America
FEBRUARY 5, 2018
THE JESUIT REVIEW OF FAITH AND CULTURE

Waging Peace in the Philippines

Sean Williams

p18

EDUCATION TODAY

The Costs of Catholic Colleges

p12

Augustine Online

p38

A Teacher's Vocation

p48

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PANEL DISCUSSION MODERATOR

Rev. Matthew Malone, SJ, president and editor in chief of America Media

PANELISTS

Leisa Anslinger, director of *Catholic Life and Faith*

Chris Lowney, author of *Heroic Leadership, Everyone Leads*

Rev. Bismarck Chau, pastor of St. Patrick's Pro-Cathedral, Newark, NJ

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Statues and Symbols

In the winter of 1914, the only surviving son of William Tecumseh Sherman, the Civil War general who fought for the Union and burned Atlanta, unexpectedly showed up at the offices of **America**. Thomas Ewing Sherman was a Jesuit. His mother had converted to Catholicism in her youth (though his father never did); and Thomas, imbued with his mother's rigorous piety, entered the Society of Jesus. He also entered into a prolonged period of certifiable insanity, apparently suffering from the same psychological afflictions as his father. Father Sherman would wander in and out of the Jesuits for decades before being fully reconciled with the Society just before his death. More about that in a moment.

Ironically, Thomas Sherman and his famous father came to mind recently during a brief stay in New Orleans, where I ventured out of my hotel to see what had become of the downtown park named for Robert E. Lee. An enormous statue of the Confederate general had recently been removed, crated up and transported to an undisclosed location, one of many such iconoclastic episodes in cities across the nation. As I stood in the now inaptly named Lee Circle, I thought of the statue of General Sherman that stands a few blocks from my office in New York, which the City of New York recently spent millions to regild. This got me thinking: Why is the statue of General Lee gone and the statue of General Sherman still there? To be more precise, what is the justification for removing one and not the other?

Is it that General Lee owned slaves and General Sherman did not? This is true, but General Sherman was also a racist. He did not become an abolitionist until the Civil War, mainly because it served the Union war aim; he certainly never believed in equality of the races. Is the justification found in the fact that the statue of General Lee is a painful reminder to African-Americans of a cruel history of injustice? That is certainly understandable. Yet it must be just as painful for a Navajo visiting New York to see the statue of General Sherman, who endorsed the genocide of Native Americans, including women and children, and did his level best to make it happen. To my knowledge, General Lee never did such a thing. Nor can we say that the Lee statue in New Orleans, like many Confederate monuments, is essentially a 20th-century reaction against the burgeoning civil rights movement. The statue of General Lee was unveiled in 1884, almost 30 years before General Sherman's.

My point here is not that one statue should go and that the other should stay, nor is my point that both should go or both should stay. My point is simply this: What is the point? Is there a coherent justification for removing one and not the other? Or is all of this simply a fight-to-the-death struggle for power? If so, we should just say so. If not, then those who want to tear down the statues need to articulate better why one should come down and the other should not. And if it is decided that General Sherman's statue should come down as well, then what will be done about Sherman Circle, located in the national capital named for a slave-owner who had even more odious views on race than Robert E. Lee? What are the criteria by which we are going to decide these questions? And, perhaps most important, who is going to decide these questions apart from the elites on either side who dominate the debate?

More important than any of that, however, is this: In light of the fact that our secular country no longer collectively recognizes a higher power as supreme judge of the universe, how are we going to prevent these monuments from being more important than they should be? If we now live in a society in which there are no goals beyond human flourishing in the here and now, then these civic symbols are only going to become more important, not less.

Which brings me back to Thomas Ewing Sherman, S.J., who died in 1933 at the Jesuit novitiate in Louisiana. The next Jesuit to die there was John M. Salter, who happened to be the grand-nephew of Alexander Stephens, the vice president of the Confederate States of America. Thus, two descendants of warring sides now lie next to each other in a grove in Grand Coteau, La., a poignant sign, whether we like it or not, that under God we are one nation. That is important to remember, for when a people renders unto Caesar what is God's, they will inevitably mistake a statue for a sacrament. A pitched and violent battle for dominance will likely follow. But those two graves in Grand Coteau remind us that while every sacrament is a symbol, only seven symbols are actually sacraments.

Matt Malone, S.J.
Twitter: @americaeditor

THE ISSUE

GIVE AND TAKE

DISPATCHES

FEATURES

Students from the Archdiocese of Mobile, Ala., carry the lead banner during the 45th annual March for Life in Washington, D.C., Jan. 19
Cover: GettyImages

CNS photo/Michael Reynolds, EPA

FAITH AND REASON

FAITH IN FOCUS

POEM

IDEAS IN REVIEW

THE WORD

LAST TAKE

What are President Trump's best and worst policies?

Now that President Trump has been in office for a year, **America** asked readers to reflect on his best and worst policies.

Although many readers were dismayed by the request to pick a "best" policy, 31 percent of respondents told **America** that restrictions on abortion were Mr. Trump's best policy. "This is one of his only policies that is Pro-life," wrote Jean Sanifer of St. Louis. "Cutting health care, immigration bans, withdrawing from the Paris climate agreement and even ending the ban on importing elephant trophies—almost every policy he has enacted shows a lack of respect for the poor and for life itself." Mat Wilson of Montgomery, Tex., echoed this point: "I want an end to abortion, but Trump isn't allowing for appropriate accommodations or benefits to help with postnatal and prenatal care, which are necessary to the health and wellbeing of mother and child."

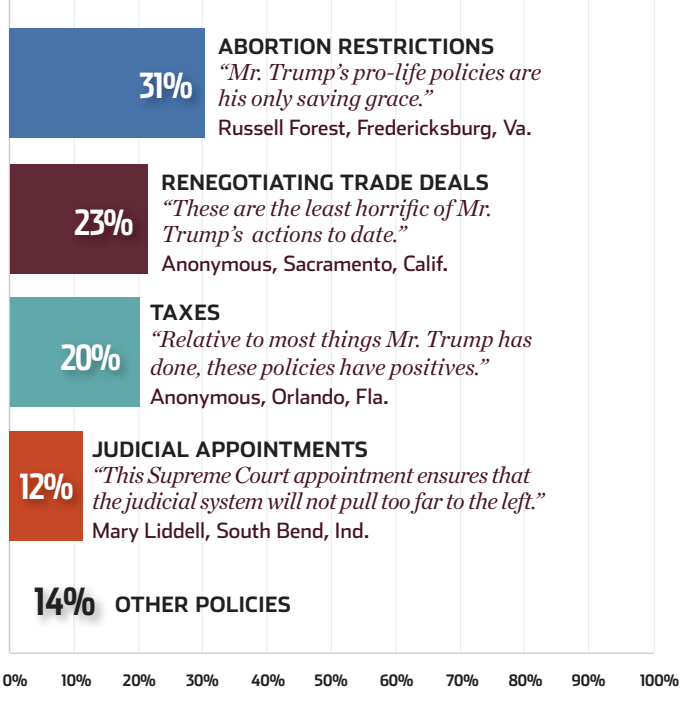
Following abortion restrictions, respondents named renegotiating or leaving trade deals such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership and Nafta (23 percent) and cutting taxes (20 percent) as Mr. Trump's best policies.

When asked to choose Mr. Trump's worst policy, 31 percent of respondents named his policies on immigration. One reader from Philadelphia told **America** that Mr. Trump's immigration policies "stem from his lack of respect for basic human rights and arise from the most egregious racism." Sebastian Belloni of Gaithersburg, Md., concurred: "Trump's immigration policies are racist, inhumane, and anti-family. He is splitting up families, targeting religious and ethnic minorities, and scapegoating non-white aliens. They do not display the compassion toward others that Jesus challenges us all [to] strive for."

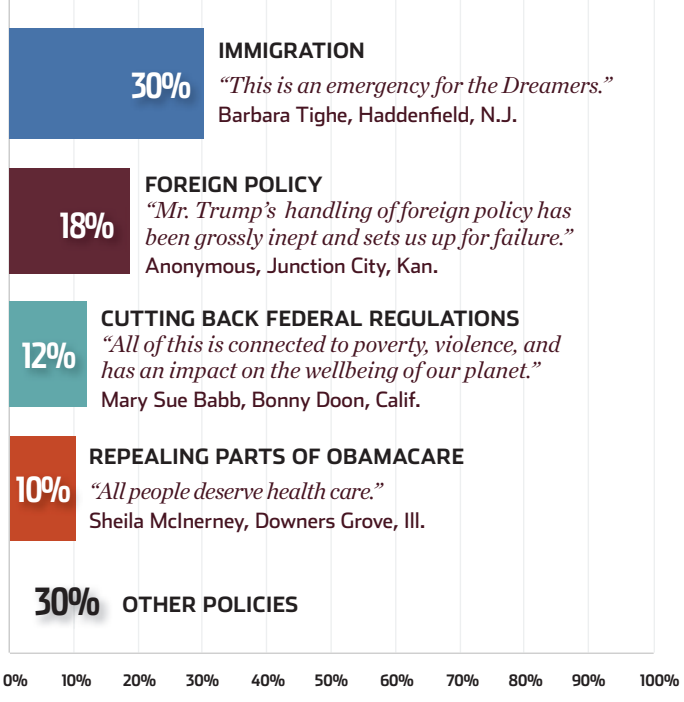
After immigration, respondents told **America** that Mr. Trump's worst policies were his handling of foreign affairs, like the U.S.-North Korea relationship, the campaign against ISIS and declaring Jerusalem the capital of Israel (18 percent); and cutting back federal regulations (12 percent).

WHAT ARE TRUMP'S BEST AND WORST POLICIES?

WHICH OF TRUMP'S POLICIES DO YOU THINK IS THE BEST?



WHICH OF TRUMP'S POLICIES DO YOU THINK IS THE WORST?



These results are based on reader responses to a poll promoted on Facebook, Twitter and in our email newsletter. Because of rounding, percentages may not add up to 100.

Finally

Re "Women in the Life of the Church." by Matt Malone, S.J. (Of Many Things, 1/22): I am so glad that the views of Catholic women are finally being studied! We cannot move forward without understanding where we are. Thank you.

Lisa Weber
Online Comment

No Surprise

Re "Catholic Women and Natural Family Planning," by Leah Libresco (1/22): It is worth noting that the majority of women surveyed are not practicing Catholics. Many of the women surveyed identify as Catholic but do not go to Mass more than once a year or really believe in Catholic teaching at all. The fact that only one in five women who had ever been married or were living with a partner said they had practiced N.F.P. is no surprise then, surely.

Nancy Gowdy
Online Comment

Not Conservative or Liberal

Re "When Catholic Women Vote, by Megan Sweas (1/22): I struggle with the political realities we face. I do not identify as conservative or liberal but as a Christian in the Catholic faith. I appreciate this quote from the article: "At its heart, Catholic social teaching is not about following rules but about being disciples, Ms. Clark said, quoting Matthew 25—whatever you did for the least of these, you did for Christ."

Margy Harris
Online Comment

Communicating the Faith

Re "Models of Faith," by Kerry Weber (1/22): This is an outstanding article that brings to mind memories of the many women who influenced me as a man growing up in the Catholic faith. As I grew up, it began to occur to me that some of the women I was taught by and interacted with at my church were far better at communicating the faith and its many nuances than many of the men trying to do the same thing. You bet it is their church every bit as much as it is the church of any cleric, titled or not.

Barry Fitzpatrick
Online Comment

Black Catholics Exist

Re "A Portrait of Black Catholicism," by C. Vanessa White (1/22): It is so interesting to see some people say that pointing out that black Catholics exist constitutes racism. Perhaps Jesus' pointing out that poor people exist throughout the Gospel is "class warfare"?

Duy Nguyen
Online Comment

More Complex

Re "A Catholic Woman Discovers Her Priesthood," by Nancy Small (1/22): This is a beautiful article. I do not think it is so simple as "the Catholic Church teaches women cannot be ordained," and I am grateful to read this story, which is more complex than that. I feel blessed to hear the author's insight about being part of the "priesthood with all women and men baptized into the Catholic community," especially about her lifelong relationship with God and her ministry.

Dawn Reel
Online Comment

Beauty and Power

It is funny that this entire article is about the author finding the beauty and power of her lay ministry, but the comments online are full of people talking about how "women are highly regarded in the church, too! This author must not know about the power of the lay priesthood!" Folks: Read the article.

Christine Haider-Winnett
Online Comment

No Priest

Many years ago, a non-Catholic friend of mine asked me how I could be so devout in a religion that does not allow Mother Teresa to be a priest. I said the answer is simple: No priest could ever be Mother Teresa.

Michelle Liscoe
Online Comment

Invisible

Re "Taking Singleness Seriously," by Emily Reimer-Barry (1/22): I was a single adult in the church for 25 years. I was pretty much invisible within my parish, and yet I was an active member of the parish. They offered programming for every other demographic; the single people were assumed to take care of themselves.

Madonna Burke
Online Comment

Community Colleges Need Church Support

A quick glance at a newspaper oped page would leave many readers with the impression that the greatest threats to higher education in the United States were right-wing speakers traumatizing vulnerable students or fragile undergrads demanding "safe spaces." As essential as the current debate over free speech on campus is, however, it is far removed from the experience of most college students.

The largest share of U.S. undergraduates—42 percent—attend a community college. These are disproportionately minority, first-generation, low-income and adult students working for the ticket to the middle class that has long been the promise of higher education in this country. For those who manage to graduate, two years of public or private college can be just that: The average annual income for adults with an associate's degree is $43,200, nearly one-third more than earnings for people with a high school diploma ($32,600).

Many students who enroll in community college, however, will never see this wage premium. According to a study by the National Student Clearinghouse in December 2017, only 38 percent of students who started at a public two-year college in 2011 had graduated after six years.

The Catholic Church, with its deep experience at every level of the U.S. education system, is well positioned to take on the college completion crisis. Last spring, for example, Arrupe College, a new two-year program started by Loyola University Chicago, graduated 52 percent of its first class (compared with a 13 percent two-year completion rate for community colleges nationwide).

Not every school or diocese, however, is in a position to start its own college. For them, Catholic Charities in Fort Worth, Tex., offers a promising model. In collaboration with Tarrant County College, Catholic Charities designed Stay the Course, a program that provides "wrap-around" services to help students navigate the barriers to graduation. These hurdles include balancing work and school (two-thirds of community college students have a full- or part-time job) and caring for children (45 percent of community college students are parents).

In a randomized controlled trial conducted by researchers from the University of Notre Dame and the University of Maryland from 2013 to 2016, Tarrant County students were placed in one of three groups. One group was given a personal "navigator," who provided academic and career coaching and connected students with social services, as well as access to limited emergency financial assistance. A second group was given access to emergency financial assistance but no case management. The control group received neither services nor financial aid.

The results show that students who received one-on-one coaching were significantly more likely to graduate after six semesters, while financial assistance alone had no effect on completion rates. These gains were driven by female students who participated in the full program, who were 32 percent more likely than the control group to earn a degree. Researchers also predict that the increase in students' post-graduation earnings would exceed the cost of the program after less than five years.

Today there are roughly 1,500 community colleges across the country educating over six million students, who face an uphill battle to graduation. These institutions can be engines of opportunity for low-income students, and the Catholic Church can and should be an effective partner in those efforts.

A False Alarm in Hawaii Raises Questions

The people of Hawaii have long been attuned to the risk of attack from abroad. The shadow of Pearl Harbor still looms large over those islands, as does the likelihood that should North Korea decide to launch a nuclear missile, Hawaii would be a target. That threat was brought into stark relief when, early on a Saturday morning in January, residents received a cellphone alert from the state's Emergency Management Agency warning: "Ballistic missile threat inbound." For almost 40 minutes, many in Hawaii believed their lives were about to end.

The warning was revealed to be due to human error. And there appear to have been no panic-induced casualties. But it is alarming that there were apparently no safeguards to prevent such a mistaken warning. As more states take precautions to prepare for a possible nuclear attack, they should ensure there are reasonable protections against setting off a false alarm and the panic that might follow.

A real attack would be detected by the military, which could then prepare for a counterstrike. According to Cold War-era protocols, a decision to retaliate must be made within minutes, for fear that our missiles would be destroyed otherwise. Today, however, it is imprudent to insist on such a short response time. The doctrine of deterrence can still be served by keeping submarines at sea armed with nuclear missiles ready to launch a counterattack. Such a policy would ensure we do not launch a first strike under the mistaken belief we are under attack.

Nuclear strategy must also account for the possibility of nonhuman error. Systems have suffered glitches before and shown incoming nuclear strikes when there were none. In 1983 only the instinctive reaction of the Soviet officer on watch prevented a Soviet missile launch in response to a mistaken warning of a U.S. strike. Also of concern is our missile warning system's vulnerability to hacking, whether by a rival nation, a non-state group or even a hostile individual.

The false alarm in Hawaii is a wake-up call for everyone. The United States must develop both better warning systems and deterrence tactics. In the long run, we must find our way out of the predicament of mutually assured destruction. Pope Francis has been clear on the need for disarmament. That is a worthy goal for the entire international community. In the meantime, U.S. Catholics should urge their government to do what it can to de-escalate the nuclear tensions on the Korean Peninsula. If we do not, perhaps the next warning about an incoming missile will be a real one.

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What Catholic social teaching says about sexual harassment

The cornerstone of Catholic social teaching is the assertion that every person has innate and infinite dignity imparted by God. All actions in and by society may be judged as just or unjust, good or sinful, based on whether they uphold this fundamental dignity intrinsic to every human life. By this standard, sexual harassment violates Catholic social teaching in three different ways.

First, sexual harassment violates the dignity of the person being harassed. If you are a victim, it communicates that your value is not based on your dignity as a human person but on the sexual role you play, without your consent, for the person harassing you. It reduces you from a full person to an object for use by the harasser. Healthy sexuality does the opposite; it affirms agency and dignity within the vulnerability of desire.

As a teen, when I was harassed, I thought I had done something wrong. We live in a society that tells girls and women that the rising dignity we feel pushing back against the narrative of our sexual objectification somehow makes us crazy or mean.

Second, sexual harassment is a violation of the principle of participation, which says that every person has the right to contribute to society as an aspect of his or her dignity. Not only does everyone have the right to get what they need (common good); everyone must be able to give as well.

College now prepares women to participate in the workforce on an even footing with men. Sixty years ago, my grandmother, then only 16 years old, moved out of her childhood home into her husband's house. Today, many women go to college and gain the means for economic independence. But according to the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, 23 percent of female undergraduate students experience rape or sexual assault while in college. These incidents often silence women, force them out of their colleges and rob them of the opportunity to fully participate in their chosen careers.

The effects of sexual harassment continue in the workplace. A study by the online journal of Sociologists for Women and Society showed that 80 percent of the surveyed women who reported unwanted touching or other forms of harassment at work also said they changed jobs less than two years after the harassment. Sexual harassment in college and at work is not really about sex. Men express sexuality in violent ways when women are a threat to male dominance. The goal is to intimidate women and remind them of where exactly they stand in the power structure. By taking away women's humanity and capacity to participate, men take back the dominion they once held, unchallenged, in higher education and in the workplace.

Third, sexual harassment is a violation of the dignity of work. Catholic social teaching argues that work itself must be dignified. No matter your occupation—fixing cars or teaching first graders—you should be able to do your work with dignity. An employer should guarantee reasonable hours, provide a safe work environment and pay a just wage.

Many recent stories about sexual harassment have been about women who are white and work in elite circles. Many were able to walk away, to say no. But for poor women, women who did not get to complete college or to build up savings, there is no other option but to remain employed.

Low-wage work, often in domestic and less regulated settings, is plagued by sexual abuse. Such work is often done by women of color, whose bodies have historically been treated as open sexual property—a profound and ongoing violation of human dignity.

All three of these violations arise from the same lie. The lie is that the male libido is uncontrollable, that the desire to take is natural. Men harass to remind themselves that the power to take defines their humanity and place in the world. Our social norms for men tell them that they reach the fullness of their human dignity as insatiable takers. Kindness, accepting refusal, mistakes, failure, trying again, tenderness: These are not acceptable ways of being a man. They must take. Ironically, this imperative to take, to harass, to violently turn the world into their object, robs men of the experience of the fullness of their own dignity.

Catholic social teaching can also help us discern the world God wants for us, one in which men conceive of their humanity as grounded in fostering rather than diminishing the dignity of others—and one in which women flourish as we participate in society on our terms, with dignified work.

Brianne Jacobs *is a postdoctoral teaching fellow in the theology department at Fordham University.*

THE RIGHT FOCUS?

A campus peer-to-peer effort takes off

By Michael O'Loughlin

Walking into McCormick Place, the sprawling convention center located just south of Chicago's Loop, it was immediately clear that the group hosting this massive gathering of Catholic students and campus ministers knows how to put on a show and how to attract a youthful crowd. The feel of the conference, hosted by the Fellowship of Catholic University Students, or Focus, was old meets new, a traditionalist ethos infused with a megachurch aesthetic. Participants wore T-shirts quoting St. John Paul II, listened eagerly to talks from Bishop Robert Barron and "The Passion of the Christ" star Jim Caviezel and attended adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and confession throughout the week.

Focus is a nearly 20-year-old evangelization ministry started by a layperson who was frustrated that non-Catholic student groups seemed more successful in spreading their faith on college campuses. Today the organization is experiencing dramatic growth. It has a presence on more than 130 colleges and universities, up from just 29 a decade ago.

This particular conference in Chicago, the Student Leadership Summit, attracted about 8,000 people, mostly students but also chaplains, seminarians, priests and men and women religious. They gathered for a week of spiritual formation, pep rallies and workshops to help them achieve the three-tiered goal of Focus: Win. Build. Send.

The organization operates by sending pairs of missionaries to campuses across the United States to form friendships with students on campus who might not be active in the church. Through activities including Bible study, prayer and Mass, they hope to win converts, or reverts, to the faith.

Curtis Martin, the founder and chief executive officer, told **America** that Focus seeks "to awaken people who have had an experience of God's love and mercy in their life" and, in turn, recast them into missionaries. College campuses, Mr. Martin said, present the most potential for renewing the church because that is where he sees the church's future leaders being formed. Though, he quickly adds, "all the culture needs help."

Alongside sessions on evangelization, storytelling and prayer, gender-segregated workshops were offered to students in Chicago. The conference handbook notes that attendees are prohibited from visiting the hotel rooms of other guests if they are of the opposite gender. And on campuses, where missionaries seek out friendships with college students as the first step in accompanying them back to the church, "discipleship" relationships are always between members of the same gender.

One workshop was hosted by the Rev. Philip Bochanski, the head of Courage, a church-endorsed ministry that promotes chastity for "persons with same-sex attraction." Several hundred students attended the workshop, many scribbling notes as the priest offered tips on how to respond to peers who come out as gay or lesbian.

Those tips included telling the person you love them, asking to hear his or her story and listening. But he also told them they may need to appeal to Pope John Paul II's "the-

CNS photo/Karen Callaway, Chicago Catholic

More than 8,000 young people from around the country gathered in Chicago in January for the SLS18 conference, sponsored by the Fellowship of Catholic University Students.

ology of the body" or natural law, perhaps even telling the person that acting on any same-sex desires is tantamount to turning away God. Father Bochanski told students not to be afraid to speak the truth—though always in love, he added—which may include being blunt about what he says are the dangers of same-sex relationships.

Katie Diller, the director of campus ministry at the parish that serves students at Michigan State University, said that the model Focus uses can "offer a wonderful witness and discipling experience," but she said professional campus ministers remain "critical in shepherding students through complex questions," such as discernment about the priesthood or religious life, spiritual concerns and even knowing when a student may need psychological assistance.

On questions of gender and sexuality, Ms. Diller said, "Students who ask questions about gender, authority or sexual orientation may be ministered to with respect, compassion and sensitivity by a campus minister who has been well trained to help form the Christian conscience around complex societal and personal issues."

For his part, Mr. Martin said Focus would lose its core identity if missionaries were required to undertake the rigorous training required of campus ministers.

"The fact of the matter is that there's a tremendous opportunity for peer ministry," he said. "By definition, if you went and got the training [a traditional campus minister receives], you're no longer a peer. You're now in your late 20s, early 30s or later. Focus is a young person's game."

Mr. Martin acknowledged that there is a risk Focus could supplant traditional campus ministry operations, but he said that the goal remains working within existing structures. Missionaries, he said, "are just out there to love people and to walk them back into a church that can provide them comprehensive healing."

"Can you do that inartfully? Of course you can. Can you bump into each other? Of course you can," he continued. "But I think it's worth the effort to strive because I think young people are worth the effort. What we're seeing is dramatic, constructive growth, where the fruit is hard to deny."

The fruit of Focus—the students who engage their faith as a result of the missionaries, activities and conferences—were energetic about the organization. Students who have been drawn into the church by way of Focus said it was the personal relationships with missionaries, the model Focus uses, that kept them engaged.

The campuses and dioceses that commit to Focus are investing in a program that is not cheap but one that seems to have figured out how to attract young people. The organization is growing quickly. It reported taking in more than $57 million in grants, contributions and membership fees in its 2017 fiscal year, a dramatic increase from 2009, when Focus reported a total of nearly $10 million.

Michael J. O'Loughlin, *national correspondent.*
Twitter: @MikeOLoughlin.

Is higher education worth its soaring costs?

Most folks have surely noticed that the cost of U.S. higher education has been on the rise, but the steepness of that ascent may come as a shock. In 1971 students could expect their annual tuition to claim a little over 10 percent of a U.S. family median annual income at a public university and 48 percent of median income at a private school.

Today they will have to cough up 110 percent of the median income for private tuition and 32 percent of it for public school. That latter burden surely represents a more manageable cost, but it is three times the '71 figure.

On a more positive note, perceptions of Godless higher ed aside, if your Catholic kids go to a Catholic institution, almost 90 percent of them will still be Catholic when it is time to wear the cap and gown.

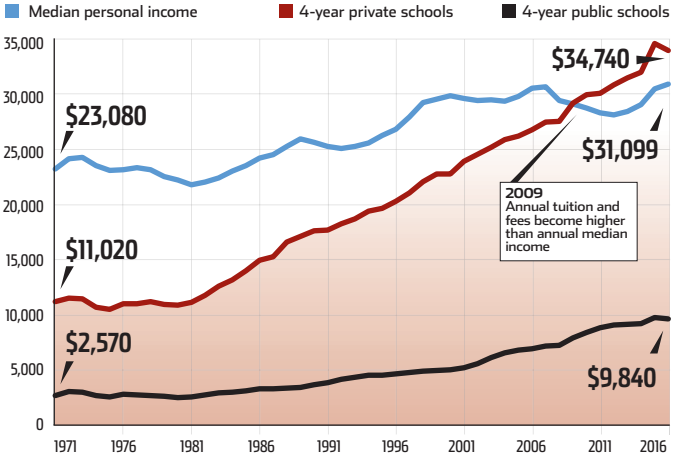
INCOMING STUDENTS (FALL 2016)

	All colleges	Catholic colleges
White	67	71
Latino	19	15
Black	13	14
Asian	13	8

ATTITUDES/EXPERIENCES OF COLLEGE FRESHMEN (2016)

	All colleges	Catholic colleges	Non-Catholic religious colleges
Have attended a religious service in the past year			
	69	80	84
Call themselves...			
far left	4	2	3
liberal	31	26	21
middle of the road	42	46	42
conservative	20	23	31
far right	2	2	3
Chose college for...			
Academic reputation	65	70	62
Financial assistance	47	65	63
Religious affiliation	9	20	33

PERSONAL INCOME VS. COLLEGE TUITION (ADJUSTED FOR INFLATION)



CATHOLIC HIGHER EDUCATION

247 DEGREE-GRANTING CATHOLIC COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES IN THE UNITED STATES

2017 TOTAL ENROLLMENT IN CATHOLIC HIGHER EDUCATION **764,448**

62% OF STUDENTS ENROLLED IN CATHOLIC COLLEGES IN 2015-16 WERE WOMEN

50.6% OF FRESHMEN AT 4-YEAR CATHOLIC COLLEGES IDENTIFY AS CATHOLIC

AVERAGE TUITION AND FEES (2016-17)

$39,400 PRIVATE NONPROFIT 4-YEAR COLLEGES

$31,489 CATHOLIC COLLEGES

FAITH AT CATHOLIC COLLEGES (2004-07)

88% OF INCOMING CATHOLICS **REMAIN CATHOLIC**

11% OF INCOMING NON-CATHOLICS **CONVERT TO CATHOLICISM**

PRIOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION

42% OF ALL CATHOLICS WHO ATTENDED A CATHOLIC COLLEGE COMPLETED ALL OR MOST OF THEIR PREVIOUS EDUCATION AT CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Sources: Race and attitudes of college freshmen from *The American Freshman: National Norms Fall 2016*, Higher Education Research Institute, U.C.L.A.; annual personal income from U.S. Census Bureau (2016 dollars) and average tuition and fees from the College Board (2017 dollars); data on Catholic colleges from the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, except for 2017 enrollment and "Faith at Catholic Colleges," from the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA).

Trump policy shift could close Catholic Charities refugee offices

CNS photo/Gregory A. Shemitz

A boy from Afghanistan prints his name on a banner during a Catholic Charities-hosted party for refugees on World Refugee Day in Amityville, N.Y., in June 2017.

After decades helping refugee families become Americans, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Dubuque announced on Dec. 18, 2017, that it was getting out of the business. Its 77-year-old refugee resettlement ministry was being shut down.

Donna Markham, O.P., president and chief executive officer of Catholic Charities USA, is concerned that the closing in Dubuque is only the beginning of what could become a nationwide shuttering of other small refugee resettlement efforts.

"We have received some indication [from the Trump administration] that those agencies that are serving under 100 resettlement clients a year are at risk for being discontinued, of losing their federal contracts," she said on Jan. 9. "So some of the agencies that are very small are threatened."

Sister Markham emphasized that the closing of the refugee programs "is not a decision that Catholic Charities is making...this is being driven by the decisions being made by the [Trump] administration."

"Clearly the tone coming from the administration is that people that are entering the United States from another culture are faced with lack of hospitality and welcoming that is frankly an embarrassment to many of us who are American citizens," she said.

"We think that 25 to 30 percent of our agencies are at risk," Sister Markham said. That means as many as 17 to 23 Catholic Charities offices around the country are now confronting the end of programs that have been successfully assimilating thousands of refugees into U.S. society for decades. Altogether about 70 of Catholic Charities USA's 166 offices maintain refugee programs.

The potential loss in institutional memory, expertise and experience, according to Sister Markham, is incalculable.

The skills required to help refugee families assimilate to life in the United States—from accessing language classes and job training to assisting with housing, social integration and health care—are not easily replicated. "It's going to be a huge loss" for Catholic Charities, she said.

And, assuming a future shift in policy might be more generous to the world's refugees, reopening a shuttered site could prove prohibitively expensive. "The sophistication involved in training a caseworker in managing these clients is quite complex," said Sister Markham. "These are not programs that can just be restarted."

Part of the crisis looming over small resettlement offices reflects a steep drop in the number of refugees being allowed into the United States. In the last year of the Obama administration, 110,000 were admitted. That number was cut to 45,000 last year, the lowest cap since the modern U.S. refugee admissions system was established in 1980. But U.S. refugee resettlement numbers are on pace to decline even more in the coming year. According to a Wall Street Journal report, just 5,000 refugees were accepted into the United States during the first quarter of fiscal 2018, meaning as few as 20,000 refugees may be allowed into the country this year.

According to U.N. figures, as many as 22.5 million people are currently refugees, crowded in third-party states such as Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Kenya. Many thousands of those millions have been waiting, often for years, for resettlement in the United States.

Even as the Trump administration continues a series of policy shifts interpreted by many as unnecessarily punitive to people forced into migration as victims of crime, conflict or poverty, Sister Markham urged U.S. Catholics to remember their spiritual obligation to refugees and migrants "coming from all over the world" and from every faith.

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

Church in Chiapas asks for help after violence displaces thousands of indigenous families

Verónica García cradles her baby on her lap, wrapped in a blue blanket against the cold. She looks tired and speaks with a weak voice. Weeks of living under a plastic sheet in the forests have taken their toll.

"It's been very hard," she says in Tzotzil, her native Mayan language. "I've barely slept since I came here, since my child was born. There's not much food and it gets cold at night, but we're afraid to go to the town. It's safer here."

Ms. García is one of approximately 5,000 indigenous Tzotzil Mayans who since late October have been scattered in small impromptu camps in the area surrounding the town of Chalchihuitán, in Mexico's southernmost state of Chiapas. They say they were chased out of their homes, only several miles to the south, by unknown gunmen after the escalation of an old land dispute.

They have lived in squalor ever since, in small, makeshift tents, with little food and no sanitation or water. Exposed to the elements at night, they sleep on the ground. The few blankets they have are reserved for the elderly, children and pregnant women. Most of the displaced people are subsistence farmers. They do not speak Spanish and were already among Mexico's poorest and most marginalized indigenous communities before they were forced out of their homes.

Their living conditions have taken a deadly toll; at least 11 people died since the refugee crisis began, according to the Rev. Marcel Pérez, a parish priest and head of the social ministry of the Diocese of San Cristóbal de las Casas.

"The situation is severe; the refugees urgently need help," Father Pérez said. "They're in need of food, clean water, blankets."

Father Pérez has been tending to the camps since the first refugees arrived in Chalchuihuitán, but he said that the diocese lacks the resources to provide all the refugees with proper care. "It's important that the world knows what's going on here," he said. "We can't just be indifferent to the plight of these people."

The origins of the conflict that provoked the villagers' dislocation date back to 1973, when the Mexican Agrarian Reform Secretariat decided on the boundaries between the municipalities of Chalchihuitán and Chenalho. The decision was rejected by inhabitants of the latter, and conflict over the land redistribution has periodically led to tension and outbursts of violence between both towns.


Photo by Jan-Albert Hootsen.

An agrarian tribunal ruled in favor of Chenalho in December 2017, determining that the original 1973 ruling in favor of Chalchihuitán was erroneous and transferring 740 acres of land to the other municipality. By then, Chalchihuitán had already been flooded with people escaping the violence.

Conflicts over land are a common occurrence in Chiapas, one of Mexico's poorest states. While the rest of the country steadily modernized during the 20th century, Chiapas retained many of its old colonial traits. Rich landowners still controlled large plantations, forcing the impoverished indigenous population into quasi-servitude until only decades ago.

Escaping paramilitaries, Tzotzil Mayans in Chiapas have been scattered in small camps in the area surrounding the town of Chalchihuitán.

Father Pérez said that the attacks on local villages and the flight of their residents follow a chilling pattern. According to him, similar events played out in the months before the massacre of Acteal, an indigenous village some 20 miles to the east. On Dec. 22, 1997, a paramilitary group called Red Mask slaughtered at least 45 members of the pacifist Catholic group Las Abejas ("The Bees"), including children and pregnant women, with the alleged complicity of local police and soldiers standing idly by.

"I'm worried for what may come in the next weeks," Father Pérez said. "The authorities have to intervene. The paramilitaries must be disarmed, and the refugees must be allowed to go back home."

Jan-Albert Hootsen,
Mexico City correspondent. Twitter: @Jahootsen.

CNS photo/Marlène Quaron, Florida Catholic newspaper

Reviewing the damage after Hurricane Irma at St. Mary Cathedral in Miami on Sept. 11, 2017.

The elderly and disabled were left behind during Hurricane Irma. What will happen next time?

As Hurricane Irma churned toward Miami in September, Gloria Guity did what she had been instructed to do: She evacuated.

But evacuation was a significant challenge for Ms. Guity, who is 76 and has two adult children with mental and physical disabilities due to cerebral palsy. Her daughter, Nelly, 38, relies on a walker; her son, José, 32, uses a wheelchair.

As Irma barreled toward Florida, the three found themselves at a hurricane shelter that lacked not only medical supervision, but also cots. They—along with hundreds of other elderly, disabled and low-income people—suffered as the storm exposed serious flaws in plans for hurricane evacuations.

Miami-Dade County has an emergency evacuation assistance program to provide elderly and disabled residents with transportation to and from shelters equipped for their medical needs. But it requires pre-registration, and many people who would have benefited said they were unaware of the program's existence.

Curt Sommerhoff, Miami-Dade's emergency management director, said the county tries to spread the word through home health care providers and the Florida Department of Health branch in Miami-Dade. But, he said, "We've got to do a better job day-to-day."

Miami-Dade officials acknowledge the hurricane evacuation system caused unnecessary stress and discomfort for many low-income, disabled and elderly evacuees.

"One of the challenges with vulnerable populations is if they're vulnerable day-to-day, disasters only magnify their challenges," said Mr. Sommerhoff.

Kate Stein *contributes from Miami. Twitter: @stein_katherine.*

WAGING PEACE IN THE PHILIPPINES

The Catholic Church navigates a minefield as a drug war rages

By Sean Williams

LUIS ANTONIO TAGLE

PHOTOS: CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE/ILLUSTRATION: AMERICA

Bishop Pablo Virgilio David was already an outspoken critic of the drug war in the Philippines when an unarmed teen was gunned down just minutes from his parish. On Aug. 16 at around 8 p.m., Kian delos Santos, a 17-year-old student, was chased by police down an alley in the cramped Manila suburb of Caloocan.

Later that night the boy's body was found, curled in the fetal position with a gunshot wound to his head. A pistol and a small bag of *shabu*—a local crystal methamphetamine—were found too. The police called it self defense: The boy had fired a .45-caliber pistol at them while working as a mule for a local drug lord. CCTV showed otherwise. Two plainclothes cops beat and dragged delos Santos away and left him to die beside a basketball court.

PRESIDENT RODRIGO ROA DUTERTE

Bishop David was enraged. Kian's death was "a very specific case of abuse," he said, adding, "It seems there's no rule of law anymore. Is this what the drug war is about?" Witnesses came forward to counter the police officers' claims. On Sept. 9 one of these witnesses, a 13-year-old girl whose father was in jail for drug offenses, ran to Bishop David's cathedral, San Roque, pleading for shelter. He took her in.

The police soon followed. They had posted bail for the girl's father. They wanted the bishop to bring her into police custody for questioning. Bishop David refused. He kept the police outside and welcomed the father in. Soon the father decided he, too, would stay with the bishop. "I love the church," he was quoted as saying.

The image of a clergyman holding off the police at the church gates was a powerful one for the community. It was a significant act of resistance amid growing opposition to the drug war. The Catholic Church has slowly found its voice against a campaign of violence that, in President Rodrigo Roa Duterte, known as Rody, has one of the world's most ruthless and capricious leaders.

But the Catholic Church in the Philippines has often worked to chart a middle path between the nation's leaders and its people. And though critics say it has been slow to react to a war that, so far, has claimed up to 13,000 lives, some believe it could play a pivotal role again.

THE CHURCH THROUGH HISTORY

The Catholic Church has been entangled in politics in the Philippines for almost five centuries. It was among the biggest colonial imports that arrived with Spanish conquistadors who, led by Ferdinand Magellan, first washed up on the shores of Cebu in 1521. Before then most inhabitants of the islands were practitioners of indigenous traditions, Muslims or atheists.

Under colonial rule, church and state were one, with Spanish friars one important part of governing the new territory. Catholic churches were built as the centerpieces of *barangays*, the country's smallest civic subdivision (today the Philippines' 7,641 islands are home to 41,969 *barangays*). Under the friars Manila became a key entrepôt between China and Mexico. Trade flourished.

But apartheid between Europeans and indigenous Filipinos grew such that by the 19th century the latter were still obliged to kiss the hand of any passing Spanish clergyman and were forbidden to break bread at the same table.

By 1896 resentment against the "friarocracy" exploded in a war for independence that broke out when Jose Rizal, an author and icon, was executed for rebellion, sedition and conspiracy. Rizal, who is called the George Washington of the Philippines, was Jesuit-educated and once remarked that he would have joined the order if he had not become a revolutionary novelist. But his hatred of Spanish friars and their abuses fueled his influential 1887 novel *Noli Me Tángere'* (*Touch Me Not*). "I have to believe much in God because I have lost my faith in man," cries the protagonist Juan Ibarra. The Katipunan (abbreviated locally as the K.K.K.), a secret, masonic revolutionary group of which Rizal was a key member, declared war in Caloocan, just a mile from San Roque. Peace would not return to the islands for decades.

By 1898 Spain had lost almost all of its empire and sold the Philippines to the United States for $20 million. But by 1902 the Philippines was an American colony. Sporadic fighting continued, and atrocities were committed on both sides. Amid the bloodshed a clamor for religious freedom grew. The Philippines won independence in 1946. But the church's biggest political stand would arrive much later, under the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos, an attorney whose rule from 1965 to 1986 was marked by brutality and excess.

In 1972, amid insurgencies by Muslim groups on the southern island of Mindanao and China-backed communists countrywide, Marcos placed the Philippines under martial law. Civil rights were suspended, the media shut down and Congress closed. Opposition politicians were detained. Some were tortured. Marcos and his glamorous wife, Imelda, who amassed a shoe collection so great it now inhabits a museum, are reckoned to have stolen $10 billion while in office.

The church had been energized by the Second Vatican Council to play a more active role in lay, grassroots communities. This grassroots work brought clergy and lay leaders into conflict with the martial law government, though bishops remained divided on how to engage in "critical collaboration" with Marcos. When Marcos's henchmen murdered the opposition leader Benigno Aquino Jr. in 1983, Cardinal Jaime Sin called on Filipinos to take to the "parliament of the streets."

On Feb. 7, 1986, amid widespread accusations of fraud, Marcos won a fourth term in office. Mass protest followed. By Feb. 23 tanks began amassing at military and police headquarters in Metro Manila. Cardinal Sin took to Radio Veritas, a Catholic station that broadcast homilies that be-

came a constant thorn in Marcos's side.

"This is Cardinal Sin speaking to the people of Metro Manila," began a speech that inspired a coming revolution. "I am calling our people to support our two 'good friends' [the army and the police] at the camp. If any of you could be around at Camp Aguinaldo to show your solidarity and your support in this very crucial period when our two good friends have shown their idealism, I would be very happy.... Please come." Around 50,000 people then crowded the camps, preventing the armed forces from leaving.

A two-million-strong, three-day demonstration on Manila's circuitous Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (EDSA), one of the city's main thoroughfares, followed. The Marcoses fled to Hawaii. Aquino's widow, Corazon, or "Cory," was inaugurated as president on Feb. 25. Rodrigo Duterte, then a 40-year-old law graduate in the city of Davao on the island of Mindanao, benefited directly from this change. His appointment to the city's vice mayorship came directly from Cory Aquino—despite his admitting to shooting a classmate in college in 1972.

Duterte became mayor of Davao in 1988. He soon earned the nickname "Punisher," serving as mayor while "death squads" rumored to have government backing claimed over 1,000 lives. Duterte himself admitted to killing three alleged rapist-kidnappers just months into his first term. His ruthlessness is masked by a laconic, laissez-faire demeanor. He prefers untucked shirts to suits and delivers chilling statements—such as comparing his drug war to the Holocaust—with all the insouciance of a Hollywood wiseguy. Unlike Marcos, he is unkempt, uncouth and often sleeps in small hotel rooms rather than in Manila's sprawling, Spanish-colonial presidential palace, Malacañang.

That everyman image is a key reason Duterte became president last June. The Philippines is deeply corrupt and economically divided. In 2011, 40 families, most of whose wealth stems from the Spanish era, reaped 76.5 percent of its GDP growth. Since the turn of the century, the country has moved 32 places on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, which surveys citizens on how problematic they consider day-to-day malfeasance to be. The Philippines moved from 69th to 101st of 176 countries.

Several of those families were represented in the election. But they could not match Duterte's savvy brand of social-media populism. Facebook and Twitter were flooded with pro-Duterte pages and accounts, many of questionable authenticity. His team flooded the nation

> THE CATHOLIC CHURCH HAS BEEN ENTANGLED IN POLITICS IN THE PHILIPPINES FOR ALMOST FIVE CENTURIES.

with red-and-blue wristbands as well as bumper stickers emblazoned with Duterte's punching-fist motif, or the abbreviation "DU30," which is pronounced "doo-thirty," a phonetic echoing of the candidate's name.

In a speech announcing his run for president, Duterte attacked Pope Francis, calling him *Putang ina*—a "son of a whore"—when referring to the pope's visit to the Philippines. After assuming office, Duterte's attacks continued. He went after Barack Obama, Muslims, China, the European Union and the media. He is ribald and makes light of rape. Duterte has singled out drugs, particularly *shabu*, as the Philippines' greatest domestic threat. "I have to slaughter these idiots who are destroying my country," he said at his inaugural State of the Nation address in July 2016. Duterte estimates the number of drug addicts to be 3.7 million. The country's Official Dangerous Drugs Board estimates it to be 1.8 million (Duterte fired the board's chief last May). He has cut funding to rights groups and dismissed critics as pedophiles.

The police have recorded 6,000 deaths under investigation. The Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates has recorded at least 12,000. Over 100,000 people have been arrested, and prisons are packed like slave galleons. Duterte has pledged to kill 100,000 "drug personalities." Duterte is like the movie character Dirty Harry, one Manila taxi driver told me, holding his fingers up like a gun. "You do something bad now you have two things: the cemetery and the hospital."

'A NORMAL, EVERYDAY THING'

I have spent many weeks covering the drug war. In that time I have seen bodies slumped over vehicles, in ditches, streets and alleyways, amid the tungsten sprawl of Metro Manila. Police rarely take statements and arrest almost nobody. One night in August the police killed 32 people in raids north of the capital.

Phrases like "human rights" and "extrajudicial killing" are sprinkled like shibboleths into everyday conversation. But the violence has become quotidian and locals are numbed. One evening the family of Ernesto Tapang, known as Brader, showed me CCTV footage of the moment four men pulled up beside him in a black S.U.V., got out and shot him dead. The police believe it was a case of mistaken identity. Nobody has been charged. "It's like a normal, everyday[thing]," his sister Emelita said of the killing.

Duterte has strangled political opposition. His most vocal critic, Senator Leila de Lima, the former justice secretary, is currently detained on suspicion of corruption charges. "You can count with your ten fingers those who are readily vocal and call out Duterte's actions and words every day," she told me by email. "With a civil society like this, you think anyone has any business complaining that the church is not doing more?"

The Philippines is among Asia's most Christian nations. Today 80.6 percent of the population (74.2 million Filipinos) are Catholic. The Philippines is home to the world's third-largest Catholic population, behind Brazil and Mexico (and just above the United States). Ninety-five percent of Filipino Catholics say they view Pope Francis favorably. How could a candidate who pilloried the pontiff make it into office?

As Duterte's presidential campaign gathered pace, Catholic officials across the Philippines voiced concerns about his human rights record. Archbishop Antonio Ledesma of Cagayan de Oro, a city in Mindanao, wrote that summary killings were "illegal, immoral and sinful." The Bishops-Businessmen's Conference (B.B.C.), a lay-clergy social justice coalition, wrote that it could not "vote for anyone who has done nothing to apprehend the perpetrators of more than 1,400 extrajudicial killings under his city administration."

Archbishop Socrates Villegas, president of The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (C.B.C.P.), promised "vigilant collaboration" with the incoming administration, echoing the "critical collaboration" Sin promised under Marcos. Villegas refused to push back harder, writing that "Mine is the silence of respect for those who consider us their enemies but whose good we truly pray for and whose happiness we want to see unfold." Three bishops, from Cubao and Puerto Princesa, praised Duterte's "simplicity."

The B.B.C. offered implicit support for the outsider's popularity, noting that "our country has a long history of failed development because we have repeatedly voted corrupt politicians and political dynasties into office."

Many other priests openly voted for Duterte, enthusiastic because of promises to restore social order and left-wing policies that chimed with church commitments, made during the C.B.C.P.'s second plenary council in 1991, to confront the dismal realities of poverty in the Philippines. Many of the flock followed suit: Duterte took 38 percent of a national poll, in which a historic 81.62 percent of the electorate voted (the U.S. presidential election in 2016, by contrast, drew just 58 percent of the electorate).

The church, too, faced its own problems. Cardinal Sin led another bloodless revolution, against President Joseph Estrada, in 2001, orchestrating a second march along EDSA to protest Estrada's financial mismanagement. But the cardinal died in 2005. And in the years leading to Duterte's ascent the church was weakened by a spate of scandals

Filipinos arrested during a drug-buy bust operation wait to be taken to a police station for verification in 2016 at a slum area in Manila. (CNS PHOTO/FRANCIS R. MALASIG, EPA)

Priests concelebrate Mass offered for martial law victims Sept. 21 in Manila, Philippines. (CNS PHOTO/ROLEX DELA PENA, EPA)

and cover-ups. In 2013 a book called *Altar of Secrets*, by the investigative journalist Aries Rufo, exposed many of them. Sex crimes were hushed. A church-owned bank went bankrupt. Radio Veritas failed to account for donations. Prelates drove around in expensive Mitsubishi Pajero S.U.V.s. Many saw this as a sign not just of extravagance, but of the church's tolerance for the deeply corrupt government of Gloria Arroyo. They were perceived to have taken the S.U.V.s in exchange for silence in criticizing a political ally. The Catholic Church was losing its common touch.

Duterte has aimed jabs at each weakness. "Go straight to God," he told supporters last February. "Don't go through the confessional." Duterte has offered to write a book about the church, entitled *Hypocrisy*. He has called its leaders "full of shit." More damaging have been accusations that Duterte himself was abused by an American Jesuit priest as a teenager. "You criticize the police, you criticize me," he told the clergy, during a January 2017 speech. "For what? You have the money. You are all crazy...when we were making confessions to you, we were being molested. They are touching us. What is your moral ascendancy: religion? What is the meaning of it?"

"From the moment Duterte stepped into the office he started firing at the church, putting it on the defensive," Carlos Conde, a researcher at Human Rights Watch who specializes in the Philippines, told me. "And it worked." Few members of the clergy offered vigorous rebukes in the early weeks of Duterte's leadership. He has also attempted to rehabilitate Marcos, whose family supported his candidacy. And Duterte has even successfully lobbied to have Ferdinand Sr. buried in Metro Manila's Heroes' Cemetery. Many fear the moves are an attempt to validate and repeat Marcos's enactment of martial law, something Duterte has already done across Mindanao in the wake of an ISIS-inspired siege in the Islamic city of Marawi this May. It is still in effect.

Last September, I visited Manila's iconic Miranda Square to witness a clergy-led protest against martial law. The chant *Buhay Na May Dignidad Para Sa Lahat*—"Life With Dignity for All People"—was repeated between prayers and hymns. #NeverAgain trended on Twitter. "There are people who are anti-Marcos and pro-Duterte," the writer Clara Balaguer told me. "That's insane. What you're seeing now is history repeating itself, and all the steps are being put into place for martial law to be declared in everything but name."

History may have been repeating itself in Malacañang. But it was also doing so at the pulpit. The rally was small: I estimated it at around 2,000, with plenty of Duterte supporters standing on its perimeter. But the church was finding its voice against Duterte. In the year since the rally, it has gotten far louder.

'WE DECIDED TO DO SOMETHING TO HELP THE PERSON'

In a small room of the St. Francis of Assisi and Santa Quiteria Parish, in Caloocan, about 50 parishioners are gathered,

STOP THE KILLING AND START THE HEALING.

sitting on plastic chairs. Religious and local council leaders address them from a raised platform. Noodles and bottled water are served. Fans beat back a numbing, midday heat.

It is the first day of Santa Quiteria's drug rehabilitation program, which welcomed the fourth cohort of participants since December last year. Healing and victimhood are key tenets; attendees are "substance use disorder" victims, or SUDs, not addicts. Around 30 people will begin the program. Two-thirds will probably complete it. It is a far cry from the government's attempts at rehab, which consist of enrolling suspected users—those who avoid death—in zumba classes.

In a room above the event, two priests, Edgar Guantero and George Alfonso, outline their separate visions to me over coffee and cake. They are careful not to over-criticize the government or the new president. Speaking ill of the pope is Duterte's "discretion," Father Alfonso, who is loud and loquacious, says wryly. But Father Alfonso cannot hide the fact that their view of the drug problem is very different from Duterte's.

"We are not denying that drugs are a problem in our society," says the soft-spoken Father Guantero. "But instead of acting about the war against them, we decided to do something to help the person."

The work at Santa Quiteria, he says, mirrors the local devotion of *Salubong*, the meeting between the risen Christ and Mary. "We are trying to not really divert but give an alternative to our government," says Alfonso. "Stop the killing and start the healing. Instead of accusing [SUDs] roughly and harshly, try to understand them and start healing them."

Bishop David's stand during Kian's case appears to have marked a step from church statements to physical action. It is part of a wider movement against the drug war's rising body count. On Sept. 8, Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle of Manila issued a statement condemning the killing, writing: "With pain and horror, we continue to get daily news of the killings around the country. We cannot allow the destruction of lives to become normal. We cannot govern the nation by killing. We cannot foster a humane and decent Filipino culture by killing." A week later Cardinal Tagle ordered that church bells should toll for 15 minutes each evening across the capital, through Nov. 27, 2017.

"The brutal murder of Kian delos Santos and other minor victims has galvanized an increasingly organized opposition to the president, but it is unlikely to deter the president from employing draconian measures in his anti-drug campaign," the author Richard Heydarian, who has chronicled Duterte's rise to power, told me. "This is not only due to the fact that Duterte's raison d'état and raison d'être seem to be the elimination of drug personalities, but also the fact that institutional checks and balances remain largely in hibernation mode."

The bishops conference maintained its "vigilant collaboration" until this January, when President Villegas issued a statement decrying the war's "reign of terror" in poor communities. While drug trafficking needed to be "stopped and overcome...the solution does not lie in the killing of suspected drug users and pushers," he added.

Finding a consistent voice across denominational and political lines has been difficult. One group doing so is Rise Up, an umbrella body of nongovernmental organizations across Metro Manila. Its wood-paneled office sits above a church beside EDSA, the site of Marcos's ouster. When I visited, the roof was leaking and only four people were there. But it is grassroots society, not watertight roofing, that will turn the tide of public opinion against the drug war, according to Norma Dollaga, who is also a Methodist deacon: "The government calls illegal drugs criminality, but we see it as a social issue.... Most of those we visit are from poor communities."

Duterte himself has admitted as much, calling the deaths of poor Filipinos a necessary step in dismantling the drug trade "apparatus." According to a survey in September 2017, three out of five Filipinos believe only the poor are killed in the drug war. Almost half of those questioned believe the police are killing innocent people. With Duterte's stranglehold on the legislature, the fightback against the war on drugs will not be carried out in Congress but on the streets. That is where the church is most able to influence its flock, through small, basic ecclesial communities

Protesters place flowers and candles under a picture of a victim of alleged extrajudicial killing after a Mass at the University of the Philippines Church of the Holy Sacrifice in metropolitan Manila, Philippines, on Sept. 21, 2017. (AP PHOTO/AARON FAVILA)

that have formed an increasingly fundamental part of the Philippine church's structure since its first plenary council in 1953.

An added obstacle may be the initiative Mamamayang Ayaw sa Anomalya, Mamamayang Ayaw sa Ilegal na Droga ("Citizens don't want the anomaly; people don't want illegal drugs"). Commonly known as MASA MASID, it is a government initiative that aims to root out drug crime in the poorest communities in the Philippines.

Some have likened the movement to a simple neighborhood watch, where citizens are encouraged to be alert to crime. But others have voiced concern over the use of MASA MASID drop boxes, in which locals can write the names of those they suspect to be associated with drugs. Those on the lists can be caught up in *Tokhang* ("knock-and-plead") police raids. Many are killed while resisting. "Any person in our country, any citizen, his or her name could come out in any watchlist because the war on drugs... does not require evidence, it simply requires names," said a leading lawyer, Jose Manuel Diokno.

If the church's grassroots campaigning grows, it will find itself in direct opposition to MASA MASID, Conde told me. "If the Duterte administration makes good use of MASA MASID...a lot more people are going to die," he said. Catholic leaders have already been threatened. Father Alfonso and Father Guantero told me many of their congregation have grown afraid to be associated with the church. "Attacks on church people and lay workers will increase, and it can be threats, harassment, God forbid more killings," added Conde. "I'm not saying that's happening now. But we should be watchful for that."

Whatever happens, there has undoubtedly been a shift in how many Filipinos view their president and his drug war. And, as the sands of opinion shift a little, the church is getting right back out on the frontline—just as it did in 1986.

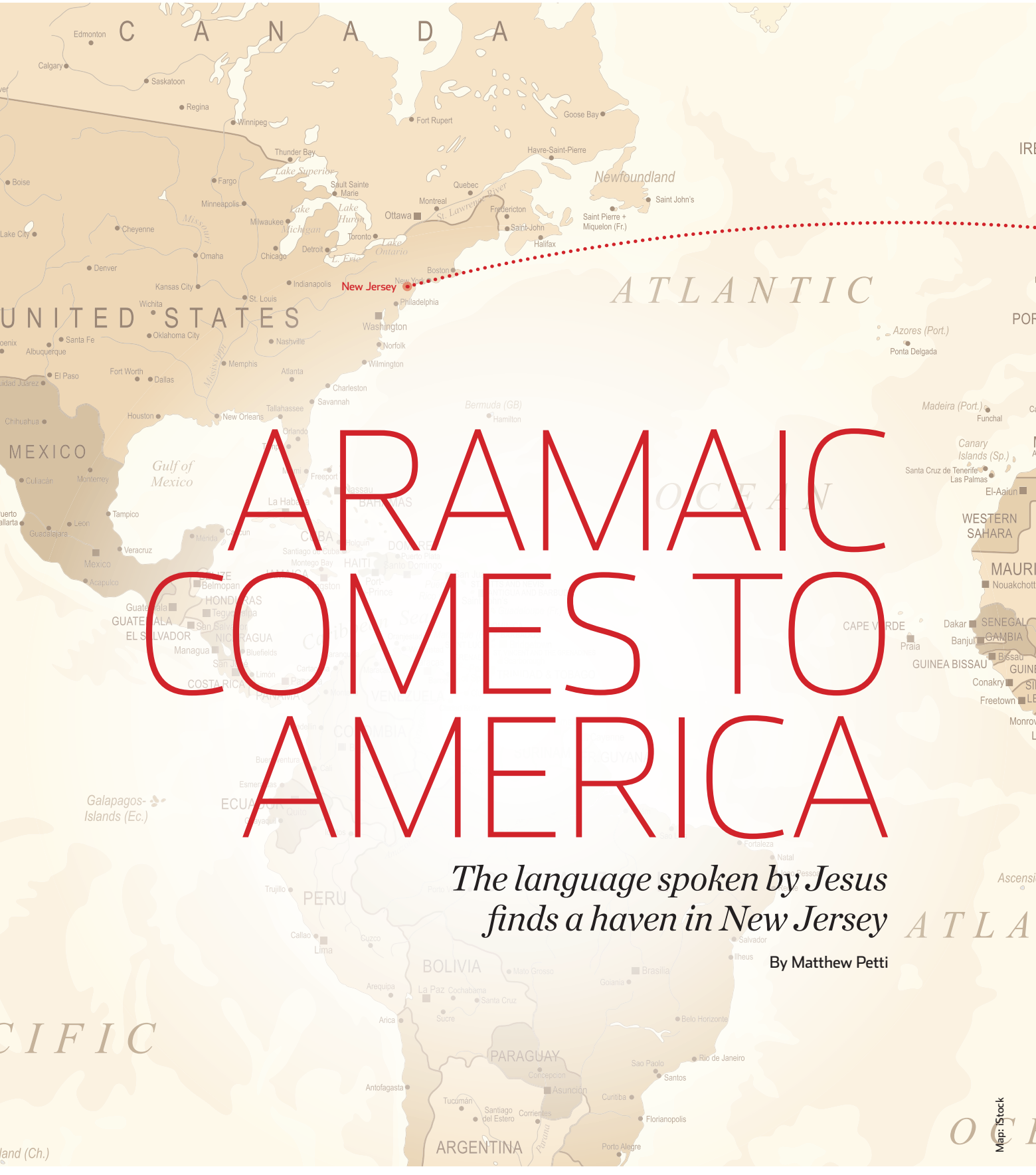
"The sheer number of killings during martial law will pale in comparison with the records of killings in the war on drugs," Edwin A. Gariguez, of Caritas Philippines, told me. "And the authoritarian rule of Duterte is beginning to become even worse than the martial law of Marcos, which he tried to disguise through some semblance [of] legality. Duterte is more brazen, unreasonably vindictive, with little or no regard for accountability."

I left Manila on Sept. 21, the 45th anniversary of the date Marcos first invoked martial law in 1972. That day the streets were lined with thousands of protesters who had gathered to warn about a return to the most repressive years of the Marcos dictatorship. The chances Duterte would make good on threats to re-enact them seemed far greater than they were the previous year. "We have only martial law in Mindanao, but the murders are all-over more than 13,000 now since last year," said Archbishop Villegas that night from a pulpit three hours north of the capital. "Killing the poor and the poorest is the only solution they know to stop crime. Fake news abounds and liars succeed to mislead and confuse."

"We must stand up for the real Filipino," he added. "We are honorable. We are respectful. We are pro-life. We are honest. We are brave. We are losing our national soul to the Father of Lies and Prince of Darkness."

My taxi crawled through the Manila traffic, and I could see protesters holding out religious placards and hand-painted psalms. As the sun set across Manila's smog-filled skyline, they held lighted candles.

Sean Williams *is a Berlin-based freelance writer and journalist.*



ARAMAIC COMES TO AMERICA

The language spoken by Jesus finds a haven in New Jersey

By Matthew Petti

Map: iStock

A strip mall 15 minutes down the highway from Manhattan is the last place I expected to hear the language spoken by Jesus Christ. But northern New Jersey is one of the places where Syriac Christians, driven from the Middle East by violence and persecution, have come to call home over the past few decades. If Jacob Hanikhe has his way, it will also remain one of the few places where Aramaic, an ancient tongue found throughout the Talmud and Gospels, is a living language.

Pope Francis talks with Patriarch Aphrem II of the Syriac-Orthodox Church as religious leaders arrive for an interfaith peace gathering outside the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi, Italy.

CNS photo/Paul Haring

Women light candles before attending Mass at the Melkite Catholic Cathedral in Damascus, Syria.

CNS photo/Youssef Badawi, EPA

Syriac, Assyrian and Chaldean Christians—their chosen name varies by denomination, but most recognize themselves as part of the same ethnic group—originally hail from the Middle East, where their Aramaic dialects were once the dominant language. Forced into diaspora by both ethnic and religious conflicts, the Syriac Christians in New Jersey, who number about 2,000 families and are mostly members of the Syriac Orthodox Church, have created Syriac establishments ranging from language schools to restaurants. They are now attempting to balance the American Dream with preserving their faith and reviving their ancient culture.

I meet Mr. Hanikhe at a bustling jewelry market, where Aramaic is almost as common as English, in the city of Paramus. A jeweler by day, he is the founder and principal of the St. Gabriel Aramaic School in Haworth, a borough in Bergen County, N.J. At his desk, behind a jewelry display case, Mr. Hanikhe displays religious icons and photos of Syriac families in traditional dress.

His desktop computer's wallpaper is a photo of Eavardo, his home village in the Tur Abdin region of Turkey. Tur Abdin, an eastern section of Mardin Province whose name means "the mountain of the servants," has been a center of Syriac life for centuries. Mr. Hanikhe wistfully points out the house he was born in and the church he was baptized in. As a visible religious minority in the Muslim-majority country, Syriac Christians in Turkey have long suffered from violence. "Our business was much better, but there we had no rights," Mr. Hanikhe laments.

According to a paper published in Ethnic and Racial Studies, the Christian community of Turkey has declined from almost one fifth of the population at the beginning of World War I to about 0.1 percent today. Under a collapsing Turkish government in the late 1970s, communist militants and nationalist gangs committed escalating acts of violence on each other and bystanders, and the military coup in 1980 brought another wave of violence, with an ethnic Kurdish uprising followed by a brutal state crackdown. (Indeed, local Syriac leaders requested not to be photographed for this piece, citing fears of the political situation in Turkey.)

But the worst attacks on the Syriac community had already come during the mechanized slaughter of World War I. Leading up to the war, the Ottoman Empire—which encompassed most of the present-day Middle East—had become increasingly hostile toward the Armenian and Syriac Christian communities under its control. During the dynasty's collapse at the war's end, Turkish troops and Kurdish militias massacred around two million Christian civilians, including hundreds of thousands of Syriacs.

Although several Kurdish groups have apologized for the Kurds' role, Turkish law forbids calling the Year of the Sword, or *Shato d Seyfo* as it is known in Aramaic, a genocide. Family and place names were changed to erase their history; the village of Eavardo, for example, is Gülgöze on official maps. The ardent nationalism of Turkey and other secular Ottoman successor states often translates to continued repression of Syriac Christians—now motivated by a desire to whitewash history rather than simple religious fanaticism. With many nations in the Middle East attempting to cut the long thread of Syriac history, it is up to the diaspora in the United States and other countries to preserve it.

The Rise and Eclipse of Aramaic

The history of the Syriac people goes back to biblical times, and that is part of the appeal for learning the Aramaic language, says Melek Yildiz, deacon of the Mor Gabriel Syriac Orthodox Church in Haworth. As he puts it, his language is "antique."

> The Syriac Christians are attempting to balance the American Dream with preserving their faith and reviving their ancient culture.

Part of the same Semitic language family as Arabic and Hebrew, Aramaic originated in the city-states around Damascus almost 1,000 years before Christ. It spread across the Fertile Crescent (present-day Syria and Iraq) during the Assyrian Empire and attained the status of a world language under the Persian Empire and remained dominant well into the Islamic era.

Even after the successors to Alexander the Great imposed Greek as the language of business and government in the Mediterranean, ordinary people continued to use Aramaic in daily life. Some of the names and phrases in the Gospels—such as *eloi, eloi, lama sabachthani* ("My God, My God, why have you abandoned me?") from Mark (15:34) — are untranslated, colloquial Aramaic in the otherwise Greek text. Christians, Jews and Mandaeans (followers of John the Baptist) in western Asia began to speak distinct Aramaic dialects, and even the Zoroastrians (Magi) used an Aramaic-influenced script for the Persian language.

After the spread of Islam and the rise of the Umayyad Caliphate, the Aramaic language was displaced by its cousin Arabic. Converts to Islam found it politically and culturally advantageous to adopt the language of the Quran, which is not hard to learn if you already speak another Semitic language.

And so the Syriac dialects of Aramaic became a symbol of Christian identity, which they remain today. As Mr. Hanikhe of Paramus is keen on reminding me, Aramaic is the "language of Jesus."

Left to rule themselves—so long as they remained subordinate to Muslim rulers—the Aramaic-speaking Christians developed distinct identities as Syriacs, Assyrians or Chaldeans. Meanwhile, many of the ancient Greek texts collected by the House of Wisdom, medieval Baghdad's equivalent of an Ivy League university, entered the Arabic literary tradition through the translations of Aramaic-speaking monks.

It is worth noting that there are Arab Christians, but the Syriacs are not among them. Some populations did adopt the Arabic language and an Arab identity without converting to Islam—and a few communities in western Syria retained Aramaic despite converting to Islam—but for Syriac Christians, their Aramaic heritage and Christian faith are inseparable.

"Our history is different from all of [the Middle East]. We didn't have a state, only our church," says Deacon Yildiz, who comes from the same village as Mr. Hanikhe. He is quick to add that Syriacs now wish they had a state, "because [people] are killing us left and right."

Under Siege in Today's Middle East

The ties between Syriacs' language, ethnicity and religion have led to oppression from multiple sides. Muslim fundamentalists feel threatened by the Aramaic language because it is associated with a religion outside of their tradition, and secular Turkish and Arab ultranationalists feel threatened by the Aramaic-speaking churches because they are an expression of a unique ethnic identity.

One of the worst situations has been in Iraq. State-sponsored repression under Saddam Hussein and his pan-Arab nationalist regime gave way to wanton religious violence after 2003, as the poorly managed U.S. occupation unleashed a sectarian civil war. While the Sunni and Shiite Muslim militias fought each other, Christians were mostly unarmed, leaving them vulnerable to kidnappings and murders by both religious extremists and opportunistic gangs.

When hardline Salafist (Sunni revivalist) forces declared the formation of the Islamic State in 2014, they attempted to exterminate not only Shiites but also Christians and other religious groups like Yazidis. ISIS devastated the Nineveh Plain, the historical Syriac homeland in Iraq, displacing entire villages and destroying centuries-old churches.

Now, as ISIS seems to be receding, Syriacs face a new threat. Athra Kado, an Assyrian activist from Tel Keppe, told me that Iraqi Kurdish parties and militias attempted to pressure local Assyrians into voting yes in September's referendum on Kurdish secession. (Federal troops expelled Kurdish forces from Tel Keppe after the Iraqi government declared the referendum illegal, although nearby towns

> Syriac-Americans may provide a template for other minority groups trying to resist the forces of homogenization, both at home and in diaspora.

remain under Kurdish occupation.) Despite claims in the Kurdish media that Christians will benefit from the Kurdish "liberation" of Syriac lands, Mr. Kado also accuses the same Kurdish militias of disarming Christians and of abandoning them to ISIS.

Yet in neighboring Syria and Turkey, a Syriac and Assyrian socialist movement called Dowronoye has been working with left-wing Kurdish parties. There are Syriac fighters working alongside Kurdish and Arab fighters in the Syrian Democratic Forces, defending a region where ISIS has devastated Syriac communities just as it did in Iraq.

"Even though what is happening to our people in Iraq and Syria is horrific, it may also be our last chance to unify our [Syriac] nation and come out of it stronger," Deacon Yildiz wrote in a pamphlet for a local Syriac event.

Setting Roots in America

In some respects, Deacon Yildiz is the one who laid the groundwork for preserving Syriac culture in New Jersey. He now works as a jeweler in the same building as Mr. Hanikhe. When I ask for an introduction to the deacon, Mr. Hanikhe calls him on the phone in Aramaic and points me to a booth across the room.

Deacon Yildiz fled Turkey with his family in 1979. One of his Syriac friends in America knew Mor Yeshue Samuel, who was the Syriac Orthodox archbishop of Jerusalem before leaving for the United States during the 1948 war and becoming the first Syriac archbishop of the United States and Canada. (He was also famous for helping discover the Dead Sea scrolls.) Archbishop Samuel hired Deacon Yildiz as a deacon and Aramaic instructor for a congregation in New Jersey.

The official history of the Syriac Archdiocese for the Eastern United States says that a deacon from Mosul named Micha al-Nakkar "probably settled in or around Boston" in the 1840s. Larger groups of Syriacs came over in later decades, as silk weavers from Tur Abdin moved to Rhode Island to work in the silk mills there. The archdiocese's history says that their children often went into highly educated fields like law and engineering.

Deacon Yildiz says there has been a Syriac community in New Jersey dating back to the mid-19th century, and it has made some enduring contributions. Taw Mim Semkath, an Assyrian school in Beirut, Lebanon, established by immigrants to New Jersey, is "the oldest known Syriac Orthodox organization that is still functioning," according to the archdiocese. Naum Faiq, a major neo-Aramaic literary figure and Assyrian nationalist thinker, came to New Jersey in 1912, where he wrote for and founded a variety of Aramaic publications. One of them, called Huyodo, is still printed by the diaspora in Sweden as Hujådå.

But because many joined the churches of American-born spouses, the Syriac community was severely diminished, notes Deacon Yildiz. "America is big," he says, "it is easy to be finished."

In a paper called "Becoming 'Syrian' in America," Akram Fouad Khater of the University of North Carolina estimates that around 100,000 people from the Ottoman Empire immigrated to the United States between 1889 and 1919. An overwhelming majority were Christian, many of them Syriac. However, Akram writes that the Middle Eastern immigrants, squeezed between hostile nativists and paternalistic do-gooders, were often forced to relinquish their "uncivilized" culture for "the norms of a predominantly white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant middle class."

Nationality quotas imposed in the 1920s all but ended Syriac immigration to America until such quotas were banned by the Hart-Celler Act of 1965. During that period many Syriacs fell out of touch with their homeland and culture, but some family ties remained strong—even across long distances. For example, Zia Attalla was the first Chaldean Catholic to immigrate to America, according to David Reimers's *Other Immigrants*, and his 1889 journey to Philadelphia attracted many from his home village of Tel Keppe to the United States. More than a century later, a city council candidate in 2012 in southern California named Christopher Shamoon attributed his parents' own decision to flee Iraq for America in the 1970s

to Shamoon's great-grandfather Attalla.

But when he first started working as a deacon in the United States, Deacon Yildiz saw "something empty." The congregation was small, and mostly older people. The archbishop told him that he was not even sure there was anyone to teach Aramaic to. But once he received his green card, Deacon Yildiz began bringing over other families from Eavardo, including Hanikhe's, bringing New Jersey's Syriac population to a couple of thousand.

Today, "chain immigration," which provides family-based pathways to permanent residency, has become a topic of political controversy in the United States. But that type of immigration allowed hardworking immigrants like Mr. Hanikhe and Deacon Yildiz to turn New Jersey from a place their language went to die to a center of Aramaic revival. Only about six months after Deacon Yildiz began teaching Aramaic classes, the classes grew too large for his house. The number of newcomers allowed the community to found several different churches, including St. Gabriel's.

In fact, the head of the entire Syriac Orthodox Church, His Holiness Mor Ignatius Aphrem II, started his career in New Jersey. (Mor is an Aramaic term of respect somewhere between "sir" and "saint.") Born in Qamishli, Syria, with the name Sa'id Karim, Mor Aphrem earned his doctorate in divinity at St. Patrick's College, a Roman Catholic pontifical university in Maynooth, Ireland. When the famous Mor Samuel died, his archdiocese was divided into smaller territories, and Mor Aphrem was made Metropolitan Archbishop and Patriarchal Vicar of the Eastern United States at St. Mark's Syriac Orthodox Cathedral in Teaneck, N.J. Elected the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East by a synod in 2014, Mor Aphrem now has a monastery named after him in Paramus.

Building on his community's renaissance, Mr. Hanikhe founded the St. Gabriel Aramaic School about 20 years ago. Every Friday during the school year, around 500 children from Mor Gabriel's congregation spend four hours learning both colloquial Syriac dialects and the literary Aramaic of religious scholarship. (There is an Assyrian dialect as well, but Mr. Hanikhe says it is not very different from Syriac.) There is also a Sunday school taught in Aramaic and a summer camp for both recreation and religious studies.

Mr. Hanikhe explains to me that many Syriac institutions do not get government support, so the revitalization of Syriac Christianity in New Jersey has been funded by the community itself.

The revitalization of Aramaic has also been helped by

CNS photo/Dan Meloy, The Michigan Catholic

Syriac Patriarch Ignatius Joseph III Younan celebrates the Divine Liturgy at St. Toma Syriac Catholic Church in Farmington Hills, Mich.

Suroyo TV, a satellite channel that broadcasts Aramaic content to communities around the world. Although its studio is in Sweden, Deacon Yildiz is on its board of trustees and holds events for the channel around the New York area.

He shows me a pamphlet for the Suroye bi Golutho, or "Syriacs in Diaspora," gala. Hundreds of Syriacs gathered at the Assyrian Orthodox Church of the Virgin Mary in Paramus at an event in June 2016 organized by Suroyo TV. In addition to photos of the event, the pamphlet features photos of Syriac-American life stretching back decades, advertisements for Syriac-owned restaurants and jewelry shops, and the announcement of a new diaspora-funded humanitarian organization in Syria called the Syriac Cross Organization.

Mr. Hanikhe—who also speaks English, Turkish, Arabic and Kurdish—says that he does "not hate any language" but does prefer Aramaic. He complains that it is hard to teach young Syriac-Americans when they "run away from our culture," but he happily remarks that the youngest generation is also the most enthusiastic about learning.

Some of the enthusiasm comes from the language's long history, but it is also a matter of survival for the Syriac people. When previous generations gave up Aramaic culture in the process of assimilating, there were still thriving Syriac communities in the Middle East. The accumulated atrocities of the 20th century, however, have made it all the more important for the diaspora to preserve their culture.

"When they're attacking you," Mr. Hanikhe says, "you try to unite to keep your language and culture."

New Generations and a New Vision

Not only are younger generations staying in touch with their parents' language, many who had been disconnected from their Aramaic heritage are rediscovering it.

A wave of Palestinian Syriac immigrants came to New Jersey after Israel captured the West Bank and Gaza in the Six Day War in 1967, followed by an exodus of Syriacs during

The ties between Syriacs' language, ethnicity and religion have led to oppression from multiple sides.

the Lebanese Civil War in the 1980s. Deacon Yildiz says that these Syriacs had already given up Aramaic in favor of Arabic. Many from other countries, like Turkey and Iran, had adopted those countries' national languages as well.

Some families have not spoken Aramaic for generations, but by participating in the Syriac-American community, their children are returning to their ancestors' language.

Sectarian divisions are also dampened in diaspora. Because the Syriac, Assyrian and Chaldean communities in America are so small, and because they experience many of the same things both at home and in diaspora, their common identity is strengthened.

"The attendees of tonight's event may come from different churches and organizations, but we all speak the same language and come from the same heritage and we are all Syriac-Assyrian-Aramaic-Chaldean," Deacon Yildiz's introduction to Suroye bi Golutho said. "No matter what we call ourselves, the enemy [doesn't] differentiate us."

However, recent developments in U.S. politics have left many Syriacs uncertain about their future. For example, President Trump has presented himself as a protector of Middle Eastern Christians, but he was also elected on a wave of anti-immigration sentiment. Mr. Hanikhe says that most Syriacs in New Jersey voted for Trump. Chaldean Catholics in Detroit, the largest Chaldean community outside of the Middle East, turned out in droves for Trump, as Slate reported in a September 2017 article.

But Syriacs have learned that Mr. Trump's nativist rhetoric does not necessarily distinguish them from other Middle Eastern peoples. The administration has been caught up in lengthy legal battles over its repeated attempts at nationality-based travel bans. The third iteration of the ban, the legality of which was still being argued in federal court at the end of December, includes Syria, which had the second-largest pre-war Syriac population.

The Trump administration agreed to remove Iraq, the country with the largest pre-war Syriac population, from the second iteration of the travel ban if its government began allowing U.S. authorities to deport Iraqis. This deal resulted in an Immigrations and Customs Enforcement crackdown on Iraqi-American communities across the country, many of them ethnic or religious minorities. Several Chaldeans from Detroit have already been deported; although a federal judge has temporarily halted the removals, many others face trouble staying in the country legally.

The Trump administration has also narrowed the definition of "bona fide relationships" for immigrants already here in order to curtail the "chain immigration" that allowed Syriacs to establish a community in New Jersey, and the president has called for an end to family-based immigration as part of a deal to renew the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program that protects undocumented immigrants brought to the United States as children from deportation.

Mr. Hanikhe says that Syriacs around the world have appealed to the United Nations to protect their community, both in the diaspora and in the Middle East, in light of the persecution they are suffering. But while he would prefer a safe and free Syriac homeland, Mr. Hanikhe says that many are left with no choice but to rebuild their community in diaspora.

This is possible only in a cosmopolitan vision of immigration, one that allows newcomers to integrate into American life without relinquishing their culture or institutions. The success of the Syriac-Americans, if it continues in the future, can provide a template for other minority groups trying to resist the forces of homogenization, both at home and in diaspora.

But regardless of the nation's immigration policy, the Syriac-American community is probably here to stay. Despite persecution and the hardship of immigration, they have managed to cultivate a powerful consciousness of their history and culture—acting as survivors rather than victims.

"If you think it's easy, it's not that easy," Mr. Hanikhe says, "but we have no choice."

Matthew Petti *is a junior at Columbia University majoring in Middle East studies. He is an example of northern New Jersey's cultural melting pot, coming from an Iranian and Italian background.*

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RENEWING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF MARRIAGE

A sacrament in peril

By John A. Alesandro

For centuries, the Catholic church has simplistically "canonized" marriage, stripping down its sacred and sacramental character as a covenant and likening it to a secular contract. The time has come to liberate the sacrament of marriage from its austere identification with natural marriage by recognizing its sacramental uniqueness, the newness Christ gave it, and the fact that the fullness of this mystery comes about not in an instant but through a couple's interpersonal growth into the "one flesh" of Genesis, to which Jesus referred in his debate with the Pharisees on divorce.

Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation "Amoris Laetitia" has put the church on the path toward a deeper recognition of the ecclesial meaning of marriage. Francis makes it clear that the magisterium, the official teaching authority of the church, need not intervene to settle every theological and pastoral discussion. There are "various ways of interpreting" the teaching and applying it to concrete situations. This article seeks to do just that: to interpret certain aspects of the church's "teaching and practice" about the sacrament of marriage.

THE MEDICINE OF MERCY

The indissolubility of a sacramental marriage is a central teaching of the church. Why has it generated such a highly polarized debate? For some, indissolubility has become a badge of Catholicity, an eternal truth whose articulation is not subject to growth or nuance. Others search for a pastoral solution, but not in the meaning of marriage itself. Instead, they appeal to moral theology and the realm of conscience to alleviate the plight of the invalidly remarried, skirting the theological issue.

Francis emphasizes the complexity of such situations, warning pastors not to use moral teaching as a weapon against those in "irregular situations," as if these truths "were stones to throw at people's lives." He draws the traditional distinction between objective evil and subjective culpability and applies it to irregular marriages in which couples can be seen as nourished by God to live a life of grace and charity. The pope adds a crucial assertion: The pastoral care of such persons "can include the help of the sacraments," for the Eucharist 'is not a prize for the perfect, but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak.'"

While the pastoral tension of such marriages is honestly presented and discussion is sincerely fostered, the doctrinal point underlying the debate remains unresolved in the synodal documents and in the apostolic exhortation. Why is it so difficult to reconcile the beautiful doctrine on sacramental marriage with pastoral practice?

The principal problem, in my opinion, is the tendency to "canonize" the propositions of church teaching on sacramentality and indissolubility, giving every single conclusion about sacramental marriage the same weight and finality. The church has rightly concretized and delimited the elements of Christ's gift of sacramental marriage to guide pastoral practice. The problem is, however, that much of this historically conditioned construct is not treated as such; it is in need of a fuller interpretation that is more faithful to Christ himself and to his people, i.e., those who are actually living out the sacrament of marriage today.

CANONICAL PROPOSITIONS

The following five statements are an attempt to articulate this "canonical construct" of pastoral practice, all of which are found in some fashion in the Code of Canon Law.

1. A man and woman bring a marriage into existence by validly exchanging consent. Consent is absolutely irreplaceable.

2. The marriage of two validly baptized persons is a sacrament, whether the parties know it or not.

3. Parties who marry validly do not have the power to dissolve their marriage (intrinsic indissolubility), nor does anyone else have the power to do so other than the Roman Pontiff in certain limited cases (extrinsic indissolubility). Civil divorces do not dissolve the marriage bond; they simply adjudicate civil effects, such as liability, support and child custody.

4. A sacramental marriage can be dissolved by the Roman Pontiff if it is not yet physically consummated.

5. A sacramental marriage, properly consummated, cannot be dissolved for any reason whatsoever by anyone, not even the pope. A person bound by such a marriage cannot validly marry another during the lifetime of his or her spouse; to do so is adulterous.

These canonical propositions flow from the church's teaching over centuries to explicate the newness Jesus proclaimed about marriage. Such statements, however, cannot adequately comprehend all that Christ brought to marriage. As the theologian Rev. Robert Imbelli has stated, "Christian doctrine is not reducible to propositions.... Doctrines are, of their very nature, 'mystagogic': leading into the mystery of Christ 'in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.'"

Unfortunately, some are tempted to reduce the "newness" that Christ brought to marriage to its bare minimum: the absolute indissolubility of the marriages of the baptized. For them, natural marriage and sacramental marriage are identical. The only difference is the "special firmness" added to marriages in which the two spouses are validly baptized.

Why is it so difficult to reconcile the doctrine on marriage with pastoral practice?

But indissolubility is not the only hallmark of Christian marriage. The *sacramentality* of the marriage of the baptized is essential to the life of the spouses and their children and to the entire people of God. The "one flesh" that the spouses become symbolizes the incarnational union of the Son of God with humanity and, like all the sacraments, brings about what it symbolizes. Sacramental marriage is not some peripheral aspect of ecclesial life; it is intimately connected with the very presence of the God-man among us, indissolubly joined to us, the central Christ-event, inserted into the fabric of the church and the family. Without it indissolubility has no meaning.

RATUM ET CONSUMMATUM

In 1978, the International Theological Commission asserted that the sacramentality and indissolubility of marriage are in a "reciprocal, constitutive relationship." Yet, recognizing the need for doctrinal and juridical development, the commission concluded that the church "can further define" sacramentality and consummation, resulting in "a deeper and more precise presentation."

Sacramentality, which logically underlies and explains indissolubility, was asserted rather late in the church's history. The marital symbolism of Christ and his church was there from the beginning, but the inclusion of marriage as one of the seven sacraments came later than the other six, and much later than the concept of indissolubility. Sacramentality, although the bedrock of the newness Christ revealed about marriage, has in fact received relatively little theological and canonical development.

Many sense, for example, that the sacramentality of marriage should be connected in some way to the personal faith of the spouses (i.e., should be more than the infused virtue of faith conferred in baptism). Yet the current canonical construct creates the quintessential horns of a dilemma: If personal faith is required for sacramentality, and no marriage of two validly baptized spouses can exist without being a sacrament, then the absence of personal faith in one or both of the spouses invalidates their exchange of consent—a sacramental Catch-22. The baptized who have no personal faith lose the natural right to marry. Either that, or their abandonment of faith means nothing in the sense that when they validly marry, they are sacramentally and indissolubly married—even though they may deny that very sacramentality!

Contrary to the spare canonical construct, *everything* about a sacramental marriage, the marriage of the new covenant, is supposed to be "elevated," "greater," "radically new"—to use John Paul II's words in "Familiaris Consortio": Natural conjugal love receives "a new significance" as an "expression of specifically Christian values."

Why, then, does that "new significance" introduced by Jesus not call for a "new" standard of judgment about all essential aspects of the matrimonial covenant? One obvious reason is that to assert such "newness" one must reinterpret the age-old canonical construct. Fortunately, one of the constitutive elements of sacramentality and indissolubility is clearly a historically conditioned factor, an element that the theological commission felt the church can "further define." It is the requirement that a sacramental marriage, though it comes into existence by mutual free consent, does not become *absolutely* indissoluble until it is *consummated*—i.e., "completed."

CONSUMMATION AS PROCESS

The identification of "consummation" with physical intercourse is a cultural addition to the teaching of Christ, a historically conditioned requirement of the canonical construct that admits of and cries out for updating. It was put in place in the 12th century to resolve a theological and practical dispute about when marriage begins, known as the consent-copula controversy. Alexander III forged the canonical compromise with which we live today: True marital consent creates the sacramental marriage bond, but such a marriage is not absolutely indissoluble unless it is physically consummated. The cultural importance of the sexual act as the juridical completion of a marriage was understandably appropriate for its time, but its sacramental role requires a fuller interpretation.

The Second Vatican Council asserted a deeper, personalist understanding of the object of marital consent: the persons themselves rather than the right to sexual acts. "The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World" explicitly rejected the hierarchical relationship of the ends of marriage: procreation as primary, and remedy of concupiscence as secondary.

Accordingly, the church should be open to the idea that sacramental marriages pass through varied stages apart from sexual intercourse before absolute indissolubility emerges. In other words, the sacramental marriage bond must be "consummated" before the indissoluble sacramental marriage is "completed," but this "consummation" may not in most cases be fulfilled simply by a single physical act. Successive stages of completion, yes; a single physical act, no.

It seems eminently appropriate to require the actuation of true interpersonal self-giving before one concludes that the spouses' mutual consent is fully consummated, that is, completed, and therefore absolutely indissoluble. With some, this may occur immediately; with others it may emerge over time; and some may unfortunately never achieve the unity required for a consummated sacramental marriage. As with declarations of nullity, hindsight may be the only way to determine whether such completion occurred.

SAVING THE SACRAMENT

We are losing the battle for marriage as a sacrament. Over the past 25 years there has been a 52 percent decrease in the number of Catholic marriages in the United States, in contrast to a 30 percent increase in the Catholic population (341,622 Catholic marriages in 1988; 163,976 in 2013). At the same time, divorce remains a major concern for all, including Catholics.

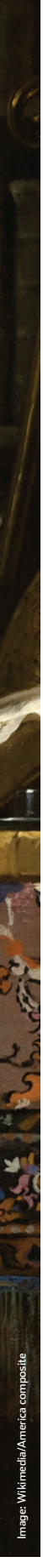
Many divorced Catholics may fortunately be declared free to remarry because they never married in the church to begin with. Many other Catholics or their prospective spouses, however, are still bound to a presumably valid marriage.

Many believe that a large number of marriages today should be declared invalid on psychological grounds. Yet the number of cases adjudicated by Catholic tribunals in the United States has dropped drastically, perhaps by half, in the last quarter of a century. What if these tribunals were given another task? Studying the capacity of spouses at the time of their marriage is quite effectively done by judges and professional counselors. Would a tribunal not be just as capable of studying whether a Christian couple truly *completed* the sacrament initiated by their vows?

Francis' promulgation of streamlined norms in 2015 has facilitated the canonical process of nullity, although further revision would be helpful (for example, acceptance of a qualified lay person as a single judge). But streamlining the process and recognizing the forum of conscience can go just so far. Elements of the canonical construct itself need radical revision: an appreciation of marital sacramentality and consummation that is consonant with the church's deeper understanding of the sacrament Christ has given us.

The sacrament of marriage is a gift to build up the people of God, not merely by the wonder of bringing children into the world but by fostering Christian families in a ministry of life and love for God and each other. This sacrificial life should be marked not only by the duty of permanence but by daily resurrection to new life. It should be a deep encounter of faith, as mysterious as that of Christ's incarnation, one that over time (a time that may be unique for each couple) is completed sacramentally and indissolubly—in other words, consummated, in the best sense of our Christian tradition and the teaching of Christ.

Msgr. John A. Alesandro *is a priest of the Diocese of Rockville Centre and a former president of the Canon Law Society of America. He is the author of* Indissolubility and the Synod of Bishops, *published in 2015 by Paulist Press.*



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AUGUSTINE IN THE INTERNET AGE

Making ancient questions matter to modern students

By Ellen B. Koneck

As a new teacher, I am struggling to make something I find so obviously important (ahem, theology) matter to my students.

In the spring of 2016—my first semester teaching—I realized quickly it would be an uphill battle to make the concerns in Augustine's *Confessions* relatable to my students. Sophomores at my university are required to take my class (a great books seminar focused on the Catholic intellectual tradition), and although many were raised in a Catholic or Christian tradition, the abstract, ancient and seemingly impractical questions about God and religion addressed in my course did not readily compel or even interest them. When the semester ended, I did not feel my class had the impact I had wanted (to my surprise, no one dropped their finance major to take up theology!).

I tried Augustine once again this past fall.

Once again, it was an uphill battle—but we were starting to get somewhere.

We spent one class on the chapter in which Augustine frets over the immateriality of God. Immateriality, conceptually, is difficult for Augustine: How can he perceive God if he cannot picture God, if God does not occupy space? But God certainly cannot occupy space, because that would make God material, and the material world is subject to change, decay and death—things that cannot be true of God (at least, not any God in whom Augustine is interested). In this lies an important issue for Augustine: God cannot be contained in the imagination because the imagination relies on spatial assumptions for its images. And God cannot take up space, lest God be too closely related to the material world. Simple, right?

I opened the seminar discussion that morning with a series of questions: "Why is Augustine struggling with this question? Why does it matter that he can't 'picture' God—and can you relate to the concern?"

I sat back in my chair, expecting to wait while they mulled over my questions. Instead, my students took no time to respond: "That's easy," they seemed to agree, without any apparent need for continued discussion, "God is spiritual. Once Augustine realizes that, he'll be fine."

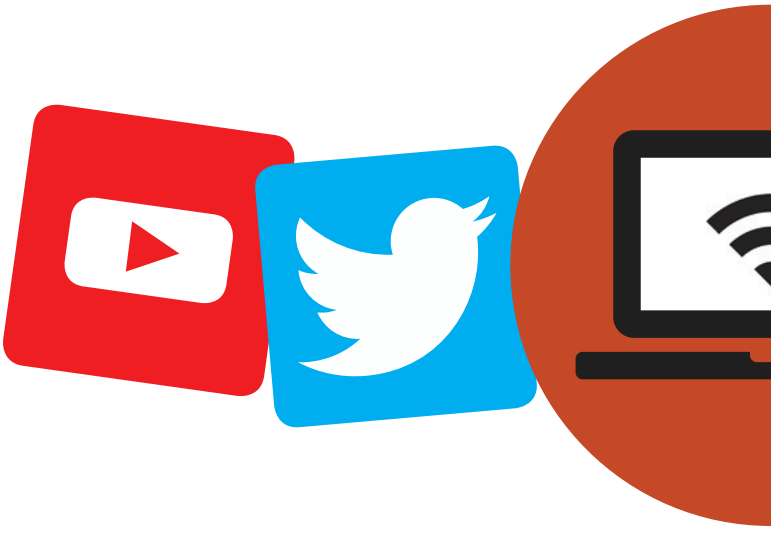
I should have seen it coming. They offered an explanation based on their modern sensibility—that is, their modern, collective comfort with the possibility of a "spiritual" realm. God is spiritual, and so is Grandma, and so is my yoga practice—easy. We have inherited a watered-down version of the answer (and all its novel applications) Augustine struggled to find, but we have lost sight of the question that initially prompted his thinking.

Reluctant to let them off the hook without digging a little deeper—after all, Augustine was not a simpleton; there must have been good reason for his intellectual hang-up—I pressed them.

"O.K. What do you mean by 'spiritual'?" (I allowed a few Merriam-Webster dictionary apps to be consulted.)

"Of, relating to or affecting the human spirit or soul as opposed to material or physical things." The discussion was stuck on a tautology disguised as a first principle: God is not material or physical because God is spirit—and spirit is nonmaterial and nonphysical.

Determined to get us unstuck, I turned to imagery. "What mental picture comes to mind if I ask you to imagine 'God'?"



We meet God in churches or nature; we meet the internet on laptops or wifi hot spots.

They remained steadfast: "God is spirit. I guess I picture Jesus. Or a dove." Another responded, "I picture the wind." While trying to affirm the rationale behind these images, I struggled to communicate why they did not satisfy the whole of Augustine's concern. I wanted them to realize that Augustine's dilemma was indeed a human dilemma—it might even be their dilemma—and not one that is adequately addressed or summarily dismissed with inherited platitudes and pre-fabricated conceptions of God or religion.

How could I present ancient questions so they have meaningful stakes for modern readers? How can I make abstract questions of God, religion and faith matter in novel ways for a new generation? How had my parents, my catechists, my professors first made these questions meaningful for me?

In a desperate Hail Mary attempt (forgive the pun), I proposed one last question that would not allow them to rely on terms like *God, spirit* or *materiality*, a question that might break them loose from reliance on predetermined notions of God, a question that might resonate meaningfully with modern students.

"Can you picture the internet without picturing your phone or computer?"

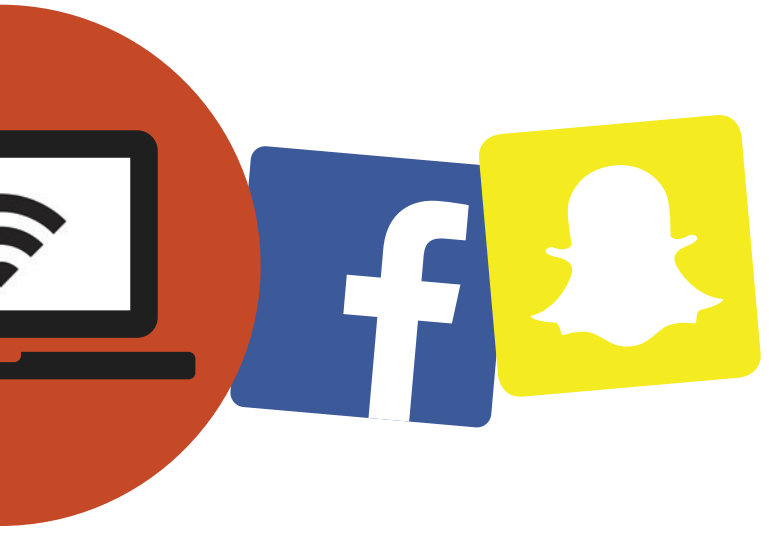
Silence.

After a minute or two of pensive quiet, a few attempts to answer were made: Perhaps a browser page? A login screen? Through conversation we all agreed that phones, tablets or laptops are not in themselves the internet. They are merely spaces where the internet seems to "live." So, too, with browser pages and login screens. Cables in the ground are cables in the ground—and though the internet might be related to those cables or browsers or tablet screens—my students all agreed that they are not, in fact, the internet.

I pressed them: "But we all talk about the internet. We all know what we're referring to when we say 'internet,' and where to find it and what role it plays in our lives. Why can't you picture it?" I will admit: I was already a little giddy at this point.

Every observation the students made—observations about predictable points of access, about familiarity and personalization, about universality and community, about its ever-present-yet-invisible nature—provided a working metaphor for the way we may experience or understand God in modern life. We meet God in churches or nature; we meet the internet on laptops or wifi hot spots. Our homepage and bookmarks are personalized, and so is our specific mode of prayer. And despite this familiarity and personalization, we find there are corners of both the internet and our own religion that seem entirely foreign. We may not see the internet—or the divine—but we trust both will be there for us when we show up with a need. Power outages and inexplicable suffering are often the occasions that prompt our sudden and keen awareness of our utter reliance on these metaphysical (or at least metasensory) realities.

The experience of wrestling to define or imagine the internet mirrored and illuminated the nature of Augustine's struggle hundreds of years before. If the internet—



which is man-made and finite—resists the ability to be easily imagined or outlined, how much truer must that be of God?

I have found that it is unproductive to try to force theological ideas—like Augustine's understanding of evil, Dante's depiction of the beatific vision or Flannery O'Connor's morbid but hopeful anthropology—into the minds of students despite their disinterest.

Instead, I try to translate the import of these weighty concerns, claims and questions so students can feel what Augustine or Dante felt when facing these existential summits, or so they can entertain Plato's suggestion that perception and reality are not necessarily what they seem.

Theology is impotent and irrelevant when presented as just a set of ideas, doctrines or conclusions to be passively internalized. Instead, it is the kind of discipline that requires first making the questions that drive theological inquiry meaningful, long before answers can even be introduced.

Ellen Koneck *is the acquisitions, sales and marketing manager at Anselm Academic in Minneapolis, Minn. She previously worked at Commonweal and taught at Sacred Heart University in Fairfield, Conn.*

Martin Scorsese has something to say about immigration

By Antonio De Loera-Brust

Image courtesy of Miramax Films

"Gangs of New York" reminds us that for as long as the United States has been a nation of immigrants, it has been infected by xenophobia.

It doesn't get more Martin Scorsese than the street brawl scene that opens his 2002 film "Gangs of New York." The battle is the climax of a bitter turf war between American nativists, led by the fearsome Bill the Butcher (played by Daniel Day-Lewis) and the Irish Catholic immigrant gang, led by "Priest" Vallon (Liam Neeson). At stake is control of the Five Points neighborhood in Lower Manhattan, today's Little Italy.

After a preliminary exchange of religiously charged insults ("Roman popery"), the fight begins. We see ears ripped off, legs folded in and men tearing at each other's faces with bloody fingers. "America was born in the streets," the film's posters declared. The opening sequence makes clear it was a bloody and violent birth.

Set in the mid-19th century, "Gangs of New York" reminds us in a visceral way that for as long as the United States has been a nation of immigrants, it has been infected by xenophobia. Fifteen years after the film's release, the country is once again bitterly divided over race, class and immigration. Demographic changes today are as dramatic as the changes in the 19th century. The backlash has been just as fierce, in rhetoric if not in widespread street violence.

Ironically, though perhaps not surprisingly, it is often the descendants of once-hated 19th- and 20th-century Catholic European immigrants who resent the immigrants of today. "My ancestors came here legally and followed the law," goes the usual argument against illegal immigration today. Scorsese's film is a $97-million way of responding, "You sure about that?"

SCORSESE'S AMERICA

Despite its national implications, the plot of "Gangs of New York" is intensely local, set in Martin Scorsese's childhood neighborhood. Much of the action centers around the construction of a Catholic church that strongly resembles the real-life Old St. Patrick's Church in Little Italy. Old St. Patrick's was built in the early 19th century as the first seat of the Archdiocese of New York. In the second half of the 19th century, as Irish-Americans gained wealth and influence, they built the larger St. Patrick's Cathedral on Fifth Avenue. Lower Manhattan's immigrant neighborhoods, once home to Irish and Germans, became home to Russian Jews and Italians. Old St. Patrick's Church was inherited by these Italian immigrants, among them Scorsese's Sicilian immigrant grandparents.

Growing up in that neighborhood, Scorsese became fascinated with the stories of the immigrants who came before him. "One story was about a group of mostly Irish immigrants having a showdown in front of the church with a gang of Protestant American-Born men, who felt they were the only true Americans," recalled Scorsese in a book on the film's making. "On this occasion the immigrants banded together, gathering up all the weapons they could find, and defended their church against the attacking mob."

This exact scene unfolds in the film, with the Irish-American protagonist Amsterdam Vallon (Leonardo DiCaprio) leading the face-off against Bill the Butcher's nativist gang. This moment, like many others in the film, reveals what we could call the Martin Scorsese thesis of immigrant assimilation: Becoming American requires not only enduring violence but being able to return it as well. It is a question of power, of how big a "gang" you can assemble.

Scorsese's vision is in stark con-

In "Gangs of New York," the means of war and politics are not easily distinguishable.

trast to the mainstream narratives of immigrants that often highlight hard work, family values and civic participation. First, his protagonists are all orphaned. Bill the Butcher is orphaned by the British, who killed his father (presumably in the War of 1812). Amsterdam Vallon is orphaned by Bill the Butcher, who kills his father, Priest Vallon, in the opening scene. Cameron Diaz's Irish-American character Jenny is similarly parentless, the closest thing to a father figure being Bill the Butcher, who took her in as a girl.

The only "family value" showcased in the film is revenge or, more charitably, the family loyalty that motivates revenge. But tribal loyalty is valued above all by both sides, who despite living in close quarters choose to draw a bright line between themselves and their enemies.

"Gangs of New York" leaves viewers rooting for the Irish immigrants. Yet in its thematic outlook, the film perhaps agrees more with Bill the Butcher's philosophy when he says that "a native is a man who's willing to give his life for his country." This is the violence that Scorsese presents as the rite of passage necessary for immigrants to become Americans. (In fact, many of his films, from "Mean Streets" to "Goodfellas" to "The Departed," explore the ways in which immigrants and their descendants use violence to make their way in America.)

Consider how Scorsese depicts voting, widely seen as the most important mark of U.S. citizenship. When an election takes place in "Gangs of New York," heroes and villains alike happily use intimidation, fraud and violence to win votes. Tellingly, both sides rely on immigrant votes, with Bill the Butcher dragging Chinese immigrants to the polls. Meanwhile, Amsterdam and his gang mobilize the Irish, pushing a few reluctant citizens to vote at knifepoint. It is often said that politics is "war by other means." In "Gangs of New York," the means of war and politics are not readily distinguishable.

What is truly provocative is how Scorsese depicts the outcome of the violent and fraudulent election, with the immigrants coming out on top. An Irish-American candidate is elected, thanks to plenty of fraud and multi-

Image courtesy of Miramax Films

tudes of Irish voters. This candidate (Brendan Gleeson) is a former street brawler, who in the opening scene was bashing in nativist heads with a club. His transformation into a well-dressed and democratically elected sheriff is a classic model of a soldier turned politician who assimilates into the American mainstream.

The movie could have ended here. Instead, within minutes of his election, he is brutally murdered by Bill the Butcher in broad daylight. Standing over the corpse, Bill tells all the assembled witnesses: "That, my friends, is the minority vote."

THE ANCIENT LAWS OF COMBAT

Clearly democracy, at least in those days, was not the path into American identity. But if not democracy, then what? Scorsese suggests that, for many immigrant groups, it has been through ritualized violence. After Bill the Butcher negates the vote through outright murder, the film comes full circle: The Irish gang, reformed under Amsterdam, challenges Bill the Butcher to another pitched battle for control of the Five Points.

One of the film's most interesting motifs are images and statues of Native Americans. They are tucked away in the backs of rooms but often clearly in frame, waiting to be noticed. The imagery reminds us that Bill the Butcher's "natives" were themselves once immigrants who used violence to claim their place in America. But the fact of this violent conquest does not prompt any self-reflection or remorse from Bill the Butcher; rather, it is central to his claim that the later-arriving Irish do not belong. In the sole eye of Bill the Butcher (he cut the other one out himself), vi-

Bona Annuntiatio

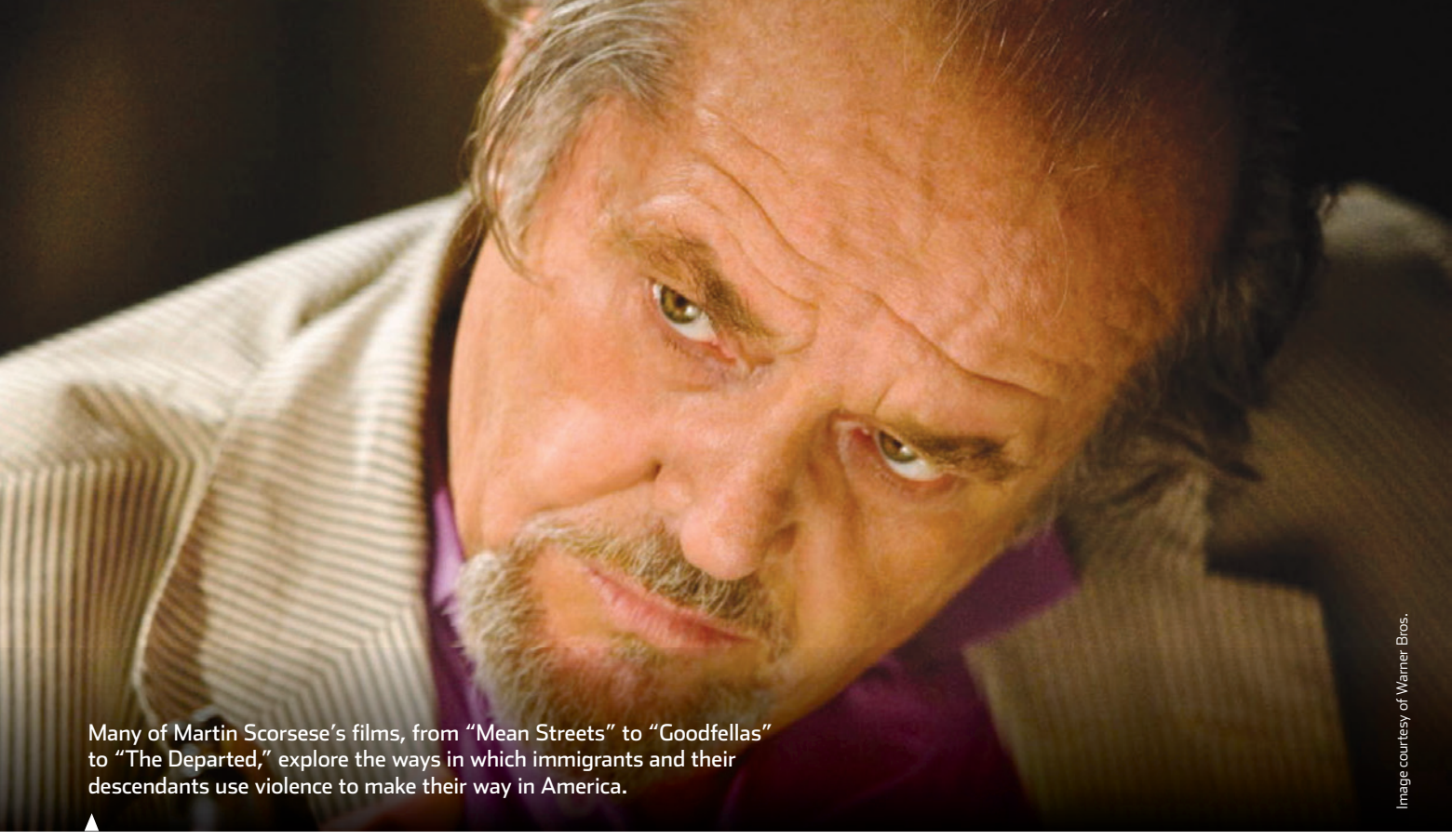
By Shann Ray

with good brothers
we without vision without light inner or ocular
we who perish like the flower in the field wait for light

this one wronged
beaten by his own father whipped
but when he became a man he not only forgave his father
who had little in life and little opportunity
he bought him a house and placed his father on firm ground
the image of him and his father embracing
weeping on one another's necks stays with me forever o God

you are a poet of reconciliation
i mean she and i see you as a poet
of blessing we who were homeless exiled sick with longing
you blessed us all

Shann Ray's *work has appeared in Poetry, Esquire, McSweeney's and Narrative. Honors include a National Endowment for the Arts Literature Fellowship and an American Book Award. He teaches at Gonzaga University.*



Many of Martin Scorsese's films, from "Mean Streets" to "Goodfellas" to "The Departed," explore the ways in which immigrants and their descendants use violence to make their way in America.

Image courtesy of Warner Bros.

olence is how one stakes a claim as an American. Bill justifies his xenophobia by pointing out that his ancestors, specifically his deceased father, fought for America at its founding.

In one memorable scene, Bill declares that the country is not for those who have "had no part in the fighting for it." Even as he speaks, we see Irish immigrants, fresh off the boat, line up behind him to enlist in the Union Army. Service with the Union side in the Civil War is a way in which Irish immigrants could lay claim to their American identity—again, through violence. They fight for the nation, so they belong in the nation.

Bill recognizes this logic. Despite having killed Priest Vallon, Bill calls him "the last honorable man." He tells Amsterdam, "Your father tried to carve out a corner of this country for his tribe." Amsterdam comes to recognize that this violent struggle to "carve out a corner" is his generational legacy. By embracing this struggle he becomes truly American.

THE CONTINUING DRAMA OF IMMIGRANT AMERICA

Scorsese's decision to tell the story of his old neighborhood is understandable. It is intriguing, though, that he chose to tell it through the experiences of the Irish. After all, Italian-Americans also experienced discrimination and violence—much of it at the hands of Irish-Americans, who jealously guarded their political power or influence against later immigrants. Perhaps someday Scorsese will jump forward in time to tell the stories of today's large, often hated, Catholic immigrant group: Mexicans. (I have a pitch. Call me!)

Contrasting the immigration experiences of Mexicans with those of the Irish and Italians lays bare the arbitrariness and even the racism of U.S. immigration policy. When the Irish came to the United States in the 19th and early 20th centuries, all an immigrant had to do to come "legally" was to arrive on its shores. Strong immigration restrictions were then put in place specifically to prevent Italians and Eastern European Jews from coming to the United States. Both Catholicism and Judaism were seen as threatening minority religions, and Italians and Jews were both thought to import terrorism in the name of anti-American ideologies, specifically anarchism and communism. In 1924 legal Italian immigration was essentially ended by congressional legislation, but Italians kept coming, many as undocumented immigrants.

Yet Italian-Americans eventually succeeded in the United States, building the Little Italy that Scorsese grew up in and others like it across the country. They achieved political power, too. In New York, Fiorello La Guardia broke the political stranglehold of the Irish-dominated Tammany Hall machine to become the city's first Ital-

ian-American mayor. As the political power of Italian-Americans increased, undocumented Italian immigrants were offered citizenship. Throughout the 1940s there was, in effect, an amnesty program for undocumented Italian and other European immigrants.

During the same period when Italian immigrants were being given amnesty, Mexicans encountered fierce resistance and xenophobia. The 1930s saw the policy of Mexican Repatriation. The 1950s saw "Operation Wetback." Both were periods of mass deportation that saw U.S. citizens of Mexican origin rounded up and deported. And while many Mexican immigrants received amnesty in the 1980s under President Reagan, Congress' failure to pass comprehensive immigration reform in recent decades has left undocumented immigrants with little to no chance of being granted a path to citizenship.

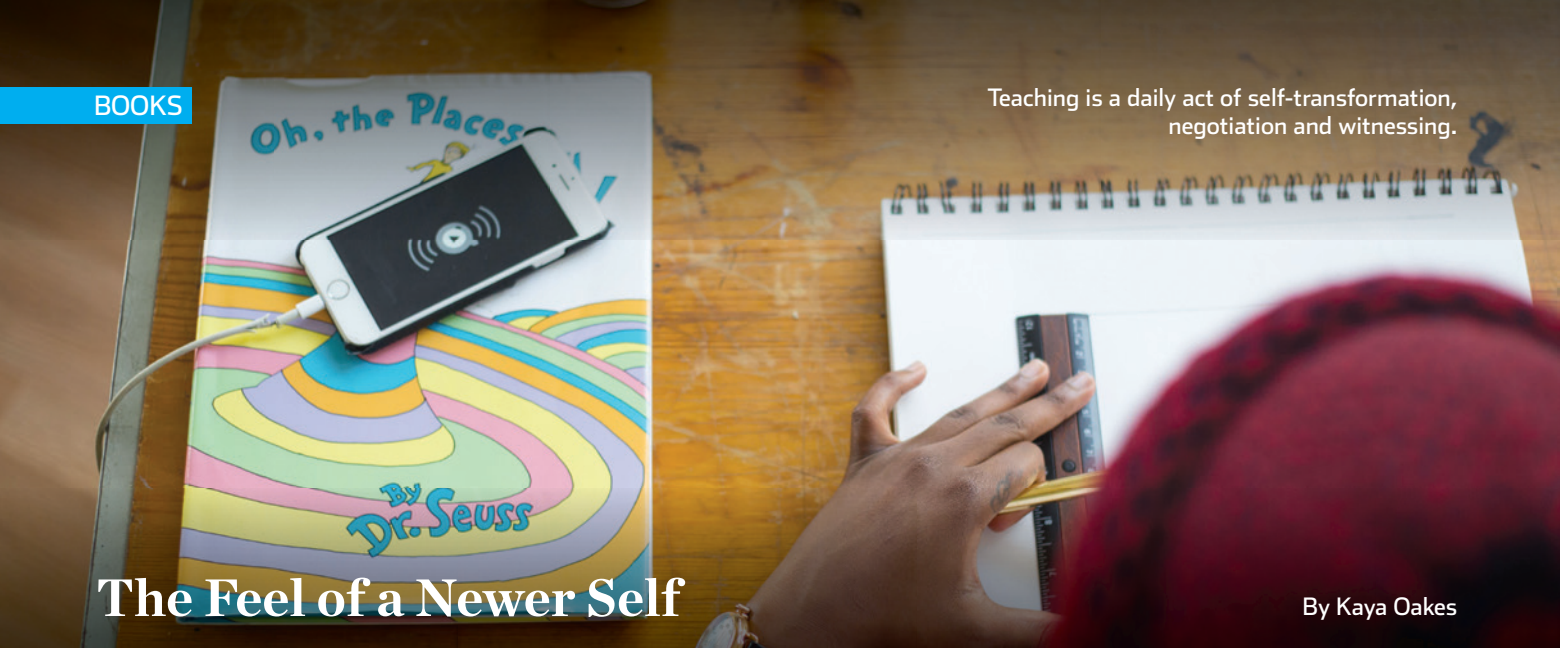
The history of our immigration laws reveals the same realities as Scorsese's "Gangs of New York": Who gets to be treated and accepted as an American is not a matter of right or wrong. It is not even a matter of the law. As Americans of Mexican, Japanese and African origin have discovered throughout history, even citizenship is often no guarantee of equal treatment. For Scorsese, American identity is first and foremost a question of power. "Gangs of New York" offers a grim warning: Immigrants who hope to be Americans must take power in order to do so.

One of Scorsese's most interesting insights into U.S. history concerns how immigrants and their descendants end up becoming anti-immigrant themselves. In the years after the battle that opens "Gangs of New York," many of the Irish lieutenants of Priest Vallon join the nativist gang of Bill the Butcher, becoming neighborhood cops and enforcers against other Irish immigrants. I am reminded of Steve Bannon and John Kelly, the Catholic descendants of Irish immigrants who have nevertheless formulated or implemented the Trump administration's anti-immigrant policies. This is one of the deeper tragedies of our immigration debate today. The age-old conflict of the native versus the immigrant is no longer predominantly Protestant against Catholic. It is now Catholic against Catholic.

We are still grappling with the central question the film raises: What does it take to become American? When people practice new cultures or religions or introduce different languages or foods into our towns and lives, we worry that our American identity is being diminished. Yet every wave of immigration has contributed something to the country we share. The Christian command is clearly to welcome the stranger and the refugee, to love others as ourselves. "Gangs of New York" reminds us that throughout our history we have often failed to do so.

Before the final battle, Amsterdam promises Jenny that "this will all be over tomorrow." She replies, "No it won't." Fifteen years after "Gangs of New York" and 150 years after the time the film depicts, our debates over immigration and American identity are no closer to being over than when Irish Catholics were forced to defend Old St. Patrick's in Lower Manhattan.

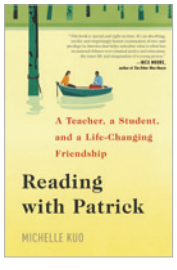
Antonio De Loera-Brust *is a Joseph A. O'Hare fellow at America.*



Teaching is a daily act of self-transformation, negotiation and witnessing.

The Feel of a Newer Self

By Kaya Oakes



Reading With Patrick: A Teacher, a Student, and a Life-Changing Friendship
By Michelle Kuo
Random House.
320p $27

The question of vocation is one teachers wrestle with every day. If vocation is a calling, it also carries the weight of calling others; and in the case of students, our attempts to call students to care about their education often prove futile. This quid pro quo is doubly complicated when those students are poor, living in an depopulated rural area or caught in a cycle of systemic racism, drugs, incarceration and violence.

The Hollywood solution to this scenario would be to send in a heroic teacher whose passion for her subject would inspire the students. The reality presented in Michelle Kuo's *Reading With Patrick: a Teacher, a Student, and a Life-Changing Friendship* is a more honest and complicated one. Kuo, fresh out of Harvard when she arrives in Helena, Ark., as part of the Teach for America program, is clearly passionate about teaching reading and writing. She will also be tested. "I believed books could change the lives of my students," she writes. "It was unabashedly romantic. I was twenty-two."

Of the difficult circumstances her students face, Kuo is most familiar with racism. As the child of Taiwanese immigrants, Kuo knows that, like her black students in Arkansas, Asian Americans are not really considered American because "our faces give it away." Most of Kuo's students have never met an Asian person. Many have never been outside of Helena, with its population of 6,000, its shuttered stores and abandoned factories.

Kuo's two years in Helena take up the first half of her book. The Teach for America program has come under criticism in recent years because so many well-intentioned young teachers like Kuo are thrown into underserved schools with little preparation. Kuo's school is a dumping ground for the worst students in the district, staffed by largely ineffectual teachers and administrators counting the days to retirement or transfer to another school. The attrition rate is high.

Inspired by the writing of James Baldwin, Frederick Douglass and Malcolm X, Kuo hopes to get her students engaged in reading and writing. But their circumstances are so difficult that caring about anything beyond day-to-day survival is a challenge. As she writes, "I began to speculate that the modern Delta did not exist in the American consciousness because it disturbed the mind." In the black diaspora, millions of former slaves fanned out across the country, building new lives in Detroit, Chicago, Oakland. In Helena, however, Kuo's students are "descended from the people who had been left behind."

But one student soon makes Kuo curious. Patrick is quiet, a peacemaker, and so receptive to reading and writing that teaching him is like throwing a match into gasoline. "There are just certain kids," Kuo says of Patrick, "for whom you bring all your hope." Patrick and Kuo begin to form a bond when they discover they are both passionate readers. As Baldwin once wrote, "It was books that taught me that the things that tormented me most were the very things that connected me with all the people who were alive, who had ever been alive."

But Kuo's two years in the Delta come to an abrupt end when her Teach

Photo by Tamarcus Brown on Unsplash

Patrick is so receptive to reading and writing that teaching him is like throwing a match into gasoline.

for America contract runs out. Hoping to make a greater difference than she thinks she can make in a classroom, Kuo applies to law school, also feeling pressure from her immigrant parents to conform to their idea of success.

Within just a few years of Kuo's departure, quiet, shy Patrick is incarcerated. A friend of his sister attacks Patrick on their front porch and, during the ensuing fight, the other man dies. Patrick has a valid claim for self-defense, but Patrick is also a black man caught up in the American judicial system. Kuo, as a law student, is by now familiar enough with jurisprudence to understand that if she returns to Helena, she can help with Patrick's case. But more important, she understands that the imprisoned rarely receive any sort of education. When she visits him in jail, Patrick thanks her "without expecting me to come back." Kuo postpones plans to work at a legal nonprofit in California and moves back to Helena.

The teaching that takes place in the latter half of Kuo's book is different. There is no classroom and no set curriculum. One on one, she and Patrick first make their way through C. S. Lewis's *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*. She realizes Patrick may not be a murderer, but he is not perfect. He tricks her into smuggling marijuana into the jail. He has fathered a child and feels guilty about their separation. He misses his family but discourages them from visiting. Patrick identifies the most with Edmund in Lewis's novel, the character who betrays his siblings but recognizes his mistakes and works to rectify them. But his reading skills have quickly deteriorated since his time in Kuo's classroom. Patrick, like many of Kuo's other students, dropped out after the tenth grade.

Kuo begins to challenge Patrick with more difficult books and finds that he responds most strongly to poetry and epistolary reading and writing. Patrick is deeply Christian and has a strong sense of right and wrong. He begins to write letters to his daughter, long and elaborate letters rich with imagery and metaphors for their separation as an act of contrition for not being present to her.

It is in Baldwin's letter to his nephew from *The Fire Next Time* that Patrick finds a deep connection, telling Kuo that Baldwin is "real." After a few months working with Patrick again, Kuo writes "he had come so far, but what struck me then and for many years afterwards was how little I had done for him," because "so little was required for him to develop intellectually"; and yet in the United States "these things were rarely supplied."

Patrick is eventually released from prison, but mass incarceration's impact on black men has a long tail. Patrick will struggle to find work because of the felony on his record. He may score highly on placement tests for junior college, but he will face challenges for the rest of his life. To her credit, Kuo does not gloss over this. But she sees hope in Patrick, hope that does not evaporate.

Kuo eventually finishes law school and becomes a lawyer. In many ways, however, her lifelong job is to be a teacher: not just of Patrick and her students in Helena, but of us, as readers, because Kuo understands that teaching is a daily act of self-transformation, negotiation and witnessing. But mostly, as she writes, like all vocations, teaching is an act of trust:

> ...to know a person as a student is to know him always as a student; to sense deeply his striving and in his striving to sense your own. It is to watch, and then have difficulty forgetting, a student wrench himself into shape, like a character from Ovid, his body twisting and contorting, from one creature to another, submitting, finally, to the task of full transformation. Why? Because he trusts you; because he prefers the feel of this newer self; because he hopes you will make this change last.

Kaya Oakes, *a contributing writer for* ***America****, teaches writing at the University of California, Berkeley, and is the author of* The Nones Are Alright.

The invisibles

Richard is a newly retired classics professor living outside contemporary Berlin. Recently widowed, he has a life of melancholy memories, pleasant boredom and simple rituals. Comfortably muffled, he is struck one night by news reports of African refugees staging a protest in a city square he had visited that same day: "Why didn't he see the men?"

This timely new novel by Jenny Erpenbeck, a German writer and opera director, unfolds as Richard's effort to do more than just see these men. He begins visiting with them and learns of the various tragic circumstances that pushed each out of his home country in Africa. He offers the men car rides to appointments with immigration officials and dentists, language lessons, introductions to German Christmas traditions and occasional odd jobs with his well-off friends. He even gives one man a few thousand euros to purchase a tract of land in Ghana for his family members to farm.

In recompense, Richard is invigorated, if also frustrated by the endless bureaucratic entanglements that confront present-day refugees in even the most welcoming of European countries. He simultaneously struggles with ambivalence toward, even resistance to, the friendship, gratitude and hopefulness that he experiences from the African men with whom he spends more of his time and money. Finally, he is robbed, and he hates it that the evidence very strongly points to the bright young man who visits his house to play the piano.

In all of this eventfulness, *Go, Went, Gone* never becomes preachy or sentimental. Instead, it is quietly bracing, as when Richard recognizes "he's one of very few people in this world who are in a position to take their pick of realities." By the end of the novel, Richard decides to bring opposing realities together. He knows he cannot change the world, and that there is still much to be done and much that he can do.

Randy Boyagoda *is an English professor and principal of St. Michael's College in the University of Toronto. His new novel, Original Prin, will be published in 2018.*

In his own words

This book is both timely and original—timely because 2018 is the centennial of the publication of the Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins's first book; original because it focuses on Hopkins's texts more than on commentary, and because the texts are so varied: poems, letters, journals, sermons and spiritual writings. Hopkins is now widely recognized as one of the 10 finest poets in the history of English poetry, and this study offers insights into his view of the world, his mind and interests and his relationship with God.

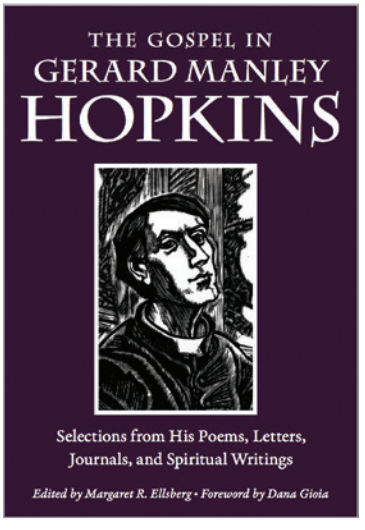
Margaret Ellsberg has structured the book chronologically. She begins with Hopkins's Oxford and early Jesuit years (1863-75), then offers his first poem of genius, "The Wreck of the Deutschland," his great Welsh sonnets, and his early years as a priest in schools and parishes of England and Scotland (1875-84). She ends with his years of teaching at the Jesuits' University College in Dublin and his death (1884-89).

In Hopkins's mind and interests, nature is a major focus—birds, stars, trees, spring, autumn—and God is a recurring presence in his prayer, his poems, his priestly life and his love of the Eucharist. His poems inspire notes on rhythm, Walt Whitman, poetic language, advice that his poems are "less to be read than heard," and a prayer that Christ "watch over my compositions." Key ideas are selfhood, individuality and "inscape"—the shape and uniqueness of every being. Favorite people are celebrated: Henry Purcell, Duns Scotus, Hopkins's own family, his parishioners. He worries about England's conversion, the working class and the environment. Dublin brings months of deep depression, gentle recovery, a later loss of poetic inspiration, then death from typhoid shortly before his 45th birthday.

Despite a few small factual errors, *The Gospel in Gerard Manley Hopkins* is a fine, original study where the reader can meet Hopkins directly and through his own words, offering fresh insight into this great poet who so dearly loved God and his creations, and who sang of them with glee.

Joseph J. Feeney, S.J., *is the author of* The Playfulness of Gerard Manley Hopkins *and co-editor of The Hopkins Quarterly.*

Go, Went, Gone
By Jenny Erpenbeck, translated by Susan Bernofsky
New Directions. 286p $16.95



The Gospel in Gerard Manley Hopkins
Selections from his Poems, Letters, Journals, and Spiritual Writings
Edited by Margaret R. Ellsberg
Plough Publishing House. 255p $18

The high cost of free speech

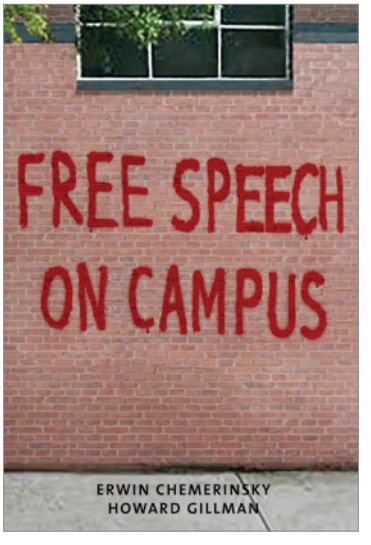
University administrators these days often find themselves trying to navigate between two dangerous extremes: the Scylla of policing obsessively the expression of ideas so as to avoid triggering any university students who may feel unsafe, and the Charybdis of giving license to student groups to invite monsters like Richard Spencer or Milo Yiannopoulos to campus. The former can lead to the censorship of legitimate speech; the latter can turn campuses into unwitting forums for openly fascist rhetoric designed to torment the disadvantaged. Is there a way to steer between the two?

Not really, argue Erwin Chemerinsky and Howard Gillman in *Free Speech on Campus*. Steer as close to Charybdis as you can and hope for the best. Freedom of expression is close to an all-or-nothing proposition by their lights: Even the best-intentioned attempts to keep students safe from harm inevitably lead to censorship and coddled minds. Throughout history, from Reformation-era attempts to monitor printing presses all the way to the creation of "safe spaces" on our college campuses, they argue, censorship inevitably hurts those it is designed to help.

The authors, legal scholars and academics both, fear that "students' support for basic free speech principles is dramatically eroding" and that "university leaders are well versed in providing full-throated defenses of civility and tolerance, but their arguments for protecting the expression of all ideas, even those considered offensive and hateful, are often less clear or convincing." While Chemerinsky and Gillman draw the line at physical threats and harassment based on sex, race, creed or sexual orientation, they otherwise recommend that universities defend freedom of speech at almost any cost.

Their most valuable contribution to this national conversation is a clear and coherent summary of the issues involved in free-speech debates. Accounts of controversies past and present are fair and nuanced, and consistently give the salient points in layperson's terms. Accepting the authors' arguments and their capacious willingness to tolerate offense, however, will be a hard sell for educators increasingly accustomed to a world of safe spaces and speech codes.

James T. Keane, *senior editor.*
Twitter: @jamestkeane.



Free Speech on Campus
By Erwin Chemerinsky and Howard Gillman
Yale University Press. 216p $26

Full book reviews at americamagazine.org/books

Banjo-pickin' for God

By Stephen Bullivant

Some years ago, I briefly toured the Midwest playing harmonica with Ralph Stanley and the Clinch Mountain Boys. Quite how an English teenager came to be there still mystifies me as much as it surely did the concert-going publics of Lawrence, Kan., or Des Moines, Iowa. In fact, my time among bluegrass royalty is only the second most improbable-but-true story of my life. The first is how, some five years later, I came be baptized into the Catholic Church, influenced largely by drinking with Dominicans.

Those facts are, for the most part, unconnected. I mention them here solely to reassure you: When it comes to the intersection of Catholic mendicant orders and the musical traditions of Appalachia, this ain't—as we Brits are wont to say—my first rodeo.

"The Hillbilly Thomists" is the eponymous debut album of a group of two Dominican priests and eight student-brothers. The ensemble, founded in 2013, takes its name from one of Flannery O'Connor's famous self-descriptions: "Everybody who has read *Wise Blood* thinks I'm a hillbilly nihilist, whereas...I'm a hillbilly Thomist." Don't you just love them already?

The album cover consists of a slightly blurred portrait in black-and-white (though with Dominicans, who could tell?). Thirteen friars sit formally with their assorted instruments. All but one stare blankly at the camera. It looks for all the world like a daguerreotype dug up from John Lomax's attic. In truth, it is an archival photo of music-making Illinois Dominicans from the 1920s. Even banjo pickin', in the hands of the Order of Preachers, can be an exercise in *ressourcement*.

The stage is, then, perfectly set for a grave disappointment. One starts to play the album, hoping—but not daring to actually expect—that fabled "high lonesome sound," infusing old Anglo-Celtic folk tunes and homegrown spirituals with an authentically American feel that sounds as old as the mountains themselves. It is a disappointment that never comes. From Alpha to Omega, "Leaning on the Everlasting Arms" to "Just a Closer Walk with Thee," this is bluegrass of the highest order. The song selections, arrangements and musicianship are all superb. My personal favorites include "Angel Band," "Poor Wayfaring Stranger" and the beautifully harmonized a capella rendition of "Amazing Grace."

The album's one original composition, Brother Justin Bolger's rousing "I'm a Dog," also merits mention. It is both a knowing nod toward a rather less wholesome trope in the folk-country tradition (cf. "Salty Dog Blues," "Call Me a Dog," "Move It On Over") and a moving affirmation of the Dominicans' evangelistic charism:

I'm a dog with a torch in my
mouth for my Lord
Making noise while I got time
Spreading fire while I got earth
How you wish it was already lit
Give me your fire I'll do your work

The album's penultimate track, it serves as a by-now much-needed reminder that crafting bluegrass perfection is not, after all, the Hillbilly Thomists' day job.

That said, the friars' religious vocation and their musical avocation are not without a natural affinity. The Appalachian oeuvre is, of course, already imbued with a deeply Christian sensibility. In the hands of experts in both preaching and liturgical singing, these

Even banjo pickin', in the hands of the Order of Preachers, can be an exercise in *ressourcement.*

Photo courtesy the Dominican Friars Province of St. Joseph

well-worn folk standards reclaim the fervor and sincerity with which they were first written, sung and faithfully passed on by Christians past.

As we have already done with the great treasures of Anglican and Methodist hymnody, there is a great deal in this (predominantly) Baptist patrimony with which to complement and enrich the Catholic "treasure of sacred music." All of which raises an intriguing thought experiment—albeit one I hesitate to moot in the august pages of **America**. Just suppose that the Hillbilly Thomists had come along 50 years earlier. How different might today's parish liturgies be if they had been influenced rather more by Dominicans from Appalachia, than by Jesuits from St. Louis?

Stephen Bullivant *is a professor of theology and the sociology of religion and director of the Benedict XVI Centre for Religion and Society at St. Mary's University in London.*

Staring into the Black Mirror

Netflix's science-fiction anthology series "Black Mirror" has made a name for itself imagining dystopias just around the corner from today. Its impact, however, has been less a matter of its oft-prescient nightmares about the implications of present-day technology than its insights into the fears and aspirations of our humanity.

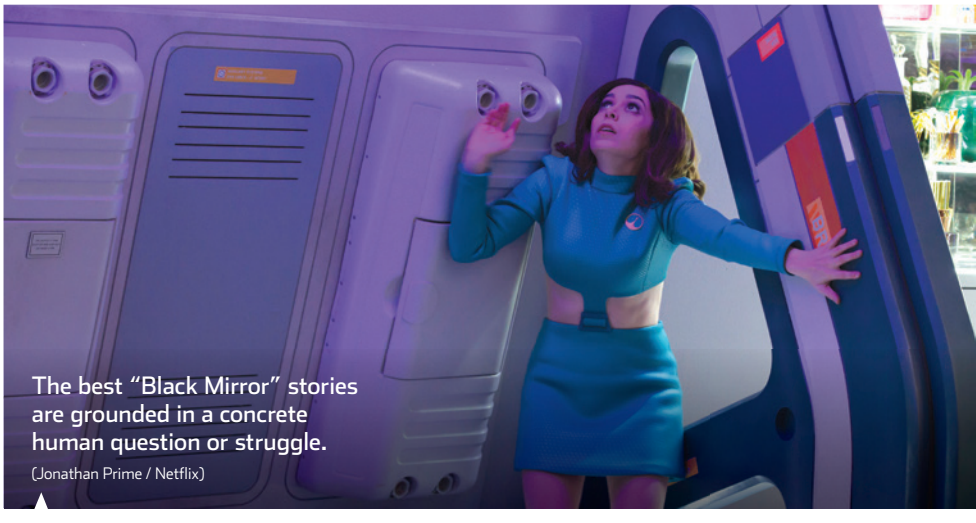
Whether telling the story of a world in which social media ratings have become the currency of class and access, or of a grieving widow's attempt to use her dead husband's online presence to recreate him, the best "Black Mirror" stories ground themselves in a concrete human question or struggle: Can I keep my child safe? Can I trust my partner? Will I ever find "the one"—and if I do, will the world allow us to be happy? These latter-day "Twilight Zone" tales might be about human life 15 minutes from now, but they are always most fundamentally about that human life.

Or so one hopes. Watching the newest season of "Black Mirror," which debuted on Dec. 29, the focus is not always quite so clear. Some episodes sit very well in the Mirrorverse, grounding innovation and its nightmarish discontents in the deepest of our human yearnings. If you only watch one episode this year, make it "Hang the DJ"; both the performances and the story of two people longing for one another in the face of their society's relationship-determining algorithms is both compelling and sweet.

Most of the season's other five episodes, though, seem to set aside any real exploration of humanity for big premises, many of them not terribly fresh. Given the fast-changing world that we live in, and the perennial moral conundrums of our lives, there is no end of interesting material for "Black Mirror" to consider. And the series remains one of the very few places where you can find a real exploration of the moral and social questions of our day.

Unfortunately, much of season four plays less like a deep dive into the human condition in the modern era than another needless iPhone update. One lives in hope for OS 5.

Jim McDermott, S.J., *is a contributing writer for* ***America.***



The best "Black Mirror" stories are grounded in a concrete human question or struggle.

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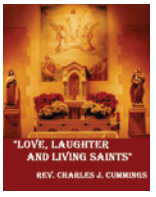
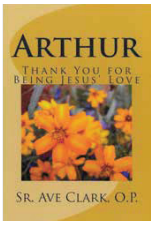
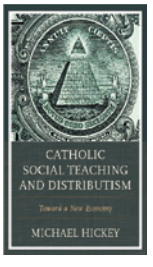


Short Stories of Catholic School Days & 50 Years of Parish Happenings, by the Rev. Charles J. Cummings, retired priest, Diocese of Scranton, Pa. Book and preview available: Amazon paperback, $12.95; Nook or Kindle e-book device $4.99.



This book is a story about a man named Arthur who lived courageously with a mental illness. Far more than a story, it is the way Arthur chose to live his life that will offer you challenges, inspirations and opportunities to become more loving, peace-filled and joyous for and with one another. I hope as you read, reflect and ponder the stories, parables and words of Arthur's life, you will feel your heart and spirit uplifted. Perhaps you will even say: "Arthur, thank you for being Jesus' love"(Sr. Ave Clark, O.P.). Book available for purchase on Amazon.



Newly published book *Catholic Social Teaching and Distributism/Toward a New Economy*, by Michael Hickey, published by Hamilton Books. order at Amazon.com (ISBN 978-0-7618-7004-3). For further information email MikeHickey33@gmail.com

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Alumni and friends of Fordham University; weekend of March 9-11, 2018, at the Seminary of the Immaculate Conception, Huntington, L. I. Theme: "The Spirituality of Pope Francis: Reflecting on God's Mercy and Grace"; director: Brendan Horan, S.J. For more information, contact Dan Gatti, S.J., at dgatti@fordham.edu.

Life Outside the Camp

Readings: Lv 13:1-46, Ps 32, 1 Cor 10:31-11:1, Mk 1:40-45

To understand biblical attitudes toward leprosy, it is important to realize that the malady mentioned in Leviticus is not Hansen's disease, the ailment that today goes by the name leprosy. Hansen's disease is a neurological ailment that is not infectious enough to warrant the elaborate quarantine that Lv 13:45-46 requires. Instead, the cluster of symptoms mentioned in Leviticus better describes fungal and parasitic skin infections. Many of these also affect leather, cloth, furniture and masonry, as Lv 13:47-14:57 describes. These diseases rendered a person "unclean," meaning that sufferers were so highly infectious that they had to withdraw from the normal life of the community to protect others from contagion. As virulent as these conditions were, however, they were not always permanent or fatal. The biblical instructions regarding leprosy hold forth hope that the condition might clear up on its own. Leviticus includes several rituals to determine whether healing had occurred and to restore a sufferer to the community.

The Hebrew Bible often treats leprosy as a temporary ailment sent for someone's instruction or correction. Moses was a leper briefly (Ex 4:6-7), as was his sister Miriam (Nm 12:10-15). King Uzziah continued to reign even after he was struck with leprosy either for permitting others to practice illegal rites (2 Kgs 15:4-5) or for profaning the inner sanctum of the temple (2 Chr 26:16-21). God uses four lepers to reveal the miraculous deliverance of Samaria (2 Kgs 7:3-15). Meanwhile, the Syrian general Naaman came to Israel to be cured of his leprosy by washing in the Jordan (2 Kgs 5:10-14). Leprosy was a serious ailment that constrained a person from entering sacred or inhabited places. One could, however, realistically hope for deliverance and continue to participate in society, albeit in attenuated ways.

That situation had changed by Jesus' day. Hansen's disease, which is progressive and incurable, had come to Israel about two centuries before Christ, probably as a result of commercial and military encounters with tropical nations. Fear of this new disease, coupled with leprosy's reputation as a divine chastisement, led many to treat it as more than an illness or temporary punishment. It represented a living death that alienated individuals not just from their own diseased bodies but from family, society, nation and God. Jesus' power over leprosy was distinct from his general power to heal (Mt 10:8) because in healing lepers, Jesus performed an act akin to raising the dead.

He remained outside in deserted places, and people kept coming to him. (Mk 1:45)

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

What conditions today trap people in a living death?

How can you follow Christ to serve those "outside the camp?"

In last week's Gospel passage, Mark recounted that Jesus' healing of an individual caused a rapid growth of his fame in Capernaum and then throughout all of Galilee. In this week's passage, people from everywhere mob Jesus in such numbers that he cannot even enter the towns along his route. To continue his mission to outcasts, Jesus had to live like one, dwelling in deserted places "outside the camp."

This holds a lesson for our own discipleship. Each Christian hears a unique call from the Spirit to continue Jesus' mission. Like Jesus, we must make our abode "outside the camp." In the Spirit we will find those places—deserted by others, but inhabited by those longing for grace—in which we can complete the mission that Christ has entrusted to us.

Michael Simone, S.J., *teaches Scripture at Boston College School of Theology and Ministry.*

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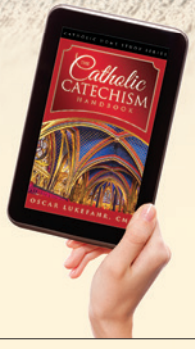

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Forgive Us as We Forgive

Readings: Gn 9:8-15, Ps 25, 1 Pt 3:18-22, Mk 1:12-15

Our readings this week tell a story of faith, humility and grace. In the first reading, God was so pleased that Noah had maintained his faith throughout the flood that God made an everlasting covenant with Noah and his offspring. The rainbow that appeared after storms was a sign of God's love for Noah and for any who lived like him in faith.

Although it is based on earlier sources, the account of Noah that we have in our Bibles dates from the postexilic period, about five centuries before Christ. In its original context, it likely gave comfort to the returned exiles who had survived 70 years of slavery in Babylon. Like Noah, they had kept their faith during a time of disaster. Like Noah, they were the recipients of a special covenant with God, who gave them the Sabbath as a sign of divine love.

This week's second reading, attributed to St. Peter, speaks of this same covenant. The author and his fellow Jews were descendants of Noah and of the returned exiles. They placed great trust in the covenant that God had made with them through their ancestors. Now, because of Jesus' resurrection, they could open that same covenant, which offered protection, blessing and inclusion in the divine household, to any who received baptism.

Through Christ, God offers a covenant of love to all people; but to experience the love, a person must respond in faith. Maintaining faith in times of distress is not easy. It did not come naturally to Noah and his family or to the Babylonian exiles, and it does not come easily today.

In this week's Gospel passage, Jesus urges repentance as a first step toward faith. As Pope Francis recently reminded his listeners, "Only those who recognize their sins and ask forgiveness can receive the understanding and forgiveness of others." It is pointless to seek reconciliation with someone we have wronged if we refuse first to change. Moreover, it is only through our own repentance that we can learn to recognize and trust the true repentance of others. A person who has never sought forgiveness has little understanding of how to forgive another. Only when we know the true vulnerability and relief that comes from righting our own wrongs will we be sensitive to the same movements in others. Repentance for our sins strengthens our compassion for others.

Repentance also teaches us to trust the love of others. Asking forgiveness is an intimidating task, but when we do it properly, it can deepen the bonds of love. This is probably why Jesus counsels us to repent first, then believe. What we learn from trusting the love of others we can apply to our faith in the love of God. We can, like Noah and his family and like the returned exiles, keep our faith in God alive even when it is difficult.

Lent has begun, and with it comes an opportunity to increase our faith through works of penance. Every time we set right some wrong we have done, we come that much closer to the faith of Jesus, who found signs of the Father's love in everything his eyes beheld.

'Repent, and believe in the Gospel!' (Mk 1:15)

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

What event in your life tested your faith?

For what have you had to ask forgiveness?

Have you ever had to forgive someone for something similar?

Michael R. Simone, S.J., *teaches Scripture at Boston College School of Theology and Ministry.*

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Changing Hearts and Structures

The U.S. bishops confront the evils of racism

By George V. Murry

"Racism is an evil which endures in our society and in our Church," the U.S. bishops wrote in their 1979 pastoral letter on racism, "Brothers and Sisters to Us." It was the first of its kind and a way to "call attention to the persistent presence of racism and in particular to the relationship between racial and economic justice."

Twenty-five years after the letter, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops commissioned a study to discern its implementation and reception. The results painted a disheartening picture of the church's relationship with the black community.

Since 1979, the study found, only 18 percent of U.S. bishops had issued statements condemning racism. Of those, very few addressed systemic racism. In addition, it noted that many diocesan seminaries and ministry formation programs were inadequate in terms of their incorporation of the history, culture and traditions of the black community.

Throughout its history, the church has participated in fostering racism. During the 19th century, some U.S. bishops defended slavery; and during the 20th century, many Catholics opposed the civil rights movement and encouraged—or at least acquiesced in—racial segregation. Why has the U.S. church been incapable of enunciating straightforward principles and taking decisive action regarding racism that has led to a change of attitude?

Recent events in our country have involved the targeting of African-Americans, Hispanics, Jews, Muslims and immigrants. These events have forced us to realize that the discussion on equality must run deeper if we are to be true to the principles on which our faith is built and on which our country was founded.

Last August, U.S.C.C.B. president Cardinal Daniel DiNardo established the Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism, on which I serve as chair. It will focus on addressing racism in our society, and even in our church, and on the urgent need to come together as a nation to find solutions. The bishops have made the eradication of racism a top priority, and we are committed to the goal of helping the church become a consistent and productive voice in eliminating this plague.

The bishops and lay members of the committee will listen to the needs of individuals who have experienced racism. We will bring to the table African-Americans, Hispanics and people of different races and religions in an ecumenical gathering to work with us to find solutions to this epidemic of hate that has plagued our nation for too long.

Through listening, prayer, meaningful collaboration and action, we will seek a common ground where racism can no longer find a place in our hearts or in our society.

We will also organize listening sessions around the country to better understand the many faces of racism and how best to respond. We will prepare materials that dioceses can use to encourage parishioners and students in Catholic schools to better understand what racism is, recognize its many manifestations and take concrete action to overcome it. We hope to challenge the reluctance that many people have to speak about race. The key will not be to simply talk but rather to change hearts, which will lead to a change of attitude and then a change in behavior.

If the U.S. church is to exemplify the love of Christ, it must move forward with the realization that no one can enter full into communion with Jesus Christ if one's relationship to the other is marked by indifference or oppression.

The church has an opportunity to acknowledge its past contributions to the evils of racism, to ask forgiveness of one another and to commit itself to living in communion as the Christians that Jesus envisioned at the end of his earthly ministry.

In order to become one, we must speak the truth and reach out to one another in a spirit of reconciling love and solidarity.

George V. Murry, S.J., *is the bishop of Youngstown, Ohio, and chair of the U. S. bishops' Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism.*

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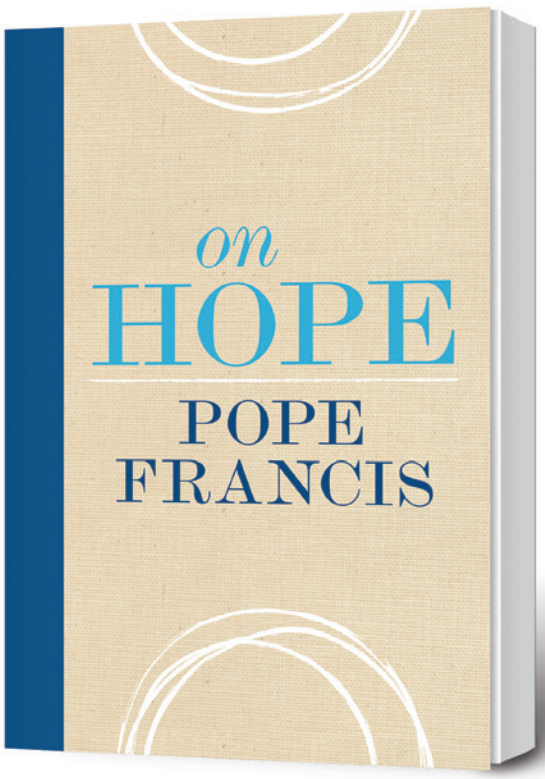

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