

# America

MARCH 5, 2018

THE JESUIT VIEW OF FAITH AND CULTURE

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Pope Francis

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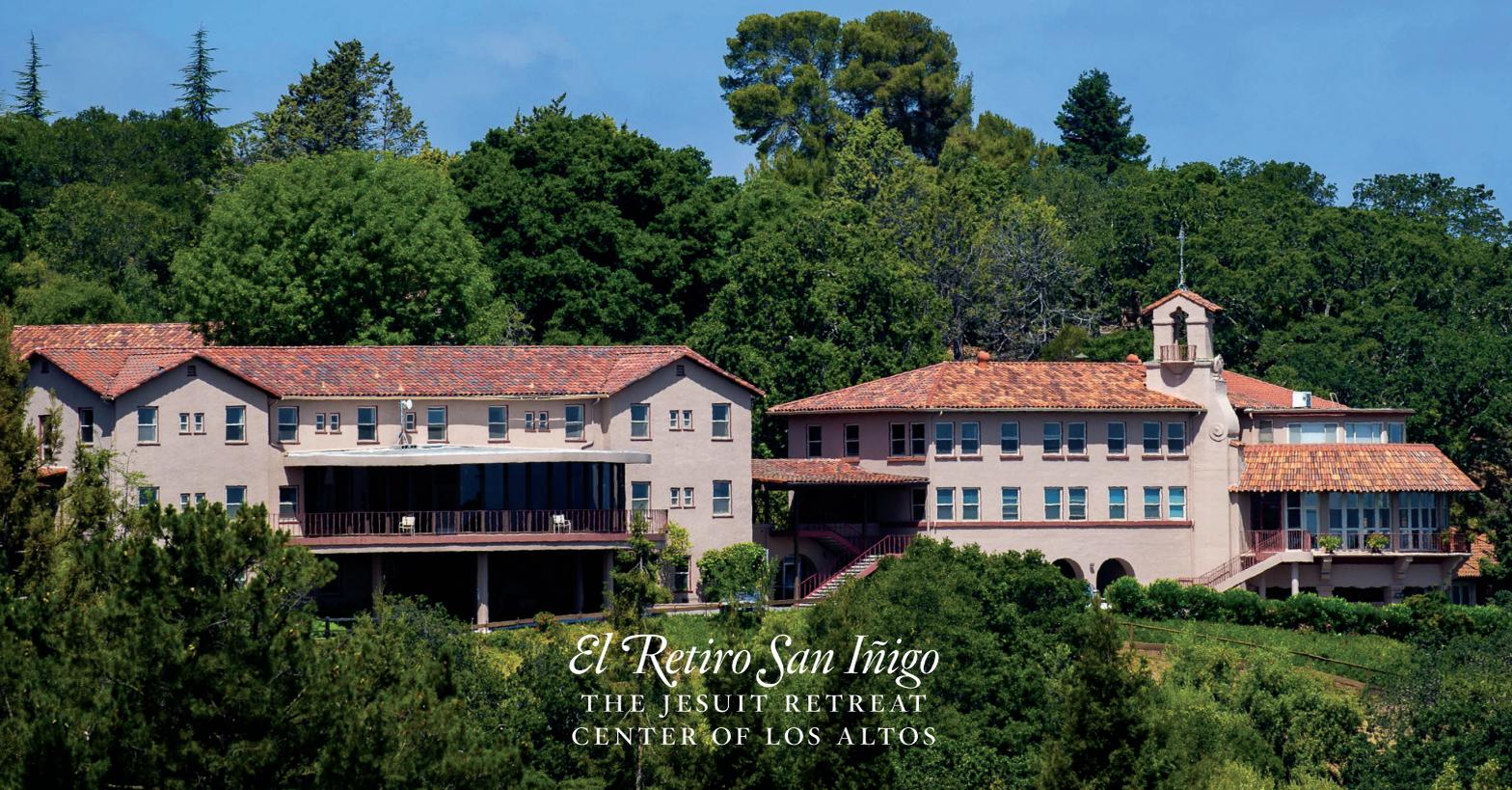
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## Life in the Neighborhood

I am writing this column on the 50th anniversary—to the day—of the U.S. debut of “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood,” the PBS program hosted by the cardigan-clad godfather of children’s television after whom the program is named. The late Fred Rogers is currently enjoying something of a post-mortal renaissance: More than a decade after his death, his program continues to air in reruns on PBS stations across the country; the U.S. Postal Service has issued a stamp with his picture on it; one of his famous sweaters now hangs in the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History; and there’s even an upcoming, big studio biopic starring everybody’s favorite good guy, Tom Hanks. I didn’t know Fred Rogers, but I suspect he’d be embarrassed by all this attention.

Actually, it is not quite true that I didn’t know Fred Rogers. I spent every afternoon with him when I was a boy, racing home from the school bus, bolting through the door and diving onto the couch just in time to catch the start of his show. Like millions of others, then, I can say that I did know him. For as his wife of more than 40 years once said, “the Fred you see on T.V. is who Fred is. He’s not playing a character. He’s himself.” If there was a single theme that ran through every one of the 1,000 episodes of “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood,” it was that: Be yourself. If you think that’s just saccharine pabulum, think again. “When I say it’s you I like,” he told an interviewer, “I’m talking about that part of you that knows that life is far more than anything you can ever see or hear or touch. That deep part of you that allows you to stand for those

things without which humankind cannot survive: Love that conquers hate, peace that rises triumphant over war, and justice that proves more powerful than greed.”

Off-camera, Mister Rogers used a different word for all that: faith. A deeply devout Christian and an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church, Fred Rogers decided early on that his ministry would be with children and that his pulpit would be your television set. “I just thought, wouldn’t it be wonderful if we could use this marvelous gift called television to broadcast grace to the entire world?” At a time when most children’s programs were selling toys and other products under the guise of escapist cartoon fantasy, Mister Rogers was talking to us about death and divorce, what to do with our anger, what to do when we wronged someone, how to navigate our deepest fears, even how to face the day after 9/11. His few critics say that his program produced a generation of narcissistic and entitled kids. That’s just bosh. Love, he liked to say, is a hard, active noun, more like ‘struggle’ than ‘affection.’

Fred Rogers was a new evangelist before the phrase was invented. He pioneered a way to use modern technology to convey the basic values of Christian living in a language accessible to everyone. By language, I don’t mean mere words. The words he spoke were true, of course, but they touched us in a lasting way only because they reflected the truth of who he was. In 1971, just as Mister Rogers was gaining his audience with this new kind of television, the Vatican released “*Communio et*

*Progressio*,” a pastoral instruction on the means of social communications. “Communication is more than the expression of ideas and the indication of emotion,” it read. “At its most profound level, it is the giving of the self in love.” As Christians, we believe that God, who is love, has revealed himself in Jesus Christ, who is both the means and the message of that revelation. If that is true, then nothing a Christian says, however factually accurate, can ultimately be called truthful if it is not spoken in charity. Without love, the living love that must move the hearts of all disciples, then our words are “noisy gongs or clanging cymbals.” Fred Rogers knew that. He lived it.

Among the tributes today on social media was one tweet from a fan, a video clip of Mister Rogers accepting an Emmy award in 1997. In response to this short video, more than 1,000 people posted comments on Twitter about him. As far as I could tell (I read hundreds of them), not a single comment was toxic or cynical. (In case you’re wondering, that never happens on Twitter). It is a welcome sign that there is still room in the world for human decency. “You need three things to be successful in life in the only way that truly counts,” Mister Rogers said. “The first is kindness. The second is kindness. And the third is kindness.” That may sound naïve, but it is just the opposite. It is our only realistic hope if we want not merely to inhabit the world but live in it as God intended, as neighbors of one and all.

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



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A candlelight vigil for the victims of the Ash Wednesday shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, in Parkland, Fla., Feb. 15.

Cover Image: St. Colman's Cathedral in Cobh, Ireland. (iStock)

AP Photo/Gerald Herbert

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## Do you pray for your favorite sports team to win?

In response to the above question, posed on social media and in our email newsletter, only 23 percent said they prayed for their favorite team or athlete to win. Mike Maiale of Blue Bell, Pa., explained: “I pray about what is on my mind. I do not imagine that God is that concerned with the outcome of most sporting events, but we are, and I believe that God likes us to go to him with our hopes. Plus, it can’t hurt!”

Many respondents told **America** that their prayers include petitions for the safety of athletes. “I hope my team wins, and I do pray, but I do not believe it is important in itself who wins. I do pray sincerely that no one gets hurt,” wrote Cecelia J. Cavanaugh, S.S.J.

Seventy-seven percent of respondents gave a resounding “no” when asked if they pray for sports success. Ryan Hamedy of Boston, Mass., said: “While I respect people that do pray for their teams, I feel as though I should not waste prayers that might really do someone good. I do not want God to think I am spiritually crying wolf.” Jen Roblez

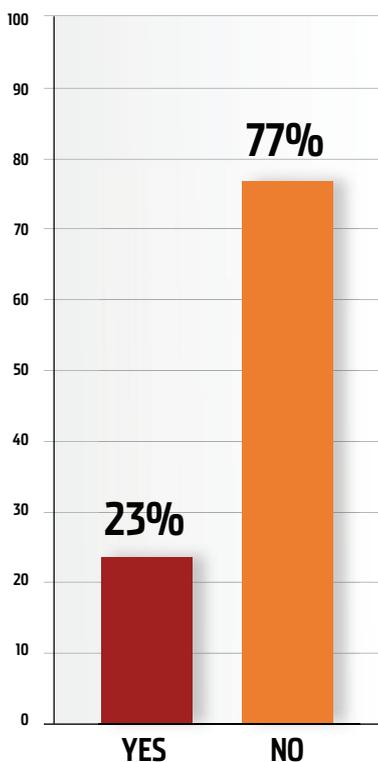
of Emporia, Kan., gave a similar response: “It is O.K. to pray for sports outcomes, but I think there are much more important situations that deserve my earnest prayers.”

**America** also asked readers about whether or not they saw sports as a force for social good.

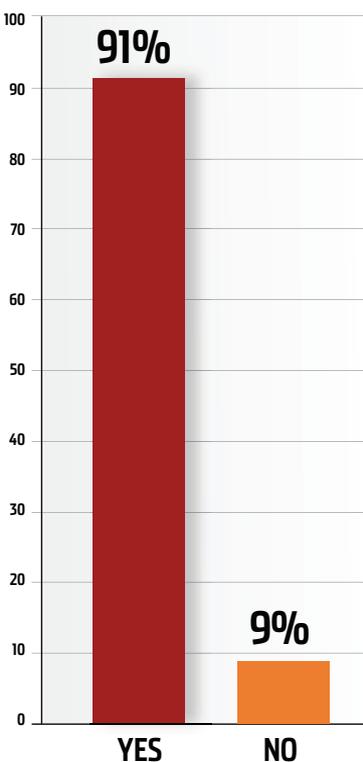
Sixty-six percent answered “yes” in the context of professional sports (e.g., N.F.L., M.L.B., the World Cup), and 92 percent told us that they saw community sports like Little League as a force for social good.

Shruti Kulkarni of New York City offered a perspective that was shared by many other respondents: “Sports can be a force for social good, for teaching community, cooperation, discipline, hard work, losing with grace and other good values,” said Ms. Kulkarni. “Sports teams also might provide an opportunity to do other kinds of good, such as acts of service within a community or raising their voices for a particular justice issue. However, whether or not they are forces for social good depends on the leadership and the players.”

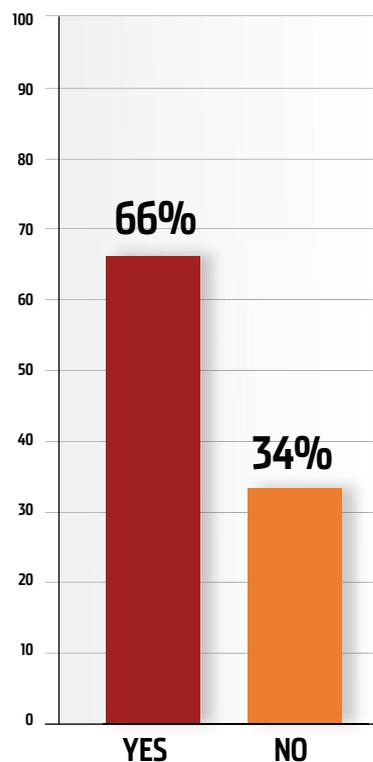
If you have a favorite team or athlete, do you pray for them to win?



Do you see community sports (e.g. Little League) as a force for social good?



Do you see professional sports (e.g. NFL, MLB, the World Cup) as a force for social good?



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.

### Protect Human Life

Re “Appalling Partisanship on Abortion” (Our Take, 2/19): I am a former longtime Democrat of more than 30 years and very reluctantly registered as a Republican several years ago primarily because of the party’s support for laws to protect the innocent unborn from the violence of legal abortion. However, I essentially favor a consistent ethic of life. That means that our government, individuals and houses of worship should vigorously work to protect human life by law both before and after birth. I am very disappointed that the Democratic Party takes such an extreme position in its platform, denying legal protection for the unborn for any reason up until the time the unborn infant—or fetus, which is Latin for “young one”—is viable.

**Tim Donovan**

Online Comment

### An Injustice

Re “An Impossible Choice on Immigration” (Our Take, 2/19): While a strong moral case for accepting the “Dreamers” requires both justice for them, given their unchosen situation, and mercy for the future (permission to remain and a path to eventual citizenship), this is a separate matter from the question of the qualifications of future immigrants and protecting the borders. Catholic moral tradition and Pope Francis agree that a nation has a right to an orderly immigration or refugee process. There should be mercy, but it requires balancing true need with the justice due to those already in a country legally. To reduce this complex moral and political situation in the age of terrorism, as well as drug and human trafficking, to “nativist” sentiments is an injustice both to millions so labeled and to the Catholic moral tradition.

**Colin Donovan**

Online Comment

### Critical Inquiry

Re “Barbarians at the Gate,” by Matt Malone, S.J. (Of Many Things, 2/19): Thank you, Father Malone, for trying to bring back the good “old school” spirit of critical and objective inquiry into our public discourse here in the United States and in the world at large. I take my faith in Christ and my Catholicism seriously, and your essay has made me proud. May the living Christ who is our Lord and savior continue to teach us the right way.

**Adeolu Ademoyo**

Online Comment

### No Less Sinful

Re “How Do You Rate Pope Francis’ Handling of Sex Abuse in the Church?” (Your Take, 2/19): This reader does not feel qualified to judge the Holy Father. However, until the issue of the abuse in Chile and historical cover-up is addressed openly, decisively and in a true spirit of contrition, the Catholic Church and its clergy have no right to the moral high ground on any other issue.

Unfortunately, while sexual abuse may not be more common in the church than in the general public, the clandestine way it has been addressed is no less sinful than the abuse itself. The real test for Francis will be how he moves forward to reconcile his responsibility not to the church but rather to his flock.

**Mark McKee**

Online Comment

### Fear for Millennials

Re “Blaming Millennials,” by Zac Davis (2/19): I have nothing but fear for the millennials. We baby boomers had it easy. Millennials have more than enough to deal with without the scorn of old baby boomers being heaped on. They will have to live in this mess that we voted for a lot longer than we will.

**Stanley Kopacz**

Online Comment

### Paying for Jesus

Re “A Jaw-Dropping Price for the ‘Savior of the World,’” by Leo J. O’Donovan, S.J. (2/19): According to Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus was sold for 30 pieces of silver (estimated value \$200 to \$600). Perhaps we should rejoice to see the commercial market today placing a much higher value on what is only an image of our Lord. And we are reminded that Muslims have always had a great respect for Jesus. I see progress here.

**Judith Gerharz**

Online Comment

### Checks and Balances

Re “Even Some Trump Supporters Worry That His Character is Undermining His Presidency,” by Daniel Allott (2/19): What you have not factored into the equation is at what point the majority in Congress will draw the line and stop this tyrant. If Congress does not stop Donald J. Trump’s unethical, illegal behavior, he will continue unabated. Public opinion means nothing if the checks and balances of our Constitution are not employed.

**Erin Dolan**

Online Comment

## In Praise of Noise

Three years ago this March, Pope Francis made a startling observation during an interview with the Mexican media company Televisa: “I have the sense that my pontificate will be brief: four or five years.” Since two years had already passed since his election on March 13, 2013, Francis’ offhand remark seemed to put an unexpectedly short timeline on his papacy.

We now mark five years of Francis’ pontificate. The editors of **America** wish him many more. “Hagan lio,” he told a crowd of millions at World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro in 2013, “Make some noise,” and there is no question that this pontificate has done just that.

Jorge Bergoglio’s own experiences in Jesuit ministries and as archbishop of Buenos Aires clearly molded him to be an outspoken pope of the poor, the marginalized and the victims of a throwaway culture. He has bluntly rejected the wealth and trappings of his office, and the simple gestures that have accompanied this conviction will be the enduring symbols of his pontificate. Francis has intensified his predecessor Benedict XVI’s strong condemnations of war, an unfettered market and growing economic disparity; he has also offered a blunt but welcome prophetic voice of correction to international leaders, including President Trump.

In five years, Francis has produced three landmark documents. First came his apostolic exhortation “The Joy of the Gospel” (“*Evangeliium Gaudium*,” 2013), in which he sketched out his vision of a church whose strengths and resources should “be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today’s world

rather than for her self-preservation” (No. 27). It was followed soon after by “*Laudato Si’*.” While widely received as a call for environmental protections and a critique of consumerism, the encyclical is also one of the most important social justice encyclicals in history. “Everything is related,” Pope Francis wrote. We cannot affirm the rights of humanity while denying the dignity of our environmental home; we cannot abort or euthanize or marginalize unwanted humans as if they were trash; and we cannot trash the planet in the pursuit of wealth or ease or misbegotten notions of freedom.

More controversial was Francis’ post-synodal exhortation on the family, “The Joy of Love” (“*Amoris Laetitia*,” 2016). That exhortation, which looked at a broad range of topics related to human love, also opened up the possibility for those who are divorced and remarried to return to the sacraments under certain conditions. That pastoral concession has drawn the loudest cries: affirmations from many living and ministering in difficult pastoral situations and vigorous criticism from those who charge that the pope is contradicting the doctrine of the church.

A quieter but more dramatic shift is the new emphasis in “*Amoris Laetitia*” on the authority of the local bishop in the pastoral application of universal church law. Critics of this devolution of authority say that it will result in the church teaching in one town what is not taught in another, which is contrary to the universality of the church. But this criticism confuses universality with uniformity, an error against which

Francis has been outspoken. Respect for the authority of local structures in the church will help us to regain a sense of the ecclesiology of communion while also respecting cultural differences.

Such hopeful lights make the shadows of this pontificate all the more disappointing. None has been more painful than Francis’ uneven response to sexual abuse in the church, precisely because those who have been abused by clergy are some of the most obvious victims of the throwaway culture Francis condemns. The pope recently appointed new members to the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors he created in 2014, including lay representatives, hopefully giving the commission new life after repeated complaints from previous members that some Vatican officials were refusing to cooperate with the commission. Worse is the ongoing crisis of the church in Chile, where Francis defended a bishop accused of failing to report sexual abuse despite substantial evidence of wrongdoing, going so far as to accuse the bishop’s accusers of slander. While Francis has since apologized for his insensitivity and dispatched a high-ranking official to investigate the claims, the damage to already wounded hearts and to the pope’s credibility was great.

Vatican reform has also foundered despite Francis’ appointment in 2013 of a council of cardinals tasked with overhauling the Vatican Curia. Little public progress has been made to cure the Vatican’s sclerotic culture, and much in the Vatican’s operations remains as opaque as ever.

*Ecclesia semper reformanda est.* A church newly open to mission must be a church that listens to voices it has ignored in the past to its great detriment, first and foremost those of women.

On the level of diplomacy and ecclesiology, recent weeks have brought new signs of hope for the Catholic Church in China. Francis has continued the delicate and frustrating work of engagement with the Chinese government to normalize the church's life in that nation. Controversial but pragmatic moves toward a policy of jointly appointing bishops with the government have raised the possibility of reaching a long-desired goal: a united Catholic Church in China for the first time in 70 years. Matteo Ricci, S.J. would be proud.

This litany of lights and shadows speaks to a larger matter: the personal goal that Francis seems to have set for his papacy. His critics are certainly right about one thing: He does indeed seek "to change the church," not in its essentials, but in its orientation to the contemporary world. The church is "not a catalog of prohibitions" to be enforced, Pope Benedict XVI reminded us, nor is it an elite club for the saved. We must not forget that the church is her mission. As Pope Francis said before the conclave in which he was elected, the church must go out of itself to proclaim fully the invitation to join in Christ's mission of salvation and redemption. Five years into this groundbreaking papacy, there is much more noise to be made.

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## Uniting the Chinese church: five things to consider

News of the Holy See's possible rapprochement with China's Communist government on the appointment of bishops has aroused charges of a betrayal of the "underground church" and fears that Catholics will be abandoned who for decades have suffered because of their fidelity to Rome.

Too many Catholics, Americans in particular, still see the situation of Chinese Catholics through the lens of the Cold War. Most foreigners ignore the transformation in official Catholic attitudes in favor of the inculturation of the Gospel in local cultures. The new Vatican initiatives are the outcome of long trends in relations with Beijing. Here are some developments to consider.

*Joint appointment of bishops.* On and off for more than 20 years, the Vatican and Beijing have been jointly appointing bishops, and even before this practice, most government-selected bishops quietly offered their pledges of fidelity to the pope. The joint appointment of bishops illustrates the common interest Rome and Beijing have in the unity of Chinese Catholics.

Reconciliation between what St. John Paul II called the "Two Faces of the Church" in China was the goal of Pope Benedict XVI's letter to the Chinese church in 2007. It appealed for church unity and unity among the bishops for ecclesial and theological reasons. But it is likely that Pope Benedict also regarded unity as a prerequisite for normalization of the church's status within China.

*Intermingling of Catholics in daily life.* Most outsiders do not understand how closely Catholics from registered and unregistered churches are already interacting, especially in cities. Candi-

dates for the priesthood study together in the same seminaries. Parishes often share the same quarters, with underground Catholics worshipping in the official parish church at their own times, and pastors of the two communities share rectories.

*Anti-Communist Catholicism: time for aggiornamento?* It has been 55 years since St. John XXIII's encyclical "Peace on Earth." At the time, the letter's most controversial affirmation was its opening to dialogue with political parties of the left, including the Italian Communists. Pope John himself penned the line that distinguished between adherents of an errant ideology and the ideology (Marxism) itself. "Peace on Earth" cleared the way for the re-establishment of the Catholic Church in the East. But an opening to Communists still has not been accepted by intransigent elements of the underground church in China. Might it not be time to apply John's teaching to relations with the Chinese government? Why should China be an exception to world Catholicism's aggiornamento in church-state relations?

*Chinese culture and the Gospel.* Pope Francis has his own theological rationale for a rapprochement with Beijing, whose policy is to "Sinicize" religion—to give it a Chinese character. A cornerstone of his apostolic exhortation "The Joy of the Gospel" is that each culture produces its own unique synthesis with the Gospel. He is inclined to accept the idea of Chinese Catholicism rooted in the world's most ancient civilization.

Because Francis has sponsored events with the Chinese in honor of the 17th-century Jesuit Matteo Ricci, whose methods of evangelization respected

Chinese culture, Beijing has reason to trust the genuineness of his initiatives. Why should the Catholic faith in China be tied to the forms of past centuries while inculturation takes place in other places across the world?

*Tension in the underground.* Finally, one factor that led to Benedict XVI's 2007 letter was internal rivalries in the underground church. Bishops held on to office beyond retirement; sometimes they reasserted their authority after a younger bishop had been appointed. With these tensions in mind, it is easier to comprehend why the Holy See seems to regard the ecclesial common good as requiring unity among the Chinese bishops and diplomatic relations between the Vatican and Beijing. There is a belief in Rome that it could help locals deal with these troubles if there is an apostolic delegate or nuncio residing in Beijing.

Over the years, there have been frequent reports that Beijing and Rome were close to concluding an agreement, but no breakthrough occurred. So people should not let their hopes, or their fears, grow too high. China has been tightening regulations on nearly every group, and anti-corruption campaigns are consolidating political power at the top. All the same, the Holy See seems to be preparing for the day when the Catholic Church, united once again, will enjoy a normal existence in China.

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Drew Christiansen, S.J., former editor in chief of *America*, is the Distinguished Professor of Ethics and Global Development at Georgetown University and a senior research fellow at the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs.

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from Chris Lowney



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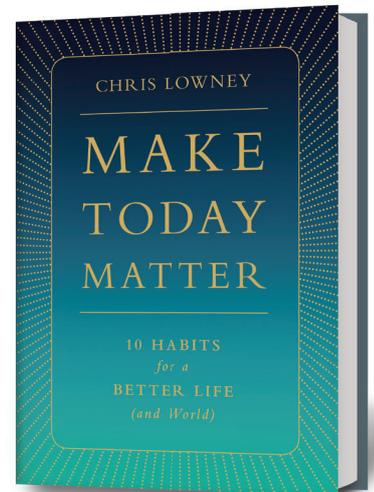
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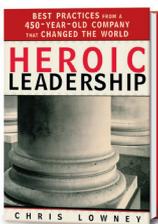
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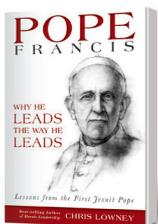
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# SOUTH KOREAN BISHOP URGES TRUMP TO RECONSIDER TOUGH TALK ON NORTH KOREA

President Trump used his State of the Union address on Jan. 30 to continue a war of words and tweets with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. “North Korea’s reckless pursuit of nuclear missiles could very soon threaten our homeland.... We are waging a campaign of maximum pressure to prevent that from happening,” he told Congress, arguing that “complacency and concessions only invite aggression and provocation.” “I will not repeat the mistakes of past administrations that got us into this dangerous position,” the president said.

Mr. Trump’s strong words were meant for an audience at home, many analysts suggest, and were intended to prepare the nation for a possible resumption of conflict with North

Korea. Also listening with keen interest to the president’s speech were the people of South Korea, who surely have reason to fear a restoration of hostilities with the North. Even if that conflict were to remain limited to conventional weapons, as many as 300,000 South Koreans could become casualties within days of renewed fighting.

Bishop Peter Kang U-il, a former president of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Korea, leads the diocese of Cheju. “It is true that the North Korean regime oppresses its own citizens with absolute dictatorship, as the president says, and we cannot accept their threatening gestures with missiles and nuclear tests,” Bishop Kang said in an interview conducted by email. “But that does not mean that other

U.S. Marine Corps and Air Force aircraft over the Korean Peninsula on Sept. 18, 2017, in response to a North Korean ballistic missile launch on Sept. 14.

countries have the right to launch a preventive strike that would incur without doubt a total war and unprecedented destruction, not only in the Korean Peninsula but also in other countries,” he said. “We think this kind of aggressive attitude by the president only motivates wrath and hatred against each other.”

The State of the Union comments were not the first time the president has made thinly veiled or even outright threats against the Kim regime. Some of Mr. Trump’s comments on Twitter, where he has taken to referring to the North Korean leader as “Rocket Man,” seem to be deliberately provocative. The tone has been noted in South Korea, according to Bishop Kang.

“The North Korean regime and its people recognize that North Korea is one of the poorest countries in the world,” he said. “However, they have a very strong sense of pride for their contemporary socialist heritage and their country.”

He called this national pride “their last fortress and their most precious property,” albeit one used to delude and distract the North Korean people. “They would not lay down this pride even if they starve,” he said.

“I feel that it would not be ideal or helpful at all to hurt this pride and their self-esteem,” he said. “I’d appreciate if President Trump would choose more refined language respecting their honor and pride, even though their leaders express themselves with very aggressive and violent language at times.”

He urges that the United States reconsider not only its rhetoric but also its strategy in dealing with the Kim regime. “We believe,” he said, “that the continuing military pressure and economic sanctions will not make the North abandon their nuclear bombs and missiles.” North Koreans believe the nation’s nuclear-weapon capacity is the only practical insurance against attack by the United States or South Korea, Bishop Kang said.

The president’s aggressive stance toward the North may have surfaced at a particularly inopportune moment. “Because of the Pyeongchang Olympics, most Korean people feel there has been a certain improvement in terms of relations between the South and the North Korea,” he said. “Here in the South, people hope sincerely that atmosphere of détente will be prolonged after the Olympics.” But there is reason to fear the warming trend

could end quickly, Bishop Kang added, since the South Korean and U.S. armies will “probably resume their annual exercises soon after the Olympics,” something he believes “would cause violent reactions from the North.”

For his part, Bishop Kang would prefer to see less geopolitical emphasis on the likelihood of renewed conflict and more on restored negotiations. “It is my belief that real peace cannot be attained in the end by arms and military operations,” he said, “but only through patient dialogue and collaboration based upon mutual respect.

“No war,” he said, “can bring along any positive result for anybody, and it will only mean many more civilian victims than soldiers.”

According to Bishop Kang, the most important practical move that the allies South Korea and the United States could make toward ending the tension with North Korea, and perhaps beginning tentative steps toward a lasting peace, would be to find a way “to let the North trust that the United States and South Korea do not have any intention to attack or to overthrow their regime by military force.” And the best way to earn their trust, he said, “is to diminish the allied military exercises, which are for them a real tremendous threat.”

Despite the current increase in tension, Bishop Kang maintains a hope that “in a not-too-distant future” the Koreas will become reunified. “The North Korean people are forced to live in an absolutely abnormal situation, which is made barely possible only by severe police surveillance,” he said. “But this kind of oppression and surveillance cannot last,” the bishop said. “We have seen in other socialist countries that such tense situations can unexpectedly collapse.”

Mediation and moderation are recurring themes in Bishop Kang’s commentary on the prospects for peace with North Korea. Perpetual enmity “will never promote peace in the world,” he said.

“We should recognize the other side, whether they are communists or capitalists, as the same—human beings, created as the same children of God the Father.”

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

## The spreading—and aging—of the green

St. Patrick's Day brings a focus to the Irish diaspora in the United States, now several times larger than the population of Ireland itself. As the map below indicates, those who claim Irish heritage to the U.S. Census Bureau (which limits respondents to two ancestries) are most prevalent in the Northeast—led by Massachusetts, where 21 percent of all residents say they have blood from the Emerald Isle.

Overall, Irish-Americans make up almost exactly one-tenth of the U.S. population. This includes pockets of Irish-Americans in Appalachia, the Deep South and old mining towns in the West. In places like Missouri and West Virginia, the population includes many “Scotch-Irish” who have been in the United States for many generations and identify as Protestant. In fact, data from the General Social Survey from 2000 through 2012 suggest that the shares of Irish-Americans who are raised Catholic or Protestant is

about even (40 percent each).

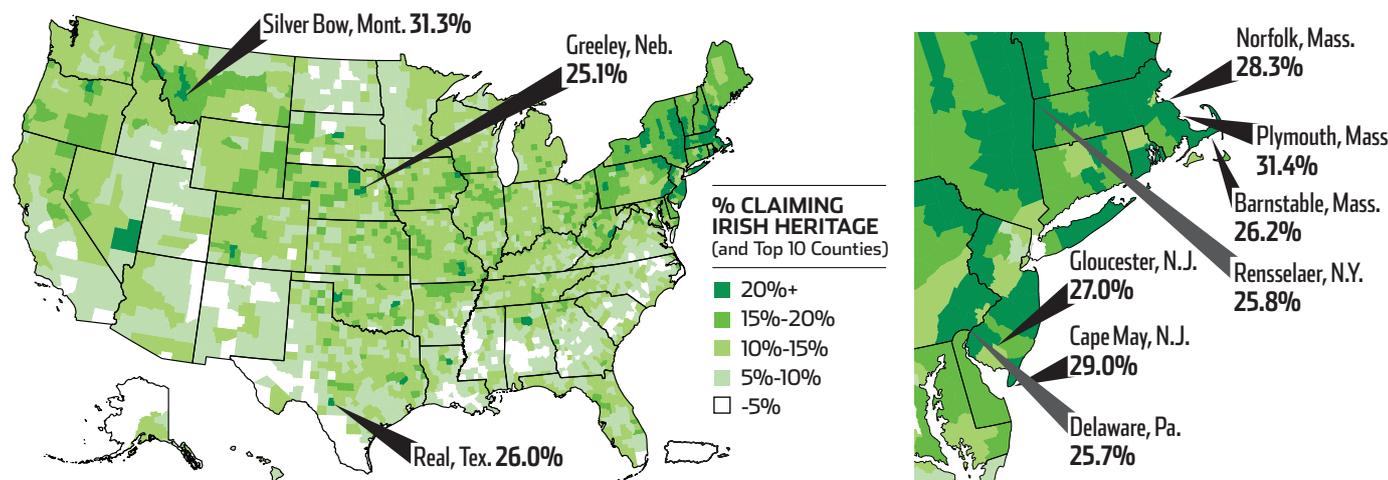
Census data indicate that Irish-Americans are now better educated, more affluent and more likely to work in white-collar jobs than are U.S. residents as a whole. They are also more likely to be homeowners rather than renters, which helps explain why the Irish population is noticeably higher in suburban counties than in cities like New York, Philadelphia and even Boston.

But the Irish presence in the United States is in a long decline. Americans of Irish descent are, on average, older than other citizens, and the number of Irish-born living here peaked way back in 1890, at 1.9 million. It is now about 125,000.

Robert David Sullivan, associate editor.

Twitter: @RobertDSullivan.

### THE IRISH DIASPORA IN AMERICA



**32.3 MILLION AMERICANS CLAIM IRISH HERITAGE**  
WHEN ASKED TO PROVIDE UP TO TWO ANCESTRIES

THAT'S 10.0% OF THE U.S. POPULATION  
(SECOND ONLY TO GERMAN, AT 13.9%)

ALMOST 7 TIMES THE POPULATION  
OF IRELAND ITSELF (4.8 MILLION)

**9.2 MILLION AMERICANS**  
CLAIM ONLY IRISH HERITAGE  
2.9% OF THE U.S. POPULATION

	Total U.S.	Irish ancestry
Median age	37.7	41.0
College graduates	30.3%	37.4%
Median household income	\$55,322	\$66,688

**125,840 IRISH-BORN LIVED IN THE U.S. IN 2016**  **156,474 IN 2000**

**1766** first official St. Patrick's Day parade held in New York  
(by Irish soldiers serving in the British army)

**1962** first year Chicago River is dyed green | **0** Number of snakes in Ireland after St. Patrick

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau (2016 data); Central Statistics Office, Ireland; "St. Patrick's Day 2014: Facts, Myths, and Traditions," March 15, 2014, National Geographic.

## Cardinal Cupich: Pope Francis' family teaching is a paradigm shift for the church



Cardinal Blase J. Cupich of Chicago meets Pope Francis during his general audience in Paul VI Hall at the Vatican Feb. 7.

of divorce and Communion, he did say the conversation between families and pastoral ministers could yield greater understanding of what the church holds true. “Doctrine can develop as a result of the church’s merciful accompaniment of families because God has chosen the family as a privileged place to reveal all that the God of mercy is doing in our time,” he said.

Citing the pope, he said developments in doctrine include “remaining open to the invitation to see our moral teachings on marriage and family life through the lens of God’s omnipotent mercy.”

Cardinal Cupich said the pope’s critics “misinterpret and misunderstand ‘Amoris’ simply because they fail or refuse to take into account the present reality in all its complexity” and that they “limit their scope to an idealistic understanding of marriage and family.”

“As a result, they narrow their options when it comes to responding to the lived realities of people’s lives since their knowledge is fragmented and incomplete,” he said.

Pope Francis, Cardinal Cupich said, is not inventing new ideas. Instead, he is “retrieving a way of thinking about church teaching and practice that has its root in our tradition.”

The challenges families face today are different from the past, the cardinal said, highlighting social support structures that “have all but evaporated”; economic strains on families, including lack of equal pay for women; “alienation and isolation” that can lead to substance abuse; and “seismic shifts in society” that “affect marriages and families.”

These realities, Cardinal Cupich said, make necessary “a shift in the way the church’s ministers interact with families and married couples” that begins “with the understanding that families are not problems to solve.”

The cardinal said bishops, ministers and theologians “should be ready to instruct” on issues related to family life—but always with “the sensitivity of a spiritual director or a close friend who can listen to the experiences of another humbly, not pretending to have all the answers, and always ready to help discern the movements of the Spirit in that particular moment.”

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

Arguing that “the complex realities that couples and families face today are singularly different from those of the past,” Cardinal Blase Cupich urged Catholic leaders to embrace Pope Francis’ “call to action” and to welcome “a new way of relating to the lives of families today.”

The Chicago archbishop, delivering an address on Feb. 9 at the Von Hügel Institute, a Catholic research institute affiliated with St. Edmund’s College at the University of Cambridge, in England, said ministry to families today must find “a balance between teaching and listening” that is “open to the possibility of learning from one another.”

Cardinal Cupich said that Pope Francis has encouraged church leaders to accept “a healthy dose of self-criticism” and called for “greater attention to the voices of the laity, especially on matters of marriage and family life.”

In his address, the cardinal threw his red hat in with the Vatican’s secretary of state, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, who in January said Pope Francis had initiated a “paradigm shift” in Catholicism with his pastoral letter on the family in 2016, “Amoris Laetitia,” or “The Joy of Love.”

The encyclical has won praise for its reality-based approach to pastoral care for families. But critics charge that it has undermined traditional church teaching, particularly because of a provision that could allow some divorced and remarried Catholics to receive Communion.

Cardinal Cupich backed Cardinal Parolin’s analysis, calling “Amoris Laetitia” “a major shift in our ministerial approach that is nothing short of revolutionary.” He said church leaders must listen to the lived experience of Catholic families, which “represents an enormous change of approach, a paradigm shift holistically rooted in Scripture, tradition and human experience.”

While the cardinal did not touch directly on the question

## Jesuit Refugee Service reports high level of homelessness among London's refugees

A report from the London office of the Jesuit Refugee Service U.K., released in January, reveals an alarming incidence of street homelessness and destitution among refugees in London. More shocking, J.R.S. contends that it is deliberate government policy to make life for refugees as difficult as possible.

The report finds that almost two-thirds of refugees have experienced street homelessness in the previous year, 20 percent of whom were sleeping on the capital's often-cold streets for more than a month. At the same time, over a third of those who had some kind of housing described themselves as at risk of physical violence in their accommodation.

Sarah Teather, country director of J.R.S.-U.K., explained that the report, titled "Out in the Cold: Homelessness Among Destitute Refugees in London," brought into the foreground the realities of life for refugees in London that her team had first discovered in conversations over shared meals at the East London J.R.S. Day Centre.

Ms. Teather explained that anxiety about living arrangements was never far from these conversations, prompting her and her team to investigate more closely. What they found, she recounts, "is that destitute refugees are living in conditions which are worse even than we feared."

Refugees experiencing destitution, including street homelessness, have not gotten into such predicaments as a result of poor planning. J.R.S. contends that it is deliberate government policy, which critics call "the hostile environment agenda."

J.R.S. asserts that it "is not an acceptable tool of government policy" to deliberately make people destitute, particularly when it is known that such destitution exposes already vulnerable people "to street homelessness and significant risk of exploitation and abuse."

The report highlights an arbitrary system for those seeking asylum. Anyone who applies for asylum may not take paid work, according to U.K. policy, but they do receive housing and a minuscule allowance of £36.95 (\$52.44) per



Young demonstrators gather outside Parliament in London on Oct. 24 to call for more child refugees to be allowed asylum and safe passage to the United Kingdom.

week. When the system decides that a claimant's process of seeking asylum is exhausted, even those meager supports end, meaning, quite literally, destitution.

Other laws exacerbate these effects, making it very difficult for an asylum seeker to find accommodation. "The Home Office aims to create a 'hostile environment' for undocumented migrants," the report notes. "This criminalises many everyday activities, such as driving and work, and makes it extremely difficult for undocumented migrants to access vital services, notably healthcare."

There is semi-permanent street homelessness among refugees and asylum seekers. Almost half those surveyed reported having to remain on the move, staying in different places on different nights.

Sixty-year-old Svetlana, a woman quoted in the report, says: "I am 15 years here. No support, no help. The government does not care." She and her husband admitted to searching for food in garbage cans. The anti-immigrant rhetoric, often peddled and widely believed in the United



CNS photo/Mary Turner, Reuters

## Church leaders call Trump's proposal to end 'chain migration' a threat to families



CNS photo/José Luis González, Reuters

Dreamers gathered at the U.S.-Mexico border wall in Sunland Park, N.M., in January.

During the State of the Union address in January, President Trump detailed “four pillars” of his immigration plan: increasing border security, ending extended-family chain migration, eliminating the visa lottery and legalizing 1.8 million undocumented immigrants, including Dreamers—undocumented immigrants brought to the United States as minors.

Dominican Sister Donna Markham, president of Catholic Charities USA, said it was “disturbing” that the legalization of Dreamers would “come at the expense of dividing families.”

“It is deeply problematic that political leaders are increasingly referring to family-based migration as ‘chain migration.’ Families aren’t chains,” she said in a statement released on Jan. 29.

Bishop Joe Vásquez of Austin, Tex., chairman of the U.S. bishops’ Committee on Migration, called family immigration “part of the bedrock of our country and of our church.”

“Upholding and protecting the family unit, regardless of its national origins, is vital to our faith,” he said in a statement released shortly before the State of the Union address. “We should not...barter the well-being of unaccompanied children for the well-being of the Dreamers. We know them all to be children of God who need our compassion and mercy.”

During his address, the president alleged that “a single immigrant can bring in a virtually unlimited number of distant relatives.”

“It’s a myth,” said Kevin Appleby, senior director of international migration policy for the Center for Migration Studies of New York, calling the ending of family-based migration the equivalent of “a family ban.”

J. D. Long-Garcia, senior editor. *Twitter:* @JDLongGarcia.

Kingdom, that all asylum seekers are fit, opportunistic young men appears far wide of the mark.

The report stresses that refugees represent an “exceptionally vulnerable group of people who are on the very margins of society and whose most basic needs are not met.”

The report calls for a number of specific measures, saying that the intentionally hostile environment has to be more widely challenged and that those seeking asylum should be given the right to work.

With these changes, not only would some of the most destitute people in British society benefit and their humanity be acknowledged, but society itself would be a good deal less brutal. We might even come to see what Pope Francis has pointed out—that these stories are “signs of the times” on which we must reflect.

David Stewart, S.J., *London correspondent.*  
*Twitter:* @DavidStewartSJ.

# THE FUTURE OF CATHOLIC IRELAND

*The church has deep roots here, but a changing culture offers challenges*

By James T. Keane

The College Chapel at St. Patrick's College of Maynooth has 454 carved oak stalls for seminarians and priests. They run in serried ranks down the length of its nave, making it the largest choir chapel in the world. The church itself is a masterpiece of Gothic Revival, and the ceiling of the church offers a kind of visual catechism, taking worshippers through salvation history by means of painted images.

Since St. Patrick's College's founding in 1795 in County Kildare as the national seminary for the Catholic Church in Ireland, it has trained over 11,000 priests—not just for Ireland, but for the global church. The seminary also inspired two major missionary societies, the first di-





Photo: James T. Keane

In Dublin's Glasnevin Cemetery, the tomb of Daniel O'Connell, known as "The Great Liberator," is inscribed: "My heart to Rome, my body to Ireland and my soul to heaven."

rected to China and the latter to Africa. Many American Catholics may also remember that the parish priest of their childhood was from Ireland; that man was likely trained in Maynooth.

When construction on the College Chapel began in 1875, Maynooth was the largest seminary in all of Christendom. It is no accident that the media portrayal in the United States (and many other countries) of a Catholic priest is of an Irish man with a thick brogue. In 1899, 82 priests “for Ireland, America, and Australia” were ordained at Maynooth.

In the fall of 2017, a new class of first-year seminarians arrived at Maynooth to begin their training for the priesthood.

There were six men.

### **Ireland in the Coming Times**

In total, there are 36 seminarians living at Maynooth this year (another 25 are assigned to Maynooth but live elsewhere). The decline in priestly vocations in Ireland is paralleled by similarly stark decreases in numbers for men’s and women’s religious orders. “The decline in vocations is not even the biggest problem we face,” said Stanislaus Kennedy, R.S.C., known throughout Ireland as Sister Stan, a social justice advocate and founder of the charity Focus Ireland, now the largest voluntary organization in the country. “The biggest problem is the decline in participation by the laity, especially by the young people.” Recent surveys confirm this, showing steep declines throughout the Republic of Ireland in religious practice and reception of the sacraments.

More than 90 percent of Irish Catholics reported attending Mass at least weekly in the early 1970s; recent surveys put that percentage at between 30 and 35 percent in recent years. In the Archdiocese of Dublin, it is less than 20 percent, and some urban parishes report weekly attendance as less than 2 percent of the Catholic population. As many as one in ten Irish now identify as “nones,” claiming no religious affiliation.

The numbers augur an uncertain future for the Catholic Church in Ireland, long a place where Catholicism seemed sure of deep roots and high adherence to practice and tradition. Will Ireland follow the same trajectory as Quebec, an overwhelmingly Catholic culture that almost completely rejected the church in two generations to become one of the most secular societies on earth? Or will it resemble the Catholic Church in the United States, where a community diminished by sex abuse scandals and a decades-long vocations crisis still bleeds numbers but seems vital enough to survive? Or will there be some unanticipated future for the famous “land of saints and scholars”?



Photo: James T. Keane



The College Chapel at St. Patrick's College of Maynooth has 454 carved oak stalls for seminarians and priests.

### How and Why?

There is no single cause for what ails the Irish Catholic church, but without question a primary source of anger and disillusionment is the crisis caused by sexual abuse of young people by members of the Catholic clergy and religious, which was doubly painful in Ireland because of the all-encompassing authority of the Catholic Church over Irish society throughout the 20th century. The pervasiveness of clericalism in Irish Catholic culture contributed to a culture of noblesse oblige among the clergy, and civil authorities were far more likely to defer to bishops and the superiors of religious orders when deciding whether to pursue cases of misconduct. Reports of other kinds of physical abuse in Irish schools, orphanages, “Magdalene laundries” and other church institutions have been legion in the Irish media in recent years. Coverups and transfers of repeat abusers was easier in a society that reflexively trusted religious institutions. That trust has been badly damaged, if not destroyed. “The priests thought they were more powerful than the police,” one man in a pub in Galway told me, “and they were right.”

This disillusionment is not felt only among laypeople, either. I conducted a group interview with the Rev. Michael Mullaney, who is the president of St. Patrick's College at Maynooth, and the Rev. Michael Collins and the Rev. Tomas Surlis, both directors of formation at the seminary. They noted that the seemingly endless revelations about sexual and physical abuse in the church had deeply affected priests and seminarians too, not to mention potential vocations.

“There's a sense of bereavement among the clergy as well [as among laypeople], and a sense of fear around intimacy,” commented Father Surlis. “There was a tactile nature to the ministry of the priests and the religious orders, to their interaction with the people, and that is not so much the case anymore.”

“That has affected our work with young people,” Father Mullaney agreed. “That trust and that connection was broken. It's very hard with that air of suspicion present.... We have to rebuild that trust, and that's going to take a lot of time.”

A second reason for Ireland's changing church profile is perhaps counterintuitive when one considers the first. The Ireland of today is an extraordinarily open society, economically and culturally. An English-speaking, well-educated population was poised to benefit from globalization and the technology boom of the 1990s and early 2000s. Ireland also benefited handsomely from joining the European Union (and then suffered deeply

A scenic landscape of Ireland, likely a coastal town or village, with a silhouette of a person's head in the foreground on the right. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

# THE OUTWARD SIGNS OF A DEEPLY CATHOLIC NATION ARE STILL VISIBLE EVERYWHERE IN IRELAND.

from E.U.-mandated austerity measures after the 2008 economic collapse). Full membership in the European Union brought infrastructure improvements, access to new markets and immigration—the last an awkward reality for a largely homogenous population unaccustomed to diversity of creed, culture or ethnicity.

The economic successes of Ireland after full integration into the European Union and the acceleration of globalization were due to two things, commented the Very Rev. Diarmuid Martin, archbishop of Dublin, in an interview in Dublin in November. “We had a very well-educated workforce, and we had an open economy. We were ready for it. But with the open economy comes cultural openness.... That’s a positive thing, but it means we have to realize that the dominant forces in Irish culture come from outside Ireland in many ways.”

Rapid urbanization has also changed Irish society. The Republic’s population will soon pass five million (still far below an estimated eight million in 1848, immediately before the Famine), but fully 50 percent of that population lives in the vicinity of Dublin. Other studies have noted that fewer than 10 percent of the Irish workforce is involved in agriculture. The church is grappling with how to evangelize a changed society even while that society is rapidly being transformed before its eyes. The Taoiseach (prime minister) of Ireland, Leo Varadkar, recently called for a referendum in May that could make abortion legal, a prospect that would have been unthinkable just 10 years ago. Mr. Varadkar is also the first child of an immigrant (his father was born in Mumbai) and the first openly gay man to be elected Taoiseach.

Traditional roles for women have also changed dramatically outside the church, but not inside. “There’s no doubt that generations of women feel that they haven’t been included in areas of responsibility in the church, not necessarily just the priesthood,” Archbishop Martin said. “Grandmothers feel this way, mothers feel this way, but their daughters feel in a much stronger way that [the church] isn’t necessarily a place where they belong. You can’t deny it.”

Archbishop Martin was blunt in pointing out another source of malaise: the Irish church’s unwillingness in the past to engage in significant evangelization efforts or faith formation on its own soil. For generations, he said, the church relied on Irish society, particularly the schools, to be the primary vehicle for faith formation and transmission. Since catechism in schools was almost universal and many were run by religious orders, few parishes invested resources in adult faith formation. The identification of the Republic of Ireland with a persecuted Catholic Church, the ubiquity and hegemony of church institutions, and cultural taboos against lax religious practice all contributed to keeping the pews full.

“An atheist could learn the catechism by heart and regurgitate it all the time, and never move towards faith,” Archbishop Martin said. “We learned all the rules and the norms, and it was presumed that the basic elements of faith were there.... People felt that there was really very little need to evangelize, that being born into Irish society made you a Catholic.”

Some more traditional voices in the Irish church have laid much of the blame for the decline in vocations and



A pilgrim ascends during an annual pilgrimage to Croagh Patrick near Lecanvey, Ireland. The 2,500-foot-high mountain, which overlooks Clew Bay in County Mayo, is considered the Mount Sinai of Ireland. The tradition of this pilgrimage stretches back over 5,000 years.

church practice on exactly that loss of traditional religious strictures since the Second Vatican Council, but the formation staff at Maynooth thought otherwise. “If we hadn’t had Vatican II, the decline would have been worse. The disconnect with the world would have been more glaring,” said Father Collins. “At least Vatican II has equipped the church in some way to negotiate the huge social changes we could not have predicted.”

“The key and core insight of the Second Vatican Council is the ecclesiology of communion,” added Father Surlis, “this idea that we are together, disciples on the road. It’s almost as if the Spirit is forcing that upon us, at one level. Yes, the decline of vocations into the priesthood and religious life is worrying, but it’s leading to the emergence of a healthier, more balanced church in this country.”

### **Culture and Contradiction**

The outward signs of a deeply Catholic nation are still visible everywhere in Ireland. The post office in one town outside Dublin, for example, advertises in its window, “Signed Mass cards sold here.” In the middle of Dublin, a huge Nativity scene in late November advertised “Dublin City Council lighting up the city at Christmas.” Passengers still routinely make the sign of the cross when their train or bus passes a church. Shrines and crosses are everywhere, alongside highways as much as along the narrow country lanes, and not all are in ruin.

“Culture tends to be consistent, and in my experience there is nearly always a return to the roots of culture,” commented Mary Kenny, an Irish journalist and a founding member of the Irish Women’s Liberation Movement as

well as author of *Goodbye to Catholic Ireland*, in an email interview last December. “What has been will be.... I think the deposit of Irish spirituality will remain, and I’m often surprised by how well-attended Mass can be in Ireland. Recently, on Nov. 1 [the Feast of All Saints], I caught a Mass at Clarendon Street [in Dublin]. Standing room only!”

This attachment to a cultural faith is often expressed alongside a dismissal of the church in ways that can appear openly contradictory. One taxicab driver assured me that he would never darken the door of a church again, so angry was he at the sex abuse scandals and at a culture where clerics held unlimited authority over society. And yet he expressed open affection for the priest who buried his father; and when I pointed out that a St. Padre Pio prayer card graced his windshield, he answered, “Well, of course. He’s my patron saint.”

That same man also objected strongly to recent educational policies that exempt non-Catholic immigrants to Ireland from Catholic religious instruction, because “you can’t be Irish if you don’t learn our faith.”

That combination—a rejection of the institutional church alongside open affection for individual pastoral figures, including parish priests and Ireland’s large number of women religious—was repeated numerous times over eight days of conversations. Again and again I heard some variation of “the church is such a part of Irish life” stated by people who then noted matter-of-factly that they had long since stopped attending Mass.

### **A Numbers Game—or Not**

“From one perspective, something is dying,” said Father



Dún Aonghasa is the largest prehistoric stone fort on Inishmore in the Aran Islands, County Galway, Republic of Ireland.

Photo: iStockPhoto



Photo: CNS photo/Robert Duncan

Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of Dublin answers questions at a Vatican news conference on the 2018 World Meeting of Families, which his archdiocese will host.

Collins. “But from another perspective, you can see that we are in a liminal space: Something new is emerging. There’s something very vibrant happening. That sounds almost like a contradiction, but I think it is the reality.”

As positive factors among disappointing numbers, Father Collins and his fellow priests at Maynooth pointed to the endurance and even growth of other sources of Christian nourishment in Ireland, including pilgrimages, public novenas and frequent visits to nontraditional worship sites, such as the Marian shrine at Knock or the many healing wells and legendary “thin places” of Ireland. The philosopher Charles Taylor has called this style of religious practice “the culture of festivity” in his book *A Secular Age*, noting that a population of mobile Christians, less tied to familial dwelling places or multigenerational traditions, is more open to “religious experiences” than to regular practice. Ms. Kenny agreed with Mr. Taylor’s thesis, noting that despite widespread secularism and consumerism, pilgrim-

ages like the one to Santiago de Compostela in Spain are more and more popular, and “cathedrals are attracting terrific crowds all over Europe. God works in mysterious ways.”

In this sense, the Irish church can also rely on a pre-Christian Celtic spirituality whose subtle (and sometimes obvious) influence is everywhere in Ireland. Lough Derg, an ancient Celtic religious center that became a Catholic pilgrimage site, grows more popular with every passing year. The same is true of Croagh Patrick, the “Holy Mountain” that is dedicated to St. Patrick but whose religious significance stretches back five millennia.

Similarly, both Archbishop Martin in Dublin and the formation team at Maynooth mentioned the coming World Meeting of Families in Dublin, from Aug. 21 to 26, as a highly anticipated event that should draw huge and enthusiastic crowds. Pope Francis is expected to preside at the closing Mass, making him only the second pope in history to visit Ireland. The first papal visit, by John Paul II in 1979, drew more than 2.5 million people to various public Masses and ceremonies—almost half the population of the island.

### At the End of the World

Directly west from Dublin by 150 miles, but a world away in almost every other respect, Inishmaan is one of the Aran Islands, three rocky outposts that sit at the entrance to Galway Bay. They are a geographic extension of “The Burren,” a huge limestone formation that forms much of the topography of nearby County Clare. Though the unforgiving climate and scarce resources of the islands made them little more than bird estuaries for much of known history,

evidence of monasteries and abbeys from the fourth century can be found on all three, including the purported homes of St. Colmcille, St. Abigail (St. Gonnait in Irish) and St. Enda. The Aran Islands are a reminder that Christianity did not spread organically or in any kind of territorial sequence. There were Christian monks in the Aran Islands before Augustine wrote his *Confessions*; there were monasteries on Inishmaan three centuries before Britain was converted to Christianity.

The islands became more heavily populated in the 17th century, covered by farms cultivated by rural Irish peasants driven from their lands during Oliver Cromwell's genocidal persecutions of Catholics. "They can go to hell," Cromwell is reputed to have said of Ireland's Catholics while driving them west, "or they can go to Connaught." Some scholars estimate half of Ireland's 1.5 million people died in the violence or the ensuing famines. The British also used the Aran Islands to imprison captured Catholic priests before they were sold into indentured servitude in the West Indies.

The islands have almost no natural soil, and the process by which settlers coaxed life out of the hard ground seems born of a superhuman stubbornness. Carting sand and seaweed up the hills and cliffs, farmers cleared land by stacking loose rock in dry-stone walls and then spreading the sand-seaweed mixture directly atop the limestone surface, finally applying a thin layer of topsoil. From this soil could be coaxed a meager crop of potatoes and other vegetables, as well as grass for grazing cattle and sheep. Fishing also provided nutrition, though frequent storms and treacherous wave patterns made this a perilous endeavor. Many a gravestone or memorial marker on the islands bluntly reads "Drowned."

Even today, the islands are remarkable for their isolation and stark, wild beauty. They are also among the few remaining places in Ireland where all the residents speak Irish fluently. On a walk to the top of Inishmaan at the end of November, I became convinced there was a woman keening nearby in the ruins of a monastery. No; it was the frigid Atlantic wind screaming through the chinks of the island's endless dry-stone walls. Enda and Abigail, I thought, were of sterner stuff than we; so too the modern-day residents; so too the thousands of priests who listened to that banshee scream as they awaited a prison ship and a life of forced labor. For anyone with an interest in the history and dynamism of Christianity, these islands are a source of fascination.

But today, the Irish clergy shortage means that the three islands share among them one priest. The residents of Inishmaan have Mass in winter on every other Sunday.

## Revised Expectations

What is the future for Catholic Ireland? Some of the institutional responses to a diminished church will be familiar to Americans: parish clustering, increased reliance on professionally trained lay ministers, greater stress on evangelization beyond the catechism taught in the schools. "We need to do a lot more catechesis and youth ministry," said Father Mullaney, "as well as reaching out to people who have been disaffected or alienated because of the [sexual abuse] scandals." Lay salaries—in parishes and in schools—will need to be funded, either publicly or privately, to a greater degree than those of priests and religious in the past.

"I have heard priests and bishops say that we will be a smaller church, but that we will have a stronger identity," commented Sister Kennedy. "But I don't think that's the way to go—that kind of church will be one that is removed from the life of many of the people. What we need instead is a total renewal, a transformation of the way we imagine ourselves.

"We need to bring laypeople into every part of the church," Sister Kennedy continued. "The pastoral part, the sacramental part, the administrative part. It is not enough simply to encourage people to be eucharistic ministers or to serve on the parish finance committee. Real renewal will [require] laypeople participating in every aspect of the church.

"In the Irish church, laypeople are the 'outsiders.' Until laypeople are seen as an integral part of the church and participate fully in it, the church will continue to decline and become a small congregation with little influence," she said. "If laypeople participate fully as 'people of God' as 'Gaudium et Spes' proposes, with preferential support for the poor, the priesthood and the rest will take care of itself. And the church, while separated from the state, will have its own place and a clear role: bringer of good news to the whole of society."

The "sacramental famine" brought on by clergy shortages may prove even more painful for Ireland than for the United States, as the Irish church has not experienced the huge numbers of vocations to the permanent diaconate that the U.S. church enjoyed in the decades following the Second Vatican Council. And another vocation crisis is no less pressing, even if coverage of it is more muted: an unprecedented decline in the number of women religious in Ireland. These women are some of the most beloved public figures in Irish culture.

Archbishop Martin predicts that the church will seem diminished in many ways but will always be a vital part of Irish life. "We need a church that is relevant more than it is dominant," he said, and that can sometimes mean looking

THE SONG YOU KNOW.  
THE STORY YOU DON'T.



Will I stand in your presence  
Or to my knees will I fall  
Will I sing hallelujah  
Will I be able to speak at all

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beyond numbers to larger questions. “There are parishes that have never been as vibrant in the past as they are today, even though numbers may be smaller,” he noted. “But it is a worry that most of those vibrant parishes are middle class. And you have to ask yourself: Why is that? The middle class tends to be the most comfortable and most conformist grouping in society. And the believing community can’t just be a conformist grouping. It must somehow or other be shaking people out of conformity.

“The Irish church has to change gear. And has to notice that the gear has changed.”

## Brave New World

Archbishop Martin also cautioned against equating the reality of Irish life with the cultural perceptions of what he called “the Auld Sod brigade,” Irish-American descendants of emigrants whose sentimental memories (real or not) of Ireland are not always or often shared by the nation’s residents. The world of potato farms improbably coaxed out of rocky soil, or of Gothic Revival chapels full of sturdy peasants on the path to the priesthood, has more life in those sentimental memories than in reality. The church may never again look as it did in Maynooth 100 years ago, but the history of places like the Aran Islands suggest it will persist in some vital way. An unexpected personal discovery during my visit suggested that the future of Irish Catholicism, whatever it may be, is tied up with the future of an Ireland that is now far different from what many Americans imagine.

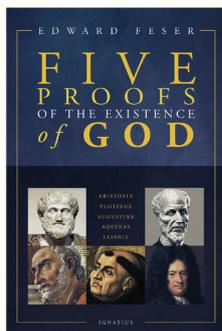
A sister of mine lives with her Irish-born husband and children outside Dublin. I stayed with them for several days during my reporting for this essay. Her eldest son is at Belvedere, the Jesuit prep school in Dublin (its most famous alumnus: James Joyce); her youngest son attends an “Educate Together” school, where catechism is taught after school rather than as part of the curriculum. Both her daughters attend a Catholic school with over 1,000 students. In some ways, exactly what I had expected.

But at one point I heard her on the phone with two of our other siblings discussing future travel plans. A visit from the United States had been complicated because her eldest son had a water polo tournament in Malta, and her eldest daughter had a field trip that same week to Norway. It was a shock to me, and would be that to the “Auld Sod brigade” as well. The Irish are Europeans now.

James T. Keane is a senior editor at *America*.



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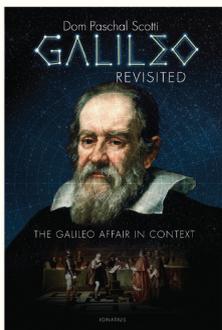
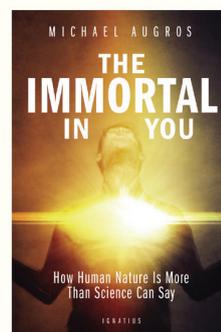
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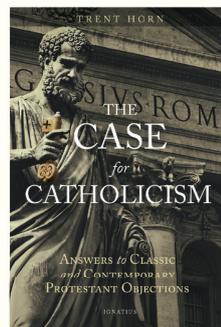
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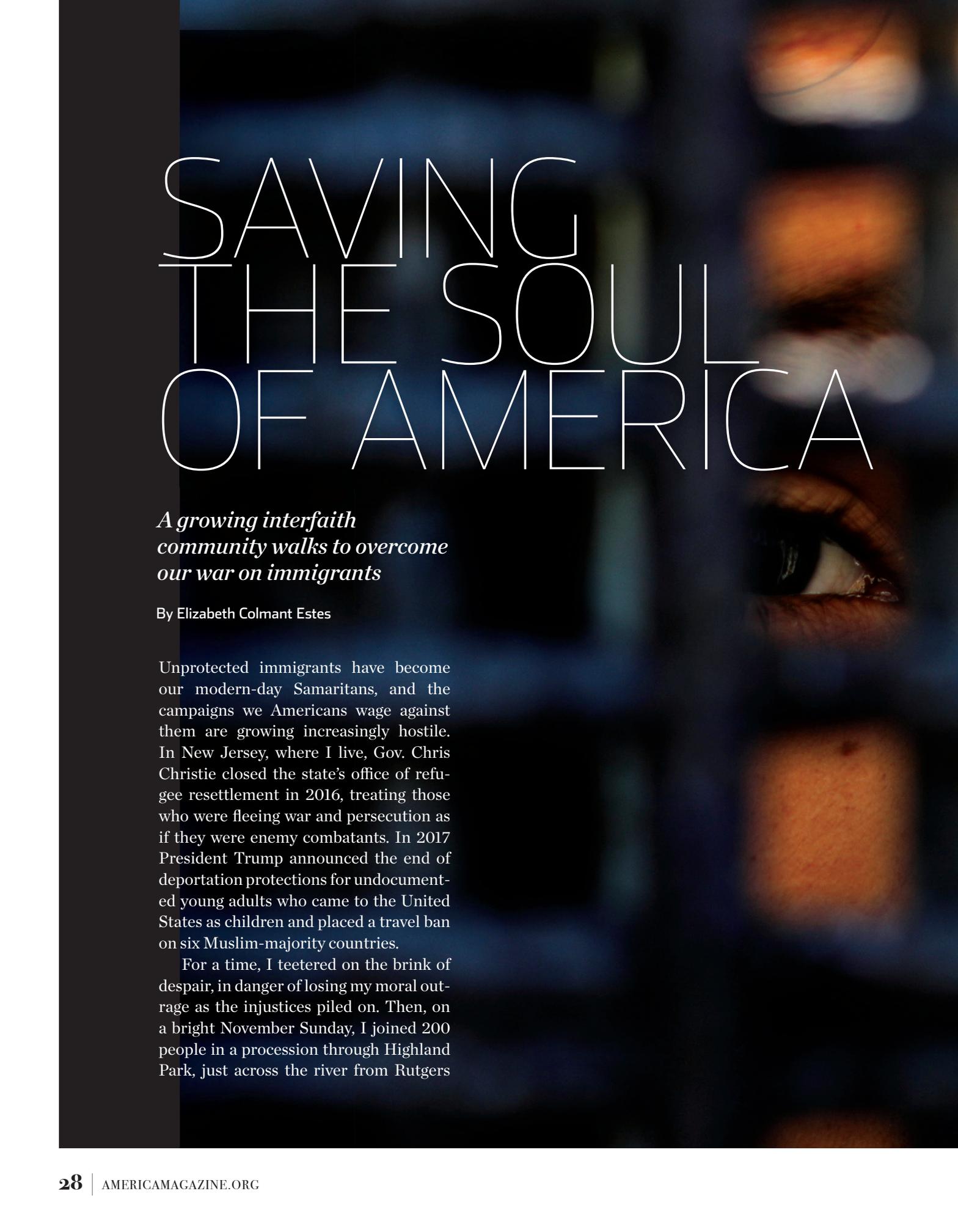


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# SAVING THE SOUL OF AMERICA

*A growing interfaith  
community walks to overcome  
our war on immigrants*

By Elizabeth Colmant Estes

Unprotected immigrants have become our modern-day Samaritans, and the campaigns we Americans wage against them are growing increasingly hostile. In New Jersey, where I live, Gov. Chris Christie closed the state's office of refugee resettlement in 2016, treating those who were fleeing war and persecution as if they were enemy combatants. In 2017 President Trump announced the end of deportation protections for undocumented young adults who came to the United States as children and placed a travel ban on six Muslim-majority countries.

For a time, I teetered on the brink of despair, in danger of losing my moral outrage as the injustices piled on. Then, on a bright November Sunday, I joined 200 people in a procession through Highland Park, just across the river from Rutgers



Photo: CNS photo/Mike Blake, Reuters

A boy in Mexico looks through the border fence at Border Field State Park in San Diego Nov. 18. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has urged protection for immigrants and refugees.

# We want to be here for them, for as long as it takes. ●●

University's New Brunswick campus. They were fundraising for Interfaith Refugee and Immigrant Services and Empowerment, a coalition of 60 organizations dedicated to resettling refugees and assisting asylum seekers in Central New Jersey. It was a sign that my 1.8-square-mile municipality has become a refuge for people fleeing persecution.

Walking among the crowd, I recognized only a few familiar faces. Whether prompted by the Holy Spirit or my own need for inspiration, I felt compelled to ask these New Jerseyans, "Why are you here?" I wanted to know what powerful force brought these strangers together to invest their time, energy and money to help immigrants whom so many Americans view with suspicion, anger and hatred.

In the golden sunshine of the crisp afternoon, a tall gentleman with a graying ponytail towered over the procession. Amid a sea of posters bearing messages of welcome ("Refugees Make Our Country Great") and warning ("Will Trade Racists for Refugees"), the man declared: "Jews, Christians, Muslims, pagans and atheists, all working together. Makes you think, maybe God...exists."

His remark was somewhat tongue-in-cheek. A retired Lutheran pastor, John Fischer explained that in 40 years of ordained ministry, he rarely attended a meeting like the monthly Interfaith-RISE gatherings at the Reformed Church of Highland Park, led by the church's co-pastor, Seth Kaper-Dale.

"Seth comes in with a long list of tasks that need to get done, and people just raise their hands. By the end of the meeting, every need is cared for," Pastor Fischer said. "It lifts your spirit."

Back in 2014, when Lutheran Disaster Response, a ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, asked congregations to provide shelter for people who lost their homes in Hurricane Sandy, the parsonage of Our Savior's Lutheran Church, where Rev. Fischer now worships, stood empty and in need of repair. The tiny congregation dedicated \$35,000 to renovate the four-bedroom house for a New Jersey family until their own home was once again livable. The parsonage then became vacant just as Interfaith-RISE was desperately searching for a place large



support a refugee family.

Nancy Zerbe and her husband, Pete Materna, who are Catholic, were introduced to Interfaith-RISE by neighbors who started the group at St. Luke's and then assisted the Afghan family in the Lutheran parsonage. After the couple participated in an Interfaith-RISE Walk-a-Thon in November 2016, they joined as representatives of their own congregation, St. Peter the Apostle University and Community Parish in New Brunswick. They are two of dozens of Interfaith-RISE volunteers who shuttle refugees and asylum seekers to doctor appointments and grocery shopping.

"Imagine taking an Iraqi family to an American supermarket for the first time and trying to explain—via Google Translate on a cellphone—the difference between organic and nonorganic produce!" exclaimed Ms. Zerbe.

Ms. Zerbe and Mr. Materna connected Interfaith-RISE clients and coordinators with a local Catholic Charities office. They introduced St. Peter's congregants, including a tutor trained in English as a second language, to Interfaith-RISE. Changes to federal immigration policies under the Trump administration have made their immigration ministry feel like a call from God. According to Ms. Zerbe, "Helping refugees and asylees assimilate and feel welcome in a new home provides a powerful way to live out Christ's



People from various religious traditions gathered for the 2017 Interfaith-RISE Walk-a-Thon.

Photo courtesy of Elizabeth Colmant Estes

teaching that ‘as you did to one of the least of these, my brethren, you did it to me.’”

Last spring, the Catholic couple joined Interfaith-RISE for weekly trips to the Elizabeth Detention Center, a converted warehouse on the outskirts of Newark Liberty Airport. Every Monday a van shuttles volunteers from Highland Park to the center for visits with some of the 300 men held in detention by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. On Wednesdays another group visits a few of the center’s 30 detained women. Asylum seekers may be confined there from four to 18 months. Some say they have been pressed by D.H.S. agents to return to the dangerous countries they had fled. Many asylum seekers simply give up.

Over the course of their visits, Ms. Zerbe and Mr. Materna got to know a young Nigerian woman who was being held separately from her husband. In May an immigration judge granted the Nigerians legal asylum status. Late on the night when D.H.S. released the couple, Ms. Zerbe and Mr. Materna returned to the center, took the husband and wife to a cheeseburger dinner and then brought them home, where the two couples lived together temporarily. The Nigerian woman said that for the rest of her life she will never forget how that night’s warm breeze felt on her skin.

...

Today the suffering people at the Elizabeth Detention Center are at the core of my Central Jersey community’s work. But it was not always that way. Before 2003, church leaders like me were largely unaware of the vulnerable immigrants in our midst. That year we learned that most of the congregants in an Indonesian Protestant congregation that rented our sanctuary at the Reformed Church of Highland Park were undocumented—and in danger of deportation.

The Indonesian congregants had fled an anti-Christian pogrom in their home country that started in May 1998, fueled by an Islamic extremist military. Ethnic Chinese Christians were systematically and publicly raped, bludgeoned and murdered. Indonesian churches were burned down for more than a decade—and are still being destroyed. Our future congregants lined up at U.S. embassies and consulates because America was a “Christian” country. Instead of creating a costly refugee program, the Clinton administration gave persecuted Indonesians tourist visas.

In the absence of a formal U.S. refugee program, many Indonesians overstayed their tourist visas—a civil offense, not a criminal one. Nevertheless, in 2003 undocumented Indonesian men voluntarily registered with the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System, a program im-



Detainees at the immigrant detention center in Elizabeth, N.J., work on computers in the educational center at the facility.

Photo: AP Photo/Mike Derer

plemented after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, to identify suspected terrorists from 25 mostly Muslim countries. Christian Indonesians wanted to help the United States fight the same terrorism they had experienced back home. They—and we, as their landlords—hoped this would put them on a path to citizenship.

What followed was an immigration nightmare. The registration system did not identify a single terrorist, but it did ensnare thousands of well-meaning, undocumented men. Because asylum cannot be granted if immigrants do not apply within the first year after they arrive (a poorly publicized 1997 law), Indonesian petitions were declined nationwide. Appealing those decisions has cost each applicant tens of thousands of dollars in legal fees.

In May 2006, D.H.S. agents armed with rifles and batons conducted a middle-of-the-night raid at a garden apartment complex in Avenel, N.J., where many Indonesians lived together, helping one another with child care, job leads and meals. The next morning, 35 adults, mostly fathers of families, were detained in the Middlesex County jail. Pastor Kaper-Dale allowed everyone else to hide in our church. Six weeks later, all 35 detainees were deported. “I didn’t visit anyone detained in the county jail,” Rev. Kaper-Dale says. “I just didn’t know.”

Over the next several years, wives and mothers with no job experience and who spoke little English lost their leases and the communal support of the Avenel complex. They crammed themselves and their children into single bedrooms in the apartments of acquaintances and scraped by on \$7 an hour filling nail polish bottles. We watched U.S. citizen children miss countless days of school and listened as they tried to communicate with fathers, 9,000 miles away,

who could no longer hug them or pay for their health care.

Harry Pangemanan, an undocumented Indonesian who was ordained as a Reformed Church elder and ministry associate, today repairs and furnishes homes for Interfaith-RISE immigrants. But in January 2009, D.H.S. detained him for four months. Church members visited Mr. Pangemanan nightly in Elizabeth Detention Center, where he lived under the glare of lights 24 hours a day every day, with open toilets and showers. He worried desperately about his wife and young daughters. As his prospects grew dim, Mr. Pangemanan started to show signs of mental distress.

“Will you do something for me, Harry?” Pastor Kaper-Dale asked him. “Be a light for everyone inside.”

Few detainees spoke the same language, but in Mr. Pangemanan’s Bible study, somehow everyone was able to communicate. Church members visited Mr. Pangemanan’s friends and listened to desperate stories from India, Pakistan, Congo, Ghana and Sierra Leone. Pastor Kaper-Dale finally won Mr. Pangemanan’s release when he reached out to an assistant to the U.S. secretary of Homeland Security. Mr. Pangemanan was safe, but church visits to the detention center continued. Sometimes Pastor Kaper-Dale would get calls late at night from D.H.S. officials when they were about to release an asylee who had nowhere to go. Former detainees lived in congregants’ spare bedrooms, basements and even in Sunday school classrooms. That December, D.H.S. struck a deal with Pastor Kaper-Dale that enabled the church to supervise undocumented Indonesians, sparing them from detention.

In 2011 the federal government reneged on that deal and deported several Indonesians. Dozens received temporary stays, but nine who were denied deportation pro-

tection—including Mr. Pangemanan—entered sanctuary, imprisoning themselves in the church building for more than 300 days, until they were granted stays from the highest level of the Obama administration. Today, as the United States closes its doors to immigrants, Christian Indonesians are once again being deported. Today, three families live in sanctuary in the church.

No U.S. law requires that all undocumented people be deported. D.H.S. can invoke a large number of humanitarian factors to stay deportations. Still, Mr. Pangemanan, despite managing 1,200 groups from across the country—50,000 volunteer hours—to restore more than 200 of the Jersey Shore’s poorest homes destroyed by Hurricane Sandy, remains in grave danger. “Because of what this community has given me,” Mr. Pangemanan says, “by receiving me, with who I am, helping me with difficult times and keeping my family together, I would like to help as many people as I can.”

•••

The Reformed Church and our interfaith partners received a firsthand education through our work with the Indonesian Christians in how aggressive deportation tactics destroy people, marriages and families, deprive children of wage-earning parents and put enormous pressure on private and public safety nets. Our congregation also slowly learned to care for these undocumented people and used those lessons to launch the church’s Affordable Housing Corporation. Formed to shelter homeless people in the area, the corporation today brokers leases for Interfaith-RISE refugees and asylees, including a New Brunswick apartment for the Nigerian couple that Ms. Zerbe and Mr. Materna met after they were released from detention. The Nigerians took to calling Ms. Zerbe and Mr. Materna “Mum and Dad,” as the Americans coached them through their initial job interviews and then through the trials and pitfalls of the couple’s first paid employment.

To prepare a new home for an arriving family, Sarah Hymowitz, a Highland Park resident and an Interfaith-RISE liaison to Anshe Emeth Reformed Temple in New Brunswick, publishes an online registry for household items—from rugs to lamps, detergent to toothpaste. Ms. Hymowitz says, “If I send an email on Monday, often by Wednesday, 100 items are spoken for.” At first, she had asked for gently used household items. But the response was overwhelming. Instead of providing one pot, a volunteer bought a brand new set she found on sale.

“I get a nice glimpse of how generous people are,” Ms. Hymowitz says. “It’s a very concrete way to help. You see someone wearing the coat you bought. You know someone

is sleeping beneath the bedspread you donated.”

•••

Other volunteers paint, clean and deliver furniture to homes to prepare them for families who sometimes arrive straight from rugged refugee camps in countries like Uganda and Jordan. A Jewish woman who keeps kosher learned how to cook halal dishes to greet Muslim families with a warm meal on the night they arrive. A number of men are devoted to picking up refugees at area airports.

Abrupt immersion in American culture can be challenging. Louise Sandburg from the Jewish Center Interfaith Resettlement Committee, in Princeton, directs cultural orientation for Interfaith-RISE. One of the first things she teaches refugees is how to dial 911. Last spring when a child spilled hot tea on himself, an Arabic-speaking Highland Park police officer accompanied the family for hours in a hospital emergency room. One night, a Congolese baby spiked a fever. Pastor Kaper-Dale dispatched a neighbor to demonstrate how to use a digital thermometer and call a health clinic doctor.

The Interfaith-RISE director Paola Stevens is also the social worker who coordinates services for refugees. She explains that as an affiliate site of the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, Interfaith-RISE is mandated to provide services for each refugee’s first 90 days in the country, including health screenings, shelter, Medicaid, job training and E.S.L. lessons. Connecting people to faith and ethnic communities is also critical. Sunni families flourish in a Sunni mosque. Syrian interpreters are affiliated with the Islamic Society of Central New Jersey.

“The goal is self-sufficiency and independence,” Ms. Stevens says. “We want to be here for them, for as long as it takes.”

With 46 refugee arrivals to Interfaith-RISE from January to November 2017, resettlement operations would have ground to a halt without volunteers. Broadcasting urgent and specific calls for help is key to Interfaith-RISE’s success. It is also key to Pastor Kaper-Dale’s pastoral philosophy.

“Early on, a church leader told me she was terrified because she used to know everything that went on, but now she no longer did,” explained Pastor Kaper-Dale. He then assured her: “We don’t need to know. We don’t need to control everything in the body of Christ—that’s where many churches fail.” He calls his approach “creating intentional, compassionate community.” Community networks cannot be paid for or measured, but they make lives work.

•••

As the 2017 Interfaith-RISE Walk-a-Thon paused outside houses of worship, borough halls and schools,



community leaders spoke words of welcome and refugees who arrived in the past year from Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria introduced themselves. One father told walkers that he called his parents to say how his Jersey neighbors had shown him great kindness. “When I see one of you, you are my loved ones,” he explains in newly learned English.

At the end of the walk, refugee chefs provided the walkers with refreshments. In the spring of 2016 this tradition inspired the opening of a pay-what-you-can lunchtime cafe called Global Grace in the dining hall of the Reformed Church. Monday through Friday, a chef from Indonesia, Syria, Congo, Sierra Leone or India cooks favorite recipes from his or her homeland, earns income and meets neighbors. The cafe contributes more than \$1,000 a week to Interfaith-RISE. Thanks to national media coverage of the cafe in outlets like National Public Radio, customers drive for miles to support refugees.

Fida Ayoubi from the New Brunswick Islamic Center volunteers at the cafe and also serves as an Arabic translator for Interfaith-RISE. Her family was saved by Christian neighbors during their harrowing escape from Lebanon’s civil war during the 1970s. She says, “Helping refugees with the Interfaith-RISE community has been very good for my soul. It’s taught me the humbleness, generosity and goodness of selfless people who help just to help.” Ms. Ayoubi is supported by many of Central Jersey’s Islamic communities. “When I am looking for donations and friendship for refugees, I send out a message, and those needs are met.”

•••

Crunchy brown leaves crackled underfoot as walkers shuffled onto the lawn of Highland Park’s public library. There, the director of the New Brunswick Islamic Center, Sami Catovic, explained how welcoming refugees is a tradition deeply inscribed in Islam’s holy texts: “Fourteen

hundred years ago, Prophet Mohammed, peace be upon him, was suffering in his home of Mecca and fled with his community to Medina, as migrants and refugees, where he helped form a new community.” In Medina, Mr. Catovic explained, the Prophet declared an end to the divisions of tribe and ethnicity; from then on, there would be only migrants and helpers. Mr. Catovic gave thanks for the most beautiful gathering on that Sunday afternoon. It is simple, he said: “We are either immigrants trying to establish ourselves or helpers assisting those trying to establish themselves.”

Judy Richman is an Interfaith-RISE volunteer who helps refugees with English conversation and takes families on trips to the local Stop & Shop. It was from her that I first learned the Hebrew phrase *tikkun olam*, which means repairing our shattered world.

“Tikkun olam is the obligation to take actions that increase dignity, equality, justice and healing,” explains Ms. Richman, a retired lawyer. Thanks to her work with Interfaith-RISE, she now knows where to find the best halal butcher and the most excellent Southeast Asian supermarket. “Every act of loving kindness brings us closer to God’s vision for the world,” she says. “Torah repeatedly commands us to protect the widow, the orphan and the stranger.”

For me, the defining moment of the walk came in the form of a question. A young woman from Princeton University’s Office of Religious Life asked the crowd, “Who are we without welcome?” Maya Wahrman told how her great-grandfather arranged for his family’s escape from Frankfurt to Palestine in 1933 and also paid for a visa for a woman, a stranger, who could not afford to migrate legally. Years later, when the woman visited with her new family and offered to repay her debt, Ms. Wahrman’s family gained friends who might not have survived the Holocaust had

◀ At the Interfaith-RISE Walk-A-Thon community leaders spoke words of welcome to refugees.

they been unable to flee Germany. Many Jews use the Hebrew word for cataclysm, Shoah, instead of the word most Americans use, Holocaust—an ancient Greek word meaning “burnt offering.” Cataclysm is one experience that many Interfaith-RISE volunteers and immigrants share.

Ms. Wahrman then told us how immigrants changed her life. A Pakistani asylum seeker was the first person she visited in Elizabeth Detention Center—and Ms. Wahrman was the first Jewish person the Pakistani man had ever met. After he had been released, Ms. Wahrman visited him late one night, after saying goodbye to another detainee, who was about to be deported. Despite the hour, he surprised her with a full Pakistani dinner. Because Ms. Wahrman’s family remains in Jerusalem, another asylee, a Palestinian, calls himself Ms. Wahrman’s Israeli uncle. “We have to care for you,” he told her, “because we are your American family.”

“I want to thank you for who I am because of this community,” Ms. Wahrman told us.

A slowly setting sun cast long shadows on the pavement outside buildings where we had paused earlier, as I retraced my steps and returned for my own family dinner. In the golden glow, I realized I had come to share Ms. Wahrman’s gratitude. Lingering in the fresh November air was the unmistakable sense that I had received an ineffable gift, an intuition of greater wholeness, a pervasive thankfulness that I could not have experienced had I stayed inside.

As Christians, our goal in life, as Ms. Zerbe reminded me, is to stop living like the security-minded goats we find in Matthew 25 and instead become like the extravagant sheep who give food to hungry people, water to anyone who thirsts and, of course, welcome to strangers. We cannot do it alone. Good Samaritans everywhere know that when anyone asks for help, they are inviting us to become full-fledged children of the one God. By joining my neighbors in opening our doors and lives to immigrants, part of me had been healed.

*Elizabeth Colmant Estes is a chaplain for people of all faiths and no faith at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital in New Brunswick, N.J., and a candidate for ordination in the Reformed Church in America. This article is adapted from her forthcoming book, Global Grace Cafe: A Tale to Revitalize Hope.*

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AN EMPIRE.

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CAVIEZEL  
OLIVIER  
MARTINEZ  
AND  
JAMES  
FAULKNER

PAUL  
APOSTLE OF CHRIST  
WHERE SIN ABOUNDS... GRACE ABOUNDS MORE.

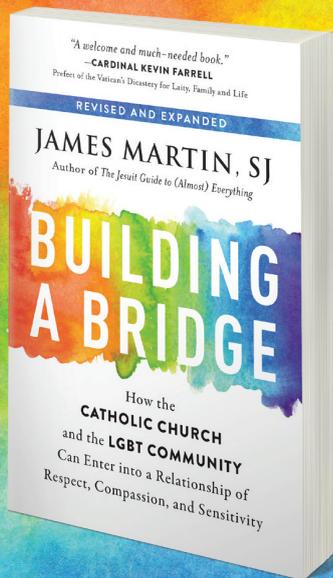
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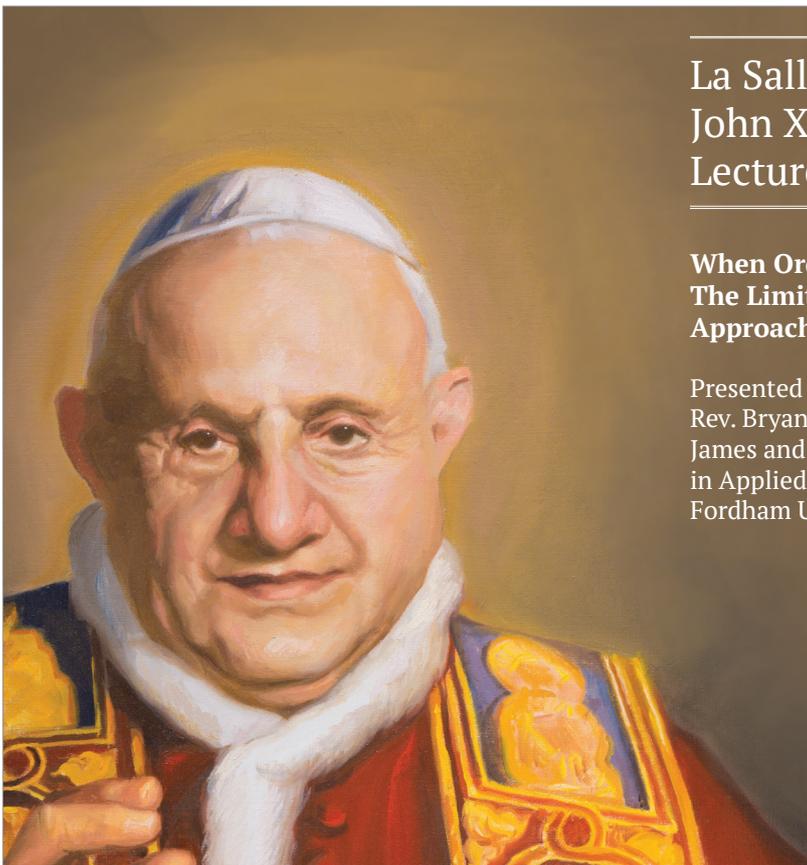
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# BLACK BROKEN BEAUTIFUL

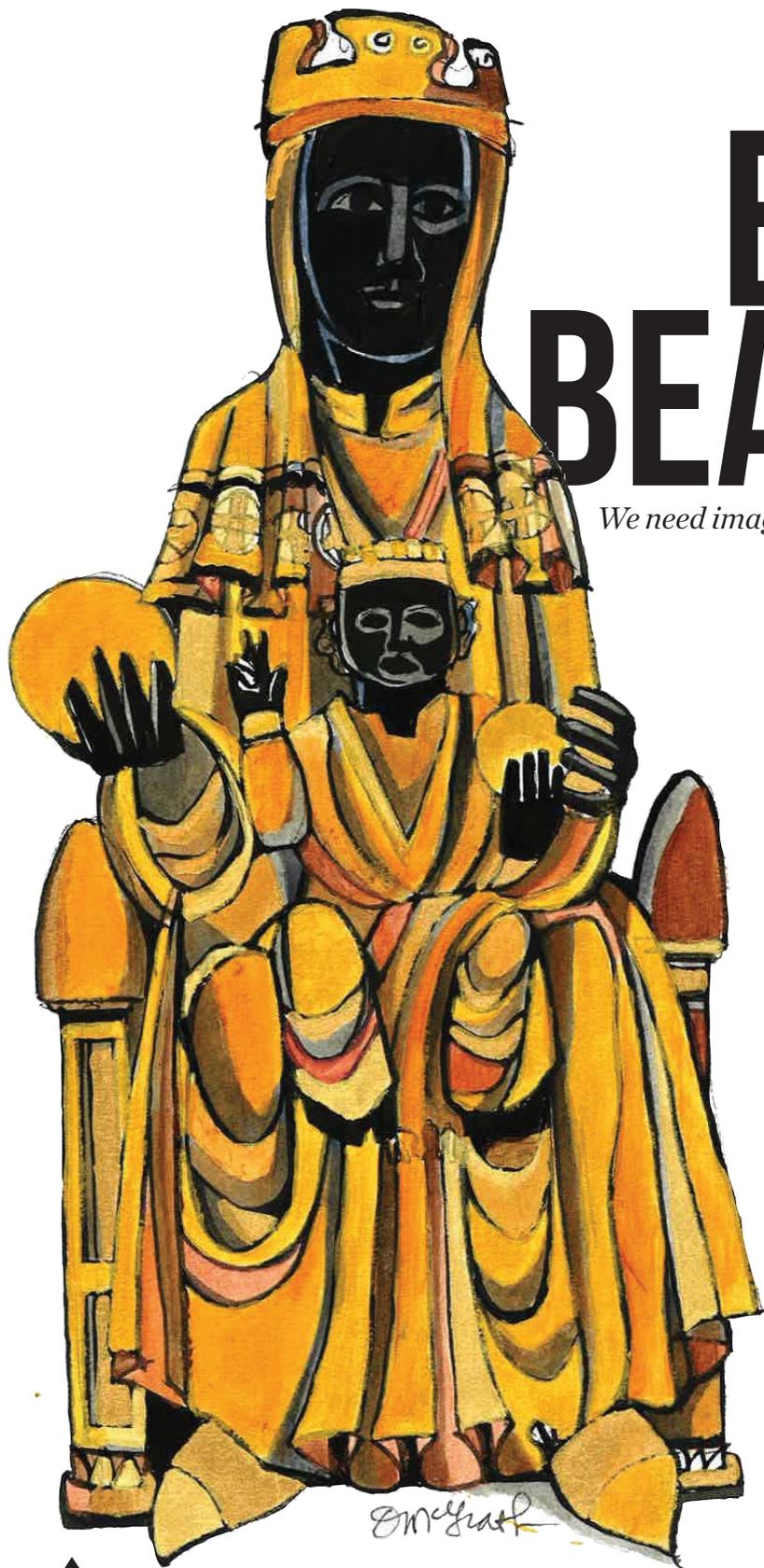
*We need images of the dark Madonna now more than ever*

By Mickey McGrath

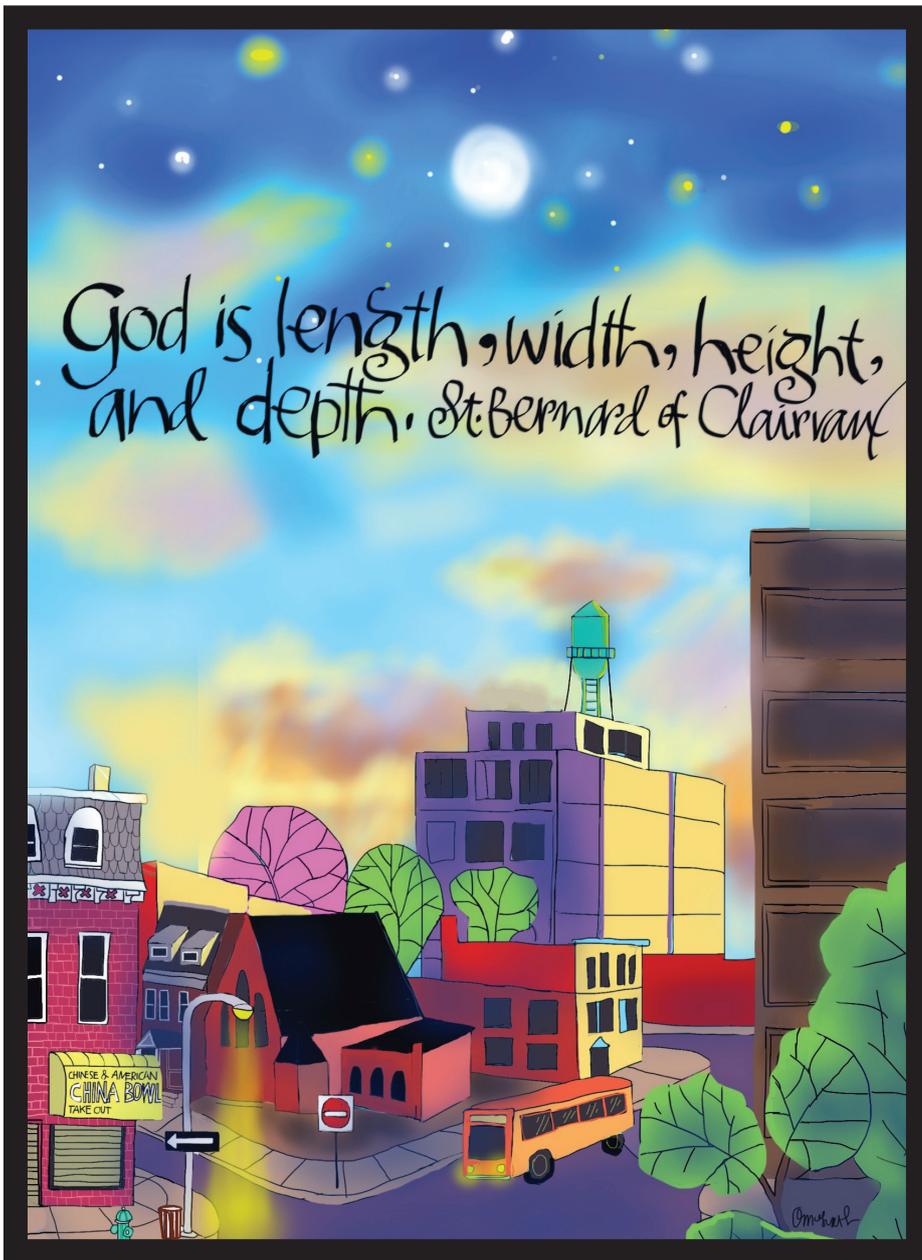
For the last eight years of my pilgrim journey, I have lived at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Camden, N.J. My studio, where I spend my hours in creative bliss, free of the internet and a phone, is in South Camden at Sacred Heart Church. Across from my studio window stands Our Lady of Camden, a life-sized bronze sculpture of Mary as a black woman. Living in a city notorious for its violence has made me more aware of God as the source and summit of beauty—the beauty to be found at the margins, the beauty of black and brown, the beauty emerging from transformed brokenness.

Black Madonnas first entered my life about 25 years ago when I made an artist's pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. I was in grief following the death of my parents and seeking a change of life to suit my new identity as a middle-aged orphan. Our group of 12 pilgrims started out in Paris, following a popular medieval route southward to the Pyrenees and across northern Spain. It was a life-changing trip for me. Seeing some of the greatest art and architecture in Western church history illuminated the deep, dark recesses of my spirit with new and gentle light.

I am but one in a long line of seekers—many centuries' worth, actually—to have been smitten with the Black Madonnas one encounters along the pilgrim route. Since that initial trip, I have traveled twice to Montserrat, near Barcelona, where St. Ignatius Loyola had a conversion of heart and left his sword at her feet. She is covered in gold and silver



▲ "Our Lady of Montserrat" ©Bromickeymcgrath



"Cosmic Camden" ©Bromickeymcgrath

way, as gift and grace.

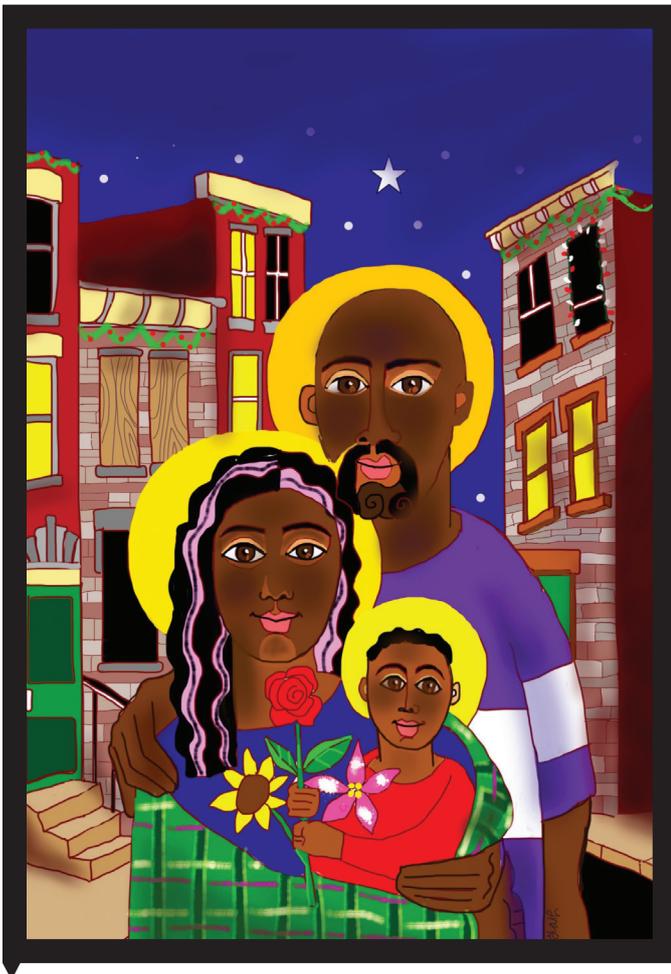
Archetypally speaking, the blackness of Black Madonnas is symbolically linked to creativity and newness, to welcoming the darkness while seeking the light, to embracing mystery. Mary's blackness reminds us of the rich, fertile soil in which we scatter the seeds of new dreams and possibilities. Hers is the cosmic blackness of the night sky and the ever-

mined by slaves in South America, which makes for a conflictingly poignant visit.

St. Francis de Sales said, "We pray best before beauty." Granted, he lived by a picturesque lake in the French Alps, so it was natural for him to reach that conclusion. But he was not speaking just about surface beauty. When he was a college student in Paris, suffering a crisis of faith that brought him deep anxiety, he visited the Black Madonna known as Our Lady of Good Deliverance and prayed the Memorare. She lifted his sagging spirit, brought him inner peace and changed his life forever. The very heart of Salesian spirituality is about living life in love, not fear; about not allowing worry and anxiety too much power over us; and about seeing darkness, no matter how it comes our

er-expanding universe. It is the darkness of the womb, the "maternal womb of mercy," a term that Pope Francis has used to describe the church.

In the United States, it is difficult for us to see black or brown without racial connotations. As an artist of faith, I strive in all my work to honor the traditions and origins of our timeless religious symbols while seeing them with modern eyes and sensibilities. As an American Catholic deeply disturbed by the racial strife of our nation and dangling by the frayed but sacred threads of my faith, I find renewed hope and comfort in Mary the Black Madonna. For me, she remains the loving font of wisdom she was to saints like Francis de Sales and Ignatius Loyola. She is still the source of comfort she has always been for restless pilgrims



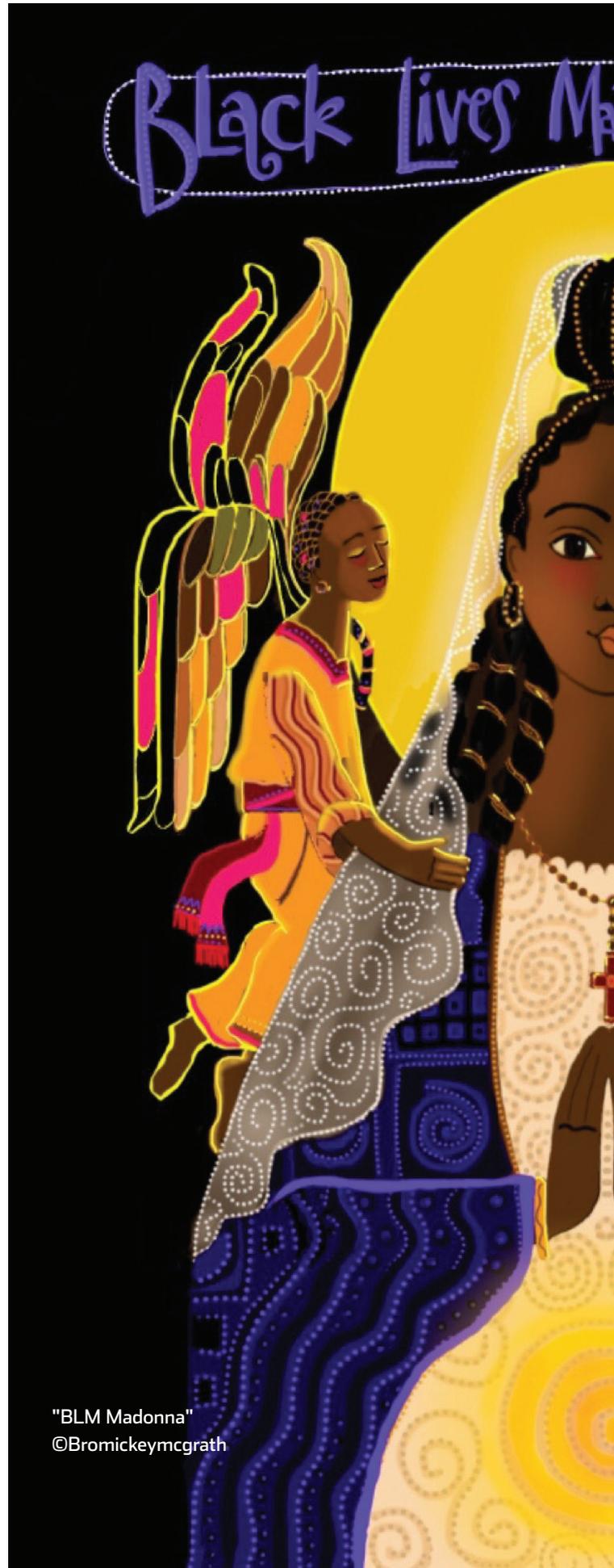
"Baltimore Holy Family" ©Bromickeymcgrath

who have crisscrossed Europe for centuries.

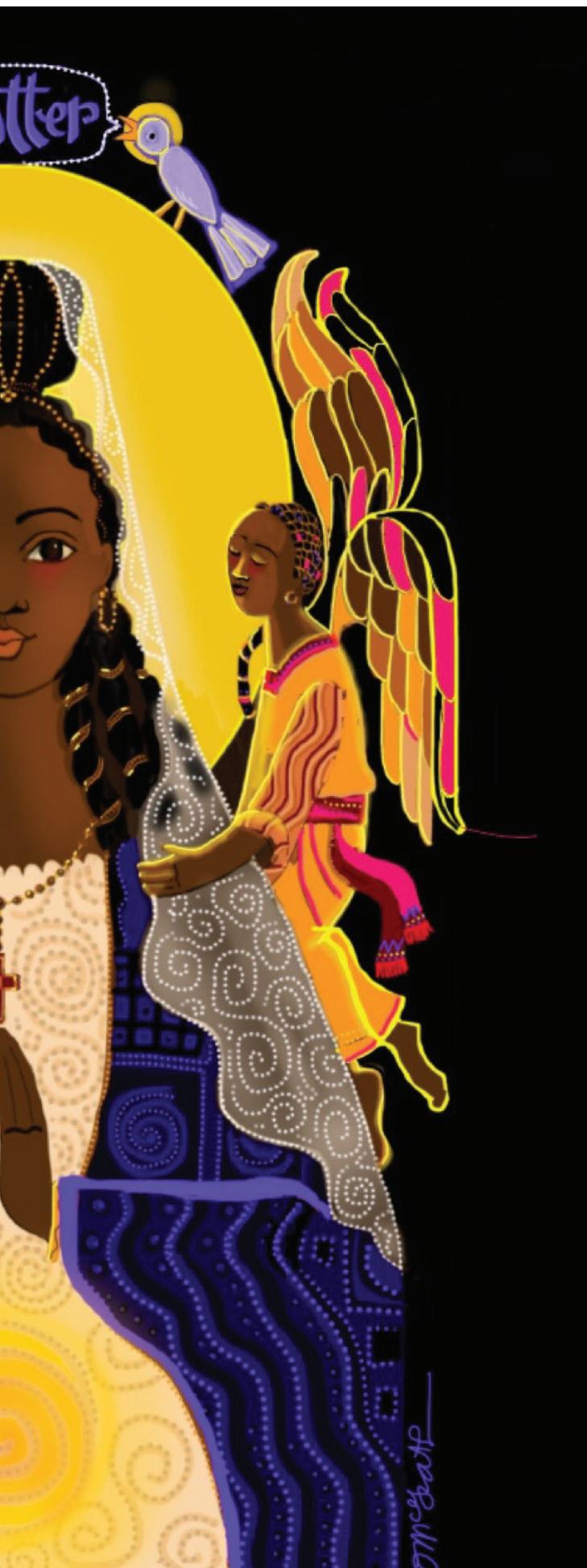
But in today's world, she means even more.

Lately, because of the pervasive divisiveness in our church and nation, I find myself painting more Black Madonnas as my morning meditations than ever before. In my lifetime of 60 years, I do not recall having so many reasons to cry and send up my sighs to Mary for help and hope: the sharp increase in hate crimes; the blatant homophobia and anti-Semitism; the anti-immigrant, anti-Latino, anti-Muslim fervor that poisons our air; the greed and selfishness that is destroying our common home; terrorism, gun violence and disease; red pews and blue pews in our churches.

Last year, as my prayerful artistic response to the racial fears and tensions, I painted a "Black Lives Matter Madonna." I showed her for the first time at a retreat I was leading near Detroit last summer. When I returned to my seat, there was an unsigned message for me scrawled on a piece of loose leaf paper. It read, "All lives matter." Sadly, my anonymous friend, that is not true in this country and never has been. I could prove it by inviting you to Camden,



"BLM Madonna"  
©Bromickeymcgrath

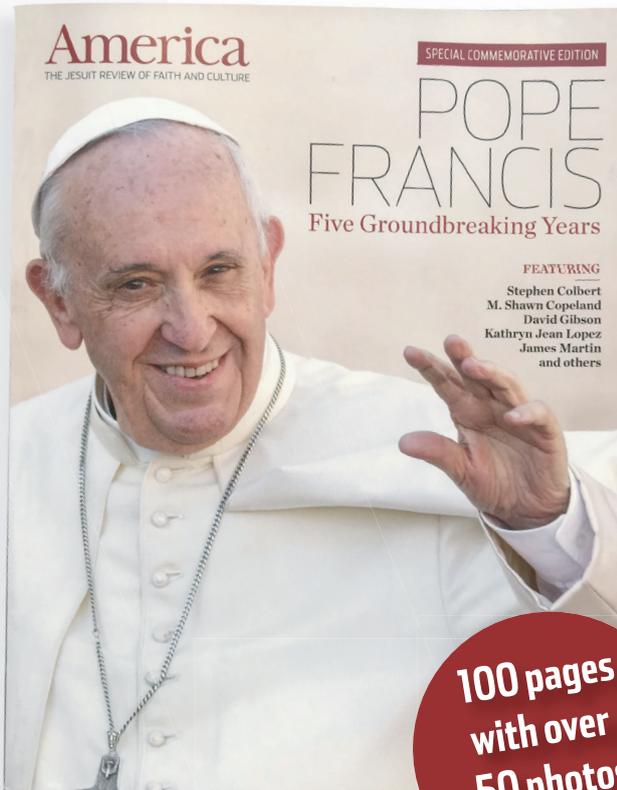


"Avila Garden" ©Bromickeymcgrath

where you would see for yourself. But I would invite you to look beneath the surface, with your other eyes, the ones in your heart where you will see darkness as beauty not fear, rich in mystery and promise and full of light.

Across the street from my bedroom window is a scene I have painted several times since I came to live in Camden: a Chinese restaurant and a dentist's office. It has been my humble little corner of the world for eight years, and I love it. I look at this familiar scene with pilgrim eyes—the eyes of the dark Madonna who has prayed for us sinners in this dark valley of tears from Bethlehem and Calvary through medieval France to the world today. I paint, and I pray: Hail Mary, full of grace, show unto us the blessed fruit of your womb, the Prince of Peace, the Light of the World, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Brother Mickey McGrath, a member of the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales, is an award-winning artist and the author of 18 art and faith books. He is also a popular speaker and retreat leader around the United States; website: [bromickeymcgrath.com](http://bromickeymcgrath.com).



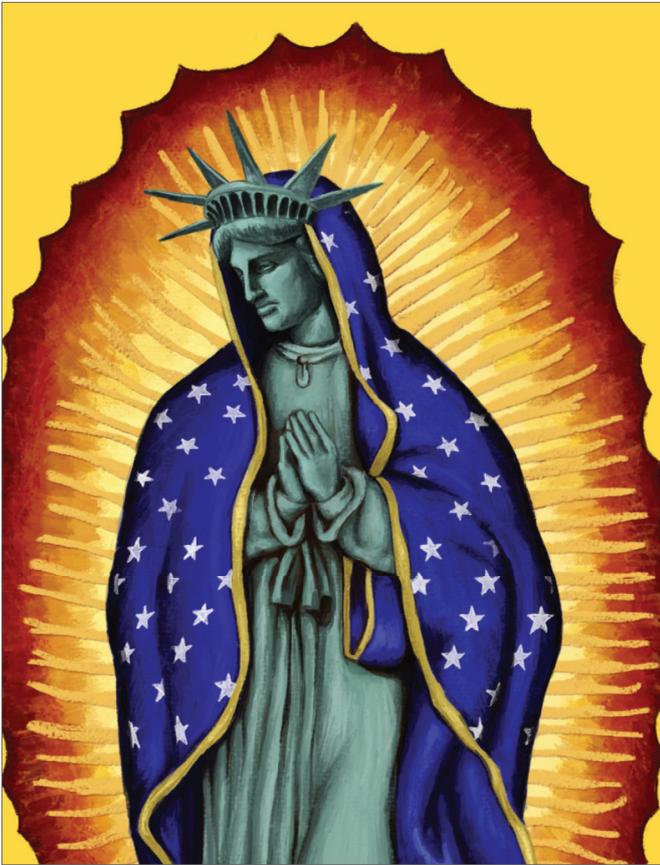
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## *A Desperate Desire for Justice*

By Tom Deignan

Back in January, the Rev. Gary Graf, a Catholic priest at St. Procopius Parish in Chicago, made an unusual announcement during Sunday Mass. As President Trump battled Democratic congressional leaders over immigration, Father Graf said that he was embarking on a hunger strike until the fate of the so-called Dreamers—undocumented immigrants brought to the United States as children—was resolved.

“Yes, it’s dramatic,” Father Graf told *The Chicago Tribune*. “It’s a way in which we pray for our political leaders and invite them to do their jobs.”

During the past year, from Chicago to Ankara, from Georgetown to the Middle East, hunger strikes have been a surprisingly popular strategy

for activists and prisoners. In January two Turkish educators who lost their jobs in the wake of the failed coup against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan ended an 11-month hunger strike, after each had lost more than 40 percent of his body weight. That same month, a Jordanian-born businessman from Youngstown, Ohio, and a Mexican-born Army veteran from Chicago also announced they were going on hunger strike after they were targeted for deportation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Last May hunger-striking Palestinian prisoners were joined by Patriarch Gregory III Laham, the 84-year-old former primate of the Greek-Melkite Catholic Church, protesting what they termed inhumane

conditions in Israeli prisons. Inmates at California’s Folsom State Prison cited similar concerns when they initiated their own hunger strike in 2017. Finally, students, faculty members and alumni at a number of Catholic universities—including Georgetown, John Carroll and Notre Dame—engaged in hunger strikes to call attention to what they characterized as inhumane treatment of farm workers.

Last year and this year also mark the 100th anniversary of a series of lengthy hunger strikes declared in the name of women’s rights, pacifism and anti-colonialism—one of which even produced a candidate for sainthood (more on that later). Hunger strikes, of course, spring from a desperate desire for justice. But they also raise thorny political, philosophical and



Hunger strikes raise thorny political, philosophical and even spiritual questions. Refugees in Athens went on hunger strike in November to demand reunification with family members in Germany.

Quinn calls them “a legitimate tool of the powerless against the powerful.” Mr. Quinn went to Northern Ireland at the height of the hunger strikes controversy there in the early 1980s, when he was working for Hugh Carey, then governor of New York. Hunger strikes, Mr. Quinn adds, “reassert the power of the prisoner over his own person and simultaneously challenge the captor to use his power to end the strike or prolong it.”

Jeremy Cruz, a theology professor at St. John’s University in New York, says, “Those who make the argument that [hunger strikes] are sinful rely on the idea that suicide is an ‘intrinsic evil.’” But, he adds, the circumstances that drive a person to make a hunger strike must also be taken into account, and systemic abuse and inequality can too easily be forgotten in debates over the morality of fasting.

“The real ethical question we need to ask,” Mr. Cruz says, “is, how do we advance social justice so that people don’t feel compelled to starve themselves?”

Historically speaking, hunger strikes have been relatively rare, at least prior to the 20th century. Historians locate the roots of hunger striking in ancient Roman, Celtic (in which it was called *troscad* or *cealachan* in Gaelic) and Indian (“sitting *dharna*”) cultures. They were generally used to draw unwanted attention—shame—to a person who had failed to pay a debt or broken some other valued cultural norm.

Prisoners under czarist Russian

regimes in the 19th century sporadically engaged in hunger strikes. By the late 1800s, Laurence Ginnell, an Irish nationalist and member of parliament, noted that hunger striking, under ancient Irish legal codes, “was clearly designed in the interests...of the poor as against the mighty.” He added, however, that “distress by way of fasting [was] now so strange to us because so long obsolete.” And yet a decade and a half into the 20th century, hunger strikes would expose severe weaknesses in the mighty British Empire.

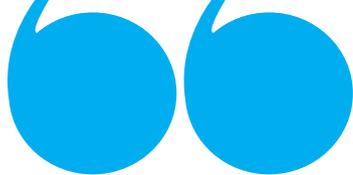
The modern era of hunger striking is generally considered to have begun in June 1909. Scottish-born Marion Wallace Dunlop, a member of the Women’s Social and Political Union, was arrested in England during a suffragette campaign. Once imprisoned, Ms. Dunlop refused to eat, initially dismaying even allies in the movement. But in a matter of weeks, three more suffragettes went on hunger strike. British authorities eventually decided to force-feed these women through their noses and throats, an invasive, often brutal process. Other hunger strikers were released when they became weak only to be re-arrested once they became healthy, a heavily criticized process that came to be known as “cat and mouse.” It was a pattern that would occur again and again: hunger strikers turned into aggrieved martyrs by heavy-handed authorities.

The first years of the 1910s turned out to be a crucial turning point in the history of hunger striking. The tactic—and the accompanying very

even spiritual questions. How should we react to a hunger strike—especially once the striker begins to suffer? And, theologically speaking, is a hunger strike akin to a suicidal—and, thus, sinful—act?

This question is particularly relevant in Ireland, which celebrates the 20th anniversary of its fragile but still holding Good Friday peace agreements in April. Hunger strikes remained an effective tactic for Irish Catholic activists throughout the 20th century, even as theologians and politicians debated their morality. It is not difficult to find websites or forums that claim (as catholicdoors.com puts it) that “to commit suicide through a hunger strike is a mortal sin that leads to eternal damnation.” Many historians and theologians, however, take a much more nuanced view.

The writer and historian Peter



## *The writer Peter Quinn calls hunger strikes ‘a legitimate tool of the powerless against the powerful.’*

public, very political suffering—spread across the globe.

In 1913 a 44-year-old Indian activist named Mohandas Gandhi began the first of his many fasts, this one to protest the treatment of Indians living in South Africa. Gandhi would become synonymous with hunger striking right up until his assassination in 1948. In 1929, the activist Jatin Das died while on hunger strike in a Lahore prison, protesting British treatment of Indian political prisoners.

But it was in another beleaguered British colony—Ireland—where the hunger strike was most widely employed, even before the Easter rebellion against British rule in 1916. Irish hunger strikes were employed during a massive 1913 labor dispute and to oppose British efforts to recruit Irish soldiers for World War I. By Easter 1916, when the British crushed a rebel uprising, hunger strikes were woven into the fabric of Irish activism. In 1917, dozens of Irish prisoners went on hunger strike, including Thomas Ashe, who died after being forcibly fed.

As hunger striking became central to the Irish struggle, theological debates followed. Writing in *The Irish Ecclesi-*

*astical Record*, the Catholic chaplain at Dublin’s Mountjoy Jail, John Waters, said, “Though I could never see any reason to doubt that the hunger strike was suicide, I am bound to say that I had but very little success in inducing the strikers to adopt my views.”

Following the 1920 death of the lord mayor of Cork, Terence Mac Swiney, after a 74-day hunger strike, the Jesuit theologian P. J. Gannon actually defended the tactic, writing: “No hungerstriker aims at death.... His object is to bring the pressure of public opinion to bear upon an unjust aggressor.... There is nothing here of the mentality of suicide.”

The decades that followed saw dissidents across the globe die during hunger strikes: Pedro Luis Boitel in Cuba, Emil Calmanovici in Romania, Anatoly Marchenko in the Soviet Union, Potti Sreeramulu in India.

Meanwhile, 2017 marked a century since the United States entered World War I, with a great burst of patriotic fanfare. Much less celebrated has been the pacifist movement that opposed U.S. involvement in the Great War. One of the most high-profile resisters was Ben Salmon, a devout Catholic who embarked on a hunger strike that lasted 135 days. The *Denver Post* had labelled him a “man with a yellow streak down his spine as broad as a country highway.” Today, however, Catholic activists are building a case to canonize Salmon.

More recently, hunger strikes came to be inextricably linked with the Catholic civil rights movement in Northern Ireland. Beginning with the death of hunger striker Bobby Sands on May 5, 1981—a month after he had been elected a member of Parliament—the eyes

of the world watched the showdown between hunger strikers and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of Britain.

“Mr. Sands was a convicted criminal. He chose to take his own life. It was a choice that his organization did not allow to many of its victims,” said Ms. Thatcher, refusing to give in to various prisoners’ demands. By late August, 10 Irish Republicans were dead and a fierce global debate—were Bobby Sands and his comrades martyrs or fanatics?—commenced.

Looking back on this heated time in 2016, *The Irish Times* ran an article entitled “Suicide or Self Sacrifice: Catholics Debate Hunger Strikes.” Maria Power, a lecturer in religion and peace-building at the Institute of Irish Studies, University of Liverpool, wrote, “The events and debates surrounding the hunger strikes shone a blinding spotlight on the hierarchies of the Irish, and English and Welsh Catholic Churches.”

Archbishop John R. Roach, then president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, referred to Sands’ death at the time as “a useless sacrifice.” But others argued that the hunger strikers could be absolved if they believed in their “individual conscience” that they were trying to right larger wrongs. Maria Power told **America** this split had national, class and even ideological roots.

“The main debate was occurring between English and Irish Catholics,” noted Ms. Power. “To the English, the hunger strikes were sinful because those engaged meant to fast to the death. But to Irish Catholics, the hunger strikers...[were using] their bodies as a weapon to get the British government to acquiesce.”

## Burn-Off

– Benedictine Abbey  
Collegeville, Minn. (1996)

By Terry Savoie

Inviting fire,

the prairie grass  
sizzles in the wind,  
dances from match-  
stick dry to ash to  
scatter seeds now  
dormant with  
their own grand  
intentions of survival  
as seven monks  
labor over  
long-handled  
hoes & shovels,  
wary, silent, deftly  
circling in, armed with  
prayer & moth-eaten army  
blankets draped over  
their shoulders to  
hem in the hiss,  
the flame's  
seductive pull,

a siren's call.

---

*Terry Savoie, a retired teacher, received his education at the University of Iowa and has had poems published in APR, Ploughshares, The American Journal of Poetry, North American Review, America and other journals.*

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Pictures of Irish hunger strikers interned at Maze prison hang from a balcony in West Belfast, Aug. 9, 1981. Ten Catholic hunger strikers died at Maze in 1981, including Bobby Sands, who had been elected a member of Parliament.

Photo: AP Photo/Chuck Zeeller

Father Brian Jordan, a Franciscan, was a student at Washington Theological Union during the Irish Hunger Strikes. They “were omnipresent in my mind, heart and soul,” he told *America*. “I am both pro-life and pro-social justice. I contend the hunger strikers believed they were acting in a just manner against an unjust aggressor.”

The novelist Mary Gordon clearly had the Irish legacy of hunger striking in mind when she wrote her disturbing novel *Pearl* in 2004, about an American student who goes to Dublin to study linguistics only to chain herself to a flagpole and refuse to eat. Lurking under the surface of Ms. Gordon’s novel are many unsettling questions—among them: Why would an upper-class, once-apolitical American turn to a tactic generally reserved for only the most desperate and oppressed? And: Is it possible that some people do not have a moral right to resort to hunger striking?

The flurry of recent hunger strik-

ing has led to similar questions. When parents and activists went on hunger strike to protest the closing of a Chicago high school in 2016, Eric Zorn wrote in *The Chicago Tribune*: “When a hunger striker truly believes that he or she would rather die than continue to live under current conditions... then, yes, their plight, their claims deserve extra attention and expedited handling.”

Hunger striking graduate students at Yale also came under fire because they had talked about replacing hunger strikers who become weak or ill. Amy Hungerford, a professor and dean at Yale, wrote in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, “A hunger strike...implies a false equivalence between these students at Yale and the millions on whose behalf Mohandas K. Gandhi, César E. Chávez, and others sacrificed their bodies to hunger.”

Hunger strikes, of course, should never become a fad. But it is also clear that the 20th-century activists Ms. Hungerford cites continue to inspire.

At a time of massive inequality (not to mention deep historical ignorance), this is a victory in and of itself—even when a conflict seems decidedly a first-world issue like, say, choosing between a taxicab or an app-based transportation service.

“[W]hat is left for us?” one hunger-striking cab driver asked in December 2015, during a dispute between Toronto’s cabbies and the ride-hailing service Uber. “You want to kill my industry? Kill me first. Let me starve over here.”

This may seem a touch un-Gandhian, but that does not make this cab driver’s plight any less desperate. Gandhi himself might well have recognized that.

---

Tom Deignan is a contributing writer to the new book *Nine Irish Lives: The Fighters, Thinkers and Artists Who Helped Build America (Algonquin)*. He has written for *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The National Catholic Reporter* and is a columnist for *The Irish Voice* newspaper.

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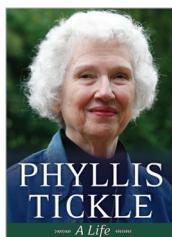
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## She was earthy and ethereal

By David Gibson

Phyllis Tickle introduced countless readers to traditional fixed-hour prayer.



**Phyllis Tickle**  
A Life  
By Jon M. Sweeney  
Church Publishing  
256p \$26.95

The last time I saw Phyllis Tickle was on a lovely spring day in 2015, when I spent several precious hours with her as she spoke publicly (and poignantly) for the first time about the lung cancer that would claim her life a few months later. But before that happened I had to find her, and that meant wandering along country roads near her farm outside Memphis in an effort to reconcile Tickle's blithely dispensed directions with the precise commands from an equally confident, but equally notional, navigational computer speaking from the dashboard of my rental car.

I called Tickle in exasperation as soon as a lucky turn produced a single signal bar on my cellphone. She assured me I would find her with no problem if I just kept going, and that I would recognize the place by the mad barking of the five stray dogs that her grown children dumped on her over the years. "I told them that if they give me one more damned dog, I swear I'll take them out

and shoot 'em all!" she said. She then rushed to assure me that I ought not to be put off by the canine dramatics. "They'll raise holy hell," she drawled. "But they've never bitten anybody."

That was vintage Phyllis Tickle. Charitable, profane, folksy and with a sly touch of ambiguity: She didn't say the dogs would *not* bite, she just said they hadn't bitten anyone—yet. You were always taking your chances in life, and also with Phyllis, but you should enjoy the ride and be confident the risk was worth it. Probably.

It certainly was worth it that day, as she talked with typical wisdom and humor and insight about her life and impending death, about past projects and future plans that she knew she would not see completed. It was wonderful, yet painful, to be reminded of all that Phyllis Tickle had been and done in her 81 years: poet, educator, spiritual writer, chronicler of the pastoral life, acclaimed lecturer on religious trends, leading promoter of religious publishing—not to mention wife, mother and homemaker, whose pleasures around the farm included killing snakes, planting lettuce and belting out songs like Three Dog Night's "Joy to the World."

My story on our conversation for Religion News Service would only skim

the surface of all she said that day, but one of the projects she was working on has now been completed and goes much deeper and wider than I could, and with greater grace and insight and storytelling skill. It is an authorized biography by Jon Sweeney, a veteran author and the editor in chief at Paraclete Press, that serves as an essential summation of Tickle's multifaceted work. It is also a moving recounting—with occasional eye-opening revelations—of her remarkable life.

That is no easy task. Sweeney (full disclosure: he helped arrange my visit to the farm in Lucy, Tenn., in 2015) notes at the beginning of this volume that despite the millions of words that Tickle wrote and spoke, often about herself, there is much "deflection and indirection" in her work and she "excelled at philosophizing around emotional difficulty."

There were difficulties aplenty, and *Phyllis Tickle: A Life* catalogues those we knew, and some we did not, so that by the end you are even more impressed by Tickle's determination, productivity, generosity and persistence in religious devotion and spiritual seeking. She never gave up and never became cynical, even if she had plenty of reason for despair.

Consider that she gave birth to seven children, one of whom died in infancy, and she endured at least that many

miscarriages; the losses lacerated her heart and wounded her marriage to her high school sweetheart, Sam Tickle, a physician to whom she remained faithful even as he wandered religiously and sexually. After two decades of marriage, Sam confessed to her that he was bisexual, and he engaged in regular affairs with men. Phyllis made the best of it for the next 40 years, and even befriended many of his partners. But it was a searing pain all the same, one she kept secret the rest of her life.

Phyllis Tickle was also beset by illnesses, including a tick-borne disease that would sap her energy for much of her later life. A near-death experience at the birth of her first child was traumatic but also life-changing. It introduced this conservative Presbyterian daughter of the East Tennessee mountains to a mystical sensibility that never left her. Even as she pursued the life of the mind and constructed a career—no small feat in itself for a Southern woman in the 1950s—Tickle pursued spiritual fulfillment and truth relentlessly. That pursuit (along with the desire to find a spiritual home her husband would share) led her to any number of different churches and movements.

She eventually became a chief exponent and chronicler of what was called “emergent” Christianity. Yet her book *The Divine Hours* introduced countless readers to traditional fixed-hour prayer, and she herself migrated not to some nondenominational congregation but to the Episcopal Church.

She appreciated Anglicanism’s intellectual freedom and doctrinal development and became identified with theological liberals and gay-friendly theologians like John Shelby Spong, Brian McLaren and Marcus Borg. But she was also very rooted in Christianity’s core beliefs.

“Phyllis never understood why being progressive had to mean throwing out every traditional aspect of faith,” Sweeney writes, “and she never really approved of the ways progressives replaced one set of certainties with another.”

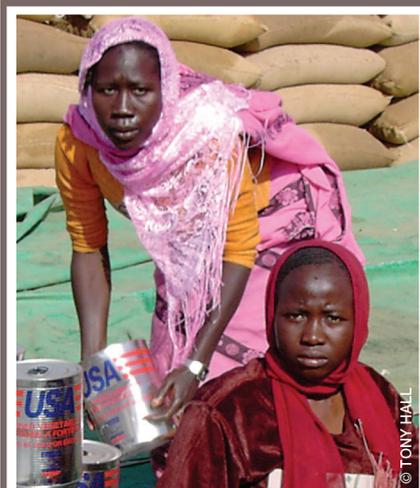
Sweeney writes that a chief challenge of the biography was “to blend Phyllis’ life with her writings.” He is up to the challenge, which is why this volume is as valuable as it is readable. At the same time, something haunting emerges from the retelling of Tickle’s life. Here was a woman who was both spiritual and religious, doubting and faithful, progressive and traditional, honest yet secretive, earthy and ethereal, and someone who made a career out of the written and spoken word.

Will there ever be another Phyllis Tickle? Could there be? Our lives have become so fragmented and polarized—not to mention the havoc that the internet and social media have wrought on publishing—that Tickle already seems like a relic of another age, though she has been gone less than three years. When I spoke with her she was still curious about the changes she knew were coming, and she clearly wanted to take a crack at guessing at what they might entail even as she knew she would likely never have the chance.

But she also seemed at peace knowing she would not live to see any more changes, or have to navigate the upheavals—for herself, or for an audience. She was ready to be done. “The dying is my next career,” she told me.

As I drove away that day, she stood on her porch and waved enthusiastically. “Traveling mercies!” she shouted. “We’ll meet again on the other side.”

David Gibson is the director of Fordham University’s Center on Religion and Culture.



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## He did more than win a war

Recent years have brought a chorus of voices seeking to correct the image of Ulysses S. Grant as a business failure, a drunk forced out of the army at the end of the Mexican War, a Civil War general who butchered both Northern and Southern troops and, ultimately, a failed president who presided over the most corrupt regime in our history. Pulitzer Prize-winning historian and biographer Ron Chernow is the most recent of Grant biographers seeking to correct the record.

His doorstopper of a biography (1,200 pages) will entertain the general reader and challenge the historian. Among the many aspects of Grant's life he considers, three stand out in Chernow's account: Grant's alcoholism, his military career and his presidency. As regards his alcoholism, Chernow con-

sulted with his own brother, a medical doctor, and concluded that Grant was a lifelong alcoholic, a solitary drinker who went off onto prolonged binges. But the author argues that Grant controlled his drinking whenever a major battle was to be fought.

As a military commander, Grant waged successful campaigns in the West and through the states of Tennessee and Mississippi, but his capture of Vicksburg was a turning point in the war. Historians question the high losses that Grant's troops absorbed, but Grant was a better strategist than Robert E. Lee. Chernow also tries to correct the record on the Grant presidency. Grant has been called inept, lazy and totally lacking in political skills. It is true that Grant's cabinet was corrupt, but Chernow notes that Grant himself was not charged. Ironically, Grant was a victim

of a Ponzi scheme. Dying of throat cancer and worth \$80, he wrote his famous memoirs to support his wife.

Only recently, Chernow notes, have historians recognized the accomplishments of the Grant presidency. Grant tried to enforce the goals of Reconstruction in the Southern states when he sent federal troops into South Carolina to attack the Ku Klux Klan; and he upheld the Fifteenth Amendment, which gave African-American males the right to vote. On the northern border, the diplomatic efforts of Secretary of State Hamilton Fish firmed up the friendly relations between the United States and Canada that have lasted into the present day.

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Larry Madaras taught for 40 years at various colleges, including Spring Hill College in Mobile, Ala.

## Islam by the book

In *What the Qur'an Means and Why It Matters*, the Pulitzer Prize-winning Catholic author Garry Wills offers what he hopes can be a remedy to many Americans' fear of Islam: an invitation to pick up the Quran and read it. Wills takes readers through his journey reading the scripture of Muslims, and writes that he encountered "stories I already knew," about Adam, Noah, Moses, Jesus, Mary and even John the Baptist. Wills also notes that "the overall tenor is one of mercy and forgiveness, which are evoked everywhere, almost obsessively."

Wills denounces anti-Muslim fear-mongering and discrimination while also admitting to his readers that he too has biases and stereotypes about Muslims. This important confession gives readers license to be honest about

their own prejudices. In discussing concepts like jihad and Shariah, Wills takes pains to dismantle preconceived notions of a monolithic Islam. At times, Wills falls into simplistic and stereotypical ways of talking about Muslims and their faith, unintentionally leaving many readers' stereotypes intact.

Though Wills believes that picking up the Quran is the remedy for our fears and the solution to confronting Islamophobia, this should not be one's first step. Islamophobia is not simply a problem of misunderstanding a religion, but a form of bigotry and racism that will not be done away with simply by learning more about Muslims' religion.

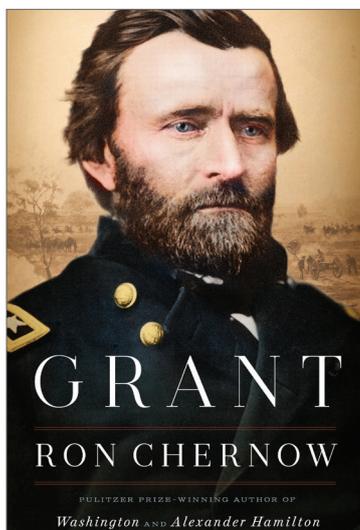
Readers curious about the Quran should look for an annotated Quran translation, or a version with introductory essays, keeping in mind that Muslims do not read the Quran outside the

context of their broader faith tradition (just as Catholics and other Christians do not read the Bible in a vacuum). Because the best learning about Islam happens through meeting Muslims—those who embody that faith—readers should get to know Muslims, both through face-to-face encounters and even through following them on social media.

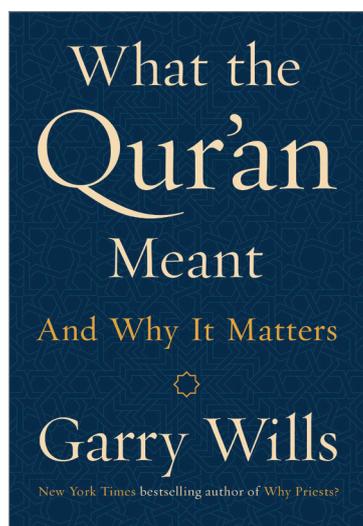
Wills writes that "fear is rarely a good guide." Wills's book endeavors to dial down the anxiety and fear surrounding Islam, and in many respects succeeds. At a time when there is little Catholic writing on Islam that manages to be simultaneously accessible, thorough and charitable, Wills's efforts are commendable.

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Jordan Denari Duffner is the author of *Finding Jesus Among Muslims: How Loving Islam Makes Me a Better Catholic* (Liturgical Press).



**Grant**  
Ron Chernow  
Penguin Press. 1104p \$40



**What the Qur'an Meant  
And Why It Matters**  
By Garry Wills  
Viking. 240p \$25

## Your man in Dublin

Dublin is not Paris, or London, or New York, those favorite haunts of writers down through the centuries. Or maybe it deserves to be thought of in that august company. John Banville certainly seems to think so. The Irish novelist and mystery writer (who sometimes writes under the nom de plume Benjamin Black) takes readers on a tour of literary Dublin, making a few other historical stops along the way, in his charming new memoir, *Time Pieces*. Refreshingly idiosyncratic, this book probably will not inspire Martin Amis or Salman Rushdie to buy a Dublin flat, but the reader may well find himself scrolling through air fares on Aer Lingus.

Banville did not grow up in Dublin. But every year on his birthday—Dec. 8, the feast of the Immaculate Conception, a public holiday at the time—he was treated to a day trip to the capital from his home in Wexford. That Dublin in the 1950s was “mostly a gray and graceless place” did not deter him, and when he was old enough he “forsook” Wexford for an extra room in his aunt’s home on Upper Mount Street.

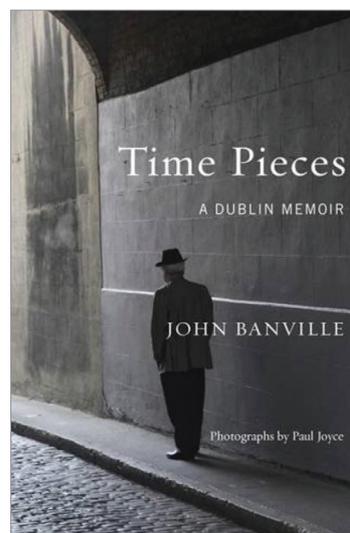
These memories are evoked as an older Banville, now a much-honored literary figure (author of *The Sea*, winner of the Man Booker Prize in 2005), rambles through the streets of the capital. Perhaps unsurprisingly, he has few kind words for the church of his youth, but he is good company nonetheless, and it is great fun to see where his meanderings lead.

Here is the Grand Canal, elegized by Patrick Kavanaugh, that runs all the way to the River Shannon. There is the

Jesuit high school James Joyce made infamous in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. “Irish writers never merely emigrated,” he writes, “they always ‘went into exile.’” Thankfully Banville stayed put.

Mostly *Time Pieces* is an excuse for Banville to riff on the rain (“its drops as fine and penetrating as neutrinos”), the underrated quality of Irish light (“exquisite, silvery, ever-changing”) or the color of tea (like “tree trunks sunk for centuries in swamp water”). “We do not grow up,” he writes, “all we do is grow dull.” Banville is 72 now, but he has not lost his switchblade-sharp eye for seeing.

Maurice Timothy Reidy, executive editor.  
Twitter: @mtreidy.



**Time Pieces**  
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## Malcolm X: Brutus or Caesar?

By Rob Weinert-Kendt

Do we Americans have plays worthy of our rich, complicated history, the way the English, for instance, have not only Shakespeare's history plays but the work of such latter-day "state of the nation" scribes as David Edgar and David Hare? While the state of our nation is unmistakably a throughline in the American dramatic canon, from Eugene O'Neill to August Wilson, we don't have, for instance, a great tragedy about the Civil War and Reconstruction to rival the Bard's *Henriad* and "War of the Roses" plays or a juicy revenge drama à la "Richard III" about, say, Richard Nixon or Huey Long.

Obviously, a juggernaut like "Hamilton" has changed the game, seemingly in one fell swoop. But there are other signs that today's theater artists are self-consciously aiming for the Shakespearean history model: the Oregon Shakespeare Festival's ambitious commissioning program, *American Revolutions*, has given us Robert Schenkkan's sweeping if somewhat leaden plays about L.B.J. ("All the Way," "The Great Society"), as well as Universes' "Party People" (about the Black

Panthers and the Young Lords) and Lisa Loomer's "Roe," among others.

One of the more successful efforts in this budding genre is Marcus Gardley's "X: Or, Betty Shabazz v. the Nation," which recently ended an Off-Broadway run. The play toured the country last year with the Acting Company, in repertory with a staging of "Julius Caesar," and the influence of Shakespeare's Roman tragedy can be felt on many levels in this retelling of the last years of the iconic African-American activist Malcolm X. In Gardley's deft hands, Malcolm (Jimonn Cole) is both something of a Brutus—an idealist who turns on his mentor, the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, when he learns that the Nation of Islam leader has impregnated several young women—and a kind of Caesar, assassinated by conspirators, whose deed will forever stain them while effectively martyring him.

The play's central voice and conscience, though, is Malcolm's widow, Betty (Roslyn Ruff), whose quest to convict her husband's killers drives the action. Ostensibly we are in a sort of spectral courtroom, overseen by a formidable magistrate clad in black

hijab and abaya, in which witnesses are called and legal protocol is fitfully invoked but where speeches, arguments and flashbacks freely overtake the stage.

The flow among music, speech, documentary and drama is expertly handled by the 10-member cast and its director, Ian Belknap. At its best, the play comes off like a sort of spoken-word oratorio. While the portrait of Malcolm himself is at times disappointingly wooden—it is understandably hard to humanize an icon—many other characters spring to vivid life, including J. D. Mollison's Louis Farrakhan, whose fierce jollity poorly masks rage at being underestimated.

The characterization of Farrakhan's grudge hints at one of Gardley's most impressive achievements. He manages both to honor the verdict of history—that the Nation of Islam, angered by Malcolm's betrayal and conversion to Sunni Islam after a trip to Mecca, was clearly involved in his 1965 assassination—and give it context and contingency. On a personal level, Gardley shows how Malcolm's apostasy bitterly stung and divided his former colleagues. And he gives fair



A new play shows how Malcolm's apostasy from the Nation of Islam bitterly stung and divided his former colleagues.

consideration to the notion that the U.S. government, whose complicity in Malcolm's death has been neither conclusively proven nor discounted (N.Y.P.D. files on the case still haven't been opened), felt more threatened by a moderate Malcolm than by the formerly militant one.

But in much the same way that all Americans are complicit in the continual killings of young black men by officers we empower with deadly force and effective impunity, Malcolm's killers were not just a few hired guns. Gardley's title gestures to the larger truth: In a narrow, literal sense, "the Nation" that Betty Shabazz accuses is the Nation of Islam. But the real enemy of black people's advancement in America, then as now, remains America itself. Our moral destiny demands a different ending, and we do well to look to dramatists as much as politicians to write it.

Rob Weinert-Kendt is an arts journalist and editor of *American Theatre* magazine.

## The Oh Hellos tackle politics and religion

The Oh Hellos are the Texan brother-sister duo Tyler and Maggie Heath. Formed in 2011, their high-energy indie-folk has exploded from humble roots to headlining shows at venues like Red Rocks Amphitheatre in Morrison, Colo., and the Newport Folk Festival in Rhode Island.

Bucking the trend among folk bands of keeping their religious references vague, the Oh Hellos' Christianity is one of their foundational inspirations. Their first full-length album, "Through the Deep, Dark Valley," is a story of reconciliation, and Maggie Heath once described their second album, "Dear Wormwood," in a post-show conversation as "basically C. S. Lewis fanfiction," based heavily on *The Screwtape Letters*.

Since the release of "Wormwood" in 2015, Southern Christians like the Heath siblings suddenly came to be associated, often unfairly, with the toxic nationalism that motivates the so-called alt-right. In response, for the first time in their six-year history, the Oh Hellos got political. The lead single, "Torches," off their new EP, "Notos," came out in November 2017 and immediately evoked images of white nationalists marching with tiki torches in Charlottesville, Va., three

months earlier.

"Notos" is also named after the Greek god of the south wind, who was said to stir up summer storms like Hurricane Harvey, which ravaged the band's native Texas last fall. Even on an EP named after a Greek deity, however, the Oh Hellos cannot help but braid Scripture into their music. The album is couched in the story of the prophet Elijah, beginning with the first stanza of the first song, "On the Mountain Tall": "on the mountain tall/ whisper to me words in a voice so small/ like the one that to Elijah called/ quiet as a candle and bright as the morning sun."

The "Notos" EP packs in many of the high-energy folk elements fans have come to expect from the Oh Hellos—shouted group vocals, hand-clapping, electric guitars, up-tempo banjo picking and fiddling. "Notos" is the first part in a series based on the Anemoi, the Greek gods of the winds, each of whom has a unique personality. Eurus, the warm wind of autumn, is the subject of an EP released on Feb. 9.

Colleen Dulle, *Joseph A. O'Hare fellow*,  
Twitter: @ColleenDulle.

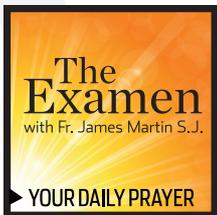


Oh Hellos, a brother and sister folk duo, braid Scripture into their music.

Photo by Laurie Heath via The Oh Hellos



# PRAY WITH THE JESUITS WHEREVER YOU ARE

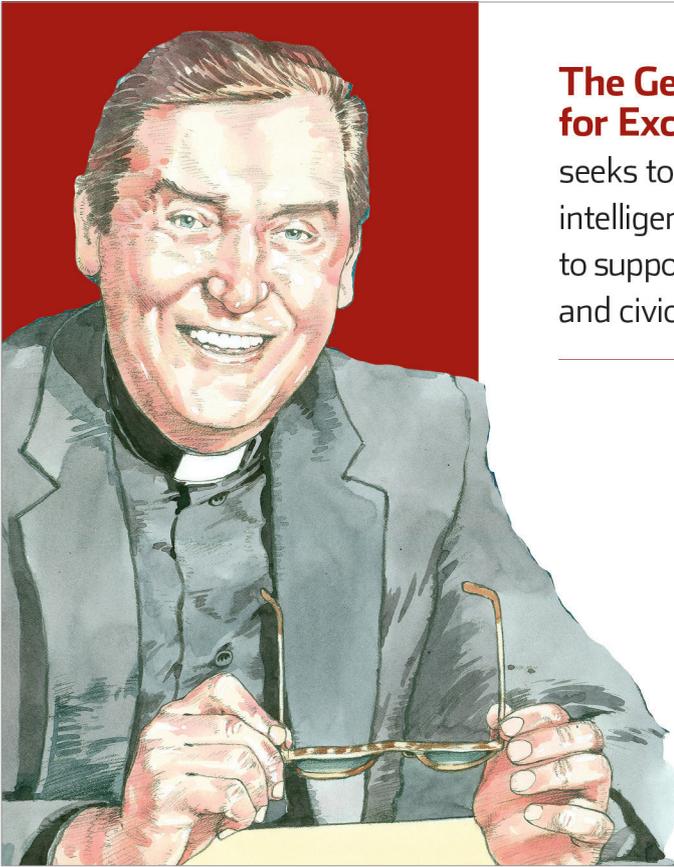


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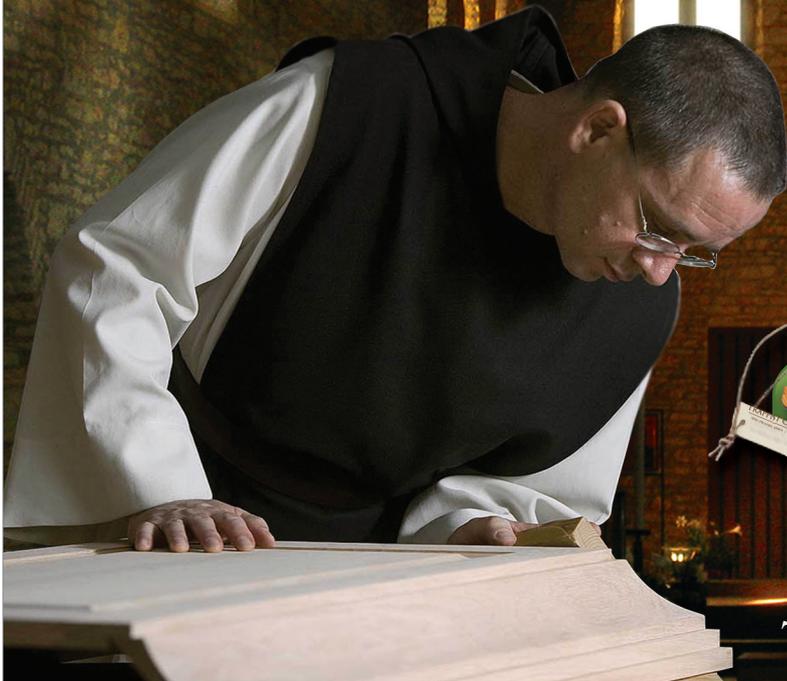
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# Finding a Home

Readings: 2 Chr 36:14-23, Ps 137, Eph 2:4-10, Jn 3:14-21

Through faith in God, Christians come to their true homeland. This week's readings speak of that journey. In the first reading, a new king fulfills the hopes of generations of Jewish slaves and allows them to return home from captivity in Babylon. In the second reading, St. Paul reflects on the saving grace of God, who offers a place forever at Christ's side to any who believe. In the Gospel, Jesus reveals the content of this faith, which is to live according to his teaching and example.

In Scripture, this journey often starts in exile. The biblical patriarchs were nomads who wandered the southern Levant and northern Egypt. David took flight from Saul's wrath and lived for some time among the Philistines. Elijah hid from Ahab and Jezebel in the desert of Horeb. The Israelites lost their homeland twice, first to the Assyrians and then to the Babylonians. The first reading documents the beginnings of the return from the Babylonian exile, but as one empire succeeded another, even those who returned felt like strangers in their own land. In every biblical age, it was only those who maintained their faith who found their way home again.

Early Christians identified with this tradition. The author of the Letter to the Hebrews compares the Christians of his day to the biblical patriarchs, who "acknowledged themselves to be strangers and aliens on earth" (11:13). In a similar way, the first letter of Peter uses the word *exiles* as a metaphor for Christians, and an unidentified writer of the early second century speaks of Christians as people who "dwell on earth, but are citizens of heaven."

From one perspective, Jesus embodied this sense of rootlessness. His home was always somewhere else. Matthew and Luke never quite sorted out whether he was from Bethlehem or Nazareth, and his return to the latter as an adult was a fiasco. Even his adopted city of Capernaum offered him resistance. After wandering for some time, he met his end in Jerusalem, a place he had never called home.

From another perspective, however, Jesus was always at home. People everywhere welcomed him. He had extraordinary confidence in the generosity of others. Wherever he

*'Whoever lives the truth comes to the light.'* (Jn 3:21)

## PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Describe your own experience of being in "exile."

How can living like Christ help you find a home in God?

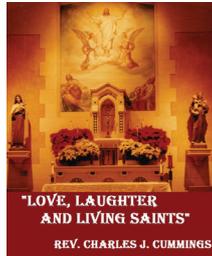
went, friends and even strangers met his needs. Jesus' sense of being at home in the world lived on in his disciples when they went out on mission, and it is reflected in the writings of the same second-century author quoted above, who says of Christians that "every foreign city is a fatherland; every fatherland a foreign city."

Jesus' true home was the presence of his Father, a fact especially clear in John's Gospel, and in today's Gospel reading John teaches us how to find our home in the same presence. To "come to the light," we must "live in the truth." John illustrates the truth with Jesus' commandment to love one another and with the example he gave by washing his disciples' feet and becoming a servant to all. We join Jesus "at home" when we live by the same teaching and example. This is the opportunity that Lent provides. As we turn away from our attachments and live out the truth that Christ taught us, we find ourselves at home in divine light wherever we go.

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

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# Service and Honor

Readings: Jer 31:31-34, Ps 51, Heb 5:7-9, Jn 12:20-33

Many stumble when they realize the suffering that a mission from God entails. Some of the greatest prophets tried to talk God out of their call, and in this week's Gospel reading, Jesus himself struggles to overcome his distress. John recounts Jesus' turmoil in a multilayered soliloquy that touches on the true meaning of service and honor. Any who wish to honor Jesus must serve his mission with their lives. As the Father lifted Jesus up, so God will honor Jesus' servants and through them bring many to new life.

Honor from above is not the expected outcome of a life of service, a truth well illustrated in the television series "Downton Abbey." Early in the first season, when a high-ranking duke comes to visit the Crawley family, a substantial group shows up at the door to welcome him. This group includes not just the Crawleys themselves, but all their maids, valets and footmen. The duke exchanges courtesies with the family, but pays no attention to the servants, who stand silently throughout the reception. The duke offers them no greeting and gives them no thanks for their welcome. At the end of the reception, when a particular servant is addressed, he responds as briefly as possible and avoids eye-contact throughout the interchange. The scene is a blunt illustration of the

hierarchy that pervaded aristocratic households of the day. Servants honored members of the upper class with no expectation of reciprocity.

Although the practices would have been different, the hierarchical culture of Jesus' day included similar structures of authority and honor. Slaves expected no return for the honor they paid their masters. Comparable expectations governed relations within families or between teachers and disciples. Honor was a duty that those "below" paid to those "above."

This sense of duty is probably behind the request of the Greek pilgrims in today's Gospel, who asked to see the teacher and offer him words of honor. They reach Jesus at a critical moment, as he realizes the full implications of the mission he accepted. In that realization, Jesus also comprehends the role his disciples will have to fulfill. Those who wish to "see" him must live as he does. It is not enough to gaze on Jesus or hear his words. To "see" Jesus, one must accept the same mission from the Father: to live as the servant of all and to show and trust in God's love even unto death. When Jesus said, "Where I am, my servant will also be," he was describing a life of Gospel proclamation as well as a death on the cross.

Throughout John's Gospel, the Father's greatest desire is to bring the world to new life. Jesus served the Father by accepting this mission, and the Father honored this service with new life in the resurrection. But just as a seed, in death, ultimately produces an abundance of new seeds, so Jesus, in death, produced an abundance of new servants of the Father's life-giving mission. Turning worldly expectations on their head, God will honor those disciples who serve Jesus' mission. This is what Jesus tried to explain to the pilgrims in today's Gospel. Any who wish to "see" him must remain at his side through life and death.

*'The Father will honor  
whoever serves me'  
(Jn 12:26)*



## PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

What do you hope to see as you come to Christ?

What have you seen as you have served Christ's mission?

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

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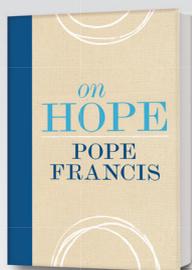


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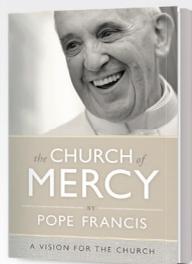


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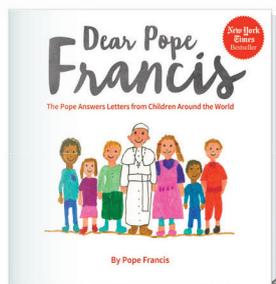


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# Bringing Them Back

*The Chibok girls have become a symbol of resilience in Nigeria*

By Anne Arabome



When news broke of the abduction of 276 girls from their boarding school by Boko Haram militants in the middle of the night on April 14, 2014, a visceral anger and profound sadness welled up inside me. Why such violation of innocent schoolgirls? It could have been me.

I, too, went to boarding school in Nigeria with other teenage schoolgirls. Back then our dreams were boundless as we imagined a future full of hope and promise. Like us, the Chibok girls, as they have come to be known, had dreams. They dreamt about becoming doctors, teachers, lawyers, nurses, architects and much more. On a continent where education is denied to millions of children, these girls were among their community's best and brightest. They worked hard to build a more secure future for themselves and their families.

Then, abruptly, in one night of terror, their dreams were shattered by gun-toting fanatics of a deranged religious ideology. The kidnapping of these innocent girls sparked global outrage echoed by the rallying cry #BringBackOurGirls.

The Chibok girls are a picture of the women in Africa who dream of a better future with passion and compassion, yet are held captive by a conspiracy of attitudes, beliefs and practices that relegate them to a marginal status as lesser beings. Examples are

not hard to find. Consider the bizarre case of Ghanaian schoolgirls who are banned from crossing a river to go to school during their menstrual period. Or South Sudanese school-age girls prized for their economic value as child brides. Or Kenyan girls abducted from school and subjected to female genital mutilation. For all of these girls and many more, #BringBackOurGirls resounds.

Faced with a multitude of obstacles, African women and girls remain resilient. Over the last three years, several Chibok girls have been released or have escaped. Some of the girls enrolled at the American University of Nigeria. They have excelled in their studies, just as their captive colleagues would have done had they been given a similar opportunity. There are still 112 girls in captivity, and the Nigerian government is doing all it can to free them.

Other Chibok girls were given the chance to study in the United States. They, too, have demonstrated the indomitable spirit of the African woman and shone in their studies. One of these women, Sa'a, captured this spirit when she said: "My dream is I want to become a doctor, by God's grace. And I'm working toward that right now...not only to be a doctor but also to be an inspiration for girls back in Nigeria or children who couldn't get the opportunity to go to school." The fate of her kidnapped

colleagues remains etched on her consciousness: "I might have been one of those that died. I might have been one of those girls who came back home with babies."

The Catholic faith upholds the inalienable dignity of women and men created in the image of a loving God. Scripture reveals that God's precious gift to us is life. I imagine how God must feel when he looks at what the Chibok girls have experienced.

When evil acts deny the dignity of the human person and impede human flourishing, like Boko Haram did to the Chibok girls, God's dignity is violated. And, like Rachel of the Old Testament, God laments inconsolably with the agonizing cry "Bring back our girls!" Wherever and whenever women are held captive, our real and ardent desires must echo this lament of freedom and cry for life.

*Anne Arabome, S.S.S., is a member of the Sisters of Social Service of Los Angeles and the associate director of the Faber Center for Ignatian Spirituality at Marquette University.*

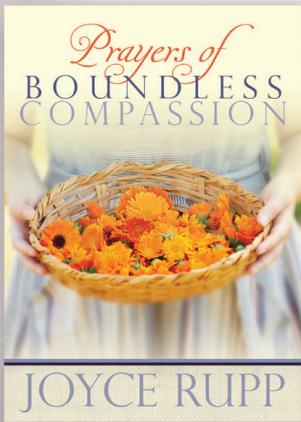
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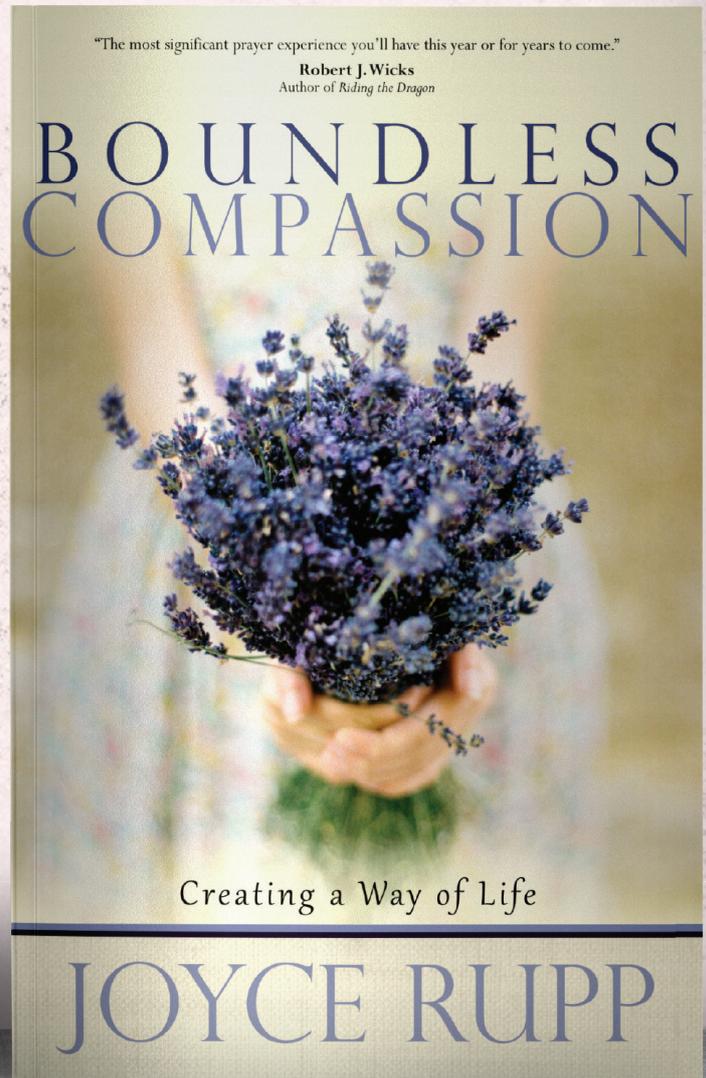
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