D., is the author of two of the book’s essays. The first reports in detail the history of the Religious Sisters of Charity, including its founder Mary Aikenhead, who was declared venerable by Pope Francis in 2015. Coen’s second chapter offers a history of the Donnybrook laundry from its establishment in a different location in 1798 to its closure in 1992. Includ-

ed is information on the Donnybrook convent’s capitalistic endeavors. Despite the religious group’s mission of charity, its laundry operated according to a customer-focused business model, with lucrative commercial contracts.

Other chapters take deeper dives into various aspects of life at Donnybrook, with factual details that underscore those in Martin and Keegan’s works of fiction. Lindsey Earner-Byrne, a gender studies professor at University College Cork, writes about “respectability,” an 18th-century concept that defined a woman’s moral worth and social power well into the 20th century in Ireland. According to its rigid principles, nuns were held up as exemplary models of morality, while single mothers were undeserving of compassion and subjected to abusive control. Magdalene laundry workers in particular were “the warning to all other women of how easy it was to fall and how serious the consequences were.”

O’Donnell’s chapter humanizes these “fallen women” with excerpts from testimonies collected from survivors. She prefaces these testimonies with historical background information about Catholic social doctrine, specifically Pope Leo XIII’s encyclical letter “Rerum Novarum.” O’Donnell makes a strong argument that the church’s social

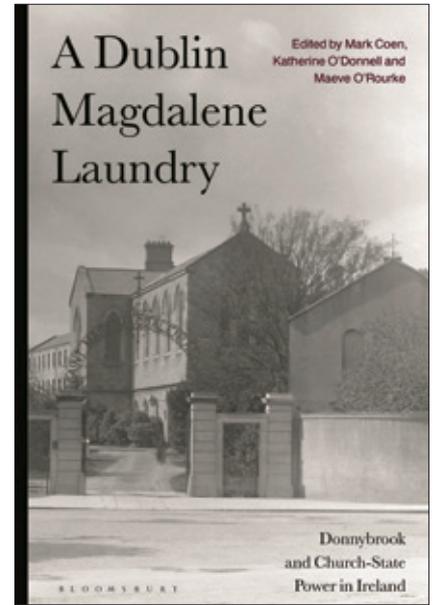


William Murphy, via Wikimedia Commons

Blomsbury / 288p \$30



Grove Press / 128p \$20



Lilliput Press / 448p \$24.63

doctrine helped the Irish middle class consolidate power and reinstitute another form of colonialism through the incarceration of so many poor and working-class women, despite the country's revolutionary ideals for independence.

Chris Hamill, a Belfast-based architect, takes a cue from James M. Smith's book *Ireland's Magdalen Laundries and the Nation's Architecture of Containment* (2007) to analyze Donnybrook's design and layout. Everything about its architecture, from the size of its windows to a covered bridge that connected the women's transept in the chapel to the laundries (rather than to their dormitory), conveyed a sense of surveillance and containment. Hamill further notes that its fortress-like structure was unmissable, a place the surrounding community could not convincingly claim to have known nothing about.

The feminist legal professor Máiréad Enright looks at Donnybrook's benefactors and examines how charity becomes a means to reinforce moral and class divisions. She also discusses how Catholic teaching on mercy became politicized in Ireland and has been used to curb attempts to hold religious orders responsible for abuse.

When the Irish government released its report on the laundries in 2013, the claim was made that the religious orders did not profit from the laundry women's labor. Two accounting experts, Brid Murphy and Martin Quinn, analyze Donnybrook's available accounting records and prove otherwise. Another claim in the government's report is that women in the Magdalene system did not serve extended amounts of time there. But the chapter on the Irish criminal justice system by Lynsey

Black, a law professor at Maynooth College, challenges this claim, showing that many women sentenced to Donnybrook and other laundries disappeared into "a shadow penal system."

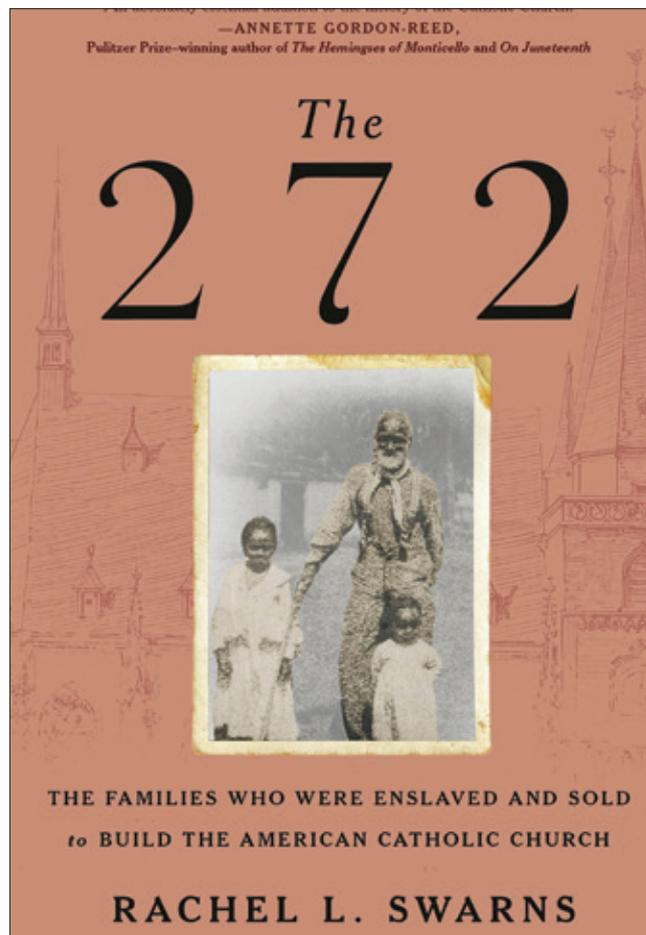
A recurring theme throughout the book is the lack of access to records in places such as Donnybrook. Researchers were left to literally sift through the laundry's remains to piece together its history.

In the final chapter, McGettrick describes her process of building a "guerilla archive" as part of the Magdalene Names Project, which gathers public records like gravestones, census records, death certificates, Catholic directories and newspaper archives to establish the identities of women who died in the laundries. She writes that the project "acts as an accountability mechanism" as well as a tribute to the women "through which survivors, relatives and advocates can speak truth to power."

McGettrick's chapter offers a fitting close to *A Dublin Magdalene Laundry*. It encapsulates the heroic work of all its contributors and of artists like Martin and Keegan. Together, these works provide a model of true accountability and shed necessary light on a dark era in the Irish church.

René Ostberg is a freelance writer in Illinois. She has published articles in *National Catholic Reporter*, *Sojourners*, *Next Avenue* and *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

A SHAMEFUL HISTORY



Random House / 352p \$28

In 1838, the Maryland Province of the Society of Jesus, long a major slaveholder in the mid-Atlantic region, sold 272 of the men, women and children it owned to purchasers in Louisiana. The sale generated widespread criticism at the time, mainly because of its size and consequent visibility. Residents of this region, as elsewhere where slavery was then legal, were accustomed to slave sales; coffles of enslaved people were sometimes marched past the U.S. Capitol en route to a major slave market in nearby Alexandria, Va.

But large-scale sales of the enslaved by individual owners were relatively rare—the 1838 sale by the Jesuits, Rachel Swarns tells us in *The 272: The Families Who Were Enslaved and Sold to Build the American Catholic Church*, was “one of the largest documented slave sales in the nation”—and the Jesuits had enjoyed a reputation, not wholly deserved, as unusually humane slaveholders. (Their failings in this regard had mainly to do with the Jesuit province’s lack of financial resources, precisely the problem that provoked the 1838 sale.) Proceeds from that sale, which ultimately

netted the Jesuits the equivalent of some \$4.5 million in today’s dollars, did much to stabilize the province’s finances and to rescue debt-ridden Georgetown Academy—today’s Georgetown University—from probable collapse.

The Jesuits were hardly the only religious order in the United States to own slaves. Nearly every Catholic religious order—women’s communities as well as men’s—that resided where slavery was permitted owned at least a few slaves. But the Jesuits owned by far the most, mainly because of the peculiar circumstances of their early decades in British America.

Shortly after the arrival of the first Jesuits in Maryland in 1634, that colony’s Catholic proprietor ceded to the order vast tracts of local land, meant to provide the young community with sustenance for its ministry. And indeed, the profits generated by the Jesuits’ various Maryland “plantations” were the order’s principal source of income in the United States as late as the early 19th century. The Jesuits initially staffed their plantations not with enslaved persons but with indentured servants, most (but not all) of whom were white. It was only with a growing scarcity of indentured labor, and concomitant moves in each of Britain’s American colonies to recognize in law an explicitly racialized form of slavery, that the Jesuits began to acquire slaves of their own. The oldest known record of Jesuit slaveholding in Maryland—and hence in British North America—is from 1717.

The Maryland Jesuits took seriously their spiritual obligations to those they enslaved, often requiring them to attend Mass and policing their private behavior. A good many of their slaves, in fact, did embrace Catholicism. But those same slaves often lived in abject poverty, an almost inevitable consequence of the order’s recurrent financial crises.

The order’s need for cash also led to at least occasional slave sales. When the Jesuits did sell slaves, they normally tried to do so locally, to avoid severing kinship ties in the slave community, and they generally declined to sell spouses away from one another or dependent children away from their parents. But the fear of sale was an omnipresent cloud over life among the enslaved, even those owned by conscientious masters. That fear grew stronger in the 19th century, as seaboard agriculture began to decline and the states of the Deep South were opened to cultivation.

Nearly one million enslaved persons were forcibly transported from the states of the Upper South to the Deep South between 1800 and 1860. The Maryland Jesuits were discussing the possibility of selling significant numbers of slaves as early as the 1820s, although objections to this option were still sufficiently strong within the local Jesuit community, not to mention in Rome, to forestall any action.



The Jesuits continued to own slaves, or to rely on rented slaves for labor, at various outposts until 1864.

That opposition had not disappeared by the mid-1830s, although it had weakened significantly. The order's financial troubles had grown more severe by then, and a new generation of leaders lacked their predecessors' attachment to the aging plantations and the history they represented. Among the most influential voices pressing for a mass sale of the Jesuits' slaves were those of Fathers Thomas Mulledy, the youthful president of Georgetown Academy, and William McSherry, the provincial superior of the Maryland Jesuits.

Theirs was an expansive vision of the order's future in the United States, with a revived Georgetown Academy functioning as a principal intellectual center for the young nation and a network of new academies enhancing the work of the church in growing cities. Such a vision was expensive, both men pointed out; it could not be realized with the dwindling profits from plantations that were dependent—as even their defenders had to admit—on a labor force with built-in inefficiencies.

With Roman permission finally obtained, a mass sale of slaves took place in stages in 1838. Mulledy supervised the sale, though he was bound by certain strictures dictated by the Jesuit general superior in Rome. Elderly or infirm slaves could not be sold, nor were spouses to be separated—a directive that Mulledy ignored in at least a few cases. Rachel Swarns depicts Mulledy, with good reason, as a headstrong man and probably an alcoholic. His behavior was also prompted by ambition, both for himself and for the future of the American Jesuits.

The Jesuits continued to own slaves, or to rely on rented slaves for labor, at various outposts in the South until 1864. Perhaps this is one reason that the 1838 sale appears to have receded so quickly in Jesuit memory. The past decade, however, has brought that sale back to public attention, with demonstrations on the Georgetown campus, extended media coverage and, now, Swarns's splendid book.

Swarns describes Jesuit slaveholding through the history of the Mahoney family, members of whom had been bought by the Maryland Jesuits in the mid-18th century. That same family was divided by the 1838 sale, with most but not all enslaved members then living sold to purchasers in Louisiana.

The family's story begins with the arrival in Maryland in 1634 of Ann Joice, a probably biracial woman who initially worked as an indentured servant; she was forcibly reduced to slavery over the course of her long life. A few of her descendants, at least some of whom were visibly biracial, achieved their freedom by various means. But most remained enslaved.

Those family members owned by the Jesuits seem to

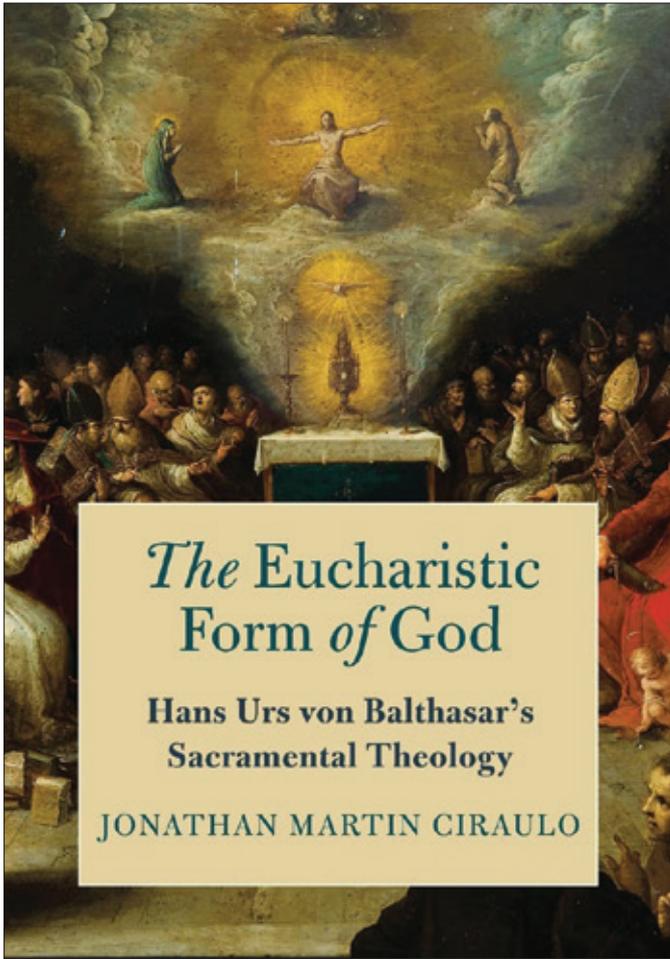
have enjoyed a privileged status, working as house servants or skilled craftspeople rather than field hands and, at least according to family tradition, beneficiaries of a promise of protection from sale—this in reward for the heroic defense of Jesuit property by Harry Mahoney during an 1814 raid by the British army at the St. Inigoes plantation. That promise was broken in 1838, when most of Harry's children and grandchildren were sold. He and his wife, Anna, remained at St. Inigoes, still the property of the Jesuits, on the grounds of age. Both were still enslaved when they died.

Maryland formally abolished slavery in 1864, one year before the ratification of the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and the end of slavery nationwide. But it was a limited freedom, with abolition quickly followed by violent repression of the newly freed and the eventual imposition of disenfranchisement and legal segregation. Although Swarns's account of the Mahoney family's time in slavery is remarkably vivid, given the scant historical record, we learn little of their story after the end of the Civil War. Most family members seem to have remained Catholic. One of Harry's granddaughters joined the Sisters of the Holy Family in New Orleans and served for 18 years as their mother superior; a great-great granddaughter was a member of the Oblate Sisters of Providence. Several of Harry's descendants, moreover, are among those currently pressing Georgetown University and the Jesuit order to make restitution for the grievous sin of 1838 and for a long history of slaveholding.

This latest chapter in the story—that of Harry and Anna and more than a thousand like them—is still being written, as Swarns explains in her admirably fair-minded epilogue.

Leslie Woodcock Tentler is *emerita professor of history at The Catholic University of America.*

A CHRIST-CENTERED ANTHROPOLOGY



University of Notre Dame Press / 352p \$50

“Don’t judge a book by its cover” is usually sound advice. But sometimes the cover can provide precious insight into both the spirit and content of a work. This is certainly the case with *The Eucharistic Form of God*. The cover of Jonathan Ciraulo’s splendid study of Hans Urs von Balthasar’s sacramental theology depicts Raphael’s “Disputa del sacramento,” painted in the early 1500s to adorn the library of Pope Julius II. Particularly noteworthy in the fresco is that the center of the converging horizontal and vertical lines is the eucharistic host enshrined upon the altar. Here, in the well-known words of the hymn of Thomas Aquinas, “Adoro Te Devote,” believers experience the memorial of Christ’s passion as a source of present grace and pledge of everlasting glory.

Ciraulo claims that “Balthasar’s theology as a whole is concerned, one could say consumed, with making the Eucharist the linchpin for all speculative dogmatics.” So much is this the case that, in contrast to the mainstream of the Catholic theological tradition, Balthasar contends that in

heaven the blessed will experience not the cessation of the Eucharist, but its full realization.

It is worth considering the ramifications of this view in four crucial areas of theology: Christology, theological anthropology, Trinitarian theology and eschatology.

For Balthasar, the Eucharist is not just one of the many actions Jesus performs, reserved for his Last Supper with his friends. It is the form, the pattern, of his entire life. His very being is to be self-gift: an offering to his heavenly Father for the sake of his brothers and sisters. His *kenosis*, his self-emptying, in obedience to his Father’s will, is so that the world “may have life and have it to the full” (Jn 10:10). Thus, Jesus’ entire life, and not only his death, reveals his eucharistic passion for communion. “My body for you” marks and informs the salvific mission entrusted to him by his Father.

Jesus’ vision of communion receives ultimate expression, finds unique embodiment, in the sacrament of the Eucharist. Here he becomes the food and drink by which others may share in the arduous joy of transforming communion. Jesus is the vine, believers the branches. Through him and in him eucharistic communion takes root and spreads.

From this vantage, Balthasar proceeds to delineate a Christ-centered anthropology: a consideration of the human from the normative reality of the eucharistic Christ. Here Balthasar’s distinction between the “individual” and the “person” comes to the fore. Ciraulo rightly affirms that “intimate relationality in which one’s identity is implicated in that of others is essential to Balthasar’s understanding of person as opposed to a mere individual.” Life in Christ, initiated in baptism and brought to fulfillment in the Eucharist, is a progressive incorporation into the body of Christ. The Christian thus participates in Christ’s eucharistic form and mission, his being for others, his passion for communion.

Unlike the “buffered” individual of secularity (acutely depicted and critiqued by Charles Taylor in *A Secular Age*), Christian “personal” existence is constituted by relations of gratitude and service. It is, in sum, eucharistic existence. And, since Christ’s Eucharist is the fruit of his sacrifice even unto death, the believer’s participation in Christ’s salvific mission, to further the world’s “at-onement,” will lead him or her to share his atoning suffering for the sake of Christ’s body. As Ciraulo asserts: “the eucharistic Christ causes those who receive him to become eucharistic themselves. Christ’s body, itself dissolved, is now a dissolving agent.”

Hence, the eucharistic Christ is the basis for and measure of Christian morality. Indeed, for the Christian, morality finds its deepest ground in a Christic mysticism: “As

long as you did it for one of these my least brethren, you did it for me” (Mt 25:40). But the condition for its possibility lies always in the union of Christians with their head: “For, apart from me, you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5). A eucharistic ethic requires eucharistic celebration. It is ever nourished and renewed by participation in Christ’s eucharistic sacrifice, the reverent reception of his body broken and his blood outpoured.

Thus, for all the value Balthasar places on the aesthetic, of the place of beauty in the life of the believer and in Catholic theology, he is no advocate of mere “aestheticism.” The beauty of space and song, of art and poetry, is always subservient to the beauty of holiness, the transformed way of life to which Christ summons his disciples. Long before the Second Vatican Council issued its “universal call to holiness,” Balthasar had argued forcefully for the inseparability of theology and spirituality and for the surpassing authority of the saints.

Reflecting upon the perduring importance of the Eucharist in the economy of salvation, in humanity’s call to sanctifying communion, opens upon the contemplative conviction that the very life of the Triune God manifests a eucharistic dynamic. With allowance for the need to speculate soberly and to honor the “ever greater difference” of all analogous language about God, the interpersonal exchange among the persons of the Trinity manifests relations of giving and receiving, of thanksgiving and rejoicing. Such relations enact that generative eucharistic communion from which all creation springs and to which it returns.

The above insights find dramatic denouement in the book’s final chapter: “*Sub Velamento: The Eucharist between this World and the Next.*” Balthasar’s robust sacramentality accents the real presence of Christ in our earthly Eucharist. Yet the full reality remains to be revealed, thus the *velamentum*, the eucharistic veil, that at once conceals and reveals. For the eucharistic Christ is not yet “all and in all” (Col 3:11).

And so Ciraulo insists: “for Balthasar, the place that Christ goes to prepare is simply himself.” Heaven is Christ, but it is the whole Christ, head and members. The transparent communion, definitively inaugurated in Christ’s eucharistic sacrifice, will find its consummation in the marriage supper of the lamb (Rev 19:9). Balthasar exults that the promise of eternal life, prefigured in the Eucharist, is a life fully corporeal, communal and cosmic. Transfigured corporeality, new heavens and new earth, without doubt, but not discontinuous, not disincarnate; just as the risen Lord continues to bear his life-giving wounds.

Ciraulo offers an apt analogy: “Balthasar takes the notion of the Eucharist as a ‘foretaste’ of heaven to its logical

conclusion. The foretaste is not like an appetizer, a small and entirely different food from the main course...but rather a literal tasting in advance of that eschatological banquet in which all limited and fumbling use of the body, community, and time are brought into perfection at the wedding feast of the lamb.”

The very life of the triune God, a life of infinite communion, will then be fully reflected in the communion of holy ones in the ascended Christ, comprising the perfected finite image of the triune God. And humanity’s long transformative journey from Genesis to Revelation will, at the last, be accomplished and consummated.

This fine book, by a most promising young scholar, is not only intellectually rewarding; it is prayerfully pondered—from cover to cover.

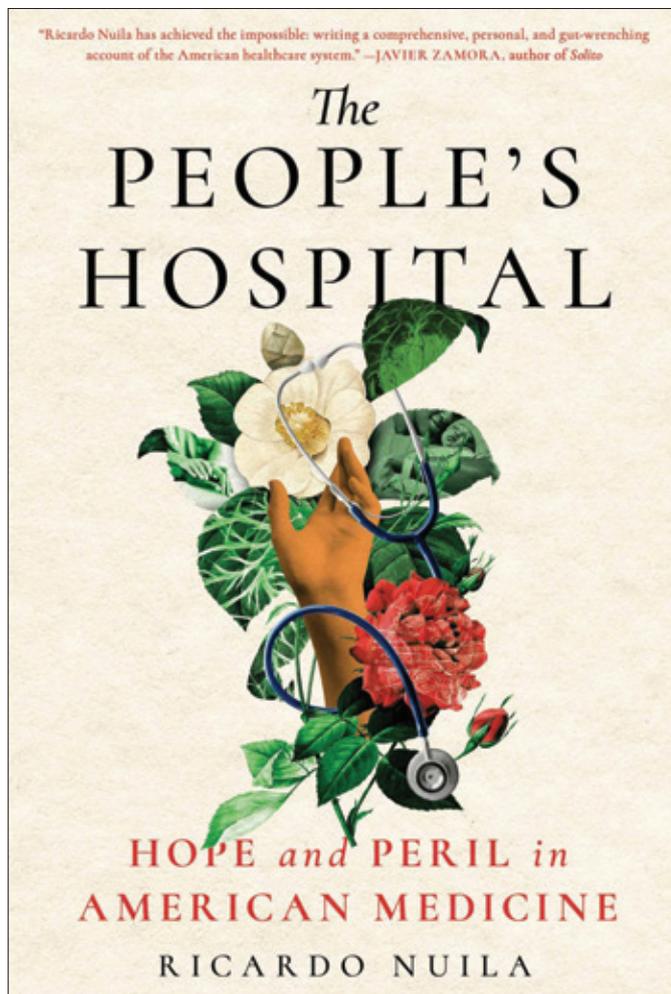
Robert P. Imbelli, a priest of the Archdiocese of New York, is the author of *Rekindling the Christic Imagination*.

POEM SABBATH

By Meg Eden Kuyatt

Jesus takes my carefully planned calendar
and throws it out the window
where the birds eat it.
Jesus touches the hem of my clothes
and instantly I fall ill. Bedridden.
Jesus says, *Woe to your puritan work ethics.*
Didn't my father say
you shall have no other gods?
I don't think of my days as gods
but they are sneaky ones
I stuff to the brim with things I can say I did.
But not today. Not this week.
I am a body, broken. Immovable.
I lie, waiting for my own spirit to return.
Why, I ask Jesus, even though I know.
Enter my rest, he says, tucking me in
but I kick and whine like a toddler.
I'm not tired, I say as my eyes close
against my will. How is this yoke so difficult
when my burden is so light?

Meg Eden Kuyatt teaches creative writing and is the author of the poetry collection *Drowning in the Floating World* and several children's novels, most recently *Good Different*.



Scribner / 384p \$28

Hospitals used to be for people: the sick and those able to care for the sick. We built hospitals from a vision of charity—the need to encounter a person at their most vulnerable—as places for all, irrespective of their ability to pay. It is why medicine was once a calling.

Hospitals in the United States today are for profit: their investors and the executives able to run sprawling health systems. We now build these hospitals with a view to productivity—the need to concentrate ill people who need lucrative interventions—as places of high-tech care for those who can afford it. It is why health care is now a consumer good.

In his debut book, *The People's Hospital: Hope and Peril in American Medicine*, Ricardo Nuila calls today's \$4.3 trillion dollar health care industry "Medicine Inc." He laments that it "isn't working, not for medicine or patients," and that in the name of profit it has "usurped this

beautiful combination of art and science that doctors and nurses practice." Nuila presents the conflict between the profit motive of health care and the art of medicine by describing the hospitals that work for people and the hospitals that do not.

The hospitals that deny care to the indigent ill are the ones that do not work. These hospitals "dump" patients "at critical moments, when immediate medical intervention can mean the difference between life and death." Nuila describes case after case where a patient is denied a test, a medication or a procedure by these hospitals because there is insufficient profit in providing care. Those hospitals are spreading throughout our nation in expansive Medicine Inc. systems.

The hospitals that work are general hospitals, caring for patients with a range of medical conditions, but also safety net hospitals, preferentially serving the varieties of marginalized ill people. Practically every city used to have a hospital that worked. Over the last 50 years, their number gradually decreased. Cleveland closed Saint Vincent's, Los Angeles lost Martin Luther King Jr., and New Orleans abandoned Charity. In the last five years, we lost another 70.

Nuila works at one of the survivors, Ben Taub Hospital in Houston. Nuila grew up in Houston, the son of Salvadoran immigrants, and returned home for medical training. He studied in Ben Taub's operating rooms as a medical student and trained in its wards as a resident, and is now attending throughout the hospital as a practicing internist.

Ben Taub Hospital serves one of the largest cities—Nuila reminds readers that the landmass of metro Houston exceeds the area of the state of New Jersey—in the most prosperous country in the world. Ben Taub sits within the Texas Medical Center, which bills itself as a "visionary global medical complex." Ten million patients are cared for annually in its 9,200 beds in facilities spread over 50 million square feet. But most of the beds and most of those services are closed to the patients Nuila meets at Ben Taub, because his patients are the "un": the uninsured, the undocumented, the unhoused, the unhinged and the undesirable.

Medicine Inc. hospitals literally do not work for these un-patients. As a result, Nuila writes, they do not work for the rest of us. Nuila relates stories of people who fall out of their health insurance, leaving them to choose between their health and basic needs like food and shelter. Abandoned by the health care system, they start GoFundMe pages to pay for prostheses until they find their way to the

people's hospital.

Ben Taub is a 402-bed hospital affiliated with 16 neighborhood health centers. Staffed by faculty and resident physicians from Baylor University, Ben Taub provides primary care, specialty care and emergency services. It does so because of a commitment by the people of Houston, which supports Ben Taub with millions of dollars in property taxes. In return, Ben Taub provides services that are inaccessible to people in many parts of Texas. It is a people's hospital, for those blessed to have it.

Nuila counts himself blessed, writing that it is at public hospitals that a physician can find his calling, his good work, his vocation. After all, he admits to a patient, "I went to Catholic school all my life." That was a local Jesuit high school before Georgetown University, and it is perhaps that training that led him to structure the book as a cycle of stories and arguments, almost like the pattern of proclaiming a reading and then explaining it in a homily. It can leave a reader with similar catechetical training waiting a little bit for the next movement, when bread becomes body.

Nuila writes that a transformation in health care could happen if governments across the country supported safety-net hospitals like Ben Taub. That answer feels necessary but insufficient, leaving out a reflection on how you turn Americans into a people capable of acts of solidarity and subsidiarity like a local public hospital.

Nuila seems to sense this and, as he brings the book to its conclusion, searches for a different kind of ending. In the final chapter, he tells of his encounters with a devout Muslim patient. She is a woman of deep faith. Nuila reflects that his faith has broadened since his youth. She worships God. Nuila admits he is no longer able to assign a name to his faith but honors the behavior of faith. That habit of believing in people who choose to care for other people gets Nuila to his conclusion. "That's what healthcare is at its best, what I see at Ben Taub: science coming together with people. It's why I continue to believe in medicine. My faith comes full circle when I imagine myself through each of their eyes and I realize I'm one of them."

The personal encounter, the realization of a shared humanity; it is the faith of a true physician. It is also why, as Nuila writes, "Faith will always be a part of practicing medicine."

One measure of the endurance of faith can be found in books published about medicine. People's hospitals are rare these days but remain popular among publishers. Perhaps it is hard to sell a book about Medicine Inc.'s health care factories. If you read a history of one of today's gleaming specialty hospitals or multi-state health systems, it's

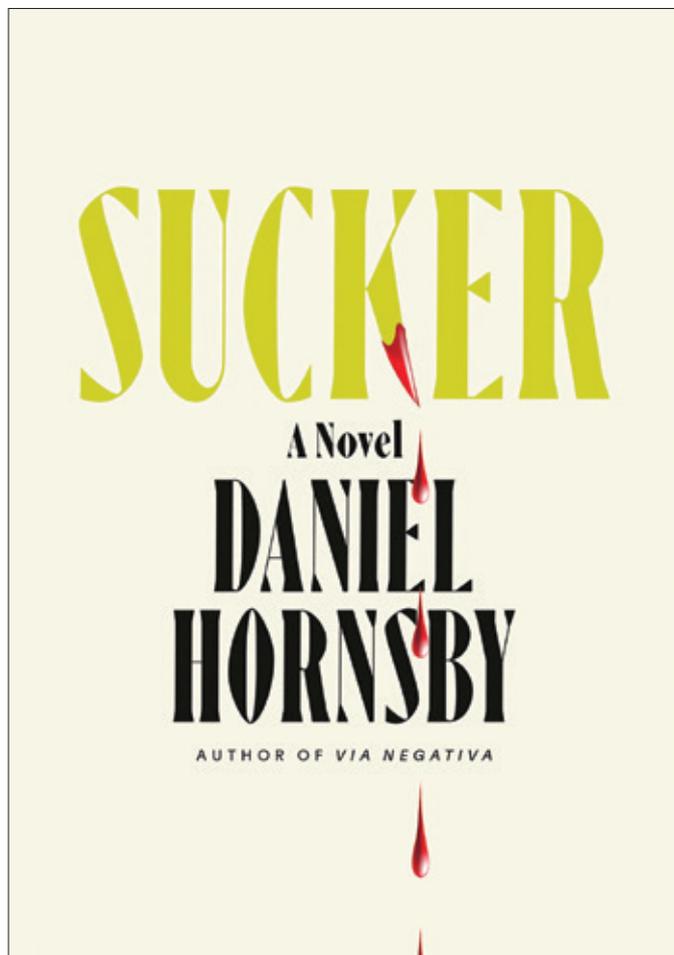
usually heavily vetted by a PR department. The audience is the medical staff and the philanthropic class. Perhaps publishers suspect the rest of us would recoil at the stories of hospital executives dining out on their profits while their patients starve.

Publishers typically serve up stories of the hospital that works. Just in the last few years, David Oshinsky's *Bellevue* told in detail the history of New York City's most famous hospital while charting our nation's shifting account of what the indigent ill deserve. David Ansell's *County* related personal stories of training and teaching at Cook County Hospital in Chicago. Mike King's *A Spirit of Charity*, focusing on Grady Hospital in Atlanta described the public policies that have alternately enabled and crippled public hospitals.

Perhaps we write about public hospitals to reinforce our memories of what hospitals once were. Perhaps those memories still haunt us, that idea of a hospitable place that will take us in when we are ill. Of all these books, Nuila's seems most poised to reanimate the ghost of the public hospital. He knows his history as well as Oshinsky, his story as well as Ansell and his policy as well as King. But Nuila is the best writer of them all, able to narrate the experience of being ill and caring for the ill to make his readers feel that they too now know that the people's hospital is "one of the world's little secrets." And it might become so widely shared that it is no longer a secret.

Abraham Nussbaum is a physician at a safety-net hospital in Denver and the author of the forthcoming Progress Notes: One Year in the Future of Medicine.

MEANING IN A WORLD GONE MAD



Anchor / 256p \$27

Pop quiz: When was the last time you read a novel by a younger author that was effective and entertaining as a page-turner, but also concerned with old-school and seemingly uncool themes such as sin, forgiveness, spirituality or even accountability? I'll wait.

Such a novel is not easy to find nowadays. But you've read one if you happened to catch Daniel Hornsby's 2020 debut *Via Negativa*, a svelte yet brooding tale that involves a forlorn priest on the lam with a beat-up car functioning as a mobile monk's cell, as well as a pistol and a wounded coyote. It is a story about escaping one's past and confronting it at the same time. But it also manages to find pockets of humor in the vastness and general weirdness of our country, while tackling weighty themes like faith in general and the recent history of the Catholic Church in the United States in particular.

This first novel stood out in numerous ways, maybe none so much as the youth and previously unknown gifts of Hornsby himself, who hails from Indiana and holds an M.F.A. in fiction from the University of Michigan and an

M.T.S. from Harvard Divinity School. It showcased the author's impressive grasp of Roman Catholic tradition as well as even headier subsets of the same tradition, such as monasticism and mysticism.

Via Negativa drew ample notice and some incoming fire from both religious and secular media outlets. It also left readers with the intriguing question of where a writer with such a uniquely flavored debut might turn next.

The answer is, apparently, toward the world of big tech, the punk scene of southern California, some weird form of vampirism and the eternal pursuit of, well, immortality. Naturally!

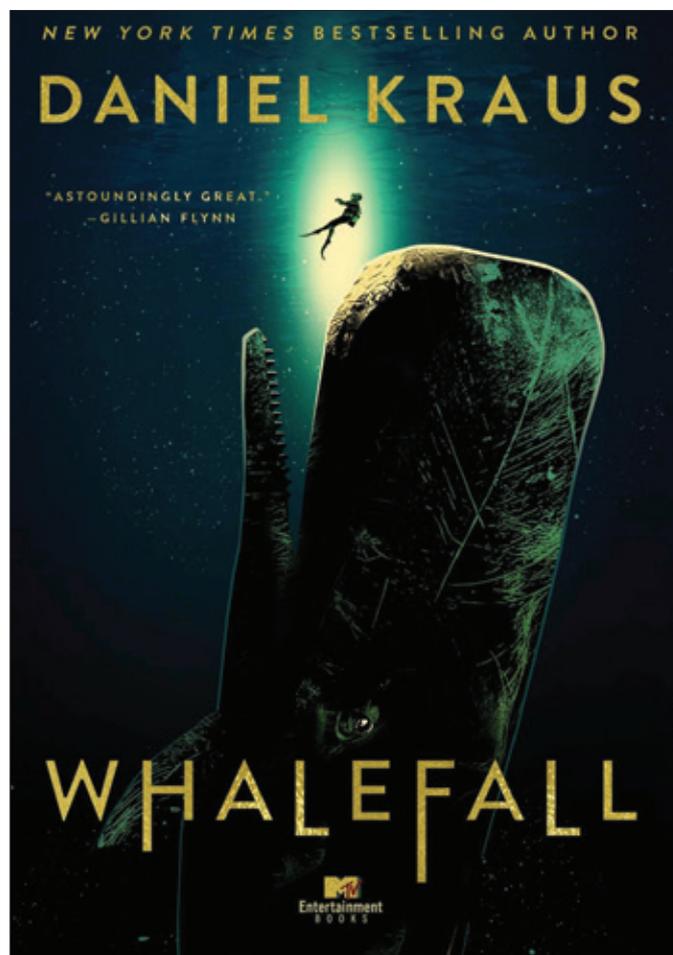
Hornsby's new page-turning novel *Sucker* is an eclectic blend of the aforementioned elements, sometimes enough to spin the heads of Luddites like myself in the areas of advanced technology, biology or way-underground punk rock. But it's also a toothy (sorry) satire that is consistently funny, a sobering screengrab of our wealth- and power-obsessed nation. And while I felt the book came close to sailing overboard en route to its dizzying conclusion, I was impressed with its wit and audacity.

Sucker is narrated by the smart-aleck, silver-spoon-fed Chuck Gross, formerly Charles Grossheart, the namesake (but not, pointedly, the first-born) of a billionaire owner of a vast, international corporation that trucks in oil products, labor exploitation and far-right crusades. Gross decides from an early age in a privileged but loveless environment that he would like nothing more than to "prune himself from the family tree." Yet it turns out to be challenging to sever oneself entirely from immense, generational wealth and all of its trappings, as Gross learns at every turn. So he capitalizes on his advantages to establish, what else, a punk rock record label that is beginning to thrive, despite the work-averse Gross's best efforts, as this fast-paced novel unfolds.

A problem for Gross is that he is increasingly estranged from his unloving clan and its circle—not just his monster of a father but also a drug-addled and distant mother, a feckless older brother, and various "handlers." So he leaps at a sudden opportunity to reconnect with an old Harvard (where else?) classmate-turned-tech-maven named Olivia Watts.

Watts—a kind of younger, female, perhaps more interesting amalgam of Steve Jobs and the shadowy, hoodie-wearing Kalden in Dave Eggers's tech novel *The Circle*—has parlayed her doctorate in "bio-something," her grueling experience as a cancer survivor and her own considerable vision into a rising tech-medicine outfit called Kenosis (wink, wink). She credits her collegiate friendship with Gross with some of the inspiration behind her grand enterprise, which the latter comes to view, reasonably, with skepticism.

IN THE BELLY OF THE BEAST



MTV Books / 336p \$28BR

The crucial innovation driving Kenosis is the invention of a tiny implant, a bean-like object capable of generating “microfluidic protein assays”—essentially gathering biometrics and diagnostic data using the body’s own energy as fuel. In its early stage, the device is only able to retrieve information, but through aggressive research and development, the ambition is to use it as a revolutionary treatment for cancer and other diseases. The public-facing mission of this technology is to allow humans to live much longer and healthier lives.

Gross is hired as a “creative consultant,” the sort of role he inhabits easily, since he’s never really had to work much. But he’s no dummy, even if he is vapid and lippy, so it is not long before he begins to wonder what he’s really doing there. Is he simply a bridge to his reviled father’s money and resources? Or does Watts intend to groom him for and later initiate him into a far more sinister and outlandish design?

Our less-than-heroic protagonist spends the remainder of this twisty and sometimes breathless novel playing everyone around him—investigating his own suspicions of Watts and Kenosis; alchemizing the tragic but timely disappearance of a punk singer into profits for his record label; and sticking it to his “evil” father. What he turns up starts weird and gets weirder. By the time we encounter mutant animals, underground cave networks and an ancient order of new-agey vampires, *Sucker* has us rockin’ and rollin’, hanging on for dear life.

Hornsby doesn’t quite perform this gyrating mosh on a high wire without some errant steps. There are some cardboard, thuggish villains in this story, as well as a handful of writerly misfires here and there, such as likening an errant piece of pepperoni on a shirt to a “medal awarded for bravery in the field of pizza.”

More important to this reader, though, Hornsby brings a considerable wealth of insight and inquiry into this fun but stimulating entertainment. It is here where readers of his first novel will recognize its author, who repeatedly finds ways to engage the broader implications that naturally emerge from a story having to do with technology, capitalism and the aspiration to prolong human lives.

At one point, while contemplating the vastness of the Pacific relative to those lives, a key character in *Sucker* inquires, “How can we get something done with so little time?” It’s an enduring conundrum, of course—the solution to which, as Hornsby’s winning second novel reminds us afresh, is likely to remain out of our hands.

Jude Joseph Lovell is the author of numerous books of fiction and nonfiction, most recently *The Tie Goes to the Runner: Reflections on the Game That Saved Me*.

Known colloquially as the “twilight zone,” the abyssal zone—one of the deepest parts of the ocean—contains millions of creatures. From the smallest amoeba to the giant squid, mysterious creatures of all kinds are located in this dark ocean layer. The abyssal zone is also home to the scientific phenomenon of “whale fall,” when the body of a whale sinks to the ocean floor. The carcasses of these whales, often sperm whales, can sustain an entire biosphere of organisms for centuries, as their blubber and bones become food and shelter to micro-inhabitants.

Enter Jay Gardiner, a 17-year-old scuba diver from Monterey, Calif., the protagonist of Daniel Kraus’s gripping new novel *Whalefall*. Jay’s father, Mitt, is a local diving legend in Monterey. Diagnosed with terminal cancer, Mitt takes his own life, drowning himself with diving weights. Wracked by guilt following his father’s death, Jay seeks a form of reconciliation by recovering the remains of his estranged father at the bottom of Monastery Beach, a treacherous location for divers and swimmers alike.

Each chapter of *Whalefall* forms a layered narrative between past and present, with flashbacks to Jay's youth and the current processing of his trauma during his solo dive. Jay uses his robust diving knowledge, instilled in him by the ramblings of Mitt and Mitt's best friend Hewey, to navigate through the Pacific. The novel progresses by cataloging Jay's P.S.I. (pounds per square inch), which is the way divers measure the minutes left of oxygenated air in their tanks. The growing pressure of the novel supports the narrative in two distinct ways. Jay experiences the literal atmospheric pressure condense around him during his dive, as well as the self-imposed pressure to find Mitt's remains and reach a form of restitution in his relationship with his late father.

With about an hour of air left in his tank, Jay witnesses an 80-foot, 60-ton sperm whale hunt its most notable prey: the giant squid. Amid the chaos of the hunt, Jay is caught by his "bone bag," the mesh sack used to collect objects from the ocean floor. Jay is entangled in the tentacles of the giant squid and dragged down the throat of the whale into the first of the whale's four stomach chambers. The guts and goo of the giant squid, along with Brillo pads, trash bags and a gym sock, are all that are left to keep Jay alive inside the belly of the beast.

An environmentalist message is subtly laced throughout the novel. In the flashback-style narration, the reader gains insights into Jay and Mitt's experience at sea onboard the *Sleep*, Mitt's whale-watching vessel, and is drawn into the struggle for effective animal protection advocacy.

At the same time, the flashbacks of Mitt's drunken ravings about the Inuit people's respect for whales both inspire and disturb as he places the lives of these creatures over the value of his son. Jay's memories revolve around his father's tales of past adventure, rather than memories of the two of them sharing actual moments together. Their estrangement leaves Jay adrift, physically reassured by the absence of his abusive father but emotionally unsettled in their relationship upon Mitt's death.

While our national whale story is Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*, Jay's journey into the belly of the whale will more likely remind most readers of the biblical story of Jonah: While Jonah has three days and three nights in the whale and Jay has a mere 60 minutes, their story arcs bear a striking resemblance. Like Jonah, Jay experiences a kind of metanoia while inside the whale. The reconciliation with the spirit of his father Mitt in a methane-induced delirium takes on a dialogue—like a form of prayer. Like Jonah, Jay has been "hurled...into the depths, into the very heart of the seas, and the currents swirled about" (Jon 2:3). Jay's emotional catharsis while being crushed by the walls of the whale's stomach holds the reader in the restless limbo of

this action-packed thriller.

There is a spiritual element to the inner machinations of Jay's mind as he comes to grips with the grief he has experienced. At his most desperate to survive, Jay recites a half-prayer from his father's favorite novel, John Steinbeck's *Cannery Row*: "Our Father, who art in nature." The line, Jay tells us, is not only tattooed across his father's stomach (which is riddled with scars from his diving adventures) but carries the unique emotional weight that only prayer can. While Jay could never be formed in his father's image despite Mitt's attempts, he too is scarred. Internally, Jay suffers the unsparing wounds of grief. It is here, in the belly of the whale, that Jay most clearly experiences his remorse.

Perhaps, then, grief is in some way a kind of whale fall: the fertile ground from which hope can arise. This kind of fall occurs in our human experience, where death can create a new form of life.

The novel is not for claustrophobic readers, who may find themselves squeamish at the vivid visual and aural language Kraus uses to depict his underwater world. Kraus's mastery of undersea description comes as no surprise, given his previous work with the director Guillermo del Toro. Kraus and del Toro co-authored *The Shape of Water*, which became the basis for the 2018 Oscar-winning film.

While the novel is gripping in every sense of the word (I never thought I'd have to so vividly imagine clinging to the walls of a whale's slimy esophagus), for Kraus's narrative to be effective, it requires an imaginative reader. Despite the very real possibility of being swallowed by a whale and the 2020 viral video that inspired Kraus, some elements of Jay's survival are difficult to grasp. His emotional survival is heroic, but between the severe lack of oxygen and sizzling stomach acid, his physical survival seems unfathomable.

For some, the book's premise may be outright dismissed. For others, it may be all the more reason to dive into *Whalefall*.

Christine Lenahan is a Joseph A. O'Hare, S.J., fellow at *America*.

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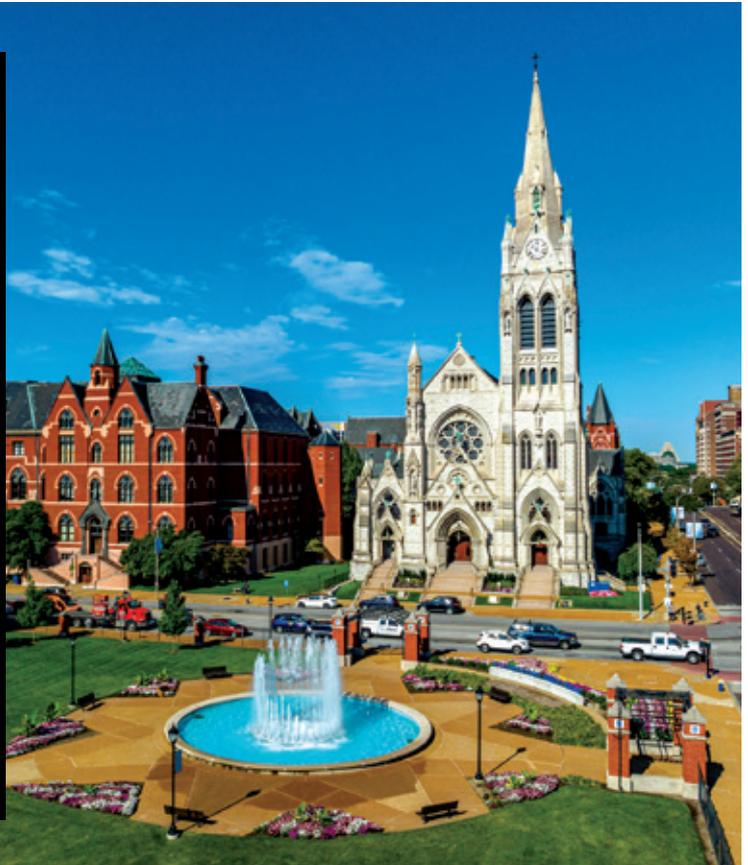
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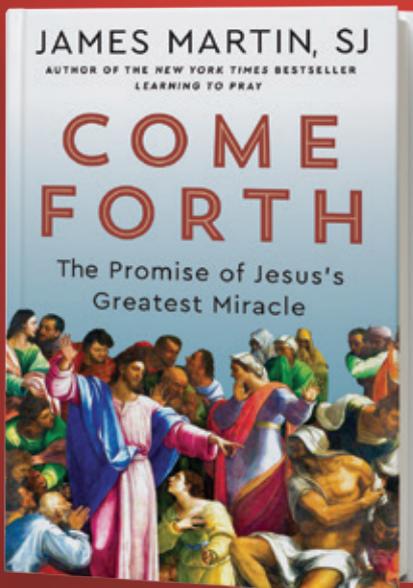


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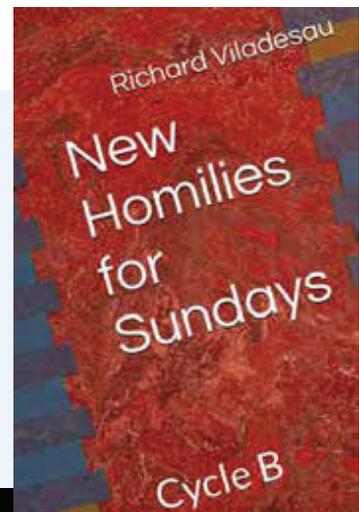
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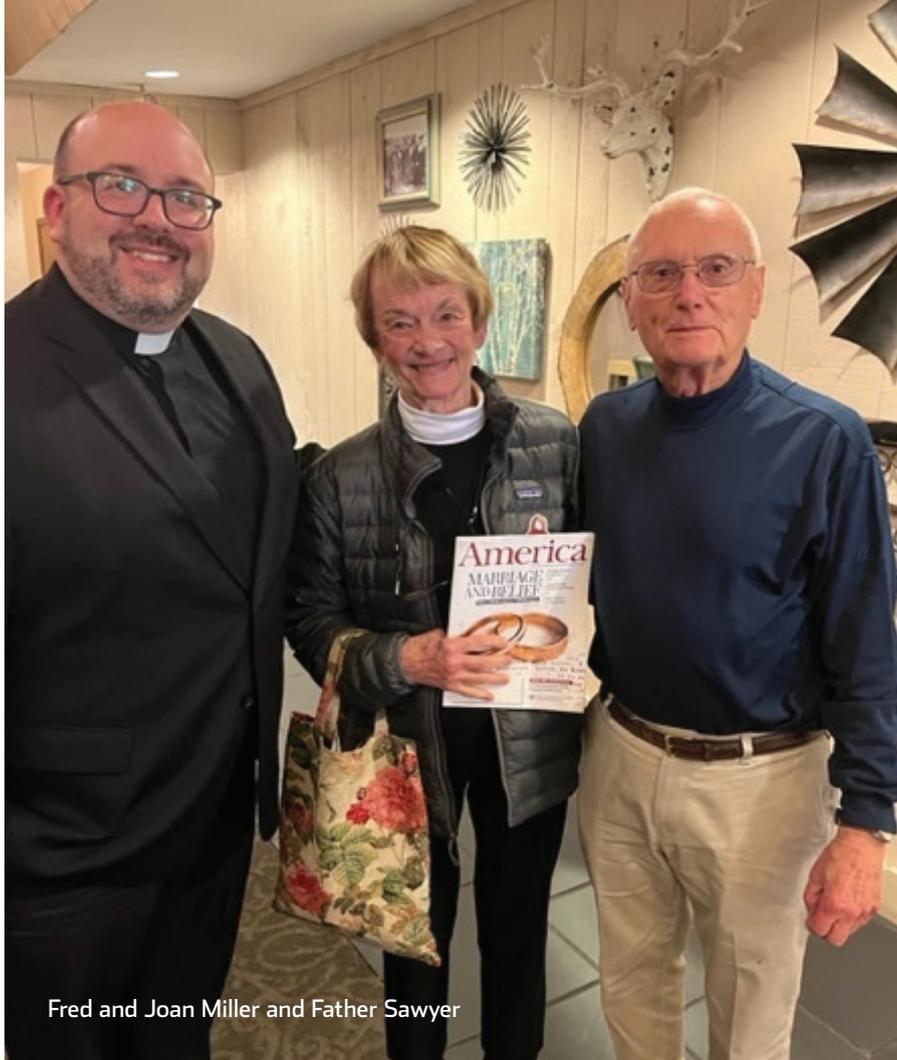
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Julia Persinger, Father Malone and Joe Persinger in front of The Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes during the pilgrimage to Lourdes and Paris in September 2022



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House* • Iyn Houze • Mr. George F. Howlett, Jr. • Andrew Hoy* • Mr. and Mrs. James D. Huber • Joan Huber* • Jessie Hubert* • Fr. Chuck Huck • Lisa Huerta* • Patty Huffman* • Seth Hugg* • Patrice Hughes • Monica Hughes • John Hules* • Ms. Ann D. Hungerman • Irene Hunt* • Amy Hunter • Ms. Emilee Hunter-Maguire • Mr. Denny Hunthausen • Brian Hurley • Ms. Meghan Hussey* • Mr. Brian Hutching • Herlinda Hutchinson* • Suzanne Hutchinson* • Rachelle Hyde* • Maria A.I. Abreu* • Deborah Iaconelli* • Joe Iannone* • Bob Ierien* • Sisters of IHM Immaculate Heart Convent • Nancy Ikeda* • Denise Illing • Dr. and Mrs. Thomas V. Inglesby, M.D. • Cathy Ingram* • Mrs. LouAnne Insprucker • Ms. Donna Ioppolo • Peter Iorio • M. J. Iozzio • Fr. Danilo Isidoro, S.J. • Jennifer Israelson* • Nina Ito* • Kris Ivancic • J. Knipper and Company • Fay R. Jackson • Susan Jackson* • Donald Jackson • Rev. Joseph A. Jacobi • Mr. Robert Jacobs • Karen Jacobs* • Paul Jacoby • Mr. and Mrs. John T. Jacoby • Freida Jacques • Ms. Anna Jaklitsch • John Jaksich* • James Kozak • Lois Jameson • Mr. and Mrs. David M. Janitor • Mrs. Patilynn Jansen • Jennifer Janusiak Schroeder* • Ms. Joan Jarosek • Linda Jarvis • Jeanette Jaworski* • Gerald Jay • Mary Frances Jeffrey • Mr. Richard Jenkins • Susan Jenkins • Michael Jennings • Jeanne Jensen* • Mr. Raymond Jereza • Amy Jerome* • Geraldine Jerome* • Gretchen Jezerc • Fina Jimenez • Ivelisse Joens* • Baiju John* • Mr. Eric Johnson • Mr. Jeff Johnson • David Johnson • Micheline Johnson* • Sheila Johnson • Anne B. Johnson* • Bonnie Johnson* • Cindy Johnson* • Susan Johnson* • Carolyn Johnson* • Sue Johnson* • Barbara Johnson* • Ellen Johnston* • Mr. Robert Jones • Ms. Patricia Jones • Joan Jones • Helen Jones* • Fr. John Jordan • Jane Joseph • Dr. Carium Joseph • Kathy Joseph* • Jennifer Joyce • Ivana Jozinovic* • Dr. and Mrs. Peter J. Judge • Diane Julian* • Ms. Mary Juliano • Anne Junokas* • Fred and Karen Kaffenberger* • M Kaiserman* • Ruth Kaleniecki* • Mary Kate Kaminski • Ms. Mary Beth Kamp • Emily Kamp* • Jeffrey Kamradt* • Mrs. Anne T. Kane • Edward Kansa • Velma Kantrow* • Beth Kapocias • Claire Kapusta • Robert Kashmer* • Robert Kaspro* • Mr. Edward Kassak • Yvonne M. Katharopoulos • Warren Kaufman • Lawrence Kavanaugh* • Mr. Francis P. Kayatta • Mr. Paul Kazanecki* • Mr. James Keane • Erik Keane* • Ms. Mary Jo Keaney* • Amy Kears* • Donald P. Keeley • Dr. and Mrs. Joseph H. Keffer • Mr. John Kehoe • Mr. John Keiser • Mr. Gary Keister • Mary Kay Kelder* • Kathleen A. Kelley • Karen Kelley* • Gerard Kelliher* • Mr. Michael Kelly • Vincent Kelly • Sheila Kelly • E. Francis Kelly • Joanne F. Kelly • Mary Kelly* • Patricia Kelly-Stiles* • Mark G. Kelsey • Ellen Kelty* • Ken Kemeny* • Carl Kemmerer • Raymond B. Kemp • Raymond B. Kemp* • Dr. Lawrence Kemper • Lawrence Kemper • Patricia Kennedy* • Lynne Kennedy Mullen* • Patricia

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Ben Denihan, Heather Trotta, Grace Regan, Julian Iragorri and Father Sam Sawyer in Ein Karem during the 2023 Holy Land pilgrimage

Markham* • Mary Marks • Lani Marnane-Konopaske • Kimberly Marovic • Donna Marple* • Rev. James T. Marsh • Theresa Marsik* • Ms. Margaret Martens • Lynn Martens* • Rita Martin* • Suzanne Martin* • Mary Kate Martin* • Mr. Rose Martin* • Joaquin Martinez • Norma Martinez* • Joe Martinez* • Marte Martinez* • Christopher Martinez* • Sandra Martinez* • Cynthia Martinson* • Mr. and Mrs. Ronald and Margaret Martone • Rosemary Marusak • Frank Mascagni III* • Richard Massoth • Sara Mateus • Matthew Matis • Jeni Matousek* • Barbara Matsko* • Br Christian (Cole) Matson* • Ann-Marie Mattocks* • Maureen Dinger • Mr. and Mrs. Arthur W. Maurer • Mr. Paul Max • Susan Maxwell* • Theresa May* • Christine May* • Ms. Elizabeth Mayr • Beth Mayr • Edward Mazurek • Kayla Mazzarini* • Mr. Laurence Mazzotta • Kevin W. McCanna • Kathleen L. Mc Chesney • Christina McCabe* • Daniel McCabe* • Msgr. William McCaffrey • Colleen McCahill* • Mr. E Michael McCann • Ann McCarthy • Sean McCarthy • Georgene S. McCarty • Mr. John M. McCauley • Margaret McCleary* • Ms. Lori McClelland • Christine L. McClure • Ms. Kathleen V. McComas • Mr. James McConnell • Ms. Maureen McCord • Charlotte McCorquodale • Ms. Mary Ann McCoy • James McCracken • Rev. Justin McCreeedy • Kathleen McDaniel* • Mr. John McDermott • Eileen McDermott* • Mr. Robert N. McDonald • Mr. Mike McDonell • Cheryl McElhatten* • Sean McElwee •

Susan McEvoy* • Bill McFadden* • Marianne McGah* • Mack McGehee* • Michael McGillicuddy • Gregory and Allyson McGinn • Dennis P. McGlone • Michael and Joann McGovern • Kathy McGovern • Mary McGovern* • Elizabeth McGowan* • Patrick McGrory* • Christopher McGuinness* • Brian McGuinness • Joan McGuinness • Joseph McGuire • Maryann McHugh* • Joseph McHugh* • Sarah McIntyre* • Angie McIntyre* • Ms. Nancy H. McKee • Grace McKeel* • Mrs. Catherine A. McKeen • John & Julie McKellar • Rev. Francis P. McKenna • Deacon John McKenna • Mrs. Mary A. McKenna • Theresa McKenna* • Mr. Paul McKenney • Maureen McKew • Ms. Ashley McKinless • Jean McKinn • Frank McKown* • Pip McIlroy • Mr. and Mrs. Daniel J. McMahon • TJ McMahon • James McMahon* • Thomas P. McMahon • Ms. Cindy McMahon • Marita McMahon • Margaret S. McManus • Richard Mcmanus* • Kathleen McMorrow* • John McNeil • Mr. William McNichols • Jan McShea • Mr. J. R. McSwiggin • Julie Meadows • Mr. Joe Meaney • Jamie Medeiros* • Josefa Medellin • Media Services Processing, LLC* • John Meehan • Darla Meeks • Mr. and Mrs. Dale R. Meers • Jean Meersman* • Joseph Megan • Aimee Mehl* • Ms. Cynthia Melitz • Erin Melody* • Carol Mendel* • Cristina Mendia* • Ms. Danila Mendoza • Brian Mendoza* • Margaret Meneghelo* • Stefano Mengozzi • Mr. Frank Mercado • Basil Merenda • Suzy Merkins* • Mr. and

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Bebe Broadwater, Mary Rutherford and Beth Renyi at the dinner celebrating Father Malone's tenure as the 14th editor in chief

Oshie • Patricia Osman • Daniel O'sullivan • Claire Ott* • Daniel Ottaunick* • Amy Overby • Elsa Oviedo* • Mr. Daniel A. Oviedo Ruiz • Ms. Diane Owens • Valerie Oxford • Ms. Ann M. Padberg • Olga Padilla-Falto* • Patricia Frey • Joanne Pagano* • Maria Pagan-Overmyer* • Molly Page* • Janet Paist • Mr. Walter R. Palicki • Ms. Suzanne Palmer • Alexandra Palmer* • Joseph Palmeri* • Edward Palumbos • Rev. Edward L. Palumbos • Kathleen Pancoast • Nelly Pandagos • K. Pane* • Anna Paneno • Eric Panico • Mr. and Mrs. Richard Pantaleo • John S. Panzica • Carolyn Papham* • Monika Papy • Nicholas Paradiso • Gary Pardo • Gael Pardoen* • Dr. and Mrs. William P. Pare • Meghan Parent* • Christopher Park* • Alison Park* • Linda Parker* • Ann Parker-Way* • Ms. Regina M. Parks • Ms. Hatha Parrish • Phyllis Parr • Lindsey Pasquale* • Robert Pasquarelli • Mr. John E. Patrick • George and Patricia Patterson • Robert F. Patterson • Mary Beth Paul • Mrs. Susan M. Pauly* • Mr. and Mrs. Louis F. Pazuano, Sr. • Maureen Pavy • Anthony Paz* • Jeffrey Pearce* • Ms. Mary Pearlman • Erik Pearse • Nelson Peddycoart* • Monica Ann Pedone* • Therese Peffer* • James Pegoni* • Loretta and Steve Pehanich • Dr. and Mrs. Derek Peloquin • Duke Peltier* • Ms. Janet Penello* • Rebecca Penfold Murray* • Amy Penne • Mary Pentecost* • Michelle Pequet* • Ms. Raquel B. Perez • Dr. Blanca M. Perez • Minerva Perez • Alexa Perez* • Anthony Perito • Mr. George Perkins • Lissa and Gerry Perrone • John and Mary Perrotti • John Person • Pamela Pert* • Steven Perucco • Map Pesqueira* • Lisa Peterangelo* • Barbara Peters • Valerie Peters • Ms. Anne Peterson

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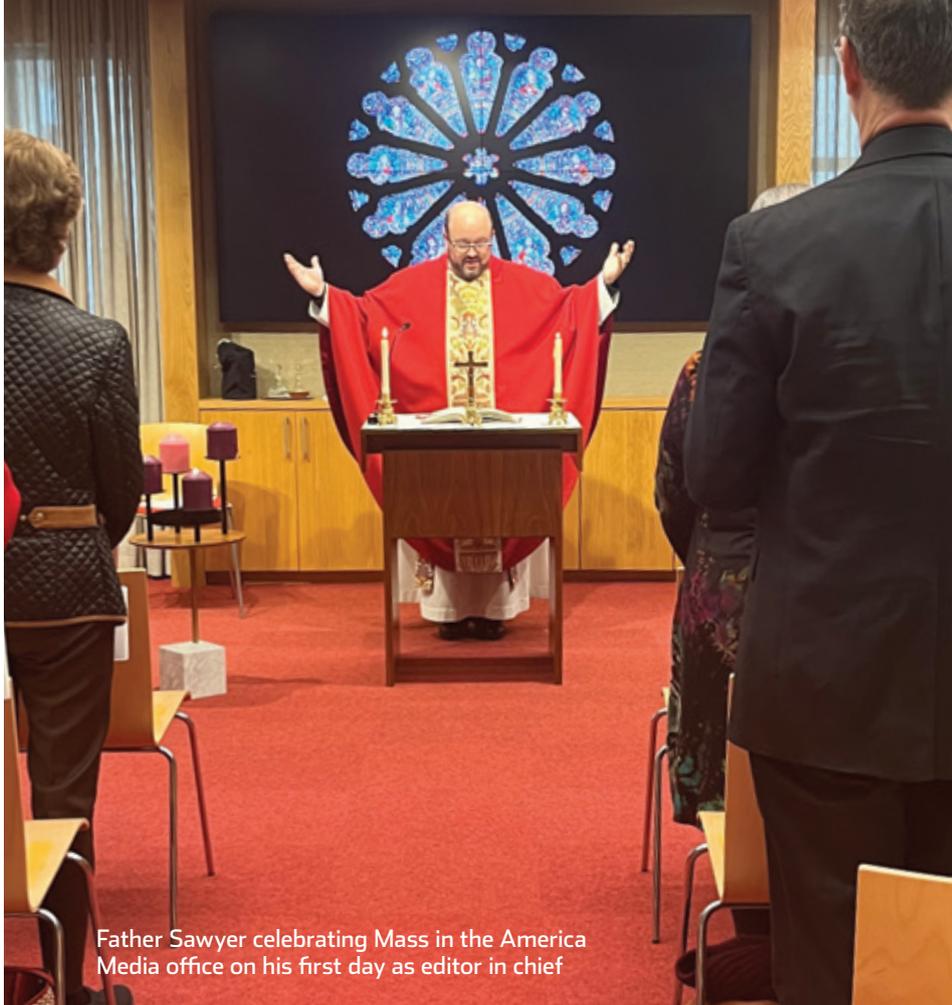
America supporter, pilgrim and volunteer Cloisters Collection guide Dina Grant leads America friends and past pilgrims on a private tour of the Met Cloisters.

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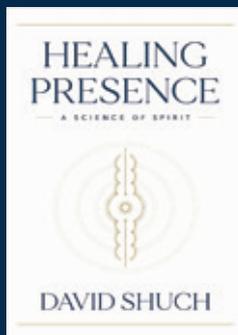
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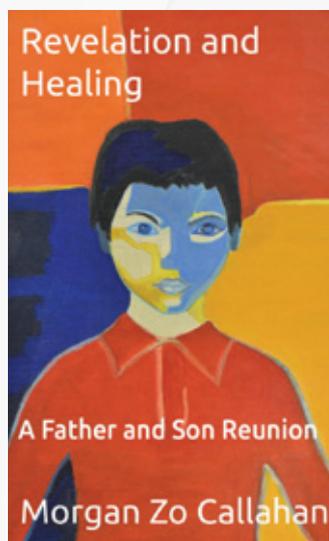
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CLASSIFIEDS MARKETPLACE

Revelation and Healing:

A Father and Son Reunion recounts the author's slow journey from an adoption that left him longing for his biological parents and wondering if he had any Black blood. He was assured he did not. Discovering, while in high school, his mother's identity, years later he found that of his biological father, Lionel Durand (1920-1961), a Black man born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Suddenly the author realized the source of his own immediate empathy as a boy with Martin Luther King Jr. and the civil rights movement he led. The author shares the often- shocking details of his adoption and the grounding therapies which facilitated self-acceptance. With filial admiration, the author traces the life of his beloved father, Lionel Durand, friends with Jean Cocteau and Picasso, an internationally acclaimed newsman and journalist, who fought in the French Resistance during World War II, twice imprisoned, twice escaped. Welcome to this reading journey and its wondrous surprises.



Lionel Durand's cover painting of his mixed-race daughter, Barbara. Same Black father as the author, a different White mom.



Lionel Durand broadcasting for Voice of America

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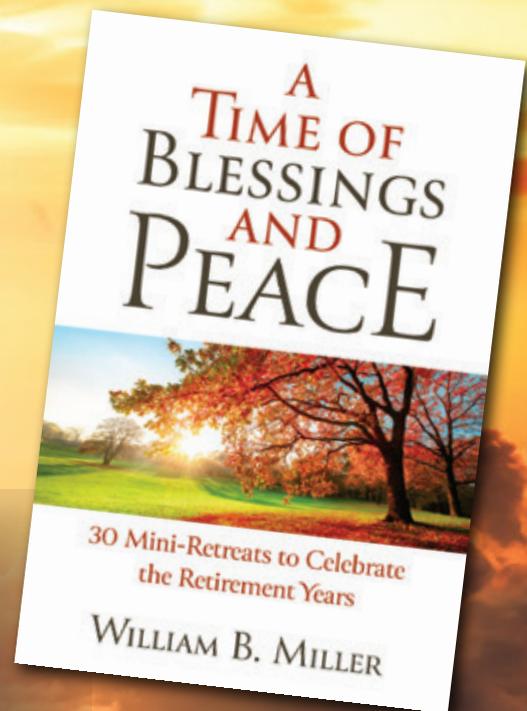


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Moral Growth Requires Honesty

Living in Montana has some particular advantages. Among them, one can easily feel changes in the seasons. Our moral lives do not so easily reveal whether change has occurred, especially change for the better. How ready are we to allow correction and change in our ethical reasoning toward others? The readings during the month of October invite us to ask this question with honesty.

The last Sunday of this month provides the context for the Sundays that precede it. The Gospel that Sunday challenges the reader to ask how much effort to put into loving God. Jesus responds, “With all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” (Mt 22:37). This love for God becomes evident in our treatment of each other. The two

greatest commandments are fulfilled if love in action is the ideal. When our reality lacks this love, we are called to an honest self-assessment.

The readings of this month’s first Sunday raise questions that prompt this kind of honest self-assessment. “Is it my way that is unfair? Are not your ways unfair?” (Ez 18:25). The following Sunday continues with a question and word play, “Why, when I waited for the crop of grapes, did it yield rotten grapes?” (Is 5:4), as the prophet questions why there is bloodshed instead of justice in God’s vineyard. The readings this month give us the opportunity to search deeply and honestly for responses to these piercing questions.

TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (A), OCT. 1, 2023

Fairness and the Logic of God’s Vineyard

TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (A), OCT. 8, 2023

Justice and Bloodshed in God’s Vineyard

TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (A), OCT. 15, 2023

Is Heaven Like a High Mountain or a Wedding Feast?

TWENTY-NINTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (A), OCT. 22, 2023

The Divine Right of Caesar and the Privilege of God

THIRTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (A), OCT. 29, 2023

One’s Moral Worth Measured in Coats for the Poor



Victor M. Cancino, S.J., lives on the Flathead Indian Reservation in western Montana and is the pastor-delegate for St. Ignatius Mission. He studied Sacred Scripture at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome.



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Do We Have Too Many Seminaries?

It is not sensible for each diocese to have its own | By Timothy M. Dolan



For many families, the end of summer means back-to-school. We praise God for our Catholic grade schools, high schools, colleges and religious formation programs that instruct so many of our young people. The direction of and stewardship of these institutions is a sacred trust handed to us by our forefathers in the faith who heeded Jesus' command to preach the Gospel to all peoples and to strengthen the faith.

But also within our obedience to the last command of Jesus "to teach the nations" would be our *seminaries*. To provide quality formation—human, academic, spiritual and pastoral—to our future priests is a sacred duty for me as a diocesan bishop, supported by my priests and people.

I often ask myself, do we have *too many* seminaries? To that I must answer with a resounding *yes!*

They are all good, to be sure. Yet, I conclude we would be better off if we had fewer *good* ones and instead had truly *excellent* ones. Here in the Archdiocese of New York we have a very good major seminary, St. Joseph's. Yet, we struggle with enrollment, finances, maintenance of huge buildings and finding more and new quality faculty, especially priests.

This archdiocese, along with our neighbors, the Dioceses of Brooklyn and Rockville Centre, pooled our resources a dozen years ago, uniting into one major seminary (instead of the two we had) and one college seminary for men studying for their undergraduate degree (instead of two). This year, we closed the college, and sent our men to St. Andrew's across the

Hudson in Newark, up to Our Lady of Providence College Seminary in Providence, R.I., and down to Washington, D.C. We bishops are glad we did. That story could be repeated in many places where bishops have realized it is neither financially feasible nor pastorally sensible for each diocese to have its own seminary.

But more such strategic decisions need to be made. On the East Coast, from Boston to D.C., you find *eight* theologates. In Ohio, three major seminaries are within three hours apart. They're all good, but often all have plenty of room, not enough money, buildings that need repair and dozens of excellent priests on the faculty who are sorely needed in parishes. Not only that, but two-thirds of our seminaries nationally are in the Northeast, with only 20 percent in the South and West, where the Catholic population is growing and vocations to the priesthood and religious life are higher.

The question I ask is not a new one. A decade and a half ago, the Holy See, after an apostolic visitation of our seminaries, told us we had too many seminaries. And the acclaimed American Catholic historian Msgr. John Tracy Ellis advocated for fewer seminaries seven decades ago, arguing that the church might be better served by a few well-financed, first-rate institutions.

Rare would be the bishop who has not had to make heartburn-inducing choices about closing or merging beloved parishes and schools. How can we not apply the same criteria we did for those tough decisions to the bloated number of seminaries we have? We

also have a responsibility to offer our seminarians a first-rate education before they enter full-time ministry.

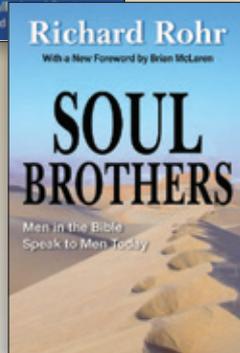
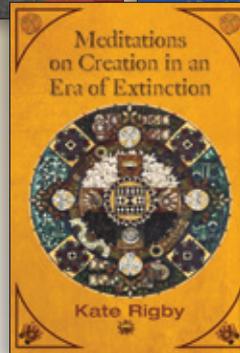
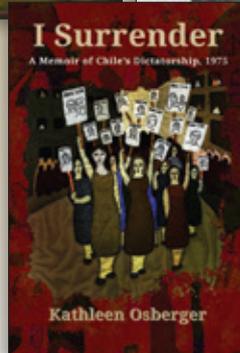
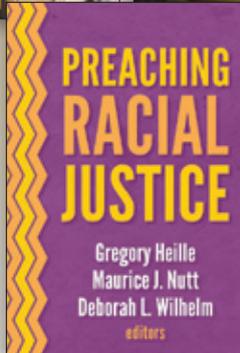
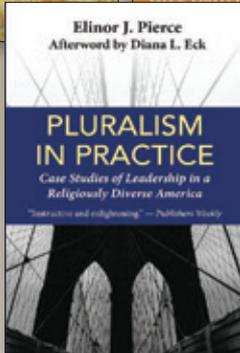
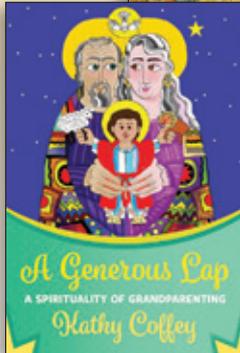
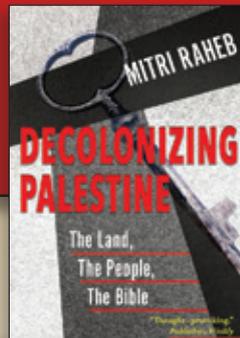
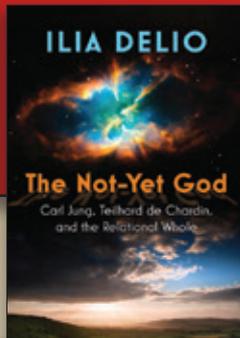
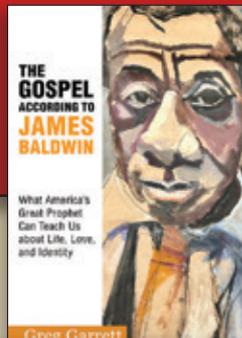
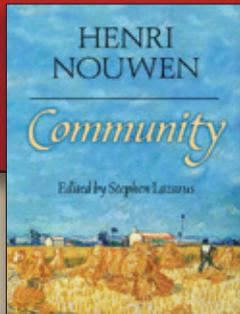
A year and a half ago, those tasked with the oversight of the eight seminaries along the East Coast from Boston to D.C. met, and each bishop and rector agreed with all of this. Each bishop and rector admitted that realistically we need to close some...as long as it's not mine!

What would a consolidation of our seminaries look like? Certainly we must begin with a period of careful discussion and discernment. Some thoughtful observers have proposed we consider regional major seminaries, one for each of four or five geographic areas in the U.S. church. With funding and staff provided by all the area dioceses, such institutions could become educational and pastoral centers without peer. Obviously religious orders might have their own formation programs, and we would also perhaps need to continue to offer a seminary for delayed vocations. Not that we need to open new ones, but rather utilize existing institutions in a creative, bold, daring way.

All our other educational institutions, as well as parishes, are biting the bullet. It is time we in charge of seminaries do the same thing. The fact is, we'll then have fewer seminaries but much better ones. Let's "cast out to the deep," and "be not afraid."

Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan is the archbishop of New York.

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