

America

APRIL 13, 2020

THE JESUIT REVIEW OF FAITH AND CULTURE

FAITH IN THE TIME OF CORONAVIRUS

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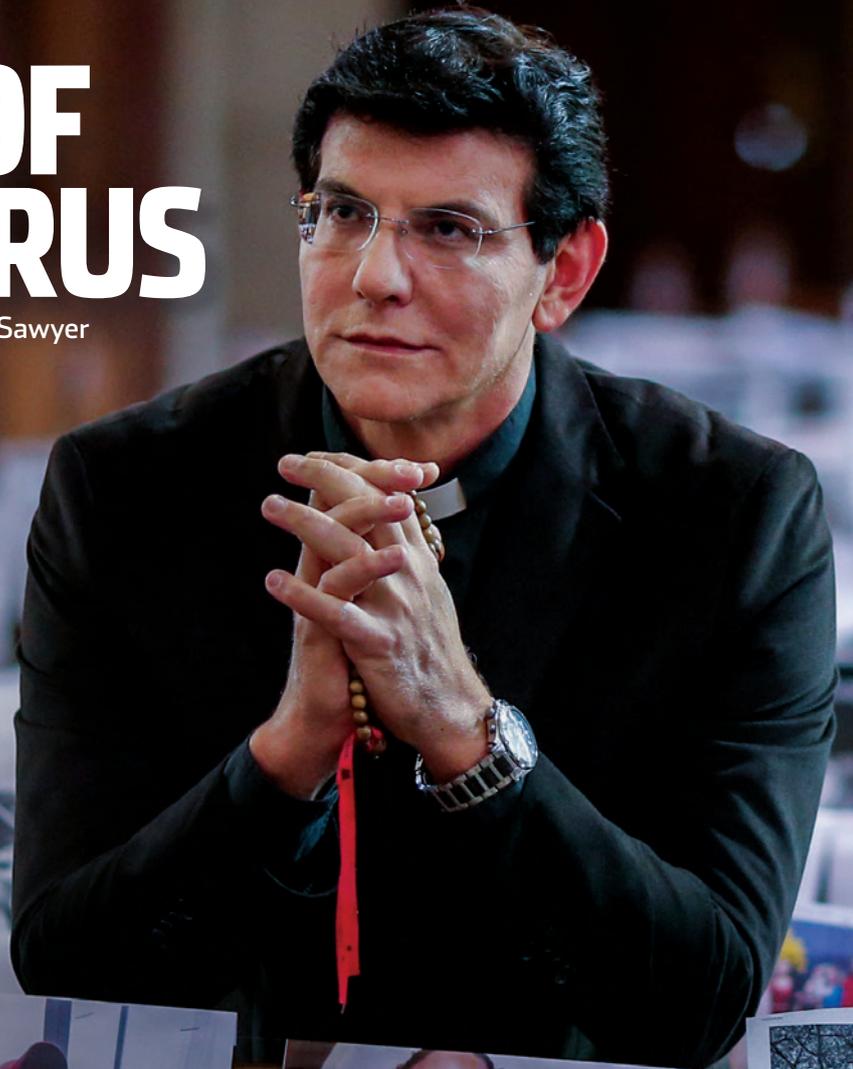
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OF MANY THINGS

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Join Father Matt Malone, S.J., *America's* president and editor in chief, live each week for news analysis and a sense of community during the Covid-19 pandemic. An extension of Father Malone's magazine column, "Of Many Things," this accessible and timely video series will inform, inspire and nourish *America's* audience and viewers everywhere.

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In Memoriam

Joseph A. O'Hare, S.J.
February 12, 1931—March 29, 2020
10th Editor in Chief, 1975 to 1984



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CNS photo/Damish Siddiqui, Reuters

Migrant workers return to their villages during a nationwide lockdown in India to limit the spreading of Covid-19, March 26, New Delhi.

Cover: Father Reginaldo Manzotti prays with photos of his parishioners taped to the pews in the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Curitiba, Brazil, March 21. (CNS photo/Rodolfo Buhner, Reuters)

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In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, many dioceses have suspended in-person Masses or dispensed Catholics from their Sunday Mass obligation. We want to know: How are you practicing your faith in this time of the coronavirus?

I've been watching live-streamed or pre-recorded Mass every day with my boyfriend. I used to go to daily Mass frequently and have fallen away from the practice, but now I find myself eager to connect and pray with others who are sitting in their living rooms just like I am. Missing the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, has deepened my faith in the Real Presence and made me all the more in awe of God's loving presence.

Katie Rich

New Haven, Conn.

Daily prayer, attending/celebrating Mass with our parish through YouTube recording, driving people to medical appointments, delivering meals to homebound people, donating to food banks and driving in the Arizona desert to leave water for migrants or anyone in need.

Eric Noyes

Green Valley, Ariz.

I am keeping in touch with other homebound persons by cards and phone calls. Sometimes I get carried away and my cards become letters, just like St. Paul's did!

Cheryl Keehner

Cleveland, Ohio

I have immersed myself in painting Our Lady the Victorious. I [took] a photo of the statue when I visited the Kalwaria salt mine in Wieliczka, Poland, a few years ago. It has become my prayer as I paint—a prayer for the entire world. My prayer also is that I do justice to its 17th-century maker.

Barbara Brozovic

Binghamton, N.Y.

Reaching out to the sick and homebound in our parish. Daily prayer. Quiet and social distancing. Encouraging others. Doing *lectio divina*. Reading.

Dorothy Jean Beyer, O.S.B.

Mount Angel, Ore.

Trying to attend Jim Martin's 3 p.m. Facebook Live reflections, online Mass, continuing prayer and reflection routines. Some friends are doing holy happy hours by Zoom.

Tom Plante

Menlo Park, Calif.

I am continuing my practice of daily devotion and prayer. I read the daily Mass readings. I pray the Rosary every day. I watch Mass online. I read books related to the Catholic faith that I may grow and understand the faith better.

Dale Gentry

Dallas, Tex.

More than anything, my spiritual focus has been on gratitude. I live east of New York City, which is now the U.S. center of the virus, and many in my family live in Queens. My daily prayer is how grateful I am that most of us have health insurance, the economic means to get through the impending economic depression and the strong family ties that guarantee that we'll be there for each other. I pray about gratitude daily.

Bette Ingoglia

Northport, N.Y.

Walking in the woods at a nearby park, praising God for his beautiful creation has been uplifting. Reading the psalms and journaling through my thoughts, hopes and fears continues to be an authentic way to pray. Trying to sit in silence for 10 minutes a day helps me to be open to God's healing grace.

Kathleen McCrillis

Tipp City, Ohio

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To Address Pandemic, the Nation Must Choose Prudence Over Ignorance

Last New Year's Day—a mere three months ago—few could have imagined that by this date the United States would be in the deathgrip of a pandemic and on the brink of a prolonged economic recession. The nation's sudden envelopment by this two-fold crisis has left politicians and policymakers scrambling just to make sense of events, let alone to make the life-and-death decisions that fall to them. Given the sheer scale and complexity of the crisis, it is not surprising that public officials struggle to find answers. At a minimum, however, they need to ask the right questions, especially about what they do not know, which is a great deal more than most would care to admit.

At one point, a few public officials, including President Trump, suggested that the current efforts to mitigate the impact of the coronavirus outbreak—social distancing and public closures—should be curtailed earlier than public health experts, including the president's own advisors, think is prudent. It is clear that the virtual lockdown of the country is causing vast economic damage. It is also true that recessions and economic hardship have life-and-death consequences, often resulting in higher rates of suicide, domestic violence and substance abuse.

It is understandable, then, that people are asking whether the measures to mitigate the effects of the pandemic are doing more harm than good. These discussions usually take the form of comparing an unknown data point (like the number of avoidable deaths Covid-19 will cause) against another unknown data point that is assumed to be worse (like a second Great Depression), or against a known, unarguable good (like national economic growth).

As for the first unknown, the number of avoidable deaths, we do know something—namely, that there will be many such deaths and that each involves a profound human tragedy. We also know that the epidemiological models have large confidence intervals, meaning that the number of avoidable deaths is projected to fall within a very large range. We do not know, for example, whether the official number of deaths in the United States will be 10,000 or 80,000 or more.

The reason the confidence intervals are so large is because we have insufficient data, largely because of the unavailability of testing. The federal government has badly bungled its response. The effects of ongoing, systematic underinvestment in the nation's public health infrastructure were made worse by a president who spent the first weeks of this impending crisis behaving as though the number of cases would remain low. President Trump downplayed the threat, and a federal bureaucracy unaccustomed to using its own power (including marshaling and coordinating private-sector forces) failed to efficiently address problems that affect the common good.

If U.S. officials had prepared for the coronavirus landfall by building up effective testing capacity, the nation would have been better able to enter into the required calculus. Perhaps the United States would have been able to mount a response similar to that of South Korea—isolating and tracing contacts among known infected individuals instead of quarantining the whole population. This would have permitted public officials to compare accurately a more narrowly modeled epidemiological risk against the economic risk. As it is, we do not know

enough to make that comparison.

These process failures have left Americans to debate ethical tradeoffs for which we lack the information to make good prudential decisions. It is impossible to make good prudential decisions about completely unknown risks, and it is a catastrophic failure of imagination and moral responsibility to act as if we are unable to learn what we need to know to make a better decision.

Making decisions such as these necessarily involves risk assessments and weighing different possible outcomes. But such decision-making must not descend into a strict arithmetical calculation that values human life as merely one material good among many. The inherent worth and dignity of human life are immeasurable.

We know there are many people who know more than the rest of us about these matters. We should listen to them. Experts can be overrated and can surely make mistakes, but in a public health emergency, prudence dictates both following their advice and doing what is possible to improve the data on which that advice is based.

And their nearly unanimous advice is clear: As Dr. Anthony Fauci told CNN on March 26: “When the numbers are going up, that’s no time to pull back. That’s when you have to hunker down and mitigate, mitigate, mitigate—get the people taken care of; that’s what you have to concentrate on.”

A Bittersweet Farewell

Like many other New Yorkers and **America** readers, we suffered a great loss on Sunday, March 29, with the death of Joseph A. O'Hare, S.J., editor in chief of **America** from 1975 to 1984. The editors mourn his death but also share many fond memories of the clever, erudite and joyful man who graced us with his myriad talents for so long. He was a famed raconteur with an impish streak and a powerful intellect; seldom was he vanquished in a battle of wits.

In 1984 **America** lost Joe to Fordham University, where he would serve as president for 19 years. But he returned to the magazine in 2003, serving **America** as an associate editor until his retirement in 2009 (with a brief sabbatical as president of his beloved alma mater, Regis High School).

Joe loved being a Jesuit and a priest, and he loved his city. He was a born-and-bred New Yorker, a son of the Bronx (his father was a patrolman in the N.Y.P.D. Mounted Unit), and his writing always evidenced his great affection for the Big Apple. He was also a citizen of the world. After earning a doctorate in philosophy, he taught from 1955 to 1958 and then from 1967 to 1972 in the Philippines. He counted among his friends many famous and influential people—and indeed, one of his favorite quips was “every Jesuit has a celebrity all his own.”

We bid a bittersweet farewell. To quote one of Joe's signature phrases, “See ya on the other side.” Well done, God's good and faithful servant.

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The coronavirus virus meets another threat: declining faith in medicine

Every disease outbreak is a concern, but Covid-19, more popularly known as a coronavirus, might be especially deadly. This is not because of the genetic makeup or the incubation period of the virus. It is because the general public has lost confidence in the medical community. This trend has been especially acute among several religious groups, with Catholics experiencing one of the larger declines in trust.

The General Social Survey has been asking about the public's trust in a number of institutions since 1973, and the trend line for medicine should frighten people in the field of public health. In the 1970s, about 53 percent of U.S. citizens indicated that they had "a great deal" of confidence in medicine. By 2018, the last year for which we have data, that number had declined to 38 percent.

There are significant differences among religious traditions. For instance, in 1973 three in five evangelical Protestants (of all races) expressed "a great deal" of confidence in medicine, the highest of any Christian group. That support dropped in half, with just 32 percent expressing the same sentiment in 2018. For Catholics, the share

expressing confidence started at 52 percent in 1973 and dipped to 43 percent in the most recent survey—perhaps a more modest decline because so many health-care facilities in the United States are Catholic-run. That nearly 10-point decline is similar for mainline Protestants.

There has also been a great decline of confidence in medicine among black Protestants, from just over half expressing "a great deal" of confidence in 1973 to only 27 percent saying the same in 2018. While there are many potential reasons for this, one could be the revelations of unethical medical testing on African-Americans in the past.

The only religious group to see an increase are Jews, who saw a six-point rise in confidence in the last 45 years. This may be because Jews in the United States are concentrated in the urban Northeast, where health care is more accessible.

It is not easy to pin down reasons for the broad-based decline in trust. One theory, that suspicion of science is linked to the conservative political ideology of many Christians, is contradicted by the fact that the religiously unaffiliated (whose politics often lean

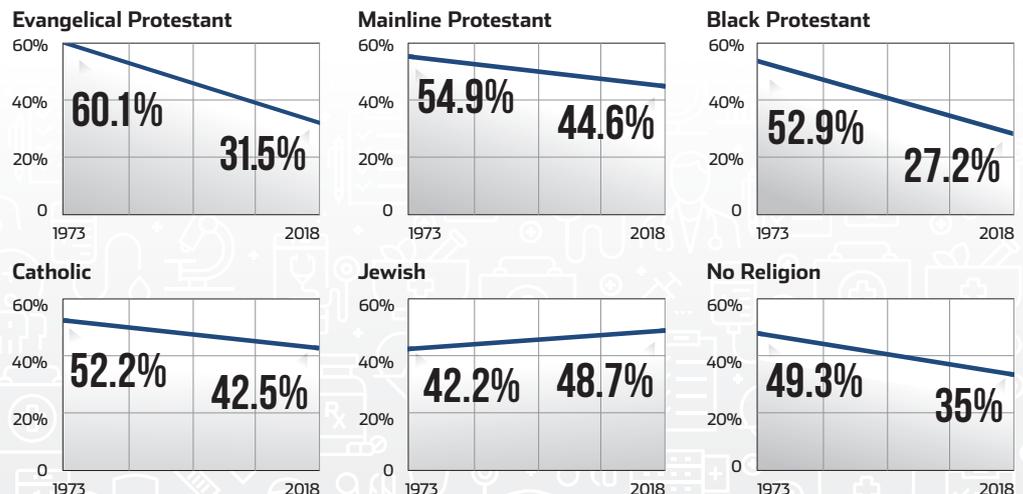
to the left) have also seen a 14-point drop in confidence during the last 45 years.

Another theory is that Americans have not lost confidence in medicine specifically but have adopted more skeptical views toward all types of societal institutions.

The General Social Survey also asks, "Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?" It is clear from this broader question that the American public is somewhat less likely to trust their fellow man today than they were in the 1970s. But the patterns here are not the same as for the question about trusting medicine. For instance, evangelical Protestants have long been wary of others in society, with just 41 percent of them saying that people can be trusted in 1973 and 30 percent in 2018. The decline among Catholics was similar, dropping from 50 percent to 34 percent over the same period. But even the religiously unaffiliated saw a drop of over 14 percentage points, with only 32 percent saying they could trust people in 2018.

One outlier is mainline Protes-

How much confidence do you have in medicine? Percentage saying "a great deal" (1973 vs. 2018):



tants; about 40 percent of this group still say that most people can be trusted. A possible explanation lies in theology. Most evangelical Protestants believe that the end of the world will begin as societies devolve into violence and sin, so they may be on the lookout for evidence that things are going downhill. Tellingly, a survey conducted last year by the advocacy group Prison Fellowship found that 81 percent of practicing evangelicals believed that the crime rate has risen in the prior 25 years, which is empirically false. (Sixty percent of all adults, 62 percent of practicing Catholics and 66 percent of mainline Protestants also held this erroneous belief.) Mainline theology, however, places very little emphasis on the book of Revelation and the end of time. In fact, the social gospel, which argues that Christianity can (and has) made the world a better place, is much more prominent in mainline churches.

To get a sense of how general distrust feeds into a lack of confidence in the medical community, I divided the survey respondents by whether they believed that people can be trusted or not. I calculated the shares of those who said that they had “a great deal” of confidence

in medicine in both 1973 and 2018 for the four largest religious groups.

Looking at these two factors brings a sharper focus: Distrust of other people and a lack of confidence in medicine seem to be related. For both mainline Protestants and Catholics, there was no decline in confidence in medicine over the last four decades when the sample is restricted to just those who have a trusting view of society; the entirety of the decline was among those who say that people cannot be trusted. (Among Catholics in the latter group, those expressing confidence in medicine fell from 54 percent to 39 percent.)

But that pattern did not hold for evangelical Protestants. The share of this group expressing confidence in medicine fell sharply even among those who say that people can be trusted (from 72 percent to 37 percent). Evangelicals are outliers here, but there is no apparent theory that explains this. It merits further investigation.

This lack of confidence in the medical community sets the stage for a national disease outbreak that may become more widespread and deadlier if people wait too long to go to the hospital

after noticing coronavirus symptoms—whether because they do not trust the medical profession itself, do not trust they will be treated equitably or with dignity, or fear financial hardship.

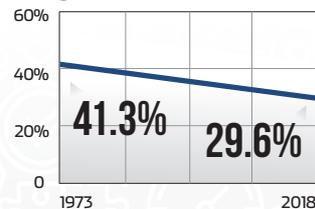
But another possible accelerant is misinformation from medical authorities and political leaders, including a president who first described the Democrats’ treatment of the virus as a serious threat as a “hoax.” At least one study has indicated people who distrust government are more likely to refuse medical vaccinations for themselves or their children. With trust in government at a 70-year low, the politicization of medicine is a growing danger.

Medical professionals and epidemiologists must not only stay out of political debate but also work to make sure they do not become political pawns. The Covid-19 pandemic requires the medical community to effectively communicate messages about public health and treatment of the sick. If handled correctly, the current coronavirus outbreak may also improve trust in medicine among the general public.

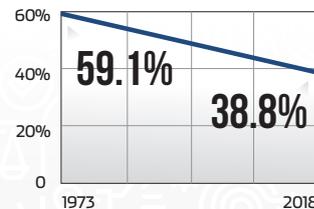
Ryan Burge is an assistant professor of political science at Eastern Illinois University, in Charleston, Ill.

Would you say that most people can be trusted? Percentage saying yes:

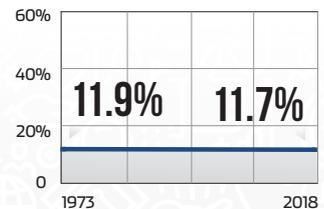
Evangelical Protestant



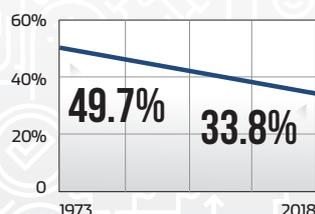
Mainline Protestant



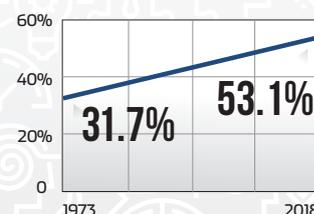
Black Protestant



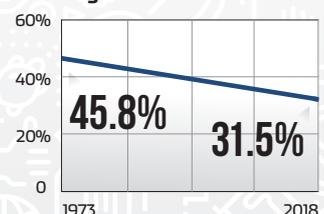
Catholic



Jewish



No Religion



With Masses suspended, parishes face collection shortfalls and perilous finances

By Michael J. O'Loughlin



It started off as a trickle, with only the Archdiocese of Seattle—located in one of the hardest-hit regions in the nation in terms of the coronavirus—announcing on March 11 that it would suspend public Masses to help slow the spread of Covid-19. Then the announcements from other dioceses followed in a deluge: The Archdioceses of Washington, Newark, Chicago and Boston announced similar suspensions less than two days later. In less than a week, with more than 10,000 cases of Covid-19 already reported in the United States, nearly all of the nation's Catholic dioceses had suspended public Masses, and several confirmed that the suspension would run through Holy Week and Easter.

When it comes to church finances, parishes and those who work in them are facing an uncertain future the longer the crisis drags on. Part-time church workers have seen their income halted; major charities are worried about missed collections; and at least one diocese has temporarily laid off employees.

Julia Strukely is a religion teacher at a Catholic middle school in Virginia. On the weekends, Ms. Strukely is a fill-in accompanist in a few parishes around Richmond. She said she usually plays up to three Masses and brings in about \$300 per week. But with no Masses being held in her diocese until further notice, Ms. Strukely will not receive that pay.

"It's extra money to put in savings or to pay bills that come at the end of the month," Ms. Strukely said. Not having that money "will impact me soon," she added.

Since there are more than 17,000 parishes in the United States, Ms. Strukely is likely far from alone when it comes to a temporary loss of income. Steve Petrunak, the president of the National Association of Pastoral Musicians, said that he has heard anecdotally from members who work full-time in parish music ministry that they will continue to be paid through the shutdown, at least for now. Beyond those positions, however, there is more uncertainty.

"The cantors, the instrumentalists, those are the ones who are really taking the biggest hit at the moment because



CNS photo/Rick Musacchio, Tennessee Register

The Rev. Mark Sappenfield broadcasts Mass by Facebook on March 20 at St. Matthew Parish in Franklin, Tenn.

it's those people who are paid through stipends," he said.

If the crisis continues too long, Mr. Petrunak said, he worries the economic impact at parishes could move beyond freelancers. "If you think of the struggling communities, how long can they go before they're going to have to make decisions about church personnel and parish personnel?" he asked.

The economic impact could also affect the church's charity work.

In mid-March parishes throughout the United

States prepared to host a special collection for Catholic Relief Services, the international development arm of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. The collection brought in more than \$16 million in 2018, according to data from the U.S.C.C.B. With Masses canceled in most of the United States, much of that funding could be in jeopardy.

"With the situation in flux and so much uncertainty, we don't know what the impacts on giving could be," Mark Melia, the executive vice president of charitable giving for C.R.S., said in a written statement. "However, around the world C.R.S. is helping our church partners to respond to this crisis in creative ways. Given the adverse economic implications, donors likely too will be facing economic challenges themselves."

In addition to the collection, many Catholics participate in the Lenten Rice Bowl program to benefit C.R.S., collecting spare change during the 40 days of Lent and donating it around Easter. Since the program's inception more than 40 years ago, it has raised more than \$250 million.

Mr. Melia said in his statement that this fundraiser could be "adversely impacted" by the suspension of Masses, and he acknowledged the "uncertainty" and "unpredictably" about the collection. But, he added, "we know for sure that Catholics, including our donors, are deeply committed to caring for the most vulnerable around the world and seek to do good even in the most challenging of times."

The loss of collection dollars to parishes is already more than a hypothetical.

The Diocese of Providence confirmed in an email, for example, that the "pandemic crisis has required a temporary reduction to our staffing, and limited personnel will be working from home to support our schools, parishes and other agencies." At parishes that rely on weekly collections to cover payroll and other bills, the implications of suspended Sunday Masses could be dire.

Take the Church of St. Paul the Apostle in Manhattan. On March 8, nearly every pew was filled with worshipers. The severity of the coronavirus pandemic was just emerging, and the presiding priest announced that those gathered should refrain from shaking hands during the exchange of peace; he also said that at Communion, the consecrated wine would not be offered. Beyond that, Mass proceeded as normal. But by the following Sunday, the Archdiocese of New York had suspended public Masses and the parish had gone dark. On March 17, the pastor emailed parishioners to bring them up to speed on the financial challenges that just a single week without Masses presented—and to ask them to sign up for automated online giving.

"We all still have bills to pay, and the church is no different from each one of us personally," Rick Walsh, C.S.P., wrote. "This hardship has led us to take the difficult steps of tightening our belt by reducing our staff and limiting the parish center office hours." A normal weekend's collections would raise about \$10,000, but with no Masses and only online donations, contributions were down by more than 50 percent.

According to the email, the parish already laid off a full-time maintenance worker and its part-time bookstore employees, and it is now paying the equivalent of two salaries to the three Paulists who work at the parish. Though the hope is that the employees can be hired back after the crisis subsides, Father Walsh wrote, "There may well be more measures to come."

As for how long Masses will be suspended, no one really knows. Some parishes are reaching out to parishioners,

A woman reads a prayer book in the sanctuary of St. Mary Church in Appleton, Wis., on March 18.



asking them to increase their offering if they are able and encouraging them to sign up for online giving. Some parishes that are streaming Masses, like St. Francis Xavier in New York, are asking viewers to contribute through Venmo, the cash-transferring phone app.

Some dioceses have launched online giving campaigns meant to help parishes weather the crisis. The Archdiocese of Newark is using the crowdsourcing site GoFundMe, available at www.rcan.org/parishsupport, to raise money for parishes, with more than \$100,000 donated as of March 26. In Chicago, the archdiocese created a website that donors can use to make a one-time or recurring gift to any parish they choose. The site, along with a donation site for the archdiocese's Coronavirus Emergency Fund, can be accessed at www.archchicago.org/support.

"About 70 percent of our parishes have an online giving program," Brendan Keating, chief development officer in the Chicago Archdiocese's Office of Stewardship and Development, told Catholic News Service. "Of course, that means 30 percent don't."

All parishes still have bills to pay even if they are not holding public Masses, Mr. Keating said. "With the suspension of Masses, it's critically important that parishioners support their parishes with online giving. The parishes absolutely need this income more than they ever have."

Patrick Markey, the executive director of the Diocesan Fiscal Management Conference, told Catholic News Service that the toll on parishes and dioceses as a result of the suspended Masses will be painful.

"It's a big hit, and it's gonna hurt," he said, noting that many dioceses rely on income from parish collections and may not be able to support parishes for too long as their reserves dwindle.

"They'll want to pay everybody, but they have to be realistic about that," Mr. Markey said. "In the short term, they can continue making payroll to all of the employees, but at some point, they'll have to start looking at other options."

Father Walsh, the pastor at the Church of St. Paul the Apostle, acknowledged that "the ramifications of [the pandemic] are tremendous." But, he added, it has also shown people how interconnected we are as human beings, and that, he said, reminds him that "the big picture is hope."

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

CAN PARISH COLLECTION BASKETS GO ONLINE?

Google searches for "Mass times" have declined by **83%** in the United States since an Ash Wednesday peak, with millions of Catholics sheltering at home.

The Archdiocese of Chicago reports that **70%** of its parishes have some form of online giving, but only **10%** of total collections is donated electronically.

\$10: average weekly parish donation per family.

The percentage of Americans who report belonging to a church, synagogue or mosque is at an all-time low—**50%** in 2018, down from **70%** in 1999. The decline has been greater among Catholics. **76%** of Catholics belonged to a church in 2000; now, **63%** do.

The well-connected on the internet are not connected to churches: Just **42%** of millennials are church members.

Top priorities among Catholics for giving: **82%** said their parish; **71%** cited helping the poor and needy in their local community; **46%** said local Catholic schools; **34%** said diocesan needs.

A 2013 CARA survey found that **68%** of working-age U.S. Catholics had never made a donation online.

In 2019, a Pew Research Center survey found that **26%** of Catholic had reduced their contributions to their parish or diocese in response to reports of clergy sexual abuse.

The Giving USA Foundation's annual report on philanthropy found that donations to religious institutions fell by **1.5%** in 2018 (or down by **3.9%** if adjusted for inflation), continuing a long trend of decline.

At the U.S.-Mexico border, A scramble begins to curb coronavirus

A border patrol agent walks along a wall separating Tijuana, Mexico, from San Diego on March 18.

In February more than 400 people gathered for the blessing of the Kino Border Initiative's new 18,000-square-foot building in Nogales, in the Mexican state of Sonora, just south of Arizona. By the middle of March just a few weeks later, with the outbreak of Covid-19, everything had changed.

The Kino Border Initiative is a binational effort to serve migrants, educate the public and advocate for justice. Kino staff are still serving food at its *comedor*, part of their daily efforts, but the coronavirus has changed how they do it.

"What we're trying to do is maintain a distance between migrants while they wait in line," Sean Carroll, S.J., the director of the Kino Border Initiative, said. Families enter together, receive their food and then find a place to eat outside.

"It really modified our services—clothing, legal counsel, meals," Father Carroll said. "We're still serving, but it's been an adjustment for everyone."

Father Carroll has sent long-term volunteers home, and other volunteers, who come down for the day from southern Arizona, have been told to stay home for their own safety—many of them are retired—and for the safety of the migrants.

Norma Pimentel, M.J., the executive director of Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley in Brownsville, Tex., said humanitarian groups are "taking all the precautions possible."

The Trump administration's "Remain in Mexico" policy allows immigration officials to return thousands of asylum seekers to Mexico while their appeals are being decided. Many now live in tents in makeshift camps after shelters in Mexico ran out of space in Matamoros, Tamaulipas, just south of Brownsville.

"We have set up hand-washing stations throughout the camp," Sister Pimentel said in an email. "We will be testing everyone that shows flu-like symptoms. We will isolate any family until we confirm it is not the virus."

In Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, migrants fleeing violence in their home countries have been waiting for months for their cases to be heard, Marisa Limón of the Hope Border Institute said. They see Covid-19 as just the latest obstacle to finding safety for their families.

Others have been waiting for court dates in detention. "We knew these folks are immunocompromised because of malnutrition," Ms. Limón said.

"We are concerned that the care and well-being of immigrants in detention is not being considered [by immigration officials]," she said. "The pandemic is exposing gaps in what we provide to those most in need."

In Tijuana, Baja California, the Casa del Migrante has cut the number of migrants it accepts to half its normal capacity. Staff have closed the shelter's TV room, where guests would gather in the past, and migrants spread out in the patio area during meals rather than congregate in the dining area.

"We really want to keep people healthy," Pat Murphy, C.S., a Scalabrini priest who runs the Casa del Migrante, said. "We don't want to kick any people out, but we can't let people in when they're sick.... Everything we do has been amplified and made more difficult because of the virus."

He argues that U.S. officials are "deporting the virus," suggesting that the Mexican government should stop accepting deported immigrants from the United States.

In Tijuana, three cases of Covid-19 have been confirmed. "But they've only tested 60 people," Father Murphy said. "If you work that out to the population, we could have 1,000 cases.... People need to start dying in Mexico before [the U.S. and Mexican governments] take it seriously."

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



Covid-19 threat adds to refugee suffering in Greece, Turkey, Syria

With world attention fixed on the coronavirus pandemic, other significant humanitarian challenges have fallen out of focus. Among them is the ongoing refugee dilemma on the Aegean islands of Greece and at the borders of Turkey.

Conditions at overcrowded refugee camps in Greece have become desperate; and in an attempt to highlight its own problems maintaining 3.6 million refugees, Turkey has revived threats to open its border to Europe. At the same time, thousands of Syrian families have been pressing against the closed border with Turkey, desperate to escape the violence being visited on Idlib Province by Russian and Syrian forces as the Syrian civil war drags on into its 10th year.

According to Jesuit Refugee Service, more than 950,000 people have fled the fighting in Idlib. Added to this volatile mix is rising anxiety over the coronavirus in refugee camps.

Maria Alverti is the director of Caritas-Greece. The Greek government, like many others around the world, recently ordered extreme measures to contain the coronavirus, closing schools, restaurants, cinemas and sporting events—“anything that can prevent a big number of people getting together,” Ms. Alverti reported. “The virus is quite high on the agenda now, [but] so far, we have not heard official measures for the camps.

“We are deeply concerned what might happen if the coronavirus spreads in camps like the ones on the islands,

where thousands of people are packed [together] and severe health issues are already their daily challenge,” she said, describing conditions by email.

Of course, refugees in Greece are not the only groups facing heightened vulnerability to the coronavirus. Joan Rosenhauer, executive director of Jesuit Refugee Service/USA, expressed “great concern that the spread of Covid-19 will impact the more than 70 million forcibly displaced people around the world.”

“Refugees often live in unstable or overcrowded conditions and lack access to health care,” Ms. Rosenhauer said. “Some, like the millions displaced in Iraq and Syria, have potentially already been exposed, while others, like those trying to flee from Venezuela, will be denied the right to seek asylum with border closures.”

On March 3, Jesuit Refugee Service-Greece joined more than 90 other humanitarian and refugee advocacy organizations in a letter to European Union leaders, calling for immediate action “to decongest the Aegean Islands...through fair relocation of asylum seekers for the sake of universal human rights and in accordance with E.U. obligations.” According to the groups, 42,000 asylum seekers now reside on the Greek islands, about seven times their capacity.

While Western media portray Turkey as something of



CNS photo/Khalil Ashawi, Reuters

Internally displaced Syrian children at a camp near the Turkish border in Atme, Syria, on March 4.

the heavy in this ongoing refugee brinkmanship, a statement issued by the European Council on Refugees and Exiles points out that Turkey is hosting more refugees than any other country in the world just now—“and more than twice as many as the rest of Europe combined.”

“It is time for the rest of Europe to do its fair share,” the E.C.R.E. said, adding, “The current situation shows the risk of outsourcing protection and relying on Turkey instead of finding collective European responses and fixing European asylum systems.”

Greece, too, these refugee advocates say, has been forced to carry too heavy a burden. A situation report shared by an official from Caritas Internationalis notes “a big change in the atmosphere and public opinion [about] refugees on the islands.”

“Refugees are considered as a threat for the communities that have had enough of carrying such a huge burden,” according to the report. In their letter, humanitarian leaders said, “This ongoing political stalemate between the E.U., Greece and Turkey must be resolved. This game, played by the powerful, is putting innocent human lives at risk. It must stop now.”

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



Photo by Joe Mahoney/Wikimedia Commons

Cyrus Habib rallies for Dreamers in September 2017.

GOODNEWS: Washington’s Cyrus Habib will not seek re-election, plans to join the Jesuits

Cyrus Habib, the lieutenant governor of Washington State, will not seek re-election and is planning to enter the Society of Jesus this fall, the lieutenant governor announced on March 19.

“I’ve felt a calling to dedicate my life in a more direct and personal way to serving the marginalized, empowering the vulnerable, healing those suffering from spiritual wounds, and accompanying those discerning their own futures,” Mr. Habib wrote in an essay published in **America**.

Mr. Habib, 38, interrupts what had been a rapid political ascent. Born to Iranian immigrants in Maryland, he is the first and only Iranian-American to hold statewide elected office in Washington. Mr. Habib is also a three-time cancer survivor and has been blind since the age of 8. He converted to Catholicism at the age of 25 while studying at the University of Oxford.

Mr. Habib’s movement toward discerning the priesthood began when he learned his father, Mo, was diagnosed with cancer; but he did not seriously consider a vocation until his father passed away in 2016, just a few weeks before he was elected lieutenant governor. “In that year or so after my father died, [I said to myself], I feel like I’m accomplishing things, I know what we’re doing is so important in this political moment...but am I personally deriving a sense of joy from this life?” Mr. Habib said.

Mr. Habib is eager to bring his experience as an attorney, professor and legislator to his new vocation. “It’s not that what I want to do is abandon the causes and issues that I care about, whether it’s education and health care or voting rights or whatever it might be, but that I may be in somewhat of a unique position to play a different role.”

Zac Davis, *associate editor.*
Twitter: @zacdayvis.



A ROAD TRIP THROUGH THE SWING STATES (BEFORE THE VIRUS HIT)

Trump voters are holding firm, but Covid-19 may bring a sea change

By John W. Miller



In the first week of March, reporting on U.S. politics for **America**, I set off in a rental car from my home in Pittsburgh.

My plan: Spend a day each in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin and Iowa. All five states backed Barack Obama, a Democrat, in the 2012 presidential election and Donald J. Trump, a Republican, in 2016. Winning over the voters in those swing states, and addressing their concerns about deindustrialization, health care, abortion, racial tension and other issues, is key to both parties' 2020 presidential campaigns.

Then came the virus.

The novel coronavirus disease Covid-19 landed hard in a highly connected nation with an aging population, a disjointed medical system, and persistent income and racial inequality. Initially clustered in big cities on both coasts, the virus spread into the heartland—and into the places I visited.

Schools, restaurants, bars, gyms, and both Little League fields and pro sports stadiums slammed shut. Dioceses suspended Mass *en masse*. The stock market

plummeted. In a particularly American touch, gun sales increased.

The pandemic crisis left me with the feeling I had dreamed the entire road trip. Yes, I had seen some of the pearls of a sprawling, diverse land: a poetry reading at Oberlin college, a spectacular Serb restaurant in Milwaukee, quirky bookstores in Iowa City. But for a while, travel like that will, in fact, be just a dream.

Closed for business, the United States goes on, but its culture and politics are transformed. When I called to check in with the people I met on my trip, there was a consensus that it was worth shutting things down for a while to contain the virus, with praise for civil servants like Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

Crisis brings out the values we hope are true: Humans matter more than profits, truth more than political spin and science more than the stock market. Maybe public service will even regain its once-noble reputation.



Beaver, Pa.:
Among those who voted for Mr. Trump in 2016 were suburban white Catholics like Judith and Mike Deelo.



Photos by: John W. Miller

“I have great confidence in what the president calls the ‘deep state,’ people who’ve given their careers to good government,” said Rocky Marcoux, Milwaukee’s commissioner for city development who, pre-lockdown, gave me a tour of the city in his Toyota pick-up truck. “There’s a decency and competency in those people that will shine.”

My phone calls reaffirmed the value of my road trip. The places I visited are still there, and the people I met, like the rest of us, still have a decision to make in November about the future of this country.

Among Democrats, I found more unity than I expected. All the Bernie Sanders supporters I talked to said they would vote for Joe Biden in November, assuming he is the Democratic nominee. Among Republicans, I found allegiance to Mr. Trump based on satisfaction with his tax cuts and appointments of conservative, pro-life judges; there was less concern about his ethical and behavioral shortcomings. Among undecided voters, especially Catholics, I found an openness to supporting Mr. Biden, even among those identifying as democratic socialists.

Monday: Trump is a 'New York City streetfighter and hard-core businessman. That's what we needed.'

...

Monday: Beaver, Pa. (suburban Pittsburgh) Trump's Suburban Catholic Support

On a rainy Monday morning, I set out on Route 65 along the Ohio River, which starts near my house and flows west all the way to the Mississippi. It first hits Beaver County, a cluster of river towns at the heart of Pittsburgh's once-mighty steel manufacturing complex. In one of those towns, Ambridge, a plaque reminds visitors that the Brooklyn Bridge is made from local steel. Beaver County is now in a population decline, and only 24 percent of

Tuesday: 'The Democratic Party left me when they abandoned my values, Catholic values.'

adults have a college degree, compared with 32 percent in the United States as a whole.

In 2016, Mr. Trump won 58 percent of the vote in this county of 166,000, up from Mitt Romney's 52 percent in 2012 and the best performance by a Republican since 1928. In 2016, voters here told political reporters of their hope for factories opening again and their receptiveness to Mr. Trump's promises to support gun rights and oppose abortion. Among those who voted for the president were thousands of suburban white Catholics like Judith and Mike Deelo, who said they plan to vote for his re-election.

"I'm impressed by what Trump has done for the church," said Mr. Deelo, a retired metals trader. In particular, said Mr. Deelo, he has backed anti-abortion policies and nominated conservative judges. Catholic bishops last year voted to make abortion the "pre-eminent" issue for Catholic voters, Mr. Deelo pointed out.

Mr. Trump is a "New York City streetfighter and hardcore businessman," said Judith. "That's what we needed."

When I later caught up with the couple by phone, they both repeated their support for Mr. Trump. The couple also said they had to cancel a planned vacation to California. "It's better to overreact than underreact," said Mr. Deelo.

I met the Deelos as part of a focus group assembled for America by the Rev. Bob Miller, the pastor at Sts. Peter and Paul Church in the county seat (also called Beaver). It was a politically conservative bunch, with most leaning for Mr. Trump and some undecideds who said they might vote for a more moderate Democrat like Mr. Biden. "I know so many Catholics who hold their noses and vote for [Mr. Trump] just because of the abortion issue," said Joe Rubino, a retired teacher.

What about inequality and lack of access to health care and good education? Like other politically conservative Catholics I met on the trip, focus group members endorsed helping the poor, but said it was something the private sec-

tor and individual citizens should do. "The more money I make, the more generous I can be," said Julie West, who works in the oil and gas industry.

The group said they mainly got their information from Fox News. Few read a newspaper anymore.

That is bad news for J. D. Prose, political editor of The Beaver County Times, founded in 1851. In 1999, Mr. Prose moved to western Pennsylvania from Washington, D.C., to become the political editor of The Times. Those were salad days: The newspaper printed 50,000 copies on weekends, operated a full-on features desk and even sent reporters to Russia.

Now Mr. Prose is feeling burned out and looking for other work. The decline in advertising revenue has obliterated the newspaper industry. "Instead of reading my stuff, people go on Facebook and yell at each other," he said.

Maybe as a result of this breakdown in how people get their news, some were slow to heed the alarm over Covid-19. "The virus, I believe, is being blown out of proportion," Phil Remke, the former mayor of Moundsville, a West Virginia town down the river, texted me on March 15. "I believe the media is causing the panic."

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Tuesday: Lorain, Ohio (suburban Cleveland) Even Bernie Bros Will Vote for Biden

As I headed west on Tuesday morning, rolling down the backslope of the Appalachians toward the Great Lakes, I journeyed through the Silicon Valley of the 1890s.

From Pittsburgh to Iowa, thousands of artisanal entrepreneurs used the coal, glass, natural gas and iron ore to build new consumer goods, from cosmetics to horseless carriages. Henry Ford in Detroit made cars. The Wright Brothers in Dayton, Ohio, made bicycles and then airplanes. One cog in the network of manufacturers was the city of Lorain, the seat of Lorain County on Lake Erie west of Cleveland. Ford used to make cars here, assembling almost 10 million Fairlines, Thunderbirds and Rancheros.

In the mid-20th century, migrant workers from Puerto Rico and Mexico, and African-Americans from the South, arrived in Lorain to work in the factories. One of them was the family of the Nobel Prize-winning writer Toni Morrison, who in her first novel, *The Bluest Eye*, describes a dying fire giving the sky "a dull orange glow." The Ford factory closed in 2005, taking down with it a network of suppliers. The two big steel mills are basically closed, and have not re-

opened despite President Trump's promises.

Lorain County has a slowly rising population of 310,000; in contrast to Beaver County, it has a significant non-white population (22 percent of the total). Overall, only 24 percent of adults have college degrees, but it is home to a famously liberal college, Oberlin. In 2016, Hillary Clinton beat Mr. Trump in Lorain County by 131 votes, 47.6 percent to 47.5 percent. This was down from a 15-point margin for Mr. Obama in 2012.

had moved north from Michoacán State to work in a steel mill. "I believe in what unions can give people," he told me. "That's benefits and fair pay, and training for a trade."

Mr. Ceja opposes Mr. Trump, but immigrants and other Latinos come in all political stripes. David Arredondo is vice chair of the Lorain County Republican Party, and his brother Joel is president of



Lorain, Ohio: Raoul Ceja was born to Mexican parents in Lorain in 1935. "I believe in what unions can give people," he said.

As industry spread west across Ohio, the Catholic Church came along, keeping communities together as they staffed the factories that made steel and manufactured consumer goods for the country and world. In the city of Lorain, even the priests seem to be made of steel. The Rev. John Retar worked as a purchasing manager for a steel company for 12 years before discerning a vocation and going to seminary. He said his parishioners are mostly Democrats "because they're proud, blue-collar, working-class people."

He invited Raoul Ceja to our meeting. The 84-year-old was born to Mexican parents in Lorain in 1935. His dad

**Wednesday:
'When you factor in
poverty, you get a climate
of fear: fear of immigrants
and the other.'**

Thursday: 'Obama was so loved, and that pissed off people who elected Trump.'

the city council—as a Democrat. The two are from a family of Mexican immigrants, and both started as Democrats. In 1972, David was a delegate for George McGovern at the Democratic National Convention; now he's a Trump booster.

"The Democratic Party left me when they abandoned my values, Catholic values," he said. "My dad came here as an immigrant, and my values are hard work and self-reliance, and the Democrats lost me when they started promising free stuff." The two brothers talk about politics, but without fighting. "Family is the most important thing," David told me.

On the phone, David said he supported Mr. Trump's handling of the crisis "because he's relying on experts and medical professionals, and these decisions are coming from them."

Many immigrants do not engage in politics when they first move here, said Victor Leandry, the executive director of El Centro—a Lorain nonprofit that, among other things, educates Puerto Rican and Mexican immigrants about the U.S. political system. "People are worried about practical things, like getting a job and paying their rent."

What's incredible about the United States, Mr. Leandry told me, is its diversity. "You can drive south from here and leave a Puerto Rican community, and then drive through Trump country, and then Oberlin [College], which is incredibly liberal, and then get to Amish country, all in less than an hour. You don't get that in Puerto Rico."

It was Super Tuesday, so I decided to watch primary results with those famously liberal students at Oberlin College. At a campus bar known as the 'Sco, the primary results were coming in on a big screen, and the crowd favorite, Mr. Sanders, was losing. I approached a gathering of students. Would anybody be willing to talk to me? They all pointed at 20-year-old Dan Kennedy. "I'm not sure I'm in a good head space," he said, but he agreed to talk, along with another politically engaged student, 19-year-old De-

lia Waltz.

Both were Sanders supporters, worried about the climate crisis and eager for student loan forgiveness and universal health care. But both said they would support Mr. Biden in November.

I asked a leading question: "Isn't Biden channeling this craving Americans have to return to normalcy, the rule of law?"

"How old are you?" Mr. Kennedy asked.

I answered truthfully: 42.

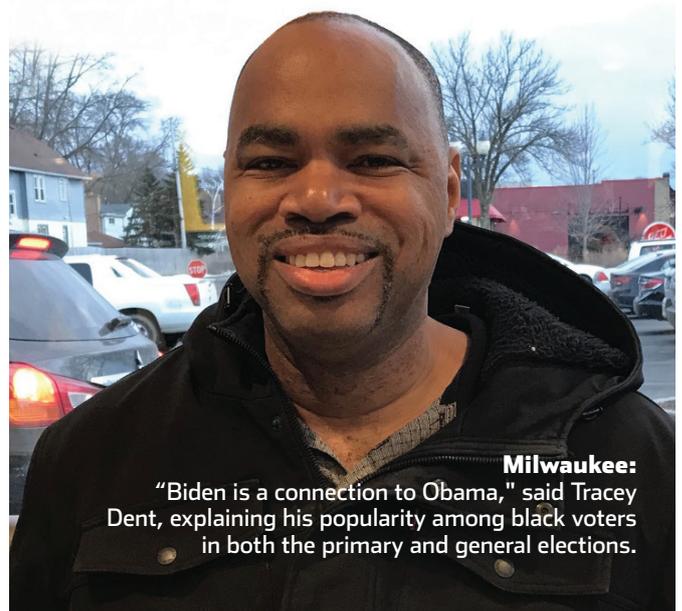
"O.K., so this is a generational thing," he said. "We don't understand this idea of reforming institutions, of going back to something, because institutions have always failed us. They let 9/11 happen. And the Iraq War. And the climate crisis. And the financial crisis. And the guns."

The coronavirus, Ms. Waltz told me later on the phone, "just shows how right Sanders has been in demanding universal health care." She still planned to vote for Mr. Biden, but she committed only to volunteering for candidates for local offices.

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Wednesday: Macomb County (suburban Detroit) Fighting for America's Future

This is not the first time America has felt under siege. In



Milwaukee:

"Biden is a connection to Obama," said Tracey Dent, explaining his popularity among black voters in both the primary and general elections.



Macomb Township, Mich.:

St. Isadore Church is divided over politics, said Debbie Rak, the parish office manager. “So we’ve learned not to talk about it too much.”

the 1960s, Detroit and other cities experienced violence related to racial segregation and discrimination. One consequence was that white inhabitants fled to places like Macomb County. North of the city, it is now a sprawling, flat area of 840,000. Still growing, it is 79 percent white, and 25 percent of adults are college graduates—a sharp contrast to the 46 percent in next-door suburban Oakland County, which has been trending Democratic in the past couple of decades.

Macomb County was once heavily Democratic (John F. Kennedy got 63 percent here in 1960), but it took a turn to the right in 2016. Mr. Trump won the county by 12 points, after Mr. Obama won it by four points in 2012 and by nine points in 2008.

Much of that swing came from Catholic voters. At St. Isidore Church, in Macomb Township, the congregation leans politically conservative. Mark George, a Jesuit priest who worked at the church in 2018 and 2019, said he was frustrated by parishioners conflating support for Mr. Trump with their Catholicism. He was criticized, he said, for preaching against wearing the Trump campaign’s “Make America Great Again” cap at anti-abortion rallies. “I don’t think Trump is really pro-life” because his views on immigration, the environment and foreign policy “show a callous disregard for life,” said Father George, who added that he has prayed in front of abortion clinics.

He said that church members fought over whether it

was appropriate to display little white crosses at the intersection outside the church in memory of victims of abortion. “That just brings shame to women who have had abortions,” he said. “Don’t we want to help them?”

So where is the middle ground, I asked Father George. “It’s hard to see right now,” he said. In addition to abortion, he said, some in the congregation have fought over immigration, gay marriage and the #MeToo movement.

The parish is divided over politics, agreed the parish office manager, Debbie Rak. “So we’ve learned not to talk about it too much.” She asked me not to reveal her own political views.

I didn’t like the fear I felt from Ms. Rak and other U.S. Catholics about speaking their minds. We’ve gotten so much worse at civil dialogue.

But I got some hope back a few miles from St. Isidore, taking a walk around a middle-class, tree-lined residential neighborhood with the 23-year-old activist Lauren Schandavel. She is an organizer for We the People, a Michigan nonprofit that, among other things, organizes town halls, workshops, interracial and intercultural meetings, and educational events for lower-income communities in Michigan.

“Around here, it’s a car culture, so there’s no shared public spaces, and people don’t know their neighbors,” she said. “When you factor in poverty, you get a climate of fear: fear of immigrants and the other. We’re trying to fight that.”

Friday: 'As long as we have the First Amendment, I'm going to keep speaking out.'



Talking on the phone later, Ms. Schandevell said she has been meeting online and trying to figure out how to “care for the community remotely and safely. The pandemic makes that work much harder.”

Ms. Schandevell is a Sanders supporter but said she would support Mr. Biden in November if he is the nominee. “I have a vote,” she said. “I want it to count.” In community organizing, she added, “we try not to tie our fortune to one election or one politician; the work has to go on.”

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Thursday: Milwaukee, Wis.

Black America's Support for Joe Biden

Driving across Michigan in a long evening, I reached Milwaukee, a city of 595,000 with zero population growth at the heart of one of the most unequal and racially divided metropolitan areas in the United States. The city itself is 39 percent black and firmly Democratic (77 percent for Ms. Clinton in 2016), in contrast to the whiter, Republican-dominated communities of southern Milwaukee County and to the surrounding suburban counties.

In 2016, according to one study, turnout among black voters in Wisconsin fell to 54 percent (from 74 percent in 2012). And in Milwaukee, 93,000 African-Americans did not vote, according to a data analyst who worked for the Obama campaign in 2008 and 2012. The lower vote total in Milwaukee County, combined with a big swing toward the

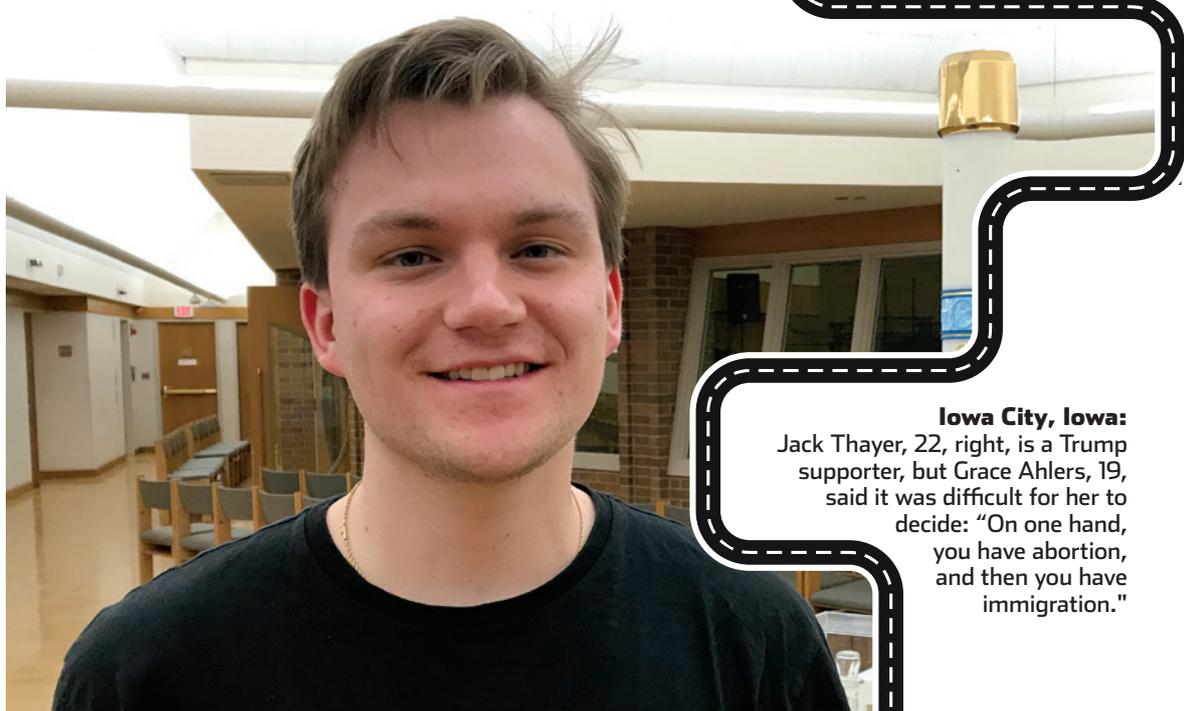
Republicans in rural Wisconsin, allowed Mr. Trump to win the state by 23,000 out of a total vote of 2.98 million.

Giving me a tour in a city pick-up truck, Mr. Marcoux, the city's commissioner for city development, pointed out new mixed-income housing, along with sports facilities for the Bucks and Brewers and the headquarters for Molson-Coors and Harley-Davidson. The effects of racial discrimination persist in the city, which is, at this writing, still scheduled to host the Democratic National Convention in July.

A couple of weeks later, we were on the phone talking about the pandemic. “We need some immediate economic relief in people's hands,” said Mr. Marcoux, echoing a national consensus.

Even before the pandemic, in the African-American community here, as Matthew Desmond documented in his Pulitzer Prize-winning book *Evicted*, it was hard to keep hope alive. “We're burned out,” said Tracey Dent, an activist I met at a McDonald's in a black neighborhood. “This is one of the hardest places to be a black person in, and it's gotten worse under Trump.” Mr. Dent works two jobs, including one at night as a security guard.

Mr. Dent said he and others in his neighborhood are supporting Mr. Biden. “Obama was so loved, and that pissed off people who elected Trump,” he said. Referring to the former vice president's strong support among black voters in his primary campaign against Mr. Sanders, he added, “Biden is a connection to Obama, and a lot of black people lean more conservative.”



Iowa City, Iowa: Jack Thayer, 22, right, is a Trump supporter, but Grace Ahlers, 19, said it was difficult for her to decide: “On one hand, you have abortion, and then you have immigration.”

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Friday: Iowa City, Iowa Still Believing in America

Iowa, the heart of the Midwest, is a unique place in American politics: a movie set, where prospective presidents come to play-act the part for a few months before the first contest of the presidential campaign, and see if they have what it takes.

“We’re spoiled,” said Meghann Forster, a city councilwoman in Coralville and a lecturer at the University of Iowa on social media and content marketing. “My kids have met all the people they see on TV.”

Iowa City, the seat of Johnson County, is a highly educated Democratic stronghold in an increasingly Republican state. In 2016, Ms. Clinton won Johnson County with 65 percent, only a tad below the 67 percent win by Mr. Obama in 2012. But Mr. Trump made significant gains almost everywhere else in the state; outside of North Dakota, this was the biggest swing in the United States, going from a six-point Democratic win to a nine-point Republican win.

At the Cardinal Newman center in downtown Iowa City, which ministers to Catholic students, I found a few discussing Dorothy Day’s *The Long Loneliness*. “Did you know she was a socialist?” asked 22-year-old Jack Thayer. He is young, conservative and a Trump supporter. He supports helping the poor, “but it should be freely given,” he said. “The government shouldn’t be able to take any-

thing away from you.”

Many Catholic voters here are wrestling with their choice. Grace Ahlers, 19, said it was difficult for her to decide. “On one hand, you have abortion, and then you have immigration,” she said, explaining that few Catholic politicians embrace all of the church’s teaching in their positions.

But the United States, a pluralistic nation, has always demanded finding common ground despite differences. Mazahir Salih, a Sudanese Muslim immigrant who this year became mayor pro-tem of Iowa City, considers Catholics natural political allies. “We share values,” she said. When she became a citizen in 2004, she said. “I had to promise to defend America, and they said everything else I could keep: my religion, my culture, my food.”

Ms. Salih called herself a patriot. “My first loyalty is to the Constitution, not to a person,” she said. “As long as we have the First Amendment, I’m going to keep speaking out.”

A few hours later, I flew back to Pittsburgh. As the coronavirus upended the country with a war-like challenge the following week, I kept thinking about Ms. Salih’s words. They sounded like a cure for something.

John W. Miller is a Pittsburgh-based writer and former staff reporter and foreign correspondent for *The Wall Street Journal*.



Christianity in a time of sickness

By Tomáš Halík

Our world is sick.

I am not just referring to the coronavirus pandemic, but to the state of our civilization, as revealed in this global phenomenon. In biblical terms, this all-pervasive sickness is a sign of the times.

At the beginning of this unusual period of Lent, many of us thought that this epidemic would cause a sort of short-term blackout, a breakdown in the usual operation of society, one that we would ride out somehow, and then soon things would all return to the way they were. But as time passes, the reality has become clearer: They will not. And it would not turn out well if we tried to make it so. After this global experience, the world will not be the same as it was before, and it probably should not be.

It is natural at times of major calamities that we first concern ourselves with the material necessities for survival, but “one does not live by bread alone.” The time has come to examine the deeper implications of this blow to the security of our world. The unavoidable process of globalization would seem to have peaked. The global vulnerability of a global world is now plain to see.

What kind of challenge does this situation represent for Christianity and the church—one of the first “global players”—and for theology?

The church should be a “field hospital,” as proposed by Pope Francis. The church should not remain in splendid isolation from the world but should break free of its boundaries and give help where people are physically, mentally, socially



A modern-day field hospital. Pope Francis has used the field hospital metaphor for his vision of a more vibrant and caring church.

and spiritually afflicted. This is how the church can do penance for the wounds inflicted by its representatives quite recently on the most defenseless. But let us try to think more deeply about this metaphor—and put it into practice.

If the church is to be a hospital, it must, of course, offer the health, social and charitable care it has offered since the dawn of its history. But the church must also fulfill other tasks. It has a diagnostic role to play (identifying the “signs of the times”), a preventive role (creating an “immune system” in a society in which the malignant viruses of fear, hatred, populism and nationalism are rife) and a convalescent role (overcoming the traumas of the past through forgiveness).

Before Easter last year, Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris burned down. This year in Lent there are no services in

hundreds of thousands of churches on several continents, nor in synagogues and mosques. As a priest and a theologian I reflect on those empty or closed churches as a sign and challenge from God.

Understanding the language of God in the events of our world requires the art of spiritual discernment, which in turn calls for contemplative detachment from our heightened emotions and our prejudices, as well as from the projections of our fears and desires. At moments of disaster, images of a wicked, vengeful God spread fear. Such images of God have been grist for the mill of atheism for centuries.

At a time of disasters I do not see God as an ill-tempered director, sitting comfortably backstage as the events of our world play out. Instead, I look on God as a source



After this global experience, the world won't be the same, and it probably should not be.



An empty St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican on March 12, 2020. Pope Francis told people watching his morning Mass that day that such restrictions were for "our own good."

of strength, operating in those who show solidarity and self-sacrificing love in such situations (yes, including those who have no "religious motivation" for their action). God is humble and discreet love.

But I cannot help wonder whether the time of empty and closed churches is not some kind of cautionary vision of what might happen in the fairly near future. This is what it could look like in a few years in a large part of our world. We have had plenty of warning from developments in many countries, where more and more churches, monasteries and priestly seminaries have been emptying and closing. Why have we been ascribing this development for so long to outside influences (the "secularist tsunami"), instead of realizing that another chapter in the history of Christianity is coming to a close, and it is time to prepare for a new one?

Maybe this time of empty church buildings symbolically exposes the churches' hidden emptiness and their possible future unless they make a serious attempt to show the world a completely different face of Christianity. We have thought too much about converting the world and less about converting ourselves: not simply improvement but a radical change from a static "being Christians" to a dynamic "becoming Christians."

When the medieval church made excessive use of the interdict as a penalty, and those "general strikes" by the entire ecclesiastical machinery meant that church services were not held and sacraments were not administered, people started increasingly to seek a personal relationship with God. Lay fraternities and mysticism proliferated. That upsurge of mysticism definitely helped pave the way for the Reformation—not only Martin Luther's and John Calvin's

but also the Catholic reformation connected with the Jesuits and Spanish mysticism. Maybe discovery of contemplation could help complement the "synodal path" to a new reforming council.

A Call for Reform

Maybe we should accept the present abstinence from religious services and the operation of the church as *kairos*, as an opportunity to stop and engage in thorough reflection before God and with God. I am convinced the time has come to reflect on how to continue the path of reform, which Pope Francis says is necessary: not attempts to return to a world that no longer exists, or reliance just on external structural reforms, but instead a shift toward the heart of the Gospel, "a journey into the depths."

Did we really think that we could solve the lack of priests in much of Europe and elsewhere by importing others from Poland, Asia and Africa? Of course we must take seriously the proposals of the Synod on the Amazon, but we need at the same time to provide greater scope for the ministry of laypeople in the church. Let us not forget that in many territories the church survived without clergy for entire centuries.

Maybe this "state of emergency" is an indicator of the new face of the church, for which there is a historical precedent. I am convinced that our Christian communities, parishes, congregations, church movements and monastic communities should seek to draw closer to the ideal that gave rise to the European universities: a community of pupils and teachers, a school of wisdom, in which truth is sought through free disputation and also profound contemplation. Such islands of spirituality and dialogue could be the source of a healing force for a sick world. The day before his papal election, Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio quoted a passage from the Book of Revelation in which Jesus stands before the door and knocks. He added: "Today Christ is knocking from inside the church and wants to get out."

For years I have pondered a well-known text of Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Madman," whose titular character—the fool who alone is permitted to speak the truth—proclaims "the death of God." That chapter ends with the madman coming to church to sing "*Requiem aeternam deo*" and asking: "What after all are these churches now if they are not the tombs and sepulchres of God?" I must admit



that for a long time various forms of the church seemed to me like cold and opulent sepulchres of a dead god.

It looks as if many of our churches will be empty at Easter this year. We will read the Gospel passages about the empty tomb somewhere else. If the emptiness of the churches is reminiscent of the empty tomb, let us not ignore the voice from above: “He is not here. He has risen. He has gone ahead of you to Galilee.”

A question to stimulate meditation for this strange Easter: Where is the Galilee of today, where we can encounter the living Christ?

Sociological research indicates that in the world the number of believers (both those who fully identify with the traditional form of religion, and those who assert a dogmatic atheism) is falling, while there is an increase in the number of seekers. In addition, of course, there is a rise in the number of “apatheists,” people who could not care less about religious issues or the traditional response to them.

The main dividing line is no longer between those who consider themselves believers and those who consider themselves nonbelievers. There are seekers among believers (those for whom faith is not a legacy, but a way) and among nonbelievers, who reject the religious notions put forward to them by those around them but nevertheless have a yearning for something to satisfy their thirst for meaning.

I am convinced that the “Galilee of today,” where we must seek God, who has survived death, is the world of the seekers.

Seeking Christ Among Seekers

Liberation theology taught us to seek Christ among people on the fringes of society. But it is also necessary to seek him among people marginalized within the church. If we want to connect with them as Jesus’ disciples, there are many things we must first abandon.

We must abandon many of our former notions about Christ. The resurrected one is radically transformed by the experience of death. As we read in the Gospels, even his nearest and dearest did not recognize him. We do not have to accept at all the news that surrounds us. We can persist in wanting to touch his wounds. Besides, where else will we be sure to encounter them than in the wounds of the world and the wounds of the church, in the wounds of the body that he took on himself?

We must abandon our proselytizing aims. We are not entering the world of the seekers to convert them as quickly as possible and squeeze them into the existing institutional and mental confines of our churches. Jesus also did not try to squeeze those “lost sheep of the house of Israel” back into the structures of the Judaism of his day. He knew that new wine must be poured into new wineskins.

We need to take new and old things from the treasure house of tradition that we have been entrusted with, and



We have thought too much about converting the world and less about converting ourselves.

make them part of a dialogue with seekers, a dialogue in which we can and should learn from each other. We must learn to broaden radically the boundaries of our understanding of the church. It is no longer enough for us to magnanimously open a “court of the gentiles.” The Lord has already knocked from within and come out, and it is our job to seek him and follow him. Christ has passed through the door that we had locked out of fear of others. He has passed through the wall with which we surrounded ourselves. He has opened up a space whose breadth and depth has made us dizzy.

On the very threshold of its history, the early church of Jews and pagans experienced the destruction of the temple in which Jesus prayed and taught his disciples. The Jews of those days found a courageous and creative solution. They replaced the altar of the demolished temple with the Jewish family table, and the practice of sacrifice with the practice of private and communal prayer. They replaced burnt offerings and blood sacrifices with reflection, praise and study of Scripture. Around the same time, early Christianity, banished from the synagogue, sought a new identity of its own. On the ruins of traditions, Jews and Christians learned anew to read the law and the prophets and interpret them afresh. Are we not in a similar situation in our days?

God in All Things

When Rome fell on the threshold of the fifth century, there were instant explanations from many quarters. The pagans saw it as punishment of the gods for the adoption of Christianity, while many Christians saw it as God’s punishment on Rome. St. Augustine rejected both those interpretations. At that watershed moment, he developed

his theology of the age-old battle between two opposing cities, not of Christians and pagans, but of two loves dwelling in the human heart: the love of self, closed to transcendence (*amor sui usque ad contemptum Dei*) and love that gives of itself and thereby finds God (*amor Dei usque ad contemptum sui*). Our time of civilizational change calls for a new theology of contemporary history and a new understanding of the church.

“We know where the church is, but we don’t know where she isn’t,” the Orthodox theologian Paul Evdokimov taught. Maybe what the last council said about catholicity and ecumenism needs to acquire a deeper content. It is time for a broader and deeper ecumenism, for a bolder search for God in all things.

We can, of course, accept this Lent of empty and silent churches as little more than a brief, temporary measure soon to be forgotten. But we can also embrace it as an opportune moment to seek a new identity for Christianity in a world that is being radically transformed before our eyes. The current pandemic is certainly not the only global threat facing our world now and in the future.

Let us embrace the approaching Eastertide as a challenge to seek Christ anew. Let us not seek the living among the dead. Let us seek him boldly and tenaciously, and let us not be taken aback if he appears to us as a foreigner. We will recognize him by his wounds, by his voice when he speaks to us intimately, by the Spirit that brings peace and banishes fear.

Tomáš Halík is a professor of sociology at Charles University, Prague, president of the Czech Christian Academy and a university chaplain. During the Communist regime he was active in the underground church. He is a Templeton Prize laureate and holds an honorary doctorate from Oxford University.

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Christian Seders?

How we can honor the meaning of the Jewish Passover

By Jon M. Sweeney

I am a Catholic who is married to a Jewish woman. Both complicating and enriching things, my wife is also a rabbi.

Last year, our synagogue co-hosted a Passover Seder with and for the people of St. Mark A.M.E. church in Milwaukee, where we live. We met in the fellowship hall of their church, which looked like every other church basement I have ever seen: windowless, with fluorescent lights, metal folding chairs and a busy kitchen smelling of food both new and familiar. Both congregations cooked that day: Some prepared for the ritual parts of the meal; others made dishes to go alongside. We started out standing together in prayer, led by my wife and the female pastor of the A.M.E. church, who has become our good friend. Then we sat on the folding chairs, deliberately mixing the congregations so as to allow attendees to meet new people. We were African-American Christians, Jews and one Catholic.

The Seder is a meal, and you are supposed to take your time at it. We did. We talked about slavery, exodus, redemption and liberation from both the Jewish and African-American Christian experience. Both communities have a painful history of experiencing these biblical ideas firsthand. In Milwaukee, we live with a terrible history of segregation, discrimination and racial conflict. I think we used our Seder well; people spoke freely and honestly but still allowed sensitivity and tact to rule the evening.

I would like to see every community have such a rich experience around a Passover Seder. But I still have cautions to raise.

I was recently talking with a Christian professor who teaches world religions to undergraduates at a large university. He told me most of his students think Jewish practices today are just like what they have read about in the Old Tes-

tament in Sunday school. “They assume animal sacrifices are still going on,” he said, and he was serious. “That’s why they think Jews and synagogues are scary.” I am frightened by how little we seem to know about each other.

At times, this ignorance can lead Christians to see a deep gulf between followers of Jesus and our Jewish brothers and sisters. The familiar proper nouns “Old Testament” and “New Testament” can lead Christians into bad theology, and they tell each other that the “old” has been replaced by the “new.” This has not been the teaching in the Catholic Church, at least since the Second Vatican Council.

But when it comes to Christians having Passover Seders, problems can arise from finding *too little* difference between the faiths. This problem has plagued and followed us since the fourth century, when the Emperor Constantine made Christianity legal in the Roman Empire. Since then, in most parts of the world, there has been a sense—at the risk of putting it crudely—that “we” won. So we are in a position to pick and choose those bits and pieces from other religious traditions that appeal to us, as if they are ours to plunder. It is not always “plundering”; sometimes we do this out of deep appreciation and a desire to learn. But we have to be respectful. As Christians have become more familiar and neighborly with people of other religious traditions, we have extended that familiarity to appreciation, and sometimes appreciation becomes appropriation.

This happens, for example, when we decide that a Native American ritual would work nicely inside a Christian ritual or when we add a practice from Buddhism into our Christian prayer life. These appropriations are usually harmless to the other religious traditions but not always so. Sometimes it can feel as if something precious has been stolen.

As Christians have become more familiar and neighborly with people of other religious traditions, we have extended that familiarity to appreciation, and sometimes appreciation becomes appropriation.

I remember asking a rabbi friend 20 years ago why he was troubled by Christians performing Passover Seders in their homes. Isn't it an opportunity for Christians to come to understand better the Jewish roots of their faith? He responded: "It has to be done with sensitivity and a sense of proper boundaries. Otherwise, it's offensive. How would you feel if I decided the Catholic Mass was lovely, and I started incorporating a bit of consecrated host into my Kabbalat Shabbat services? If you take 'just a bit' of my Jewish practice and incorporate it as your own, it's like me taking a nibble of the host." He was overstating to make his point, but it worked. Since then, I have sought to be scrupulous when adopting or observing religious practices from traditions not my own.

Christians will sometimes host Passover Seders in homes or churches. In most cases, this does not mean that they are observing the eight days of Passover along with their Jewish friends and neighbors. Rather, Christians usually put on a Seder out of a desire to recall, mark or celebrate the Jewish origins of Christian faith.

The evening of Maundy Thursday—the day before Good Friday—is the most common day and time for Christians to host a Seder. This is because there is widespread belief that the Last Supper, which took place on the evening before Jesus was crucified, was a Seder meal. The Gospels say that Jesus was in Jerusalem for Passover.

Sometimes a local rabbi will be invited to lead the Seder, and in such cases, my concerns of misappropriation are calmed. The rabbi will know what to do. But when there is not a rabbi or an experienced Jewish leader for the Seder,

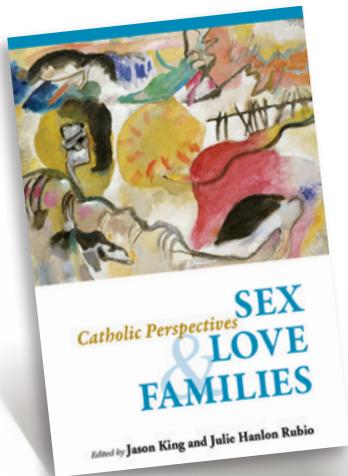
then the Christians who are doing this Jewish ceremony need to approach this Jewish tradition with understanding and nuance.

First, we should not appropriate the symbols and texts to Christian uses. For example, some Christians want to say that the matzo (unleavened bread) that is central and symbolic in a Jewish Seder is representative of Jesus' body. The Gospel of John suggests this, when Jn 1:29 refers to Jesus as the "Lamb of God." But this is to radically change the meaning of the matzo as understood in a Seder. If you are hosting or participating in a Seder, you should do so by honoring the order and meaning of this ritual meal that is not yours. Drawing parallels is acceptable; go ahead and talk about the Christian ways of understanding unleavened bread, including how Christians use unleavened bread sacramentally. But do not simply re-appropriate the Jewish symbol and texts.

The same goes for the wine that is part of a traditional Seder. Four cups of wine are drunk to remember different teachings of the Seder. Christians might want to say that the wine represents the blood of Christ on the cross. But it doesn't. At least it does not in the context of a Jewish Seder. Again, discussing parallels is fine, but Christians should not simply "take over" the symbolism and change it. Allow yourself to learn about a Seder in the context of the original Passover story in Judaism.

This, as in all things, should be guided by the witness and teaching of Jesus. How would you like it if someone took some bits of your religious tradition and turned them into something else? Remember Luke 10. Jesus asks a lawyer: "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" The lawyer replies with excellent Torah: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." Yes, Jesus says. "Do this, and you will live."

Jon M. Sweeney is the author of many books, including *James Martin, SJ: In the Company of Jesus*, and the compiler and author of *Jesus Wasn't Killed by the Jews: Reflections for Christians in Lent*, just published, with an afterword by Amy-Jill Levine.

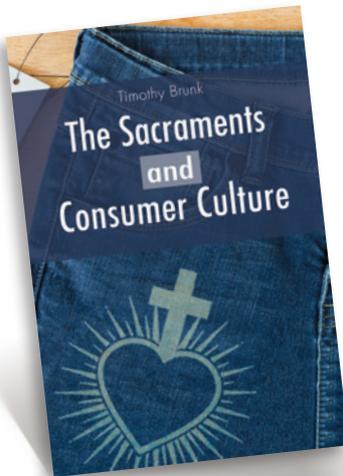


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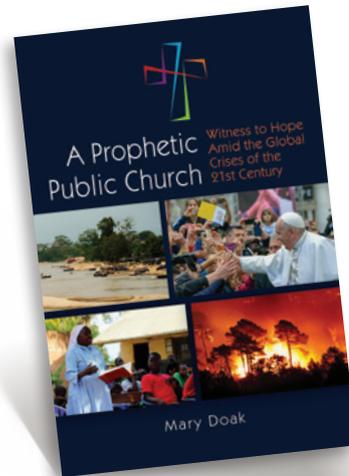
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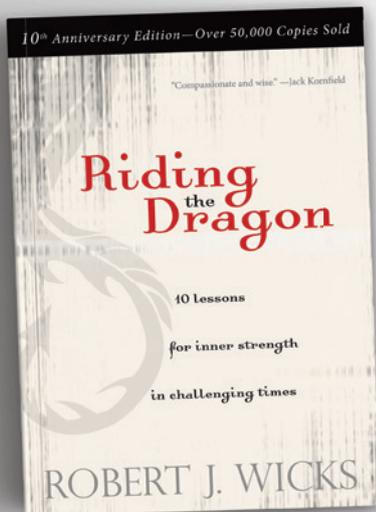
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By Simcha Fisher

A BELL TO RING

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Kalianthi Karipidu, 89, poses for a photo at the windows of her home in central Rome on March 11, 2020.



THE GOOD AND BEAUTIFUL THINGS I'VE SEEN AMID THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Some people are hoarding hand sanitizer in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Some people are making wills, and some people are slowly retreating into nail-gnawing panic. My husband went and found a handbell.

This is because the new coronavirus, along with all its deprivations and terrors, has given my family something rare and wonderful: Everyone is home together at noon every day. That means we can say the Angelus. And if you are going to say the Angelus, you need a nice, loud bell to ring—especially when you have college kids home who think of noon as early morning.

I am not trying to make light of the pandemic. I spent part of my morning tumbling into a spiral of fear, telling myself a bleak story about my family's wonky immune systems and the shortage of hospital beds. I have two elderly parents with underlying health conditions and friends whose livelihoods and mental health are in serious peril. Maybe worst of all, I see people saying you are only afraid if you lack faith in God. As if Jesus himself never felt fear when there was reason to fear.

God bless my husband, he went and found a bell to ring. Sometimes we have to halt what we are doing and forcibly remind ourselves that isolation does not have to mean we



Sometimes we have to halt what we are doing and forcibly remind ourselves that isolation does not have to mean we are forsaken.



are forsaken. When we say the Angelus, we remember that God did not abandon mankind. He sent an angel to Mary, and Mary gave a savior to us. So we are making an intentional effort to keep sight of that, when it is so easy to slide into terror and distress. We are not abandoned.

Let me share a few things that brought me up short in the last few days and reminded me how much good there is in the world.

People are helping each other. At-home parents are taking in the kids of working parents; people are dropping off casseroles on the porches of neighbors under quarantine; food trucks and restaurants are delivering free food to kids locked out of school lunch programs. People are using social media to make matches between those who can get around and those who cannot, so no one is abandoned. Many power and water companies are suspending shut-off notices; landlords are forbearing on collecting rent while their tenants scrape by without wages; apartment houses are offering free lodging to students left stranded when their universities abruptly closed; some internet providers are offering free service so everyone can stay connected; basketball players are donating portions of the salary to pay the wages of arena workers whose work has been halted; people are scouting out hard-to-find foods for friends with restrictive diets. I have even seen private citizens offer to help pay the rent for strangers simply because there is a need.



Medical staffers perform house calls in Bergamo, Italy, one of the areas worse affected by the coronavirus, on March 25, 2020.

And people are offering less obvious kinds of aid to each other. Some are practical, as in Italy, where an overburdened hospital ran out of valves for its I.C.U. respirators, so a local company stepped up and brought a 3-D printer into the hospital, where they quickly designed and printed new valves and got people breathing again. Just like that.

And there are less practical, less concrete kinds of sharing going on, which nonetheless bring aid to desperate people. By now you must have seen the videos of numerous Italians leaning out their balcony windows, sending their hearts and voices into the outside air even as their bodies are confined to the home. I should not be surprised by how many Italians seem to have household tambourines, but I am still impressed. I found it especially endearing that one Italian neighborhood chose to sing “Volare” and, despite being Italian, they sounded terrible, just terrible! They were nice and loud, though. And do not miss the moment when the tenor belting out “Nessun Dorma” picks up his young child, who, with the honesty of childhood, promptly covers his ears.

I cannot remember the last time I saw so many people making music together, and it is good.

Sometimes what people have to offer is experience. One friend, who had to quarantine herself a few years ago when chemotherapy destroyed her immune system, reminded everyone that cozy clothes can be comfortable but can also drag us down, so it helps a lot to get dressed every



Claudio Furlan/LaPresse via AP

day. Other friends with chronic struggles with anxiety and depression are reminding each other that there is nothing shameful in being afraid. There is reason to fear. But getting moving and getting fresh air can help us take charge of our bodies' response to that fear.

Of course, Catholics are stepping forward with spiritual help. Priests around the country, trying to avoid the contagion that comes with crowds gathering, are hearing confessions outdoors in parking lots. St. Damien of Molokai could not find a priest who was brave enough to set foot on the leper colony there, so he had to stand on the shore and shout his sins to a priest sitting in a boat. But some of our priests will park themselves on a folding chair and all the penitent has to do is pull up between the orange pylons and roll down the window.

Possibly my favorite example of a priest stepping up is one Orthodox priest in Virginia who, mindful of his flock who could not make it to Divine Liturgy, did what so many priests and ministers are doing: He broadcast the service via Facebook Live. But he had never used the program before, and somehow a filter got turned on without his knowledge, which made him appear to have googly eyes.

I keep coming back to this and laughing my head off. Best of all, he chose one of the screenshots as a profile picture. Why this story, of all things, should restore my hope and sense of perspective, I cannot say. But that is

what happened.

The crisis is so overwhelming and so multifaceted there is no one who can solve it; but people are sharing whatever it is they do have.

Homeschoolers everywhere, who are fully used to having their kids at home all day, are sharing tips on how to homeschool temporarily—practical, real-life advice and encouragement for how to find some unexpected joys when you have to do your best while you don't really know what you are doing.

I could go on. There is so much good, so much generosity, so much kindness. So many people are giving what they have. It is a relief to receive food, child care, a little cash, a delivery of diapers. But it is good to know that people are still people, still willing to visit each other, still willing to bring hope, still willing to share what they have.

So let us go get a bell and ring it every day. Ring it for other people. Amplify the good you have and the good you know about. And ring it for yourself. The isolation will not last forever. There is so much good in the world. We have not been abandoned.

*Simcha Fisher is a speaker, freelance writer and author of The Sinner's Guide to Natural Family Planning. She blogs daily at simchafisher.com and weekly at *The Catholic Weekly*. She lives in New Hampshire with her husband and 10 children.*

Army Chaplains and the Epidemic

While World War I raged in Europe in January 1918, a pestilence almost as dangerous as the war itself broke out: the Spanish influenza. Over the next three years, a quarter of the world's population was infected, and the death toll was estimated at between 50 million and 100 million. All over the United States, emergency hospital camps were set up to care for victims, and many Catholic priests served as chaplains in these camps.

Dispatches from Europe are constantly heralding the courage and bravery of one or other priest. His distinguished conduct under fire has been such as to cause even the callous newspaper correspondent, accustomed as he is to chronicle extraordinary facts, to deem him worthy of a prominent place in the public print. It may be the brief account of some French abbe's exploit in which he showed such courage that the uncatholic French Government saw fit to confer on him its highest decorations. Or it may be the short, crisp recital of the award, by our own General Pershing, to some American priest, of the Distinguished Service medal for outstanding and conspicuous bravery. These messages, in which everybody delights, find a special welcome in Catholic hearts. We know that all our priests "over there" are doing their duty.

But the great epidemic of influenza is bringing to the army chaplains in our cantonments here [in the United States] the praise and honor that are their due. Shot and shell and gas bombs attract more attention than the hacking cough and the delirium and the hemorrhage of the influenza and pneumonia ward. But the priest who worked in the latter was just as much a hero as the one who labored amid the former. Both endangered their lives from a sense of duty, sanctified by love.

All the priests affected are now well and their weakness is only a reminder of the great things that they were able to do for God, for souls and for the Church. They are now cheered by the wonderful knowledge, gathered from

a comparison of their records with the record of death, that God in His providence so disposed the relays of priests that not a Catholic died without the reception of the Last Sacraments. A beautiful and consoling thought and a mighty compliment to the kind of work done by Christ's active and zealous ministers!

The foregoing recital of facts was made so that some practical and pertinent reflections and conclusions might be drawn from the data. First of all, a wonderful impression was created upon the doctors, nurses and orderlies and also on the Protestant patients by the splendid act of faith that showed clearly in the demand made by the hundreds of Catholic boys, white and colored.

The kindness of the priests towards the sick, their unselfish and untiring devotion to their duty and the wonderful spirit of faith displayed by the Catholic soldiers before and especially after the reception of the Sacraments produced very practical results among the non-Catholic soldiers, both white and colored. Twenty-five of them asked and received Baptism before their death. A number of them had never been baptized before. While others did not go so far as to receive the Sacraments from the Catholic priests, still they joyfully accepted his kind office in directing their dying thoughts towards Almighty God and their last end. Many a Protestant boy's eyes were closed in death by the Catholic priest after the soldier had made a fervent act of contrition aided by the shepherd of Christ. But, above all, a kinder feeling towards the Church and the Catholic

The great epidemic of influenza is bringing to the army chaplains in our cantonments here the praise and honor that are their due. ♡♡

priest sprang up in the hearts of all these soldier boys, whether Protestant or Mormon or Jewish, because of the almost Divine service of love rendered by the ambassadors of Christ in this time of sorrow and pain and suffering.

Greater, because more intelligent, was the impression made upon the doctors and nurses by the presence and work of the Catholic chaplains. A new impression had been made upon them by the insistent demand of the seriously ill soldiers for the priest. They had attended Catholic patients before. But this was something different; it was the individual Catholic sickroom magnified hundreds of times, and everybody was witness to a magnificent act of faith voiced by thousands of Catholics who loved their Faith. These men and women could not ignore nor forget what they saw and heard. They thought about the phenomenon and talked on it. Finally, the thought found its expression of wonderment: "What a wonderful faith to possess."

Unmindful of rest and food, the two things most needed in avoiding the dread influenza, the priests worked among the sick. They seemed unmindful of danger too. The doctors thought them foolish and some of them told this to the priests in a kindly way. But they admired them too at the same time. They could not understand how the chaplains could be so forgetful of their health. They seemed to forget that the number of priests was only two, while the doctors' grand total was 150. They

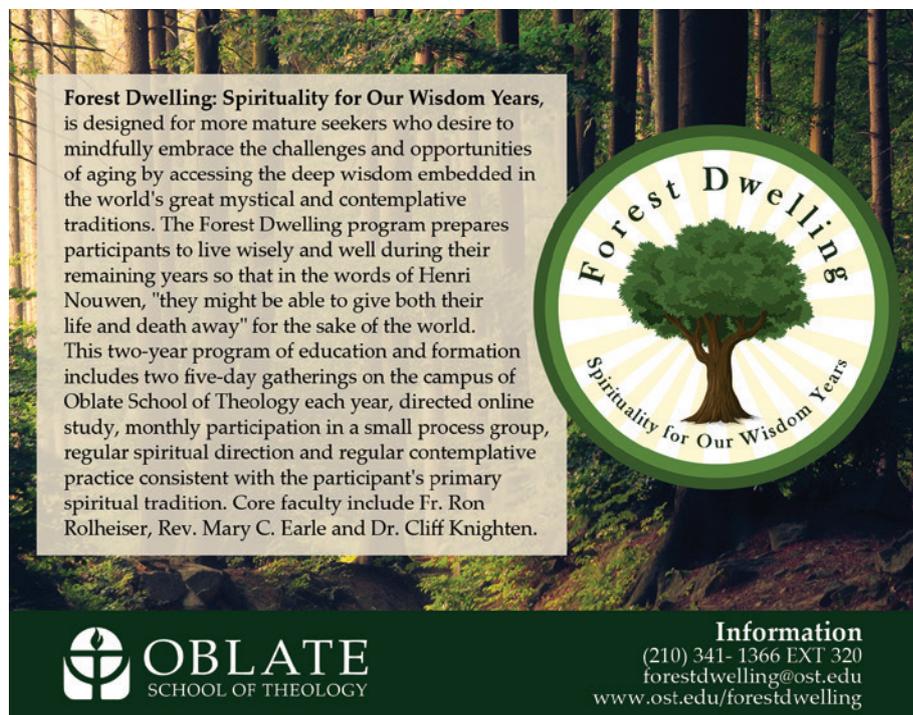
did not realize that, while they worked hard from a sense of duty, the priests labored out of pure love of Christ and the salvation of souls. It was the difference between labor from a sense of duty and labor from a spirit of love, and there is a very great difference.

The doctors admired the priests not only because they saw them assist the dying to die well, but also because they came to realize the material help that was given them in bringing back their patients to health. The bright, happy smile of these ministers of Christ in the midst of so much pain and suffering, the pleasant morning salutation, and the cheery word that raised the patients from the depression into which their extreme weak-

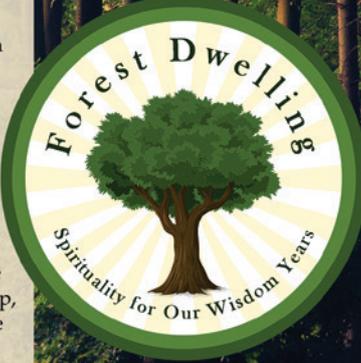
ness had thrown them, came to be recognized as a tonic far exceeding any material medicine.

The doctors were glad to see these dispensers of the mysteries of God come into their wards. They were always so happy, so consistently cheerful that they spread sunshine and gave an impetus towards recovery wherever they went. The doctors admired, wondered, they could not understand. But what priest would not be happy and cheerful, even though tired and famished, when he was saving souls for Christ in such abundance!

Bernard J. McNamara was a frequent contributor to *America* in the 1910s and 1920s.



Forest Dwelling: Spirituality for Our Wisdom Years, is designed for more mature seekers who desire to mindfully embrace the challenges and opportunities of aging by accessing the deep wisdom embedded in the world's great mystical and contemplative traditions. The Forest Dwelling program prepares participants to live wisely and well during their remaining years so that in the words of Henri Nouwen, "they might be able to give both their life and death away" for the sake of the world. This two-year program of education and formation includes two five-day gatherings on the campus of Oblate School of Theology each year, directed online study, monthly participation in a small process group, regular spiritual direction and regular contemplative practice consistent with the participant's primary spiritual tradition. Core faculty include Fr. Ron Rolheiser, Rev. Mary C. Earle and Dr. Cliff Knighten.



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What We Lost at Notre-Dame de Paris

By Jason M. Baxter

Before the Cathedral of Notre-Dame de Paris caught fire last April, it had the dubious distinction of being the most visited monument in the world. Five million people a year visit the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. Five million people a year visit the Colosseum in Rome. Four million go to the Statue of Liberty, and three million visit the pyramids of Giza in Egypt. But 12 million were visiting Notre-Dame.

I say dubious distinction because one gets the impression that not many of the people who visited actually knew what they were looking at. The cathedral had become a celebrity, famous for being famous. If you have been to Paris and have seen

Notre-Dame, then ask yourself this question: What is the chief feeling that you experienced upon visiting it? My guess is that you experienced its “oldness,” its antiquity or, somewhat vaguely, the aura of its “fame.” That is, you felt this strange sensation of being in the presence of something you knew you were supposed to admire, even if you couldn’t put your finger on what it was you were supposed to pay attention to.

This explains much of the global reaction to the burning of Notre-Dame: We felt weirdly helpless because we knew that something irrecoverably beautiful was being lost, but we were not exactly sure what we were losing.

Shortly after the fire, President

Emmanuel Macron of France not only promised to rebuild the cathedral within five years. He added, provocatively, that the French would make it “better”; that is, they would make a “contemporary architectural statement.” And this, of course, has triggered massive debate. The French Senate rejected the idea, while the National Assembly, controlled by Macron’s party, supported it.

One architectural firm proposes to turn the roof of Notre-Dame into a greenhouse, updating the monument and bringing it into the green age. Others propose to rebuild the tower virtually, with a beam of light technologically soaring into the heavens to fulfill the dream of the Gothic builders. Others, I think more cynically, realize



Before the Cathedral of Notre-Dame de Paris caught fire last April, 12 million people were visiting it every year.

that the cathedral is just a popular place for tourists to come and so propose to turn the roof into a swimming pool. Other proposals suggest a roof of stained glass or a contemporary sculpture. And then there are those—polls show that the majority of the French favor this—who propose to replace the roof and spire to be as close as possible to what was built in the 19th century by the imaginative architect and restorer Eugène Viollet-le-Duc.

These various architectural solutions have provided an opportunity for a conversation about the original meaning of the building, a question, I think, we now realize we had forgotten to ask: What did Notre-Dame mean? What did it feel like to step into it in the Middle Ages? And ought we to build it back new in some way, so that it is not just a dead monument?

Mute Stones Speak

In the midst of all of these questions, the work of the late Catholic Belgian scholar Andrew Tallon has become newly relevant. Tallon died a few years ago at 39, but before his death from brain cancer he created a laser-scanned map of Notre-Dame, accurate down to five millimeters. He used digital lasers and sensors, which emitted hundreds of thousands of signals per second, to create a data cloud of measuring points. The images are eerily beautiful. The raw data creates the sensation that we are looking at a kind of ethereal skeleton—pointing to the cathedral's hidden spiritual reality. Tallon's data cloud images not only help us know in detail what was structurally there, but also inspire the desire to re-see the spiritual heart of the cathedral.

Tallon was able to show, for example, that the choir loft has perfect geometrical ratios. Just beneath the skin, as it were, is a series of perfect circles; vertically, a great equilateral triangle spans the whole choir. In other words, geometrical realities are hidden beneath the surface of the visible, and these geometrical realities frame the viewing experience of the cathedral.

To modern visitors, utilitarians to the core, it seems a little absurd that one would work so hard to create ge-

ometries that cannot be seen but only felt, as it were. But I suggest that this is exactly how medieval builders felt about nature and how they felt about their cathedrals, which were meant to reveal nature at deep levels. For the medieval mind, there was an extraordinary interaction between the many textures and colors and designs on the surface and the deep patterns underneath. It is this interaction between surface variety and deep patterns that gives the sense that the cathedral is spiritually porous.

Imagine the feeling that you would have walking into a haunted house on Halloween: rickety old boards, unusual light coming from under the doors, occasional eerie laughter. If you can, maintain the uncanny feeling but flip it, so that it is positive, and you might have a sense of the spiritual porousness of the cathedral in the medieval experience.

Visual Opulence

We are fortunate to have a piece of medieval travel writing by a scholar at the University of Paris, Jean de Jandun, who wrote his *Tractatus de laudibus Parisius* in 1323. In his short, overwrought rhetorical treatise, he spends time praising the small town of Senlis for its natural beauty but spends most of his time proclaiming that Paris is the greatest city in the world. In particular, he praises three buildings in Paris: Notre-Dame de Paris; the palace of Philip the Fair (now destroyed); and Sainte-Chapelle, the royal chapel built to house the most famous relic in medieval France: Jesus' crown of thorns. I will focus on what he says about the cathedral.

First, Jean praises Notre-Dame for its dazzling variety of shapes, sizes and

What did Notre-Dame mean? What did it feel like to step into it in the Middle Ages? Should we build it back new in some way?

textures. He praises the cathedral for how the “whole and the parts” interact, for how “high, large, and strong” its towers are, for the “multiple variety of ornaments,” for the “multipartite arrangement,” for the “light-filled amenities,” for the different types of windows (some are small and circular, some gleam with precious colors, some have pictures). In other words, there is a riot of shapes and visual textures, colors and geometrical designs: sharp angles, round surfaces, long and high lines. The key words in this analysis are “multipartite” and “varied.” Jean imagines looking around, visually drinking in the multiplicity of things: “I believe this church offers the carefully discerning such causes for admiration that the soul may barely be satiated by its inspection.”

In other words, Jean describes a situation of visual opulence, excess of meaning, superabundant gratuity of patterns and textures and colors. He is not so much overwhelmed by the fact that Notre-Dame is beautiful but that it is beautiful in so many ways. Some things are high, some low, some round, some square, smooth, ornate, intricate, colorful, gemlike, light-filled. In short, the church is a place of variety and magnificence.

The Cambridge art historian Paul Binski has found that those two words, *variety* and *magnificence*, were often used in connection with Gothic church construction. In an aristocratic

culture, there was an assumption that royal or aristocratic patrons would put on a feast that was splendid or a tournament that was opulent. The magnificence of the display would manifest the magnanimity of their souls. Architectural projects, too, sponsored by the same aristocratic patrons, were thought of in such terms. As Professor Binski puts it, in an age of epic, chivalric and knightly heroism, the buildings erected by kings, dukes, aristocratic bishops and conquerors strove to embody “*magnitudo*” and “*varietas*” (what we might call “heroic spaciousness” and “mind-boggling opulence of detail”).

For instance, a chronicler (William of Poitiers) compared William the Conqueror’s crossing of the English channel to Julius Caesar’s expedition to conquer Britain. When William the Conqueror later offered to have his daughter become a nun in 1066, he was said to be following the example of Agamemnon’s sacrifice of his daughter Iphigenia. We can understand the building practices of the day as an extension of this heroic cultural mindset, one in which medieval builders and patrons were eager to recreate the glories of antiquity and myth.

Great souls build great-souled buildings. And thus it was particularly desirable to surpass the old buildings of Rome. English and French clerics obtained measurements of the great

basilicas in Rome or Jerusalem to ensure that their own creations were longer, wider and had higher towers. It was during this age of heroic emulation that the old classical proportions were distorted, elongated, stretched up and made to reach out, creating that dream-like effect of magnificent magnitude and sublimity for which Gothic cathedrals are famous.

And so we find contemporaries praised churches for the sheer Herculean feat of importing so many and such heavy and exotic materials, which required the struggle of men and rope and cargo ships. The feat of engineering, shipping, transporting, harvesting, digging and extracting displayed munificence, magnanimity, magnificence. Stones quarried locally would be mingled with stones from all across the world. They built in the “heroic” mode.

But Professor Binski argues that *magnitudo* and geometrical design were not the only ways medieval builders tried to create the feeling of heroic transcendence. There was also *varietas*, which I translate “mind-boggling opulence.” Over the walls, ceilings and floors of medieval cathedrals we find a riotous variety of forms at play within the sober, governing architectural patterns: carved stones, interlacing rib vaults, bundles of differently sized stone columns, ornate friezes, windows of different sizes, polychromatic stained glass.



One of the rosette windows of Notre Dame Cathedral pictured on July 17, 2019, three months after a fire destroyed much of the church's wooden structure

CNS photo/Stephane de Sakutin, pool via Reuters

Rib vaults spring from columns, like massive branches leaping from huge trunks; intricate patterns laid into marble floors swirl and loop. Master builders signed their names within carved mazes of Daedalus, as if they thought that their genius lay in the intricacy of the labyrinthine designs. Then, as now, the experience of the riotous and playful shapes that are found all over the walls and on the floors and ceilings created a kind of release from the ordinary preoccupations of the day. They free the mind from its cares and lead it to a sense of being lost, immersed in wonder, overwhelmed by the hilarity of joy.

Craving Color

Jean de Jandun was also particularly sensitive to color. He describes Notre-Dame as “*terribilissima*” (awe-inspiring) because it “shines out” like a “sun among stars.” The chapels are “light-filled,” and some windows “gleam” with “precious colors” and are “beautiful with the most subtle figures.” Later, when describing Sainte-Chapelle, Jandun adds comments on its “select colors,” “precious gilding,” “beautiful transparency,” “gleaming windows,” the “beautiful altar cloths” and the “dazzling gems” on the reliquaries. And when Jean takes all of this in, turning this way and that, he has to resort to mystical language to describe it: One

feels “as if rapt to heaven [*quasi raptus ad celum*], to be entering one of the best chambers of Paradise.”

Before we dismiss Jandun’s account of the color as simply rhetorical exaggeration, we should remember how deadened our senses are to color and light in contrast to the medieval world. In a world of ubiquitous electric lights, which are always on and have become so bright that we are literally causing spring to start a few minutes earlier each year, it is hard for us to imagine the visceral feeling that medieval people enjoyed upon entering a sun-soaked chapel. Similarly, in a world of chemically created neon colors, we are not surprised to find bright

colors on metallic cars, in digital images, fast food restaurants and our clothing. In this cluttered landscape, our senses are deadened to color.

But in the medieval world, where even the sight of a saturated color was rare enough to be memorable, there was a sensitivity to stars, the moon and flowers, in which intense colors were visible but only seasonally. Gems and stones from exotic parts of the world were imported, ground up and used as pigment to make a pure color of blue (lapis lazuli), for example. The wool-dyeing industry was the medieval equivalent to steel and railroads, the great industry of the day precisely because pure colors were hard to come by. Medieval culture craved color, maybe the way we crave isolation and freedom from noise.

But in a Gothic cathedral, you could find not only pure saturated colors; you could find many of them, all gathered together in the same place. It was like seeing every color from throughout the year gathered into one permanent flowering, a kind of sensory overload, analogous to what it is like for us to watch a Christopher Nolan film in an Imax theater. Walking into a cathedral was dizzying, vertiginous, giddy. It made you giggle and gave you a shortness of breath. Meaning was everywhere, full and rich.

Jandun also uses a fascinating term: “O how peacefully are praises sung to the most holy God in these tabernacles, when the hearts of the singers are *analogically* beautified with the virtues through the pleasing pictures of the tabernacle!” The term “analogically” (*analogice*) refers here to the way the hearts of those singing praise feel pierced and penetrated with divine light, analogous to the way windows are pierced by the power of the sun.

We can compare Jandun’s comments on the *varietas* of Notre-Dame with other theological reflections on *varietas* from the same period. Hugh of St. Victor, for example, also wrote about the diversity of the things in the natural world:

[T]his world is a sensible book (*mundus hic sensilis liber quidam*) that has divinity written into it. Individual creatures are letters and reveal some aspect of divinity. For the immensity of the world (*immensitas mundi*) reveals divine power; the beauty of the world, divine wisdom; the utility of the world divine goodness.

Hugh then goes on to show how studying these natural “traces” lifts the mind up to God. Note, in particular, how sensitive Hugh is to diversity of shapes and variety of patterns:

The immensity of the world is subdivided into multitude and magnitude. See how the [world’s] multitude clearly figures forth power: look at the stars of the heaven, the sands of the sea, the dust of the earth, the drops of water, the feathers of birds, the scales of fish, the hairs of animals, the grass of the fields, and the fruit and leaves of the trees. The individual creatures (*singula*) are not only innumerable, but the kinds of creatures are also innumerable (*set etiam innumerabilia genera*).

What follows are pages and pages

devoted to cataloging all kinds of creatures. Hugh turns, for example, to contemplate the category of “*magnitudo*” and enumerates “the mass of mountains, the courses of rivers, the spaces of fields, the height of heaven, and the depth of the abyss” as examples. Later he argues that the beauty of the world can also be found in extraordinary shapes, variety of color, that which is huge, tiny, unusual, particularly beautiful or even monstrous. All these things cause us to marvel, as we do at giants among men, whales among fish, griffins among birds, elephants among quadrupeds, dragons among serpents.

Hence that sense of “awe” and “fullness,” or what medieval theologians call “*sapientia*” and “*visus cordis*,” an uplift of the heart, a sense of deep insight that has come to the threshold of worship. The world feels too full, almost painfully joyful, one in which bright colors cut and burn. There is too much goodness to take it all in, too much variety. God is too good, too benign, too loving toward us. He did not just choose one path to make himself known but an infinite number of them, and they are all enveloping us, clamoring for our attention, like the superabundant variety of patterns and colors and shapes and sizes in the cathedral.

This, then, I think, is what we lost at Notre-Dame de Paris: a sense of the world as super-saturated, with an infinite number of joys surrounding us, rushing toward us, pressing in us. The cathedral gave us a glimpse of an infinitely benign God: through the visible toward the invisible God. One could say that the cathedral was a kind of laboratory for creating an experience of depth by means of an experience of plenteous multitude, and in

this way, it stood as a mystical laboratory for making visible the love of God.

I have a proposal in mind for the rebuilding of the cathedral, even if it is not very practical. I like the idea of a glass roof, in which glass panels would be fitted into arches, which themselves were formed in imitation of the old, Gothic groin vaults. Paris, needless to say, has had success updating its landscape with metal and glass. Think of the Eiffel Tower or the Pyramid at the Louvre.

However, my caveat is that we grant the modern addition only if, on all major Marian feast days, Paris goes lights out at night, as Toronto regularly does. In that case, I think we would have something that would make the medieval builders nod approvingly, in awe, at something they would have done had they had the technological means to do so.

Imagine an evening service of Compline, lit only with candles, and the ability to watch the stars rotate above our heads in the vault above. That would enable us to see the old building anew.

Jason M. Baxter is an associate professor of fine arts and humanities at Wyoming Catholic College and the author of multiple books, including *Beginner's Guide to Dante's Comedy (Baker Academic)* and the forthcoming *The Infinite Beauty of the World: Dante's Encyclopedia and the Names of God (Peter Lang)*.

In Adoration: April 2019

By Andrew Calis

The quietness of time still ancient yawns
above the chapel, seat-still pews, slow stretching
wooden backs. Christ shining, Christ gold, dawn
in a fragile frame, eternal glowing,
naming every element in silent sheets
of unsaid sound, air living in its particles,
alive in movements too discreet
for sight, molecular, the holy heart.

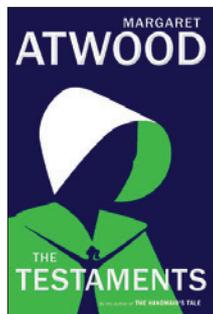
In silence. But a silence firecharged, as
that strong and silent sun of gold keeps watch,
and in cool air, has almost melted, has
already melted me. Has fast dispatched
the stone that builds my body, rolled back time,
has blinded me, and blessed with sight the blind.

Andrew Calis teaches at Archbishop Spalding High School in Severn, Md. His work has been published in *Dappled Things*, *Presence* and elsewhere.



When the meek are not blessed

By Aidan Johnson



The Testaments

By Margaret Atwood
Nan A. Talese
432p \$28.95

“When push comes to shove,” says a character in *The Testaments*, “only one’s own nightmares are of any interest.” In *The Testaments*, the new science fiction novel by Margaret Atwood, the author’s own nightmares are on full display: *The Testaments* is a sequel to *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1985), Atwood’s acclaimed depiction of a future state, Gilead, in which females are made completely subordinate to males. Due to pollution, the few fertile women in Gilead are sold to the richest men. These women are called “handmaids” and forced to wear red. Female sexuality

is presented as diabolical.

Gilead is *The Testaments’* primary setting. If anything, the dystopia is even scarier in the sequel, which provides terrifying detail on the history of the Christian fundamentalist regime that overthrows the United States at Gilead’s founding. As in *The Handmaid’s Tale*, realism makes the story harrowing. And yet, for all of its nightmare quality, *The Testaments* is full of joy. It depicts Gilead’s downfall and the role of women (Gilead’s scapegoats) in the triumph.

The Testaments deservedly won the 2019 Booker Prize, sharing the honor with *Girl, Woman, Other*, by Bernardine Evaristo. The prose is darkly, addictively funny, as spare as Shaker furniture. Like Milton’s Satan, the main narrator, Lydia, is a near-perfect example of a character whose sins make her compelling and even beautiful.

Lydia is in charge of the Aunts, a

quasi-monastic female order charged in turn with various aspects of the regulation of Gilead’s women. The Aunts are the only women in Gilead permitted to read. (Teaching a girl to read, according to Gilead wisdom, is like “trying to teach a cat to crochet.”) Some of the only books to survive Gilead’s rise are kept at the Aunts’ headquarters, the evocatively named Ardua Hall. In an ironic homage to Phyllis Schlafly, the Republican activist who rose to fame fighting the Equal Rights Amendment, the Aunts sip hot milk in Ardua’s Schlafly Café.

A former judge, Lydia flourishes under the new regime because she is cunning and smart, of the Schlafly mold. She sells out. But from Lydia’s guilt-plagued soul spills the plot to topple Gilead.

One way into the specific interest of *The Testaments* for Catholic readers is through Lydia’s complex relationship with St. John Henry New-

The Testaments is Margaret Atwood's sequel to *The Handmaid's Tale*, which was made into a television series on Hulu.

man: The narrator chooses to hide her manuscript in a hollowed-out copy of Newman's *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, one of the forbidden books preserved in the Ardua Hall library. Lydia chooses the *Apologia* for her hiding place in part because she intuits that no other Aunt will be daring enough to open it. (Catholicism is seen in Gilead as a "heretical and next door to voodoo.")

But Catholic readers will appreciate a subtler connection: Like Newman, who was vilified for leaving the Church of England to become a Roman priest, Lydia turns her back on Gilead in order to serve a deeper truth. Her narration is her apology for the major decisions of her life.

Even richer meaning opens up when we consider the significance of the *Handmaid's Tale* phenomenon for the theology of Mary (and the significance of Mary for Atwood). The word "handmaid" evokes Mary's song to Elizabeth.

"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior," Mary sings in the Magnificat. "For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness" (Lk 1:44-56). The song is revolutionary, hymning the kingdom of God as demotion of the rich and liberation of the poor: "He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones but lifted up the lowly." The handmaid is the Magnificat's central symbol. That she is (by definition) a female servant is exactly the point: Like *The Testaments*, Mary's song dreams of a world in which handmaids find both authority and power.

In her award-winning book *Truly Our Sister*, Fordham theologian Elizabeth Johnson, C.S.J., argues that Mary is best understood in connection with her fellow peasant-women: the poorest

women and girls alive today, particularly refugees. Johnson submits that the church's centuries of focus on Mary's maternity and supposed asexuality continue to have a disastrous impact on women. Moreover, Johnson argues, these narrow views on Mary distract the church from Mary's significance as a member of the communion of saints. As St. Augustine said, "It was for [Mary] a greater thing to have been Christ's disciple than to have been his mother, and she was more blessed in her discipleship than in her motherhood."

Part of the significance of Atwood's tales is in their critique of this misogyny. In Gilead, the handmaids are treated as brood-mares. They are idealized through a patriarchal theology revealed as unholy, a value system that dehumanizes. Conversely, justice and truth are shown as entering the world through the courage of oppressed women—the rebel handmaids, the subversive Aunts. In these characters, Atwood in a sense unveils the true Mary, the brave disciple and prophet. *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Testaments* are intertextual with the Magnificat in this way.

Atwood is an agnostic. She has argued at length that atheism and faith are equally unprovable, making agnosticism the rational position. In owning the anxiety of influence from Newman and Luke, Atwood in no way compromises her neutrality. Rather, she pays homage to the church as a source of texts that can liberate at least as much as they can kill.

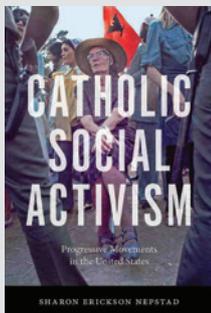
Far from being anti-Catholic or adopting a view of the church as irredeemably patriarchal, Atwood's handmaid tales are better understood as in the tradition of *A Canticle for Leibowitz* (1959). *Canticle* is Walter M. Miller's

classic science fiction novel, the tale of a post-apocalyptic monastery playing its part in the rebuilding of civilization. The institutional church is much more potentially dangerous in Atwood's view than in Miller's. For all of its anti-Catholicism, Gilead begins as a religious movement. It uses faith to justify its ways, whereas *Canticle* imagines the church as a ray of saving light, cutting through the post-nuclear cloud.

The golden bond that unites the books is their common depiction of monasticism as the preserver of truth in an ecologically ravaged future. Monks are the heroes of *Canticle*, as quasi-nuns (Aunts and their postulants) are the heroines of *The Testaments*. As much as *The Handmaid's Tale* provides rich fodder for a feminist theology of Mary, *The Testaments* invites the church to reconsider the role of female religious in the renewal of spiritual life.

Why are *The Handmaid's Tale* and its spin-offs so compelling and to so many? (Hulu has produced three seasons of an Emmy-winning eponymous *Handmaid* TV series. A fourth season is now in the works.) The answers are complex. Ultimately, they are about the politics of gender and the role that symbols play in that conversation. Lionel Trilling called the meeting point of politics and literature "a dark and bloody crossroads." Gilead is a quintessential case. We see in its story that ancient signs, like the handmaid and her song, still breathe with a thrilling vitality.

Aidan Johnson works in poverty law in the Niagara region of Canada.



Catholic Social Activism

By Sharon Erickson Nepstad
NYU Press
224p \$30

Charity is not enough

For 15 years I have enjoyed the numerous books by the sociologist Sharon Erickson Nepstad that examine religious social movements that work for peace and justice. Her latest, *Catholic Social Activism: Progressive Movements in the United States*, explores the ways American Catholics have championed worker justice, peace, feminism, liberation theology, immigrants and environmentalism. Drawing upon historical texts and many other sources, *Catholic Social Activism* brings readers a thorough and complex history of recent Catholic activism in the United States.

Some of the efforts, like the sanctuary and immigration movements, showed a great deal of cooperation between lay Catholics and the church hierarchy. Others, like women's movements and liberation theology, have been contested; at times the laity's activism leads the hierarchy into eventual engagement and at other times they remain at loggerheads. This lay-magisterium interaction is central to her book, and Nepstad tells a compelling story.

To suggest a critique of Nepstad's book, it is, with important exceptions, a story of white Catholics. I know of many black and Hispanic parishes engaging in justice work in

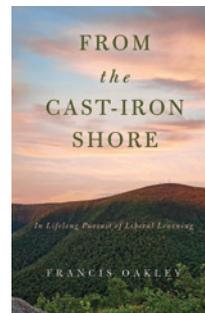
their communities. Including some of the parish- and diocesan-scale efforts that do not enjoy the national visibility of the groups Nepstad chronicles would have helped to illuminate their efforts.

Nepstad concludes the book by offering five themes learned through her observations. Exploring the first of these, she asserts that charity is not sufficient; socially engaged Catholics must work toward structural change. This book also demonstrates the power of collective action, as well as the costs of significant personal sacrifice: not only countless hours but also many people imprisoned—some even losing their lives.

It is much easier and more rewarding to engage in works of mercy, in which we see the immediate fruits of our efforts: one more jacket for a warmer body, a lovingly prepared meal for a full belly. But Nepstad demonstrates the Catholicity of justice work and might inspire readers to such work even when their efforts fall short of a clear victory.

The rigor and breadth of Nepstad's research and analysis makes this an excellent book for academic courses. Yet the page-turning readability also makes it valuable for everyday Catholics who look to deepen their understanding of Catholic social teaching and how our church has enacted it.

Maureen Day is an assistant professor of religion and society at the Franciscan School of Theology and the author of *Catholic Activism Today: Personal Transformation and the Struggle for Social Justice*.



From the Cast-Iron Shore

By Francis Oakley
University of Notre Dame Press
550p \$35

A college president looks back

In his beautifully written memoir, *From the Cast-Iron Shore*, Francis Oakley relates a conversation with the chairman of the Yale history department, who intimated that Oakley, at the time a young Catholic scholar, could not be objective in teaching courses on the medieval church and society, unlike a WASP like himself. Oakley is today one of America's leading medieval historians. He is also the former president of Williams College.

The book tells the tale of Oakley's journey from being an Irish immigrant in England through his education as a first-generation college student at Oxford and then his crossing to North America. Oakley identifies himself as "a rather institutionally oriented sort of fellow," so it is no surprise that his tale blends the personal, the institutional and the historical. The book is in stretches illuminating, amusing, wise and moving.

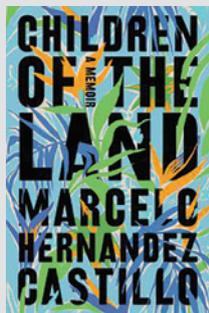
I went to Williams and took a class with Oakley in the spring of 1975, so I expected to enjoy the chapters about the college, but I was pleased to find the first half of this book, about Oakley's early years, at least as engaging. He writes with a novelist's touch, and the book offers a combination of clarity and lyricism that made it difficult to put down.

Oakley's early years in and around Liverpool were colored by life in a Catholic, sacramental universe on the one hand and the bombs of World War II on the other. Much of the book is devoted to his time at Williams, which he writes about using Catholic expressions. For example, he describes the building of the Jewish Religious Center on campus as a sacramental moment in the college's history.

America readers might be attracted to the volume on three levels: first, as the fascinating story of an immigrant intellectual who brings a fresh eye to our nation's appeal and its idiosyncrasies; second, as an account of diverse higher education systems, the values of small liberal arts colleges and developments and controversies in American higher education; and third, as the life story of a prominent Catholic intellectual who reflects on his faith and engages debates within the church, including advocating a historically informed ecclesiology that defends the primacy of council over pope and the provisional, reformable nature of doctrine.

The book is just over 500 pages, which seems long at first blush; but it reads quickly, and the seemingly mundane details give the narrative an appropriate richness and roundedness.

Mark W. Roche is the Joyce Professor of German and former dean of arts and letters at the University of Notre Dame.



Children of the Land
By Marcelo Hernandez
Castillo
Harper
384p \$28.99

The border divides a family

Marcelo Hernandez Castillo's soulful and startling memoir of his life as an undocumented immigrant, *Children of the Land*, begins with a knock on the door on a Sunday afternoon. When Castillo was a senior in high school, I.C.E. agents raided his family's home in California, searching for his father, who had been deported three years earlier. Castillo, who had been brought across the border from Mexico at age 5, convinces the I.C.E. agent to allow him to wake his napping mother so that she will not be startled by them barging through her bedroom door.

This raid symbolizes the precarious nature of growing up undocumented. Any peace Castillo enjoys—like the calm of that Sunday afternoon—is tenuous. For the undocumented, the boundaries between public and private are porous.

While we might think of the southern border as fixed since the Gadsden Purchase of 1854, Castillo's story illustrates how mutable it is. At times restrictions on border crossings are lax or amnesty is granted. At other times the border hardens. As different political leaders take over, Castillo and his family are subject to the whims of changing laws. He is able to obtain DACA status and eventually a green

card, thanks to his marriage to his childhood sweetheart. But when his mother applies for a visa for victims of violence who have cooperated with police in an offender's prosecution—for which she clearly qualifies—local officials deny it.

Castillo describes how his mother turned away from the Catholic Church because she could no longer believe in the vivid representations of the divine in its crucifixes, statues and stations of the cross. "She wanted a God who, like her, could hide in plain sight."

Castillo is caught between two languages, two countries and two cultures. He writes with gorgeous precision and sensitivity about his experience as a boy growing into a man in a country that will not recognize him, his family split across borders. He vividly illustrates the psychological toll this takes on a sensitive soul who yearns for his family to be safe, intact and able to enjoy a Sunday's peace.

Jenny Shank's first novel, *The Ringer*, won the High Plains Book Award. She is on the faculty of the Mile High M.F.A. in creative writing at Regis University in Denver.

In "Dana H.," Deirdre O'Connell lip-syncs to a recorded account of Dana Higginbotham's abduction.

She was abducted, but she did not lose her faith

By Rob Weinert-Kendt

Dana Higginbotham is both here and not here. A hospice chaplain from Florida, she is the subject of "Dana H.," an extraordinary new play by her son, Lucas Hnath, recently staged at the Vineyard Theatre in Union Square in New York. And though her actual voice can be heard throughout the play, she is not onstage; instead an actor, Deirdre O'Connell, lip-syncs to a recorded account of Higginbotham's abduction by a disturbed client some 25 years ago.

That may sound like an odd device, but Hnath—author of the plays "A Doll's House, Part 2" and "The Christians"—knows exactly what he is doing, and the show's mix of harrowing verisimilitude and eerie remove is remarkably potent.

This double vision might also have been inspired by his mother's layered spirituality. For, as Higgin-

botham says in the show and told me in a recent interview, she often feels set apart—in the world but not of it, to use a scriptural formulation.

"You've seen the darkness in the world, you've seen the darkness in yourself," she told me of the months she spent under the control of a man known only as Jim, a member of the Aryan Brotherhood who first latched onto her as a counselor, then as his abductee for a number of violent, bewildering months when she was between jobs, living alone and thus vulnerable.

"People refer to that a lot of times in casual ways—you know, 'when bad things happen to good people.' But that's usually things like a chronic illness or death, things that are to be expected in the term of life. The totally unexpected takes you a bit off center from where you were, and maybe even

makes you more realistic. Everyone else seems to be a bit naïve." Sometimes, she told me, she will be "sitting with my hospice team, the nurses, the social workers, the managers, and the talk they talk—it's like they don't even see this world."

Higginbotham's ability to see through surface reality to a deeper truth feels subtly but strongly linked to her hospice practice, in which she helps people prepare to leave this world for another. It is a connection Hnath's play makes explicit, as the abduction story is bookended by her descriptions of her ministry to dying patients and their families.

"When a person is in their final hours of life, and sometimes even before those final hours, pretty much everyone has pulled away from them and they're just waiting," said Higginboth-

am. “They’re isolated. This is a recurring theme in my life, right?”

Indeed it was her isolation, after a divorce and a consequent job loss, that made her an easy target for her abductor. It was not always so. Raised in Pittsburgh in a Presbyterian household, she dreamed equally of being an actress and being an evangelist along the lines of the popular faith healer Kathryn Kuhlman. She did theater in college, then went into radio and music production, which took her to Miami. There she had Lucas with her first husband, a recording engineer, and opened her own recording and rehearsal studio. But she soon reached a crossroads.

“I had been involved in witchcraft,” she said matter-of-factly—a tendency toward the dark arts she attributes, in the show, to her mother telling her she was evil from the age of 3. In Florida, with a young child, she said, “There came a point when things just started going wrong. My business burned down, and it would just seem like I was being chased by the demon. I didn’t want any influence of that over Lucas; I never wanted that to touch him. So I renounced all of that and turned my life over to the Lord.”

Not long after, she was finally able to realize her pastoral ambitions at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, which accepted women in ministry, however grudgingly. “Men were given permission to leave the room when it was my turn to preach,” she recalled drily. She later did street evan-

gelism with her second husband and Lucas, and eventually found her way to a chaplaincy at a psychiatric hospital, where she has served patients of all denominations, “even atheists,” she said.

The long episode with Jim—which involved myriad violent crimes, including many inflicted on her, as well as the near-complete indifference of law enforcement to her plight—didn’t shake Higginbotham’s faith so much as reorient it.

“I would compare it to going through a loss of innocence,” she said. She admitted that her faith practice was not much help during the worst of it. “I was pretty much in trauma the whole time. It was constant: Don’t look in the mirror, somebody’s following us, and looking down at the knife” held by her abductor. In her own experience and that of her patients, intense pain can block access to prayer: “I mean, you can’t even pray when you have a toothache. How was I going to pray?”

But as she reflected on this horrific chapter and what it revealed to her about the way the world really works, I had to wonder: Where does God fit into it? It’s the theodicy question, basically: What kind of God would make or allow a world where this could happen?

“It’s that damn free will,” she said. “He didn’t make this world—we did.” But while she doesn’t think God could create or intend suffering, she does “firmly believe that ‘all things work together for good for those who are called according to his purpose.’ Because he does love us. And I do believe that though life is kind of a dark place, there are moments where he has worked [things] together for good.”

In her own life, she can point to “empathetic witnesses” who have helped her at various points through her own dark periods—a high school

drama teacher who steered her away from suicide, for instance—and whom she feels God placed there for her. And while she is content with being a hospice chaplain, there is another way she would like to apply her own experience.

“My burning desire is to be out there doing either speaking or trauma counseling, working with moral distress in P.T.S.D. victims,” she said, referring to a condition afflicting veterans and health care professionals who have faced dilemmas where they “know the right thing to do, but there are reasons they aren’t allowed to do it.” Her experience as a helpless hostage to a violent man gives her the ability, she said, to “sit face to face with some of our patients who are veterans, and they get that I get that. That is the healing key right there: Someone else gets it.”

This is also what theater can do. Of O’Connell, the performer brilliantly embodying her onstage, Higginbotham said, “I think that she may actually come as close as possible to going through what I went through to some degree.” As for her son’s play, which she has seen twice now, she said the experience of viewing it, as both its subject and its literal voice, “wasn’t like watching a show. But it was a good thing. It was very validating.”

Rob Weinert-Kendt, an arts journalist and editor of *American Theatre* magazine, has written for *The New York Times* and *Time Out New York*.

Building Community

Readings: Acts 2:42-47; Ps 118; 1 Pt 1:3-9; Jn 20:19-31

Our ideas of connection and community have been put to the test. Many institutions have been reaching members virtually, as physical contact is limited to slow the spread of Covid-19. Today's readings reveal how early Christians connected with people in order to spread the faith. They can inspire us to think about how we engage with our sisters and brothers and nurture our faith, even at a distance.

The Gospel describes Jesus' commissioning of the apostles. After Mary Magdalene, Peter and the beloved disciple leave the empty tomb, Jesus appears to Mary (Jn 20:11-18) and then to the apostles. Today's Gospel starts with verses we will also hear on Pentecost, at the end of the Easter season. In John's account, Jesus breathes on his followers and tells them to receive the Holy Spirit, an action that has parallels to God's creation and animation of the first human being in the garden of Eden (Gn 2:7-8). Jesus animates the church by breathing the power of the Spirit onto the apostles, an act that is interpreted as authorizing them to lead the Christian community.

Not all the apostles were present for this founding moment. Thomas infamously doubts Jesus' resurrection, requiring physical proof by seeing the stigmata, the marks of the crucifixion on Jesus' body. When Jesus eventually appears to Thomas, he asserts the importance of belief in the resurrection, blessing those who believe without seeing as Thomas does.

The second reading from 1 Peter builds on this idea by proclaiming the importance of faith, even during difficult times. The reading emphasizes divine protection and calls for joy "while you may have to suffer various trials." Although it is difficult to rejoice while many suffer physical, mental, social and financial hardships, we should remain faithful and pray for relief. Social distance can be mitigated by spiritual closeness. Prayer connects us as a community of faith during periods of crisis.

In the first reading from Acts, the apostles teach, pray and share fellowship with converts, and they help people in need. As the apostles ministered to new believers, "every day the Lord added to their number."

They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life.
(Acts 2:42)

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

How can you use technology to foster connections?

How do you nurture your faith when separated physically from your community?

How can you serve people in need, especially those who are most isolated and vulnerable?

Luke's description of early Christian life in Acts provides the foundation for building a diverse community of faith. By emphasizing prayer and breaking bread in homes, Luke highlights the importance of connecting with people on a personal level to foster meaningful relationships that glorify God. Even as we are physically at a distance, many people can connect virtually for prayer and friendship. But we should also remember those who are unable to connect in this manner. Reach out by phone and letter to people who are most isolated.

Of special importance, the apostles and converts work together, selling possessions and distributing the proceeds to people in need. These gestures of self-sacrifice can inspire us to help those who are most vulnerable in society. Jesus emphasized care for people in need, and it is noteworthy that Luke describes service as one of the first acts that the apostles share with converts. Let us be creative in how we serve God and one another at this time.

Jaime L. Waters teaches Scripture at DePaul University in Chicago. She is an associate professor of Catholic studies.

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The Journey Continues

Readings: Acts 2:14-33; Ps 16; 1 Pt 1:17-21; Lk 24:13-35

In the Word column for Easter Sunday, I posed the question, “What if you *believe* in the resurrection but don’t *understand* it?” In today’s Gospel, Luke offers answers: be patient, pay attention to how your heart is moved, study and participate in a faith community.

The Gospel of Luke includes a unique tradition about two otherwise unknown disciples, Cleopas and an unnamed person, who walk on the road to Emmaus and unknowingly encounter the risen Christ. Having heard the testimony of Mary Magdalene and other women who found the empty tomb, these disciples are traveling away from Jerusalem astounded at the news. When they encounter Jesus, “their eyes were prevented from recognizing him.” Luke does not explain why. Maybe it was not yet time for them to fully grasp the resurrection. From this we can learn the importance of patience as we come to understand what we believe.

Jesus does not reveal his identity right away; instead, he asks the disciples about their conversation. Cleopas responds with genuine surprise that Jesus is not aware of the recent events. As they reflect on Jesus’ crucifixion, the disciples share their regrets because they “were hoping he would be the one to redeem Israel,” showing that they do

not yet realize that Jesus’ death indeed was the redemption they were seeking. These disciples’ honesty in sharing their emotional reactions, uncertainties and concerns can inspire us as we walk along our own faith journeys.

As Jesus continues with the disciples, he teaches them Scripture, offering Christological explanations of passages about Moses and the prophets. Luke says that Jesus “interpreted to them what referred to him in all the Scriptures,” an assertion that shows how Luke understands the Gospel. Like Jesus, the Evangelists reframe and elucidate Scripture in light of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. This practice can inspire us to study Scripture critically as a way to increase our knowledge. Try not to be alarmed at Jesus’ apparent frustration with the disciples—or us—being “foolish” or “slow of heart.” Instead, recognize that this is exactly where Jesus meets and teaches us.

As the Gospel ends, the disciples finally acquire the clarity they were lacking. When Jesus takes bread, blesses, breaks and gives it to them, “their eyes were opened.” In Jesus’ eucharistic actions, following the pattern of the Last Supper, the disciples recognize and understand who he is. By participating in sacramental rituals in community we nourish our relationship with God and recognize the divine presence in our midst.

Although most of today’s Gospel focuses on conversations, it is Jesus’ actions that reveal his identity. These actions change how the disciples understand him and themselves. They vividly assert that their hearts were burning when they learned about Scripture from Christ. Moreover, when they later share their encounter with the apostles, the disciples affirm that it was the breaking of bread that revealed Jesus’ identity.

As we continue through the Easter season, be inspired to learn from these disciplines, who grow in faith by their openness to seeing God in their lives.

Jaime L. Waters teaches Scripture at DePaul University in Chicago. She is an associate professor of Catholic studies.

The two recounted how he was made known to them in the breaking of bread.

(Lk 24:35)

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

What can you do to increase your understanding of Scripture?

What can you do to journey nearer to God?

What actions can you take to live out your faith?

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America

Watching a Mass on YouTube

It has power no matter what form it takes

By Sam Sawyer



As I write this, on March 15, I am watching a livestream of the Sunday morning Mass at which—until 2 p.m. yesterday, when the Archdiocese of New York suspended public liturgies as part of the effort against the coronavirus epidemic—I was scheduled to preside. Once the parish was down to only the one Mass, by livestream, the pastor assigned it to himself; and I'm grateful that I was spared the need to get on the subway today.

We had Mass this morning in our Jesuit community, in our own small chapel, and I don't think we have ever been more conscious of the power of the Mass or of our own dependence on God as ministers than knowing that our small community is able to have Mass in person while the vast majority of people around us are relying on video streams for Mass today.

But every Mass is a Mass for the salvation of the world, because every Mass is Christ's sacrifice for all of us, no less with 10 priests in one small chapel than with the pope and tens of thousands of the faithful in St. Peter's Square in Rome, or with 500 parishioners at St. Francis Xavier on 16th Street in Manhattan, where I had expected to be this morning.

The Catholic tradition has an abundance of ways to make grace visible and tangible. Translating those into more virtual forms can feel like

watering down the gift we have been given, but it can also—and this is the invitation in these challenging times—be a way of diffusing grace through all the world. Which is, after all, what the Holy Spirit is doing already.

The Mass has power whether we are able to be there in person or not; it has power even if it can be celebrated only under limited and restricted circumstances, because God is not bound by circumstance.

Some people may suggest that recognizing the power of the Mass should make us so courageous that we throw caution to the winds and trust in God to protect us—"Don't you trust God more than you fear the coronavirus?" they ask.

But that gets the question of trust exactly backward.

Trust God enough to know that the Mass is being offered for us, all over the world, in small chapels in religious houses and in cathedrals that are eerily empty of people, in hospitals and prisons, and also with people joining in prayer by YouTube and Facebook Live and radio and local access cable television and every other form of communication that human innovation has devised.

Trust the promise of God that the Sabbath was made for human beings rather than human beings for the Sabbath. Trust the assurance of the church that the Sunday obliga-

tion, even under normal conditions, does not bind when traveling to Mass becomes impossible or imprudently dangerous.

Trust that the scientific knowledge which tells us how necessary it is to limit or suspend public gatherings is itself a gift of God. And that gift calls us to exercise our charity by recognizing that every time we can avoid the risk of catching or passing on this current pandemic, we are acting in charity for those who are most vulnerable to this disease. We are acting for the public health workers who are heroically on the front lines of this crisis and, indeed, for the whole world. Trust that God gives us courage in order to act wisely and not just boldly.

And above all, trust that it is God who makes the Mass and the Eucharist both possible and powerful. And that power is sufficient even if we are limited to participating through a livestream.

Sam Sawyer, S.J., is an executive editor and the director of digital strategy at America Media.

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