

America

2019 CPA MAGAZINE OF THE YEAR

AND CULTURE

AUGUST 19, 2019

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THE CURRAN CENTER FOR AMERICAN CATHOLIC STUDIES
AT FORDHAM UNIVERSITY PRESENTS

"EVERYTHING THAT RISES MUST CONVERGE": RACE & GRACE IN FLANNERY O'CONNOR

THE CURRAN CENTER FOR AMERICAN CATHOLIC STUDIES AT FORDHAM UNIVERSITY will sponsor an afternoon symposium devoted to discussion of Flannery O'Connor's powerful story, "Everything That Rises Must Converge," followed by an evening performance by Compagnia de' Colombari. The story is adapted for the stage and directed by Karin Coonrod.

FORDHAM
THE JESUIT UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2019

Symposium | 2–4 p.m.

Duane Library | Tognino Hall
Fordham University | Bronx, NY

Performance by *Compagnia de' Colombari* | 7 p.m.

Leonard Theatre | Fordham Preparatory School
Fordham University Campus | Bronx, NY

This event is free and open to the public. Seating is limited and registration is required. For more information and to register, send an email to cacs@fordham.edu, or visit fordham.edu/etrmc.

This event is cosponsored by America Media and The Mary Flannery O'Connor Charitable Trust

Virginia Is for Lovers

Sometime in 1921 the good people of the Commonwealth of Virginia decided to present a statue to the people of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. That's what the sign says.

Whom does this statue depict? The English virgin queen, Elizabeth I, perhaps, after whom the commonwealth is named? No. How about Sir Walter Raleigh, an early English explorer of Virginia? No. Rather, the statue depicts George Washington, the first president of the United States and conqueror of the first British Empire. An odd gift, indeed, which makes one wonder whether Virginians might have been doing all this with their tongues planted firmly in their cheeks.

What's even more bizarre, however, is where the British elected to display this statue of Washington: in London's Trafalgar Square, the busiest, most popular public space in the city. More to the point, Trafalgar Square, you will recall, celebrates the greatest naval victory in British history, that of Admiral Horatio Nelson against a much larger French fleet off Cape Trafalgar during the Napoleonic War of the Third Coalition.

I can't imagine Nelson would approve of sharing his square with Washington. He once said that sailors "must consider every man your enemy who speaks ill of your king; and...you must hate a Frenchman as you hate the devil."

All this left me scratching my head as I stood in Trafalgar Square recently. I mean, George Washington was a traitor according to his British contemporaries; and I suppose by Nelson's definition, he technically still is. Moreover, General Washington de-

feated the British during the American Revolution only with the substantial help of the French Navy, whose defeat Trafalgar Square celebrates. The French blockaded Yorktown, in Virginia, preventing the British General Charles Cornwallis from receiving reinforcements and forcing him to surrender to Washington. The rest, as they say, is history.

So what in the world is this statue doing here? One possibility is that it is simply an expression, albeit an awkward one, of the sense of solidarity between two peoples who forged a bond in the world war they had just fought together. And perhaps the Virginians and the British both did all this with a wink and a nod, appreciating the irony, perhaps even reveling in it. Still, it's hard to imagine that Americans would place a statue of Lord Cornwallis or King George III in front of Independence Hall. Somewhere, perhaps, but not in a place that is such a focal point for the nation's pride.

My best guess is that our British friends probably didn't give it much thought and they didn't feel threatened. They could erect a statue of the man who destroyed the first British Empire because, in 1921, they were enjoying the fullest extent of the second British Empire, the one, they were told, on which the sun never set.

Yet the sun did set. So, in a strange way, this statue of Washington, which was permitted by an excess of imperial pride, now serves as a symbol of the humbling inflicted by the vicissitudes of history.

There is a lesson in that. While half of our country is supposedly making America great again and the other half is busy tearing down stat-

ues, literal and figurative, we would do well to remember that the eventual decline of U.S. power and influence is as inevitable as death and, of course, taxes, those infamous levies that led us to revolt in the first place. I'm not one who thinks the demise of the republic is imminent, mind you, but it is inevitable. History tells us so, and it would be sheer hubris to assume otherwise.

So whose statue should we add in Philadelphia if we want to follow the British example? I don't know. But like this one in Trafalgar Square, whoever it depicts should serve to remind us that there is, in the end, only one king, the King of Kings, and that the fortunes of a people can rise and fall as quickly as the tide.

Too bad Nelson of Trafalgar isn't around. He knew a lot about tides, literal and otherwise. You'll recall that he died at the battle of Trafalgar, struck down by a French marksman. Among his last words were these: "Now I can do no more. We must trust to the Great Disposer of all events and the justice of our cause."

Would that all people and nations did that more often.

Matt Malone, S.J.
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AP Photo/Christian Chavez

People gather in Juarez, Mexico, on Aug. 3, in a vigil for three Mexican nationals killed in an El Paso shopping-complex shooting. 22 people were killed and more than two dozen injured in the incident.

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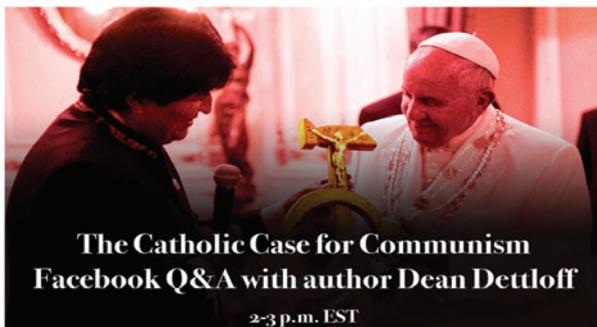
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RICHARD G. JONES
Future journalists should be formed in compassion



America Magazine - The Jesuit Review



In the Aug. 5 issue of **America**, we published an essay titled “The Catholic Case for Communism,” that generated a great deal of attention and consternation. The author of the essay, Dean Dettloff, responded on America’s Facebook page to comments and questions from readers. Below is an excerpt of the conversation.



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Isaiah Ritzmann I was interested that you brought [Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker](#) into this discussion. I feel like the Catholic Worker’s “communitarian personalism” shares some of the same spirit as communism but is philosophically and politically distinct. [Would you argue that communism is superior](#) to the personalism envisioned by Peter Maurin, Day and the Catholic Worker movement?

↳ **Dean Dettloff** Thanks for the question, Isaiah. There’s certainly an affinity between the Catholic Worker and communism, and in a certain way there are even communist principles modeled by the Catholic Worker. The Catholic Worker and the Communist Party USA also had an interesting relationship, with members of both often speaking at each other’s meetings and funerals, and supporting one another in prison. That said, while I sincerely appreciate and value the witness of the Catholic Worker, my own politics align more with a Marxist kind of communism. For me, I think that the problems of capitalism are so big that they will not be solved by small outposts of holy living, even while I hope those outposts continue to witness to another world being possible. Things like climate change, for example, are not likely to be solved without a large, structural change in how our global economy works, and in that sense I think communism gives us many tools that the Catholic Worker doesn’t quite offer.

Monica Hildegard Miyashita How do we challenge the statements by conservatives that [socialism results in situations such as those in Venezuela or Cuba?](#) How do we counter the point that the other side often makes regarding the disdain socialists seem to have for religion?

↳ **Dean Dettloff** Thanks, Monica. Some socialists avoid these arguments by saying we can separate socialism from certain countries, much like Christians often separate Christianity from certain Christians. Personally, I don’t take this approach, although I know many people who do. Much more effective, I think, is to consider why life is so difficult for people in places like Venezuela or Cuba. Both of these countries, in particular, have made mistakes—no doubt about that, as have all capitalist countries, of course—but they are also uniquely blockaded and sanctioned by the global economy. This makes normal relationships difficult, and it is impossible for one country to be fully self-sufficient in our industrial age these days. Even with these obstacles, both Venezuela and Cuba have managed some unique achievements at their height, and today Cuba’s life expectancy remains higher than that of the United States, for example, and Cuba consistently ranks among the top in U.N. studies for access to quality health care. I always encourage people to look again at the histories of socialist and communist countries, and to ask hard questions about why things happen the way they do. This does not mean socialists never make mistakes, but it does mean opening ourselves up to the possibility that maybe the story is more complicated than we think.

Nancy Herzig Shannon My question is: [Socialist parties have historically advocated for the right of a woman to choose abortion.](#) How do we who back the socialist platform deal with this issue in practical ways? In my own activism, I basically shy away from the abortion issue, which is not very honest or helpful. I just feel like the right-to-life movement doesn’t represent me because of its alliance with right-wing conservatives. Can you speak to this contradiction?

↳ **Dean Dettloff** A difficult and important question, Nancy. Thanks! There are many issues that Catholics will find they disagree with in socialist party platforms, and I encourage them to begin a dialogue with socialists to find out why they might have this or that plank in a platform. For those who feel especially convicted by abortion, I would say

that the kinds of policies advocated by communists are also trying to make a world that removes many of the economic constraints that lead some people to make difficult choices. It doesn't end the debate, but I think making our ethics revolve around a single issue stops us from thinking about the many injustices that are permitted in a capitalist society and required for that society to work.

Paul Schryba Peace! Mr. Dettloff, **doesn't communism believe in economic determinism**, and how does that square with Christian teaching on the nature of man and free will? **I believe that economic determinism is actually idolatrous.**

↳ **Dean Dettloff** There is debate among Marxists themselves about whether or not communism needs a deterministic interpretation, so we should always remember that Marxism is a tradition with many voices. I agree, personally, that a hard determinism is not the way to go, and so do most of the Marxists I know. There are still, however, many patterns in the world that do influence our behavior, and Marxism can help us get a better grasp on those so we can truly take a free relationship to them and decide if these are patterns we really want.

Antonio De Loera-Brust [former O'Hare fellow at **America**] Nowhere has there been as much of a merging of Catholic and communist/leftist thought as in Latin America. Some in Bolivia see Che Guevara as a saint, the E.L.N. in Colombia was led by priests for years, and the Sandinistas made an enormous effort to enjoy support from the church. Today, however, Evo Morales has ignored term limits in Bolivia, the E.L.N. is a drug-trafficking terror organization in Colombia, and the Sandinistas have shot into crowds of Jesuit university protestors in Nicaragua. **Time and time again we've seen Catholicism suffer when far-left governments take power**, and we have seen no shortage of left-wing governments devolving into authoritarianism. The current situation in both Venezuela and Nicaragua is foremost on my mind, and the church has been rather clear in standing up to government abuses in both. Can the author comment on these examples, and what lessons he sees for **how to avoid any sort of future "Catholic communism" from ending up in the same authoritarian place?**

↳ **Dean Dettloff** Hi Antonio, thanks for this question! It's a good one! The charge of authoritarian tendencies among communists is one that I think is sometimes true and sometimes false. It's an easy way to avoid getting into the nitty-gritty of historical situations, and in many ways it also doesn't tell us exactly what objections someone might have to a certain way of organizing a government (Nicaragua, Venezuela and Cuba are all very different, for example). I think it's important for us to do the hard work of understanding histories beyond the headlines, and to get many perspectives on those histories. At the end of the day, though, communism holds out the idea that it is up to us to decide what our future will look like, and it offers proposals for how to get there. In programs like the one for the Communist Party of Canada or the Communist Party USA, which are widely available, there are some interesting reflections on both the challenges of authority in the history of communism and how to develop truly democratic institutions that might help us do something different than what we're doing now. I would encourage you to read those if you're curious, and see what's being proposed. Maybe it will stick and maybe not, but the policies and ideas are much broader and more surprising, in my experience, than people think. At the same time, I know a lot of socialists who are not convinced by the vision of communist parties and advocate something more like social democracy or socialist reformism. I'm happy to dialogue with them, as are communist parties historically, and I think it's a good way for some people to find their own path to opposing capitalism.

↳ **Antonio De Loera-Brust** Is there something in a utopian vision that claims a moral mandate to radical and extra-legal political change that lends itself to authoritarian tendencies? So much of the factionalism that's obvious on the left, referenced implicitly in your being happy to dialogue with other anti-capitalist groups, and in your piece [in **America**] as well, which mentions a Trotskyite killing a Stalinist, seems to me to stem from these sorts of politics of purist ideological arguments, where **any disagreement can quickly harden into a position against the progress of humanity**. I'd argue this is fertile ground for all sorts of atrocities and the privileging of humanity over human beings.

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A Distressing Complacency on Threats to the Election Process

During his congressional testimony, former Special Counsel Robert S. Mueller III warned that not only had Russia interfered with the American election process in 2016, but “they’re doing it as we sit here.” That chilling moment should have focused the attention of all Americans, but unfortunately, the legislators in the hearing room barely paused to register it.

The questions of whether President Trump encouraged Russian interference in the 2016 campaign or obstructed an investigation into election security are certainly relevant—and members of Congress have a duty to pursue these questions, no matter how much the president levels blind attacks against them—but restoring public trust in the way we elect our political leaders is the more immediate task. With little more than a year until the next presidential election, we are learning that the integrity of this system is more at risk than many of us had supposed. (The Senate Intelligence Committee has concluded that election systems in all 50 states were targeted by Russia in 2016 and that other nations also are developing the capacity to change electronic election results.) We remain in the dark about precisely what Mr. Mueller was

referring to in his warning about “doing it as we sit here” and can only hope that members of Congress have shown more curiosity about the specifics in closed-door briefings than appeared on C-Span.

Whatever the specifics of Russian interference, whether it is spreading disinformation or hacking voting systems, it is clear that our political leadership needs to act with a speed and unity that it has rarely shown in recent years. In these pages we have often voiced disappointment over the inability of the executive and legislative branches to come to bipartisan agreements on immigration reform, tax reform, health care and climate change, but the integrity of our elections is not an area where partisan differences should be an obstacle.

The House of Representatives has passed election-security legislation that includes \$600 million for new voting equipment, along with national requirements that voting machines stay disconnected from the internet and produce paper records, but the Republican leader of the Senate, Mitch McConnell, has refused to allow votes on the proposals authored by Democrats and has not proposed alternative mea-

asures of his own. Mr. McConnell reportedly objects to being painted as someone unconcerned with election security, arguing that it has always been the responsibility of the states to administer elections. But the determination of who will occupy the White House and which party will control Congress is not a purely local concern, and it is reasonable for all U.S. citizens to be concerned about the security of every vote that will help make that determination.

The states themselves do not have to wait for Congress to act. Some are already moving on their own to better secure elections. Georgia, for example, recently mandated that touchscreen voting machines also produce verifiable paper ballots. Even better, a bipartisan national commission on election security or a public summit of all the secretaries of state would be steps toward restoring confidence in our electoral system.

In demanding action, we risk deepening doubts over the results of the next presidential election should security not be improved or guaranteed by then. That is a risk we have to take. It is an act of faith that our republic is still capable of responding effectively to an existential threat to our democratic processes.

Fixing Social Media Dangers Will Take More Than Fines

The Federal Trade Commission levied a record \$5 billion fine against Facebook in July for its failure to protect users’ personal information adequately. The company had announced that it was expecting the fine in April and set aside \$3 billion for it then. After both the April announcement and the F.T.C.’s July

action, Facebook’s stock price rose. The fine is easily within Facebook’s means (the company reported quarterly profits of slightly more than \$5 billion), and investors were pleased to see this episode resolved.

One widespread reaction was that even this fine—more than 200 times larger than the previous record,

a \$22.5 million fine against Google in 2012—was unlikely to damage Facebook or do much to change its behavior. But it is not clear what size fine or what other forms of pressure might have greater effect.

During the past two months, the Justice Department has initiated an antitrust review of major tech companies,

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and Congress has held hearings examining how much power these internet giants hold and how they use it. Facebook's own co-founder has called for the company to be broken up.

As legislators and regulators grapple with the enormous power technology companies wield over both private data and public conversation in our democracies, they need tools that cut deeper than large fines and limited oversight. Mark Zuckerberg has frequently argued that Facebook is a technology company, not a media company. While that distinction should not carry much, if any, moral significance, it does offer a point of leverage.

The growth of social media was enabled by the "safe harbor" provision in the 1998 Digital Millennium Copyright Act, which freed companies from liability for copyright-infringing content posted by users as long as they responded quickly to takedown requests. In other words, what it means to be a technology company rather than a media company is that tech companies do not have to review content in advance. Users register, posts go up, and violations get sorted out later. That has allowed these platforms to scale at the speed of their algorithms, leaving humans running behind to catch up.

This model—scaling over a vast number of users with minimum human involvement—makes social media both powerful and dangerous. In addition to fines, oversight and transparency, legislators should consider whether brakes need to be put on this business model. Imagine if Facebook, in order to register a user, had to invest even 1 percent of the effort required when the Transportation Security Administration enrolls someone in PreCheck? No doubt the social media giants would deem such an approach unworkable, but it would get their attention more than a \$5 billion fine.

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Dante, the president and the moral cowardice of the G.O.P.

One of John F. Kennedy's favorite quotes was something he thought came from Dante: "The hottest places in Hell are reserved for those who in time of moral crisis preserve their neutrality."

As it turns out, the quote is apocryphal. But what Dante did write was far better, and it came vividly to mind last month as Republicans failed to take a stand after President Trump's racist tweets and the chants of "Send her back," directed at Representative Ilhan Omar of Minnesota, who immigrated here from Somalia, at a Trump rally in North Carolina.

In Dante's *Inferno*, the moral cowards are not granted admission to Hell; they are consigned to the vestibule, where they are doomed to follow a rushing banner that is blown about by the wind. When Dante asks his guide, Virgil, who they are, he explains: "This miserable way is taken by sorry souls of those who lived without disgrace and without praise. They now commingle with the coward angels, the company of those who were not rebels nor faithful to their God, but stood apart."

Behind the banner, Dante writes, "trailed so long a file of people—I should never have believed that death could have unmade so many souls."

And to those ranks we can now add all the politicians, pundits and camp followers who refused to take a stand when they were confronted with the stark moral choice posed by Mr. Trump's racist attacks on four minority women elected to Congress last year as Democrats.

Despite some feeble attempts at rationalization, there was clarity to the president's language and his larger intent. Mr. Trump was not merely using racist tropes; he was calling forth something dark and dangerous.

Mr. Trump did not invent or create the racism, xenophobia and ugliness on display last month; they were all pre-existing conditions. But the mere fact that something is latent does not mean it will metastasize into something malignant or fatal. Just because there is a hot glowing ember does not mean that it will explode into a raging conflagration.

In a healthy society, that burning ember may not ever be completely extinguished. But the mores, values and taboos of society would keep it controlled, isolated and small. Now Mr. Trump is stoking the fire.

Democracy is fragile because we are all an odd mix of prejudices, vices, virtues, bigotries and aspirations. We can be demons or angels. That's why moral leadership matters; society can go either way. Abraham Lincoln appealed to our "better angels." Mr. Trump has given us permission to indulge our fouler impulses.

And so we have Americans chanting, "Send her back! Send her back!"

Privately, we are told, some Republicans were horrified. But few were willing to speak out publicly. They chose to stand apart.

Someday, we can expect to read lachrymose mea culpas from members of the G.O.P. who will confess that they regretted siding with Mr. Trump or remaining silent, and they will unburden their freighted consciences in memoirs and op-ed pieces.

They will assure us that their silence did not reflect who they really are. But it did because this was the moment when they had to make a choice.

Unfortunately, this is where the G.O.P.'s Faustian bargain has led: Their moral compromises and silence have become a habit. The small surrenders become larger ones until

there is nothing left.

Some of them are motivated by fear of the president's wrath or by the political pragmatism of politicians who are obsessed with self-preservation. Others simply hope to ride out the news cycle, hoping the entire incident will be quickly forgotten.

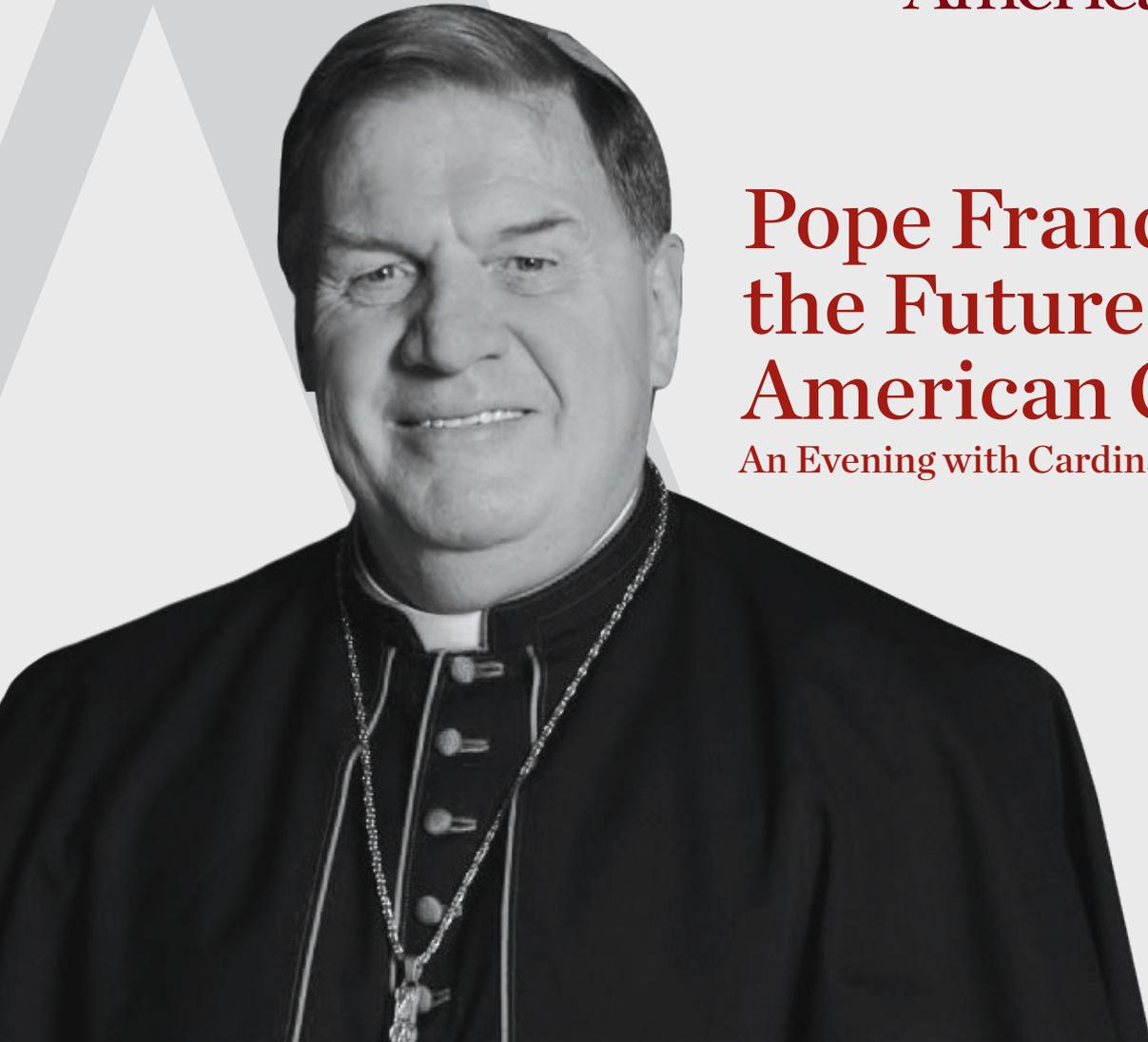
But at some level, I suspect, they know that this was a defining moment. And it reminds us that while we celebrate political and moral courage, we forget that genuine political courage is vanishingly rare. We remember St. Thomas More, but gloss over the fact that he stood virtually alone among his peers in speaking truth to the power of his age. Hilaire Belloc captured the moment:

Most of the great bodies—all the bishops except Fisher—had yielded. They had not yielded with great reluctance but as a matter of course. Here and there had been protests, and two particular monastic bodies had burst, as it were, into flame. But that was exceptional. To the ordinary man of the day, anyone, especially a highly placed official, who stood out against the King's policy was a crank.

Unlike his colleagues, More did not make a bargain with his soul.

And those who did? Who remembers them now? As Virgil counseled, "Let us not talk of them, but look and pass."

Charles Sykes is the founder and editor at large of The Bulwark and a longtime conservative commentator.



Pope Francis and the Future of the American Church:

An Evening with Cardinal Joseph Tobin

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24 | 6:30PM

The New York Athletic Club, President's Room | 10th Floor
180 Central Park South, New York, NY 10019

Join us as *America* and American Bible Society host H.E. Cardinal Joseph Tobin, Archbishop of Newark, for an evening discussion on the vision of Pope Francis and the present state and future of the American Catholic Church.

Matt Malone, S.J., editor in chief of *America* magazine, will serve as the moderator for the evening.

This event is free and open to the public. A reception will immediately follow the evening's conversation.

To RSVP:
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A battle for the future of Hong Kong

Anxieties grow over Beijing's response

By Verna Yu

Images of protesters struggling with riot police in Hong Kong have shocked the world this summer. As tear gas canisters and rubber bullets fall, the leading financial center of Asia has at times looked like a war zone. Protests in Hong Kong that began in June are showing no signs of abating. Hong Kong officials have refused to accede to the protesters' demands, and tensions and tactics have escalated.

On July 30, protesters jostled with commuters during rush hour on the subway just a few days after they had swarmed the arrival hall at the Hong Kong airport. Later that evening, they clashed again with police after reports that 44 of the demonstrators detained in recent days would be charged with the relatively serious charge of rioting.

Hostility toward the police and Hong Kong authorities reached a new peak after a shocking incident on July 21, when large numbers of men dressed in white T-shirts rushed into a subway station and indiscriminately attacked commuters, leaving 45 people hospitalized.

Willy Lam, an adjunct professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, said that Hong Kong's "political DNA" has been radicalized by the protests. Now he worries that Beijing authorities may "double down on the psychological warfare" to counter the growing pro-democracy sentiment.

Kenneth Chan, a political scientist at the Hong Kong Baptist University, told **America** the continuing protest is an expression of widespread anger against the Hong Kong and Beijing governments. "Protesters clearly feel the city's autonomy has been systematically undermined by Beijing," he said.

Political analysts here do not believe China will turn to the People's Army to clamp down on the protests, but the Beijing leadership could mobilize pro-Beijing figures and groups in Hong Kong to attack and undermine the pro-democracy cause. As the Hong Kong government loses legitimacy and credibility, Beijing may assume more power over day-to-day affairs in Hong Kong. Beijing officials could also

speed up Hong Kong's integration with China through infrastructure projects or change the special administrative area's demographic makeup by admitting thousands of migrants from the mainland, analysts say.

"It is sad...to remind ourselves that Hong Kong is under the control of a notorious anti-democratic one-party regime," Mr. Chan said. "Beijing's reactions are going to determine how this round of confrontation will come to an end.

"The [Hong Kong] government is unable to resolve a political crisis of its own making," he said. "It has allowed itself to become increasingly dependent on the police and the pro-Beijing loyalists who are under the control of the [Chinese] Liaison Office."

According to Mr. Chan, the resilience of the pro-democracy movement has begun to weaken the resolve of the Hong Kong political and economic establishment. Even people in the business community and civil servants have begun to urge the government to restore stability by meeting the protesters' political demands.

Joseph Cheng, a retired political science professor at the City University of Hong Kong, said Chief Executive Carrie Lam's lack of legitimacy in Hong Kong people's eyes and the authorities'

continuous refusal to address the demands of protesters have pushed the political crisis "to a new level."

"I worry that Beijing will grow impatient," Mr. Cheng said. "There is no chance for negotiations, and Beijing will further tighten the screws and crack down even harder on Hong Kong."

The current wave of protests roiling Hong Kong started on June 9, when an estimated one million people thronged the city center to urge authorities to scrap an amendment to an extradition bill that would have allowed criminal suspects to be sent for trial in China's Communist Party-controlled judiciary on the mainland. Many believed the new law would allow Chinese authorities to clamp down on democracy activists or religious and intellectual expression.

Almost a week after the first mass protest, Ms. Lam announced the suspension of the bill. But that move failed to quell discontent. As anger against the government grows,

the anti-extradition movement has evolved into a wider campaign to address a range of grievances and has reignited the people's demand for universal suffrage.

Hong Kong's culture of protest has its roots in its political system. Ordinary people have traditionally had little say in how the city is run. Many believe that frustrations bottled up over decades have now been unleashed.

As a semi-autonomous city under Chinese rule, Hong Kong has retained most civil freedoms, including freedom of speech and assembly, under the One Country, Two System formula set up at the handover from British to Chinese rule in 1997. Many here believe that formula has been gradually breaking down.

Hong Kong's leader is elected by a largely pro-Beijing committee of 1,200 people, not by a direct vote among the electorate, and only half the members of the 70-seat legislature are directly elected, while the other 35 seats are occupied by mostly pro-establishment figures from corporate and special-interest groups.

By ousting pro-democracy lawmakers and rejecting candidates seen as pro-independence from elections, the Hong Kong government has crippled the pro-democracy camp's capacity to block unpopular policies in the legislature. Now the only way for Hong Kong people to voice their opposition to unpopular decisions is to take to the streets.

But Hong Kong's protesters risk provoking a hardline mainland master with little tolerance for political liberalization and democracy. "One should ask whether Hong Kong will degenerate from a stable and prosperous financial hub into a police state, which would mean the beginning of the end for the city," Mr. Chan said.

In the end, many in Hong Kong may choose to leave if they can, Mr. Cheng said, rather than "keep quiet and bow before the authorities."

Many Hong Kongers refuse to accept that fate, believing that as long as their cause remains in the international spotlight, they have a last chance to fight back.

"I think for most of the people who are at the front line, it is a revolution," said one protester, who declined to give his name. "And we will try to obtain our political demands at all cost."

Verna Yu contributes from Hong Kong.



As ranks of voting seniors increase, poverty persists among U.S. children

Children do not have the political clout of seniors in the United States, and the Urban Institute projected last year that by 2028 only 7 percent of the federal budget will go toward spending on children, as Social Security and Medicare account for an ever-growing share of the budget. By 2035, according to projections from the Census Bureau, people over 65 are expected to outnumber children for the first time in U.S. history. By then, residents under 18 will represent only 19.8 percent of the national population, down from 22.8 percent in 2016.

The national numbers obscure the fact that the children's population is still skyrocketing in many states, among them states that have low scores in child well-being, according to the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Kids Count report. The annual report measures children's welfare by health, education, economic indicators such as the poverty

rate, and "family and community," which includes measures like single-parent households and teen pregnancies. This year, New Hampshire and Massachusetts scored the highest on "child well-being," while New Mexico and Louisiana were at the bottom.

Texas (which added 2.5 million children), Florida (1.2 million) and California (1.1 million) have accounted for half the total growth in the number of children in the United States since 1990; all rank in the bottom half of states in the Kids Count report. Every state but four in the South and West saw its child population grow; conversely, a majority of states in the Northeast and four states in the Midwest, both regions that tend to have higher child well-being scores, saw their child populations decline.

Robert David Sullivan, *senior editor*.
Twitter: @RobertDSullivan.

CHILD POVERTY AT A GLANCE

Children are the poorest age group in America.

- ▶ A child is born into poverty every 41 seconds in America.
- ▶ Nearly 1 in 3 of those living in poverty are children. Over 12.8 million children were poor in 2017.
- ▶ Of these children, nearly 5.9 million lived in "extreme poverty," that is, below half the poverty line.

The youngest children are the poorest during their critical years of brain development.

- ▶ Nearly 1 in 5 infants, toddlers and preschoolers are poor.
- ▶ More than 1 in 3 Native American and black children under 5 are poor.
- ▶ Nearly half of all poor children under 5 live in extreme poverty.

Poverty affects all children, but disproportionately children of color.

- ▶ More than 2 in 3 poor children are children of color.
- ▶ Nearly 1 in 3 Native American children and more than 1 in 4 black and Hispanic children are poor, compared with 1 in 9 white children.

Poverty affects children in rural, suburban and urban communities.

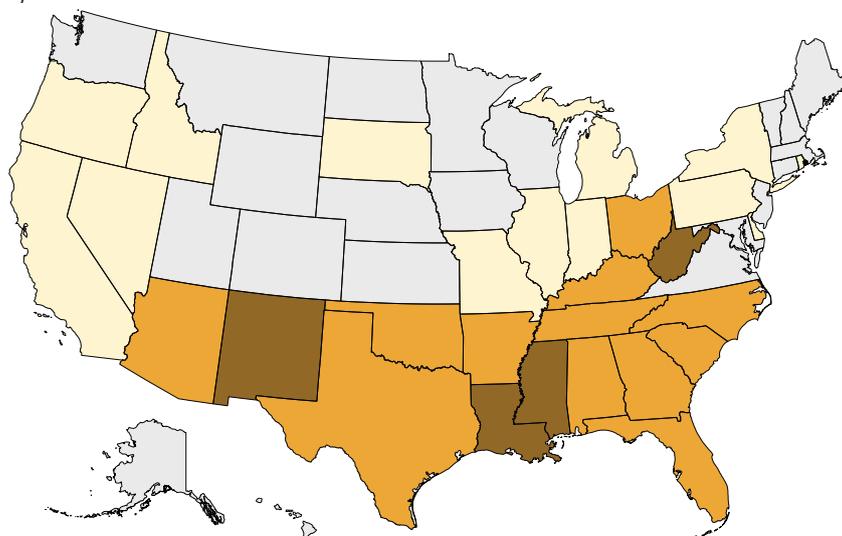
- ▶ 60 percent of poor children live outside major cities—in suburbs, smaller non-metropolitan cities and rural areas.
- ▶ 2 in 3 poor children in related families live with an adult who works.
- ▶ Nearly 1 in 3 live with a family member who works full-time, year-round.

CHILD POVERTY AROUND THE NATION

□ Less than 15%	■ 20%-25%
□ 15%-20%	■ More than 25%
Five highest rates of child poverty	Five lowest rates of child poverty
Louisiana 28.0	New Hampshire 10.3
New Mexico 27.2	Utah 10.7
Mississippi 26.9	North Dakota 10.9
West Virginia 25.9	Hawaii 11.5
District of Columbia 25.6	Minnesota 11.8

Five fastest growing child populations (1990-2017)

Nevada ▶117%	Arizona ▶62%	Texas ▶50%	Utah ▶48%	Georgia ▶44%
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Sources: "Ending Child Poverty Now," Children's Defense Fund, released May 1, 2019; "2019 Kids Count Data Book," Anne E. Casey Foundation, released June 17, 2019.



Trump's anti-immigration rhetoric meant to instill fear, advocates say

President Trump visits the U.S.-Mexico border in Calexico, Calif., in April.

From extending the wall on the U.S.-Mexico border to efforts to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program to making it more difficult for green card holders to retain their status, the Trump administration has arguably made reducing both legal and undocumented immigration into the United States a primary goal. In addition, the administration announced there would be enforcement actions in 10 different cities targeting 2,000 undocumented immigrants during the weekend of July 13 and 14. While there were no reports of any such large-scale effort, the announcement itself caused widespread anxiety.

“We didn’t see any raids in Dallas,” said Josephine López Paul, lead organizer with Dallas Area Interfaith, an affiliate of the Industrial Areas Foundation. “But immigrants have been living in fear for years now.” The fear keeps community members locked inside, afraid to fill out a census form or seek health care for their children, she said.

The Trump administration also announced in July that the U.S. departments of Justice and Homeland Security would adopt an interim “third country rule” requiring immigrants seeking asylum at the U.S.-Mexico border to apply for refugee status first in another country. Yet days after the new rule was said to have been implemented, the acting head of U.S. Customs and Border Protection told NPR it was being piloted “in just one location.” And on July 24, a federal judge in California blocked the new rule.

That outcome was expected by Teresa Cavendish, director of operations for Catholic Community Services of Southern Arizona. She believes the Trump administration, unsure if any one measure will hold up in court, uses a “multi-pronged approach,” hoping that something will have an impact. C.C.S. runs the Casa Alitas shelter for asylum seekers in Tucson, Ariz. In recent weeks, Ms. Cavendish said, the number of asylum seekers Casa Alitas receives on any given day—previously as many as 300—has dropped by more than half.

“We’re never quite sure what the outside push and pull is,” she said. For example, immigration officials regulate the number of individuals who may apply for asylum on any given day through a process called metering. Immigration officials may also process individuals through detention centers at different rates.

“It’s difficult to make predictions,” Ms. Cavendish said. “You need to be prepared for folks. If you calculate wrong, that means someone will be sleeping on the street.”

When Trump administration officials announce anti-immigration measures, “they instill fear among the immigrant community and score points with their base,” said Donald Kerwin, executive director of the Center for Migration Studies in New York. “They know they can’t deport everybody, so they set broad enforcement goals and hope [other undocumented immigrants] will leave. They’re trying to do deportation through fear, to get people to self-deport.”

The administration is considering cutting the number of refugees admitted to the United States to zero, Mr. Kerwin said. Last year, Mr. Trump also endorsed a bill that would cut legal immigration by 50 percent, according to the Migration Policy Institute.

In Dallas, Ms. López Paul said the church works to dispel fear through “know your rights” workshops, a parish identification card program and health fairs. Dallas Area Interfaith hosts events at churches and synagogues to build community amid a climate that breeds isolation.

“We’re not going to see meaningful change until we hold our elected officials to account,” she said. “National politics is not going to move forward without a centrist agenda of pro-immigrant reform.”

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After governor ousted, is reform possible in Puerto Rico?

Nearly two weeks of street protests finally compelled the resignation of Gov. Ricardo Rosselló in Puerto Rico on July 24. Rolando López, a former religion teacher at a Cristo Rey school in Boston who became an accidental street activist in his native Puerto Rico, was among those cheering the announcement.

Now “the emphasis of the activists on the ground,” he said, “is that the governor resigning is not the last step. This really is about a more general critique of the economy of Puerto Rico.” The governor’s acts and attitude are only an expression of a political system that is “deeply flawed,” he said.

Mr. López had been visiting family as protests began after the leak and publication of almost 900 pages of text messages exchanged among the governor and his confidantes. Mr. López was delighted to join in the historic moment.

The “Ricky Leaks scandal,” he said, has exposed the contempt among many in Puerto Rico’s ruling elite for the common person. The attacks and vulgar comments directed against women and L.G.B.T. people woke up members of marginalized communities in Puerto Rico, Mr. López said, and they have led the charge against the now former governor. But it was the shocking disdain he expressed for the people who voted him into office that brought hundreds of thousands of demonstrators into the streets on July 22,

demanding that he step down.

The president of the Puerto Rican bishops’ conference said the actions of the governor and his administration were the final straw for residents of the U.S. commonwealth, who have suffered through years of financial mismanagement, corruption and the devastating aftermath of Hurricane Maria. On July 23, Bishop Rubén González Medina of Ponce said that the massive protests in the island’s capital, San Juan, were “a manifestation of the people and their outrage, as well as their exhaustion from having been *cogido de bobos* [‘taken for idiots’].”

Mr. Rossello stepped down as promised on Aug. 2 and swore in his presumptive replacement, Pedro Pierluisi, a veteran politician just appointed secretary of state. That appointment had been confirmed by the island’s House of Representatives, making Mr. Pierluisi technically eligible to serve as the new governor. But Senate leaders, who had not voted to confirm Mr. Pierluisi, filed a lawsuit on Aug. 5 seeking to oust the new governor as the island’s leadership crisis continues.

People in the street are ready to continue protesting until someone they trust steps into the governor’s role, according to Mr. López. “That, in a way, will prove the mettle of what we are doing,” he said.

“This is not just a protest to get a governor out, this is



CNS photo/Marco Bello, Reuters

Demonstrators celebrate in the streets of San Juan after Gov. Ricardo Rosselló announced his resignation.



CNS photo/Bryan Woolston, Reuters

Mourning at a vigil in Dayton, Ohio, on Aug. 4.

Pope Francis joins U.S. sorrow after weekend of mass shootings

“I am spiritually close to the victims of the episodes of violence that these days have bloodied Texas, California and Ohio, in the United States, affecting defenseless people,” Pope Francis said on Aug. 4, expressing his sorrow after back-to-back mass shootings in the United States left at least 30 dead and dozens injured in Texas and Ohio. He also included in his prayers those who died the previous weekend during a shooting at a festival in Gilroy, Calif.

The first weekend of August produced the nation’s seventh deadliest gun violence attack after a 21-year-old Allen, Tex., man opened fire on Aug. 3 at a mall in El Paso, Tex., killing 21 and injuring more than a dozen people. Local and federal authorities are investigating the shooting as a possible act of domestic terror and a hate crime. The suspected gunman has been linked to a manifesto that speaks of a “Hispanic invasion” of Texas.

Bishop John Stowe of Lexington, Ky., commented on Twitter: “More senseless gun killings...more white nationalism...more disregard for the sanctity of human life... We need to create the beloved community Jesus envisions now.”

Less than 24 hours later, nine more people were dead and more than a dozen others injured after a gunman opened fire near a bar in Dayton, Ohio.

“The lives lost this weekend confront us with a terrible truth,” said Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, in a statement issued with Bishop Frank J. Dewane of Venice, Fla., chair of the bishops’ Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development. “We can never again believe that mass shootings are an isolated exception. They are an epidemic against life that we must, in justice, face.”

Rhina Guidos, *Catholic News Service*.

more the rising of a voice that has been repressed for a long time, calling for the birth of a new country.

“Basically, they are not going to stop until they see a leader they can trust but, more importantly, who trusts them.”

Though he was shocked by acts of police violence against demonstrators that he witnessed, what has most impressed Mr. López has been the joyfulness of the demonstrators as they united against the governor. Music and dance often interrupted the flow of the demonstrators; he saw Franciscans in prayer circles stopping traffic and San Juan punk rockers handing out sandwiches to passersby.

“I don’t think I have ever been to something as joyful as a Puerto Rican protest, and I’ve been to plenty,” Mr. López said.

It is not clear if contagious joy can evolve into a force that can create meaningful political and economic reform, but Mr. López described the people of Puerto Rico this week as “empowered, informed, educated and deeply motivated.”

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



Grace Amid the Grief

Faced with tragic choices, families and doctors are seeking another path for critically ill infants.

By Kerry Weber

Walk through the doors of the grand, sand-colored-brick facade of NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital and take the elevator up to the neutral tones of its 17th-floor hallways, and you will reach the bright oasis of an office that belongs to Dr. Elvira Parravicini. It is a small space, as nearly all New York City spaces are, but she has filled it with color and life—the thick green leaves of aloe vera plants, the soft pink of dried roses, an icon of the Madonna and child and a photo of her cradling a friend's premature baby in her arms. On one wall hangs a photo of a dawn and one of a sunset in Northern Italy, where she grew up.



Photo courtesy of Now I Lay Me Down To Sleep

Gina Harris, pictured here pregnant with her son David, is the executive director of Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep, a nonprofit that dispatches professional photographers to photograph infants who are expected to live for a brief period. Harris lost two sons, David Paul Harris (Oct. 25, 2007) and Ethan Robert Harris (June 18, 2008), to fatal fetal conditions.



For the last 21 years, Dr. Parravicini has worked as a neonatologist—a pediatric specialist who cares for newborn babies who are seriously ill or premature—and in 2008 she founded the hospital’s Neonatal Comfort Care program. She works in the delivery room and the neonatal intensive care unit, treating sick infants just after they are born and for as long as it takes for them to recover. But many of her patients are known to her long before that.

Dr. Parravicini’s work often begins while her patients are in utero. For those children whose conditions are expected to be treatable, she meets with parents to develop a treatment plan. But parents of children with life-limiting conditions—a medical term used when a patient’s life is expected to be short—also seek out her advice because she can offer a plan for them, too.

Drawing on best practices in hospice and palliative

care, Dr. Parravicini sits down with these parents and goes over the diagnosis and the prognosis: what the baby might look like, the length of life and a range of scenarios—the best and worst case and anything in the middle. Some may be stillborn, some may die during labor, some will live for a few hours, some for a few weeks. She asks and addresses questions like: How can we make the baby comfortable? What do you desire for the birth if we know the baby’s life will be short? How do we feed and dress the babies with certain anomalies? How do we address possible pain? The process and outcomes are different for each family, but all of them fall under the heading of perinatal hospice.

The Neonatal Comfort Care program provides compassionate perinatal hospice care to children with life-limiting conditions, before, during and after birth, and provides emotional, logistical and medical support to their parents

Melissa Borgmann-Kiemde, her husband, François Xavier Kiemde, and their daughter, Marguerite, cherished each moment with Xavier Jean Kiemde, born Sept. 13, 2012. He lived for one hour outside of Borgmann-Kiemde's body. "He was stunning," she recalls.



Photos courtesy of the family

throughout. Although the percentage of children with life-limiting conditions is small (approximately 3 percent are born with what the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention describe as birth defects, a descriptor that includes many of these conditions), they have been the focus of legislation in several states. Arkansas, Nebraska and Minnesota now require women seeking an abortion for a child with a life-limiting condition to receive information about perinatal palliative care. A similar law failed in Texas. Several studies have shown that an awareness of perinatal hospice support increases the likelihood that a pregnant mother will carry a child with a fatal fetal abnormality to term.

These moves were cheered by some pro-life groups, but legislating palliative care also runs the risk of politiciz-

ing the practice. Perinatal hospice is "a choice that appeals to people along the political spectrum," says Amy Kuebelbeck, the founder of perinatalhospice.org, an online resource for families and health professionals. "It resonates with pro-life beliefs, but it is not just a pro-life thing. It transcends the abortion debate."

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A major concern for many parents considering perinatal hospice is pain. Dr. Parravicini says that this is typically not an issue for infants in perinatal hospice. "A baby with a life-limiting condition is very weak, but pain is rarely evident," she says. There are pain scales to detect pain in an infant, and while the likelihood of needing pharmacological treatment is low, many painkillers are available and can be

given without an IV. “We want to guarantee not only that the baby is not in pain but that this baby is comfortable,” she says.

Children in perinatal hospice most often stay with the parents, both in the hospital and, if they survive long enough, in the home, typically foregoing treatment in the NICU. Dr. Parravicini co-authored one study that, though small, showed that babies with life-limiting conditions live approximately the same amount of time whether they are in hospice or in the NICU. “Our motto is ‘before death there is life,’” she says.

like hiring a “hitman.” With these comments dominating the news, little attention was paid to the rest of his address, which offered helpful context for understanding the church’s relationship to perinatal hospice. The pope stated, in part: “These are the children that the culture of rejection sometimes describes as being ‘incompatible with life.’ No human being can ever be incompatible with life, either because of their age, their state of health or the quality of their existence. Every child that presents itself in a woman’s womb is a gift that is about to change a family’s story.... This

“ IN SIX MONTHS EVERY CATHOLIC HOSPITAL COULD HAVE A PERINATAL HOSPICE PROGRAM. ALL IT TAKES IS SOMEONE WITH SOME AWARENESS.”

Dr. Parravicini’s program also offers workshops and educational resources for professionals. In June, for the first time, the program sponsored a three-day boot camp at the hospital that offered professional accreditation to nearly 90 physicians, nurses and other professionals hailing from 19 U.S. states, Russia, Australia, Italy, England, Canada and Burundi.

The strong response to the conference reflects the growing interest on a global scale in the topic of perinatal hospice. The Vatican has also taken note. In May, approximately 400 people representing 70 countries gathered to discuss perinatal hospice care at a conference co-sponsored by the Vatican Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life and an Italian nonprofit. The group included Dr. Parravicini and Ms. Kuebelbeck, both of whom are Catholic, as well as bishops, laypeople and medical professionals, who discussed education, awareness and advocacy and met in a private audience with Pope Francis.

The pope’s speech to the group made headlines when he went off-script to say that performing an abortion was

child needs to be welcomed, loved and nurtured. Always!” He said that the “practical, human and spiritual difficulties [of accompanying children with fatal fetal abnormalities] are undeniable, but it is precisely for this reason that more incisive pastoral action is urgent and necessary.”

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Just 20-odd years ago, there was little formalized care for patients who received an adverse prenatal diagnosis. “Discussion swarmed around termination versus throwing your hands up,” says Dr. Byron Calhoun, a maternal fetal medicine specialist in West Virginia who has served as a medical adviser for Priests for Life, who also attended the Vatican conference. He wanted another option for his patients, so he began to develop a series of best practices for caring for the mother and unborn child through pregnancy, birth and death and coined the term “perinatal hospice” to describe it. In 1997, he became the first person to write about the topic in a medical journal. He describes the practice as “more high-touch than high-tech,” and his motivation was simple: He hoped to “just let parents be parents and

love their children. If we provide this alternative, it's hard to argue with that," Dr. Calhoun says. "If you believe in choices, then you have to provide a choice."

Many advocates for perinatal hospice today are women who had to forge a path for themselves during their own time of pregnancy, loss and grief. In 1999 when Ms. Kuebelbeck learned that her unborn son had an incurable heart condition, she chose to continue with the pregnancy and built her own support system. She chronicled the journey and the death of her son, Gabriel, in her book *Waiting with Gabriel*. She also co-wrote a guidebook for parents facing similar situations, *A Gift of Time*, with Deborah L. Davis, a developmental psychologist.

Ms. Kuebelbeck moderated a panel discussion at the Vatican conference. "It was incredible to look into the audience and realize there were people there from all around the world who were there wanting to do something to help families like mine," Ms. Kuebelbeck says. She says her family crafted their experience "by the seat of our pants." Years later, when she first heard the term "perinatal hospice," it was "an 'aha' moment," she remembers. "Now we have words for what we were trying to do."

Today there is a substantial body of medical literature on the topic and more than 300 perinatal hospice programs around the world. And Ms. Kuebelbeck estimates that there may be more "because a lot of people are continuing to provide this gentle care even without the words for it."

Ms. Kuebelbeck's website began as a collection of names of hospitals with perinatal hospice programs scrawled on scraps of paper. When she realized that her collection of scraps was the most complete record of these programs available, she decided to start an online resource that might help other parents in need. She says she hopes that one day the programs will be so commonplace her site would be as unnecessary as a website devoted to locating emergency rooms. "Starting a program is not expensive. In six months every Catholic hospital could have a program," Ms. Kuebelbeck says. "All it takes is someone with some awareness."

Amanda Balderrama knows what it takes. She was 22 years old and pregnant for the first time when her unborn son was diagnosed with a severe form of spina bifida. A registered nurse who lives in California, she sought out several opinions and asked question after question; but over

and over, Ms. Balderrama, who is Catholic, heard only one thing from doctors: Her child was "incompatible with life." She felt tremendous pressure to terminate the pregnancy and was scared for her family. "My husband lost his first wife in her last month of pregnancy. I didn't want him to lose me, too," she says. "I was told that was also a risk, that there could be more complications." Devastated and seeing no other option, she chose to abort. She told few people of her decision and was unsure of where or how to direct her sorrow. "I learned to brush my grief under the rug," she says.

Five years later, she learned that a friend from high school had lost a baby shortly after she delivered. "She talked about her baby as though it was a big part of her life," Ms. Balderrama says. "I never talked about my son. I didn't feel like I had the right to grieve, and I didn't feel worthy of grief." The friend invited her to a remembrance walk that helped to raise awareness about pregnancy and infant loss. The event included a table for a local hospital advertising its perinatal hospice program. When she saw the information about the program, Ms. Balderrama burst into tears. "I felt that if this was the choice that had been offered to me, I would have taken that," she says.

She determined that she would do her best to make sure other parents understood their options. "I wasn't given a choice. I was told to terminate, and I want families to have the option to carry to term," she says. Ms. Balderrama founded a program called Journey to Remember, which partners with hospitals to provide support for families in circumstances like hers. Until recently, she also served as its director.

Ms. Balderrama's program offers support to women in person or by phone. "We help them parent through love instead of fear," she says. "We help them to bond with their baby. We talk about things like grief." She also helps them plan as best they can. "A lot of times when families receive a diagnosis, a lot of decisions are stripped away from them," Ms. Balderrama says. "We try to give as many parenting responsibilities back to them as possible." They may help them schedule maternity photos or newborn photos, offer memory boxes for keepsakes or even attend a delivery to act as an advocate, help them manage end-of-life arrangements and refer them to support groups in the community. "I have seen many families who deal with their grief in a

Laura Gonzalez, left, holds her daughter, Amanda Joy Gonzales. Amanda, who has Trisomy 18, was expected to die shortly after birth. She was born on Oct. 10, 2013, and, against all predictions, is still alive.

very healthy way because we've walked them through their grief throughout the pregnancy."

Ms. Balderrama's daughters are 18 and 13, and she has spoken with her oldest about her experience with abortion and why she now does the work she does to help other mothers. "I've told her we never hold judgment on anyone who made that choice [to abort] because we know how it can feel—like there's no way out," says Ms. Balderrama. She hopes her work has shown people that there is another way, and she is grateful to be able to speak openly about her son and her loss. "My son has taught me more about myself and my relationship with my Savior than anyone," she says. "He has taught me about costly grace."

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After an adverse fetal diagnosis, perinatal hospice programs often counsel the parents on how to communicate to the rest of the family, how to communicate with the siblings, how to talk to coworkers who innocently ask about your due date. "You go grocery shopping and your belly is sticking out and [a stranger asks] 'Oh my gosh, is it a girl or a boy?'" Dr. Parravicini says, "and you want to die. All of this needs to be addressed and supported."

Some families choose to have a "prayer shower"; some choose to have a photoshoot while pregnant. Some record the baby's heartbeat or take three-dimensional ultrasound images. "We try to identify their desire and what is important to them even during pregnancy," she says. "It's not just about the delivery."

Christine Nugent worked hard to build a supportive community—one that included friends, family, willing hospital staff and the Sisters of Life, who assist pregnant women as part of their mission—when her unborn daughter was diagnosed with Trisomy 18 at 20 weeks. "Some people thought I was crazy and didn't want to work my case, and I said: 'Get them out of my way. Get people who get it.' Once the shock wears off, you realize you can do it, and there's a lot of help out there, and you just need to find the help," she says.

But Ms. Nugent, who is Catholic, also had to decide how she would discuss her pregnancy in more public settings. She was working as a science teacher in Long Island,

N.Y., and told her most talkative friends about her decision to carry her daughter to term. They spread the word on her behalf. Ms. Nugent told her coworkers to spread the message that "they can talk to me like nothing's happened. I'm O.K. with that. Or they can talk to me about something deeper." If a stranger asked her about her pregnancy, she applied what she called the "three-strikes rule." On the first question, she provided a superficial answer. After a second question, she would "smile and let it go." But after the third question, she "let them have it," describing her situation in detail. "I have to live with myself, and this is what is best for me," she says. "This is my choice."

Ms. Nugent's daughter, Grace Ann, lived for two months, one in the hospital and one at home, a situation that she had not let herself hope for. She found herself both terrified and grateful. "Any mom I know who has carried a sick baby—are they scared? Are they heartbroken, do they have a lot of grief? Yes. I have never met a mom that regretted carrying. But you can't make a decision if you don't have good information, and they don't all get that information," Ms. Nugent says. "I see lots of women who have made the other decision. And I don't judge them, but their grief is different."

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In many perinatal hospice programs, the care continues long after the families leave the hospital. New York-Presbyterian's Neonatal Comfort Care offers a bereavement group that provides long-term follow-up with a social worker as well as a group meeting once a month. "People underestimate the psychological thunderstorm that these families go through when a baby dies," Dr. Parravicini says. "There is a mentality that says not seeing the baby or performing a termination is protecting yourself because you are not attached to the baby. This is not quite true," she says. "The ability to hold the baby, to feed the baby or to have a picture with the baby, to see the eyes of the baby, it's such a big factor in the grieving process and helps very much. These allow families to process much better."

Several studies support the argument that terminating a pregnancy due to a diagnosis of a fatal fetal abnormality



Photo courtesy Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep

does not offer a shortcut through the parents' grief. And, in fact, an article in the journal *Prenatal Diagnosis* stated that "there appears to be a psychological benefit to women to continue the pregnancy following a lethal fetal diagnosis." The study found that women who continued their pregnancy showed less despair, avoidance and depression. Another study found that 97.5 percent of women who continued their pregnancy following such a diagnosis did not regret their decision.

Photographs of the children also have proved to be a meaningful keepsake for many grieving parents. Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep is a nonprofit that dispatches professional photographers who volunteer their time to photograph infants who are expected to live for only a brief period. "The process puts a face to these babies and provides healing," says Gina Harris, the organization's executive director. Ms. Harris knows this firsthand, as she lost two sons, David and Ethan, to fatal fetal conditions. Ms. Harris says that the photos can even play a role in the healing process for women who have lost children decades earlier. She has met many women who

talk about their own deceased child for the first time after seeing photos of these babies. "We don't photograph death," she says. "We're capturing love."

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In May 2012, a level-2 ultrasound revealed that Melissa Borgmann-Kiemde's unborn son's cerebellum was not connected, he had a hole in his heart and he was taking on fluids. Still, she felt him kicking inside her.

"We knew that whatever the course of this life was, that we were there to listen to this life," says Ms. Borgmann-Kiemde, who is Catholic. "We needed to state pretty explicitly that we didn't want anyone to coach termination." Yet she was less sure of what came next.

When they received the diagnosis, a friend dropped off Amy Kuebelbeck's book *A Gift of Time*, along with some tacos, on her porch. The book introduced Ms. Borgmann-Kiemde to the concept of perinatal hospice and, reading it, she felt surrounded by the stories of all the other parents in the book. She thought: *Oh my God, people do this.* "All of a sudden your community widens, and you didn't want this community in your wildest dreams," she says. She

began to plan and continued to pray.

At a routine doctor's appointment in September of that year, Ms. Borgmann-Kiemde learned she would need to deliver early due to challenges the pregnancy caused for her own health. She was admitted to the hospital that day. She was forced to adapt her plans, but her friends and doulas and the hospital staff worked to make sure she could still include meaningful rituals in the abbreviated timeline.

They asked her, "What do you need to do before you meet your son?" She said she wanted to shower, she wanted to perform a blessing with the doulas and she wanted to arrange to have some photographs taken. All of it happened.

When the doctor performed the C-section, Ms. Borgmann-Kiemde had someone lined up to baptize her son, Xavier Jean Kiemde. In the hour that Xavier lived outside her body Ms. Borgmann-Kiemde bathed him and held him. The photos of the moments shortly after his birth capture the joy she and her husband, François Xavier Kiemde, shared in being with him. "He was stunning," she recalls.

Ms. Borgmann-Kiemde remembers being grateful for just being able to hold Xavier for as long as she wanted, even after his death. She was given special permission to take him to the chapel where she prayed. And when the funeral director came, she anointed his hands with the same oil she had used to anoint her son. She was the one to place Xavier directly into the funeral director's arms.

The crowd at Xavier's funeral was larger than the one at the couple's wedding. Ms. Borgmann-Kiemde's father and brother made Xavier's tiny casket. Ms. Borgmann-Kiemde worked with an artist in Ghana to design a batik fabric that she used to make a cloth for Xavier's casket and a dress for her daughter, Marguerite. Her husband is from Burkina Faso, and she wanted the family to be able to say of their West African heritage and their love, "We're clothed in this."

And then, after all the beautiful rituals, there came, of course, the grief. Her breast milk came in because her body could not know what her mind and heart were grappling with: that the child it had grown was now gone. This was followed, Ms. Borgmann-Kiemde says, by "cabbage leaves and raging." (Cabbage leaves are traditionally used to decrease milk supply.) And 24 hours later, she was back at the hospital with anxiety attacks.

And, then much later, adding to the emotional toll was the financial cost. "I have just finished paying off those hospital bills," Ms. Borgmann-Kiemde says, but she would not

change her decision. "Emotionally, spiritually, psychologically, there is so much life and abundance that have come from that journey. It has allowed space for me to be present to others." Ms. Borgmann-Kiemde says her son's life and death has played a crucial role in her journey to become a spiritual director. "I think of Xavi, of his journey, as birthing this capacity to be present to what feels like the unspeakable and to how God's journey is working in our life," she says using her son's nickname.

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There are as many ways to provide perinatal hospice as there are children who need it. "We follow your baby," Dr. Parravicini says, meaning that the treatment and approach will be tailored to each child and may differ even for babies with the same condition, based on the child's response and the family's desires. And sometimes plans are adapted when children defy the odds.

"Eighty percent of our babies die soon after birth, but there are some that, if they can go through life, we help them with that, too," says Dr. Parravicini. She points to a photo of a curly-haired toddler holding a green Christmas ornament—a girl who was not expected to live but is an active 2-year-old. Her heart condition means she will likely still lead a short life. But for now, Dr. Parravicini says, she enjoys playing with her siblings.

Dr. Parravicini says that her faith is the foundation of her work and inspires her to show love to her patients and their families and continues to teach her that "life is not in our hands."

The biggest piece of art on her wall consists of several smaller works, simple paintings in broad brush strokes. Dr. Parravicini says they were done by former pediatric patients at the hospital, nearly a decade ago. They were about to be discarded, but Dr. Parravicini noted their beauty and saved them—and then framed them. "Can you believe it?" she says. "They were throwing it away."

Kerry Weber is an executive editor of *America*.

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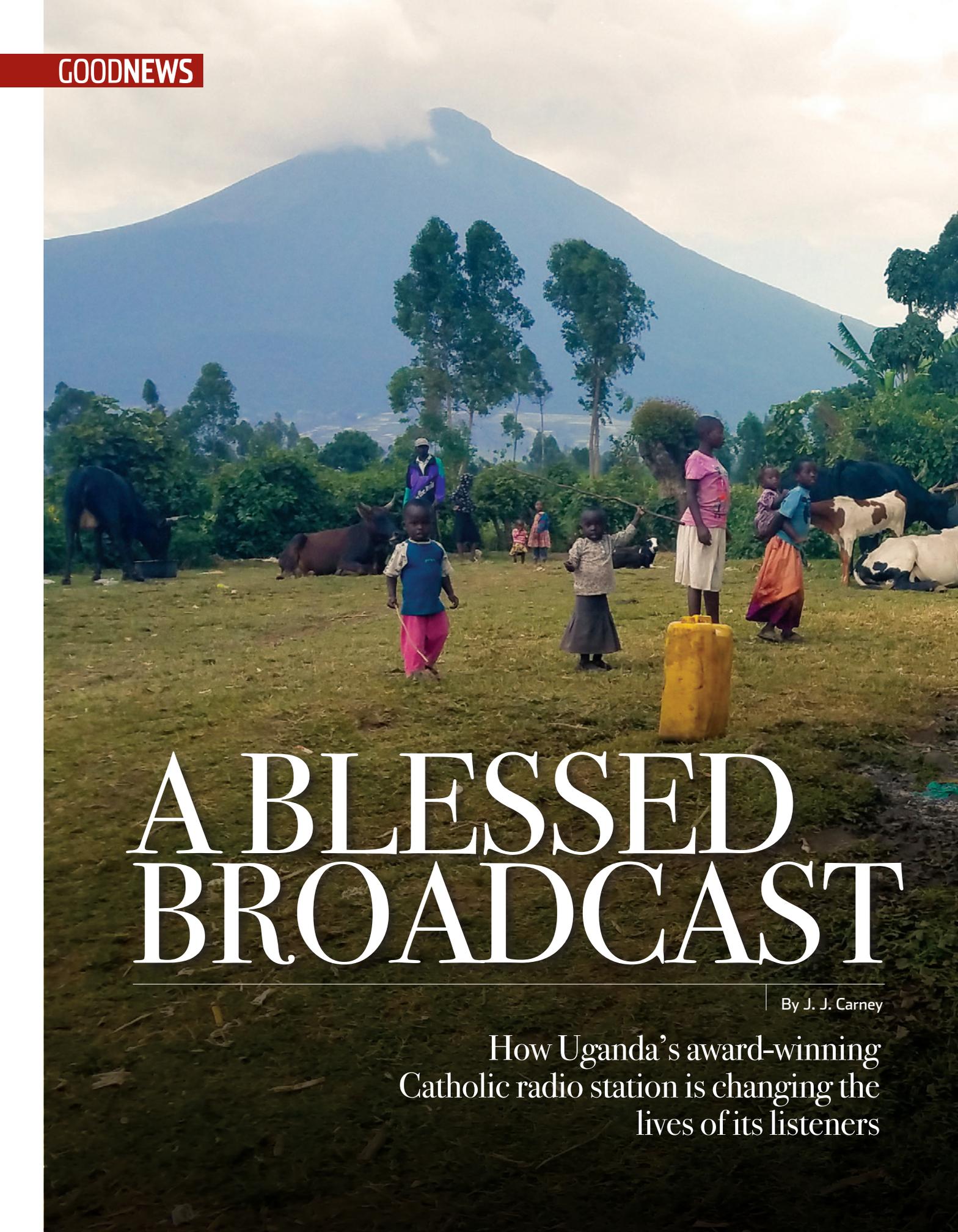


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ABLESSED BROADCAST

By J. J. Carney

How Uganda's award-winning
Catholic radio station is changing the
lives of its listeners



People in Southern Uganda obtaining fresh drinking water. In a focus group conducted by Radio Pacis, many local residents praised the station's programming for improving family life.

Hundreds of well-wishers surrounded the fence at Uganda's Arua airfield as a small Eagle Air plane landed on the dirt airstrip. An Italian, an American and three Ugandans—all leaders of the local Catholic radio station, Radio Pacis—emerged from the aircraft, holding aloft a small trophy. Accompanied by cars, trucks and boda-boda motorcycles, the Radio Pacis team's journey back to their headquarters became a city-wide festival as thousands of local residents lined the streets singing, dancing and ululating. Long associated with the dictator Idi Amin, Arua town and West Nile region could now boast of a much different kind of international recognition: the BBC had just named Radio Pacis as the best new radio station in all of Africa.

Over a decade after its 2007 award, Radio Pacis continues to exemplify how Catholic radio can respond to the "signs of the times" in 21st-century Africa. The station broadcasts Mass, the Rosary and biblical reflections, as well as programs analyzing refugee resettlement, peace-building and domestic abuse. Through community engage-

ment forums in local villages, Radio Pacis gives a voice to ordinary Ugandans while also raising consciousness in the community around issues like sanitation and social entrepreneurship. The station works not just to inform but to transform the community.

In the words of Prudence Joan Oden, production assistant at Radio Pacis, "People here believe that once you are poor, you are poor. The radio helps them to see how they can come out of their poverty and do things to improve their lives." The station's attention to the everyday struggles of its listeners is not just good ministry; it is also good for business. Radio Pacis reaches an estimated listening audience of 10 million in Uganda, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In its holistic vision of what its founders call "Gospel values radio," Radio Pacis is more than a radio station; it is a remarkable sign of the new evangelization in Africa. But to understand the vision that animates the mission of Radio Pacis, it is useful to understand the two missionaries who helped start it.

THE MISSIONARY JOURNEY

Born in 1939 in the northern Italian town of Cesena, the Rev. Tonino Pasolini's earliest memories are of running into caves to escape Allied bombing. The oldest of five children, he grew up with a strong desire to be a priest and entered a diocesan minor seminary at the age of 11. His strong call to the priesthood was not matched, however, by a desire for missionary life. "I despised missionaries," he says, "for leaving Italy and not helping in their own home."

It took a sudden, Pauline call to change Father Pasolini's attitude. The Rev. Enrico Faré visited Father Pasolini's seminary in Bologna to speak about his experiences as a Comboni missionary in Sudan. Father Faré's passion and conviction left a lasting mark on the teenage Pasolini. As he recalls: "I remember the day and time distinctly. It was 4 p.m. on Dec. 3, 1957. God was calling me clearly, clearly." Significantly, for Father Pasolini the call was more to Africa than to missionary life in itself. Following the model of the order's Italian founder, St. Daniel Comboni, who died in Sudan in 1881, the Comboni missionary was expected to, in Father Pasolini's words, "give your soul, mind, energy, heart and body for Africa to bring the Good News to the people of Africa."

Father Pasolini was ordained in 1964 during the Second Vatican Council. Soon he received his long-awaited call to the African missions, landing in West Nile in 1966. His initial encounter included significant challenges. He asked the local Comboni parish priest about Lögbara culture and was told to learn how to eat cassava. "And remember," the priest added, "that they are an inferior race." Fortunately, this racist paternalism was also on the way out. The Comboni General Chapter of 1969 embraced the reforms of Vatican II and looked to renew the order by revitalizing Father Daniel Comboni's original focus on "the mission for Africa." Just as he was finding his feet, however, Father Pasolini was recalled to Italy, first as a postulant director and later as the youngest Comboni provincial superior in the world.

In 1982, Father Pasolini returned to Uganda and settled in the West Nile town of Maracha near the Congolese border. Here he channeled his energies into the formation of lay leaders and married couples. He also built a parish learning center to train catechists to work across Maracha Parish's 55 subparishes, exhorting them to have "open eyes" to identify both the community's challenges and its emerging leaders. (Catechists typically lead these subparishes, and priests visit every few months to celebrate Mass.) In 1990, Bishop Frederick Drandua of Arua asked Father Pasolini to become the diocesan pastoral coordina-



tor. Recognizing that he needed outside help, Father Pasolini wrote to contacts at the Volunteer Missionary Movement to request an English-speaking lay missionary with a background in teaching, administration and academic theology. As it turned out, the movement had only one candidate who fit this bill: Sherry Meyer.

Born in 1951, Ms. Meyer grew up in a small suburb of Indianapolis, Ind. The oldest of six children, she attended Franciscan Catholic schools from elementary school through university, becoming the first member of her family to graduate from college. After years as a teacher and then a high school principal, she took a job with the Archdiocese of Chicago in the late 1980s, where she also pursued studies in theology and ministry at Catholic Theological Union. She assumed she would either keep working at the archdiocesan offices or go back to Indiana to work in parish ministry—until, at the age of 40, she started dreaming about Africa.

Far from embracing a romantic dream of missionary life, Ms. Meyer resisted. Questions churned in her head. How could she leave her close-knit family? What if she got sick? How could she beg friends and family for mission appeals after years of proudly supporting herself? And perhaps most of all, "What good can a 40-year-old American woman do in Africa?" But over weeks and months of discernment, the call persisted. Ms. Meyer decided to join V.M.M., a Catholic agency dedicated to lay ministry and mission.

Ms. Meyer arrived in Uganda in October 1991, just in time for the Catholic Church's annual worldwide celebra-



Bishop Sabino Ocan Odoki of the Diocese of Arua, Uganda, pays a visit to the staff of Radio Pacis. Many on the staff have learned the ropes through the radio's Candidate Mentor program, a competitive four-week apprenticeship.

tion of Mission Sunday. Despite the apparent liturgical serendipity, the initial auguries were not good. Her roommate came down with hives; Ms. Meyer's asthma kicked in; she had no toilet for the first time in her life. "Every day I said, 'I can't do this, I am going home!'" she says. She had to learn to be totally dependent on others, a mentality that did not come easily to an oldest child and single woman who had prized personal independence all her life. Now she found herself learning how to take a bath using a basin and how to care for chickens.

Given these challenges, Ms. Meyer told herself that she would complete a year of service and then go home to the United States. But Father Pasolini recognized her administrative abilities and passion for lay ministry, and he invited her to help the Combonis develop a new lay ministry training program. Her mission was straightforward, though not simple—helping local Catholic lay people embrace their calling "to be participants in the church rather than spectators." Ms. Meyer was soon engaged in a variety of pastoral ministries based at the new Christus Centre that she and Father Pasolini set up in Arua town in the early 1990s. Her ministries included teaching Scripture to lay catechists, running collaborative workshops for priests and laity and planning two diocesan synods. In fact, 90 percent of the materials for Ugandan Catholic "liturgies in the absence of a priest" were developed by Ms. Meyer, enabling catechists to share Communion on Sundays with local Christians during the months or even years between visits by a priest.

Ms. Meyer realized that she was also offering a unique image for the Ugandan church: a laywoman engaged in pastoral and liturgical ministry. Although some of the old-school Italian Combonis fretted that she was, in her words, one of these "wild, American, feminist women who go to theology school," Ms. Meyer's results slowly won them over. When her five-year contract with V.M.M. ran out in the late 1990s, she affiliated with the Combonis as a lay missionary, attracted by the Combonis' pragmatic focus. Such practicality soon opened Ms. Meyer and Father Pasolini to an innovative form of pastoral mission: taking the peace of Christ to the airwaves.

GOSPEL VALUES RADIO

In 2001, Ms. Meyer and Father Pasolini were asked to jumpstart a new diocesan initiative in mass communications: a local Catholic radio station. On the suggestion of their diocesan bishop at the time, Bishop Drandua of Arua, they named the station Radio Pacis. The name was chosen in part because of the local church's commitment to build intertribal and inter-religious peace in the historically neglected and war-torn region of Northern Uganda. The home region of Idi Amin, West Nile Province suffered greatly during the post-Amin instability and civil war of the early 1980s, when government soldiers took revenge on Amin's former soldiers and local civilians. Having grown out of Alice Lakwena's Holy Spirit Movement, Joseph Kony's Lord's

The station's attention to the everyday struggles of its listeners is not just good ministry; it is also good for business.

Resistance Army rebellion—and the brutal government response to it—ravaged neighboring Acholiland and Lango District between 1986 and 2008.

The station's name also highlighted Ms. Meyer's and Father Pasolini's desires to push Radio Pacis beyond the traditional strictures of African Catholic radio. To be sure, Father Pasolini and Ms. Meyer ensured that the station broadcast Mass, liturgical music and 10-minute "Scripture Moments" that included commentaries on the daily readings. But Ms. Meyer and Father Pasolini also wanted the station to embody the social dimension of Gospel values by addressing issues of human rights, health, education, family, gender relations and civic education. For Ms. Meyer, this focus on human lives echoes Jesus' own ministry. "Jesus always preferred the poor, the lame, the sick and those on the margins, and this entails issues of justice, human rights, courts, corruption and health care access," she says.

Radio Pacis went on the air in October 2004 and quickly became the most popular radio station in the region, in part because the station broadcasts on three frequencies in all six local languages: Acholi, Alur, Madi, Kakwa, Lögbara and English. In turn, Radio Pacis has crossed more than just national and linguistic borders; the station's highest listening percentage is in the overwhelmingly Muslim area of Yumbe. Ms. Meyer posits that this success across many demographics is because local people of all religious stripes appreciate the station's commitment to "accuracy, truth, and balance" in a media landscape dominated by propaganda, bribery and superficiality. In addition, Ms. Meyer and Father Pasolini refused early pressure to hire only Catholics; Protestants and Muslims serve in prominent management positions at the station. For Father Pasolini, this inter-religious workforce reflects West Nilers' general inter-religious harmony. "We live together! We plan together! We stay together! This is the real Uganda!" he says.

Whatever its international reach, Radio Pacis remains a distinctively local, engaged community radio station. The

station raises over 70 percent of its operating budget from local sources in West Nile, and at least 22 of its 24 hours of daily programming are locally produced. Since 2010, the station has sponsored "community engagement" efforts, in which field reporters move into villages, hosting forums that enable ordinary people to voice their concerns directly to their civic leaders. The station's huge listenership provides ample motivation for the recalcitrant politician. In turn, Radio Pacis has raised awareness among the local population on questions of human dignity like sexual abuse of children, alcoholism and domestic violence.

According to Sarah Amviko, a West Nile native who is the human resources manager for Radio Pacis, women are now speaking more openly about domestic violence. "[The radio] has empowered women to stand their ground and to know that they are human beings," she says. For her part, Ms. Meyer recalled a conversation with an older man who thanked her for the attention the station pays to spousal relations: "The things you say on the radio are really unique—no one else can say that to us!" For Ms. Meyer, this demonstrates how radio can be akin to a "social liturgy," creating a sacred space that facilitates an elevated conversation on questions of human dignity.

A good example of this "elevated conversation" is provided by "We Go Forward," one of the station's most popular morning programs. In a focus group conducted by Radio Pacis, many local residents praised the program for improving family life. For example, while state-run primary school is free, parents are still expected to provide school supplies. Sometimes this is a big challenge on both a financial and a cultural level. But one Lögbara mother credited "We Go Forward" with convincing her that it was worthwhile to pay for her children's scholastic materials. After listening to a program on domestic conflict, one local man foreswore physically abusing his wife. Still another woman in nearby Maracha District argued that "We Go Forward" lifted the self-esteem of such marginalized groups as women and children, people with disabilities and people living with H.I.V./AIDS. "Being a discordant couple [one partner is H.I.V. positive and the other is not], I used to fear to disclose my status," she says. "But having listened to the program Ama Mu Drile ['We Go Forward'] on Radio Pacis, I freely came out to tell people about my status."

As 1.3 million South Sudanese refugees have poured into Northern Uganda over the past five years, refugee questions have become central dimensions of Radio Pacis's community outreach. The station's Rural Initiative Community Empowerment brings together refugees and local host communities to discuss areas of shared concern



In 2007 the BBC named Radio Pacis the best new radio station in all of Africa.

To understand the vision that animates the mission of Radio Pacis, it is useful to understand the two missionaries who helped start it: Sherry Meyer and the Rev. Tonino Pasolini.

such as environmental destruction, infrastructural development and disease prevention. Other weekly programs like “Voice of the Voiceless” and “Refugee Hour” enable refugees to speak directly on their own situations. For the longtime local reporter Gabriel Adrapi, this programming reflects Radio Pacis’s mission that “whatever we do, we do for the voiceless of the community.”

Radio Pacis also strives to practice what it preaches through staff training and apprenticeships. Many on the staff have learned the ropes through the radio’s Candidate Mentor program, a competitive four-week apprenticeship. The station’s managers have trained with the best mass media agencies in the field, including BBC World Service, the Uganda Media Development Foundation, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and Radio Vatican. In turn, Radio Pacis staff are now teaching radio managers from around the continent; this year delegations from South Sudan and Malawi came for training. Not surprisingly, the Uganda Communications Commission recently praised the station as “not only a model radio station in Uganda, but a model radio station in the whole of Africa.”

This does not mean that the station faces no challenges. Radio Pacis has been stymied in its efforts to open a new station in Kampala, Uganda’s capital. The station remains dependent on foreign donors for a significant percentage of its budget. In turn, staff salaries are lower than those of Radio Pacis’ local competitors, leading some reporters to take their talents elsewhere.

Those who remain do so in part due to Radio Pacis’s collaborative and empowering work environment. Multiple staff members spoke of how much they appreciate Ms. Meyer’s and Father Pasolini’s consultative leadership style, including a tradition of Friday meetings at which staff members collaborate to voice commendations and critiques from the past week. When asked to explain its success, Sta-

tion Manager Gaetano Apamaku highlighted the “decentralization” of Radio Pacis, noting that “in leadership you have to trust other people to do things.” In recent years, Ms. Meyer has moved out of administrative leadership and into a senior consulting role; Father Pasolini is currently in the process of handing over his directorship role to the Rev. Charles Idraku, a local priest. This transition reflects a demonstrable shift from the racist mentality evident in some members of earlier generations of missionaries. It also reflects deeper missiological convictions. The work of Ms. Meyer and Father Pasolini is based on a deep respect for the identity and beliefs of the people with whom they work. As Ms. Meyer put it, “God was here long before the first missionary arrived in Africa.”

This mission of integral human formation remains at the heart of Radio Pacis as it approaches its 15th anniversary this October. Echoing this mission, Ms. Amviko described the true measure of the radio station as not market share but maturation.

“Radio Pacis has not just inspired people but made people grow,” she says. “As a human being, what can I do to become a better person?” The deep faith of the station staff and their commitment to the wider world encourages a mentality that resists the temptation of creating an insular community. Rather, Radio Pacis encourages greater engagement with the world and deeper service for all our brothers and sisters. As Father Pasolini puts it, “If we work for our community, we have understood what it means to be a Christian.”

J. J. Carney teaches theology and African studies at Creighton University in Omaha, Neb. This article is adapted from his forthcoming book, For God and My Country: Catholic Leadership in Modern Uganda (Cascade Press 2020). Research for this article was made possible by funding from Creighton University and the U.S. Fulbright Foundation.

BEFORE THE THAW

By Pasky Pascual

Opting for hope in a troubled marriage

January's chill cut to the bone. Leaving the baggage claim area, I stepped into the gloom of winter wearing a T-shirt and REI cargo pants, my daily ensemble during four months of travel. When she greeted me outside the terminal, my wife burst out laughing. "Think you're still in the Philippines, do you?"

But she was somber as she drove home through Washington, D.C., meandering north alongside ice-covered Rock Creek. Later that evening, peering at me across the kitchen island, as if the air between us had congealed, she said, "I liked living alone."

My wife left three weeks later, insisting couples therapy was pointless, hopeless.

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We met almost 35 years to the day she walked away, at a Fat Tuesday party during a blizzard. We met as undergraduates at George Washington University in 1983. I attended the university as a foreign student from the Philippines. Friends pointed her out to me, saying she had just returned from a

semester abroad in Aix en Provence. Her blue eyes sparkled, offset by the red aviator scarf she later told me belonged to her deceased father, a fighter pilot in the Pacific War.

Emboldened by Carlo Rossi wine, I mumbled an invitation into her ear, "Want to stroll through the snow?" We spent the evening slipping and sliding on the pavement outside Ronald Reagan's White House, clinging to each other for support.

By 10 o'clock the next morning, Ash Wednesday, my hangover had cleared enough for me to shuffle to the college auditorium for Mass, where I made sure to sit near her. After the priest intoned, "Let us offer each other the sign of peace," we nodded and smiled at one another. In that morning's sacred space, so soon after the previous night's revelry, I sensed the fullness of her humanity, one blessed with both holiness and *joie de vivre*.

I returned home to the Philippines after graduating that spring. In those pre-internet days, we wrote one another long letters on onion paper every week. Shortly after arriving back in the Philippines, the political dissident Be-



unplash

nigno Aquino was assassinated on the tarmac of the Manila International Airport. Thousands of Filipinos took to the streets in protest. To intimidate us, the police swung clubs and chased after us as if we were dogs.

With money she barely had, she called me long-distance. “Are you safe?” she asked in a tremulous voice. Over the next months, our friendship grew as we continued to share our concerns and dreams with one another.

Two years after that phone call, on the steps outside Georgetown’s Holy Trinity Catholic Church, after Good Friday evening services, I asked her to marry me—a penniless, foreign graduate student. “You know me,” I said.

“Yes, I know you,” she replied. “And I will marry you.”

Her courageous decision—to commit to someone with no demonstrable material promise—has been my life’s most precious gift.

I had been a Jesuit seminarian two years before meeting her. I went to a Jesuit school in the Philippines and entered the novitiate there. I did not believe I would find

someone who could satisfy all my spiritual longings and needs for human companionship. I left the Jesuits, however, believing that God was calling me to be a family man.

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The first week after my wife left me, I lost 10 pounds, apparently from trying to outswim the undertow dragging me down to despair. When at last I expended all my energy and hope, my two adult daughters, both in their mid-20s, buoyed me up, lifting me with their wisdom, their unconditional, nonjudgmental presence.

Meeting at an Indian bistro for lunch, my daughters and I took turns sharing stories about how each of us handled past and current relationships. As my daughters spoke, I watched their tan hands reach for the naan bread, their skin’s brown hue a reflection of the mixture of race and culture that brought joy to their parents’ friendship.

This diversity ingrained in our family seemed suddenly out of sync with the times after the 2016 elections, as indeed did our entire worldview. Racism and anger against



I pray we are merely on temporarily divergent journeys to our best personal selves so that, someday, we can meet again downstream in conjoined bliss.

immigrants seemed to be a common feature on the campaign trail and in the new administration.

The next spring, my wife and I would convene after work at the bar in the Marriott Hotel above Metro Center, Washington's central subway station. I worked as an environmental scientist, while my wife worked for the Head Start program, which provides early childhood education and support for underprivileged families. I had abandoned Catholicism years earlier, not least because it failed to provide nurturing space for my gay daughter, but a desire to serve stayed with me. Over beers, my wife and I brainstormed all the ways we could continue to craft meaningful lives in service of the public good.

I laid out a plan for us to begin building the future we had long envisioned, a vision of improving lives in developing countries. For the first time since we married, I would return to the Philippines for an extended period to teach a course in data science. There was a global demand for people who understood big data. This would create opportunities for smart, underemployed people in developing countries. As long as they had access to bandwidth, educated Filipinos could provide data services for companies in the developed world. On my wife's part, this would mark the first time—after years in which we sustained the house menagerie, including her mother and our daughters—she would live alone.

When I flew to Asia, I believed we were on the cusp of our next adventure as a couple; I was simply the advance scout exploring our frontier.

If I had been a real scout, however, I might have considered the possibility that life back at base camp would unfold in ways I could not foresee.

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I had never before considered suicide. But in the aftermath of my wife's departure, as I walked along Rock Creek, throwing pebbles into the water, I often thought of Virginia

Woolf. She stuffed her pockets with stones to drown herself in the river near her Sussex home. I avoided the bathroom, especially during sleepless nights on my half-empty bed, because thoughts of sinking into warm waters with slit wrists were becoming alarmingly enticing.

During those dark times, I remembered my brother's suicide. The pain of his death lingers, even decades after I read the yellow strip of paper on which, even at his darkest hour, my brother scribbled his accountability on his suicide note: "The fault is mine. All mine."

Thinking of my daughters, I lurched in the opposite direction, toward hope, toward living a life of responsibility to my loved ones.

And so I languished, wondering whether this ache, like an insidious parasite consuming me from inside, corresponded to emotions my wife had been harboring. In those few weeks before she left, anything I said or did only seemed to stir more pain within her, until she felt she must leave me. I finally understood how much pain she kept hidden from me, from our family and from our friends.

Finally, I sought solace by returning to my Catholic roots and diving into the deep well of Jesuit spirituality. In 2013, after the white smoke wafted above the Sistine Chapel and Pope Francis emerged to catch the bus to his hotel, I told myself, "I know this man." His simplicity and compassion appeared to spring from the same spirit shared by my Jesuit mentors.

Two months after my wife walked away, for the first time in many years, I entered a Catholic church. Sitting alone in the darkness, I heard the faint but familiar voice of Tom Green, S.J., my spiritual director. "The soul," he used to tell me, puffing on his pipe as the smoke wrapped around us, "is the battleground in the war between God and the Devil."

We understood each other enough to know we relied on metaphors to "eff the ineffable." Our understanding of God, molded by Catholic traditions and belief, was that of an all-encompassing goodness residing in creation, in others and in ourselves. In its etymology, Devil simply referred to someone blocking the path to God. The Devil was a personification of anything—a friend, neurotic attachments, fake news—leading me away from my best self.

Father Green trained me to recognize those God-inspired movements in my soul-stirring courage and compassion. He taught me to be sensitive to how the Devil plays with my fears, subtly nudging me toward hopelessness and anxiety. And he delivered his most useful advice: "Never make a major decision when the Devil encloses you in his embrace."

This is powerful stuff, these Jesuit mind tricks. For the moment, my marriage is in a crisis, where past traumas,

aging bodies and waning hormones poison the narrative. Distrust and anger colors my wife's view of our marriage. Father Green's instructions from the past help me settle my emotional turmoil by shifting my focus to God's voice inside me, encouraging me to treat my wife with compassion.

I try not to overthink this legacy of discernment from my teacher. I grasp comfort where I can find it, in this case by layering my vague understanding of human relations and psychology with the spiritual principles developed by the Jesuit order's founder, a 16th-century soldier-turned-mystic. These principles impel me to focus on that one area where I can exercise choice: to respond lovingly to my wife's departure.

On good days, I believe my authentic self must be constant in unconditionally loving her, even as I claim responsibility for the harms I caused "through my fault, through my fault"—as I used to chant at daily Mass—through my most grievous fault. Wherever the journey leads, she remains my best friend, and I hope to be beside her at journey's end. Knowing this helps me through bad days, when the Devil gives no quarter on my soul's battleground and I am awash in the urge to walk away and end the marriage.

On a recent bad day, I wandered into a movie theater to distract myself. The movie's protagonist, a country priest entrapped in existential crisis, paraphrases the Trappist monk Thomas Merton: "Despair is a development of pride so great that it chooses someone's certitude rather than admit that God is more creative than we are."

With spring, Rock Creek flows freely, except in the shallower, cooler waters near the shore. There, ice stubbornly persists. I watch chunks of it break off like fragile crystals to float away and melt into the downstream flow toward the Atlantic Ocean.

I am overwhelmed by the notion that without my wife and I noticing it, quotidian behaviors and attitudes over 33 years have frozen into patterns of certitude, imperiling our marriage. As in any long marriage, there were children to care for, bills to pay, household chores to be done; and we somehow lost focus on the love we have for each other.

For now, all I can do is pray desperately for a grace-inspired thaw, so we may surrender to God's creativity. I pray we are merely on temporarily divergent, independent journeys to our best personal selves so that, someday, we can meet again downstream in conjoined bliss.

And I force myself to pray also for the most gut-wrenching grace of all, to embrace the possibility that each of us might follow our individual soul's movements down the creek, only to ultimately drift, despite ourselves, to separate spots in the ocean.

Pasky Pascual is a lawyer and scientist. He currently trains teachers and students in data analysis in Ecuador.

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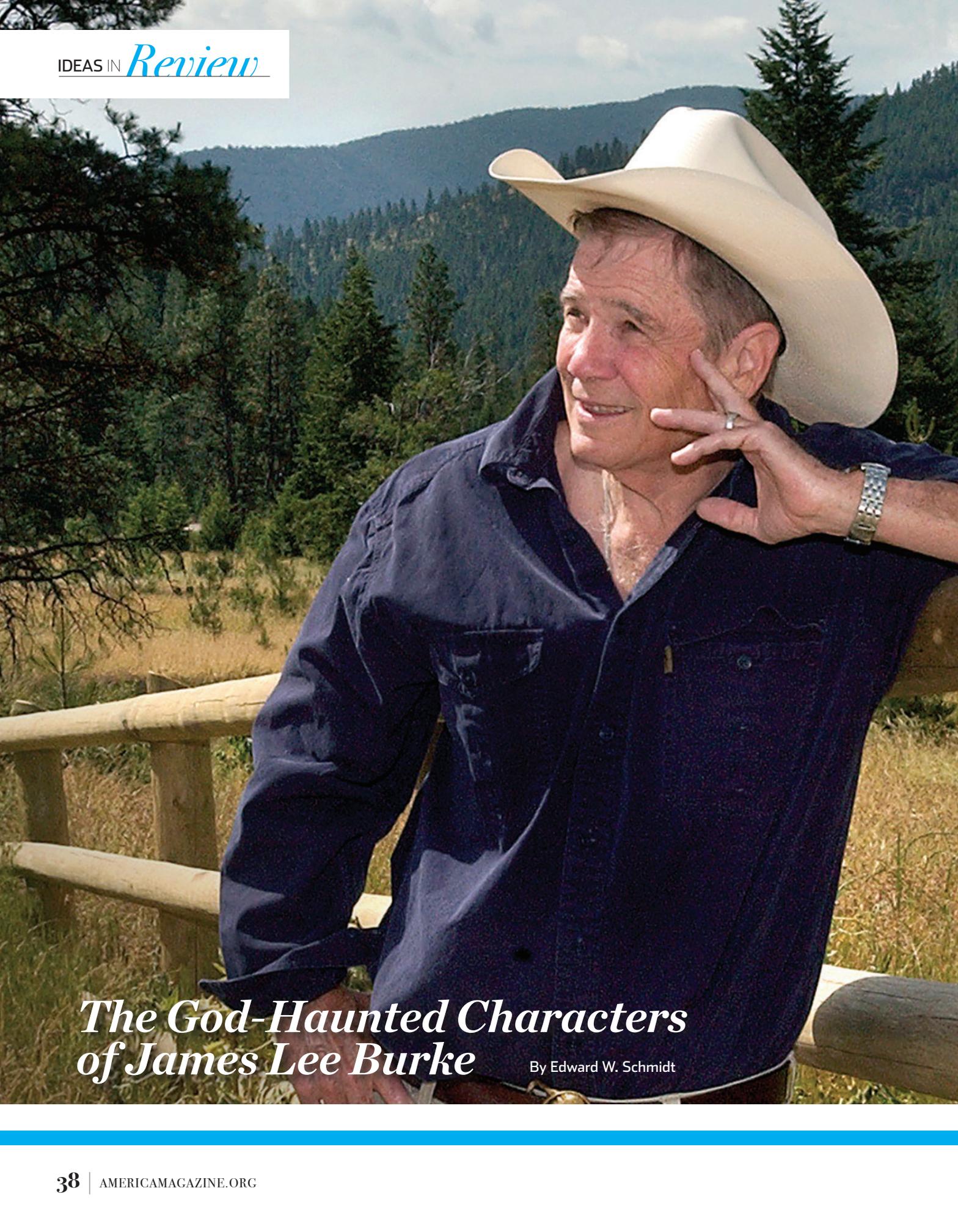


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*The God-Haunted Characters
of James Lee Burke*

By Edward W. Schmidt



AP Photo/The Missoulian, Linda Thompson

In 37 novels and two short-story collections, James Lee Burke has chronicled the struggles of those who would do good in a context of pervasive evil.

Theology has many sources: Sacred Scripture, of course, and church decrees; documents from popes and councils, and the writings of saints; reflections on experience and insights into things beyond.

The epic poet Homer was called a theologian because he sang of gods and their ways, of heroes and scoundrels, of loyalty and betrayal. Numerous book titles include “A Theology of,” with the object being St. Augustine or Samuel Beckett, the body or holiness or hope, liberation or time or the icon. Perhaps more ironically, **America’s** pages have talked of the theology of Louis C. K. (8/17/15) and of Taylor Swift (6/6/16); The Jesuit Post entered the list with “Lady Gaga the Theologian” (5/11/16). Meanwhile, The New York Times has given us “Obama the Theologian” (2/8/14) and “The Theology of Donald Trump” (7/5/16).

While it might not be necessary to say there is “a theology of James Lee Burke,” the crime novelist certainly has insights into the ways of God as they relate to the ways of his heroes and villains. His 37 novels and two short-story collections have built up a faithful readership that relishes the struggles of those who would do good in a context of pervasive evil. Sometimes the religious angle is explicit. More often it is dropped in subtly or casually, along with historical, literary and artistic references and insightful glimpses of the world of nature. Sometimes it is in simple references to medals, statues, Communion hosts.

Good and Evil

A number of books refer to a character’s Gethsemane or Golgotha experience and many use other scriptural words or themes. One character in *In the Electric Mist With Confederate Dead* (1993) admits: “I used to look through a glass darkly. Primarily because there was Jim Beam in it most of the time.” Or from *Last Car to Elysian Fields* (2003): “Was I my brother’s keeper, particularly if my ‘brother’ was a dirtbag?” The reference may be simple, but it is always apt.

Burke’s characters are complex. His lead character in 22 novels, Dave Robicheaux— sometimes a law officer, sometimes a private investigator—is a man with a strong drive to put the bad guys away. But with his pained memories of service in Vietnam and his struggles with alcohol, he does not hide his flaws and mistakes as he tries to do good. His Catholic background and education are noted, as is his regular attendance at Sunday Mass. The really bad guys he confronts hurt him and some of those he loves (two of his wives are murdered in the novels). In the first Robicheaux novel, he is on the police force in New Orleans, but in subsequent books he moves out to the bayous around New Iberia and runs a fishing business while also working for the local sheriff. Still later



Dave Robicheaux, Burke's lead character in 22 novels, is a man with a strong drive to put the bad guys away. ●●

he moves to Montana, and the mountains become a new setting for the violence and the detective work. Then we return to the bayous and shady streets of New Orleans.

Though his first wife runs off with a Houston oilman, later wives show him great love and support him in his drive to do good. His adopted daughter, Alafair, evokes his undying love and returns it to him. His old buddy Clete is a constant partner in fighting crime, though hardly a model for sanctity with his drinking and his womanizing. The pluses and the minuses are a constant, and the balance is a very real picture of human life.

Some of the truly evil people in the novels include drug kingpins and others in organized crime. At one point, listening to a rape victim tell her story, Robicheaux expresses great contempt for “cops and judges and prosecutors who sided with a rapist, and I’ve known many of them. There is no lower individual on earth than a person who is sworn to serve but who deliberately aids a molester and condemns the victim to a lifetime of resentment and self-mortification.” In *Jolie Blon’s Bounce* (2002), Robicheaux comments: “I had a recent

encounter with this man. I think he’s evil. I don’t mean bad. I mean evil, in the strictest theological sense.”

In *Electric Mist*, an F.B.I. agent remarks to Robicheaux: “You’re always hoping that even the worst of them has something of good in him.” Most characters in fact do include some elements of good, even gang members who sell drugs on the street—they often don’t seem to have much of a choice. Women in Burke’s novels are generally good, and nuns always, with one exception. Priests are basically good, though not free of their humanity.

Religion in the Air

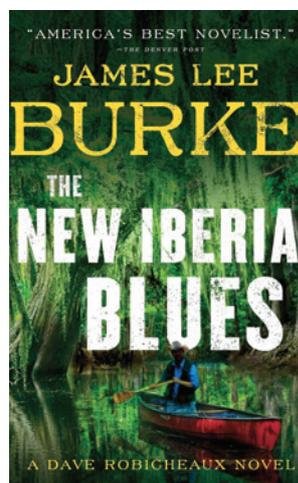
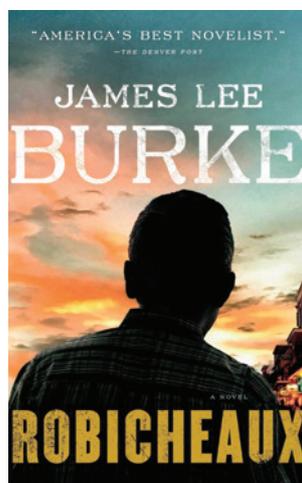
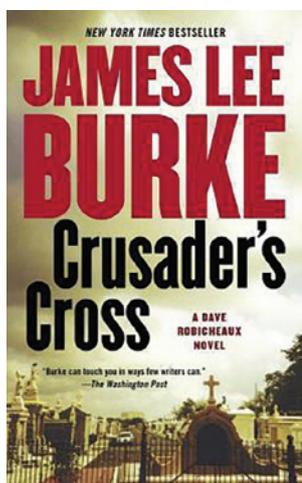
The first Robicheaux novel is *The Neon Rain* (1987), in which he is a police detective in New Orleans. In the opening scene, he sees protesters rallying outside Louisiana’s notorious Angola penitentiary, where an execution is to take place. The crowd includes “priests, nuns in lay clothes, kids from L.S.U. with burning candles cupped in their hands.” Later in the novel we hear of Catholic priests in Nicaragua and of a priest killed along with local people in Guatemala, and about Catholics in Central America generally: “They’re doing some bad shit

to our people. They’re killing priests and Maryknoll nuns and doing it with the M-16s and M-60 machine guns we give them.” The wars in Central America and the Maryknoll nuns reappear in future novels. Here as elsewhere, religion is not the central theme, but it is a significant part of the atmosphere.

This first novel also has classical and cultural allusions: Cassandra, Sir Walter Scott, Prometheus and Polonius, John of the Cross, *A Passage to India*, Shakespeare and Robert Frost, Billie Holiday, Blind Lemon Jefferson and Leadbelly, Ernest Hemingway and James Audubon. And like almost all his novels, it gives beautiful glimpses of nature, as in the opening sentence: “The evening sky was streaked with purple, the color of torn plums, and a light rain had started to fall...” All of Burke’s novels mix in such images, and they are always natural—never heavy-handed.

Toward the end of this first novel in the series, Robicheaux asks questions of motivation, of good and evil:

I was never good at complexities, usually made a mess of them when I tried to cope with them, and for that reason I was always fond of a remark that Robert Frost made when he was talking about his lifetime commitment to his art. He said the fear of God asks the question, Is my sacrifice acceptable, is it worthy, in His sight? When it’s all over and done with, does the good outweigh the bad, did I pitch the best game I could, even though it was a flawed one, right through the bottom of the ninth?



Burke's books address the everyday tensions between sincere belief and right desires that are buffeted by harsh realities and human weakness.

Casual theology perhaps, but charged with insight.

The religious element is quite prominent in Burke's 2018 novel, named for the title character, *Robicheaux*. Partly it is found in the background, with references to Sunday Mass, a grotto with candles flickering, crucifixes and medals hung around one's neck. But it also has more substantive religious marks. When Robicheaux's friend Clete Purcell recalls "the people who hurt you and me when we were kids," Robicheaux thinks to himself:

People make peace with themselves in different ways, sometimes being more generous than they should. But you don't pull life preservers away from drowning people or deny an opiate or two to those who have taken up residence in the Garden of Gethsemane.

In a dream about his daughter Alafair in danger, he remarks "If God had a daughter, I bet he wouldn't have let her die on a cross." And a bit lat-

er, referring to more dreams: "I harbored emotions that no Christian should ever have." Again, the theology is not formal. But as it rises from a very human situation of conflict, it is very insightful.

Mystical Experiences

Those religious themes persist in Burke's most recent Robicheaux novel, *The New Iberia Blues* (2019). The old references appear again: the Marian grotto in New Iberia, Communion wafers, medals, Sunday Mass. Larger religious issues also appear. A dead body on a crucifix floating in the bayou is an oft-repeated image. When Desmond, a local man who has gone on to make successful films, comes back to the bayou country for a new film, Robicheaux asks him why he makes movies. Desmond replies: "They allow you to place your hand inside eternity. It's the one experience we share with the Creator. That's what making films is about." Robicheaux reflects: "I was sure at that moment that Desmond Cormier lived in a place few of us would have the courage—or perhaps the temerity—to enter."

Speaking of the conflicted life of a police officer, Robicheaux reflects: "There are uncomfortable moments for almost all cops. The struggles are similar to those of the mystic with doubt about God's existence." The officer is fighting for what is good, but this fight stirs up contrary emotions. The officer sees too much.

At the end, when the guilty have been caught, Robicheaux takes a vacation with his daughter and his friend Clete. Reflecting on Desmond the filmmaker and his obsession with light and shadow, he remarks, "I cannot watch the sun course through the heavens and settle into a molten ball without feeling a weakness in my heart, as though God does slay Himself with every leaf that flies and that indeed there is no greater theft than that of time."

Sin and Redemption

Burke's theological reflections also address the everyday tensions between sincere belief and right desires that are buffeted by harsh realities and human weakness. For example, in *The Tin Roof Blowdown* (2007), Robicheaux reflects on his

reaction to Ronald Bledsoe, an evil opponent he wishes he could kill:

Supposedly we are a Christian society, or at least one founded by Christians. According to our self-manufactured mythos, we revere Jesus and Mother Teresa and Saint Francis of Assisi. But I think the truth is otherwise. When we feel collectively threatened, or when we are collectively injured, we want the Earp brothers and Doc Holliday on the job and we want the bad guys smoked, dried, fried, and plowed under with bulldozers.

Later in the book he comments on this man: “My own belief is that people like Bledsoe pose theological questions to us that psychologists cannot answer.” In *Pegasus Descending* (2006), reflecting on the human condition in general, Robicheaux notes: “When people seek vengeance, they dig up every biblical platitude imaginable to rationalize their behavior, but their motivations are invariably selfish. More important, they have no regard for the damage and pain they often cause the innocent.” Earlier in that book, Robicheaux, as the narrator, describes the character Bellerophon, terrified of hell and of his own libidinous nature; for him, “God was an abstraction, but the devil was real.”

More theology shows up in *Swan Peak* (2008). In one scene, trying to warn a woman about some danger, Robicheaux says, “In her eyes I could see the lights of shame and denial and self-resentment, and I tried to remember Saint Augustine’s admonition that we should not use the truth to injure.”

And later:

Years ago, in a midwestern city whose collective ethos was heavily influenced by the humanitarian culture of abolitionists and of Mennonites, I attended twelve-step meetings with some of the best people I ever knew. Most of them were teachers and clerics and blue-collar workers in the aircraft industry. They were drunks, like me, but by and large their sins were the theological equivalent of 3.2 [percent] beer.

He comments too on the nature of God. In *Crusader’s Cross* (2005), he speaks of his father “big Aldous, [who] spoke a form of English that was hardly a language.... But when he spoke French he could translate his ideas in ways that were quite elevated.” Aldous, he comments, used to say, “There are only two things you have to remember about Him: He has a sense of humor, and because He’s a gentleman He always keeps His word.”

Several characters in Burke’s books are former Jesuits, and one murder victim is a Jesuit. Jesuit names appear in places in Montana: Cataldo, Ravalli, St. Regis. And casual references are made to Loyola University New Orleans and the Grand Coteau retreat house. Early in one interchange with a federal agent in *The Neon Rain*, the agent tells Robicheaux: “I get a little emotional on certain subjects. You’ll have to excuse me. I went to Jesuit schools. They always taught us to be upfront about everything. They’re the Catholic equivalent of the jarheads [Marines], you know.” And in a later

conversation, “Don’t try to tilt with a Jesuit product, Lieutenant. We’ve been verbally demolishing you guys for centuries.”

So what about the “theology” label? In *Swan Peak*, Robicheaux says “I am not a theologian.” And in *Pegasus Descending*, he responds to his wife Molly’s question, “You don’t think God can understand that?” with the comment: “I am not a theologian, but I believe absolution can be granted to us in many forms. Perhaps it can come in the ends of a woman’s fingers on your skin. Some people call it the redemptive power of love. Anyway, why argue with it when it comes your way?” On a related note, in *Swan Peak*, Molly says to Robicheaux: “Under it all, you’re a priest, Dave.”

Along with cultural and historical references and amazing glimpses of nature, the religious and the theological surface to do their work and then give way, adding their essential flavors to the whole. Perhaps it is enough to say James Lee Burke is a great writer. No other labels are needed.

Edward W. Schmidt, S.J., is a former senior editor at *America*.

Mary, Pietà

By Whitney Rio-Ross

Body betrayed, I bore
the world's fugitive, had lost you
before we untethered.
Death is a matter of waiting,
and I saw yours curled
like a snake around every
corner, mine the spider
I couldn't catch in time.
When offered your marbled
flesh—
I couldn't.
Forgive me. A mother can
only hold so many scars.
But hovered between nightmare
and waking, my wounds sink
into yours, fresh and warm
as I remember you. In darkness,
all blood sheds embraced.
This is how we began.

Whitney Rio-Ross teaches English at Trevecca Nazarene University in Nashville, Tenn. Her poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Rock & Sling*, *Saint Katherine Review*, *Waccamaw*, *Gravel* and elsewhere.

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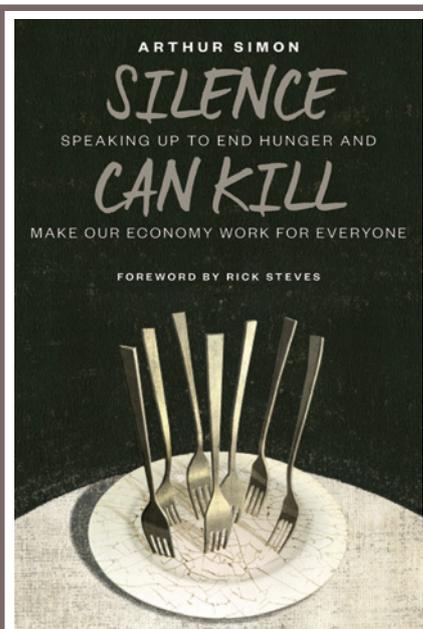
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Eerdmans Publishing, July 2019
Paperback, 300 pages

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Washington Post

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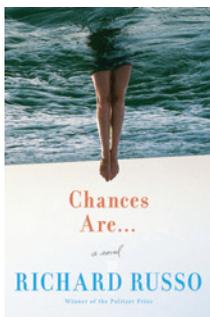
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A Martha's Vineyard mystery

By Maurice Timothy Reidy



Chances Are...

A Novel

Richard Russo
Alfred A. Knopf

320p \$26.95

Richard Russo is our great chronicler of men of a certain age. Examples abound, but the Platonic ideal remains Sully, the irascible protagonist of Russo's novel *Nobody's Fool* (1993) and its sequel, *Everybody's Fool*, from 2016. You will find no better portrait of the aging American male, rivaled only, perhaps, by Paul Newman's performance in the film adaptation of the original novel from 1994.

In his latest novel, *Chances Are...*, Russo introduces three more men of this type (all of them 66 years old, college class of 1971) and places them in a summer house on the island of Martha's Vineyard, in the town of Chil-

mark, Mass. In a surprising twist, at least for Russo fans who may be used to longer, looser tales, the plot is set into rapid motion by the mystery of a young girl's disappearance. A detective story is not what we have come to expect from Russo, who generally operates at the same, easy-going speed as his male protagonists, but he shows himself to be well versed in the basic requirements of the genre.

The last time these three men were on the island together was shortly after their graduation from Minerva College, a tony liberal arts school located on the southern coast of Connecticut. Unlike many of their classmates, Mickey, Lincoln and Teddy did not come from money, so they worked as "hashers" at a campus sorority, waiting tables and cleaning pots in the kitchen, and had limited social interaction with the young ladies of Theta house.

The exception was Jacy, a free-spirited daughter of the WASP establishment who enjoys hanging out with the self-proclaimed "three

musketees." When they all decide to spend one last weekend at Lincoln's family house on the Vineyard, it comes as no surprise when things do not go exactly as planned.

The year being 1971, the shadow of Vietnam looms. (One of the book's touchpoints is Jefferson's Airplane's song "Somebody to Love," with its opening line, "When the truth is found to be lies...") Mickey has a low draft number and is trying to decide whether to flee to Canada. His buddies are pushing for him to go, but he feels a tug of loyalty to his recently deceased father, who told him that if he did not serve, some other poor kid would have to.

This is familiar territory. People my age (Generation X) grew up with many stories, both in books and on film, of the conflicted young men sent off to serve their nation in Southeast Asia. It is a tribute to Russo's skills as a portraitist that these debates do not seem stale. In his hands, Mickey, Lincoln, Teddy and Jacy are just kids buf-

feted by the winds of history.

The three men return to Chilmark in 2015 as Lincoln is deciding whether to sell the family house. They are all haunted by the disappearance of Jacy, who left in 1971 without saying goodbye and was never seen or heard from again. It turns out there was once a time when people could be out of touch for weeks and even months and no one assumed anything bad had happened to them.

Together again, the three musketeers return to familiar patterns. “Was this what we wanted from our oldest friends?” Russo writes in one of the book’s many wise passages. “Reassurance that the world we remember so fondly exists? That it hasn’t been replaced by a reality we’re less fully committed to?”

Lincoln is the most successful of the lot, a real estate operator who has six children and a father whose influence he still can’t quit. (“Like many fathers, Lincoln’s now had two permanent residences, one in Dunbar, Arizona, the other in his son’s head.”) Mickey is still a committed son of the ’60s, driving a motorcycle and playing rock ‘n’ roll in bars. And Teddy, well, he looks something quite like a reader of this magazine. An adjunct professor, he once thought about joining a monastery, but instead opted for teaching and editing a small publishing imprint called (wait for it...) Seven Storey Books.

“To Teddy,” Russo drily notes, “it seemed that almost as many people were writing books about faith as were reading them. Most of the submissions were dreck, but a few small gems were mixed in. No new Thomas Mer-ton, of course, but he hadn’t expected

there would be.”

It is said that reading fiction can make you more empathetic, more attuned to the world inside someone else’s head. Reading Russo, this seems especially true, and not just because he creates a rich inner life for his characters. I have read many novels about characters whom I know well but do not feel a great deal of sympathy for. Teddy, Mickey and Lincoln are full of flaws, but Russo does not judge them. In fact, it could be said that he loves them as much as they love each other. Why else spend so much time in their company?

“Mickey and Lincoln, the friends of his youth? He loved them too,” he writes of Teddy. “*Still. Anyway. In spite of.* Exactly how he himself had always hoped to be loved. The way everyone hopes to be.”

This sentiment could seem treacherous in a lesser writer’s hands, but Russo earns his moments of pathos. It helps that he is an extremely funny writer who knows that humor is the way men speak to each other, especially when they are facing moments of crisis. (It should be noted that there are also women in this novel, and not just the one who disappears. There is probably an unpublished dissertation floating around somewhere on “The Long-Suffering Women in the Novels of Richard Russo.”)

The title *Chances Are...* comes from a Johnny Mathis song, which Jacy, Teddy, Lincoln and Mickey sing together on the porch in Chilmark on their last, boozy night together. The significance of the choice does not become apparent until later in the story, when Russo has a chance to muse on free will and fate, what we can change

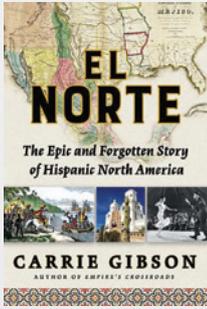
in life and what we cannot. “What made the contest between fate and free will so lopsided,” he writes, “was that human beings invariably mistook one for the other, hurling themselves furiously against that which is fixed and immutable while ignoring the very things over which they actually had some control.”

It is no coincidence that the narrative returns on more than one occasion to the room in the sorority house where they all watched the draft numbers announced. For their generation more than most, the fates exercised a strong hand.

The plot developments come at a quick pace. This is a book you can easily read in an afternoon or two in your beach chair. On one or two occasions, the plot veered a little too close to soap opera for my taste, but I am getting a little older and pickier about the kinds of things that I like. Richard Russo would understand.

Maurice Timothy Reidy is deputy editor in chief of *America*.
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El Norte
The Epic and
Forgotten Story
of Hispanic North
America
By Carrie Gibson
Atlantic Monthly
Press
576p \$30

An American story

Though he died long before the construction of any U.S. border wall, the poet Walt Whitman appears to have anticipated our current racism-infused immigration debate. For U.S. Latinos like myself, that debate can often appear as if our country is contesting the merits of our presence. But all the way back in 1883, Whitman wrote, “To that composite American identity of the future, Spanish character will supply some of the most needed parts.”

Whitman’s thoughts on those of us known as Latinos (or Hispanics—the terms are functionally similar, if not fully interchangeable) is one of many telling details that Carrie Gibson weaves together in her new work of history, *El Norte: The Epic and Forgotten Story of Hispanic North America*. Rejecting the implications of the label “minority,” Gibson instead tells the history of Latinos as equal protagonists in the American story.

Telling the entire 500-year history of Spanish-speaking peoples in what is now the United States in a single volume is rarely attempted, and Gibson is bold to do it. The book speeds through time and place at a breakneck pace, and so occasionally suffers from lack of depth. Events as pivotal to American Latino history

as the 1960s farmworker movement are given barely a page of analysis.

Nevertheless, including so many diverse periods, peoples and places in one book, and finding the sometimes faint thread of heritage and experience that unites them, is a great accomplishment. Mexicans, Cubans, Dominicans and Puerto Ricans alike will find themselves in this book, but will also learn something about the others.

The Hispanic history of North America is also inescapably a history of Catholicism. Many of the early portions of the book, including Gibson’s explorations of Spanish colonizers, are preoccupied with the often violent expansion of the church. Here is yet another reminder that there is dark history for the church to reckon with.

Ultimately, *El Norte* itself comes at a pivotal moment in Latino history. Naturally, the book addresses the fact that the sitting United States president ran on a message of explicit anti-Latino bigotry. The book falls short of answering the question I have been asking all my life: Why does American society seem to hate Latinos so much? It does, however, offer this glimmer of hope: Latinos have been through worse, and yet endured.

Antonio De Loera-Brust, a former O’Hare fellow at America Media, is a first-generation Mexican-American writer and filmmaker from Davis, Calif.



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Unjust
Social Justice and
the Unmaking of
America
By Noah Rothman
Gateway Editions
256p \$28.99

Activism gone wrong?

For many Catholics, social justice is an imperative of their faith. Advancing a social justice agenda is not just something that is in vogue, but a crucial part of church teaching. But there is another social justice—a secular one unmoored from the faith-based tenets that created the concept in the first place. In *Unjust: Social Justice and the Unmaking of America*, Noah Rothman surveys and attempts to deconstruct systematically the social justice movement that he believes has gone awry.

Indeed, most of *Unjust* is a thorough examination of the most egregious examples of the modern social justice movement as Rothman sees it. This examination essentially amounts to a list of activist trends, aggressions and failings. It is also the book’s biggest shortcoming, not because demonstrating absurdity is a bad thing, but because it is used to the detriment of a more insightful analysis of the philosophical underpinnings of the negative trends Rothman identifies.

Rothman states early in the book that “the mixing of identity consciousness with the precepts of social justice” has transformed “an ethos of equality and egalitarianism across lines of class, race, and sex... into a bitter ideology that resents

classically liberal policies.”

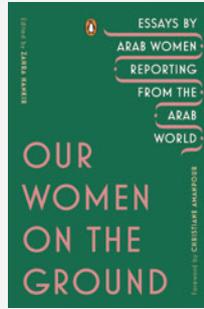
As Rothman sees it, social justice initially was a way for the Catholic Church to insert its ethics into the Enlightenment understanding of the “liberal and laissez-faire” way society should be ordered. Two Jesuits, Luigi Taparelli d’Azeglio and Matteo Liberatore (who helped draft Pope Leo XIII’s encyclical “Rerum Novarum” in 1891), laid the foundation for understanding social justice as “a moral theory of societal and economic development.”

But over the course of the mid-to-late 20th century, notions of social justice went very, very wrong. Rothman attributes their corruption to the rise of identity politics—which gained greater prominence after the 2016 presidential election—and “Identitarianism,” which he defines as “a set of values and beliefs based on the politics of personal identity.”

“Identitarians” on both the left and the right, Rothman argues, have consistently abandoned colorblind principles and have supplanted them with concerns central to their narrow identities. Rothman finds this leads to an emphasis on issues that divide, as well as the creation of a system that incentivizes claims of victimization to achieve preferred policy outcomes.

Ultimately, *Unjust* falls short of its mission. Its critical lens on the left and right is much needed, but the book fails to achieve the escape velocity needed to be as authoritative as it claims.

Dominic Lynch is a writer from Chicago; he publishes the website *The New Chicagoan*.



Our Women on the Ground

Essays by Arab Women Reporting from the Arab World

Edited by Zahra Hankir
Penguin Book
304p \$17

Telling their own stories

“Even in wartime,” writes the journalist Hannah Allam, women in Najaf, Iraq, wear *abayas*: “long billowy robes that leave only their faces, hands, and feet exposed.” After she repeatedly came under fire, Allam learned how to run in the expansive garment. “You use your left hand to hold the silky fabric under your chin to keep it in place and your right hand to hike up the bottom to free your feet. Then you run in a zigzag pattern to avoid giving a clear shot to the snipers.”

This is just one small snapshot of life in Iraq, provided by one of the 19 *safiyat*—or women journalists—in *Our Women on the Ground*. The Lebanese-British journalist Zahra Hankir has compiled a collection of illuminating essays by Arab women reporters who have worked in the Middle East and North Africa, with a foreword by Christiane Amanpour.

In her contribution to the anthology, Allam (currently a correspondent at NPR) describes how in 2004 she hid with women inside the Imam Ali shrine—a Shiite Muslim mosque in Najaf—during a siege that dragged on for weeks. When Allam escaped with her translator, two Iraqi women saved them and drove them to their hotel. “Every time Iraq began to unravel,” she writes, “it was

women who worked the hardest to stitch it back together.”

Earlier this year, The Daily Mail published an article that pushed a familiar and misleading picture of journalists in the Arab world. “EXCLUSIVE,” the tagline read. “Tinder sex with Muslim women, tequila and drugs until dawn: My real life as a Washington Post war correspondent—and how Jeff Bezos’ paper wouldn’t pay for me to deal with my PTSD.”

The piece glorified the trope of a self-destructive, James Bond-esque white male reporter bravely traipsing into the Middle East to cover conflict, all the while cavorting with local women who are—horror!—Muslims. The article also completely overlooked the trauma of the local people the featured journalist was covering.

The piece bothered readers like BuzzFeed’s global director of news curation, Sara Yasin, who wrote on Twitter: “There are loads of traumatized local reporters who talk about their experiencing [sic] without degrading anyone else.”

Our Women on the Ground is proof of that. Jane Arraf, a Palestinian-Canadian journalist at NPR who has previously worked at CNN and Al Jazeera, reflects on her time reporting on the Iraq war. She asks herself: Would it have been equally painful to watch the war unfold had she not been Arab? “I think the tragic miscalculations of the war would have been [equally painful to watch],” she decides. “But I might not have been as conscious of the depth of misunderstandings as worlds collided.”

Eloise Blondiau is a producer at *America*.



Shakespeare gets a sitcom

By Rob Weinert-Kendt

In "Upstart Crow," Will Shakespeare is an insecure if well-intentioned striver.

The popular film "Shakespeare in Love" was hardly the first or the last fictional imagining of the English writer. Indeed the Bard of Avon has appeared as a character in countless plays, films and novels since the 17th century.

It was only a matter of time, then, before he had his own sitcom. In "Upstart Crow," a delightfully cheeky BBC series comprising three short seasons (available in the United States through the on-demand service Britbox as well as from Amazon), Will Shakespeare is a mildly schlubby and insecure if well-intentioned striver. Played by the acerbic David Mitchell, this Shakespeare divides his time between a bustling family hearth in Stratford and a rooming house in London, from which he is building his playwriting career.

The show's title comes from an epithet hurled at Shakespeare in 1592 by a jealous poet, Robert Greene, in a pamphlet. A fictional Greene is on hand as the show's mustache-twirling villain to pound home the familiar theme of

Shakespeare's low birth and insufficiently fancy education. In a typical pithy putdown, he dismisses Shakespeare as "a country bum-snot, an oik of Avon, a town-school spotty-grotty."

"Upstart Crow" makes merry with this rivalry, spinning storylines out of class conflicts that often mimic the contours of the Bard's own plots. In one episode, a trio of witches foretells Shakespeare's good fortune in Stratford real estate, tempting him to murder a local landlord whose estate Shakespeare and his wife both covet. In another, Shakespeare happily receives an invitation to "saucy prancings at Lord Southampton's," only to have Greene, preying on his social anxiety, trick him into wearing ridiculous yellow stockings and cross garters to the event.

Even if such coy references (to "Macbeth" and "Twelfth Night," respectively) don't charm you, two other strengths recommend the show: sheer linguistic playfulness and art-

ful anachronism. On the first point, the writer Ben Elton conjures a consistently funny faux-Elizabethan argot, freely mixing contemporary idioms and archaic ornamentations ("He doth hate my gutlings," "I think I dodged a musket ball"), and swinging effortlessly from "wow" to "thou," from "Ain't no thing" to "Be this true?"

Likewise, the show's contemporary callouts range from obvious to inspired. The most recent season references Brexit and #MeToo, and Shakespeare's recurring rants about the indignities of coach travel echo present-day complaints about rail strikes and airline baggage fees.

"Upstart Crow" goes beyond pop-culture riffing to play, loosely but smartly, with the history and politics of the time. The first season has a running theme of Catholic/Protestant conflict, with Shakespeare's friend, Christopher Marlowe, unquestioningly hunting down "papist assassins" for the queen, while Shakespeare tries to keep his

mother's Catholic faith under wraps.

Some gags walk a line between sending up prejudices of the time and leaning on them a bit hard for laughs. The casual disparagement of Jews, though hardly unchallenged ("I'm being ironic and post-Renaissance," Shakespeare says in defense of "The Jew of Malta," a play he ends up giving to Marlowe), may grate on some viewers. And the treatment of sexism can be a bit relentless. How many times must we be reminded that Kate, Shakespeare's over-educated helpmate (expertly played by Gemma Whelan), aspires to be an actress in an age when, as Shakespeare puts it, "It is illegal for girls to do anything interesting"?

These are but trifling quibbles amid the embarrassment of riches that is "Upstart Crow." With its density and irreverence, its gleeful mix of below-the-belt crudity and snob appeal, its clearest antecedent is the anarchic meta-history series "Blackadder," which Elton co-created. But where that show was witheringly unsentimental about the secrets and lies of English history, "Upstart Crow" has a warm streak that is hardly amiss for the writer of great romances as well as frothsome comedies and bloody tragedies.

Each episode ends with Shakespeare and his wife, Anne, smoking pipes contentedly by the fire in Stratford-upon-Avon, as she offhandedly suggests story ideas we know he will take. If such winks and giggles are your cup of English tea, hie thee to "Upstart Crow."

Rob Weinert-Kendt, an arts journalist and editor of *American Theatre* magazine, has written for *The New York Times* and *Time Out New York*. He writes a blog called *The Wicked Stage*.

Bringing feminism to hip-hop

When Maysa Daw was a teenager, she remembers going to a concert by DAM, which calls itself the first-ever Palestinian hip-hop group, and asking herself: "Would I be able to sing with them someday?"

Now in her mid-20s, Ms. Daw has joined Tamer Nafar and Mahmood Jrere as a permanent member of DAM after several successful guest performances with them. Prior to joining the group, she established herself as a singer-songwriter in her hometown of Haifa, inspired by artists like Erykah Badu and Lauryn Hill.

The group has been going strong since the late '90s and first made a name for itself with anthems in Arabic like "Meen Irhabi?" ("Who's the terrorist?"), which led to a profile at the time in the French edition of *Rolling Stone*. This year marks a new chapter for DAM, which released its third studio album on June 7. Although the once all-male band has included Ms. Daw, its youngest and only female member, for several years, the album showcases her talent—and their feminism—in a new way.

On "Jasadik-Hom," Ms. Daw raps about how different layers of identity affect how you inhabit your body, in her case as an Arab, Palestinian woman living in Israel. "It took me time to

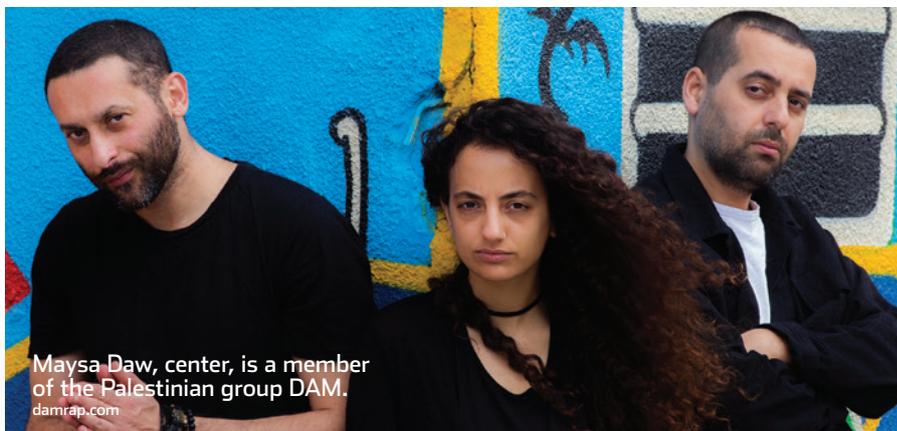
learn how to be in love with my body/
My feminine Arab body/
Standing in front of the mirror, I took off my glasses because they are masculine-made," she raps in Arabic.

She says the song was inspired by how Ta-Nehisi Coates talked about the experience of being black in the United States in *Between the World and Me*. The song appears to have struck a chord with young Palestinian women, many of whom posted Instagram stories of themselves chanting the lyrics together into their phones following the song's release on March 8, 2019, International Women's Day.

But Ms. Daw says DAM is determined to make songs that are fun as well as serious. On the latest album, Ms. Daw also takes the lead in "Emta Njawzak Yamma" ("When Will You Get Married?"), a catchy song in which DAM mocks the begging of their parents for them to settle down. Ms. Daw says the song was important because it was more lighthearted than their usual tracks.

"Yeah, every aspect of our life is connected somehow to politics," she said. "But that's not all we have or all we are."

Eloise Blondiau, producer.
Twitter: @Eloiseblondiau.



Maysa Daw, center, is a member of the Palestinian group DAM.
damrap.com

The Narrow Door

Readings: Is 66:18-21, Ps 117, Heb 12:5-13, Lk 13:22-30

In this week's Gospel reading, Luke struggles with a problem that vexed a number of New Testament authors: Why do only some people accept Jesus' message, while others treat it with indifference or hostility? Gospel narratives like the parable of the sower take up this question, as do a number of Paul's letters. Luke responds to the question with Jesus' parable of the narrow door: It is a struggle to follow Jesus, and relatively few will develop the faith and inner strength to do so.

Whereas in Matthew Jesus gives this teaching near the beginning of his ministry, Luke sets it nearer to the end, on the road to Jerusalem. For Jesus and his disciples, this is a journey of increasing faith in the Father's promises and obedience to the divine will, even in the face of hostility and rejection. For the disciples, every step of the journey required an increasingly conscious effort to follow Jesus into the unknown.

This is the narrow door. It was easy to follow Jesus, one suspects, when he was a popular preacher and healer in his native Galilee. It probably made intuitive sense to follow his example and teaching when people responded positively to it. When Jesus started to arouse hostility, however, his followers came to realize the struggle their discipleship would require. Superficial encounters with Jesus were not sufficient. It was a form of "false discipleship" merely to be a spectator, to eat and drink in his company and hear his teaching. True discipleship consisted in following Jesus' example. As Jesus traveled toward his fate in Jerusalem, this meant sharing his obedient faith, even when it started to look absurd.

As C. S. Lewis pointed out in his book *Mere Christianity*, false Christianities continue to tempt Christ's disciples today. Some worship the church instead of the God it exists to serve. Others attempt to co-opt Christ for political or social goals that have little to do with the Gospel. Still others follow when it is fashionable but fall away as religion goes out of style. To give but one example: Throughout its history, the United States has experienced several "great awakenings"

'Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I tell you, will attempt to enter but will not be strong enough.'
(Lk 13:24)



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

How have you striven to follow Christ?

How has your struggle to follow Christ advanced the salvation and freedom of another person?

that have packed its churches, but these tend to sputter out over time. (Some scholars suggest that we are living through the collapse of one of these awakenings even now.)

"Strive to enter through the narrow gate." Discipleship requires conscious effort. It is not enough to notice Jesus as he passes by; one must be willing to sacrifice everything to go where the teacher leads. The "narrow gate" is the Gospel—with its call to faith, to generosity, to forgiveness and to justice, especially for the poor. A disciple who endeavors to live according to this standard will not just arrive at God's feast but will be a herald through whom God will invite many more. Just as Jesus' struggle and obedience made it possible for his disciples to do the same, everyone who strives today to enter through the narrow door makes it a little easier for another to follow. Our faith and struggle continue Christ's work of salvation.

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

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Feast of Grace

Readings: Sir 3:17-29, Ps 68, Heb 12:18-24, Lk 14:1-14

Banquets served several functions in Jesus' day. At their most basic level, they were practical. In the era before refrigeration, perishable items could not be kept for long periods of time. Although ancient peoples came up with some ingenious solutions to the problem of food storage, they still had to consume much of what they grew fairly soon after harvest. One way to do so was to share it with neighbors and family through rituals of feasting. Weddings usually took place not long after the harvest in order to take advantage of the fresh food available at that time.

Banquets were also symbolic displays. They were foremost a demonstration of wealth. The ability to host a feast meant a family had access to land and labor, both of which revealed high economic status. Banquets were also displays of a family's social connections. Few houses had rooms set aside specifically for dining. Family meals took place in the open air, usually on the roof or in a front courtyard. Large feasts required the use of public areas of a village or town like streets or squares. One's guests would thus be visible

'Invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind; blessed indeed will you be because of their inability to repay you.'
(Lk 7:13-14)

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

What is your "wedding feast," that is, the gifts you have in such abundance that you are free to give them away?

How can you give these gifts to those who cannot repay you?

to everyone. Host families would give places of prominence to important guests not just to honor them but to show off the host family's own social connections. A place of prominence likewise reinforced the prestige of important guests like royal or military officials, religious leaders and people of wealth and privilege. For both guests and hosts, banquets were opportunities to see and be seen.

Reciprocity was expected. Relatives invited each other to family feasts, establishing and strengthening ties even among distant kin. Reciprocity also supported elite culture. A royal official invited to a family's wedding feast would, in turn, invite the hosts to a similar banquet or, even better, would secure the family an invitation to a royal event. Banquets thus played a vital role in supporting the status of those with even modest wealth and connections.

Jesus participated in this feasting culture, and one suspects that he was often one of the "important guests." Many Gospel narratives are about events at banquets or dinner parties; Jesus recognized their usefulness for his mission of evangelization. But because he knew the culture so well, he also recognized its troubling aspects. Feasts were opportunities for competition and strategic social and political maneuvering. Banquets could be occasions for generosity and for building ties of affection, but too often they became calculating performances for the pursuit of status.

In our era of refrigeration and industrial agriculture, banquets have fewer symbolic aspects. Disciples must seek opportunities to live out this Sunday's Gospel reading in other contexts. The spending of time might be one close analog. God gives each of us 1,440 minutes every day, and they are impossible to store up. A certain number are necessary to support our lives and families, but some are available to give away to others. Jesus' instruction is to spend them on those who cannot repay. Such a choice will determine our fate at the resurrection of the righteous.

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

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Restoring Public Trust

Why journalists should be trained in compassion

By Richard G. Jones



Tim Stenovec was a graduate student studying journalism in New York City. He had just started the police beat for a news blog produced in collaboration with *The New York Times* and, as part of his assignment, had access to a service that emailed breaking news alerts to reporters across the city.

One Monday, Tim received news that a man lay dying on a sidewalk. “*Fatal Stabbing*,” read the news alert on Tim’s cellphone. “East 8th Street & Ave D.”

“On my way,” read Tim’s text message to me, his editor, just a few minutes after the alert.

Within a few hours, Tim broke the news that police had identified the victim and were searching for his killer; and after about a week, he secured an exclusive interview with the victim’s sister.

Tim’s qualities can prove helpful for young journalists: his readiness when that first news alert landed in his inbox; his doggedness in working his still-developing police sources; and, perhaps most important, the compassion that he showed when interacting with the victim’s family.

Nearly a decade has passed since our work together, but Tim often comes to mind when I read about the erosion of public trust in mainstream media. In the years right after the Watergate scandal, upward of three-quarters of Americans indicated that they

had a high level of trust in the media; today, that number has dropped to about one-fifth.

As journalism educators and people in the industry chart a path toward restoring public trust in the media, it is worth taking a closer look at the role of compassion and empathy in journalism.

After nearly a decade at *The New York Times* and teaching stops at five universities, I am now a professor at the University of Notre Dame, where educating the mind as well as the heart is baked into just about everything we do in the classroom.

Working in collaboration with Victoria St. Martin—a former *Washington Post* journalist who is my teaching partner and my partner in life—Notre Dame’s journalism program has developed a course called *Covering America*. It is built around experiential learning and is designed to give students a sense of what it takes to cover large-scale national stories, often about traumatic events.

In March, the class embarked on a reporting trip to Puerto Rico. Students covered the island’s continuing recovery from Hurricane Maria. We visited the newsroom of *El Nuevo Día*, where journalists provided heroic coverage of Hurricane Maria. One journalist, the business reporter Joanisabel Gonzalez, told our students simply: “Stay human, stay human. You have to stay human to find the story.”

And as Pope Francis recently reminded journalists, finding those stories is vital.

“Informing others means forming others; it means being in touch with people’s lives,” the pope said last year on World Communications Day. The work of journalists, he said, “is, in every sense, not just a job; it is a mission.”

A way to refocus that mission is to find a renewed sense of compassion.

Ms. St. Martin, when talking with our students, often recalls a memorial that she covered for a boy who was struck and killed on his sixth birthday.

When she went to interview the boy’s relatives, several journalists were already there, afraid to approach the family. Ms. St. Martin walked right up to the family, offered her condolences and gave them a sense of her concern, and they shared their story.

We have to teach future journalists how to break down that wall, how to walk into rooms with compassion and how to see their faces reflected back at them in the faces of the people they interview. This, too, is our mission. This is how we promote goodness. This is how we generate trust.

Richard G. Jones is the Walter H. Annenberg-Edmund P. Joyce Director of the John W. Gallivan Program in Journalism, Ethics, and Democracy at the University of Notre Dame.

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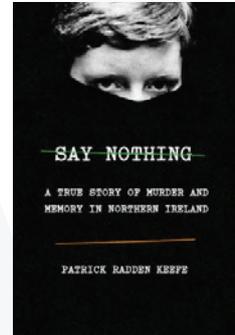
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