

America

JULY 9, 2018

THE JESUIT REVIEW OF FAITH AND CULTURE

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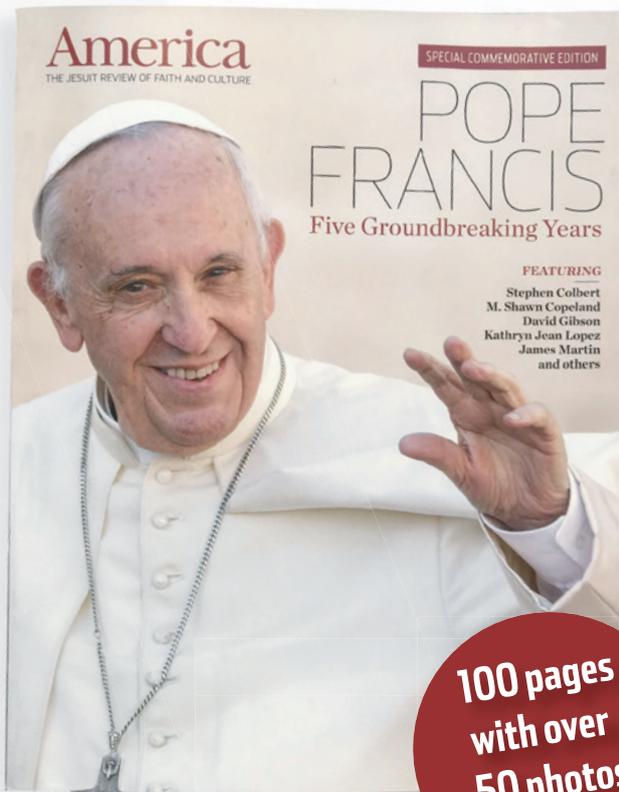
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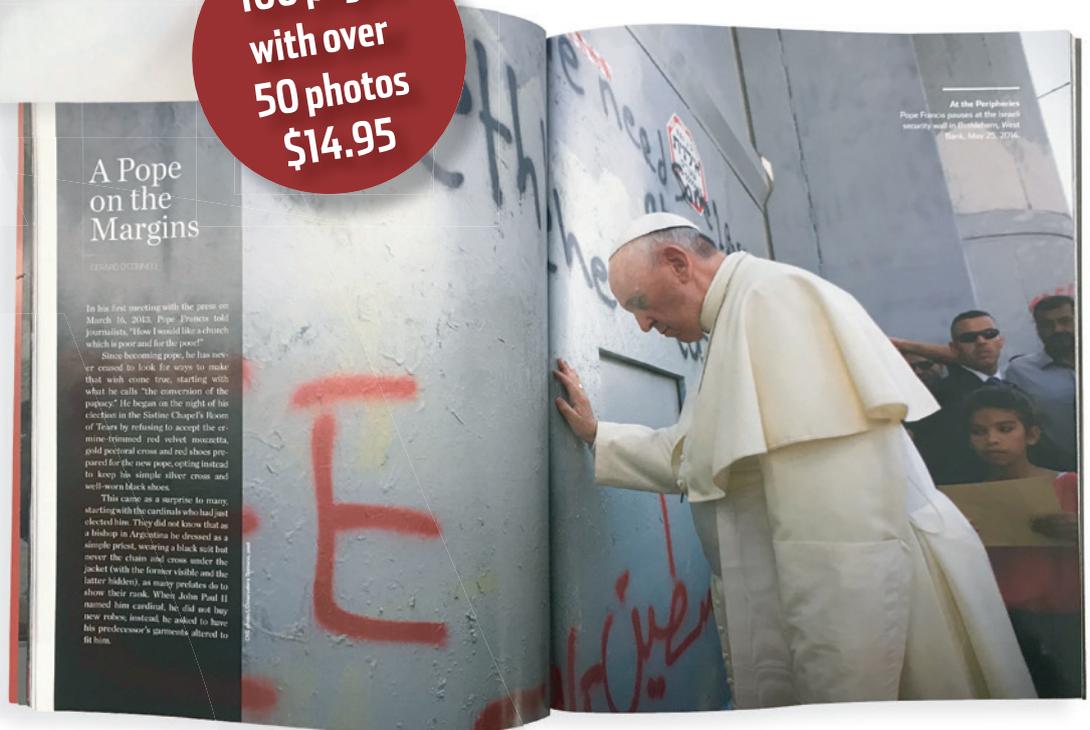




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America Jeopardy! 2018 edition

Welcome back to “**America Jeopardy!**” our occasional homage to America’s most popular game show and everybody’s favorite Catholic magazine. The game is played like the real “Jeopardy!” except that you’ll have to wait for the answers, er, questions, in the next issue. But if you’re dying to know sooner, you can go to the web page with this column at americamagazine.org and see the answers/questions there. Good luck. And, as Alex always says, please remember to phrase your responses in the form of a question. For some reason, that’s important. Have a blessed summer!

1. This well-known football coach, who reportedly said, “winning isn’t everything, it’s the only thing,” was a lifelong subscriber to **America**.

2. This poet, the author of “Trees,” wrote six times for **America**, in 1915 and 1916.

3. This longest serving first lady of the United States wrote to the sixth editor in chief of **America**, John LaFarge, S.J., to say that her hairdresser had given her a copy of his latest book.

4. The grandfather of James T. Keane, a senior editor at **America**, served in the same New York City mounted police unit as the father of this man, who was the tenth editor in chief and a future president of Fordham University.

5. The father of John LaFarge, S.J., sixth editor in chief, designed the stained glass windows at The Breakers, the Newport mansion built by this famous family and completed in 1895.

6. As a novice in the Society of Jesus in 1955, this future contributor to **America** and author of “Jesus Symbol of God,” observed the funeral

of the famous French Jesuit, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.

7. In 1959, **America**’s editors applauded this politician’s warning about an expanding “military-industrial complex,” but they also worried about U.S. resolve, especially (and ominously) in Southeast Asia.

8. After visiting **America** in 1972, this future mayor of New York, famous for asking voters “How’m I doing?” remarked to an aide: “If I can win over those Jesuits at **America**, I can be mayor of this city.”

9. This friend of the 11th editor in chief, George W. Hunt, S.J., is a longtime subscriber. He served as chairman of Columbia Pictures and succeeded A. Bartlett Giamatti to become the eighth commissioner of Major League Baseball.

10. This talented essayist and playwright, the first woman to be appointed U.S. ambassador to a European country, caused a stir when she said **America** was the best magazine in the country. Her husband was publisher of *TIME* and *LIFE*.

11. This 32nd governor of California was a longtime subscriber to **America**. His son, a former Jesuit novice, succeeded his father as both the 34th and 39th governor of the Golden State.

12. Appropriately enough, the fourth editor in chief (1925-36), Wilfrid Parsons, S.J., and the fifth editor in chief (1936-44), Francis Xavier Talbot, S.J., are buried next to each other in the cemetery at this college, the oldest Jesuit college in the United States.

13. Oops. In March 1971, the editors praised this man, who had recently seized power in a military coup in Uganda, for his “common-

sense voice.”

14. James B. Donovan, a subscriber to **America** and a friend of Thurston N. Davis, S.J., 10th editor in chief, was portrayed by Tom Hanks in this 2015 espionage film, directed by Steven Spielberg.

15. Many of his fellow Catholics, including many Jesuits, did not approve when Robert Hartnett, S.J., ninth editor in chief, used the pages of **America** to repeatedly criticize this U.S. senator from Wisconsin, whose name has become synonymous with “witch hunt.”

16. Philip Lacovara, a current member of **America**’s board of directors, successfully argued a famous case before the U.S. Supreme Court that sealed the fate of this man by forcing him to release secretly made tape recordings.

17. This man, who was once his party’s nominee for president of the United States, was the first sitting U.S. secretary of state to have a cover story in **America**.

18. In 2014 this future speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives debated his fellow Catholic and colleague, Joseph P. Kennedy III, in the pages of **America**.

19. The editors once apologized to this famous author of *Wise Blood* for butchering her prose during the editing of an article by her in **America**.

20. The nonfamous Catholic grandparents of the 14th editor in chief (2012-), are buried in Hyannis, Mass., next to this famous Catholic couple: He was his party’s nominee for vice president; she founded the Special Olympics.

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



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Friends prepare to break their Ramadan fast on the beach Rabat, Morocco, June 9.

Cover image: iStock.com

AP Photo/Mosaab Elshamy

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Are you proud of the United States?

In answer to the question above, 75 percent of respondents told us that they were not proud of the United States. Some said they had never been proud of the country. For example, Joshua Smith of Denver, Colo., wrote, “America’s history of slavery, genocide and imperialism has eclipsed anything we’ve done that I could possibly be proud of.”

But the majority of respondents in this category described losing pride in the United States under the current administration. “My American pride diminishes daily under Trump,” Deborah Patrick of Palmer, Alaska, told **America**. “We are allowing atrocities and irreparable harm to come to immigrant children. We have become a symbol of failed democracy and hatred to the rest of the world.”

David Hunt of Charleston, S.C., had a similar message: “I used to be proud. But I cannot be proud of a nation that separates families, ignores the plight of the poor and the

sick and demonizes minorities. This flies in the face of everything this nation was meant to stand for.”

Twenty-five percent of respondents said they were proud of the United States. Some who gave this answer identified themselves as children of immigrants. Aaron Piotrowski of Northampton, Mass., told **America**: “I’m third-generation American, and my family believed in the values of this country when they came here in 1912. It wasn’t perfect then, and it isn’t perfect now, but we all still believe in the values that made us move here.”

Other respondents explained that they separated pride for their country from their feelings about the current administration. “I am proud of our country; horribly dismayed, angry and disgusted with our leadership,” wrote Bob Hudd of Bay City, Minn.

The decision of the current administration to separate children from their parents is deplorable. ●●
Kathleen Ceman
 Menasha, Wis.

The United States used to be a beacon of hope for all people. Slowly white nationalism has eroded the soil. ●●
Nancy Wacker
 Shawnee, Kan.

I am proud of our Constitution, but I am sad that we can’t seem to live up to it. ●●
Katharine Lynch
 Arlington, Va.

Should other nations emulate the United States as the world’s best model of democracy and freedom?

Yes **21%**

No **79%**

Should the United States look to other nations for ways to improve its system of democracy and freedom?

Yes **89%**

No **11%**

Are you proud of the United States?

Yes **25%**

No **75%**

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

Hope of Health

Re “Alfie’s Last Days,” by Kevin Clarke (6/25): I cannot imagine the heartbreak of these parents. I love the concept of hope of health mentioned in this article. It is a healing reframing. The question is not just, “Will the child die?” The question is also, “Is there a reasonable hope for health?” When the shoe is on the other foot, and it is time for me to die, I would not want to impoverish my children or husband financially, emotionally or physically by staying when there is no hope of health.

Mary Gail Frawley-O’Dea 🗨️

Mystery of God

Re “The Gospel According to Goop,” by Eloise Blondiau (6/25): I am all for hard work and positive thinking. They have made a huge difference in making my life better. At the same time, God is the ultimate arbiter and judge, and I have discovered we just do not always understand his plan or will.

Last year, I was treated for breast cancer (I am fine now, thank God). I had done all the things to avoid the disease. I do not have a genetic predisposition for cancer, and it did not appear to run in my family, but I got it anyway. It happens, and it is all a mystery. So I ask for God’s help in my life, to be grateful, not to judge others too much (nobody knows what all of us go through anyway), do what I can at my end to stay on earth healthy and help others.

I enjoy my life and toys (especially my purse collection), but I know they are not the ultimate things that make me happy. And I know I will suffer again, but God will still be there, long after Goop and Mr. Osteen have left the scene. 🗨️

Bonnie Weissman

Illogical Extremes

Everyone wants to believe that there is a reason for everything that happens and that good prevails over evil. We know it does not always happen that way. Like every other idea, we can take things to their illogical extremes. Therapists often tell patients that the way you think can change the way you feel. That is true; what is also true is that you cannot change reality, and just changing the way you think about 🗨️ does not really work.

Peter Schwimer

A True Portrait

Re “A Flannery O’Connor Story for the World Today,” by Jim McDermott, S.J. (6/25): This is a brilliant commentary on Childish Gambino. When I first saw his music video “This is America,” I needed to take a step back, as I was not sure what images were reeling through my mind. I watched it a number of times, and each time it gained more power. I felt that it painted a true portrait of American society today.

Carol Cox 🗨️

A Terrifying Situation

Re “The Death Toll in Puerto Rico After Hurricane Maria Could Be 70 Times Higher Than Official Count,” by Michael J. O’Loughlin (6/25): I am caring for an elderly parent who is doing well as long as the life-sustaining medicine, access to emergency hospital care and, when needed, air conditioning remain available. If you took these things away for six months, it would be very scary.

Stanley Kopacz 🗨️

How to Approach One Another

Re “A Good Call,” by Simcha Fisher (6/25): I can’t help wondering: In the age of “calling out,” what happened to Jesus’ teaching? Matthew 18:15 tells us how to approach another. I respect Cardinal O’Malley, but I wonder if he tried to speak with Pope Francis before taking his comments to the media.

Jill Caldwell 🗨️

Cultures Coming Together

Re “What the World Cup Can Teach Us About Everything,” by Antonio De Loera-Brust (6/11): Although I am not as strong a fan of the World Cup as the author, I do enjoy following the games, especially if Mexico (the country of my heritage) is playing.

However, a correction is in order. The “soccer war” the article refers to was between Honduras and El Salvador, not Guatemala. In addition, the conflict was actually the result of border disputes and tensions that long predated the 1969 soccer matches.

Despite conflicts like this, sports can be a way for different peoples and cultures to come together.

Frank Galvan
Beaumont, Calif.

🗨️ Comments drawn from our website, americamagazine.org, and America Media’s social media platforms.

Letters to the editor can be sent to letters@americamedia.org. Please include the article title, author and issue date, as well as your name and where you are writing from.

The Family Separation Crisis Reveals How Far We Are From a Just Immigration Policy

How much suffering and outrage will it take to change the terms of the immigration debate? The recent tragic stories of family separations at our border—an inhumane and unnecessary method of deterrence freely chosen by the Trump administration—has begun to provide an answer.

How much pain, cruelty and chaos is the administration willing to inflict in order to appeal to President Trump's base? At least as much pain as children wailing when they are taken from their parents. At least as much cruelty as parents being told their children are going to be bathed when they in fact are being taken away. At least as much chaos as 2,300 children taken from their families with no credible plan or apparent concern for reuniting them.

How much moral and political opposition needs to be mounted until the administration finally admits—as it apparently has begun to with the signing of an executive order—that it has gone too far? At least as much as both the Catholic bishops and the Southern Baptist Convention denouncing family separations as immoral and unbiblical. At least as much as lawmakers from both parties calling clearly for a change in course.

And for all this, not yet enough. Officials from the administration, with Mr. Trump personally leading the charge, have continued to describe their actions as mandated by law—a bald lie—in order to use the tragedy they have manufactured as leverage for their legislative demands.

Moral and political pressure on the Trump administration must be

maintained. Since launching his presidential campaign with racist slurs against Mexican immigrants, Mr. Trump has masterfully manipulated fear of immigrants to build his own power while eroding respect for their human dignity. Appealing to nativist sentiments seems to be his primary goal, even more than a border wall, which likely will not work.

The executive order merely replaces the cruelty of family separation with the cruelty of family detention. The cause of both policies is the Trump administration's "zero-tolerance" policy to prosecute every person crossing into the United States without authorization. The fact is, there is no humane or just way to enforce unjust laws. If the American people will not abide using children to threaten immigrants—or if even that threat proves insufficient balanced against the violence and poverty immigrants face in their home countries—what assault on human dignity will be next? It will not be enough to reject and repent of these extraordinary assaults on the integrity of the family unless the United States also reckons with the fact that its immigration policy needs radical change.

While three fifths of the country disapproves of Mr. Trump's handling of immigration overall, and even greater numbers reject his family separation policy, a small majority of Republican voters support both. The United States is being held hostage to the immoral and unachievable political goals of immigration extremists who have rejected attempts at compromise. As a senator, Attorney General Jeff Sessions led the opposition

that doomed the last serious congressional attempt at immigration reform, assisted by his communications director, Stephen Miller, who is now Mr. Trump's domestic policy advisor and the chief architect of his immigration strategy. No progress on immigration can be achieved if the administration requires that the majority of the country simply capitulates to their demands.

Border security, while necessary, is not an absolute good, as Catholic social teaching recognizes. Its pursuit must be balanced with the need for just methods of enforcement and even more with the basic right of people to migrate in order to sustain their own lives and those of their families. It is both a moral and a practical impossibility to seal our southern border, when life in the United States is so much safer than in the violence- and poverty-plagued countries immigrants are fleeing.

Any realizable proposal to secure the border must start by expanding, rather than reducing, the flow of legal, regulated immigration from Latin America to something commensurate with the actual demand. It must recognize the need to offer asylum to those fleeing not only political persecution but domestic abuse and gang violence. It must be the kind of comprehensive approach pursued by the Reagan administration during the last major successful reform in 1986, including a path to citizenship for the 11 million undocumented immigrants already peacefully living and working in the United States. Otherwise, the country will simply be priming the pump for the next crisis.

The U.S. bishops have already

criticized the new immigration bill proposed by the House Republican leadership along these lines. But in order to achieve anything better, the energy of opposition to the Trump administration's family separation policy must be maintained past this immediate moment of crisis.

The searing images of children being removed from their parents and held in cages in immigration detention centers have roused the conscience of the country. The consistent and explicit witness given by many religious leaders seems to have finally made it clear to the public that the God of the Bible stands unambiguously on the side of the "stranger in the land."

Catholics and all Americans should continue to press political leaders to make a stand there as well and should evaluate what direct actions they might be able to take, considering their unique circumstances and abilities, to aid those suffering because of these policies. The bishops should continue their prophetic leadership on this issue, including trips to the border and detention facilities. Officials working in the Trump administration and those responsible for carrying out policies designed to stoke fear of immigrants should carefully examine their consciences and discern whether their resignations would achieve more good than their continued work within the system.

How much prayer and protest will it take to achieve a more just immigration policy for the United States? At least this much. For the sake of our brothers and sisters on our borders, we can do no less.

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Places of comfort and caring

Gradually, Americans are acknowledging the mortal facts of life and beginning to reclaim illness and dying from the grip of modern medicine. Faith communities are engaging their members in discussions about illness and dying. This coming together to plan for these most profound questions of human life is energizing congregants and clergy alike. In October 2016, at the request of Archbishop José H. Gómez of Los Angeles, I spoke with 700 diocesan priests about the challenges of caring for ill or aged people. As the only Jew and the only physician in the room, I talked about areas of commonality between faith traditions and between the professions of medicine and the ministry. I addressed misconceptions regarding sedation for uncontrollable pain and talked about the ineffectiveness of medically administered nutrition to people with advanced dementia.

During the question-and-answer period, I expected comments about these controversial subjects. Instead, the clerics rose to share heartfelt stories from their own families, as well as stories about frail parishioners to whom they ministered through sickness and suffering. The priests embraced the responsibility and opportunity of better preparing people to face the end of life together. As one example, churches across the Los Angeles area have begun holding “Care and Prepare” workshops for parishioners who are dealing with end-of-life issues.

This experience strengthened my belief that tackling issues of illness, caregiving, dying and grieving can enhance a congregation’s sense of meaning and purpose. Let us remem-

ber that the medical profession’s hegemony over questions of illness and dying is relatively new. In the late 20th century, medical science was curing so many previously fatal conditions that the line between science and science fiction became blurred.

The lesson we baby boomers took away was that progressively ill people needed progressively more intensive treatments. Yet there were unspoken caveats. First, every person whose life was saved by medicine still eventually died—either from the same underlying condition or, well, something else. Additionally, doctors are limited in what they can do because illness and dying are only partly medical.

From the first inkling that something is not right in one’s body—the early feelings of “dis-ease”—illness is fundamentally personal. As someone goes through the blood tests and scans that lead to the diagnosis of a serious medical condition, his or her energy level, body image, sense of self, worries and hopes for the future are all affected. During treatments for the condition, a person’s work and personal roles, relationships and responsibilities are significantly changed. When a medical condition leads to a decline of health and function, questions of a spiritual nature arise: Why me? What if I don’t get better? What happens next?

Congregations are a natural milieu for these conversations. An innate sense of being part of something larger than ourselves draws us into the company of others with whom we can explore ultimate questions of life and death. Throughout history, when fires and floods have threatened people’s lives, dissolving all pretense of invincibility, we have turned to one another

in community. And death is the natural disaster that awaits us all.

Today’s places of worship remain places of comfort and caring, places for discernment and guidance from religious teachings and spiritual traditions. Congregational environments liberate these topics from the confines of medicine and legitimize discussions of illness, treatment preferences and dying. Educational sessions provide information about each faith’s tenets and teachings, which guide people as they make treatment decisions consistent with their personal wishes.

Those who are drawn together by common beliefs, prayers and practices can ensure that as age or infirmity takes its inevitable toll, members of their community are not forgotten. We can accompany vulnerable people on an unchosen final journey. Each one of us can make certain that people within our own communities do not feel abandoned and that their basic bodily needs are met. We can bear witness to people’s decline, as well as their continued dignity and worth. And we can hold them up, celebrating their accomplishments and honoring their contributions.

Equally important, when illness strikes, we can allow ourselves to be tended during our own waning and vulnerability. In caring and being cared for, people of faith can fulfill a commandment that is written in the Abrahamic covenant and embedded in the human genome: Matter to one another.

Ira Byock, M.D., is a palliative care physician and chief medical officer of the Institute for Human Caring of Providence St. Joseph Health, based in Torrance, Calif. His books include Dying Well and The Best Care Possible.



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A large group of people, including children, are holding a banner that reads "HUMANITY DOESN'T REQUIRE A GREEN CARD". The banner is made of a light-colored material, possibly fabric or paper, and the text is written in large, bold, black letters. The word "DOESN'T" has a red circle with a slash through it over the "O". The banner is held up by several people, and the background shows a crowd of people and a fence.

AT MEXICO BORDER, CHURCH STEPS IN TO ASSIST CHILDREN SEPARATED FROM THEIR PARENTS

By J.D. Long-García

Protests in El Paso on June 19

About 20 new children have been attending Sunday Mass at St. Eugene de Mazenod Church in Brownsville, Tex. Parishioners pray for the children during the liturgy and then serve them breakfast.

“They want to take care of them and let them know they’re loved,” said Kevin Collins, O.M.I., St. Eugene’s pastor. The children come from Casa Padre, the nearby shelter for unaccompanied minors who have attempted to enter the United States.

A few years ago, the nonprofit Southwest Key Programs bought the building, which used to be a Walmart, and converted it into a detention shelter for undocumented minors. The number of children at centers like this has been escalating quickly since Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced a “zero tolerance” policy, vowing to prosecute everyone who enters the United States illegally.

Mr. Sessions ordered that children who enter illegal-

ly should be separated from the adults who accompany them. Now, around 5 percent of the 1,500 children who are detained at Casa Padre have been separated from their parents.

“You can see a certain sadness” in the children, Father Collins said. “They’re in between. They left their home countries, and now they don’t know what’s next. They’re hoping and praying something happens. I’m sure they don’t want to go back.”

President Trump took a significant step back from the attorney general’s policy—at least on pulling undocumented children and parents apart—after a storm of criticism from the public and media. The president signed an executive order on June 20 ending the separations, at least temporarily. A 1997 court consent decree limits the number of days undocumented minors can be held in detention, and it is not clear how the administration will respond when detainees begin to reach that cut-off.



CNS photo/Mike Blake, Reuters

It was a dramatic turnaround for the president, who had insisted, erroneously, that his administration had no choice under federal law but to break up children from detained parents. Many of the more than 2,300 children already affected by the policy will likely find themselves in an immigration courtroom somewhere in the United States as they make a case to stay in the country legally and avoid deportation.

“We’ve said for years that detention centers are not the way to handle illegal immigration,” Bishop Daniel Flores of Brownsville said. Law enforcement used to make a “prudential judgment,” he said, often releasing unauthorized entrants with ankle monitors. The zero-tolerance policy had led parents to be referred to criminal courts while their children were diverted to the care of the Department of Health and Human Services.

“The parents do not know what’s happening to their children,” Bishop Flores said. “Once they get out of the court system, it is hard for them to locate their children. This is something [the local church in Brownsville] does

every day—help parents find their children.”

In the Rio Grande Valley, the community wants to help, he said, and recognizes that the immigrants are asylum seekers leaving cruel situations in their home communities.

“These kids are scared,” Bishop Flores said. “This is a pretty aggressive deterrence policy. You can’t use kids as a deterrent. You can’t use human beings that way.”

Another Trump administration decision—to deny appeals for asylum in the United States based on claims of domestic abuse or gang violence—was deplored by Bishop Robert W. McElroy of San Diego. “For the whole of our history, the United States has been a refuge for people seeking protection from oppression,” he said.

“If we are going to begin now to categorize domestic violence and rape as other than an oppression of people’s human dignity, then we have truly lost our moral compass as a country.”

The new policy was also condemned by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. “This decision negates decades of precedents that have provided protection to women fleeing domestic violence,” said Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, archbishop of Galveston-Houston, Tex., and president of the U.S.C.C.B., in a statement released on June 13.

He had also condemned “the continued use of family separation at the U.S./Mexico border as an implementation of the administration’s zero tolerance policy.”

“Our government has the discretion in our laws to ensure that young children are not separated from their parents and exposed to irreparable harm and trauma,” he said. “Families are the foundational element of our society, and they must be able to stay together.”

On Father’s Day, June 17, more than 2,000 people protested the separation of families in Tornillo, Tex., The Texas Standard reported. The border town is the site of the first “tent city” erected to house unaccompanied migrant children.

“We are horrified about what’s happening,” said Maria Elena Manzo, a leader with Communities Organized for Relational Power in Action. “What can be more sacred than the family? It is torture to take the kids away. I don’t know what could be worse.”

Ms. Manzo, a parishioner at Sacred Heart in Salinas, Calif., said many in the Salinas Valley are undocumented. They work in hospitality, agriculture and construction.

“We have a thriving economy because of immigrant labor in those industries,” said Ms. Manzo, who talks with business, civic and community leaders as part of her work with C.O.P.A. “It is in our interest to figure out an immigration reform that keeps the people here.”

In El Paso, activists are signing petitions and marching, according to the Rev. Bob Mosher, a Columban priest. Father Mosher and other activists learned that border patrol agents were stopping asylum seekers on the bridge to El Paso. They would ask for their documents and when the travelers asked for asylum, they would send them back, he said.

Last Friday, he joined a group of 20 activists who met six Guatemalan asylum seekers. They accompanied them across the bridge. “We got them through,” he said.

J.D. Long-García, *senior editor*.
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Has suicide become a public health crisis?

In June, the suicides of the designer Kate Spade and the chef and author Anthony Bourdain shocked their friends, family and fans and brought new attention to what has become a public health epidemic. The same month new national data on suicide suggesting the scale of the problem were released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The C.D.C. reports a 25 percent spike between 1999 and 2016 in the frequency of suicide across the country. In 25 states, there were increases of more than 30 percent;

the steepest increases were in North Dakota (57 percent), Vermont (49 percent) and New Hampshire (48 percent).

In 2016 nearly 45,000 suicides occurred in the United States among people age 10 and over—more than twice the number of deaths by homicide. It is now the nation’s 10th-leading cause of death.

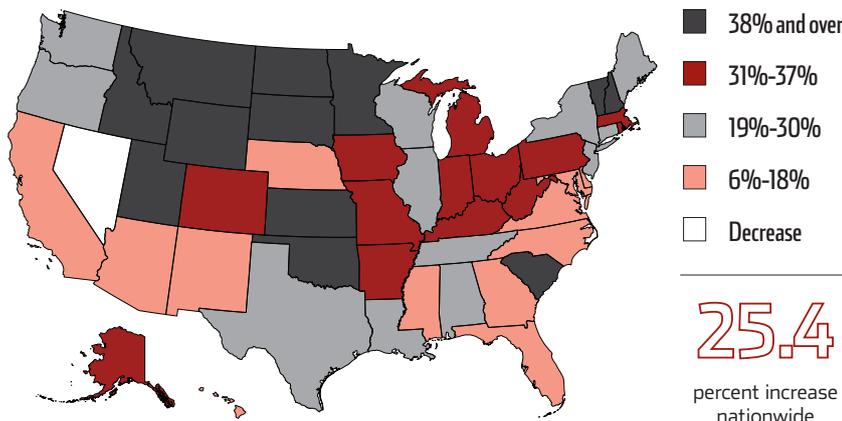
Some studies suggest that people who belong to a faith community are less likely to die by suicide. A study published in JAMA Psychiatry in August 2016 found that women who attended religious services once a week or more experienced a suicide risk that was one-fifth that of women who never attended. But other studies report a more complicated interplay, finding that while “religiosity” generally protects against suicide, it can in certain situations have the opposite effect.

Some groups, like lesbian, gay, bisexual or “questioning” young people who take their faith seriously, are especially vulnerable. More than half of teen girls who identify as lesbian or bisexual report that they have seriously contemplated suicide.

In “Life After Suicide” (*Am.*, 3/19), Associate Editor Ashley Mckinless reported on how one Catholic ministry in Chicago is assisting families in the aftermath of the loss of a loved one to suicide.

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CHANGE IN SUICIDE RATES (1999-2016)



BELIEF THAT DOCTOR-ASSISTED SUICIDE IS “MORALLY ACCEPTABLE”

NO RELIGION	77%
JEWISH	73%
CATHOLIC	47%
PROTESTANT	43%
MORMON	30%

BELIEF THAT SUICIDE IS “MORALLY ACCEPTABLE”

NO RELIGION	36%
JEWISH	38%
CATHOLIC	12%
PROTESTANT	11%
MORMON	8%

U.S. VS. PEER NATIONS: INCREASE IN SUICIDE RATE (2000-15)*

SOUTH KOREA	69.7%
PORTUGAL	60.4%
MEXICO	35.1%
UNITED STATES	29.9%
NETHERLANDS	16.1%
SWEDEN	4.1%
GREECE	3.2%

The United States is one of only seven nations in the 35-member Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development that experienced an increase in the suicide rate from 2000 to 2015. South Korea has both the highest rate in the O.E.C.D. (24.1 per 100,000) and the fastest increase since 2000; South Korea has among the highest suicide rates in the world for teenagers, possibly because of the stresses of the education system. The other 28 members of the O.E.C.D. experienced a median drop in the suicide rate of 22 percent. In Latvia, Estonia and Slovenia, the rate dropped by more than 40 percent.

* Adjusted for each country’s age distribution

SUICIDE RATE BY RACIAL GROUP (2016)

AMERICAN INDIAN/ALASKAN NATIVE	21.4
WHITE NON-HISPANIC	18.2
ASIAN	7
HISPANIC	6.38
BLACK	6.35

Note: Among American Indians and Alaska Natives, suicide rates peak at ages 20-24. Overall, suicide rates peak at ages 50-54.

RESOURCES

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
Talk: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
Chat: www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Sources: National and state suicide rates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; beliefs by religious group from the 2001-2016 Gallup Values and Beliefs Polls of U.S. adults (average over six-year period); national age-adjusted suicide rates from the World Health Organization and the O.E.C.D., which includes countries with advanced economies in the Americas, Europe and Asia; suicide rates by racial groups from the Suicide Prevention Resource Center, based on suicides per 100,000 residents.

In Nicaragua, a crisis deepens as church intervention falters

An anti-government protester holds up his homemade mortar at a roadblock set up by protesters along the Panamerican Highway in Nagarote, Nicaragua, on May 24.

In the second month of Nicaragua's bloody political crisis, masked antigovernment protesters have set up more roadblocks and barricades across the country. Police and paramilitary groups allegedly linked to the government continue to attack perceived enemies of the regime. And on June 18, Catholic leaders announced that they were again suspending talks with the government. After the failure of the latest attempt by the church to establish a dialogue, President Daniel Ortega seems more isolated than ever, and there is no solution in sight for the violence.

According to the Nicaraguan Center for Human Rights, more than 160 people have been killed since Nicaraguans first took to the streets in April to demonstrate against proposed social security reforms. A violent crackdown on protesters by law enforcement—and by gangs observers say are linked to the government—escalated into a broad protest against what many Nicaraguans say is the increasingly authoritarian Ortega regime.

“Ortega has controlled and manipulated all the institutions for years,” Ileana Lacayo, a journalist and activist from the city of Bluefields, said. “They control the Supreme Court, Congress, the judiciary, but they have lost all legitimacy.”

Mr. Ortega has eliminated presidential term limits and named his wife, Rosario Murillo, as vice president. It is widely believed that he expects Ms. Murillo to succeed him in the next presidential election, scheduled for 2021.

Mr. Ortega's soft authoritarianism has turned into violent repression. According to the opposition newspaper *Confidencial*, law enforcement and members of an allegedly government-sponsored paramilitary group set fire to a home in Managua on Sunday in retaliation for a family's refusal to allow its third floor to be used by snipers. Five members of the family died in the fire.

In early June, one city after another was hit by strikes and fighting between protesters and supporters of the governing Sandinista party. The protesters' main tactic has

been to close down roads, aiming to strangle the economy and force Mr. Ortega to make concessions. The western city of León, Nicaragua's second biggest, has been most affected, with an estimated 400 barricades across the city.

Father Aberlado Tobal, a priest in Sutiaba, said he has had to mediate local parish conflicts where Catholic laypeople were caught up on opposite sides of the battle.

“Daniel Ortega should listen to the clamor of the people,” he said. “The situation needs to be resolved soon, or the winners will be common delinquents.” He said his greatest fear is a slide toward generalized crime and violence. Before April, Nicaragua was considered the safest country in Central America.

“I hope there will be a solution in the next few months, but we don't really know what will happen,” said Gioconda Belli, a novelist and poet and one of Nicaragua's most respected intellectuals.

Ms. Belli says she has little faith in the president's ability to reach an agreement with the opposition, citing his stubborn nature. She has known Mr. Ortega and Ms. Murillo for many years; in the early 1970s, she joined the Ortega-led Sandinista Front for National Liberation, which ousted the dictator Anastasio Somoza in the Nicaraguan Revolution of 1979. Over the years, however, she became disillusioned with Mr. Ortega and is now one of the regime's fiercest critics.

“When the crisis started, it took 10 days before he even publicly addressed the situation.... [Mr. Ortega and Ms. Murillo] keep saying the protests are the result of imperialism, that the right is behind it,” Ms. Belli says. “They're playing one half of the country against the other. They want to provoke a war.”

Jan-Albert Hootsen, *Mexico City correspondent.*
Twitter: @jahootsen.
Additional reporting from *Catholic News Service.*

After three priests are murdered in Philippines: 'We are not a nation of killers, and we will not be afraid.'

The Rev. Richmond Nilo, 43, stood at the altar of a small chapel in Zaragoza, Nueva Ecija, in the Philippines on June 10. He was preparing for Mass when two gunmen arrived. Ten shots, including a fatal one to the head, left him sprawled on the floor beneath a statue of the Virgin Mary holding the baby Jesus.

Church and political leaders alike have expressed alarm over a growing culture of impunity for such violent acts, one apparently sanctioned by no less a figure than Rodrigo Duterte, president of the Philippines. His frequent tirades against the Catholic Church are believed to have emboldened killers in the recent attacks against priests.

Responding to growing criticism, Mr. Duterte on June 13 denied persecuting priests. He claimed he was even acting to protect Catholic clergy by not publicly revealing the details of investigations that were incriminating of clergy.

"A priest is no better than me," he said. "Some priests even have two wives."

Philippine authorities announced on June 15 that they had arrested their "prime suspect" in the killing of Father Nilo, identified as Adell Roll Milan, a former drug user and alleged hitman. The national police said on June 13 that the likely motives for Father Nilo's killing were a land dispute and his involvement in helping victims of rape. His death marks the third priest-slaying in six months in the Philippines.

In December 2017, Father Marcelito Paez, 72, known as Tito, was ambushed on his way home from Cabanatuan City, where he had just facilitated the release of Rommel Tucay, a political prisoner charged with the illegal possession of firearms.

In May 2018, Father Mark Anthony Ventura, 37, patiently waited to bless children after Mass in Gattaran, Cagayan, when gunmen shot him dead. Father Ventura had been an anti-mining advocate. Shortly after Father Ventura's assassination, Mr. Duterte was in Cebu to attend an annual town fiesta. He surprised his audience with the suggestion that Father Ventura's murder was linked to affairs with a number of women in his community.

The Archdiocese of Tuguegarao responded to Mr.



Duterte's comments, urging that the investigation not be "muddled by the spreading of unfounded rumors and malicious insinuations."

The Archdiocese of Lingayen-Dagupan declared a Day of Reparation on June 18, the ninth day after the killing of Father Nilo: "Killing is the solution. Killing is the language. Killing is the way. Killing is the answer. Killing is encouraged," an archdiocesan statement read. "The nation is a killing field. They kill everywhere. They are happy to kill. But we are not a nation of killers."

The statement continued: "We are not afraid. Killing is a sin. It is all wrong. This is not Filipino. This is not Christian.... The earth, soiled by the blood of Father Mark Ventura, Father Tito Paez and Father Richmond Nilo, is crying."

Bishop Pablo Virgilio David heads the Diocese of Calocan. The city has endured the most deaths tied to the bru-



Photo by Era Acayan

Mourners grieve by the casket of Father Richmond Nilo on June 11.

tal war on drugs begun by Mr. Duterte. In a post on Facebook, the bishop said that in a recent forum he was asked to offer advice to seminarians “who are losing heart and are feeling discouraged from pursuing their vocation” because of the killings of priests by brazen assassins.

“If a priest is murdered because he defends human rights, like Father Tito Paez, or he speaks out for environmental protection, like Father Mark Ventura, or he protects victims of rape and defends the Catholic Church, like Father Richmond Nilo, and his death causes you discouragement instead of inspiration, then I advise you to forget about the priesthood and leave as soon as you can,” he wrote. “The priesthood is not for cowards; it is not for the fainthearted.”

Nash Tysmans contributes from Quezon City, the Philippines.
Twitter: @nashtysmans.



Photo courtesy of Brother Emmaus O'Herlihy

"John the Baptist"

Breathing new life into liturgical art

“This character, there was a real sense of intimidation. I thought, can I make this guy look more friendly?” said Brother Emmaus O’Herlihy, an Irish Benedictine monk known for his vivid liturgical paintings, as he drew his hands across the canvas of a striking image of St. John the Baptist. “And no matter what I did, he just wasn’t budging, like he was saying, ‘I don’t need to smile, thanks.’ I couldn’t force it.

Brother O’Herlihy said his paintings, which are not intended for galleries but for spaces of worship, are meant to inspire a prayerful dialogue with viewers. But the dialogue starts from the moment he stretches the canvas, working not just with gesso, paints and primer but with the spiritual themes and figures he wants to depict.

Part of his approach is an insistence on incarnation and the bodily side of human life, which he said gets lost for some people surrounded by idealized human bodies in churches. Brother O’Herlihy said the figures he paints would not be identified as iconographic images of holiness, “but because of that, I think they speak to a present-day generation that doesn’t need that; that needs something that says, ‘Yes, you could be this person.’”

From reimagining the artistic tradition of Christianity to bringing the injustices of the world into prayer, Brother O’Herlihy’s painting encourages new possibilities for liturgical life, where participants might meet the saints as neighbors, in all their flesh and blood. Whether we are called by the gaze of John the Baptist or stopped by Our Lady as a young indigenous girl in a red dress, his paintings suggest that perhaps we too might become saintly through challenging, prayerful dialogue.

Dean Dettloff, Toronto correspondent.
Twitter: @DeanDettloff.

A long, dimly lit hallway with a person's silhouette in the distance. The hallway is dark, with light coming from the end, creating a strong perspective. The person is walking away from the camera towards the light at the end of the hallway. The walls are dark and textured, and the floor is also dark. The overall mood is somber and contemplative.

THE RIGHT TO LEAVE

How the church can
help (or hurt) women in
abusive marriages

By Simcha Fisher



“Have you called Tom?”

These simple words from a priest changed Jessica’s life. Through the course of her marriage, her husband, Hal, had gone from irritable to hostile to explosive, until the night he roamed their house with a loaded gun, threatening suicide and worse. Jessica was able to get him out of the house, and, not knowing where else to turn, she went to her “curmudgeonly” pastor for guidance, half expecting to be chided for not making her marriage work.

Her pastor insisted that her first obligation was to protect herself and her kids. Be safe, he told her. You are not safe with your husband, and God wants you to be safe. And call Tom.

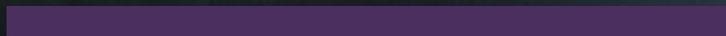
Tom was the diocesan director of Catholic Family Services, and he was the go-to resource in that parish, the one to call if you need help getting your life back on track.

“He had no hesitation, and I didn’t get St. Monica’d,” Jessica said. (Her name and the names of others who have shared accounts with **America** by phone interview or email have been changed to protect them.)

“Getting St. Monica’d” or “St. Rita’d” is shorthand for a common, blithely pious response to abuse from many Catholics: Be more like these holy women! They patiently endured abuse from their husbands, and they were saints!

While St. Rita is the patron saint of the abused, it is worth noting that in the 14th century she had no real option to leave her marriage. She was canonized for her life of holiness, not for being beaten.

Like Jessica, Louise got immediate, straightforward help from her pastor when she revealed that her husband was threatening to kill her. She called the priest when her husband was at work, and he showed up with a truck and 15 seminarians, who packed up and loaded her possessions and brought her and her young son to safety. Louise was a stay-at-home mom who at the



She had no money and nowhere else to turn. Her priest saved her life. 💧💧

time was going through the church's initiation process to become a Catholic. She had no money and nowhere else to turn. Her priest saved her life.

"That was my first introduction to Catholic social justice," she said. Her priest also paid for a deposit and first month's rent on an apartment. He made it possible for her to leave.

Not all parishes have a family services office to call, or 15 seminarians and a truck to spare. In some smaller, poorer or more rural regions, the diocese can barely keep the lights on, much less pay for a full-time social services coordinator. But the simple words of a priest can make all the difference.

"There are still priests who don't get it," said Sharon O'Brien, co-founder of Catholics for Family Peace. The organization's mission, in cooperation with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, is to educate priests and parishes to recognize abuse, to respond to it and to know where to refer people who are experiencing and initiating it.

Angela received differing advice from priests. She was a new Catholic, married to a man who emotionally abused her, threatening a murder-suicide if she left him. When she went looking for help from the church, she was still susceptible to the idea that everything was her fault. One priest said it was a shame she was suffering, but all she could do was offer it up. Another told her she had a demon in her.

But a third priest listened to her story, asked questions and prayed with her. Then he asked her if she loved her husband. She fearfully said that she did not, not at all.

"He took my hands in his and looked me in the eyes and said, 'Then whatever you do, don't go back,'" Angela said. She did not go back. Angela will always be grateful to that priest for his basic act of charity and compassion.

When Theresa began to realize how damaged her marriage was, she contacted a well-known priest by email, asking for prayers. During their correspondence, he gently and

repeatedly reminded her that Jesus wanted her family safe. He checked in with her often, offered prayers for clarity and recommended that she keep an escape bag packed.

"He also made sure to say that he couldn't tell me that I needed to leave, but that I would know where God was leading me, because under the fear would be a sense of peace," Theresa said. "He made sure that I understood that I would not be committing a sin if I left."

She eventually did leave, and her family is now "safe and free," thanks to that priest's gentle and compassionate support. By the same token, a basic failure of compassion and support from a priest can consign an abused spouse to even more misery.

Maria told her priest that her husband was abusive. "I was hoping he'd tell me that I didn't have to live like this," Maria said. The priest told her she had to stay in the abusive relationship.

"He said that God has permitted this, and we only find true peace in God's will," she said.

Maria, a lifelong Catholic, is still in that marriage. She wishes she had not gone to that priest, because now she feels even more guilty for her situation. The burden is all on her to endure the abuse, and nothing is expected from her husband, she said.

"In a perfect world, the priest would've assured me that



Many Catholic survivors who endure domestic abuse repeat the same agonizing mantra: This marriage must be God's will.

iStock.com

God loves women as much as he loves men, and that he values the individuals in a marriage as much as he values the institution of marriage," Maria said.

Discerning God's Will

Many Catholic survivors who endure domestic abuse repeat the same agonizing mantra: This marriage must be God's will. I made a vow, and it is my duty to stay and suffer.

But the Rev. Denis Lemieux of Madonna House, an author of several books who works full time as a spiritual director, calls this notion a disastrous misunderstanding of marriage and of love itself. A spouse who leaves an abusive marriage is truly being faithful to their vows, Father Lemieux said.

"How is it loving that person to allow them to continue to degrade you?" he said. "To love is to will the good for the other person. These are very serious decisions to work through, but I just can't see how tolerating abuse is serving the good of conjugal love and unity. Love them by holding them accountable for bad behavior."

This idea is echoed in the U.S. bishops' pastoral document, "When I Call for Help," which says, "The person being assaulted needs to know that acting to end the abuse does not violate the marriage promises." This is true whether the separation is temporary or permanent.

Are you in a marriage that might be abusive?

- ▶ **The National Domestic Violence Hotline** offers assessment and resources, and also includes a live chat option. You can also call 800-799-SAFE (7233) or TTY 800-787-3224. thehotline.org
- ▶ **Catholics for Family Peace** promotes a specifically Catholic response to domestic violence. catholicsforfamilypeace.org
- ▶ The U.S. bishops' document on domestic violence, "**When I Call for Help**," offers help and healing for both victims and perpetrators of abuse.
- ▶ The website **For Your Marriage** provides an overview of what domestic abuse looks like and how to seek healing. foryourmarriage.org/domestic-violence

In the seminary, Father Lemieux took courses on pastoral counseling and psychology but did not learn in depth about marital abuse. "It was seen as a no-brainer," Father Lemieux said. If a couple turned up showing signs that the marriage was abusive, the priest ought to know right away that the situation is intolerable, he said.

But even if priests consider abuse intolerable, many of those who have been abused feel a complex tangle of emotions around their situation, including guilt, self-doubt

One of the best pieces of advice I got in a spiritual direction workshop was: Know your limitations. ●●

and self-blame. An abuser works hard to make his victim believe the abuse is her fault and that she is obligated, as a wife and as a Catholic, to endure it humbly. They cannot always admit, to others or to themselves, what is truly happening in their marriage.

“I had mentally quarantined certain memories as bad, isolated incidents,” Helene said. “Denial in trauma is a powerful emotional sedative, one reason among many that abused people don’t just leave.”

Helene endured four years of horrific spiritual, emotional, sexual and physical abuse by her Catholic husband, who used to ghoulishly joke to friends that, since they were married, she was trapped and could never leave him. This line was always greeted with laughter, Helene said.

Helene spoke of her marriage troubles in confession but felt too ashamed to include the most damning details, saying only that her husband was not very nice when he was angry and that he drank and gambled too much. The priest listened quietly, encouraging her when she hesitated, and he finally told her, “You cannot keep living like this.”

She was astonished. Helene had told her priest only the “most sanitized, mundane baseline of suffering,” but even that seemed intolerable to him.

Recognize, Respond, Refer

“One of the best pieces of advice I got in a spiritual direction workshop was: Know your limitations,” said the Rev. Matthew McCaughey, a parish priest in rural Louisiana. “Priests get into trouble when they try to wade into territory they’re not equipped to handle.”

According to Nora Calhoun, a registered nurse who often counsels patients in abusive relationships, “Even the most sensible and kindhearted people, especially priests,

who have a natural bias towards trying to keep marriages intact, generally assess the abuse as being as serious as the worst thing that has already happened, with the hope that it won’t happen again.”

“Those who are experienced with domestic violence assess the abuse as almost inevitable to happen again, and with greater severity next time,” she said.

“This is why we say ‘recognize, respond, refer,’” Ms. O’Brien said. “We don’t want priests providing counseling. They don’t have the expertise or the time.”

When a pastor arrives at a new parish, Ms. O’Brien recommends that he introduce himself at the local domestic violence response agency and offer the church’s support, for instance with an annual collection or a diaper drive. The domestic violence hotline should be stored in the cell phones of all parish employees, and they should be able to point both victims and perpetrators toward the U.S. bishops’ document “When I Call for Help.” It is also important for the church to frequently and publicly acknowledge that abuse happens and that the church condemns it.

“We recommend pastors put a note in their bulletin every week or so, saying ‘Someone you know may be in an abusive relationship,’ and including the national domestic abuse hotline,” she said. This sends the message that the parish cares; and the third-person phrasing is nonconfrontational, which lessens the pressure on those who are suffering abuse, she said.

For most people, physical assault is a bright line that must not be crossed in marriage; but they are reluctant to call emotional, psychological or sexual aggression “abuse,” even if the perpetrator refuses to acknowledge or take responsibility for his behavior.

Jennie’s husband kept her and her kids isolated, moneyless, sometimes close to starving. He sexually degraded her, kept her from going to school and constantly told her she was stupid, worthless and crazy. But he never hit her, so it never occurred to her that he was abusing her.

“Nobody wants to admit they’re in an abusive marriage,” she said.

Desperate to avoid what seemed like the failure of divorce, she persuaded her husband to go to a church-sponsored Retrouvaille weekend. Retrouvaille is a Catholic nonprofit peer ministry that helps struggling couples learn to heal, strengthen and renew their marriage through a weekend retreat and a series of follow-up talks and meetings.



Many women say that in retrospect, their abusive spouses showed red flags even before the wedding.

Jennie was advised that Retrouvaille would not help in abusive marriages where one spouse is not invested in change, but no one helped her discern whether her marriage was abusive or not. The Retrouvaille website asks 17 questions about problems in the marriage—like “Do you often fight or disagree without ever resolving the conflict?” or “Are there anger issues in your relationship that seem out of control or has there been verbal or emotional abuse in the relationship in the past?” If an applicant checks yes for every problem suggested, the response is, “Retrouvaille may be what you need.”

After that weekend, Jennie’s husband escalated his assaults. “It became just another tool he used to continue the abuse,” Jennie said. Retrouvaille and all the Catholic couples counseling they received focused heavily on shared responsibility by both partners, which her husband used as evidence that his behavior was her fault, she said.

One priest gave her Jacques Phillippe’s spiritual classic, *Interior Freedom*, encouraging her to cultivate internal calm. A Catholic therapist taught her to dissociate, so that she could endure abuse patiently. Another priest told her that even though her husband was raping her, threatening to kill her, drinking heavily and trying to coerce her into a threesome, she should not leave him because he had not hit her.

Jennie did not see her marriage clearly until she

checked into a secular rehabilitation program, where she landed after memories of her first marital rape made her shut down physically. At the facility, she took a standard danger assessment questionnaire and was shocked to see that her risk of danger was extreme. When she returned home, she filed a restraining order and initiated a divorce.

The Obligation to Seek Safety

When Catholic Charities in the Archdiocese of Washington does an intake, Ms. O’Brien said, they routinely leave a checklist of abusive behaviors with the client and will very often find that 90 to 100 percent of the items have been checked. “It’s an eye-opening experience,” she said.

People of faith tend to be slower to recognize abuse in relationships, Ms. O’Brien said. Many women say that in retrospect, their abusive spouses showed red flags even before the wedding, but they rationalized them or simply did not realize that some behaviors are abnormal.

If she could make one change to marriage preparation nationwide, she said, it would be to always include the FOCCUS Pre-Marriage Inventory—or perhaps a checklist of the 11 signs of abuse included on the back of the U.S.C.C.B.’s domestic violence resource cards.

“Forget the idea that things will get better if you get married,” Ms. O’Brien said. Many divorced Catholics do

Catholics think any behavior has to be tolerated, and that is not true. 🍷🍷

not realize “there’s a reason their marriage didn’t last,” she said. They were fighting “an uphill battle” with a marriage that was never sacramental in the first place.

“We’re so uncatechized. The marriage vow is pretty simple, but ‘for better or for worse’ is not a license to kill or rape. It’s taught that way, though,” Ms. O’Brien said.

Helene’s abusive husband banked on the notion that a faithful Catholic woman would never consider divorce, joking that she was “trapped.” To many abused spouses, this is no joke, but a grim fact they have profoundly internalized. The church needs to work hard to counteract this poisonous idea, which is not truly Catholic, Ms. O’Brien said.

“Catholics think any behavior has to be tolerated, and that is not true. Canon 1153 makes that perfectly clear,” Ms. O’Brien said.

Canon 1153 states: “A spouse who occasions grave danger of soul or body to the other or to the children, or otherwise makes the common life unduly difficult, provides the other spouse with a reason to leave, either by a decree of the local Ordinary or, if there is danger in delay, even on his or her own authority.”

Most bishops have delegated the power of decree to local pastors; and in any case, the first priority is the moral obligation to seek safety, Ms. O’Brien said.

Ms. O’Brien would also like to end the myth that divorced Catholics are no longer in communion with the church even if they never remarry. Divorced spouses are often shunned rather than welcomed or supported in their time of need, she said.

Rebecca experienced this ostracism from her Catholic community after she escaped from her violent husband. For years, she had pushed herself to forgive her husband again and again, even as he beat her while she was pregnant. It was not until she found out the baby she was carrying was a girl that she came to a shocking epiphany.

“I’m going to be her standard of what is normal,” she said.

Rebecca told their priest that her husband was batter-

ing her. He counseled praying together, taking a time out if they get angry, and perhaps having a code word. The battering continued. Rebecca’s husband punched her in the face and dislocated her shoulder.

On Easter morning, after yet another violent explosion, he accused her of ruining their marriage, and Rebecca told him to leave. He did—and a deacon from their church helped him move his belongings. The priest who knew about the abuse gave him money. Because Rebecca was the one who initiated the divorce, her husband became a figure of pity.

“I lost so many friends,” Rebecca said. “I got pushed to the fringe.” The other mothers in her homeschooling group had told her that marriage is a two-way street, and you should not upset your husband.

“They rallied around him,” she said. “The community that I thought I could turn to, all these moms I had built relationships with, just gone.”

Her soon-to-be-ex continued his work as youth minister in their parish and was paying no child support, and his new girlfriend was staying in his home; but the priest told Rebecca she must pray for him as her husband, since their annulment had not yet come through.

“If you’re feeling judgment and condemnation [from Catholics] but getting healing outside the church, why would you stay?” Rebecca said. She left the church but eventually returned, thanks to her family’s gentle support. Rebecca shared her story because she wants to inspire a change in the way abuse is addressed by the church.

Jessica, like Rebecca, left the church for a time. When she came back as a single mom in the midst of a divorce, she felt “super judged.” But she and her children eventually found a new parish, one that did not condemn her for being divorced.

“The Holy Spirit was there. We sat in the first row,” she said. “We felt like we were home, and we’re never leaving.”

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.

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49

Partial List of America's Award Winners

FIRST PLACE

Best Magazine/Newsletter of the Year (National General Interest Magazines): "America Magazine," by The Editors

Best Editorial: "Catholics Must Combat Racism and Bigotry at Every Turn," by The Editors

Best Regular Column (General Commentary): "Of Many Things," by Matt Malone, S.J.

Best Regular Column (Family Life): "Simcha Fisher," by Simcha Fisher

Best Feature Article (National General Interest Magazine): "Lessons on evangelization from the largest parish in the United States," by Leah Libresco

Multimedia Journalist of the Year: Zac Davis

Best Reporting on a Special Age Group: "Can the Catholic Church keep millennials from passing it by?" by Zac Davis

Best Analysis Writing: "De-Christianization in the West is a real threat. But Putinism isn't the answer," by Sohrab Ahmari

Best Reporting of Social Justice Issues (Rights and Responsibilities): "What is the Catholic response to the rise of nationalism?" by Robert W. McElroy

Best Reporting of Social Justice Issues (Solidarity): "Beyond the Wall: Stories from the other side of the immigration crisis," by Ashley McKinless

Best Reporting of Social Justice Issues (Dignity and Rights of the Workers): "Can Catholic social teaching help solve the labor crisis?" by Rachel Lu

Best Reporting of Social Justice Issues (Care for God's Creation): "The Spirituality of Standing Rock," by Eileen Markey

Best Original Poetry: "The Christmas Spectacular," by Joe Hoover, S.J.

Best Freestanding Presentation of Online Video (News): "Meet my dad: The Republican who's hosting Muslim refugees," by America Films

Best Freestanding Presentation of Online Video (Feature): "The Catholic Church in China | A Short Documentary," by America Films

Best Multimedia Package (Series): "Fr. James Martin, S.J.: Spirituality in Solidarity," by James Martin, S.J., & America Films

Best Illustration with Graphic Design or Art Work: "I pardoned a convict who killed again. Here's why I still believe in mercy," by Andrew Zbihlyj

Best Use of Video in Social Media: "Trump & Francis: a history in tweets," by America Films

Books About Prayer: "In All Seasons, for All Reasons," by James Martin, S.J., Liturgical Press

SECOND PLACE

Best Magazine or Newsletter Website: "America Magazine," by America Staff

Best Podcast: "Jesuitical," by Eloise Blondiau; Eric Sundrup, SJ; Ashley McKinless; Zac Davis; Olga Segura

Best Editorial: "President Trump's Dangerous Nationalism," by The Editors

Best Regular Column: "The Good Word by Terrence Klein," by Terrence Klein

Best Review: "How did she lose? Bob Shrum on Hillary Clinton and the 2016 election," by Robert M. Shrum

Best In-Depth Writing: "Looking for hope in Gaza," by Matt Malone, S.J.

Best Feature Article (National General Interest Magazine): "When a Jew and a Catholic Marry," by Mark Oppenheimer

Best Original Poetry: "The Rio Grande (South)," by John Poch

Best Multimedia Package (News): "Lessons on evangelization from the largest parish in the United States," by Leah Libresco & Jeremy Zipple

Best Freestanding Presentation of Online Video (News): "Louisiana's Cajun Catholics Eucharistic Procession," by America Films

Best Illustration with Graphic Design or Art Work: "A life of service is never easy. Having autism can make it even harder," by Andrew Zbihlyj

Best Single Photo (Best Photograph): "What do you do with the mad that you feel?" by Shawn Tripoli

THIRD PLACE

Best Redesign: "America - The Jesuit Review," by America Staff

Best Coverage of Violence in Our Communities:

"A Black (and Blue) Lives Matter protest shows how deep the divide is in Chicago," by Judith Valente

"Las Vegas and the fatalism of

"thoughts and prayers," by Jason Blakely

"Are gun manufacturers and politicians morally complicit in mass shootings?" by Gerald J. Beyer

Best Coverage of Ecumenical/Interfaith Issues:

"Cardinal Cupich and Lutheran Bishop Miller commit to reconciliation on Reformation anniversary," by Angelo Jesus Canta

"The House of Abraham," by Leopoldo A. Sánchez

"A Lutheran's love letter to Pope Francis," by Aana Marie Vigen

Best Multimedia Package (Feature): "Prayer, puppets and pleas for peace in Gaza," by Matt Malone, S.J., & America Films

Best Multimedia Package (Series): "Hurricane Maria," by J.D. Long-García & José Dueño, S.J.

Best Regular Column (Arts, Leisure, Culture, & Food): "Bill McGarvey," by Bill McGarvey

Best Review: "Reflecting on the frightening lessons of 'The Handmaid's Tale'," by Eloise Blondiau

Best Book Review Section: "13-Nov-17," by James Keane

Best Layout of Article or Column (National general interest magazine): "Racism is a sickness of the soul. Can Jesuit spirituality help us heal?" by Bryan N. Massingale

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WHAT MARIA MONTESSORI KNEW

The Italian educator developed the most effective form of teaching children. So why is it still a niche movement?

By Pascal-Emmanuel Gobry



The otherworldly quiet. This is how you recognize a true Montessori preschool. For over a century now, it is usually the thing that strikes people first, and anybody who knows what children ages 3 to 6 are usually like can see why. In a school where the Montessori Method is faithfully applied, the decibel levels will typically be eerily, monkishly low.

The second thing that strikes a visitor is the orderliness. Children go about their tasks in quiet. They clean up after themselves. When they talk, it is politely and at a whisper—even when there is conflict, which is quickly and calmly resolved. Then there is the focus. The children apply themselves to activities with the sort of concentration most adults find hard to muster. It can be a transformative experience. It should be.

For as long as I can remember, I have been obsessed with education. I have read about it widely and deeply, thought about it, investigated it, practiced it in many settings. My research and experience have convinced me that what is improperly called the Montessori Method (more on “improperly” below) is not only superior to all alternatives but categorically so—not in the way that

Mozart can be said to be superior to Salieri but in the way that vaccines can be said to be superior to homeopathy. I realize that this is a bold claim, but I hope not only to defend it but also to show why it is crucial to frame the claim in this way.

We all care and fret about education. We realize how important the issue is—indeed, we often gravely intone, it is perhaps the most important there is. So there is something deeply wrong about the fact that Montessori is still a niche movement in education over a century after its birth. This is a catastrophe for the obvious reasons—all the human potential wasted by subpar education when better alternatives have been available—but also because our collective blindness reveals something deeply rotten at the heart of our collective culture.

What’s more, this should be doubly shameful for us Catholics. Dr. Maria Montessori, the inventor of the Method, was a devout Catholic, but it is not just that. The Method is Catholicism as applied to education, in the way that you might say that the spirit of St. Francis is Catholicism as applied to the Beatitudes. It would have been a disaster if St. Francis had been condemned by the



In Montessori schools, children apply themselves with the sort of concentration most adults find hard to muster.

Peter Bynne/PA Via AP

church as a heretic. But in a way, it would have been even worse if he said everything he did—and nobody cared. That, I want to argue, is what is going on.

The Materials and the Method

What is it about Montessori? In my experience, even most experts miss the crucial thing. Montessori schools feature mixed-age classrooms that look the same everywhere in the world because everything in the environment has been thought out for very specific reasons. Students can choose whatever activities they like from a prescribed list of options—the famous “materials” developed by Dr. Montessori—and can work on them for however long they want. Those materials enable students to learn by using their hands rather than from direct instruction, a process that education theorists describe as the “constructivist theory of education.”

People often focus on the materials because they are what is most obviously distinctive about the Method, and it is true that they are clever in countless ways. Each activity is intended to be self-correcting and hands-on. They are (very) cleverly designed so that the child will discover

step by step what she is supposed to learn. Each activity is a building block to the next. So when children learn to trace shapes inside metal insets that have various geometric shapes, they unwittingly practice the fine-motor skills that will enable them to pick up writing, which they typically do much faster than the average child. Equally well-conceived are the mathematics activities, which work with concrete materials like beads and demonstrate that anyone is able to become comfortable with math.

Then there is Dr. Montessori’s theory of the child. She pointed out that all infants learn how to walk and learn a language, but because it happens to all of us, we forget how incredibly difficult it is to do. Children expend tremendous effort to do it, with amazing stubbornness, trying over and over until they get it right, eagerly, and they do so of their own accord. This natural drive to learn goes on—unless it is snuffed out. Once a child is taught that she must learn only because of the threat of punishment or, as is more popular these days, the prospect of reward and encouragement, her most powerful engine of motivation is essentially wiped out, as if a new program overwrote another in a computer.

Once a child is ready to walk, she will expend tremen-



The Montessori Method is not only superior to all alternatives, but categorically so.

dous effort to do so, but only when it is the right time in her development. So it is with other skills. Trying to teach, say, writing, on a rigid schedule will only convince a child that she is unable to do so, sapping not only that endeavor but her self-confidence and willingness to learn more generally. We can all attest from our personal experience that we easily become frustrated and despondent whenever we have to do things that are either far too easy or far too hard; but when our work is right at the edge of our comfort zone, challenging but doable, not only are we better at tasks, but we often find them positively thrilling.

This natural drive is largely hard-wired within us; and because of the freedom in a Montessori classroom, children will naturally pursue those activities that are right at that pleasurable edge of the comfort zone, where we have the most focus and energy. It is not just that they will learn, say, math much faster. The system is designed so that learning, effort and initiative are all associated with pleasure and success during the most formative years of life.

Montessori is often thought of as “progressive”—no grades, all that stuff about freedom—but other aspects of the method can seem rigid. There are rules; they are just very different from the rules in a typical classroom. The children have to clean up after themselves, whether by putting away activity tools once they are done with them, wiping up spilled juice or sweeping the classroom at the end of the day. But unlike a typical American preschool, the rules do not coerce “sharing,” since they are not an attempt to manage children according to the desires of adults. If Alice will not share with Bob, Bob will just have to learn to wait. Everybody loves the idea of children “learning through play,” and Montessori is sometimes described as encouraging this, but serious Montessorians react to such a formulation with horror.

The activities, it is emphasized, are work. Children have play time, of course, but classroom work is work. “Learning through play” is seen as an admission of defeat, an implicit statement that learning is intrinsically

unpleasant and can only be made pleasant artificially. The Method is designed for the opposite goal, to teach that work is intrinsically rewarding; therefore it must protect children from external influences that might replace internal motivation for work. Hardcore Montessori parents will even—heresy of heresies!—refrain from praising their children for a job well done, since the idea of doing well to make Mom and Dad happy is already toxic. (So they say, “Wow! You must be so glad you drew that beautiful unicorn!” rather than “Wow! I’m so happy you drew that beautiful unicorn!”)

As if to make well-to-do private school tuition payers run screaming from the room, and teachers’ union reps clutch their pearls, Dr. Montessori wrote that the bigger the class size the better, since it meant more opportunities for students to figure things out on their own. She also wrote that uneducated people made better teachers than the educated ones, since they were less likely to try to deviate from the Method; and that the worst teachers of all were those with education degrees and previous teaching experience in the traditional system. The Method is sometimes criticized as too inflexible, and it can inspire comparisons to Steve Jobs, with his imperious obsession with aesthetics, minute detail and controlled environments. Most of a Montessori teacher’s job is presenting activities to children, and this is choreographed down to practically every word and every gesture.

If every activity in the Method must be presented in exactly that way, if every material must have exactly those dimensions, be exactly that shade of that color, it is because Dr. Montessori proved through countless experiments, over decades, on children from every background and on every continent, that those specific attributes produced the same results.

The idea that less-educated teachers are better because they take less initiative shocks us because we instinctively feel that teaching is, or ought to be, a creative activity in which teachers must deploy their spontaneity and innovative skills. But think about what that means. If you hear that a medical researcher working on an intractable disease has unleashed his creativity and thought outside the box, you will applaud. If you hear that your airplane’s safety officer has decided to throw the rulebook out the window and express her inner creativity, you will demand to get off the flight. Human civilization advances not when a genius produces new knowledge but when novel insight



Maria Montessori saw her goals as moral education, scientific education and artistic education.

gets translated into processes that enable non-geniuses to disseminate the product of that knowledge throughout society. It is not glamorous, but it is what actually changes the world. We know we have made progress not when a genius is able to do something new but when non-geniuses are able to repeat it.

Not the Montessori Method; the Scientific Method

Maybe the above intrigues, pleases, shocks the reader. Maybe all at the same time. Maybe we are willing to be sold on the idea that the Method is interesting and has valuable things to bring to the table. But that is not the claim I make. My claim is that Montessori is vastly and unquestionably superior to the alternatives. According to a plethora of studies, including randomized controlled trials, which have the highest evidentiary power in social science, Montessori children do better at reading and math but also outperform other children on a whole host of other indicators, including social skills, self-regulation, creativity and their sense of “justice and fairness.” The effect is more pronounced with minority and lower-income children. As far as I know, no method has been shown in a study to outright erase the income achievement gap—except Montessori. And the latest developments in neuroscience are just now catching up to Dr. Montessori’s theory of the

child developed a century ago and confirming it.

Studies are not perfect. We all know that. Science evolves and one paradigm replaces another.

But I have not yet gotten to the core of my argument.

People typically introduce the Method by talking about the materials or about the philosophy behind it. Sometimes they talk about the life of Dr. Maria Montessori. And it is easy to see why, because it is such an inspiring story. She was the first woman doctor in Italy; she was a polymath who studied everything from mathematics to anthropology to philosophy at advanced levels; she designed her first materials for mentally disabled children, a starting point whose symbolism a Christian can only see as providential. But in a sense, this approach is misleading. You cannot hope to understand the philosophy of, say, Descartes without understanding at least a bit of his biography, but you do not need to know anything at all about Isaac Newton’s life to test the validity of his theories. The most important thing about Maria Montessori is that she never used the term “Montessori Method.” She always referred to her “method” as “scientific education” or “scientific pedagogy.”

Why is this important? Every pedagogical method, whether “alternative” or “mainstream,” “progressive” or “traditional,” starts with an abstract theory (sometimes



Once a child is taught that she must learn only because of the threat of punishment or the prospect of reward, her most powerful engine of motivation is essentially wiped out. ●●

only implicit) of what a child is, how her mind works, how she learns. And it is starting from that theory that it deduces a practical method. Dr. Montessori, who was a scientist by training and never claimed to be anything more, worked the other way around. She started tinkering with materials, first in a hospital setting with patients and then in her first school, whose original iteration had a rigid class schedule and almost none of the distinctive attributes of today's Montessori schools, like child-size furniture and free access to activities. Those aspects were introduced over time and tested, and they worked.

The same was true with the activities. From her findings, Dr. Montessori developed theories, of course, but then put the implications from her theories to practical tests. That is, in a word, the scientific method. The Montessori Method is the only pedagogical method that was completely developed and refined through the scientific method. And here lies the qualitative difference.

The sum total of what humans could learn about pedagogy did not end when Maria Montessori died. But unfortunately, her spirit of rigorous experiment was for the most part not carried on. To take just one example, in my experience most Montessori advocates are opposed to children using digital devices. But given the real Maria Montessori's enthusiasm for, well, almost anything, there can be no doubt that had she been alive for the computer revolution, she would have started experimenting with electronic devices and with software, probably ending up with something for which we have no equivalent today.

The Opportunity Catholicism Missed

Maria Montessori was a deeply devout Catholic and a daily communicant. She believed her method was firmly grounded in the Gospel even as it was based on science, since indeed the two could never contradict each other, as St. Thomas Aquinas taught. She fostered the development of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, a religious instruc-

tion program using her methods, which has also shown amazing results in bringing children to know and love the Lord.

And the Method is indeed grounded in the Gospel. All of Montessori education is geared toward promoting “positive freedom” or the idea that “freedom” does not mean the power to do whatever you want to do but rather freedom from the negative tendencies that would lead you to the wrong choices, giving you the ability to do what you have been called to do. A Montessori classroom is the living embodiment of the Catholic truism that true freedom can be exercised only in an ordered framework. Dr. Montessori saw her goals as moral education, scientific education and artistic education—or education for the good, the true and the beautiful. The Method is incarnate; it reaches the soul through the body. And, of course, with those beautiful objects and precise rituals, it is liturgical.

So, as we must ask of the world, we must ask of the church: Why did we ignore Maria Montessori? Why isn't Montessori education as associated with Catholicism in the public mind as the rosary and fish on Fridays?

Imagine for a second if the church had adopted Montessori education as its blueprint early in the 20th century. Imagine first the countless lives that would have been transformed, the people who would never have reached their full potential in a traditional school. Then imagine the greater robustness of the church. (How many have left the church because of angry teachers or utterly boring catechism lessons?)

Catholics keep wondering what they have to give the modern world that it does not already have. Imagine what it would have meant for the church's witness if, by the 1950s, it was a commonly known fact that Catholics were those strange people who, for example, did not hit their children at school (and everyone could see that it was because they simply did not need to).

Why didn't we do it? We did not think we could make a difference.

By the end of the 19th century, the church had been the biggest educational institution in the world by far, continuously for centuries. Indeed, it had literally invented the school, as well as the university. But by that time, modern nation-states had taken over mass public education. The church could not compete. Modern states had infinitely more money and resources, and they could make school free for everyone and compel attendance, which certainly helped turnout. They were just more “modern.”

MONTESSORI AT A GLANCE

A Montessori classroom is the embodiment of the Catholic truism that true freedom can be exercised only in an ordered framework. Pictured: Marie Veres, H.M., principal of the Village Montessori Center in Cleveland, in 2010.



© NS photo/William Rieter

- ▶ Maria Montessori started her first school, the Casa dei Bambini, in a housing project in Rome in 1907.
- ▶ There are over 5,000 Montessori schools in the United States, including about 500 public schools.
- ▶ The method is used mostly in preschool and lower grades, though there are Montessori middle and high schools as well.
- ▶ Students are assigned to classes that span a three-year range, from birth to age 3.
- ▶ Montessori schools stress small-group learning, with no testing or grading, and students are given a high degree of choice.

THE RESULTS

- ▶ A 2017 study testing children over three years in a variety of areas found that low-income students with a Montessori education were able to keep up with students from other economic backgrounds (*Frontiers in Psychology*, 11/17).
- ▶ A 2006 study tested 5-year-old students from both traditional and Montessori schools. The Montessori students scored higher in reading and math and also saw better results in tests measuring social development.
- ▶ The same study also studied 12 year-olds. All the students surveyed had similar scores in reading and math, but the Montessori students achieved higher results on the social and behavioral tests (*Science*, 9/29/06).

The system is designed so that learning, effort and initiative are all associated with pleasure and success during the most formative years of life. 🍓🍓



And suddenly countries were faced with the question of pedagogy for the first time. Most of them ended up copying the Prussian model. The vast majority of schools, public and private, across the West, despite some variations due to history and geography, still follow the same basic model invented by a militaristic dictatorship in the 19th century. As Prof. Angeline Lillard recounts, what we think of as the “default” sort of school (tables, students of the same age, whiteboard) is the product of a very specific historical time frame and of very specific philosophical assumptions that are either questionable or, from a Catholic perspective, downright heretical.

This comes from the era of the Industrial Revolution, when schools were explicitly modeled on factories, with children as inputs. Bells were introduced to mimic the bells on the factory floor that signify breaks. Learning was induced through a reward and punishment system. (Germany and other European nations were also anticipating mass warfare, and schools needed to produce disciplined future soldiers.)

The approach made practical application of philosophical assumptions. This form of schooling is based on the Lockean *tabula rasa* view that we come into this world as blank slates, as simple receptacles for information, and on the Cartesian dualism between mind and body. Accordingly, the best way to learn something is to receive it in a disincarnate way. Those are assumptions contrary to the wisdom of the Catholic tradition.

Against the Lockean view, Montessori supports the authentic Christian view that every child has a unique, God-given identity and gifts and must, by grace, develop

them. As opposed to the Cartesian view, this approach rejects mind-body dualism. So why didn’t the church embrace it when it came along?

Because we did not—we could not—believe we could do better. In the late 19th and early 20th century, the pace of technological change was much faster than it is today, and the overall sense of the unstoppable nature of technological and organizational progress was pervasive. There was no sense born of world wars and environmental catastrophes that technology could also bring forth tragedy. In philosophy and theology, perhaps, the church was standing athwart history yelling “Stop!” But it was still impressed by all those engineers and industrialists and organizational experts who, collectively, embarked on the most ambitious school-building program in all of human history. They were the scientists. We were amateurs next to them. Of course the best we could do was copy.

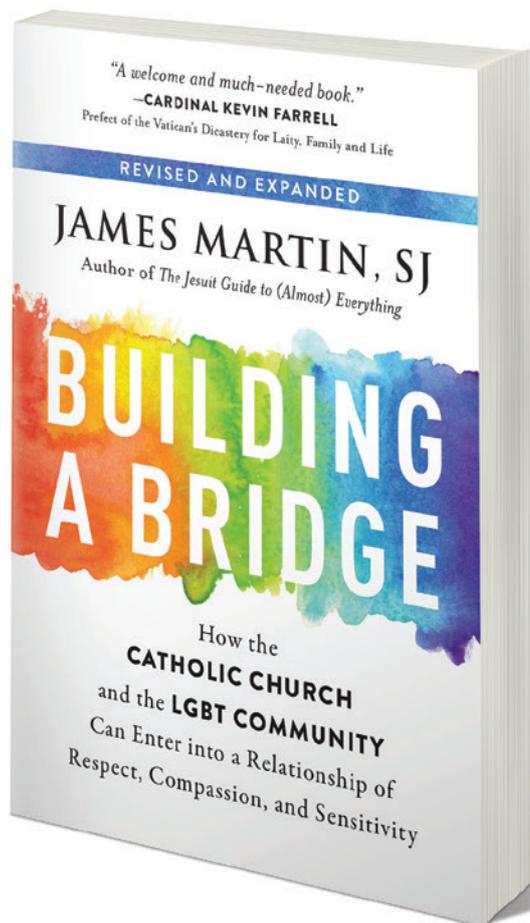
And so here we are.

Pascal-Emmanuel Gobry is a contributing writer to *America* and a fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C.

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TRUE COMMUNION

To become a Catholic
I had to give up pornography—
and the Eucharist

By Jacob Turnrose

At the start of the fall semester of my senior year of college, I was receiving the Eucharist every day. The problem was, I was not Catholic. I had begun attending daily Mass four months before, drawn less by the Catholic faith than by the soothing regularity of the liturgy. Whenever the host was administered, I went up with the rest of the parish and received it without a second thought. I did not think there was a difference between Protestant communion and the Catholic Eucharist other than that one was administered more frequently than the other.

But by September, I could no longer plead ignorance. I had begun to participate in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults and was learning about church doctrine and the theology of the sacraments, including how the Eucharist is the “source and summit of the Christian life.” I also learned that people were not supposed to take the Eucharist unless

they had received first Communion. How could I live with this contradiction: breaking the rules of the very church I wanted to join?

Around that time, I posed the question in my journal: “Maybe I should stop taking the Eucharist until I’m confirmed, but could I bear that?” I had developed a burning desire for the body and blood of Christ. And when I went to Mass, that was the only thing that mattered: fulfilling this personal desire to commune with God through the Blessed Sacrament.

But by fulfilling this desire, I was isolating myself from others. By continuing to receive Communion I was taking myself out of the adult initiation process and creating division between myself and the other catechumens and candidates, who were patiently waiting for their first Communion. I was also distancing myself from the greater



Catholic community by ignoring the stages that the church in her wisdom has laid out for catechumens and candidates prior to full reception into the church. But the thought of waiting for the Eucharist seemed too much to bear. My faith was growing, yes, but it was also becoming increasingly individualistic.

There was another problem. In addition to my daily Eucharist habit, I was watching pornography nearly every other day.

People often worry that pornography encourages men to view women as expendable and interchangeable sex partners, that it prioritizes sexual “intimacy” over emotional intimacy. I am sure that is true for some users. But I had been viewing pornography since middle school, and it was not leading me to have casual sex with all kinds of women. Instead, it led me to completely isolate myself, both sexually and emotionally.

In college, I developed a fear of sex. It seemed so risky. The potential for awkwardness, rejection and pain hung over me whenever I thought about sexual intimacy

with another person. Watching pornography was much better, I felt, because it was safe. There was no potential for hurt because I was alone with a screen. This fear seeped into my friendships, too. It was much easier for me to fence myself off from others and not let anyone get too close because the potential for pain was more than I could bear.

Deep down, however, I wanted more. I wanted to experience intimacy with others. I started by giving up Communion. In the week following my September journal entry, I decided to abstain from the Blessed Sacrament until my first Communion. Abstaining meant abandoning a certain “cave mentality” of living my faith on my own. It invited me to share my budding faith with others who were walking with me on the journey.

But my decision to refrain from Communion also forced me to reconsider how I thought about sex. The par-

allels were all too real. If abstaining from my strong urge to have the body and blood would allow me greater communion in the end, could the same be true of giving up porn?

I started taking seriously the prospect of marriage and how watching pornography might inhibit my ability to be intimate with my future spouse. I acknowledged its disconnecting properties—that it ultimately separates me from others. I asked, how could I share in the beautiful gift of sex with my future spouse if I kept teaching myself, through every porn clip, that sex was a solitary activity? How could I possibly survive the intimacy and vulnerability of marriage when I was fencing myself off from those exact things by using pornography?

These were the kinds of questions that changed things for me.

I saw that I had to expel pornography from my life in order to free myself from its narcissism. Ultimately, I had to free myself to pursue something greater. And it was the end goal itself—experiencing intimacy in marriage—that made pornography less and less appealing to me. Through the grace of God, I stopped a decade-long habit of giving in to the safe, self-gratifying act of watching porn.

Sex was never meant to be a solitary activity, but for 10 years that was all sex was for me. In a similar way, the way of the Christian was never meant to be solitary. The process of Christian initiation illuminated these truths and taught me that immediate passions must give way in order for us to experience true communion.

Four weeks before Easter Sunday, the members of my R.C.I.A. cohort were asked to examine our lives in preparation for receiving the sacraments. After a moment of reflection, we went around in a circle and shared our reflections. I was shocked to hear another candidate speak about the struggle she had with a self-gratifying sexual practice. When this person finished, I jumped in to talk about my own similar experience. She thanked me for sharing, and for a moment, I felt the solidarity that is our true end. We were two Christians, yearning for more.

Jacob Turnrose is a recent graduate of Saint Mary's College of California, where he received a B.A. in politics. He was received into the full communion of the Catholic Church on April 8, 2018. This essay is the first-place winner in America's Generation Faith essay contest.

NINE RULES TO PROMOTE CIVILITY

By David A. Zubik

Timely wisdom from the Catholic tradition

We all know that something is gravely wrong with our public conversation in the United States. The lack of civility is so pervasive that it is pointless to assign blame. We each have a responsibility to change the game, to treat each other better, particularly when we disagree.

Partisan divisiveness infects our church, even on matters of little social or theological significance. Last year, when St. Patrick's Day fell on a Friday in Lent, I granted a dispensation to Catholics in my diocese so that those who wished to partake of corned beef could do so. My inbox was swamped with nasty responses in the aftermath, accusing me of destroying Catholic tradition, purposely undermining the faith and paving someone's journey straight to hell. This is a failure of our social discourse.

Catholic tradition has much to teach us about civility. The starting principle is that every human being has God-given dignity and is worthy of respect. Or, in the words of the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

The Bible also has plenty to say about how we speak to one another. Two stories in particular address our use of language. Genesis tells of a society that sought to challenge God's authority by building a tower high enough to reach heaven. God responded by reducing humanity to a Babel of languages, unable to understand each other or work to-

gether. Humanity's hubris—the original sin reflected in the Garden of Eden narrative—shattered humanity's unity. Language became a source of conflict, war and hatred. Language lost its holiness.

But language was redeemed at Pentecost. The Acts of the Apostles describes how, when the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit, people of every language background understood them. The holiness of language had been restored. This is how we must use language: to bring about understanding and to speak of faith, hope and love.

The cultural headwinds against civility are strong. The screaming heads on cable news, the fortunes poured into electioneering and the "Wild West" of social media make it hard to engage in reasonable dialogue. I am reminded of my homiletics professor's critique of a practice homily that was particularly argumentative, closed-minded and delivered at high decibels. He dismissed it as "C.W.Y.L.H.": "content weak, yell like hell."

Civility demonstrates strength—not weakness—of thought, voice and conviction. It is a way of speaking and acting that takes seriously what I believe and what others believe. It includes a robust and passionate engagement with those of differing views. Civility assumes that the ties that bind us are far more important than the differences we have on important social and political issues. A corollary is that people live and learn in communities, including families, faith traditions, affinity groups and civil societies. Civility requires us to work together within and between



these communities, for common purposes.

Civility is not willful ignorance of another's opinion. It is built upon integrity, which is consistency in our beliefs and actions. When we claim to follow the one who called us to love our enemies but then direct caustic diatribes toward those who are even mildly critical of our views, we have no credibility. And we must be careful to treat those within our family of faith as charitably as we do those on the outside. People of faith demonstrate integrity only when our conversations and disagreements *ad intra* are as civil, respectful and tactful as our *ad extra* dialogues and arguments.

Civility requires a "civil tongue." When we direct insults toward another human being, we degrade ourselves even more than we degrade that person—and we display an impoverished vocabulary. Recently a friend of mine could not help overhearing a man making an angry, obscenity-laden phone call. He used one obscenity repeatedly as subject, object, adjective and verb. My friend was shocked that two young women nearby showed no reaction, especially as it became clear this man was talking to his wife.

I believe that such routine obscenity is related to the vileness of our public discourse. Vulgar language is not the cause, but it is a link in the chain. The degrading quality of our everyday language numbs us to the frightening degradation of our public conversation. Racial and sexual slurs, bigotry, anti-Semitism, anti-Catholicism and hatred in general have emerged from under rocks and slithered into the public square.

We need to recapture the sacredness of language. It is through words that we express life, that we express all that we love, all that we fundamentally believe.

So let me suggest "Nine Rules for Civility and Integrity for Faith Communities and Everyone Else." They come from my experience in ecumenical and interfaith dialogues, from which I have learned much and have formed treasured friendships with faith leaders of other traditions. We can disagree on profound theological and social issues but love what we see in each other's hearts.

1. In a healthy, civil dialogue, we listen to one another. Listening is more than hearing. It requires time and energy to appreciate where a person or group comes from, what they believe and why they believe it. Authentic, empathic listening takes to heart the feelings of another's heart and builds bridges among people who differ on important issues.

2. Civil conversation presumes that we are each working for the common good. We nearly always have areas of agreement and disagreement. Instead of zeroing in on points of divergence, we should first acknowledge where we can stand together. At that point, we can address our differences more effectively. When we work together on such things, we build bridges that can allow a constructive conversation about what abortion does to children, women and our society.

3. Any civil public discussion recognizes the validity of contending groups in society. My goal cannot be to shut

down another voice. Democracy and freedom guarantee differences of convictions and conclusions. I frequently hear from groups that disagree with me, whether it is about gun control or liturgy. They have a right, even a duty, to speak up when they believe the ship is off course. I read their letters carefully and try to respond carefully. I may invite some of them to my office for a conversation. While we may never agree, I owe them the respect of an honest dialogue.

Yet not every cause is worthy of respect. For example, from time to time we see the emergence of the evils of white supremacism, Nazism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. These ideologies must be heard for what they are—efforts to deprive some human beings of the dignity and respect that is theirs as children of God. Even as the First Amendment allows expression of these hateful ideas, we must condemn them firmly and nonviolently. Denounce the idea, not the person. After my predecessor did that 20 years ago, at the time of a white supremacist march in Pittsburgh, a K.K.K. leader renounced his racism, became a practicing Catholic and began working against organized hatred. Civility is transformational.

4. Civility shows respect for the person with whom I differ. You and I can do this, even while we try to persuade someone on the other side of the issue. Search out your critics' strengths: Are they trying to build a better society, help the abused, right a wrong? Affirm them for that, while pointing out that there may be better ways to achieve their goal.

5. Civility works for the inclusion of all members of society and is especially sensitive to minorities and marginalized persons. Sometimes we will have conflict over what "inclusion" requires, but we can disagree in ways that do not denigrate the other person. Differing beliefs about the nature of marriage mean that I will sometimes have serious disagreements with some in the L.G.B.T.Q. community. But if I were to call them names, accuse them of malicious motives or otherwise treat them as anything less than beloved children of God, then I would be guilty of sin. My words would make me the neon sign of the contempt that spewed forth from my mouth.

6. Civility distinguishes between facts and opinions. Let facts speak for themselves where possible. (The quote from the late Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan is more pertinent today than ever: "Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not his own facts.")

7. The flip side to this rule is that facts can only take

us so far. Disagreements about values are difficult, and we cannot and should not avoid passionate discussion. We can critique an idea without lambasting a person.

During a dinner conversation not long ago with a good friend, she held that as few immigrants as possible should be allowed to enter our country. I could not have disagreed more, and the conversation became heated. Recognizing how close I was to leaving the table, I asked, "What if the immigrant was your brother?" The conversation ended with the realization that there was something more at stake than either of our arguments. We ended the evening with our mutual respect and friendship intact.

8. We should not assume or impugn motives. People often turn to bad or questionable solutions out of a desire to do good. Years ago I heard a story about a priest who saw the same woman fall asleep every week during his homily. He was incensed that she used his homily to nap, until he visited her home and saw that she had six loud, demanding children. He left that visit glad that she could take a little nap in church. We never know the full story. So why should we judge?

9. We must be willing to be self-critical. Honest dialogue helps us to examine the roots of our own positions, leading us to clarify—and sometimes modify—our convictions.

Civility is a virtue, a habit of choices and conscience, which shapes the way we encounter others. It does not come to anyone automatically. Like any virtue, we have to work at it day after day after day after day. But we must, if we are to work for policies that support and sustain human dignity, human rights, human life.

Rules such as these, religious values and moral principles will not, by themselves, solve complex public problems. But they are part of the solution. Faith-inspired principles, when expressed with civility and conviction, are more important than ever. Issues like the economy, foreign policy, bioethics, climate change, health care and warfare require calm, thoughtful and empathic religious voices. We must be bridge builders who call the diverse members of our society to common ground, with shared values focused on the common good.

After all is said and done, isn't that what it means to live the Gospel? Jesus showed us how to listen. He knew how to change hearts. Let's all pray to do the same.

Most Reverend David A. Zubik is the bishop of the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

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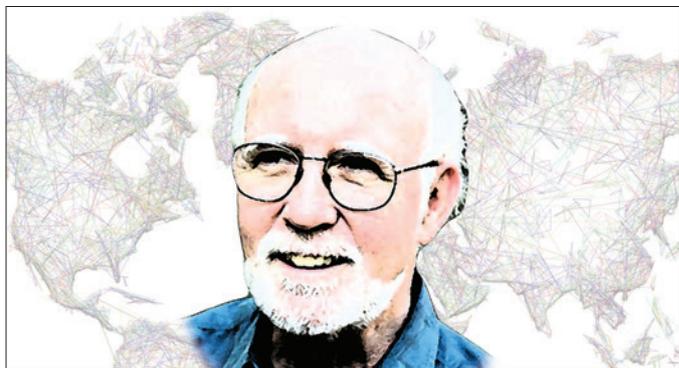
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When the Jesuits left Baghdad

July 17 marks the 50th anniversary of the coup d'état in Iraq that brought the Baathist party to power. After the coup, the two Jesuit schools in Baghdad were closed and the Jesuits teaching there were expelled from the country. The invasion of Iraq by U.S. and British forces in 2003 prompted this reflection from Joseph F. MacDonnell, S.J., author of *Jesuits by the Tigris: Men for Others in Baghdad*.

In the years following the invasion, a group of Jesuits returned to visit Iraq. Jesuit Refugee Service now works in the country, and the Society of Jesus has an apostolate in Jordan that is supported in part by U.S. Jesuits.

My first encounter with Iraqis occurred in 1955, when I taught physics and mathematics at the Jesuit secondary school, Baghdad College. Even though I was dismissed from Baghdad along with 60 other Jesuits in 1969 when the Baath party took over the government, my Iraqi students have never been far from my thoughts. Recently the stories and images sent by the “embedded” journalists covering the recent war have moved Baghdad to center stage for me once again.

In 1932 Iraq was granted its independence by the League of Nations. That very same year the Jesuits arrived in Baghdad. One of the highest priorities of St. Ignatius had been a mission to Islam, which was realized in later centuries in Egypt, Syria and Turkey. About 150 years ago two Jesuits were sent to Baghdad to investigate the feasibility of starting a school. After their caravan was robbed twice while crossing the Syrian desert, they notified the Roman Curia that the time was not yet opportune.

In 1932, however, Pius XI decided the time had come, and at the request of the Iraqi bishops four Jesuits were sent to start a high school. They purchased 25 acres in the northern part of the city and started Baghdad College (“B.C. on the Tigris”), which was founded as a science-oriented secondary school. It became such a great success that in 1955 the government gave the Jesuits 170 acres of land about 14 miles south of B.C. on which to build a new university, to be called Al Hikma.

Although Muslim boys were ad-

mitted to both schools from the very beginning, the objectives of the mission never included proselytizing Muslims. This frustrated some of our supporters. On one occasion, after giving a stirring exhortation to benefactors urging support for the Baghdad mission, Boston's Cardinal Richard Cushing confessed his feelings privately to his Jesuit friends: “This Baghdad mission has to be the biggest waste of money and manpower in the history of the church—not a single convert from Islam!” In fact, our Muslim graduates have stated publicly that their Jesuit training made them better Muslims.

Over a period of 37 years, 145 Jesuits served in Baghdad and in so doing discovered its fascinating history. The splendid cultures that flourished there for the past five millennia included Sumer, Ur of the Chaldees, Nineveh, Babylon and Baghdad of the Caliphs. From here came the code of Hammurabi, the stories of Eden, Nebuchadnezzar and his Hanging Gardens, Jonah, Tobias, Daniel, the fiery furnace, Sinbad, the Epic of Gilgamesh, Scheherazade and Haroun al Rashid. Baghdad's Jewish inhabitants were a remnant from the era of the Babylonian Captivity.

Abraham, revered as father of all three religions, received the first covenant between God and man at Ur in southern Iraq. The Apostles Jude and Bartholomew first brought the faith to Iraq, and much of the country was Christian by the time of the Muslim conquest. Later the Baghdad Caliphs made the 12th century a time of peace



Jesuits found the Iraqi students warm, hospitable and humorous. The Iraqis found the Jesuits happy, fun-loving and intelligent. ●●

for beleaguered Christians and a center of culture, as students gathered from all over the world at civilization's first university, Al Mustansurria.

Government officials were gradually converted from initial intolerance to enthusiasm for the Jesuits' educational work. A noticeable change in the attitude toward the American Jesuits occurred in 1942 during the Rashid Ali revolt, a short-lived, pro-Nazi coup d'état, when most Americans fled Iraq. The fact that the Jesuits made no effort to depart impressed the prime minister so much that he brought his two nephews to Baghdad College the following September. After that, sons of prime ministers, governors, sheiks and professional men chose the discipline and learning imparted by the Jesuits.

The student population of the two schools was roughly half Muslim and half Christian. Distrust between Christians and Muslims resulted from 12 centuries of conquest and massacres, but here on these two campuses Christians and Muslims found a place where real friendships could develop as well as a deeper understanding of each other's religion.

The year 1967, preceding our dismissal, was the most promising year ever for the mission. The pioneering years dedicated to survival were over, and earlier Muslim suspicions had disappeared. Wonderful opportunities indicated a stable future, not only

for the two schools, but also for the Islamic apostolate, the ecumenical work with the various Christians, the spiritual direction of alumni, the lay apostle program and the opening of a major seminary as well as a Jesuit novitiate.

In 1968, following a bloody coup d'état in August by the Baath Socialist Party, both schools were nationalized, and all 61 Jesuits were expelled. On Nov. 25 the 28 Al Hikma Jesuits were given five days to leave the country. Baghdad College was nationalized the following August with no reason given and no compensation offered. No one was in a position to protest these expulsions, because of the atmosphere of terror created by the Baath. Distinguished Iraqi citizens were being arrested, tortured and murdered, and each day ordinary citizens suddenly disappeared. It was not until several years after the expulsion that the Jesuits came to understand the real reason for their dismissal. The Baathists feared a fundamentalist Muslim revolt stemming from the Muslim schools, and so felt they had to close all private schools.

The most interesting part of the Baghdad Jesuit adventure does not concern buildings or huge campuses but concerns rather the students, their families, the Jesuits and their colleagues. It is the people involved who make this mission such a happy

memory, since there was much interaction between young American Jesuits and youthful Iraqi citizens and their families. Much more than other Jesuits in their American schools, the "Baghdadi" Jesuits entered the family lives of their students frequently and intimately through home visits to celebrate Muslim and Christian feast days as well as myriad social events, both happy and sad. Jesuits found the Iraqi students warm, hospitable, humorous, imaginative, receptive, hard working and appreciative of educational opportunities. The Iraqis found the Jesuits happy, fun-loving, intelligent and dedicated.

In the past, great attention was paid to the Baghdad mission by the New England Province, which made major investments of manpower, money, equipment and prayers. After the American invasion of Iraq, some of us were asked, "When are you Jesuits returning to Baghdad?" The melancholy fact is that of the original 145 Jesuits few are still alive. But Jesuits from some province certainly will return, because a place so important to Islam as well as to Christianity cannot be ignored for very long. What form the future mission will take we leave to the Holy Spirit, who took us there in the first place. But one thing is clear: The Jesuit mission to the Iraqis did not end in 1969.

May 26, 2003



On Pilgrimage in Texas, in Search of Light and Color

By Jonathan Malesic

► Ellsworth Kelly's "Austin" is a temple to aesthetic joy that provokes questions about how we experience art and spirituality today.

On a sunny Saturday afternoon inside "Austin," the limestone-clad building designed by the artist Ellsworth Kelly, a young woman walks up to an arc of lime-green light that is cast through a narrow stained-glass window and onto the floor. She holds out her hand and turns it this way and that, admiring how it looks in the light. Then she takes a few steps, and a beam of magenta illuminates her face. A friend takes her photo.

Inside the building, which recently opened on the University of Texas campus, dozens of people roam the barrel-vaulted interior, which is laid out in the shape of a Latin cross. Virtually all of them are looking at their phones. They photograph the light. They chatter in groups while scrolling through pictures. A couple dressed for a night on the town hand a phone to a stranger and pose for a picture in front of the 12-spoked, minimalist rose window in the western arm of the transept. People sit on the floor, comparing Instagram filter settings. I take a panorama of the whole place.

Kelly originally designed the building for a private site in the 1980s, but it was only built after the university's Blanton Museum of Art acquired the design in 2015, shortly before the artist's death. This artwork feels as if it were always meant to be public and to exist in the age of Instagram.

"Austin" has all the trappings of a chapel, but it has no official religious function. It is a Romanesque church

stripped down to its barest aesthetic essentials—a temple to aesthetic joy that provokes questions about how we experience art and spirituality today.

It is also the culmination of Kelly's entire career. Spectra, totems and black-and-white panels have been prominent in Kelly's work for decades. In "Austin," they all interact with each other and with time as the sun crosses the sky and shines through three window designs in succession.

The light is everything in "Austin." Over the course of my visit, the green and magenta on the floor gradually faded, and violet and yellow appeared. The four colors made a wobbly X, the shape of a chromosome. Wider, secondary stripes were reflected on the walls and refracted in a multihued halo on the ceiling. In the mornings, light comes through a circle of tumbling glass squares—they look like Jell-O cubes or Jolly Ranchers—on the eastern arm of the transept.

In the apse, an 18-foot-tall wooden totem, its shape defined by two symmetrical concave arcs, stands vigil over the shifting light patterns. Few visitors take its picture. When the doors at the south end open, it looks out to the State Capitol and the gleaming skyscrapers beyond.

Fourteen stark, square slabs of black and white marble—this one a black triangle joined to a white trapezoid, that one a vertical black stripe sandwiched between two white ones—line the walls at eye level. But you bare-

Photo courtesy Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin



Photo courtesy Rothko Chapel, Houston, Tex. Photo by Runaway Productions

The 14 canvases inside the Rothko Chapel favor the negative way: a mystical, solitary spirituality of withdrawal.

ly notice them. They reflect the light from the windows, too. Like the Stations of the Cross in a church, the slabs play a supporting role in “Austin,” bringing viewers’ focus back to the light, the building’s central mystery.

•••

Just as the population centers in Texas are in continual, often contentious, conversation, so are their signature artworks. “Austin” invites comparison with Houston’s Rothko Chapel and Dallas’s lesser-known Chapel of Thanksgiving, designed by the architect Philip Johnson. While residents of the three cities debate barbecue, climate and traffic, these buildings argue over spirituality and public life.

The Rothko Chapel seems like the near-opposite of “Austin.” If Kelly’s free play of light pushes visitors toward exuberant visual pleasure, then the 14 Mark Rothko canvases inside

the chapel favor the negative way: a mystical, solitary spirituality of withdrawal.

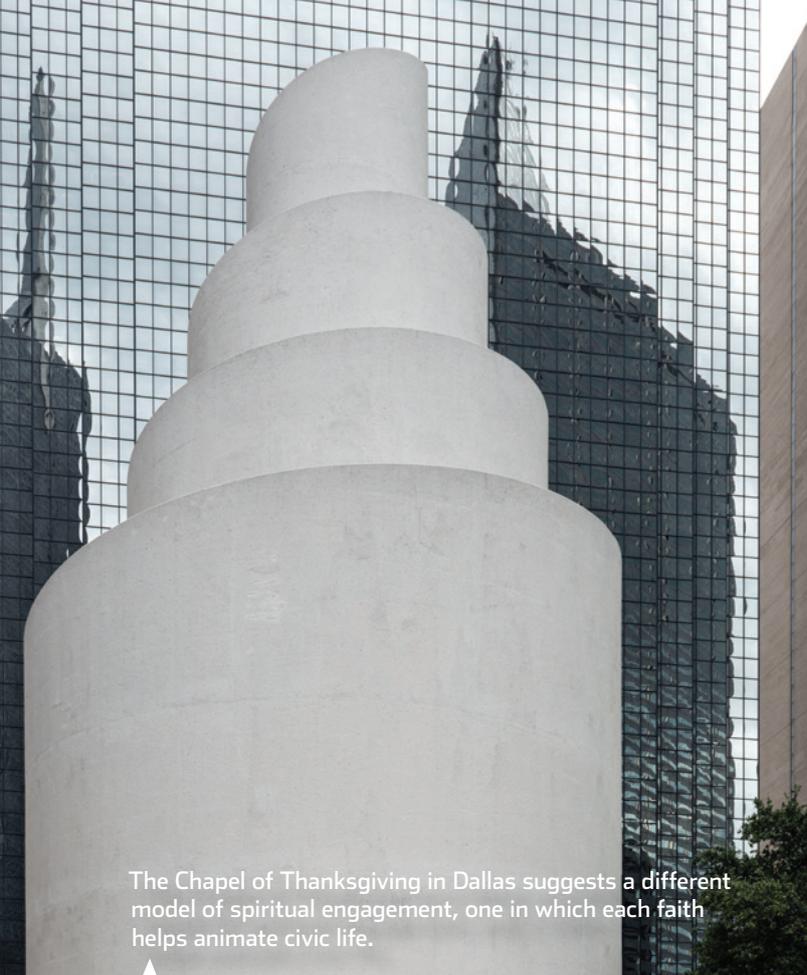
When you sit on a cushioned mat and take up a meditative posture in the Rothko Chapel, the paintings occupy your entire field of vision. In time you realize they are not entirely black or purple, as they seem at first. Fields of green and red appear after minutes of concentrated seeing. An engrossing texture emerges. Still, you cannot find yourself within the paintings. They reflect nothing of what you bring to them.

And you can’t take a selfie. Just a few years ago, the Rothko Chapel’s ban on photography would have been unexceptional. Now it seems radical. Without the ability to mediate your experience through your phone’s camera, you just have to cope with the stark negativity of the panels.

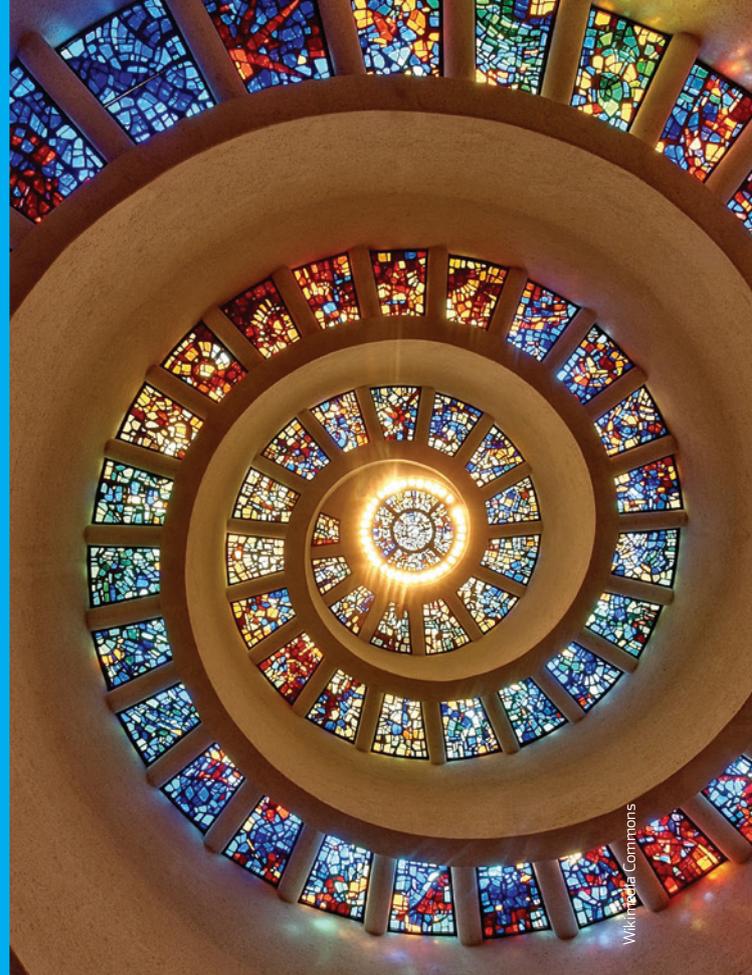
Compared with the joyous colors of “Austin,” there is something harder—though not necessarily better or truer—about that.

In Dallas, Johnson’s Chapel of Thanksgiving suggests a different model of spiritual engagement altogether, one in which each faith helps animate civic life. Words play a significant role in this spirituality. Sayings on gratitude from Christian, Buddhist, Jewish and Native American traditions are carved and printed around Thanks-Giving Square, the downtown park the architect designed, in which the chapel stands.

Dreamed up in the months after the Kennedy assassination and completed in 1976, Thanks-Giving Square was the site of a prayer service for the five local police officers murdered while protecting a Black Lives Matter march in 2016. It is also where mem-



The Chapel of Thanksgiving in Dallas suggests a different model of spiritual engagement, one in which each faith helps animate civic life.



Wikimedia Commons

bers of the clergy have led rallies in solidarity with refugees. (A block away, the Trump-loving minister Robert Jeffress’s First Baptist Church offers a less inclusive approach to religion and public life.)

The chapel’s design echoes a spiral minaret, like a roll of paper pulled upward from the middle. There is only room for a dozen chairs and a marble pedestal inside. But the ceiling coils upward 90 feet, adorned by Gabriel Loire’s 73-panel, stained-glass “Glory Window.” In the chapel’s vestibule is a small desk, where a visitor can write a statement of gratitude on a card and then hang it on a pegboard for others to see.

On a recent afternoon, one note, addressed to God, read, “I want to take a minute, not to ask for anything from You, but simply to say Thank You for all I have.” The writer included his email

address. Another note expressed thanks for a half-century of marriage. Next to it, another read, “I’m thankful to be alone so that when I’m gone, no one will hurt.”

•••

It is tempting to see the sincerity of these prayers as an indictment of the superficial, Instagram-ready experience “Austin” invites. It sometimes seems as if we care more about documenting ourselves than putting in the hard, humbling work of contemplation or gratitude.

But even as artworks converse and argue, none ever gets the final word. There is room for more than one type of experience with art or spirituality. When we post pictures of brilliant color blocks on social media, we are acting out an evangelistic impulse to share what we have seen and the joy we have felt.

Different pilgrimage sites—whether religious or aesthetic, or both at once—lend themselves to different experiences. In fact, they demand their own distinctive ritual actions. At Lourdes, you take the water. When you go to Chimayó, you take the dirt. You go to “Austin” to bathe in the light, to undergo a visible transformation. And you take a picture.

Jonathan Malesic is a writer living in Dallas. Twitter: @jonmalesic.

Rodgers and Hammerstein did as much to create mid-20th-century American culture as anyone.

The men behind our favorite musicals

By Rob Weinert-Kendt



Something Wonderful
Rodgers and Hammerstein's Broadway Revolution
By Todd S. Purdum
Henry Holt and Co. 400p \$32

Adversity can be inadvertently revealing, exposing sides of ourselves we might otherwise never have expressed so baldly. When the playwright and lyricist Oscar Hammerstein II was faced with spurious accusations of disloyalty to the United States during the Red Scare of the early 1950s because of his associations with left and liberal causes in the '30s and '40s, he initially responded with defiant dismissiveness. But then he realized the potential consequences to a career that was going full steam with his writing partner, the composer Richard Rodgers. Their musicals “South Pacific” and

“The King and I” were both running to capacity on Broadway and in London, which required, among other things, frequent trans-Atlantic travel, hence a functioning passport.

And so, as Todd S. Purdum describes in detail in his involving new book *Something Wonderful: Rodgers and Hammerstein's Broadway Revolution*, in 1953 Hammerstein drafted a 30-page statement to the State Department not only disavowing any former association with Communist-affiliated organizations but expressing support for the current “police action” in Korea and stating, in a plaintive self-assertion that is humbling to read, “I have helped write many of the songs of this nation.”

Indeed he had. With Rodgers, Hammerstein did as much to create mid-20th-century American culture as anyone (Ed Sullivan? Leonard Bernstein? Arthur Miller? Lucille

Ball?). In a handful of towering musicals, they captured the nation's broad-shouldered postwar confidence as well as its perennial mix of idealism and nostalgia. Nearly all their most enduring shows are period pieces, and a few do not take place in the United States or feature American characters at all. But whether set in the 19th-century Thai court or the verdant hills of Nazi-era Austria, the musicals of Rodgers and Hammerstein are unmistakable products of 1950s America, with its ebullience and conformism, its consumerist abundance and neo-Victorian prudery.

The question of whether their work has transcended the square, segregated era of its making—a purportedly halcyon age that some people in this country have in mind when they talk about making America great “again”—has partly been answered by their musicals' continuing popu-

Image: “The King and I,” AP Photo

larity, and in particular by a series of high-profile contemporary revivals: “South Pacific” and “The King and I” at Lincoln Center Theater in recent years, “The Sound of Music” in London a dozen years ago and currently a splendid “Carousel” on Broadway. The Oregon Shakespeare Festival features an “Oklahoma!” that has recast its two main romances with same-sex couples. While the gender and racial politics of Rodgers and Hammerstein’s shows can range from outmoded to outright offensive by modern lights, directors like Bartlett Sher have shown how they can still go over today. (His current Lincoln Center production of “My Fair Lady” is similarly exemplary.)

Purdum’s central case, conveyed by the word “revolution” in his title, is that the work of this pair of savvy producer/writers is more rich and complicated—revolutionary, even—than they’re given credit for, partly because of the passage of time, partly because of the mostly so-so film versions by which they are widely known. But for all their serious themes and liberal-ish politics, Rodgers and Hammerstein did not stand athwart the triumphalism of the ’50s; instead they gave the nation’s self-satisfied middle classes the light opera they didn’t know they needed, creating a new market they then oversupplied to the point of saturation, only to be overtaken by younger competitors (and then rock ’n’ roll). If that’s revolution, it is a peculiarly American kind, a la Disney or Steve Jobs, and it is as much about consolidation as upheaval.

Even as young pros on the make, Purdum shows, both Rodgers and Hammerstein were businessmen as much as artists, rising in a commer-

cial theater of the 1920s and ’30s that teemed with brassy ambition and cut-throat competition. Rodgers ascended especially fast and stayed at the top of his field for more than three decades, replacing his brilliant but short-lived partner Lorenz Hart with Hammerstein without skipping a beat. Meanwhile, Hammerstein plugged away more modestly, learning the craft of play construction from European operetta and the trade of theater from his family (his grandfather, the original Oscar Hammerstein, was a larger-than-life theater impresario). His most noteworthy effort prior to teaming with Rodgers was “Show Boat,” in 1927. Written with Jerome Kern, it is often credited as the first serious American musical, not only for a plot that addressed racial prejudice but for another kind of integration: of songs that advanced the show’s story and themes rather than serving as mere tuneful diversions.

That last innovation was the secret sauce of Rodgers and Hammerstein’s collaboration, which began auspiciously with “Oklahoma!” Purdum manages to recapture the unique frisson of what is by now a well-worn bit of theater lore: the moment in 1943 when a Broadway curtain came up not on a chorus of dancing girls but on a cornfield where an older woman churned butter and a cowboy hopped over a fence to sing, “There’s a bright, golden haze on the meadow.” Here was a poignant wartime reminder of the frontier land our boys were fighting for, and a seemingly new form of musical theater that had been waiting to be born.

It was a powerful mix, and the show’s extraordinary success nearly spooked the pair. But not for long:

The darkly soaring “Carousel” soon followed, as did the ill-begotten “Allegro.” Like all the stories of R&H’s more minor works—“Me and Juliet,” “Pipe Dream,” “Flower Drum Song”—the tale of the faltering “Allegro” is instructive. Styled as an experiment, its meandering record of a nondescript small-town man in crisis clearly failed for lack of nerve, not because of overweening artistic ambition.

Rodgers and Hammerstein were already middle-aged men by the time of their earliest success together, and it showed in their work for better and for worse. Smartly if cautiously crafted, often wise and heartfelt but seldom raucous or penetrating, their musicals create their own bright, golden haze. And that is no small thing. Purdum’s excellent book continues an argument that is well worth having, but as with most enduring artifacts of popular culture, from Jane Austen to the Beatles, the work itself is sufficient argument. There must be a reason, after all, that despite my personal aversion to the kitschy *Gemütlichkeit* of “Sound of Music,” my nightly bedtime song for my young boys (at their insistence as much as mine) is none other than the simple faux-folk waltz R&H inserted into the show’s second act to humanize the distant Captain Von Trapp: “Edelweiss.” Bloom and grow forever, indeed.

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

Ever ancient, ever new

Growing up evangelical in Tennessee, Rachel Held Evans was steeped in an intimate knowledge of the Bible from her early years. She grew from seeing the Bible as a childhood storybook into an adolescent understanding of it as a handbook, “because it told me what to do.” The evangelical emphasis on the inerrancy of the Bible colored much of Held Evans’s life even into college, where her conservative Christian professors reassured her that the Bible “would equip me to engage the moral confusion of postmodern culture.”

Held Evans, however, came to prominence as a voice for millennial evangelicals through blogging and social media, which she used to raise questions about evangelical positions on women, the L.G.B.T. community and biblical fundamentalism itself.

Her split from evangelicalism was public and not easy. “The harder my fellow Christians worked to minimize my objections,” she writes, “the more pronounced my objections became.”

Inspired represents Held Evans’s attempt to return to the “storybook” Bible of her childhood. As a memoirist, she admits that she comes to the Bible “not as a scholar, but as a storyteller and literature lover,” trying to see the Bible as a collection of tales best understood “when we appreciate their purpose.” Each chapter begins with a retelling of a Bible story and then moves into an interpretive explanation of a biblical theme.

The themes in *Inspired* reflect the struggle of many American Christians in the Trump era. The Bible is where Christian fundamentalism begins, so Held Evans’s emphasis throughout *Inspired* on social justice issues also reflects a gradual demographic shift

among younger white evangelicals, who, according to the Pew Research Center, skew more liberal than their older peers.

For Catholics who may not have grown up as deeply steeped in the Bible as Held Evans, what *Inspired* might offer is a conversation about what the Bible means to us not just individually but also collectively. “Like it or not,” she writes, “you can’t be a Christian on your own.”

The Bible can be inspirational at the same time that it can be puzzling, infuriating and frustrating. Sometimes the Bible can even inspire change; but in order to do so, its context has to shift to make sense to us today. Held Evans has made the shift, and *Inspired* invites readers to do the same.

Kaya Oakes, a contributing writer for America, is the author of The Nones Are Alright.

Two of a kind

Robert Giroux published many well-known authors over his long, distinguished career, first at Harcourt Brace and later at the firm that would bear his name, Farrar, Straus & Giroux. T. S. Eliot, Thomas Merton, Madeleine L’Engle, Robert Lowell and many others all wrote and learned from Bob, their redoubtable editor and confidant. In this new and perceptive study, Patrick Samway, S.J., details Giroux’s “publishing partnership” with Flannery O’Connor, one that has a special poignancy because of their shared Catholic faith and the limited time they had together.

Samway, a former literary editor of *America* and the author of a biography of Walker Percy, draws from letters to paint a picture of an editor and a writ-

er who rarely met in person but who nonetheless forged a close bond. Giroux was ever attentive, telegraphing O’Connor with good news and promises of letters to follow. And he was unusually patient, allowing O’Connor to make edits up until the very last moments of production, a habit that drives most editors batty. Giroux recognized in O’Connor a true artist with a unique voice, and did all he could to nurture it.

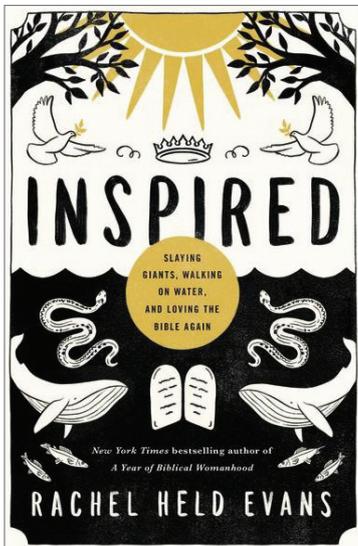
O’Connor died in 1964, after publishing two novels and two collections of short stories with Giroux. Giroux would help promote her legacy by publishing her complete stories posthumously and editing the widely praised letters collection *The Habit of Being*. Samway’s book provides a detailed look at what it takes to be what Giroux called “a genuine editor”—not someone who acquires a

book, or line-edits it, but helps the author to look at it as a whole and advise on structure, balance and pacing. An editor, Giroux believed, must have “judgment, taste and empathy.”

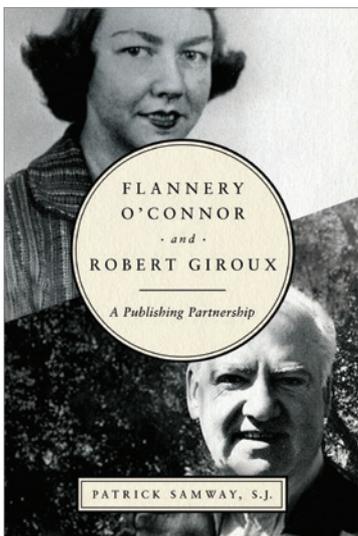
Samway is a valuable guide to O’Connor’s theological influences, particularly the Jesuits William Lynch and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. In an astute postscript, he locates her in the midlands between the two Vatican councils, describing her as someone who imbibed the mystery of the faith at the Latin Mass, but also intuited Vatican II’s vision of a pilgrim church.

Her characters are “people filled with marvelous foibles,” he writes, “on a pilgrimage, holy or otherwise, and in need of conversion.”

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



Inspired
 Slaying Giants, Walking on Water,
 and Loving the Bible Again
 By Rachel Held Evans
 Thomas Nelson. 240p \$16.99



Flannery O'Connor and Robert Giroux
 A Publishing Partnership
 By Patrick Samway, S.J.
 University of Notre Dame Press. 316p \$39

Imagination unleashed

In a world where specialization paralyzes individuals from seeking knowledge in unfamiliar areas, Roma Agrawal reminds us that engineering is not beyond our grasp. But that is not why she wrote *Built*. She wants to spark the imagination for science and engineering in young girls, especially in cultures where such inquiry is not fully appreciated. For the average reader, however, her quest sparks a more fundamental desire simply to garner insight into how the world works. Her explanations are often story-based and accessible. She couples those with observations from simple experiments that all of us did as children that provoked amusement and wonder.

Agrawal is an accomplished engineer working in London on some of the most innovative structures of our times. *Built* starts with how a scientific mind explores forces on those materials that we use to construct: clay, metal, stone and more. But the more intriguing sections of the book are those in which she asks more profound questions: How high do we want to build? How are we grounded? What does it mean to tunnel into the ground?

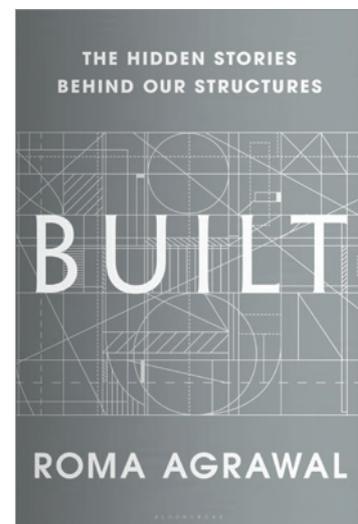
She remarks throughout about those social forces that have limited women in science and engineering. Her idol is Emily Warren Roebling, a woman who loved science as a young girl and who ended up championing the construction of the Brooklyn Bridge when her husband, the lead engineer, took ill. The book is not overbearing or preachy, just filled with subtle (and not so subtle) reminders of how we continue to exclude certain members of the human family from op-

portunities in these fields.

My only criticism of the book is Agrawal's unquestioning reliance on computers to churn out the multitude of complicated equations needed for projects to be successful. Perhaps I am a Luddite, but her portrayal of human imagination is weak in comparison with her stress on the highly efficient but less pliable capacity of computers.

The value of her writing lies not just in her quest to spark the imagination for the sciences and engineering in young women, but also in her capacity to rekindle the spark for understanding complex disciplines in a world suffering under the tyrannical weight of specialization.

Gilbert Sunghera, S.J., is an associate professor in the School of Architecture at the University of Detroit Mercy.



Built
 The Hidden Stories Behind Our
 Structures
 By Roma Agrawal
 Bloomsbury. 320p \$28



Couples therapy with Chris Rock

By Jake Martin

Chris Rock's first stand-up special in a decade might seem an unlikely source of relationship guidance. But all couples—the long-term and the newly-minted—should watch “Tambourine” on Netflix. I would go so far as to suggest that it should be mandatory viewing in all diocesan Pre-Cana programs. Can someone start an online petition for that?

Rock's segment on relationships is grounded in personal experience. While it is not the first time he has taken from his own life in his act, it is the first time he has made himself so vulnerable. His recent divorce and his own self-professed failure as a husband provide the springboard for his bits on relationships, which fill the entire second half of this one-hour special.

Rock confesses his sins as a cautionary tale. His ego, his failed marriage, his competitiveness, his infidelity and his addiction to pornography are all explored and utilized, not so much for laughs, but for catharsis and edification, both his and our own. Rock likens being in a committed re-

lationship to being in a band. “Sometimes you play lead, sometimes you play the tambourine. And when you play the tambourine, play it right.” Thus the title of the special.

We live in a confessional age (thanks a lot, Sylvia Plath!). What used to be content solely for the dark, wooden confines of the church confessional is now casually served up in tweets, posts and bestselling memoirs. Rock is not breaking new comedic ground, but what makes it so compelling is that he is the one who is doing it. He has built a career on being a critic. His laser-focused observation and searing commentary are delivered, while keeping his audience completely at ease, with his raspy voice and ubiquitous mischievous grin.

In many ways he fits the archetypal man-boy of comedy. While never lacking depth topically, his humor traditionally stayed near the surface emotionally and personally. This does not speak to a deficiency in his previous work. Emotional depth and vulnerability were just not a part of the Rock persona.

It is this new variable, this paradigm shift, that gives the confessional element in his work its power. He speaks of the irreparable damage that his cheating did to his marriage. As he says, he cheated because he wanted “something new.” He then goes on to say that the consequence of this desire for “something new” is that “your woman finds out and now she's ‘new.’ She's never the same again. So now you've got new, but it's a ‘bad new.’”

He continually refers to himself as “a bad husband,” stating that “I didn't listen, I wasn't kind, I thought I could do whatever I want because I made all the money. I didn't play the tambourine.” Chris Rock is hurting for all of us to see. He is a humbled man, full of regret, in pain. It is all of his own doing, and he freely owns up to it. His cries are not the inauthentic, self-deprecating ones of a Woody Allen. There is no manipulation here, no playing of “poor me” for a laugh or for anything else—just a real man in pain.

This transition, this new element of humility and vulnerability, was necessary and perhaps inevitable. Come-



In his new Netflix show, Chris Rock speaks of the irreparable damage that his cheating did to his marriage.

dy is a young man's game, and Rock is no longer young in "comedian years."

For all its merits, "Tambourine" is not as funny as his earlier work, most specifically his seminal HBO special "Bring the Pain." Gone is the hyperkinetic rapid-fire delivery and the stalking intensity of 20 years before, when there seemed to be an urgency to his message that his body couldn't contain. Now his gait is more measured, and he seems less to be fuelled by high voltage synapses and more by the middle-ager's second cup of coffee.

With age, Rock has lost some of his comedic teeth—the eagerness and vitality of 20 years ago have been sanded down, undoubtedly by much success, fame and, clearly, pain. The sharp-as-a-tack man-boy of comedy has become a divorced middle-aged man. But while the laughs don't come quite as frequently or loudly, the message goes a lot deeper.

Jake Martin, S.J., special contributor.
Twitter: @jakemartin74.

Why the Catholic Church cares about sports

Released on June 1, "Giving the Best of Yourself: A Document on the Christian Perspective on Sport and the Human Person" is the Catholic Church's first major document about sports. It attends closely to what happens to the human person in the context of playing sports and asks what leads to his or her integral development or to diminishment and desolation. It also considers the impact of sports on society, the pursuit of the common good and the unity of the human family.

While sports historians tend to characterize Christian attitudes toward the body as negative, in fact Christians traditionally have emphasized the goodness of the material world and that the person is a unity of body, soul and spirit. St. Thomas Aquinas asked in his *Summa Theologiae*, "Can there be a virtue about games?" His answer: "Yes." For Thomas, virtue was associated with moderation, and so working or studying all the time would be excessive. There was a need for play and recreation in a fully human life. This "play ethic" led the humanists and early Jesuits to provide time for play and sport during the school day.

One way playing team sports does

good for the human person is by providing a context within which an individual experiences community. In our internet age it provides young people with opportunities for face-to-face encounters while they are engaging in an activity that stirs passions. In such a context, they must learn to exercise self-control and how to manage conflicts within the team.

The Vatican document notes that because there are human goods associated with sports, all who wish to participate should be able to do so, including poor or displaced children, physically or intellectually disabled persons and refugees. It mentions that in some parts of the world girls and women are not allowed to participate in sports and thus cannot experience the joy and benefits of such activities. And it points to the Special Olympics and the Paralympics, as well as the Homeless World Cup and the creation of a Refugee Olympic Team in 2016, as signs of hope.

Patrick Kelly, S.J., is an associate professor of theology and religious studies at Seattle University. He contributed to the new Vatican document on sports.



Rob Hagan, O.S.A., chaplain of Villanova University's basketball team, after the team won the national championship in April.

(CNS photo/ Robert Deutsch, USA TODAY Sports via Reuters)

e.g. sublimation

By Jasmine Throckmorton

Maybe people can hurt us not because we love them;
maybe we love them because they can hurt us.

At least I tell myself this
when the light of my phone flares
up from the nightstand, haloed blue

against the dark air of my room.
I know without turning over
it's a message from you.

It will blink, an unanswered satellite.

Tomorrow, when you pretend to chance
upon me, either to intrude or comfort,
I'll explain that I meant to call sooner.

But these days I slide myself
under the microscope.
You might notice vulnerability

is my favorite shade to vaunt,
so pardon me while I push you away
this time. If the stake we wager is pain,

then I am like a raccoon in a dumpster,
gorged on my spoils, skimmed
by a flashlight's beam.

Jasmine Throckmorton is currently studying for a master's degree on a Fulbright fellowship at University College Cork in Ireland. She has been published previously in Soliloquies Anthology and Quarryman. This poem was a runner-up for the 2018 Foley Poetry prize.

A Place for God

Readings: Am 7:12-15, Ps 85, Eph 1:3-14, Mk 6:7-13

Mark uses the phrase “unclean spirits” more than any other biblical writer. In fact, the phrase is quite rare outside Mark’s Gospel. The phrase tells us something, therefore, about Mark’s religious imagination and the role he believed Jesus played in the salvation of humanity.

The terms *clean* and *unclean* suggest a ritual outlook. People, places and things that were clean could host or safely encounter the divine presence. The inner sanctuary of the Temple was the ultimate example of clean; it was so pure that the Spirit dwelt there perpetually. People who followed the Torah’s instructions were likewise clean and could approach the divine presence in the Temple or be filled with the Spirit themselves. All Israel—its people, cities, villages and land—was likewise clean when Israel stayed loyal to the covenant (Lv 26:34; 2 Chr 36:21; Ez 7:23, 9:9). By contrast, the desert was the ultimate “unclean” place, the haunt of evil spirits and wild animals.

Many in Jesus’ day feared that evil spirits had begun to creep into Israel and take possession of many (e.g., Luke 11:24). The possible reasons for this included corruption of the Temple and its priests, increased sinfulness among ordinary Israelites, the presence of pagan troops on Israelite soil or the lack of a Davidic king. It is not clear whether people thought they had become targets of unclean spirits because of their sins or whether it was simply their own misfortune, but the result was the same: physical and mental illness, permanent disabilities and exclusion from community life. Whatever the causes, in Mark’s mind the presence of so many unclean spirits suggested a diminishment of God’s presence in Israel.

An essential role of Jesus’ rescue mission was the eradication of unclean spirits and a restoration of God’s active presence. In this Sunday’s Gospel, Jesus sends out the apostles to take on that mission themselves. Their traveling gear, including a staff and sandals, resembled that of the Israelites on the night of their liberation from Egypt and foreshadowed the new liberation God had planned. Their simple living on the road allowed them to give away their services free, which symbolized God’s gratuitous love.

*‘They drove out many demons,
and they anointed with oil many
who were sick and cured them.’
(Mk 6:13)*



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

From what unclean spirits do you need to escape?

From what unclean spirits can you liberate someone else?

In Mark’s mind, the apostles’ message of repentance was linked to their ministry of deliverance. Unclean spirits manifested themselves not only as illnesses of body and mind but also as compulsive vices like cruelty, greed or pride. These unclean things can distort and even completely hinder encounters with God’s presence. The apostles’ message included a call to repentance as a way of driving away such obstructive spiritual forces.

Christ sends out his disciples today on the very same mission. We recognize unclean spirits today not through the illnesses they cause but through the minds they enrap-
ture. Individuals, communities, even whole nations can fall prey to systems of thought that obscure God’s love or subvert the means to imitate it. Suicide, addiction, ethical confusion and a general sense of hopelessness are just a few of the signs that unclean spirits prowl our world. Through acts of mercy and love, Christ’s disciples restore God’s active presence and liberate their brothers and sisters from the unclean things that keep them bound.

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

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Moved in His Depths

Readings: Jer 23:1-6, Ps 23, Eph 2:13-18, Mk 6:30-34

In this Sunday's Gospel passage, Mark gives us a glimpse of Jesus' inner state. Such insights are comparatively rare. The Gospels recount the effect Jesus had on the emotions of others, but Jesus' own feelings are usually left unreported. The New American Bible that Catholics use at Mass reads, "His heart was moved with pity for them." This is an artful translation of the Greek, which uses an earthier term, *splagchnízomai*, to describe Jesus' state. The word means something like "guts, bowels." A literal translation would read something like "He was moved in his guts for them." By using this word, Mark makes a strong connection between Jesus and the God of Israel, whose mercy is regularly described in the Septuagint with the same word. The Hebrew word behind this term is *rahamim*, a term closely related to the words for "womb" and "love." Not surprisingly, the word is strongly identified with motherhood. The feeling Jesus experiences is similar to that of a mother responding to an infant's hunger or to her child's cry. *Rahamim* is sympathy that inspires immediate action. In Jesus' case, it led to an extended sharing of the good news that ended with the miracle of the loaves and fishes.

'His heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd.'

(Mk 6:34)



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Have you too had a flash of insight? Try to remember the event with as much detail as you can.

How did it help you recommit to your Christian mission?

This was an important juncture in Jesus' ministry, since he had recently suffered two disheartening setbacks, the rejection of Nazareth and the execution of John the Baptist. In the aftermath of these events, when Jesus could have started to question the value of his work, he instead paid attention to the Scriptures and to the promptings of the Spirit. The Father responded with a flash of insight: The setbacks are temporary, but the shepherding mission that Jeremiah foretold endures. In that moment, the crowd became a symbol of all humanity, with its confusion, hopes, thwarted dreams and industrious self-defeat. This intuitive flash filled Jesus with compassion, and that feeling drew him onward to ever greater action.

These moments of insight happen at critical points in Jesus' ministry. Mark recounts another in 10:21, when the rich young man asks Jesus what he must do to be saved. "Jesus, looking at him, loved him." Not long after this encounter, Jesus embarked on the journey to Jerusalem that ended with the cross. Likewise, in Lk 19:41, when Jesus caught sight of Jerusalem, he wept over it. The sight of the young man and of the city moved him so deeply that he remained committed to his mission. He acted not just for those he saw, but for the entire lost humanity they symbolized.

This is our mission as disciples. If we pay attention to the Scriptures and to the voice of the Spirit, God will open our eyes as well. In the leaderless flock, Jesus caught a glimpse of the suffering and beauty of all humanity. Just so, God has a vision in store for us. Some moment, some insight, some event will symbolize the whole of human existence with such heartbreaking clarity that we will never be the same. Thus transformed, the great shepherd will provide what we need in the Spirit to continue his mission until God's flock is once again whole.

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



A Moment of Prejudice

When my religious habit almost cost me a job

By Josephine Garrett

As human beings, we all long to find common ground, both in our most intimate relationships and with all people. I am a member of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth; and over the past seven years of formation, I have discovered that my own desire to connect can sometimes become an inordinate attachment to receiving praise from others. I have often struggled with sacrificing integrity and authenticity to orchestrate connection.

Recently, I interviewed for positions as an intern with several organizations. One of these positions was especially highly sought-after, and I did not expect to hear back from the hiring team. To my surprise, I received an offer to continue in the interview process. There was just one condition: I would not be able to wear my religious habit. This was the first time I had experienced discrimination as a religious sister.

A week after the offer, I spoke with the supervisor. She said that not wearing my religious garb was necessary because specific ethnicities might struggle with my Catholic identity. She also said she was concerned that a sister would not be able to address sexual matters during counseling sessions.

As I listened to her speak, I began to pray. The first thing that came to my mind was “She is God’s daughter.” I was struck by this. She was pushing me away because of a difference be-

tween us, and the bias she had was in response to that perceived difference. I, on the other hand, was being challenged by the Spirit to remember that despite this bias, she and I are family, both God’s daughters.

I was tempted to give in, in order to avoid conflict. It was difficult, but I responded to her in truth that day. I told her that I did not think it was a good idea to remove my habit merely because she was fearful of how I would be perceived. I added that my hope was to find an organization and supervisor who would help me to sit before clients authentically as myself and at the same time empower them to be authentically themselves, no matter the differences between us. She told me she would think about our conversation and call me back with a final answer.

Following the encounter, I thought: How can I reconcile the supervisor’s bias with her being God’s daughter? I do not want to romanticize bias. Bias has been fuel for oppression and violence throughout history. What is also true is that, as St. Augustine said, “the essence of sin is disordered love.” The various conflicts in the United States fueled by biases are only growing: race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, political divisions among Catholics, the right kinds of religious orders, the wrong kinds of religious orders. Division is on the rise, encounter is on the decline, and biases (on all sides, even among the

most well-intentioned) are increasingly justified with eloquent words and intellectual concepts.

We want to understand, and we want to have common ground. Bias seeks this in a violent manner, by dominance—disordered love. The life of Jesus in each of us allows us to call ourselves sons and daughters of God (Gal 4:1-7) and therefore to be built up into one body, one family, “the final realization of the unity of human race.” Jesus is our common ground, and as Catholics, we are called to see Jesus in everyone and to see a glimmer of ourselves as well, if the Gospel vision is true.

I believe the Spirit whispered, “She is God’s daughter” to me that day to remind me not to fear, to respond in truth and love and to trust. The supervisor and I eventually met in person and connected. We laughed a lot, and she became an advocate for me in the interview process with the organization. I accepted a different offer, but I am grateful for the encounter. It felt like a small step toward the Gospel vision “that they may all be one” (Jn 17:21).

Josephine Garrett, C.S.F.N., professed her first vows with the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth in October 2015. She is studying to be a clinical mental health counselor, serves in vocations ministry and speaks at youth and young adult retreats and conferences around the country.

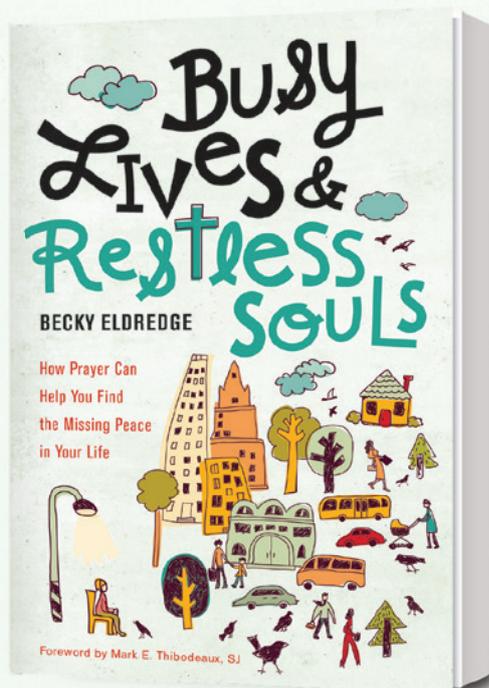
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