

America

AUGUST 6, 2018

THE JESUIT REVIEW OF FAITH AND CULTURE

2018 CPA MAGAZINE OF THE YEAR

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PRAY WITH THE JESUITS WHEREVER YOU ARE

The
Examen

with Fr. James Martin S.J.

YOUR DAILY PRAYER

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Funny you should ask

“On the Mount Rushmore of stand-up comedy,” Jerry Seinfeld once observed, “there are four faces: Richard Pryor, George Carlin, Bill Cosby and Don Rickles.” Obviously, Mr. Seinfeld was referring to their professional accomplishments, not their private conduct. By that standard, I think he is probably right; though, as Chris Rock has argued, the memorial might also include Joan Rivers, who broke new ground in the largely all-male world of professional comedy, leaving a lasting mark on late night television. Truth is, I do not really know enough to decide whose image should be etched in some metaphorical stone.

Yet Mr. Seinfeld’s comment got me thinking about what those famous folks have in common and whether it might explain how American comedy is and is not like its British cousin. I can tell you this after living in London for three years. It is easy to see that British and American comedy are different; it is not so easy to say how. Perhaps that is because there is something inherently mysterious about comedy. Most of us have a sense of when something is funny and when it is not, especially when we transgress that boundary. But it is much harder to say why something is funny and, even more, to say why someone is funny.

I suspect that what is unique about American comedy is rooted in that “someone,” in the people who created it. If Mr. Seinfeld is correct, then American comedy is largely the creation of Jews, Catholics and African-Americans. That is not to say that other groups have not made important contributions. But after a quick survey of the historical and

contemporary comedic landscape, one gets the sense that if we were to remove the influence of Jews, Catholics and African-Americans from American comedy, we would be left with something like Ziggy. (That’s a joke, meant to test the hypothesis in the second paragraph).

Still, like most jokes, there is some truth in it. For one thing, good comedy is usually the work of outsiders looking in. Mr. Seinfeld’s observational, what’s-the-deal-with-airline-peanuts brand of comedy is a good example: He steps out of the minute absurdities of our common life and invites us to join him there, outside, to peer in and laugh at how ridiculous the party looks through the window.

Since the story of the United States is largely the story of outsiders becoming insiders, it is probably not a coincidence that the principal creators of our distinct brand of comedy belong to groups who were, at one point or another, on the outside looking in.

So maybe the difference between American comedy and its British counterpart is the singularly American ambition to go to the party, accompanied by the confidence that in America we can and eventually will. A similar ambition exists among the British, but more often than not the joke is about how those on the outside looking in are likely to stay there, because they were born to the wrong family, in the wrong class, or went to the wrong school.

In other words, American comedy is more optimistic. The British comedian Stephen Fry once put it this way: “That scene in *Animal House* where there’s a fellow playing folk music on

the guitar and John Belushi picks up the guitar and destroys it. The cinema loves it. [Belushi] just smashes it.... Everyone thinks, ‘God, is he great!’ Well, the British comedian would want to play the folk singer. We want to play the failure.”

Yet that explanation tells us only that culture can determine how something is funny. It does not tell us why something is funny. Since it is ultimately a mystery, we surely cannot know the answer in any definitive sense. But I found a clue in, of all things, a definition of the church from the writings of the theologian William T. Cavanaugh: “The mission of the church,” he wrote, “is to enact the comedy of redemption amid the tragedy of the world.”

Popular comedy strikes me as doing something similar. Every laugh expresses a hope—the hope that this mysterious, terrifying world is somehow intelligible, or survivable, or both; that, at a basic level, we can make sense of the world, or at least make our way through it without being crushed by the weight of events. When we laugh at the absurdity of life, we embrace it anew with a daring we somehow lacked before.

Comedy, then, doesn’t just tell us what the deal is with airline peanuts. It tells us what the deal is with ourselves, and why it is important to take this very serious world—and our very serious selves—a little less seriously.

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



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A woman places flowers on coffins holding the remains of 172 unidentified people prior to a funeral in San Juan Comalapa, Guatemala, June 20. Tens of thousands of people disappeared during Guatemala's long civil war.

Cover image: "Ville de Sète 3009" by Bodys Isek Kingelez. © Pierre Schwartz ADAGP; courtesy Musée International des Arts Modestes (MIAM), Sète, France

AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd

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As doctors, we are called to heal our
patients—and ourselves

How should the legality of abortion be determined?

In answer to the above question, the largest share of respondents (30 percent) told **America** that the legality of abortion should be determined by the Supreme Court, as it currently is. “The Supreme Court focuses on the intention and constitutionality of law, but under the premise that new information and interpretation is always relevant,” wrote Jaime Piernicky of Omaha, Neb. “The Supreme Court (in theory) is free to be more objective.” Debra Lukacsco of Hardyston Township, N.J., concurred: “There should be one law for the entire nation. It should not be a state by state decision.”

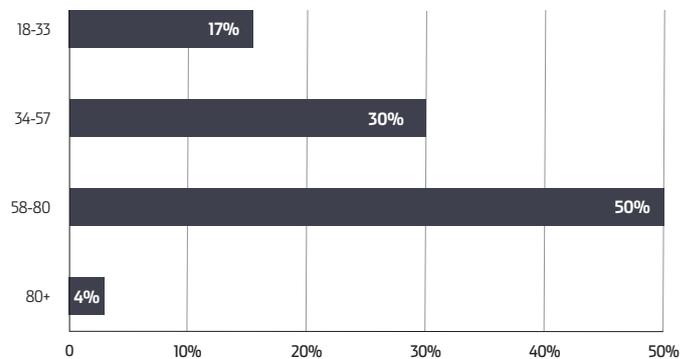
Twenty percent of respondents argued a constitutional amendment would be a better method to determine the legality of abortion. Michael Mullen of Laguna Woods, Calif., explained that he gave this answer because “I think this is the most potentially permanent and effective means of change.”

Alternatively, 19 percent of respondents proposed that the legality of abortion should be determined by statewide referenda. “A vote of the people would give the law more legitimacy than the other options,” said Mari-on Eagen of Clark’s Green, Pa. Karen Stigers of Kansas

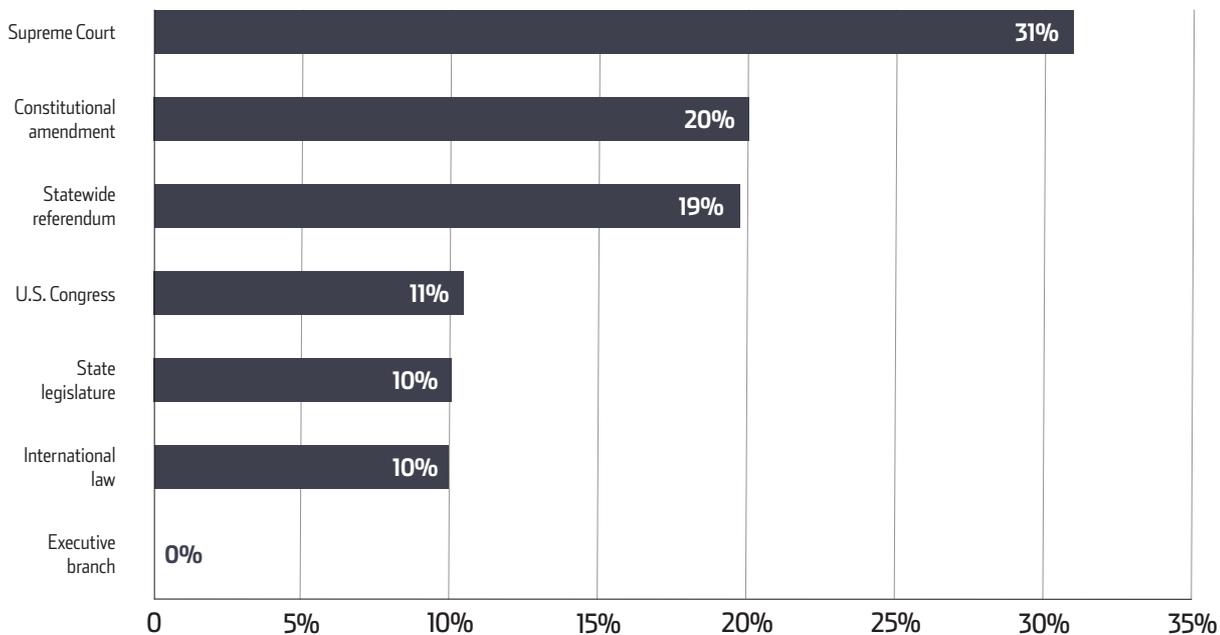
City, Kan., agreed: “Elected officials frequently disregard the desires of their voters, so give the decision directly to them.”

With shares of approximately 10 percent of respondents each, international law, state legislatures and the U.S. Congress were each put forward as other methods of determining the legality of abortion. Zero respondents proposed that the executive branch should decide whether abortion should be legal.

BREAKDOWN BY AGE



HOW SHOULD THE LEGALITY OF ABORTION BE DETERMINED?



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.

The Will of Citizens

Re “Welcome the Voter” (Our Take, 7/23): Bravo! This editorial succinctly states what must be done to ensure that our government truly reflects the will of the citizens, which is under considerable attack at this moment.

Barry Sullivan 🗨️

Restoring Humanity

Re “Saving Rosaries Confiscated at the Mexican Border,” by Michael J. O’Loughlin (7/23): Thank you for saving these belongings, Mr. Kiefer. What a wonderful, creative way to restore humanity to our way of viewing these immigrants.

Lucie Johnson 🗨️

Holding Belongings

It is really great to see a janitor like Mr. Kiefer take and hold those items. Seeing them really puts you in those immigrants’ shoes and kind of makes you feel for their situations.

Travis Murphy 🗨️

Present in Love

Re “Humanae Vitae’ at 50,” by Holly Taylor Coolman (7/23): I thought this was a beautiful article that encapsulated the meaning of “Humanae Vitae,” which is misunderstood as much today as it was when it was written.

We are never in charge, so all we can do is be present in the moment, in love, for one another. If we are to believe in a Creator who is love, then we have to believe in his creation. If we believe in his creation, then we will recognize our role as participants and custodians but not partners.

Randal Agostini 🗨️

Pyrrhic Victory?

Re “When Art Sows Hate,” by Menachem Wecker (7/23): Retrospectively assigning significance or even relevance to images and icons of a national or cultural heritage presents a worldwide dilemma. Do we risk propagating hatred by historically referring to it, or do we lose its lessons by expunging all traces of it? Is simply removing it from our sight a Pyrrhic victory? Revisionist history has frequently been a tool of authoritarians and tyrants. On balance, there is only a weak rationale for its use in democratic societies.

Allen Menkin 🗨️

Full Embrace of God

Re “Atoning for Anselm,” by Colleen Mary Carpenter (7/23): The life, death and resurrection of Jesus teaches us how to act in our journey toward full embrace of God and each other. It is in compassion toward all that we find redemption and joy in one another, not in the Dow Jones or our 401(k).

Bill Mazzella 🗨️

United With Christ

Re “Would Jesus Eat With Sarah Sanders?,” by Sam Sawyer, S.J. (7/23): I believe Jesus would eat with Ms. Sanders as well as with all of us. I also believe Jesus, at the table, would talk with us and teach us how to be loving, honest and compassionate with each other and with all the people who are affected by our words and actions, especially the most needy and disenfranchised, like those escaping persecution, gang violence, sex trafficking and murder. As Catholics, are we not aspiring to be united with Christ and all others at the table during the Eucharist?

Anthony Noble 🗨️

Active Inquiry

Re “Nine Rules to Promote Civility,” by Bishop David A. Zubik (7/9): We thought the article by Bishop Zubik was timely and thoughtful. We might add an additional point of emphasis to the first rule. True listening requires active inquiry. Too often, when we listen we are searching for a response to what we hear. If active listening were practiced more, I suspect our discourse would be more civil.

Valerie Harper and William Harper
Chicago, Ill.

How to respond?

Re “The Right to Leave,” by Simcha Fisher (7/9): As the pastor of two parishes in Georgetown, Guyana, I have encountered women who experience domestic abuse. Very often we priests find ourselves in a quandary about how to respond to this sensitive issue, since some women strongly believe that they have to remain in the relationship in “better or worse” times or because their children need a father. These two convictions are as strong as their faith in God.

Jerri Melwin Dias, S.J.
Georgetown, Guyana

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

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The McCarrick Case and the Future of Reform

The Catholic Church cannot pretend to be shocked by the pattern of sexual abuse of adult seminarians by Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, recently detailed in a comprehensive story in *The New York Times*. As *The Times* made clear in its reporting, many church leaders had received multiple notices of the cardinal's behavior. Local dioceses had been told; the papal nuncio in Washington, D.C., had been told; and, eventually, even Pope Benedict XVI had been told.

But none of these reports interrupted Cardinal McCarrick's rise through the ranks nor his appointment as cardinal nor his eventual retirement in 2006 as a respected leader of the U.S. church. Nor did these reports lead to his removal last month from public ministry, which finally resulted from a credible allegation of abuse of a minor almost 50 years ago, recently revealed and acted on by the Archdiocese of New York.

It is true that none of the earlier reports of abuse alleged criminal behavior with minors, but they were serious enough that Cardinal McCarrick should have been called to account for the terrible misuse of his office and authority. The church and its leaders should be ashamed of their failure to do so. The slow and halting progress the church has made by way of reforms adopted in response to the sexual abuse of children, for example through the Dallas charter, has been called into question by the revelation of its ongoing failures to deal with other reports of abuse.

Nor should the media, including us in Catholic media (Cardinal Mc-

Carrick was a longtime friend of this magazine and delivered the homily at our centennial celebration in 2009), be absolved of responsibility for any failure to take these and other rumors and reports as seriously as was required. To demand accountability only of the hierarchy is itself hypocrisy.

The church also cannot pretend that this is an isolated incident. There are very likely similar reports involving other bishops and church leaders who have abused their authority or committed sexual offenses that have been ignored over past decades. As societies around the world reckon with the unfolding of the #MeToo movement and victims of sexual abuse and harassment find their voices, the church must not pretend that this is merely a regrettable episode that will soon be over.

In all likelihood, there are more reports still to come that will show this situation is worse than is now known. The church should remember that real improvement consists not in the cessation of bad press for the church but in the development of a culture in which powerful leaders do not expect their misdeeds to be silently covered up and in which victims of abuse and harassment feel supported in their decisions to confront those who have mistreated them.

What can the church do to help build that culture?

First, the church must establish once and for all its willingness to hear reports of abuse and misuse of power that have been quietly ignored or "dealt with" in the past. Bishops' conferences should establish clear

procedures for reporting concerns for those who cannot go through the local diocesan structures that answer to the very bishop whose conduct may be in question.

Second, Pope Francis and the Vatican must show that they are willing to remove bishops and other church leaders who are guilty of any form of abuse, not only the sexual abuse of children. One way to do this would be to expand the process for disciplining bishops for negligence in response to abuse of minors, which Pope Francis defined in 2016, to include other forms of abuse. But an even more important reform would be greater transparency in investigating and rendering decisions in cases involving bishops. In other words, when a bishop is removed, the Vatican needs to state publicly why he is being removed.

Third, even before action from Rome, the bishops can make substantive efforts to seek justice for victims and the church community even at the cost of institutional resources and reputation. The decision of two New Jersey dioceses to release one of Cardinal McCarrick's accusers from confidentiality agreements is a good first step.

Bishops—or indeed any ministers who misuse their office by pressuring people under their authority into sexual activity—do violence both to individual victims and to the community that has invested its trust in them. The spiritual and psychological harm—to individuals and the people of God—caused by such abuse is incalculable and long-lasting.

The best way the church can begin to repent for the sins of leaders

like Cardinal McCarrick and all those who turned a blind eye to his wrongdoing is for bishops to call their brother bishops and other leaders within the church to account. It would be a significant, though sadly belated, statement of pastoral commitment for the bishops together to call upon all who have misused their ecclesial office by sexually abusing someone under their authority or pastoral care to take responsibility for their failure and submit their resignation.

Another story of episcopal abuse may break in the media at any time. It would be a prophetic witness to God's grace for the church to embrace this opportunity for repentance and the hope for reconciliation now rather than passively waiting for more secrets to be revealed.

Jesus told his disciples that it would be better for someone to have a millstone tied around his neck and be cast into the sea than to "put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me" (Mt 18:6). Surely it would be better for the church to lead the way in listening to people who have been harmed than to continue defending, even through silence, the authority and reputation of leaders who have already betrayed their pastoral responsibilities.

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Catholics must continue to embrace the mission of #BlackLivesMatter

On July 13, 2013, following the acquittal of the neighborhood watch volunteer George Zimmerman a year after he fatally shot an unarmed black teenager named Trayvon Martin, the Oakland, Calif.-based writer and activist Alicia Garza posted on Facebook: “Black people, I love you. I love us. We matter. Our lives matter.” Patrisse Cullors, another California writer and artist, shared the post and created the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter.

At the same time they were organizing protests against the Zimmerman verdict, the two women, along with the New York-based community organizer Opal Tometi, quickly built up the Black Lives Matter network on social media. “Many of us were tired and disturbed by the lack of recognition towards the killing of black people by vigilantes and law enforcement,” Ms. Cullors said in an article in *Rolling Stone* in 2017. Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, the author of *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*, told me by email that the hashtag first appeared in 2013, but “the movement was born in the streets of Ferguson in August of 2014.” She was referring to the suburb of St. Louis, Mo., where, in response to the shooting death of 18-year-old Michael Brown by a white police officer, Black Lives Matter held its first national protest.

The movement has grown to include chapters in Australia, Britain, Canada and Ghana. Its Campaign Zero provides organizers with a list of proposals for combating police violence, including independent investigations into local police departments and increased racial diversity among U.S. police officers. B.L.M. emphasizes restorative justice and fighting “vig-

orously for [the] freedom and justice for Black people and, by extension, all people.” By using both social media and direct action, the movement has grown—and is not without critics.

David Clark Jr., a former sheriff of Milwaukee County and a prominent supporter of President Trump, has referred to the movement as a “hate group” and compared the organization to the Ku Klux Klan. Others have been critical of the movement’s tactics, which include shutting down streets and highways for protests. An online petition sought to have the Defense Department declare Black Lives Matter a terrorist organization, claiming that it “has earned this title due to its violent actions in multiple cities and their influence in the killings of multiple police officers throughout the United States.”

But since the creation of #BlackLivesMatter, Catholic leaders have begun to take the racial justice movement much more seriously. At the National Black Catholic Congress in Orlando last year, U.S. bishops met with young black Catholics to discuss a perceived lack of support for the interests of communities of color. Stacy Allen, one of the attendees, asked the gathering, “How do we respond as people of faith to issues of race that have always been going on in society, but especially in light of the Black Lives Matter movement?” In response, Auxiliary Bishop Fernand Cheri III of New Orleans said, “To the black youth, I apologize to you as a leader of the church because I feel we have abandoned you in the Black Lives Matter movement.”

The momentum of Black Lives Matter may have also been a factor in the United States Conference of Cath-

olic Bishops establishing a new Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism last August. The goal of the committee is to address “the sin of racism in our society” and its effects on both the church and civil institutions. The bishops will release a pastoral letter based on the committee’s findings this November—the first formal document from the U.S.C.C.B. to address racism directly since 1979.

These efforts are welcome. But we are also seeing a rise in reported instances of racial bigotry in the United States, from citizens calling the police on African-Americans going about their daily lives, to the rise of white supremacist groups, to the Trump administration’s treatment of immigrants at our borders. Now, more than ever, we need the Black Lives Matter movement. We must continue to reaffirm that black and brown lives matter.

The Catholic Church proclaims that “human life is sacred” and that as we live “in a society marred by deepening divisions,” we must put the needs of the marginalized first. If we are to truly embody Jesus Christ and care for all human life, then we must explicitly stand with our brothers and sisters marching and chanting that Black Lives Matter. We must not let this responsibility be borne solely by women and men of color. We must lift them up and carry them, because the principles this movement embodies—to live in solidarity, to effect restorative justice and to bring about loving engagement—are exactly what we are called to do as Christians.

Olga Segura, associate editor of *America*.
Twitter: @olgamsegura.

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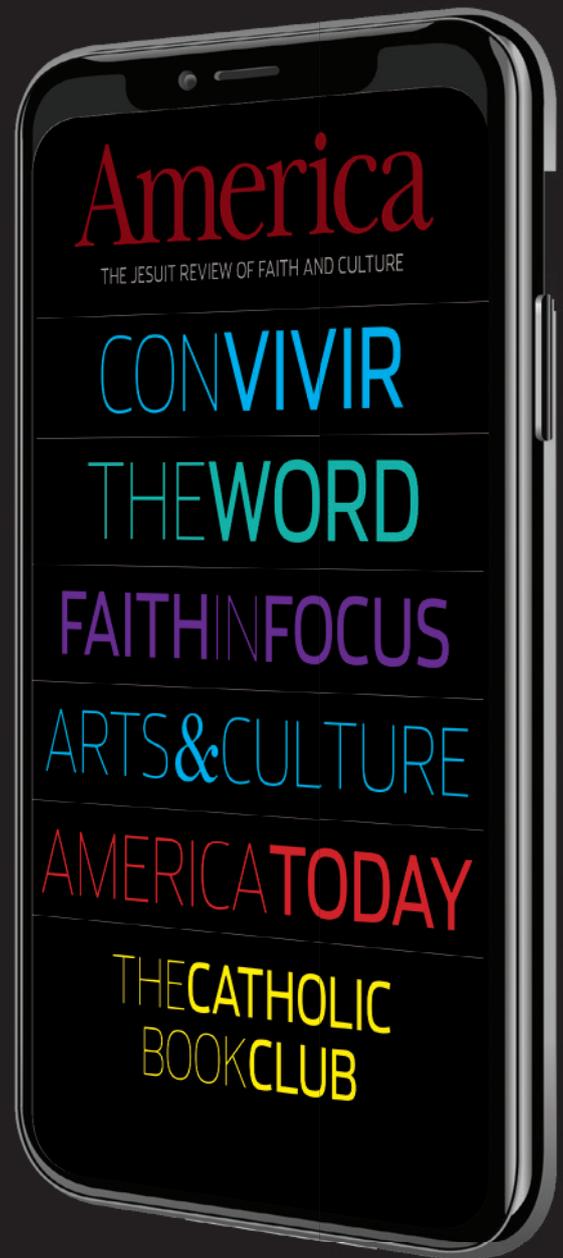
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For deaf Catholics, a gesture from Pope Francis meant the world

By Michael J. O'Loughlin

Pope Francis communicated more with one hand than many in the audience had seen in a long time from a church leader. With a smile on his face and his right arm raised in the air, Francis placed his two middle fingers in his palms and signed, “I love you,” on June 27 to an excited group visiting him in Rome.

It was a message for dozens of young Catholics from North and Central America who are deaf. For the Rev. Joseph Mulcrone, it was the experience of a lifetime.

A priest of the Archdiocese of Chicago, Father Mulcrone has been working with deaf Catholics for four decades. He said that introducing Catholics who often feel marginalized in the church to the pope ranks at the top of his career.

“When the pope came down, he went to...every young person who was in our group. I can’t tell you what that felt like,” Father Mulcrone said, speaking from Italy. “There’s

an old prayer,” he said, recalling the Song of Simeon in Luke’s Gospel, which includes the line, “My own eyes have seen the salvation that you have prepared in the sight of every people.”

“That’s what I felt like,” he said. “I’ve seen this, Lord; you can take me.”

Father Mulcrone is one of the founders of the Deaf Catholic Youth Initiative for the Americas, which serves Catholics who are deaf by providing them a gathering space and by training local pastoral workers, both hearing and deaf.

The National Catholic Office for the Deaf estimates there are 5.7 million deaf or hard-of-hearing Catholics in the United States. But advocates for the deaf Catholic community say the church is not meeting the needs of some of its most marginalized members. In part, that is because not enough ministers understand deaf culture.

For centuries, deafness was considered a disability that prohibited ordination. That began to change in the 20th century. In 1921, the Rev. Charles La Fonta became the first deaf man to be ordained a Catholic priest. He was required, however, to learn to pronounce the words of the Latin Mass, and his public ministry was limited.

The Rev. Thomas Coughlin was the first man born deaf to be ordained in the United States, in 1977, and today there are still only about 14 priests in the world who are deaf. More than half of them are in the United States.

The Rev. Christopher Klusman was ordained in 2011, and he immediately began ministering to Catholics who are deaf. He said many people fail to understand that “the deaf community is considered a cultural group with its own history, language and customs.”

“Many people don’t realize that English would be considered their second language,” he added.

The Milwaukee priest said that as a member of the deaf community himself, he is able to offer deaf Catholics homilies and resources that resonate with their own faith journeys.

Responding to questions by email, Father Klusman said, “What works for the hearing community doesn’t always ‘fit’ the deaf community and vice versa.”

“I’ve noticed there are many resources for Catholic hearing people,” the Rev. Shawn Carey, a deaf priest from the Archdiocese of Boston, told **America** through an interpreter. “With the deaf, we are just starting to develop them.”

Father Carey said that by incorporating deaf Catholics into parish life, the entire community is enriched. While many Catholics may have experienced Mass being celebrated by a hearing priest with an American Sign Language interpreter for deaf members of the community, Father Carey celebrates Mass and preaches using A.S.L. with a voice interpreter for those who hear.

“Most people just read the Gospel, but now they’re seeing it, they’re seeing the hand moves, and they feel more included in the story,” he said. Hearing parishioners have come up to him afterward to say how powerful the experience was for them.

Maryann Barth is a deaf Catholic who lives in Kentucky. She said many deaf Catholics do not feel welcome

because parishes often lack resources to serve them.

“Deaf people are ‘eye’ people, not ‘ear’ people, and to fully understand, appreciate and ‘go forward’ in our spiritual development, must have American Sign Language and deaf culture in our spiritual lives as well as our daily lives,” Ms. Barth wrote in an email to **America**. She said the church could have an important role to play in meeting the needs of deaf people, an overwhelming majority of whom are born to hearing families.

“Deaf adults become like a ‘family’ to nurture, teach, lead and support deaf children and deaf young adults,” she wrote.

Father Mulcrone, who is part of a community that celebrates Mass with the deaf community in Chicago each week, agrees that it is a matter of justice for the church to provide access to the sacraments for Catholics who are deaf.

He laments that few parishes have interpreters available to sign Mass and there are even fewer priests proficient in American Sign Language to hear confessions or anoint the sick.

“We are a pro-life church,” he said. “As a church, we tell parents to bear and raise children who are deaf and or disabled. At the same time, we fail repeatedly to provide for the spiritual care of these children and adults.”

While progress in implementing the recommendations has been slow, the meetings in Rome have shown that the deaf are getting their message to the highest levels in the church. The meeting included a Mass celebrated inside St. Peter’s, meetings with Vatican officials and an address by Cardinal Peter Turkson, the head of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, who told the group that having the sacraments available to deaf Catholics is a “right.”

Father Carey called the meeting with Pope Francis a “miracle.” Most important, he said, the trip served as “a reminder to the young deaf that you are not alone, that there are others out there.”

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

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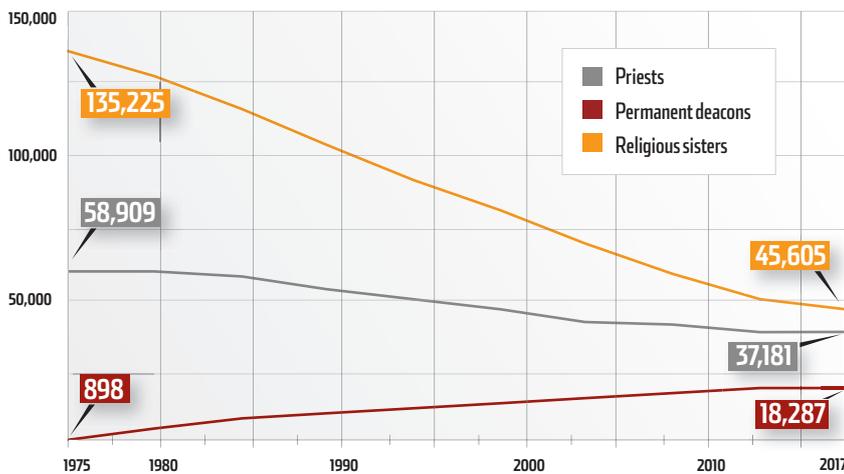
The U.S. permanent diaconate marks 50 years of steady growth

The 2018 Diaconate Congress, held in New Orleans from July 22 through 26, celebrated the 50th anniversary of the renewal of the Order of Diaconate as a permanent ordained ministry of the Catholic Church in the United States. “Permanent Deacons have shown themselves to be able co-workers with their bishops, priests, and the lay faithful in many dimensions of ecclesial life,” wrote Archbishop Christophe Pierre, the Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, in his letter of congratulations to the Congress, “including apostolic works; sacramental preparation; administrative and financial matters; hospital and prison chaplaincy; and in many other important ministries...making God’s love known through humble service.”

Over the past half-century, the number of permanent deacons in the U.S. Catholic Church has steadily grown, to more than 18,000, providing support to parishes during a period of decline in the number of ordained priests. This data comes from the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, which this year published an exhaustive study of the duties, characteristics and opinions of U.S. deacons, titled “Word, Liturgy, Charity: The Diaconate in the U.S. Catholic Church, 1968–2018.” The infographic below draws from that study, as well as from CARA’s data on current enrollment in diaconate formation programs.

Robert David Sullivan, *associate editor of America*.
Twitter: @robertdsullivan.

THE U.S. RELIGIOUS WORKFORCE (1975-2017)



As of 2017, CARA also counts 39,651 lay ecclesial ministers in parish ministry, including vowed religious.

DIACONATE FORMATION (2017-18)

2,326 CANDIDATES,
DOWN 16% FROM PEAK
OF **2,775** IN 2010-11

38 OF 175 PROGRAMS
IN THE U.S. REPORT
NO DEACON CANDIDATES
FOR 2017-2018

35 OF 175 PROGRAMS
OFFER **FORMATION**
IN BOTH **SPANISH**
AND **ENGLISH**

4.5 YEARS AVERAGE
DIACONATE PROGRAM

2017-18 deacon candidates

Ages 50-59	52%
Ages 40-49	24%
Over age 60	20%
Under age 40	4%

White non-Hispanic	70%
Hispanic	24%
Asian	4%
Black	2%

Highest educational attainment

Bachelor's degrees	36%
Graduate degrees	26%
High school or less	21%
Some college	17%

Married	96%
Widowed or divorced	2%
Never married	2%

PERMANENT DEACONS IN THE U.S.

Average age	68
Average age when individuals first considered becoming a deacon:	
Pre-Vatican II (born before 1943)	46
Vatican II (born 1943-60)	45
Post-Vatican II (born after 1960)	37
Average time spent weekly on ministry	
Retired	53%
Work full-time at a secular job	34%
Work part-time at a secular job	10%
Unemployed	4%
Not compensated financially for their ministry	74%
Also employed in a paid ministry position	35%

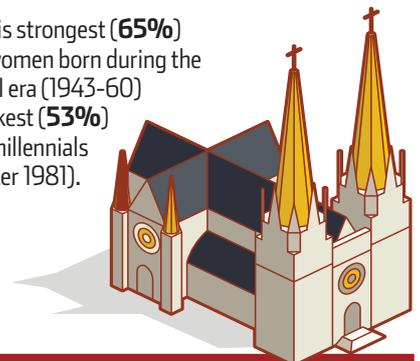
PERMANENT DEACONS WORLDWIDE (2017)

1975: 2,686 (33% in the United States)
2017: 45,609 (40% in the United States)

VIEWS ON WOMEN AS PERMANENT DEACONS

60% of U.S. Catholic women surveyed by **America** support the ordination of women deacons.

Support is strongest (**65%**) among women born during the Vatican II era (1943-60) and weakest (**53%**) among millennials (born after 1981).



Sources: Frequently Requested Church Statistics, Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate; 2017 survey of 3,166 deacons in the United States, as reported in *Word, Liturgy, Charity: The Diaconate in the U. S. Catholic Church, 1968-2018*, CARA (compensated ministry positions include director of religious education, director of liturgy, and youth minister); “Catholic Ministry Formation Enrollment: Statistical Overview for 2017-2018,” CARA; *America*/CARA women’s survey of 1,508 Catholic women in the U.S., reported in Jan. 16 issue.

A photograph showing a woman in a white knit hat and a patterned shawl being escorted by a Royal Canadian Mounted Police officer in a dark blue uniform. A young girl in a grey jacket and black hat stands next to her, holding a blue hat. They are walking across a snowy, wooded area. In the background, a dark vehicle is partially visible.

A Sudanese family is taken into custody by a Royal Canadian Mounted Police officer after walking across the U.S.-Canada border into Quebec in February 2017.

CNS photo/Christine Muschi, Reuters

Trudeau condemns U.S. 'family separations,' but Canada has detention problems, too

“What’s going on in the United States is wrong,” said Canada’s prime minister, Justin Trudeau, discussing the Trump administration’s short-lived policy of child separation at the border of the United States and Mexico on June 20. “I can’t imagine what the families living through this are enduring. Obviously, this is not the way we do things in Canada.”

But activists report that Canada’s current detention and immigration policies indeed have similar; potential to hurt individuals and divide families.

“We do have cases of children being detained,” said Emily Gilbert, a geographer and director of the Canadian studies program at the University of Toronto. While the policy of detaining children is a “last resort,” according to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, children are sometimes placed into detention centers in order to keep families together instead of separating them through the foster care system.

The Canada Border Services Agency can detain people crossing the border illegally if it considers them to be a risk to the public or a flight risk, but it can also detain people if the border officers cannot confirm their identities. Those detained can remain in custody indefinitely.

“There are limits for detention in the U.S. They don’t always adhere to them, but they are supposed to release the person into the community after an amount of time. We don’t have that provision in Canada,” said Ms. Gilbert. Some can be held for years, like Ebrahim Toure, an immigrant from West Africa, held for more than five years because he cannot prove citizenship in his home country, Gambia. And current Canadian law calls for mandatory one-year detention for “irregular arrivals,” including 16- and 17-year-old minors.

A recent report from the Global Detention Center criticized Canada for its lack of transparency regarding immigration detention conditions. According to the report, 371 children were detained with their parents or guardians over

the last two years by the Canada Border Services Agency in conditions that resemble medium-security prisons. Other children were separated from their detained parents and placed in foster care.

Because of the number of people detained by Border Services, which often exceeds the capacity of Canada’s three dedicated detainment centers in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver, some detainees are sent to jails. “It creates a weird situation,” said Ms. Gilbert, “where people [detained for immigration purposes] have fewer rights than prisoners detained there.”

Whether children remain with their families in detention or are fostered out, both experiences can have lasting psychological effects on the children and their families. A 2016 report from the International Human Rights Program at the University of Toronto found that some children in Canadian detention facilities have been put in solitary confinement, and families who are detained in the same facility are sometimes not permitted to be together.

Though Canada’s immigration policies leave plenty of room for criticism, Ms. Gilbert said they pale in comparison with the headlines that have emerged this summer from the United States, noting reports on conditions at the Casa Padre facility in Brownsville, Tex., where 1,500 boys have been detained in a converted Walmart store.

At the same time, Ms. Gilbert worries about policies in Canada that are not only hurting refugees and migrants but could be made more restrictive under different federal leadership if the balance of power changes in Canada.

Ms. Gilbert hopes, however, that the media attention surrounding the Trump administration’s migrant policy is prompting Canadians “to question the kinds of systems we’ve allowed to be put in place.”

Dean Dettloff, *Toronto correspondent.*
Twitter: @deandettloff.



Mexican church anticipates 'cordial' relations with incoming President López Obrador

Ambiguity about his faith life has long followed Andrés Manuel López Obrador, a former mayor of Mexico City (2000-5) and now, after his victory on July 1, the nation's president-elect. While religion did not seem to play an important role during the campaign, the issue of the president-elect's religiosity and his relationship with the Catholic Church will likely become more prominent as the country prepares for his inauguration on Dec. 1.

This is partly because of the significant public mandate that AMLO, as Mr. López Obrador is popularly known, achieved. He amassed an impressive 53 percent of the vote, more than any other Mexican presidential candidate since 1982.

The winning coalition, under the motto "Together We Will Make History," includes the Movement for National Regeneration (Morena), a party the president-elect himself founded; its traditional ally, the Labor Party (abbreviated in Spanish as P.T.); and the Social Encounter Party (P.E.S.), a recently founded, socially conservative political movement dominated by evangelical Christians.

"López Obrador's mandate is clear and very strong," John Ackerman, a law scholar at the National Autonomous University of Mexico, said. "He has lots of good will from the Mexican people, and he should be able to achieve a great deal."

What do his solid mandate and a conservative evangel-

ical party in his alliance imply for the next president's relationship with the church? Political and church observers in Mexico are not quite sure yet. That is partly because of Mr. López Obrador's somewhat enigmatic comments on his religiosity and the fact that he spoke very little about social issues during the campaign.

Many have speculated that Mr. López Obrador, who was raised in a Catholic household, may have privately switched to evangelical Christianity at some point during the past two decades. The rumors resurfaced this spring, when, in a column on March 20, Raymundo Riva Palacio, a commentator for *El Financiero*, wrote that Mr. López Obrador belongs to a Seventh-day Adventist church.

That church promptly denied that the president-elect was a member, and in a video recorded 10 days later as a response, AMLO declared that "Christ is love and justice is love," but he did not elaborate on which Christian denomination best represented his personal beliefs. Three weeks later, at a bishops' meeting with candidates, he finally appeared to settle the issue, declaring himself a Catholic.

"It should be clear that López Obrador is Catholic; he has never denied that. He does play a little with ambiguity sometimes," said the Rev. Hugo Valdemar, a former spokesperson for the Archdiocese of Mexico City and former editor of its magazine, *Desde la Fe*. Father Valdemar has known Mr. López Obrador for years, especially during



President-elect Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador acknowledges his supporters as he arrives to Mexico City's main square, the Zocalo, on July 1, 2018.

AP Photo/Anthony Vazquez

his term as Mexico City mayor. “He isn’t practicing, but he grew up in a Catholic environment and shares many of the church’s values.”

Whatever his religious beliefs, Mr. López Obrador’s political platform is decidedly secular and nationalistic. As president he intends to place heavy emphasis on combating corruption, which he and his political allies believe to be the root cause of the criminal violence, poverty and inequality that plague the country. Socially liberal policies that have come to preoccupy people in the capital, like legalized abortion and same-sex marriage, play little to no role in plans for the incoming government.

As a result, despite Morena’s purported leftist agenda, the Catholic Church in Mexico expects to have a cordial relationship with the incoming government, according to Father Valdemar. Father Valdemar supports that notion by pointing out that AMLO’s bond with the church during his term as mayor of the capital was “magnificent.”

“That’s the point of reference we maintain when talking about López Obrador,” he said. “I can’t remember having a closer relationship than the one we had with him.”

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



CNS photo/Alessia Gillani, Catholic Press Photo

CNS photo/Jeffrey R. Reynolds

Pedro Arrupe’s cause for canonization underway

St. Pedro Arrupe?

The Jesuit superior general, Arturo Sosa, announced on July 11 in Bilbao, Spain, that “we have formally begun the process of beatification for Father Pedro Arrupe.”

Speaking at a meeting of Jesuits and lay associates involved with the International Association of Jesuit Universities, he asked attendees to pray for the cause and asked for the assistance of anyone who has useful information about religious devotion to Father Arrupe.

Born in 1907, Pedro Arrupe entered the Jesuits in 1927. Father Arrupe was the master of novices at the Jesuit novitiate in Hiroshima, Japan, on Aug. 6, 1945, when the United States dropped an atomic bomb, almost entirely destroying the city. He repurposed the novitiate into a makeshift hospital.

In 1958, Father Arrupe was appointed provincial superior of all the Jesuits in Japan. On May 22, 1965, the 31st General Congregation of the Society of Jesus elected him as the order’s superior general, half a year before the close of the Second Vatican Council and in the midst of perhaps the most tumultuous period in the Catholic Church in several centuries. He served as superior general from 1965 to 1983. In the decade following his election, many Jesuits, encouraged by Father Arrupe, embraced a more social-justice-oriented sense of the traditional Ignatian charism.

His influence on the Society of Jesus can be seen in the countless apostolates, residences and other Jesuit initiatives that bear his name today, as well as in the many phrases and sayings attributed to him. His famous 1973 address to Jesuit educators and students, “Men for Others,” has become a central guiding document and slogan for Jesuit education today.

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

STRANGE SUNSETS ENIGMAS





In 1949, a priest with a searchlight spotted something puzzling in the sky. The mystery remains unexplained.

By Nick Ripatrazone

The sightings near Cincinnati continued through the winter and into the spring. ●●



The Rev. Gregory Miller, pastor of Saints Peter and Paul Church in Norwood, Ohio, in 1949, claimed to have seen a U.F.O. lit up with a searchlight during a parish carnival.

Americans were seeing things in the sky during the summer of 1947. A private pilot, Kenneth Arnold, was searching for a missing Marine Corps plane near Mount Rainier, Wash., when he saw nine “extremely shiny” objects “shaped like saucers” flying at 10,000 feet. Around that same time, a rancher in Roswell, N.M., found debris scattered across his land. Soon the Air Force’s 509th Bombardment Group at Roswell Army Air Field agreed among themselves that the rancher had found a crashed flying saucer—before announcing that the discovery was really a weather balloon. (The Air Force later revealed it was part of a secret program to monitor Soviet nuclear tests.)

The public was confused, curious and a little afraid. At St. Joseph’s Church in Grafton, Wis., something crashed into the lightning rod on the church roof. The Rev. Joseph Brasky went outside and found a warm metal disc, 18 inches in diameter, with “gadgets and some

wires.” The mysterious craft looked like a circular saw blade.

It was.

Father Brasky, like many other practical jokers that summer, wanted to have a little fun at the expense of the media. Hoodwinked reporters were subjected to his collection of trinkets, including “bass bottles”—beer bottles outfitted with the head of a fish—and *Fish Tales*, his self-published book of angling stories. But though many unexplained sightings were proved to be hoaxes, they continued beyond that summer. Something, it seemed, was in the sky.

In April 1949, the Rev. Gregory Miller, the pastor of Saints Peter and Paul Church in Norwood, Ohio, wrote to the Archdiocese of Cincinnati with two requests. The parish school needed an expansion. Also, the nuns who taught at the school had been living at nearby Regina High School, but their quarters



were “becoming crowded,” and they needed a new residence at the parish. Father Miller had a plan to deal with both challenges: He would hold a festival that August to raise money for the building fund.

The Saints Peter and Paul Jitney Carnival was approved for Aug. 19 through 21. The Sensational Kays and The Three Milos, two famous high-wire acts, were booked. There would be free entertainment—but also “fun for a nickel.” An Army surplus searchlight, owned by the parish, was used to attract crowds. The light was operated by Sgt. Donald R. Berger of the University of Cincinnati’s Reserve Officers’ Training Corps.

Manning a military searchlight in late August was no comfortable task, but Sergeant Berger’s job would become more difficult than he ever imagined. Around 8:15 on the first night of the carnival, among the aerialists and rides, his searchlight spotted a “glowing disc.” And this was not a one-time occurrence. Nine times in the following months, the parish searchlight would illuminate the impossible: a flying saucer. Unlike Father Brasky’s saw blade, the case at Saints Peter and Paul remains unsolved.

MAKING SENSE OF MYSTERY

The early days of flying saucer reports were full of practical jokes—along with serious, confounding sightings from military officers and pilots. Readers, and most reporters in the media, were not sure how to juggle such a contrast. From the start, the problem with flying saucers has been, among other things, a semantic one: If U.F.O. stands for unidentified flying object, then any attempt to categorize a sighting makes it an *identified* flying object—something else entirely.

Even today, whenever we talk about U.F.O.s, we are engaging in endless conjecture. We are always trying to imagine what they might be. With our eyes to the heavens, squinting at fast-moving discs and sporadic lights, the mind wanders. Yet in the mid-20th century, enough people reported strange objects in the sky that the government took notice. Project Blue

Book, the Air Force’s official study of U.F.O.s, compiled over 15,000 sightings between 1947 and 1969. Nearly 700 were labeled unexplained, but another 1,000 were categorized as unknown. While the difference remains debatable, and is likely a result of poor terminology, the conclusion is clear: Although most U.F.O. reports were easily and eventually explained, a small number were scientifically curious and enigmatic.

Scientifically curious and enigmatic, though, does not make for great entertainment. Aliens do. The rest is cultural history. From the rise of the contact-ee movement (people who claim to have had contact with extraterrestrials) to popular films like “Close Encounters of the Third Kind” and TV series like “The X-Files,” U.F.O.s have become interchangeable with aliens. If an object courses through the sky, we reason, someone, or something, must be flying it.

These sightings are certainly interesting to U.F.O. buffs, but what do they have to do with the Catholic Church—beyond a few priests who saw strange objects in 1949? U.F.O.s and faith both occupy a surreal space: the porous border region between the prosaic and the profound. Imagine a woman sees a glinting disc in the night sky. She first thinks it is a star, but then watches it bounce and bobble and speed into the distance. She might scratch her head and move on, but if she keeps thinking about that light, she must make a decision based on conjecture. Either she saw something entirely reasonable and typical—a plane, the planet Venus, a spotlight aimed at the sky—or she accepts that she has an unknown experience. And once she accepts the fragility of her perception, she opens the door to even more possibilities.

Thinking about U.F.O.s can be an exercise in theological speculation, a way to consider what might happen if the prosaic instantly became profound. Such speculation is healthy for Catholics, particularly because it can reveal how we might seek to neuter our faith of its mystery. In the same way that we might rush to explain a strange light in the sky, we might seek to



God explains himself as one who pours himself out in love, not one who explains things. ●●

George Coyne, S.J., director of the Vatican Observatory from 1978 to 2006.

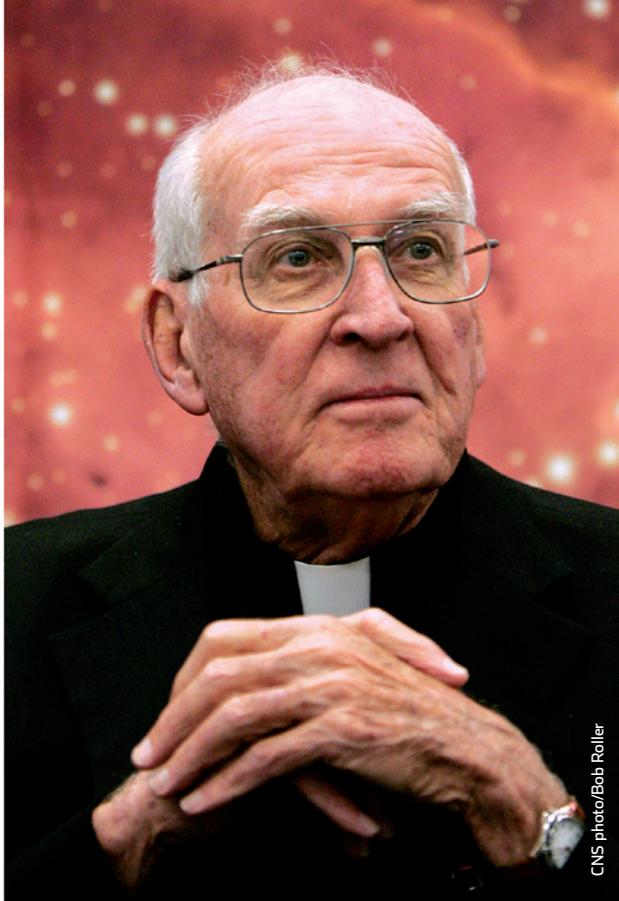
explain God in purely rational and realistic terms—a theology of convenience. Because the church has hesitated to offer firm teachings on the existence of aliens, theologians and philosophers have filled that space with wonder. As early as the 14th century, the French priest John Buridan, in a response to Aristotle's *De Caelo* (*On the Heavens*), wrote, "It must be realized that while another world than this is not possible naturally, this is possible simply speaking, since we hold from faith that just as God made this world, so he could make another or several worlds." Father Buridan's suggestion here is that all things earthly—and cosmically—are possible through God.

Astronomers have had to parry questions about aliens for years. Guy Consolmagno, S.J., the director of the Vatican Observatory, has tried to be firm with U.F.O. enthusiasts, writing on his personal website in 2013, "I do not know of any credible evidence at all that there has ever been contact of any form between extraterrestrial aliens and Earth. Period. I cannot imagine a circumstance where such contact could be kept secret for very long. And I say this, not only as an active astronomer for 40 years, but also as someone who knows lots of people in the SETI [Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence] community (who would

love to have such evidence), and as someone who's been an officer in the American Astronomical Society and in the International Astronomical Union. If there was something like this going on, we'd all be talking about it. There isn't, and we aren't."

Michael Burke-Gaffney, S.J., a Canadian priest who is an astronomer and professor at St. Mary's University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, had an extensive personal interest in U.F.O.s—even covertly investigating them for Canada's National Research Council and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. In 1966, after the noted astronomer and ufologist J. Allen Hynek penned an infamous letter to *Science* magazine offering seven reasons why U.F.O.s merited scientific study, Father Burke-Gaffney responded with his own letter. He takes a more cautionary tone. Until we identify mysterious "atmospheric phenomena," he asks, should not scientists strive "(i) to exhort people to have patience, and (ii) to remind them that, up to the present, U.F.O.s have furnished no evidence of extraterrestrial beings, and (iii) to point out that the existence of extraterrestrial little green men is no more firmly established than that of leprechauns?"

There is no official Vatican position on U.F.O.s



and aliens, although in 2014 the Vatican Observatory co-hosted a conference on the subject with the University of Arizona's Steward Observatory, called "The Search for Life Beyond the Solar System: Exoplanets, Biosignatures and Instruments." The next year, Pope Francis gave an interesting response to a question about extraterrestrial life: "In every case I think that we should stick to what the scientists tell us, still aware that the Creator is infinitely greater than our knowledge."

OF SKEPTICS AND SIGHTINGS

George Coyne, S.J., was director of the Vatican Observatory from 1978 to 2006, when he retired to focus on teaching. He is known for examining the intersections between faith and science, earning him the respect of religion skeptics like Richard Dawkins and the late Stephen Hawking. Father Coyne told me he is "very skeptical of all U.F.O. sightings of which I am aware." I asked him if extraterrestrials are worthy of serious theological or scientific inquiry, and he pointed me toward a paper he had written for the anthology *Many Worlds: The New Universe, Extraterrestrial Life, and the Theological Implications*.

Father Coyne's essay, "The Evolution of Intelli-



gent Life on Earth and Possibly Elsewhere: Reflections From a Religious Tradition," offers a route forward. Father Coyne warns we should not study U.F.O.s in the hope of somehow understanding the mysteries of God.

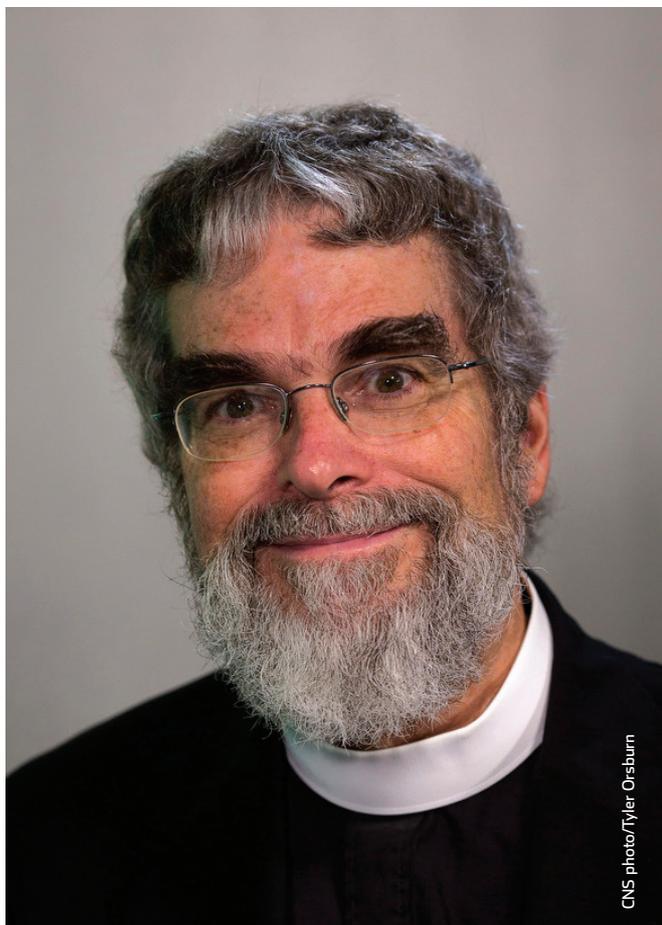
When we view God as "explanation" for the world, Father Coyne writes, using the "rational processes of science" in a manner not appropriate to their purpose—we ignore Scripture and tradition, which shows "God revealed himself as one who pours out himself in love and not as one who explains things." Though science and faith intersect, we should not expect science to reveal a proof for faith. Perhaps, Father Coyne writes, we should look to the limitations of science and consider the "very nature of our emergence in an evolving universe and our inability to comprehend it, even with all that we know from cosmology, may be an indication that in the universe God may be communicating much more than information to us."

In this conversation, U.F.O.s are too prosaic and tenuous to be of use. As for extraterrestrials, Father Coyne argues that theologians must consider that the idea of life elsewhere in the cosmos "strains [the] anthropocentric revelations of God to his people." He asks good questions without easy answers: Did God also redeem extraterrestrials from their sin? Did Jesus give up his life for them so that they might also be saved?

SEARCHING

Father Gregory Miller had been at Saints Peter and Paul since 1938. His brother Norbert was a priest at nearby St. Vincent Ferrer Church. A third brother, Cletus, was a longtime priest at a third Cincinnati-area parish, Annunciation Church.

Cletus was with Gregory at Saints Peter and Paul on Oct. 23, 1949. By that date, Sergeant Berger, the searchlight operator, had seen an object similar to the one seen on the night of the August carnival on two subsequent occasions, and he was back at the church with the two priests, as well as Sgt. Leo Davidson of the



I do not know of any credible evidence that there has been contact between extraterrestrial aliens and Earth. Period. ●●

Guy Consolmagno, S.J.,
director of the Vatican Observatory

Norwood Police Department, Robert Linn, the managing editor of *The Cincinnati Post*, and Leo Hirtl, a columnist for that newspaper. According to Mr. Berger's observation log (published by Leonard Stringfield, an Ohio U.F.O. researcher), the men saw the flying disc in the sky, and then saw two groups of five triangular objects coming out of the disc.

Mr. Hirtl was skeptical, claiming that they had seen geese that glowed in the light. Father Miller stood by his story, even getting into an argument years later with Mr. Hirtl on the Cincinnati TV station WCPO during a special program on "flying saucers."

Father Cletus agreed with his brother. He described the smaller objects as shaped "like the apex of Indiana arrowheads." At the time, Father Cletus was dean of the Institutum Divi Thomae—a unique graduate research institute established by the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. The research was directed by Dr. George Sperti, previously a director of the Basic Science Laboratory at the University of Cincinnati. Dr. Sperti, a Catholic, later told *Cincinnati Magazine* in a 1972 interview that one of the goals of the institute was to demonstrate that there is "no conflict between religion and science."



Under the direction of Dr. Sperti and Father Cletus, the institute was responsible for an interesting array of inventions. It developed Preparation H, Aspercreme, a tanning lamp, a meat tenderizer and even a method of freeze-drying orange juice—while working on their central goal of cancer research. U.F.O.s were not in their repertoire.

The sightings near Cincinnati continued through the winter and into the spring. One relatively consistent witness was William Winkler, who owned a printing company—but also was a “dabbler in things scientific,” according to *The Cincinnati Post*. “It’s not a flying saucer. Maybe it’s a base for flying saucers,” he conjectured. Mr. Winkler sent a letter about the sightings directly to General Vandenberg—the Air Force chief of staff—complaining about bungling F.B.I. agents and asking forgiveness for his handwritten letter (“My secretary has gone for the day.”).

At this time, Project Grudge, a precursor of Project Blue Book, had taken an interest in the Norwood sightings and sent a few members of their Office of Special Investigations to the parish. Those agents, along with two professors from the University of Cincinnati—D. A. Wells, from the physics department, and Paul Herget, from the astronomy department—were with Father Gregory Miller at the sighting on Dec. 20. Both scientists were dismissive, telling the *Cincinnati Post* that it was “an optical illusion” or an “illumination of gas in the atmosphere.” Mr. Herget explained, “We need an explanation to squash people’s fears.”

Mr. Herget might have said too much. The investigator Leonard Stringfield interviewed R. Ed Tepe, then-mayor of Norwood, who was also present at the Dec. 20 sighting. He explained that Mr. Wells was “there with camera and protractors and was in frequent ‘hush-hush’ with the Air Force investigators,” before calculating that the size of the disc “was approximated to be 10,000 feet in diameter.” In context, his comments sound like a cover-up.

Mr. Stringfield also claims that Father Miller had

film of the object, taken during the sighting on Oct. 23 by Sergeant Davidson. The film was reportedly shown to a closed audience at the studios of WCPO in 1952 but, like so many other elements of the Norwood case, has since vanished.

According to David Clarke in his book *How UFOs Conquered the World: The History of a Modern Myth*, that same year Domenico Grasso, S.J., a Vatican theologian, said the Holy See had debated the existence of alien contact after the flurry of U.F.O. sightings, concluding: “The last word is up to experimental science. There is nothing else to do for the theologians but wait.”

Whatever the Miller brothers saw, it was attracted to that searchlight. That seems like too convenient a metaphor, but how else do we think about the unexplained? Between August 1949 and March 1950, a U.F.O. visited Saints Peter and Paul Church. That is all we know. The moment we identify it, it stops being a mystery.

In the months after the sightings ended, Father Miller was back to writing the archdiocese. A section of the school boilers needed to be replaced. They needed to renovate the pews, choir stalls and church throne. That November he hoped to raise money to resurface the blacktop on the school playgrounds and parking lot by holding a turkey raffle and bazaar. No searchlight was required.

Nick Ripatrzone has written for *Rolling Stone*, *The Atlantic*, *The Paris Review* and *Esquire*. His newest book is *Ember Days*, a collection of stories.



PORTRAITS OF THE KINGDOM

Seeking God in the City of Angels

By Cecilia González-Andrieu | Photos by Andrés A. Andrieu

Getting a good night's sleep is impossible when everything is in a constant state of turmoil. There is a wistfulness in the air for how things felt just last week or the week before, when things appeared troubled but in hindsight now seem tame. There is much suffering, and every day it seems to grow.

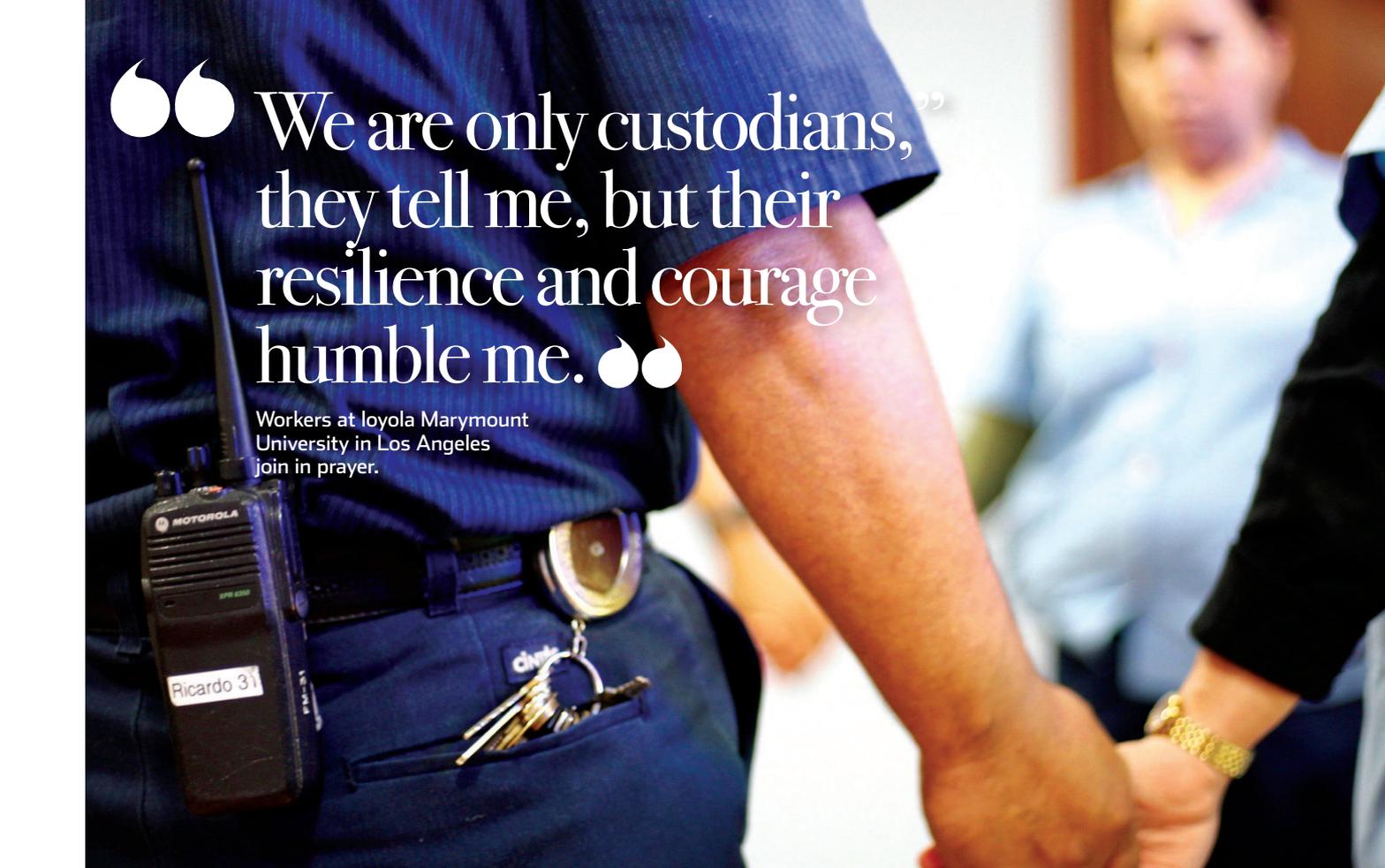
I imagine all this being said between Jesus and his friends as they walked through Galilee, tired and dusty, encountering people on the brink of hopelessness. I have also heard that same voice in the early church community as they faced persecution. It is there again as Dietrich Bonhoeffer denounces the rise of Nazism in Germany and as Martin Luther King Jr. fights against racism in Birmingham, Ala.—both theologians writing from jail cells. The brokenness of the moment is heartbreakingly poignant in the sermons of Archbishop Óscar Romero and the voices of his murdered Jesuit friends in El Salvador.

I recognize that voice in me today. Maybe you do, too.

St. Teresa of Ávila repeatedly bemoans the difficulty of writing about a profound experience. She is clear that grace is needed to give us understanding and words to express what we have seen. I share her frustration and hope that grace may be present to us



Veladoras, candles stamped with images, represent constant prayers and gratitude in Los Angeles.



“We are only custodians,”
they tell me, but their
resilience and courage
humble me.”

Workers at Loyola Marymount
University in Los Angeles
join in prayer.

all, as we try to enter into each other's worlds. So please accompany me on what seemed like any ordinary day.

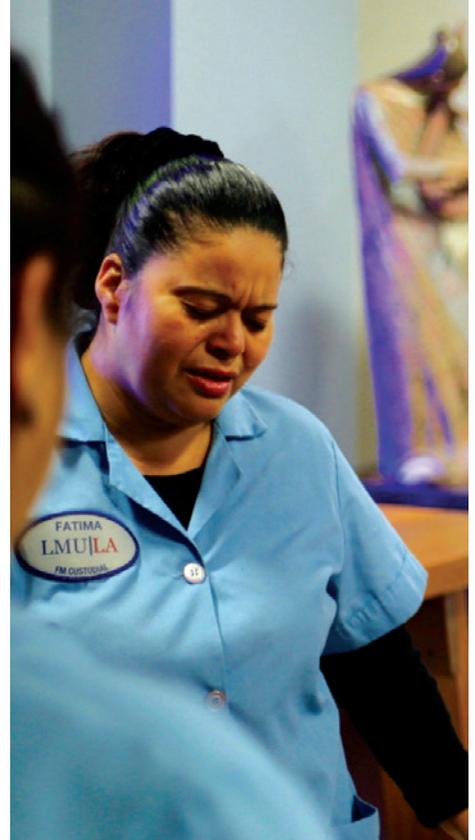
It is late in the morning, and I encounter a couple of my coworkers from the university. They tell me they are on their way to pray. I ask if I may join them, and they beam their sincere welcome. I am grateful for their trust. We enter a small chapel in our building, where several others are waiting. I know all of them. We've become friends over the years but more so recently, as the urgency of life becomes ever more acute. The members of the group carry nothing with them except walkie-talkies that sometimes crackle and interrupt. Their carts stand neatly tucked in corners around the building, and their blue work uniforms visibly mark the separations of class and privilege we accept without question. "We are only custodians," they tell me, painfully aware of their marginality. Their resilience and courage humble me.

They begin their informal prayer service, which they have squeezed into their morning break. The guidance of the service rotates among the men and women in complete trust. I note they don't pay much attention to the chapel space, other than appreciating its quiet privacy. The altar and ambo are not used, and the community stands in a circle joining hands. The day's leader voices intercessory prayers for all, having first asked what should be prayed

for. The prayers, often accompanied by tears, are for their sick, for their coworkers facing financial difficulties, for those who are far, for children, their own and the world's.

They pray for each other by name, and they intercede for the particular needs of the students and the leadership of "this great university." No one asks who is Catholic or evangelical or Pentecostal, although I know all three groups are represented. All are immigrants, and although almost all are Spanish speakers, one woman translates softly for her fellow worker from Sainte-Lucie. The day he leads prayers, his words are translated for the rest. They share hearts. We hear Scripture quoted from memory mixed with the stories of battling cancer, fighting the deportation of loved ones, hope for their children, traveling to the border to help. We take up a collection for those too sick to work. I am most grateful for what they teach me. It is a glimpse into something so sacred that I can only call it the kingdom of God.

I have also spent time recently discovering faith communities in inner-city Los Angeles with my photographer son. Far from the affluent neighborhoods, their locations and church buildings are evidence of decades of white flight. The contrast is powerful, as communities made up almost exclusively of people of color struggle to provide even the most basic ministries that are so abundant in the affluent



suburbs. Like my coworkers, they make our city function; and like them, they remain invisible to the rest of us.

I went to search for the kingdom of God with them because, as Jesus makes clear in the Beatitudes, the poor, sorrowful and meek have nothing standing in the way as they turn their gaze to God. Unencumbered by power and privilege, they are “blessed” by their vision of the reign. Just as I saw with my coworkers, the expressions of faith of the poor and vulnerable are occurring against a background of chaos and fear.

You and I live in the particularity of the United States of 2018, where millions of people wake up every morning to another day in which their future is uncertain and their forcible removal from their homes and families is a real possibility. People who have braved everything for the sake of feeding their loved ones are treated like criminals and routinely denied their humanity, jailed, deported and rejected as “illegals.”

Beyond this but connected to it, rising militarism, racist nationalism and staggering expenditures on weapons are all occurring at the same time that spending on education, health care, housing and food aid is being severely cut. We count out grimly the number of mass shootings, offering prayers as a panacea, while teachers like me watch “safety videos,” and the brisk business of selling guns continues. We close our borders to refugees, dismantle programs to aid those fleeing persecution, jailing them and separating them from their children and we cut new deep wounds into our mother earth to force out fossil fuels and

choke ourselves to death. There is much suffering.

THE TASK AT HAND

Theology is a creative task that weaves together millennia-old traditions with the urgencies of the present moment. When done properly, theological reflection allows us to see deeper into reality and discover a religious tradition’s power to face and transform that reality in faithful coherence with how we understand God’s vision for us. In our little chapel at my university, and in the locales of the inner city, I realized that our moment is at once entirely new but also entirely familiar to generations of Christians. In these communities, I saw the living faith of the poor. And this, the place where God is indispensable to life, is where any search for the kingdom of God must begin.

Our present reality, both nationally and globally, is dangerous. I do not mean just the obvious dangers of deportation or war. Those are clear. I mean the kind of danger that deceives and hides, hoping we will not notice. What is hidden inside our moment is that unless we act for the kingdom of God, the truthfulness and efficacy of the Gospel is at stake.

The custodial workers who meet every morning know this. They ask Christ to be in their midst and offer themselves and their vulnerability. For all of us who call ourselves Christians, this moment is about the biggest questions of all, about our faithfulness and discernment as beings made “in the image of God,” about our obedience to God’s vision and about our kinship as God’s creatures.

The tradition of leaving public petitions or small tokens representing prayers and gratitude witnesses to the relationship among the believer, God and the communion of saints at Saint Cecilia Church, Los Angeles.

What the early church, Bonhoeffer, King, Romero, the prayer group and the multitudes of Christians they represent know and we must now remember is that if we look the other way and acquiesce to evil, we obliterate God's attempt to reach us through Jesus Christ and destroy the very possibility of that which the Son came to announce: the reign of God.

CONDITIONS FOR THE SEARCH

As I think back on the upheaval faced by Jesus' Jewish community long before his time, the disconcerting violence encountered by him and his contemporaries and the marked collective convulsions of the past century, I am alarmed; but I also recognize that there is something more being revealed in the unfolding of that story. History also reveals that moments of confusion and suffering birthed prophets through whom the Spirit spoke. These prophets nurtured communities that rekindled an active faith in what was possible, and their work produced lasting changes in consciousness that we can reawaken today. In each of these instances, as the world was fracturing, the brokenness was revealing something new.

Those of us who live in the developed world have entered a new phase in our history. This may actually be good news for our relationship to the good news. The state of confrontation and conflict we are living in is not only our present—it is the story of our past. No matter how much we romanticize it with beautiful songs like "Silent Night," the truth (as the witnesses of the Gospel tell the story) is that political upheaval, violent ethnic and religious conflict, militarization and poverty were the conditions of the world into which Jesus was born. The New Testament, reflecting on the life of Jesus and his friends, from their first meeting through the beginnings of the movement we call the church, paints an unmistakable picture of life lived on the edge.

There is nothing romantic or good about a chaotic existence, and I wish it on no one, but it may be a necessary condition for understanding just what Jesus meant by the kingdom of God. Today, the realization that there is nothing safe or comforting

about the stories recounted in the Gospels may help us find our own place inside the big story they tell. And that story is about God's work in the world.

MARY'S VISION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

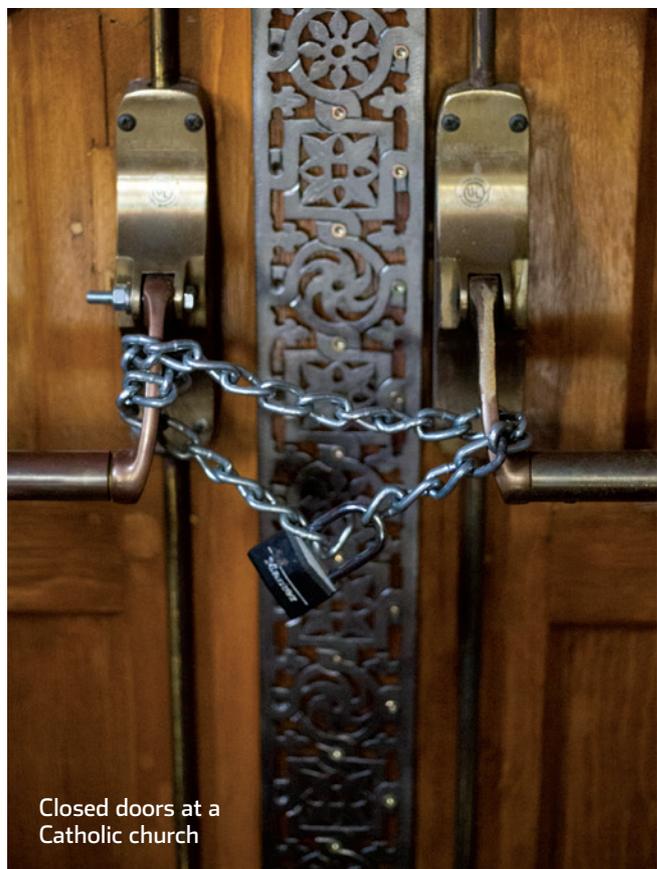
An interesting feature of the prayer group that I also witnessed throughout the inner-city parishes I visited is the central role of women's tireless work on behalf of the kingdom. Joining over 36,000 Catholics gathered for the Los Angeles Religious Education Congress in March, I observed and later confirmed an astounding (but unsurprising) statistic: 70 percent of those gathered to study and train for their work in the church were women. At the same time, a careful look at the aesthetic evidence of sacred spaces in the inner-city parishes made evident just how much the poor and vulnerable turn to a woman, La Virgen María. Why is that? Why do they seek her companionship and leave testimonies of their prayers and their love?

The author of the Gospel of Luke, drawing on a voice like the prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures, makes Mary an early herald of the purpose and nearness of God's kingdom. In what we commonly call "The Canticle of Mary" or "The Magnificat," Luke presents a number of clues for recognizing God's active presence in the world (1:46-55). At first, the canticle appears not to relate much to the story of Mary's visit to Elizabeth, and indeed many biblical scholars believe it is an early Jewish-Christian hymn. But I suggest we should read it within the context of the story.

This clear-eyed vision of the world as it *should be*, and in her forceful telling *will be*, is articulated by a radically powerless person. Mary is young, pregnant and, curiously, traveling alone and in haste through the hill country of Judah. As Luke passes along the tradition that Mary is unwed, we note that she travels to her kinswoman Elizabeth, perhaps seeking her protection. This early announcement of God's kingdom, placed in the mouth of the woman who would give birth to Jesus and raise him, needs to be read from a space of precariousness and vulnerability. The gift of praying with the poor is that

Artemio y Teresa
Gracias de Juguilita portados. Los Favoritos que estamos
Yeabida aun los que faltan de las Virgenes
Agradable por todas las Verdaderas y la mas hermosa
que nos has dado. Cuidanos siempre
muchas Gracias
Artemio Teresa

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Closed doors at a Catholic church

◀ An outdoor image of Our Lady la Virgen de Guadalupe is protected from the elements and surrounded by fresh flowers on any given day. Public prayer space, Los Angeles.

they are already there; their closeness to Mary’s situation can orient us on how to read the canticle with new eyes.

Who is this God Mary knows and wants us to know? The canticle tells us we know God not by speculation about a transcendent Other but intimately through God’s action in the world. Mary both tells and enacts the truth that God gives voice to the “nobodies.” As she speaks, Mary shows God’s action in her, which emboldens her past the limitations set up to contain her. In this, the image of the Magnificat is paradoxical. Mary is aware of her status, what the author calls her “lowliness,” and yet it is precisely this humble identification with the least that allows her to speak defiantly with them and for them. Her embrace of powerlessness as tapping into the very source of God’s power connects her religiously and culturally to an entire community of people.

GOD OF THE LOWLY

Throughout Scripture, God is never praised as an abstract concept or distant other but as the one who loves and through love makes a different and wonderfully new kind of world possible. The community I pray with

truly believes this. In their world, “God raises the needy from the dust, [and] lifts the poor from the ash heap” (Ps 113:7). Luke’s description of God’s action through Mary is that God shows mercy “to those who fear [God]” (Lk 1:50). In earlier times, the word *fear* conjured up a “fire and brimstone” God. But a more accurate way to read this is that God shows mercy to those who are consciously aware of God and act accordingly. Sailors “fear” the sea because if they do not, if they are not fully present to its ways, they will be unable to live in its demanding reality. We cannot even begin to know God’s mercy unless we are first aware of our dependence on God; otherwise we mistakenly assign to ourselves the power that is God’s alone, and we will most assuredly capsize. The kingdom of God depends on such an intentional awareness of God’s vision for creation, and this awareness must engender particular actions from us.

God’s vision for creation, Mary tells us, cannot abide arrogance; it opposes and deposes rulers who exploit the lowly and will judge and send away the rich who avoid hearing the cries of the hungry. The canticle ends by underlining God’s “promise” to God’s beloved: Mary’s suffering people of Israel. There is nothing ambiguous here about what the vision of the kingdom of God is; it entails living into this constant and searing requirement that the lowly be lifted up, not tomorrow but today. As God keeps God’s promises, so must we.

CHOOSING THE KINGDOM

This uncompromising requirement of God’s vision for the building of God’s reign has divided Christians throughout history. There are those who retire from the turmoil and speak of the kingdom of God as a future place, somewhere in “heaven,” where the wrongs will finally be righted. Getting there is just a matter of piety, patience and, well, dying. And then there are those who try to assuage their consciences by doing the minimum for others as “charity” while building spiritual spas: luxuriant parish complexes that reinforce their separateness from the vulnerable. The result is places of comfort and security that drown out the pain of the world with elevator music.

But there are also those who, like Mary, see God acting in the world for the lowly and vulnerable and boldly take up their cause, which is God’s cause. One could say that these are three different approaches to living as a Christian in a troubled world, all equally valid. One could, but one should not unless one is ready to walk away from the Gospel.

In one of the traditions collected by Luke, Jesus is

asked bluntly by scholars “when the kingdom of God would come.” Jesus responds directly in a few words. First, the kingdom “cannot be observed,” and no one will announce it by pointing it out. It is not a “place,” like heaven or a perfectly constructed temple or religious system. The reign of God is an “event.” The kingdom is not to be looked at; it is to be experienced. As Jesus continues, he challenges the scholars, telling them something often repeated throughout the Gospels: They just do not see that “the kingdom of God is among you” (17:20-21).

Any approach to the suffering of the world that does not directly engage us personally with that suffering is, in essence, a denial of the kingdom’s presence among us; it is a denial of Christ’s revelation. The offerings of flowers, candles and prayers I encountered in the inner city were addressed to Mary as the champion of the lowly, the mother who hears their cries and who carries and buries a son who died for love of them. In our little chapel and in churches all over the world, the poor make themselves present to God, ask for God’s companionship and volunteer to do the hard work.

Just as Archbishop Romero was a prophet, so too is every single person who dares to dream of God’s reign with him. Just as the Holy Spirit spoke through Martin Luther King Jr., so too it speaks through all the anonymous women and men who preceded him and walked with him. To be a prophet is a sign of our baptism, and it is time we start acting like it. Jesus Christ’s example and exhortation to us to build God’s reign of radical and dangerous love is alive in you, it is alive in me, it lives in the church, and it calls us to heroism. Where does God’s kingdom need me today, lowly as I am, to speak up and act like young Mary did centuries ago in the sun-kissed hills of Judah? This is our question.

Cecilia González-Andrieu is an associate professor of theological studies at Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, Calif., and a contributing writer for America.



BECOMING INVISIBLE

Advice for aging toward the kingdom | By Paul F. Morrissey



It is strange to feel invisible. I don't remember exactly when it began to happen. The only thing I know is that I am not seen much anymore when I walk by people on the street. It is a little discomfiting, a little bittersweet.

I am now in my late 70s and rather healthy, even athletic for my age, so it came as a shock to realize people rarely look back when I glance at them. Not just women who, understandably, do not often glance sideways. Men do not see me either. Young people rush by, earphones plugged in, oblivious to me—and others, I suppose, except for those near to them in age.

You could say this phenomenon is the result of the digital revolution. The smartphone gods insulate and captivate many of us in our own worlds. But this invisibility happens in smaller gatherings, too, even with people I know. Conversation whirls around the table. Snippets of this or that experience are shared. Chuckling to myself, I remember when I competed in the same way for the storyteller spotlight.

Now I often sit and wait. It is not a bad space to be in. It can be rather peaceful if you can get over the need to speak in order to exist. I watch the Ping-Pong match for good chunks of time before anyone notices me and asks, "So what's happening, Unc?" I try to awake from my reverie and blurt out something exciting and meaningful. It usually comes out making only half sense. "I rode my bicycle for an hour yesterday.... I planted some sunflower seeds...wrote a poem." I wait for a follow-up question, but usually it doesn't come.

The world belongs to the young. "Yet I've got so much to share if anyone wants to know," I muse to myself. "They need to live their own lives, though, discover their own meaning," another voice reminds me. This is the way we all move on, "pass out of the picture," as my father used to say. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J., says that this "diminishment" is how we prepare for the great merging with the cosmos that occurs when we die:

And if by chance we escape...there still remains that slow, essential deterioration which we cannot escape: old age little by little robbing us of ourselves and pushing us on to the end.... In death, as in an ocean, all our slow and swift diminishments flow out and merge.

Oh well, at least it is the ocean. I love the sea. But merge? Yes, this great anthropologist and priest believes that we must decrease so that Christ can become our all.

Aging is our eventual return to invisibility. It is our entering the kingdom of God. ●●

I believe it, too. It consoles me, especially on one of my more invisible days. Yet every now and then it is still a shock to my ego. A voice in me wants to scream. I want to stick my tongue out or do something crazy to throw my nephews and nieces off balance. The 20- and 30-somethings among my relatives might laugh and roll their eyes at each other and me. But the littlest ones—the 2- or 6-year-old great nieces and nephews—seem intrigued by a little craziness from an elder. The brave ones among them then run up to my outstretched arms and jump in. I am not invisible to them.

Children are on the other end of the invisibility continuum. They are just beginning to come out of it themselves. Babies peering over their dad's or mom's shoulder are still in this invisible world. When an adult peeks into their world and grins, something registers in the little brain: "I am seen. I am...I." Thus begins the long road to consciousness and visibility. Aging is our eventual return to invisibility. It is our entering the kingdom of God—unless you become like little children you will not enter it.

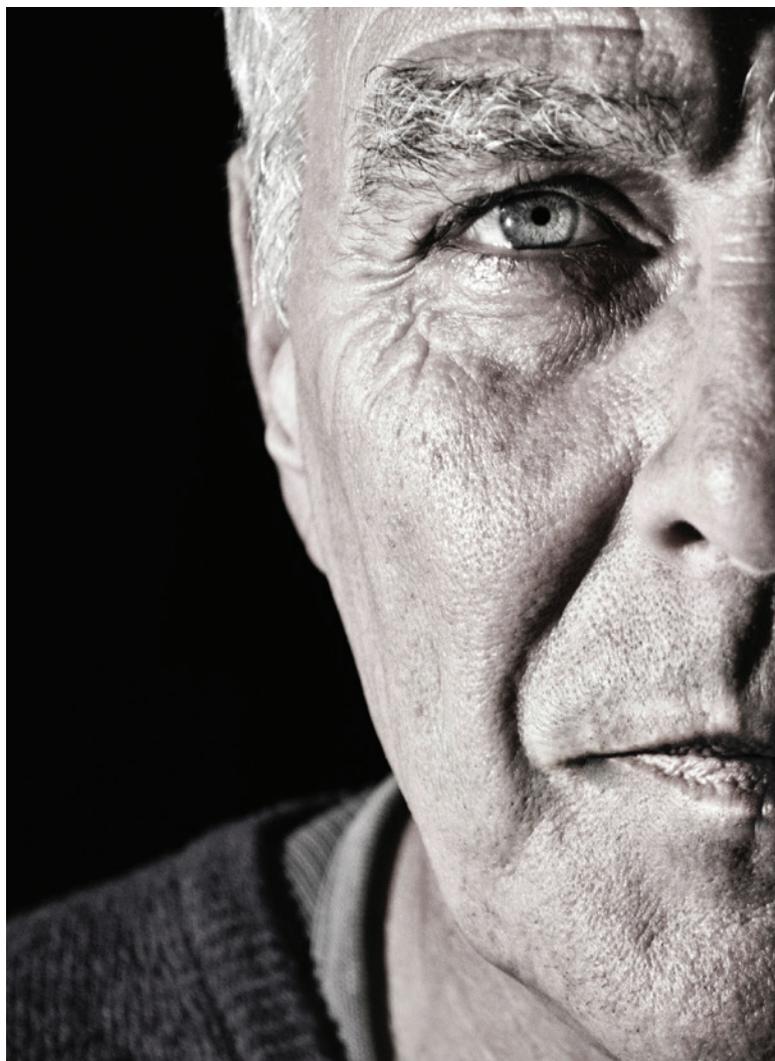
A balance is needed between our mid-life selves, eager to make our mark on this world, and the child who watches this dance with curiosity from either side—infancy and old age. It is not simply a matter of quietly surrendering to age and invisibility and the night. We are meant to struggle, even to fight with all our might this diminishment, until we have to let go a little bit and then a little bit more. If we do not resist this path, we would rarely exercise or eat healthy foods. We would never use a skin cream. We would just live off the immortality that youth seems to promise. Then be-

fore we know it, we are staring at a wreck in the morning mirror and wondering why. You gave up, didn't you?

...

I began to tell a friend about this invisibility recently. Before I could explain what I meant, he immediately acknowledged that he, too, experiences this, even though he is only in his mid-60s. The way he described it was that he hardly sees anyone looking at him with a glimmer of sexual or relational interest anymore. We all enjoy seeing a flicker of—let's call it personal—interest in another's eyes as we go through our rather regular days, don't we? A sign that we are still a little intriguing. Not just a role or object. That we might be worth having a cup of coffee or glass of wine with.

To be seen—to be desired, to be a person and not simply a role—is a beautiful human need no matter what our age is. God created us this way. When we become older (I like this term better than old) this need to be seen is even



more poignant and challenging. Not just for ourselves but for those who may pass us by.

In South Africa, the people greet one another on the road by saying, “Sawubona.” It means “I see you.” The answer is “Here I am.” In other words, you are not invisible to me. You are someone. You are God’s beloved child, whatever race, religion, sex or sexual orientation you may be.

We need to look at others and also at ourselves in this way. We must not simply be passively invisible. We need to help each other know what this invisibility means as we age. We need to have faith that each of us has a purpose, every day, until God calls us into his kingdom at last. Teilhard de Chardin calls this kingdom “communion,” and he prays that it is truly a great holy communion:

You are the irresistible and vivifying force, O Lord,
and because yours is the energy, because, of the

two of us, you are infinitely the stronger, it is on you that falls the part of consuming me in the union that should weld us together. Vouchsafe, therefore, something more precious still than the grace for which all the faithful pray. It is not enough that I should die while communicating. Teach me to treat my death as an act of communion.

• • •

This winter, a 97-year-old parishioner died. Never married, Edna had lived for many years with her sister, Alberta, who had died a few years before. Her middle-aged niece and nephew moved in to care for Edna. She moved around in a wheelchair. The priests brought Edna Communion every Sunday. During the past year, her head dropped lower and lower, and she looked bedraggled and weary of living when she sighed, “Don’t get old!” I began praying that God might take her to himself sometime soon.

Heading for the coffee and doughnuts gathering after the nine o’clock Mass on Sunday, I saw the ambulance in front of Edna’s house. I stopped. The door was tilted open, and I went in. Her nephew met me in the dark hallway and whispered, “Edna died in her sleep last night.” Shocked, though I should not have been, I looked into the living room where she always sat. There Edna lay, sprawled on the La-Z-Boy chair where she slept at night, her arm curled out with her hand open. Her eyes were cracked open a slit, almost a smile on her face. She could almost be sleeping.

Gazing at her face, I spoke to her: “Edna, Edna, you are finally at peace. Thank God!” I reached for her hand, barely cool, and pulled her eyelids down. Pouring some water from a drinking glass into my hand, I blessed her on the forehead with the sign of the cross. Her smile urged me to rest in the silence of her entering the invisible world, the great communion.

Paul F. Morrissey, O.S.A., is a prison chaplain and author. His most recent work is a novel, *The Black Wall of Silence*, which shows the struggle between loyalty and honesty at the heart of the sexual abuse crisis in the Catholic Church. Email: Fr.paul@blackwallofsilence.com.





Angelo Secchi, Jesuit Father of Astrophysics

By Adam D. Hincks

IRIGOIEN FANTINI '86

It is a mark of genius to come up with questions that are obvious in retrospect but that nobody had ever thought of asking before. The Jesuit astronomer Angelo Secchi (pronounced “sekki”), whose 200th anniversary of birth is being celebrated this year, had that talent.

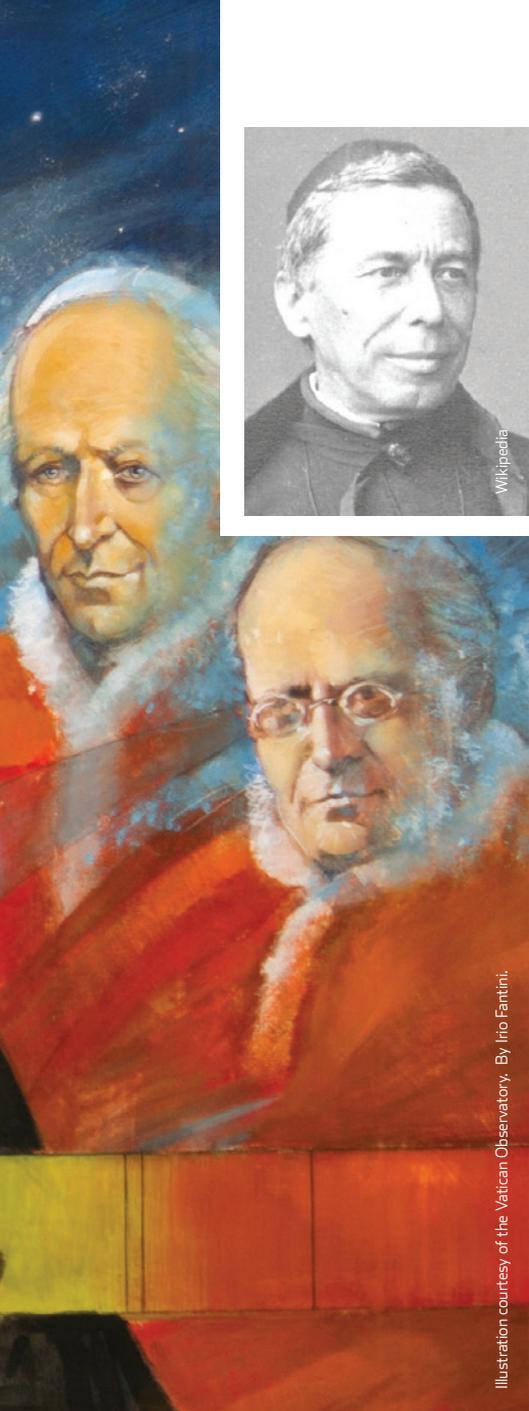
Before Secchi, astronomers were mainly interested in figuring out ex-

actly where stars and planets were. This was important for navigation, and therefore commerce, and intricate mathematical systems were developed to track the motions of the heavens above in order to guide the motions of ships below. But Secchi asked a new question: What are stars and planets? With this question, the brand-new disciplines of astrophysics

and planetary sciences were launched.

This may be Secchi’s most famous legacy; but taken in isolation, it does not do justice to his many talents and to a life full of discovery, invention, public service—and even political intrigue.

Angelo Secchi was born into a large middle-class family in the northern Italian city of Reggio Emilia on June 28, 1818, and entered the Jesuit



Angelo Secchi, S.J., whose 200th birthday is celebrated this year, asked a new scientific question: What are stars and planets?

theology degree, he was moonlighting as Pianciani's assistant.

Doubtless he would have continued on there in conventional research and teaching, but the winds of liberalism were blowing in Europe. In 1848, only months after Secchi was ordained a priest, Rome underwent a revolution, and the short-lived but strongly anticlerical Roman Republic was born. The Jesuits were forced to flee. Their superior general, Jan Roothaan, donned a wig, disguised himself as a diocesan priest and repaired to a nearby port in a mail coach to sail for Sardinia. As for Secchi, he went to England and spent some time studying mathematics at Stonyhurst College before moving to Georgetown University in the United States.

Secchi's exile in the New World ended up being propitious, as he came into contact with leading scientists and a vigorous academic environment charged with the latest developments in astronomy and physics. When the Papal States were restored in 1849 and the Jesuits returned to Rome, he was appointed director of the observatory of the Roman College and took up his new job with all these new scientific ideas fresh in his mind. He began a major upgrade of the facilities and obtained a state-of-the-art telescope (German-engineered, of course). It was with this instrument that he conducted his most famous research into the nature of stars and planets. While he was not the first to realize it was possible to analyze what chemicals a glowing object is made out of by using a prism to spread its light into its constituent colors—a technique known

as spectroscopy—he was the first to apply the technique systematically to objects in the heavens. He found he could group stars together according to common features in their spectra and came up with a stellar classification scheme that was widely adopted, and from which the modern-day system is ultimately derived.

One star claimed his particular attention: our own sun. In addition to studying its chemical composition through spectroscopy, he tracked variations in its brightness, figured out that there was a link between solar activity and changes in Earth's magnetic field and did detailed studies of sunspots. In 1860 he was one of the first people to photograph the sun during an eclipse; and he was able to prove from his photographs that the sun's corona, or outer atmosphere, was real and not just an optical illusion. His 1870 book *Le Soleil (The Sun)* is one of the most important works of solar science of the 19th century.

He also turned his attention to the planets, studying the composition of their atmospheres through spectroscopy. He made exact observations of Saturn's rings and was among the first to study the surface details of Mars. He was a pioneer in photographing the moon and used the results to examine its craters in detail. In honor of his planetary research, an asteroid was named after him, as well as craters on the moon and on Mars.

Popularizer and Public Servant

What makes Secchi a fascinating figure is that his interests extended beyond what he could see through

novitiate in Rome at the age of 15. His scientific abilities were recognized early on during his formation at the Roman College, the Jesuit university in Rome, and he studied under Francesco De Vico, S.J., director of the Roman College's observatory, as well as Giovan Battista Pianciani, a Jesuit professor of physics and chemistry. By the time Secchi was working for his



Angelo Secchi, S.J., was one of the first to photograph a solar eclipse, helping to prove the existence of the sun's corona, or outer atmosphere.

his telescope. His mind was seized by any new, interesting idea. For instance, when in 1851 Léon Foucault constructed a giant pendulum in Paris to demonstrate the earth's daily rotation, Secchi replicated the experiment within a couple of months, suspending a 105-foot-long pendulum from the roof of the Church of St. Ignatius to show Romans the exciting new scientific result.

Ileana Chinnici, an astronomer in Palermo, Sicily, has recently completed *Decoding the Stars: A Biography of Angelo Secchi, Jesuit and Scientist*. When I asked her about Secchi's interests, she characterized him as "a complete scientist," who was enthusiastic about disseminating modern theories of physics not just among academics but more broadly among the public.

"He was really an open-minded person," she commented, "very attentive to new ideas and theories, very popular among all social classes. He liked to dialogue with everybody." He gave public lectures about science, and his textbook *On the Unity of the Physical Forces* was an important instrument for disseminating the most modern ideas in physics within Italy.

His activity extended to very practical matters. It is easy to forget that even if its political constitution was at odds with Europe's ascendant liberalism, the Papal States of the 19th century were a fully functioning, modern state. Secchi contributed much to its welfare, helping with the construction of electric railways, installing lightning rods on important buildings, coming up with a system for the

lighthouses in the ports and ensuring drinking water was potable. He supervised a precise geodetic survey along the Appian Way that became the basis for accurate maps of the region.

But perhaps his most important civil contribution was in weather forecasting. He had already come into contact with the science of meteorology in the United States, and in 1856 he set up a daily telegraphic weather report for the Papal States, the first of its kind in Italy. Later he was invited by the Italian government (at the time outside of the Papal States) to set up its own such service. He designed and built an innovative meteorograph, or automatic weather recording device, that tracked barometric pressure, temperature, wind velocity, humidity and rainfall. It won the Grand Prix at

the 1867 Universal Exposition in Paris, and Napoleon III awarded him the French Legion of Honor, while Peter II made him a grand dignitary of the Order of the Rose of Brazil.

Caught Up in Politics

In 1870 Rome was captured by the emerging Italian state, and Pope Pius IX retreated to the Vatican. The Roman College and its observatory were taken over by the new government, which immediately found itself in a bind. Angelo Secchi was clearly still the best man to head up the observatory, but as a Jesuit priest his loyalty to the pope was uncompromising. In the end, his scientific credentials and prestige won out. He was allowed to stay on as director of the observatory and was exempt from taking the oath of allegiance to the government.

But relations between Secchi and the new Italian state were not always smooth. In 1872 the Holy See named Secchi the pontifical delegate to an international meeting in Paris tasked with defining the length of a standard meter. The Italian scientists lodged an official protest, complaining that the Holy See was not a sovereign state and could not be represented as such at an international conference. They were overruled, and Secchi was warmly welcomed as a voting member of the proceedings.

Secchi was never comfortable with the political situation; in the 1872 meeting he had been pressured into assuming the political role he did. While he was deeply worried that the liberal project would be a de-Christianizing force in Europe, he was also wary of the radical intransigence present in some quarters of the church.

Substance Theory

By Laura Reece Hogan

The skin of the persimmon is not what it used to be

Who is to say that it is a less lovely sphere dulled to ripe auburn pulp
and although pecked, sun-patched.

The tree speaks them tenderly into being each season. Each in turn turns to teach
the turn to the one sweet heat.

A hachiya meets its appointments, matures beyond the astringent orange sheen,

reaching for Teresa reaching for Thérèse reaching for Teresa reaching for the utter center
of the divine diamond fruit, an arrow into flame

and in living flame, leaps and ignites the next. Incandescent in the setting gold embrace,
she gathers her ruddy round wisdom, flares her warm fragrance on high:

I have kept both fresh and mellowed in store for you, my love.

I can say I love ardently, I will say we cradle stars

I can say I hold the key, I will say we usher others through.

Root wither, wind bite and branch bend lead us here, a final kiss for the crumbling
leaf crown, a release of the heavy soft body

In the time of their visitation they will shine, and dart about as sparks through stubble;

Perhaps you will just make out the glimmer of each autumnal halo in the dusk,
and it will light something inside, in the juiced middle, near the seed-heart

Who is to say the puckered rusted red flesh
is less lovely when it may be taken,
consumed, and dissolved
into molecules into
acid nebula into
fusion into
fire

Laura Reece Hogan is the author of *I Live, No Longer I*, and *O Garden-Dweller*. Her work has appeared in *The Christian Century*, *Spirituality*, *Penwood Review*, *The Windhover* and other publications.

Secchi developed a classification scheme for stars that was widely adopted. 💧💧

As Ms. Chinnici observes, he was attacked “both by anticlerical people and by ultraconservative Catholic people.” Thus, in a letter in 1877, Secchi lamented that “while some find skepticism and atheism in my writings, others see an exaltation of theology that undercuts physics in order to support the Bible.” Nor did it help, it should be added, that he had a “strong personality” (as Ms. Chinnici puts it) and occasionally came into personal conflict with other scientists.

The anticlerical sentiment of the 19th century continues to affect Secchi’s legacy today. In his hometown of Reggio Emilia, one can still see the house where he was born. Matteo Galaverni, a young priest of the diocese who has a doctorate in astronomy and is associated with the Vatican Observatory, used to pass this building with his father, himself an amateur astronomer, who would tell him stories about their city’s great son. Curiously, the commemorative plaque marking the home does not mention that Secchi was a Jesuit or a priest. Father Galaverni explained to me that this reflects the anticlericalism of the region, from which the Jesuits were expelled in 1859. Today, he says, many locals know him as a great astronomer, but few are aware that he was a priest.

According to Guy Consolmagno, S.J., the current director of the Vatican Observatory, Secchi’s priesthood

also harmed his reputation in the English-speaking world. “His rivals in the United Kingdom, including the founder and editor of *Nature*, Norman Lockyer, made certain that his works—even his popular works—were never translated into English,” Brother Consolmagno told me. “There were very successful versions published in French and German, but not English.” A contributing motive may have been that anglophone scientists were envious about how far ahead of them his work was.

Man of Science, Man of Faith

Though Secchi was accused of crypto-atheism, the fact is that he remained a faithful Catholic and devoted Jesuit priest his whole life. When he died in 1878, his will asked that his Legion of Honor medal be placed by the altar of St. Aloysius Gonzaga and his Order of the Rose by that of St. Ignatius Loyola, two great saints of the Society of Jesus buried in Rome.

But in what way did his science and his faith intersect? Brother Consolmagno considers him “typical of religious scientists of the 19th century. They still saw science, and physics in particular, as a source of unquestioning truth.... the crises of relativity and quantum theory were well in the future.” Nevertheless, even if his philosophy of science was somewhat naïve, he found no conflict between his work in the church and his work in the observatory—after all, the latter was literally built on top of the former. When Leo XIII wrote, a few years after Secchi’s death, that “truth cannot contradict truth,” he could very well have used Secchi as a real-life example of this principle.

Yet perhaps most important for us today—and especially for Christian

scientists—was his conviction that scientists should not detach their research from their spiritual lives. “Even scientific intelligence,” he once wrote, “is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.... We ought to ask God for this gift when, in our studies, we place before ourselves the end that every Christian should set his sights on: not the vanity of surpassing those who have preceded us, nor arrogance or pride after having surpassed them, but rather let us, in our asking for intellectual light, seek only to understand the works of the Lord—to know his greatness and our duty.” As he saw it, the ultimate reason to pursue science was to know God better, “so that we can learn to love and serve him.”

True to his Jesuit charism, Angelo Secchi was a contemplative in action.

Adam D. Hincks, S.J., is *America’s* contributing editor for science.

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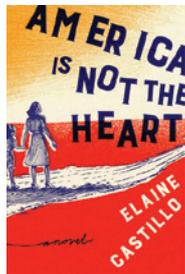
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 **Saint Thomas More**
The Catholic Chapel & Center at Yale University

Elaine Castillo immerses the reader in the swirl of connection and obligation that is the quintessential Filipino family experience.



America Is Not the Heart

By Elaine Castillo
Viking, 408p \$27

Elaine Castillo's impressive, multifarious debut novel begins in a breathless rush, in second person, present tense: "So you're a girl and you're poor, but at least you're light-skinned—that'll save you." And so Castillo sets the tone for what follows, a frank and immersive foray into the world of Filipino-American immigrants to the United States and all the journeys that follow.

Castillo's bold prose hustles through the early years of Paz, a girl born to a family of subsistence farmers in the Philippines. Paz is often hungry, but always striving. Admiring the gold tooth her mother paid to have installed in the smile of her "room-silencingly beautiful" older sister, Paz saves up to get one herself, but from a cut-rate dentist who does a poor job, causing Paz to lose all her teeth. "You're starting to learn that

A bold debut about Filipino life in America

By Jenny Shank

the things you get," Castillo writes in the opening second-person narration, "you don't get to keep."

Undaunted, Paz studies hard enough to attend a Catholic college and become a nurse, where she captures the attention of a playboy doctor from one of the country's "oligarchic families whose chokehold on the country's resources was cannibalizing its future": Apolonio Chua De Vera, known as Pol. They eventually emigrate to America, marry and settle in the Bay Area, where one day they welcome Pol's beloved niece, Geronima de Vera, now known as Hero. Hero has been disowned by her parents, and her badly injured hands prevent her from working.

Although it is Hero's story that Castillo largely focuses on, Paz is the engine that makes Hero's story possible. Paz finances the family's life by working "her normal sixteen hour days, occasionally even work[ing] a twenty-four-hour shift." Paz assumes

the financial obligations of her extended family. She has so many burdens that she can make only the minimum payments on her credit cards—but she also enjoys the power her beneficence gives her. In her depiction of Paz, Castillo has captured one unique woman—but also the millions of Filipinas like her around the globe, emigrating to countries where their educations make for better economic prospects, supporting a host of family members who have no access to prosperity.

Hero is 34 years old when we first meet her. She arrives in California in 1990, trying to start over. The novel gradually delves into her past, through shards of memory that break into her daily life the way PTSD flashbacks intrude on a sufferer's brain, but she remains something of a cipher. She is quiet and keeps to herself and is still in a fragile state as the book opens. We learn that Hero grew up in the rich De Vera family, wanting to become a doctor. Instead, she dropped out of medi-

cal school and, entranced by a charismatic leader of the communist rebel group New People's Army, joined that cause as a field doctor. Hero can no longer practice medicine because she was captured and torturers broke her thumbs. She escaped only when they learned she belonged to a powerful family.

Hero's psyche, toughened by these brutal experiences, is revealed by her reflections on an El Greco painting she had studied in Catholic school:

The teacher said the name of the painting was El Salvador del Mundo. But in no painting had Hero ever seen anyone look less like a savior of the world. The expression of Jesus in the painting was one of grievous humility and reticence. His face was hollow-cheeked and wan, and in his gaze was the inconsolable calm of someone who had long ago reconciled himself to the knowledge that the world was totally unsavable.

For years, Hero thought that the title was meant to be ironic. But only in California did Hero remember the painting again and finally realize what she hadn't been able to know, back then, what the face in the El Greco painting actually looked like. It just looked like an adult. Someone who'd once been a kid, and wasn't one anymore.

Despite Hero's unconventional background and hard-bitten outlook, in California she settles into a calm, anonymous life as a nanny, driving Pol and Paz's scrappy daughter Roni to school and taking care of her while

Paz works all those long hours. When Roni's eczema flares and Western medicine fails to help, Paz sends Hero and Roni to visit a faith healer who operates out of the Filipino restaurant she and her husband own. Hanging out at the restaurant, Hero is welcomed into the vibrant community of Bay Area Filipinos.

America Is Not the Heart celebrates this down-home culture, in which plates of leftover *pancit* (noodles) are pressed upon guests as they leave any gathering, music-obsessed young men dream of qualifying for the DMC World DJ championships, Virgin Mary candles burn on home altars to departed family members, and communities throw Santacruzán pageants, the ritual processions that end Flores de Mayo, a festival held to honor the Virgin Mary in May. Catholicism is the cultural backdrop, although many of Castillo's characters barely pay attention to their religion except at times of ritual and ceremony.

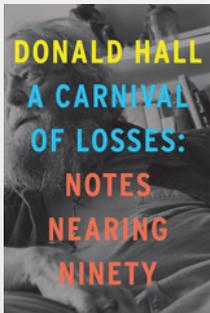
Castillo writes with swagger, tossing off references to Filipino culture, history and politics without much explanation. She immerses the reader in the swirl of connection, community and obligation that is part of the Filipino family experience. The title of the novel refers to a touchstone of Filipino-American literature, the 1946 semi-autobiographical novel *America Is in the Heart*, by Carlos Bulosan. Bulosan's immigration to America and his years as a migrant and laborer during the Great Depression inspired the story. I'm embarrassed to admit I did not know of Bulosan's book until I read Castillo's. The verve of her novel and her pride in Filipino-American culture suggest that of course everyone should know about Bulosan's book.

One reader wrote in a review of Castillo's novel on Amazon, "I have never encountered a book with so many words that are neither translated nor make sense in context."

This is certainly part of Castillo's point. She includes dialogue—that isn't italicized or demarcated by quotation marks—in a variety of languages, including Tagalog, Pangasinan and Ilocano. Characters, each conversant in English and a variety of other languages, don't even know all the dialects that are used in their presence. *America Is Not the Heart* also introduces an abundance of characters, many of whom have several nicknames. What's more, it is clear Castillo is confident enough in the decisions she made for her art that she is comfortable with the reader's potential discomfort.

There is much that many Americans do not know about the Philippines, a country the United States ruled for nearly half a century and whose immigrants comprise the second-largest Asian population in the United States. And there are countless ways we overlook the contributions of these people who keep many of our hospitals, schools and restaurants running. *America Is Not the Heart* plunges readers into the deep end of the Filipino-American experience. Keep up, Castillo's rich novel seems to suggest. Pay attention. Maybe you could learn something.

Jenny Shank is on the faculty of the Mile High program in creative writing at Regis University in Denver, Colo. Her novel *The Ringer* won the High Plains Book Award.



A Carnival of Losses
Notes Nearing Ninety
By Donald Hall
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
216p \$25

Delicious dish

In his essay collection *How to Write an Autobiographical Novel*, the essayist, novelist and poet Alexander Chee articulates this standard for his work: “Dying, what stories would you tell?”

At a glance, one could assign the same value to Donald Hall’s essay collection. Facing his own denouement, what does one of America’s most eminent mid-century poets have left to say? As Hall writes in one essay, “Why should the nonagenarian hold anything back?”

Hall’s question initially appears daring. Will shocking confessions follow such a proposition? Most of the revelations that ensue, though, do not tower with emotional stature; rather, they pace with an ordinary tick-tock. While solitude, domesticity and mortality can all thrum with vital narrative energy, in Hall’s book they tend to hem, haw and wander off.

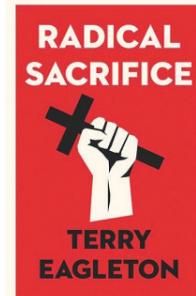
Hall’s age is the collection’s métier. To understand that the author was approaching 90 as he wrote the book is also to understand that Hall was old enough to remember relatives who remembered the Civil War, and *A Carnival of Losses* is frank about aging’s sorrow. (Hall died on June 23 of this year.)

When Hall’s dish is good, it is delicious. We learn that Marianne Moore once told Hall, “Fritos are so nutritious,” that Ted Berrigan used to steal Hall’s speed pills and that Hall and Seamus Heaney drank Guinness beside the cemetery where Gerard Manley Hopkins and Maud Gonne are buried. Other literary anecdotes underwhelm: Do we really need to know Hall once hailed a cab next to William Carlos Williams?

Hall and *A Carnival of Losses* also fail to charm with their unself-conscious misogyny and toxic masculinity. Hall romanticizes the skirt-chasing mid-century of *The Paris Review*, trades naughty limericks with Garrison Keillor and joins Theodore Roethke in flirting with a young woman as Roethke’s wife looks on, “sullen, and I thought she was crabby.”

With this book, Hall seems to be trying to place a seal upon his own literary legacy by remixing his best origin stories and famous friendships, but too often it veers into settling old scores. In one chapter Hall remembers: “We were listless, we were boring, we were sincere. So were our poems.” The same, unfortunately, can be said of most of *A Carnival of Losses*.

Laura Goode is the author of the novel *Sister Mischief* and the collection of poems *Become a Name*.



Radical Sacrifice
By Terry Eagleton
Yale University Press.
216p \$25

Lives given for the few

Sacrifice can be an unattractive word. It can suggest ideas of masochism and repression. In *Radical Sacrifice*, Terry Eagleton wants to rescue the concept for political purposes. To do this, he traces the history of sacrifice in literature and philosophy, covering a broad range of writers from Greek tragedy to contemporary philosophy, with Jesus’ crucifixion at the center. He argues that a combination of Christian theology and Marxism helps him retrieve the ethical and political meaning of sacrifice.

The martyr sacrifices his or her life in order to affirm it as a gift. Eagleton argues that previous philosophical interpretations of sacrifice do not fully capture the gift of Jesus’ martyrdom. According to Jacques Derrida, for a gift to be a gift, it has to be completely gratuitous—without the expectation of another gift in return. Eagleton, however, does not see much of a problem in reciprocity, because he views it as central to the formation of a community. Though the crucifixion does represent a gratuitous gift of forgiveness and love, it also signals a way of relating to others based not

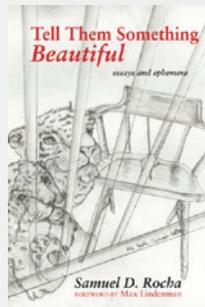
on use or profit but on solidarity and commitment.

Sacrifice also lays bare the conflict between a self-centered life and one devoted to others. Self-fulfillment is linked to the pursuit of material gains, but this can become its own form of self-denial. There is a difference between the person who sacrifices his or her life for capital and the one whose life is martyred. For the poor, the sick and the dying, awareness of one's mortality is part of daily life. They are sacrificed in the sense of being excluded from society and discarded as useless.

Eagleton thus focuses on the dispossessed as potential agents of political change. Their very existence acts as a mirror that reflects back to society at large its own inhumanity. The wealth of the few is built on the poverty of many. When embraced, a sacrificial form of self-dispossession challenges an "ethic of self-sovereignty" by suggesting that our identities are relational instead of centered on the individual.

Eagleton's erudition can at times be overwhelming. This book presumes a thorough familiarity with the history of English literature and with contemporary political theory. Nonetheless, *Radical Sacrifice* makes a persuasive case that a life given in the defense of those who are rejected, or sacrificed, is a life deeply lived.

José Dueño, S.J., is a former associate editor of *America*.



Tell Them Something Beautiful
Essays and Ephemera
Samuel D. Rocha
Cascade Books.
244p \$49

A beautiful and funky education

Sam Rocha has commented on religion, politics and education in online venues like Vox Nova, First Things and Patheos Catholic since the early 2000s. *Tell Them Something Beautiful* collects in one volume Rocha's best short essays and online reflections from the Obama presidency. Whether lamenting political discourse, calling for an end to compulsory schooling or upending kitschy holiness, Rocha aims to please and disappoint both right and left, a good sign for thoughtful Christians.

Tell Them Something Beautiful is divided into four sections with titles like "Discontents and Diagnosis" (which predicts the Trump presidency) and "The Ordo Amoris" (about the unsentimental politics of love), to name two. These divisions call attention to how Rocha's main concerns overlap and also demonstrate his renaissance dexterity as a thinker, musician and teacher. These thematic overlaps also remind us that who we are, what we believe and how we learn are inextricably linked to our universal call to holiness.

Rocha is most persuasive when discussing education and schooling. The U.S. educational system, Rocha

argues, fails to educate persons in their ensouled totality. His writing on education deftly exposes how American politics, art, capitalist economics and liturgy affect the way we relate to each other and how we relate to God. At the same time, no reader would come away thinking Rocha a dry and pious academic. From Mexican food to Pope Francis, one of the most delightful benefits from reading this collection is constant surprise over to whom or what he chooses to grant loving irreverence or critical praise.

The collection is not without its frustrations. Tedious sentences may pass online, but one wonders if careless editing was intended for the sake of fidelity to the slapdashery of blogs. But this is a minor quibble considering Rocha's unwillingness to cater to preconceived news feeds in his writing.

Reading such a capacious mind at work reminds us how beautiful it is to witness someone fully live into their vocation. Rocha is called to write and does so with a principled degree of honesty, profundity and humor. Or, to use the author's own descriptor, *funk*.

Michael Angel Martín has written poems and essays for *Dappled Things*, *Pilgrim*, *Presence*, *St. Katherine Review* and elsewhere.

The urban fantasies of a ‘small god’

By Leo J. O'Donovan

In 2013, two years before he died of a cancer first diagnosed in 2000, the Congolese artist Bodys Isek Kingelez lamented to a journalist that in his home city of Kinshasa, “no one knows who I am or what I do.” It was in fact true that the artist Chéri Samba and the pop musician Papa Wemba were better known at home and abroad. But for a good quarter-century, since a brilliant appearance at a landmark exhibition in Paris, Kingelez had been a fixture on the international art scene. Now, with a first full and extraordinary retrospective of his work in the United States at the Museum of Modern Art, he is receiving his full due.

Arising—appearing or materializing might be better words—on white ovoid forms positioned at various levels in the galleries at the Modern are some 33 delicate creations, chiefly in different kinds of paper that range in size from small buildings a foot high

to entire cities on platforms. Some are shown on revolving disks, heightening the sense that you are circling the sky to view them. But they are not buildings or cities such as you have ever seen or imagined. Forget for now Frank Lloyd Wright’s models for cities of the future in his Prairie Style or Mies van der Rohe and the International Style. Long now instead for more color and decoration, surges of symmetry, delicate tracery embellishing solid forms, buildings scalloped and syncopated, hugging the ground and piercing the sky, studded with diamonds and stars, a world of peace and prosperity not to be built but dreamed of.

Bodys Isek Kingelez was born in 1948 in the village of Kimbele-Ihunga, the eldest of nine children of farm-workers. Christened Jean-Baptiste, he was educated by Belgian missionary priests and imbibed a profound if not very system-

atic religious sense. In a later “Artist’s Statement” from 2005 he wrote: “No one could beat the strength of God that worked in me.” And further: “God has shown us that He himself is an artist. He painted the mountains, He painted the plains.... It is our duty to follow in his example. He who follows His example, he who paints as He does, will be blessed. And that’s why I am a small god.”

An excellent student, Kingelez finished high school at 22 and moved to Kinshasa. It was to be his home for the rest of his life. The Republic of the Congo had declared independence 10 years earlier and was briefly led by the democratically elected Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba, who was assassinated soon after his election. One of his opponents, who became known as Mobutu Sese Seko, proclaimed himself president in 1965 and set to work asserting the authentic Af-

The creations of Bodys Isek Kingelez hug the ground and pierce the sky, studded with diamonds and stars.

rican character of the country and the hardworking, self-reliant nature of its people.

In the burgeoning capital Kingelez attended the University of Lovanium (now the University of Kinshasa). Teaching subsequently at a secondary school left him dissatisfied, and in 1978 he experienced what he famously called an obsession to get his hands on “some scissors, a Gillette razor, and some glue and paper.” He made a little house and then a second work, “Musée National,” which he took to the Institute of National Museums. The staff there could not believe the piece was his, but when he created another directly in front of them, he was hired as a technical restorer for the museum’s collection.

Privately he labored tirelessly on his work. The art scene in Kinshasa at the time included the Académie des Beaux-Arts and several groups of painters—one emphasizing indigenous themes, another with a more Western, largely figurative style and, since the 1970s, the appearance of the “popular painters,” who drew on daily life to produce bold, personal imagery that became internationally known. Kingelez, who never set foot in an art class, avoided the influence of any of them. Critics searched for ways to describe his works—architecture in paper, hybrid unions of architecture, painting and sculpture, “propositions” as exercises in possibility. He himself called them “extrêmes maquettes” and proclaimed himself “a designer, an architect, a sculptor, engineer, artist.”

The transformative event in his life was the Paris exhibition in 1989, “Magiciens de la Terre.” Led by Jean-Hubert Martin, it ambitioned a truly global contemporary art. Six of Kingelez’s sculptures were shown, in-

cluding three made on site. The spirited “Paris Nouvel” (1989) is tricked out in the colors of the French flag, while the more sober “Allemagne An 2000” (“Germany in the Year 2000”), made the year before, alludes to the colors of both the West and East German flags. The artist was able to stay in Paris for six months (his first trip outside Congo) and there also created “Bel Atlas,” a riff on the Grande Arche de la Défense, built in 1989 for the bicentennial of the French Revolution, and the exuberant “Stars Palme Bouygues,” whose brilliant inverted pyramid subtly rebukes the builders of the Grande Arche for the stiffness of their design.

The artist was soon being shown regularly throughout the world. His internationalism was evident in pieces titled “Palais d’Hirochiima” (1991), “Canada Dry” (1991), “Miss Hotel Brussels” (1992), “Centrale Palestinienne” (1994) and “Nippon Tower” (2005)—all in the exhibition but none about a country the artist ever visited. He also had a profound civic sense, displayed in “Industria da Pharmacia” (1992), for example, and perhaps especially “The Scientific Center of Hospitalisation the SIDA” (French for AIDS), created in 1991 when an AIDS epidemic raged among an estimated six to eight percent of the population of Zaire.

With the means to buy a wider range of materials, Kingelez also expanded his horizons and began to make clusters of buildings that started with a tribute to his home village, “Kimbembe Ihunga (Kimbembe Ville)” in 1992, a tightly constructed complex built around the intersections of “Bvd Isek” and “Bvd Kingelez.” The following year he began work on a much grand-

er dream, his village fully transformed into a city, “the monument of Kimbéville...presenting what...is on the way to becoming a reality.” Think of a public building—train station, soccer stadium, church or restaurant—and it is here (though not private residences, which he never sculpted).

Still more ambitious was the artist’s largest “city,” “Ville Fantôme” (1996), with buildings that rise as high as four feet on a platform that is more than 18 feet long and almost four feet wide.

Kingelez wrote of it: “There is no police force in this city, to protect the city, there are no soldiers to defend it, no doctors to heal the sick. It’s a peaceful city where everybody is free. It’s a city that breathes nothing but joy, the beauty of life.” It is indeed a prophet’s Heavenly Jerusalem, and you can take a virtual tour of it with headsets provided by the museum.

Kingelez loved both form and color (in his work and his own dress), skyscrapers and the pulse of city life, with a conviction of the importance of “models” that suggests Plato’s ideas. Deeply committed to the welfare of society, he nevertheless resisted protest against the increasing corruption of the Mobutu regime, offering only an indirect critique with a sculptural homage to the United Nations in 1995. A singular genius, he has left us a socially perceptive, highly contextual art that nevertheless transcends political and aesthetic categories alike—not to mention that the work delights you as if you were a child again.

Leo J. O’Donovan, S.J., is president emeritus of Georgetown University and director of mission at Jesuit Refugee Service/USA.

Food for Eternal Life

Readings: 1 Kgs 19:4-9, Ps 34, Eph 4:30-5:2, Jn 6:41-51

In John's "Bread of Life" discourse, Jesus presents a symbol that functions on multiple levels. At its root, the "bread" Jesus speaks of is the life he shares with the Father. In this bond of love, Jesus finds everything that sustains him. Jesus offers this bread to his disciples through his teaching; those who follow his commandments will encounter the same all-sustaining love from the Father. This bread is also Jesus' body, which Jesus offered in obedience for our redemption. Furthermore, the bread of which he speaks is his continuing presence in the Eucharist, which his disciples continue to celebrate until today. Put simply, the bread of life is the Father's love that is available to any who believe in Christ, receive him sacramentally, put his teachings into practice and offer themselves like Christ in complete obedience to the Father.

John wrote his Gospel last among the Evangelists. John's Jesus is more reflective. He speaks at length to make explicit what the other Evangelists leave implicit. All four Gospels include a miracle story about a multiplication of loaves. Only John's Gospel follows it with an explanatory discourse. Even in their accounts of the Last Supper, the other Evangelists only hint at the reality John makes plain: The sharing of bread symbolizes the mystical life that unites the Father, Jesus and the disciples.

Each of the Gospels prepares its audience for Jesus' return. Mark expected Jesus to come soon, so the substance of his message was "Get ready!" Matthew and Luke, writing a decade or so later, nuanced Mark's message: "Stay ready!" John, writing a generation later, transformed the message entirely: "He is here already!" John uses the "Bread of Life" discourse to show that the disciples could catch sight of Christ present among them. Christ appeared in the bread they shared ritually. Christ appeared when his disciples made their bodies his own, when their adherence to his commands and example allowed Christ to continue his ministry in their own flesh. Finally, they trusted that Christ would appear to them after whatever sort of death came as a consequence of their complete obedience to him.

'I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever.' (Jn 6:51)

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

What "food" helps you to live as Jesus did?

How have works of mercy or forgiveness strengthened you?

How do such works help you know God's love?

The passage that appears in this Sunday's Gospel reading emphasizes Jesus' teaching and example as the bread of life that comes from the Father. It is easy to forget that the precepts of the Gospel are a communion with Christ comparable to the grace we receive through the sacraments. Conforming our lives to the example of Jesus makes him present. When we offer our hands and hearts and voices to Christ's continuing mission, we simultaneously attune ourselves to the Father's all-sustaining love. God's love is constant, but we allow ourselves to receive it completely when we live as the Son did.

In the Father's love, Jesus found everything he needed to sustain him for life. Just so, Jesus' disciples today find in his teaching the "bread" that keeps them going and the "flesh" that makes their own lives a continuation of his. We consume the bread of life in order to become the flesh and blood that brings life to others.

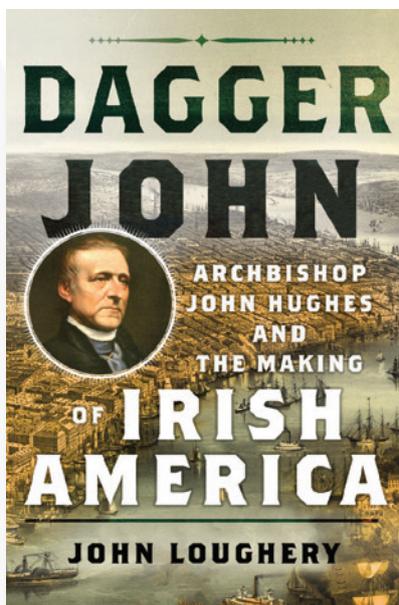
Michael Simone, S.J., teaches Scripture at Boston College School of Theology and Ministry.

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Life Inexorable

Readings: Prv 9:1-6, Ps 34, Eph 5:15-20, Jn 6:51-58

The bread of life that Jesus gave his disciples was both his teaching and the sacramental breaking of bread that we call the Eucharist. Both confer on his disciples the grace that nourished him during his own ministry. Jesus' trust in the Father's love gave him the strength to remain obedient unto death, and it was the Father's love working in him that brought him to the resurrection.

In last week's Gospel passage, it was Jesus' teaching that constituted the bread of life. This week, John turns to the Eucharist in his account of Jesus' discourse. Some scholars argue that Jesus was speaking purely metaphorically, with no reference to the Eucharist. They argue that the absence of an institution narrative in John's Last Supper account suggests that John's community might not have celebrated a sacramental Eucharist.

John's Last Supper account does not include an institution narrative, and this makes it difficult to claim that John's community celebrated a sacramental Eucharist. Although such skepticism is not unhealthy, it appears unwar-

'Just as the Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will have life because of me.' (Jn 6:57)



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

How has your reception of Jesus' body made your body like his?

How has your reception of Jesus' blood given your life a purpose like his?

ranted here. The direct, even earthy language Jesus uses for eating and drinking in this passage leaves little room for doubt that John is referring here to a ceremony centered on Jesus' flesh and blood.

New life requires new food. Just as John drew on Exodus imagery—wind and water—to describe birth to new life in the Spirit, he here draws on manna imagery to illustrate God's cultivation of new life within the believer. Jesus is the new manna. What his body did is true food; his ministry, death and resurrection constitute the new manna that nourishes a reborn disciple with grace. The salvation he won and the resurrection he revealed are the drink that continues to propel every believer to eternal life. When Christians consume the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist, they take on Jesus' ministry as their own, and they offer their own lives for the salvation of the world.

The salvation that Jesus promises is more than just life after death or the promise of a future resurrection, although both those ideas are included. Eternal life is the spirit and power that believers receive the moment they place their faith in Christ and make a commitment to live according to his example. It is the awareness of the Father's love at work in their bodies, driving away fatigue, hunger, thirst and illness. That same love is at work in the soul, driving away anxiety, despair, anger, fear and loneliness. Throughout his Gospel, John recounts those miracles that he thinks best show Jesus sharing these qualities of new life with the people he encounters.

Eternal life begins in the here-and-now. When nourished with Christ's own flesh and blood, the life within us can become an unstoppable force that undergoes no appreciable change even with our own death. Just as important, this force is a life we can share with others. Whenever we, like Jesus, help another overcome evils like fatigue, illness, fear or alienation, we become the bread that supports the life of the world.

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

THE WORD

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Everybody Hurts

As doctors, how can we be healed?

By Thomas W. McGovern



Patients and doctors are allies separated by a common language: suffering.

Patients suffer because of their diseases, because of their feelings of alienation within a technocratic medical system and because their experience is ignored in our society that often believes the best way to get rid of suffering is to get rid of the sufferer.

In the face of these obstacles, patients seek physicians not only as experts in treating their illnesses and wounds but also as experts in alleviating their suffering. But are these expectations well founded?

When I speak at medical conferences, I always ask the physicians, nurses and students if they learned anything about suffering—their own or that of their patients—during their training. Inevitably, no hands go up. Indeed, a 2017 study in Family Medicine found that such education is not taking place even though students want it. An accompanying editorial stated: “To be worthy to serve [suffering patients] means that we first must undertake the study of suffering. We cannot hope to address the phenomenon without exploring it within ourselves, our patients, our communities, our society.”

There is, however, a grievous obstacle, invisible to most patients, that prevents doctors from undertaking “the study of suffering”: Physicians themselves are suffering under the very same health care system as their patients.

Over half of physicians satisfy cri-

teria for burnout: emotional/physical exhaustion, cynicism/depersonalization and/or a lack of sense of accomplishment in patient care.

Electronic health records and increasing government regulations contribute to physician burnout. Due to E.H.R.s, the average physician spends two to three minutes on a computer for each minute spent face-to-face with a patient. Increased government-mandated administrative tasks, though well intentioned, can suck the joy out of physicians who start seeing their profession as a burden, instead of a meaningful calling. Unless this soul-crushing epidemic of physician burnout ends, doctors will not have the emotional energy or motivation to learn about and address their patients’ suffering.

While physician burnout and its solutions are multifaceted issues, the Catholic Medical Association is one innovator that is already addressing suffering among Catholic physicians and their patients.

In 2012, a colleague urged me to write a discussion-based course for health care professionals based on St. John Paul’s apostolic letter, “*Salvifici Doloris*.” This free course, successfully used since 2014 by an increasing number of our 104 local physician guilds and 34 medical student guilds, teaches physicians how to understand and address their own suffering so they can empathically see their patients as fellow sufferers and learn

how to practice compassion.

National and regional conferences, annual diocesan White Masses and local guilds provide places where physicians and students learn how to live the C.M.A. mission “to uphold the principles of the Catholic faith in the science and practice of medicine.” Most important, in an age when the very definition of “person” seems up for grabs, a guild is a place where we learn how to become a certain kind of person: a physician inspired to imitate Jesus Christ.

We must not scold the little boy at the seashore tossing back starfish one by one after a storm, saying, “You can’t make a difference to those thousands of starfish on the beach.” We must be like the little boy who tosses in another starfish and says, “But it made a difference to that one.”

This approach will not change our health care system overnight, but it will begin to change the lives of numerous patients by healing the physicians, one-by-one, who treat them.

Thomas W. McGovern, M.D., is a skin cancer surgeon in Fort Wayne, Ind., a national board member of the Catholic Medical Association, a contributor to Legatus Magazine and the host of the weekly magazine-style radio show “Doctor, Doctor.”

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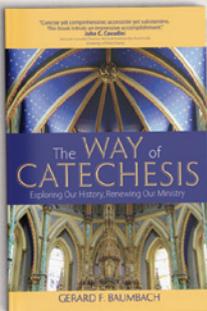
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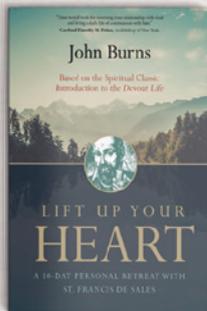
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We are proud to announce that the Catholic Press Association (CPA) and the Association of Catholic Publishers (ACP) have honored several Ave Maria Press books this year. Please join us as we celebrate these recent award winners.

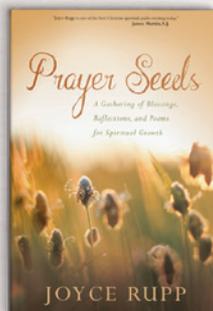
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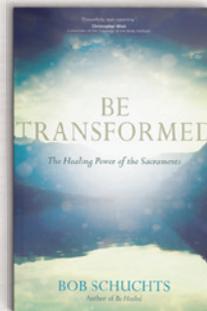
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GERARD F. BAUMBACH
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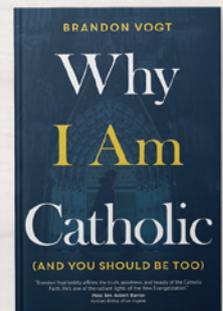
Lift Up Your Heart
JOHN BURNS
CPA: First Place (First-Time Author of a Book)
ACP: Second Place (Inspirational)



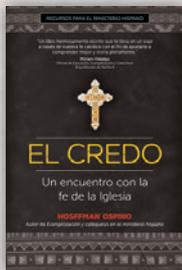
Prayer Seeds
JOYCE RUPP
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ACP: First Place (Prayer & Spirituality)



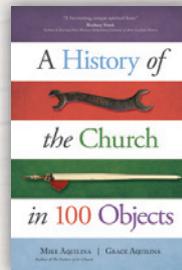
Be Transformed
BOB SCHUCHTS
CPA: First Place (Sacraments)



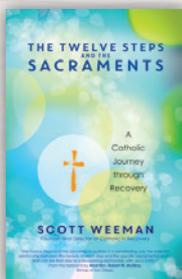
Why I Am Catholic (and You Should Be Too)
BRANDON VOGT
CPA: First Place (Popular Presentation of the Catholic Faith)



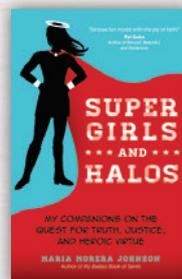
El Credo
HOFFMAN OSPINO
ACP: Second Place (Spanish)



A History of the Church in 100 Objects
MIKE AQUILINA WITH GRACE AQUILINA
CPA: Second Place (Design and Production)
CPA: Honorable Mention (History)



The Twelve Steps and the Sacraments
SCOTT WEEMAN
CPA: Second Place (Sacraments)



Super Girls and Halos
MARIA MORERA JOHNSON
CPA: Second Place (Gender Issues)



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