

America

THE JESUIT REVIEW OF FAITH AND CULTURE

Ministry and Millennials

Zac Davis

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an Ignatian Lens

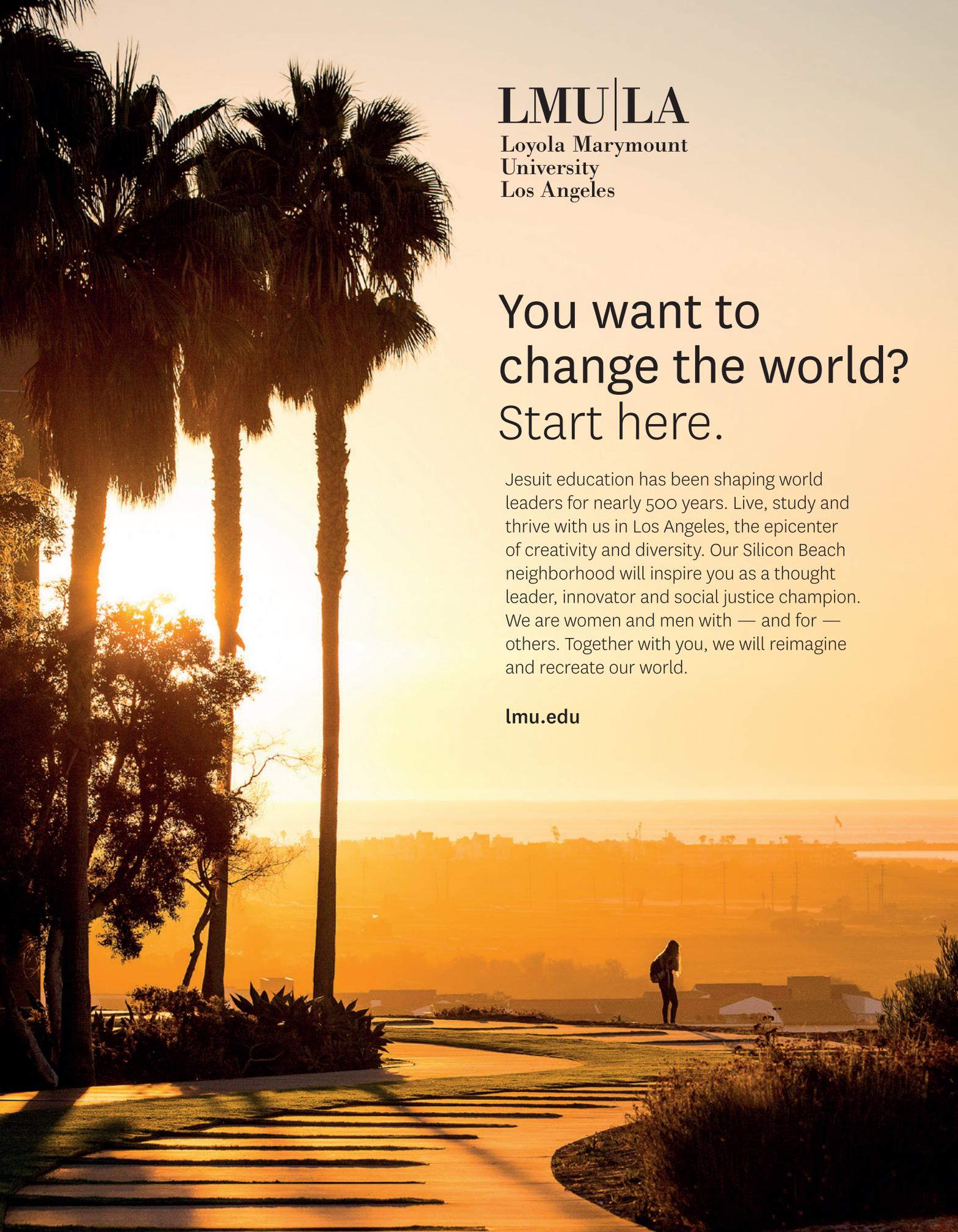
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In the Word of God We Trust

In the beginning, it was just a mostly abandoned warehouse just two blocks south of the U.S. Capitol. Over the last five years, its 430,000 square feet have been transformed into a six-story state-of-the-art museum—please pardon the cheap pun—of biblical proportions. The new Museum of the Bible, which opens on Nov. 17, will be the largest privately financed museum in Washington, D.C., with a collection and projected attendance that could rival those of its Smithsonian neighbors.

“We have no agenda,” the museum’s president, Cary Summers, told me during a recent tour of the new facility, “other than to help our visitors to appreciate the role that this unique book has played in the history of Western civilization and in the history of the United States.” In one sense, most Americans know that already. Eighty-four percent of Americans own at least one Bible and there are 2.2 Bibles for every American household. In fact, there are more Bibles in circulation today than at any time in the history of the world. Yet there is also more ignorance about the Bible than ever before, says Mr. Summers. “The goal of the museum is to help visitors to appreciate how these texts touch almost every aspect of our lives.” Yet the mission, he says, is to inform and inspire, not proselytize.

It is hard to imagine, however, how this place could not inspire visitors to investigate further the faiths that created this book. It’s a very impressive undertaking. The second, third and fourth floors are devoted to the impact of the Bible, the narratives of the Bible and the history of the Bible, respectively. Each exhibit is presented in a dazzling display of tech-

nology and scholarship, all designed to appeal to both the most and least informed among us. On the first floor, there is approximately 13,000 square feet reserved for temporary exhibitions, including what will be the largest-ever exhibition organized by the Vatican Museum outside of Rome.

What’s also clear is that the museum has the potential not only to educate and inform but also to inspire a revolution in how visitors experience museums. Mr. Summers and his team have invested a substantial sum in developing new technologies to enhance the visitor experience. Every visitor will receive a handheld personal device, for which the museum owns the patent and trademark, that will tailor a tour of the museum to the individual’s tastes and interests: You tell the device how much time you have to visit and what topics you are interested in; the device then instantly devises an itinerary for your stay, tracking your position by GPS to a point within four inches of where you are standing. It is like having a personal guide for every single visitor. And all that will be available free. The museum will not charge admission, though it will ask for a voluntary donation.

No undertaking of this size and scope, of course, is uncontroversial. The initial funding for the project was provided by the Green family, the owners of Hobby Lobby, who were recently embroiled in a controversy about archeological artifacts that were illegally (and unknowingly, according to the family) obtained from Iraq. Mr. Summers is keen to point out that none of the artifacts in question are included in the Green Collection at the museum, which itself constitutes only a small percentage of the items

in the museum’s possession. He also notes that while the museum is grateful for the Greens’ leadership gift, the museum is a distinct and independent entity, funded by donations from more than 55,000 people and institutions.

The museum has also received some criticism from academics who feel that the museum has been insufficiently scholarly in its approach. Yet it is hard to see how that is the case. Mr. Summers and his team have assembled more than 100 biblical, archeological and cultural scholars, who are working full time to tell the story of this book. It is an ecumenical and interreligious effort. One-third of the scholars are Protestant, says Mr. Summers, one-third are Catholic and one-third are Jewish. They include some of the most accomplished biblical scholars in the world, some of whom have written for **America**.

According to Mr. Summers, that unprecedented ecumenical and interreligious cooperation is the museum’s greatest accomplishment. “We have learned here that the major traditions that share the Bible can, in fact, work together,” he says. So even before the doors officially open next month, the place has made a difference. But when those doors open, how many will walk through them? While he has what he thinks are reliable predictions, “there’s more to measuring our success than the numbers,” Mr. Summers says. In other words, in the end, it’s a leap of faith.

—
Matt Malone, S.J.
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People on a rooftop wave Spanish flags during a march in downtown Barcelona, Spain, to protest the Catalan government's push for secession from the rest of Spain, Oct. 8.

AP Photo/Manu Fernandez
Cover: iStock/Composite

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Only those who understand true humility can walk with Christ

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Black and brown parishioners are transforming the Catholic Church

What type of gun control does the United States need?

Although respondents to **America's** survey had different priorities with regard to gun control, an overwhelming majority of 88 percent called gun control a pro-life issue. Fifty-two percent of respondents had either been harmed by gun violence firsthand or knew someone else who had been harmed by firearms. Mass shootings, suicide, crime, domestic violence and accidents were cited as sources of this harm.

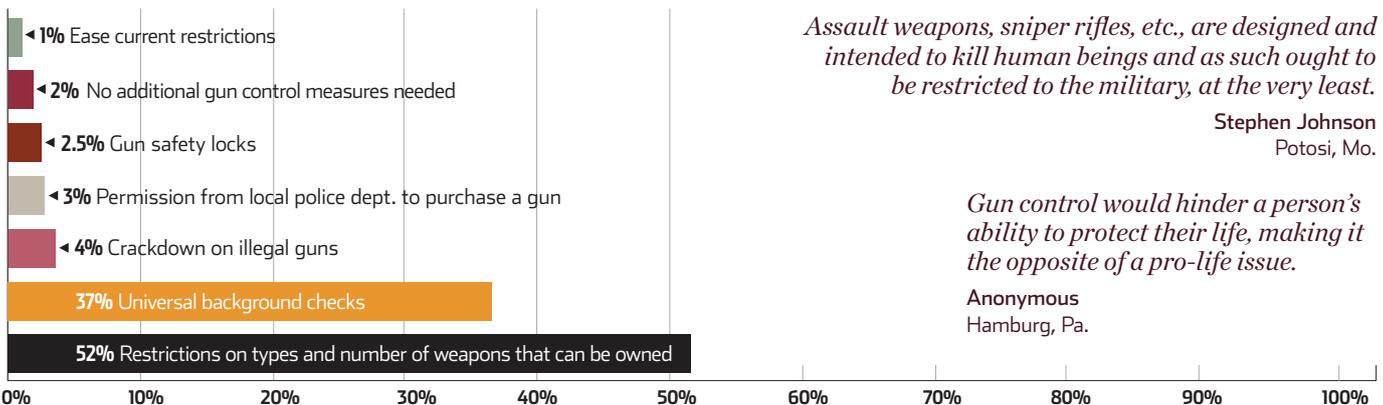
Over half of respondents (52 percent) told **America** that there should be restrictions on the types and number of guns that individuals are permitted to own and use. "I would like to see most if not all guns banned," said Brian Pinter of the Bronx, N.Y. "The Second Amendment was clearly relating to people who are members of a state militia. We ought to permit hunters to own rifles, but other guns should be banned."

These readers repeatedly questioned the necessity of

gun ownership for most Americans, particularly when these guns are assault weapons. "It is not necessary to have multiple weapons and the kind of weapons that can kill many people within minutes," said MaryLouise Chesley-Cora of Hockessin, Del. Jeanne Deren of Northville, Mich., echoed this point: "There is no need for anyone to own assault-style rifles or semi-automatic weapons. I support people owning guns for hunting and shooting sports."

Thirty-seven percent of readers thought that universal background checks should be the foremost priority in gun control enforcement and implementation. "If there are legitimate reasons that a person should not own a gun, then we need to screen for those whenever someone tries to buy a gun," explained Joseph Denicola of Lincoln, Neb. "It's just common sense," said Wendy Sierra of Round Rock, Tex.

WHICH ONE OF THESE GUN CONTROL MEASURES DO YOU THINK IS MOST IMPORTANT TO IMPLEMENT OR ENFORCE IN YOUR STATE OR THE UNITED STATES AS A WHOLE?



Assault weapons, sniper rifles, etc., are designed and intended to kill human beings and as such ought to be restricted to the military, at the very least.

Stephen Johnson
Potosi, Mo.

Gun control would hinder a person's ability to protect their life, making it the opposite of a pro-life issue.

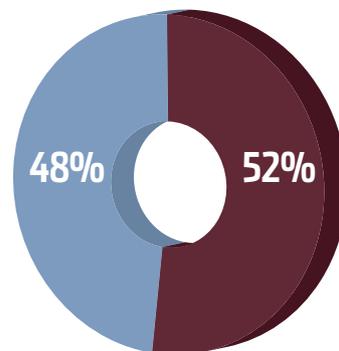
Anonymous
Hamburg, Pa.

I worry that gun control can become another tool to criminalize the poor. Until there are serious reforms that change the racial and class-based outcomes of our criminal justice system, it seems that further regulations are bound to bolster mass incarceration of the most vulnerable, not end it.

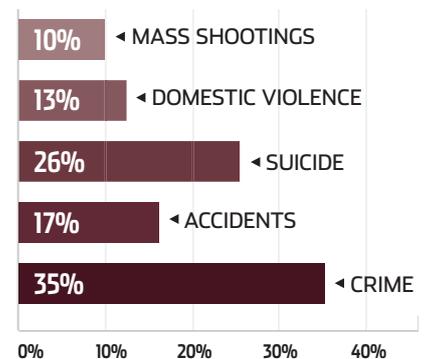
Anonymous
Durham, N.C.

HAVE YOU/SOMEONE YOU KNOW BEEN HARMED BY GUN VIOLENCE?

■ YES
■ NO



IF YES, WHAT TYPE OF GUN VIOLENCE HARMED YOU/SOMEONE YOU KNOW?



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

A Good Starting Place

Re “Appeal or Accusation? How We Use ‘Pro-Life’ and Why it Matters” (Our Take, 10/16): This editorial is a good starting place for a sensible discussion that could lead to real change in U.S. political practice. The realist in me says it will never happen, but the Spirit has worked in stranger settings. Too many politicians are pro-birth and not pro-life because the minute the child is born they wish to remove all possible help for the child by way of social programs. The church itself sends a mixed message.... This editorial calls for a consistent ethic, reminiscent of Cardinal Bernardin, which would give all of us pause as we enter the body politic with our faith at the ready. Well done.

Barry Fitzpatrick

Online Comment

Worse Than Nothing

Re “As Rohingya Crisis Worsens, Myanmar’s Cardinal Bo Calls for Healing and Justice,” by Gerard O’Connell (10/16): If [Myanmar’s leader] Aung San Suu Kyi were merely silent and inactive, those excuses would at least potentially make sense, but she is doing worse than nothing. She is actively complicit by denying the atrocities by the military and mobs and explaining away what the regime is doing as the victims’ fault. Sadly, it’s not unusual for ecclesiastical hierarchs to take the side of the secular authorities against the oppressed and contrary to the dogma of the preferential option for the poor.

Kester Ratcliff

Online Comment

Vocations of Love

Re “Blessed Among Women,” by Jennifer Ochstein (10/16): Equality should not be seen as in opposition to complementarity. In fact, the equality that is equated with some type of mathematical sameness only serves to elevate one particular vocation over another, one particular destiny over another. For example, why should it be assumed that working in a career for money is greater than working in a home? It all depends on perspective. Similarly, the role of priest and the role of mother or father are both best understood as vocations of love, with different callings and different gifts, all with equal dignity.

Tim O’Leary

Online Comment

Social Deadlocks

Re “A Farmer and a Prophet,” by Anna Keating (10/16): Thank you for your insightful and timely article on Wendell Berry. As the Rev. Andrew Greeley (and others) have pointed out, the Catholic imagination is not “either/or” but “both/and.” The “and” suggests that there is more available to choose from than just “this” or “that.” Your contrast between Berry’s approach (not his uniquely) and the drive for the homogeneity of big industrial capitalism and big totalistic statism invites us to contemplate alternatives for breaking the political and social deadlocks that are characteristic of our times. Beautifully done!

Randolph Lumpp

Online Comment

What is Right?

Re “Saint Black Elk?” by Damien Costello and Jon Sweeney (10/16): The spirituality of indigenous people everywhere is much closer to Christ than to Christianity. I suspect that the canonization of Black Elk would do more to lift Christianity than to lift the Lakota people, who are and have been alive in Christ since before the Catholic Church came along to convert anyone. In fact, it is we who need conversion to be Christ in humility.

I was happy to learn that Harney Peak was renamed Black Elk, for it was there he first observed the great hoop of the world. I climbed it in 2009 before my 60th birthday so I too could see what Black Elk saw. Sadly, I saw vast acres of browned pine waiting to go up in flames, a monoculture managed by paper interests. The footprint of colonialism remains overwhelming.

Janet Elizabeth Horton

Online Comment

Nice Touches

Re “‘Rosemary’s Baby’ and ‘The Exorcist,’” by Nick Ripatrzone (10/16): Not all Catholic representations in horror films rely on typically negative stereotypes. In “The Sixth Sense,” Haley Joel Osment’s character, Cole Sear, finds solace from his perplexing visions when he purposely visits his church, and when he is in possession of his small saint figures in a private space in his home. Those were nice touches in an engrossing, tense film.

Tom Cashman

Online Comment

Gun Suicides and Family Values

An epidemic of gun violence is tearing apart families in the United States every day. The horrific mass shooting in Las Vegas on Oct. 1 reminded us of this scourge upon our nation, and the editors of *America* have long held that the only permanent solution is the repeal of the Second Amendment (Am., 2/23/13). But the most significant consequence of unfettered gun ownership is not our shameful history of mass shootings: It is suicide.

Stephen Paddock killed 58 people in his Las Vegas attack. While the following comparison is in no way meant to diminish the enormity of that tragedy, on a typical day in the United States, the same number of people die from self-inflicted gunshot wounds, according to the Centers for Disease Control. To phrase that another way, the epidemic of gun suicide is killing Americans at the rate of one Las Vegas attack every single day.

More than 60 percent of the people who die from gun violence in the United States, in fact, die from suicide. The problem is not only access to firearms—one in three American households owns at least one gun—but that guns are a far more lethal weapon for inflicting self-harm than any other method. Researchers at the T. H. Chan

School of Public Health at Harvard University have found that most suicide attempts have a fatality rate below 5 percent; for attempts with a firearm, that number soars to an astonishing 85 percent.

Sadly, such statistics are not always readily available, because the Centers for Disease Control have been intimidated for two decades by gun-lobby proponents who have threatened to strip funding if C.D.C. research “advocates for” gun control. This lack of data leads to facile conclusions and the repetition of platitudes about gun violence rather than serious reflection, the most callous example being the post-Las Vegas statement by Senator John Kennedy (Republican of Louisiana): “I do not think that the United States Congress can legislate away evil.”

A suicide prevented is often more than only one life saved; it often is a whole family preserved. Americans of every political persuasion agree that the family is the primary building block of society, and in Catholic social teaching the family is understood to be the primary mechanism by which a just and well-ordered society functions. But what destroys a family more efficiently than the self-inflicted death of a father, a mother or a child?

If repeal of the Second Amendment is politically unattainable, can anything be done to reduce the unreasonably large number of guns in our homes? There are no quick fixes, but even incremental changes in law and practice can make a difference over time. Laws against drunk driving, for example, were minimally effective at reducing fatalities when first codified in the 1930s, in part because the initial standards for blood alcohol concentration (.15 percent) were fully twice what they are today (.08 percent). But incremental changes in the law, along with education programs, both of which helped establish strong social norms against drunk driving, eventually had long-lasting effects. Over the last 40 years, drunk driving fatalities have decreased by more than 50 percent.

This same incremental approach could work in fighting the gun suicide epidemic in our families. But a first step has to be taken. Las Vegas (and Sandy Hook before it) made it clear that the horror of mass shootings is not enough to convince legislators to take action. Can the ongoing deadly plague in our homes, putting our children and loved ones at daily risk, provide the impetus finally to change hearts and minds?

Don't Shortchange the Census

Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross is asking Congress for \$15.6 billion to fund the 2020 Census, an increase of \$3.3 billion compared with the last decennial count. In a misguided feint at fiscal responsibility, some Republicans want to avoid any increase at all, but this would disregard inflation, a larger population and new costs related to cybersecurity. That would be

a serious mistake.

The 2020 count will be used to redraw congressional and other legislative districts so that, at least in theory, they have equal populations. The Census will also be used to distribute funding for many federal programs, from highway projects to Medicaid. And it will track migration and access to housing, which means it will help

measure the success of recovery efforts in areas recently hit by natural disasters, including parts of Florida and Texas and the entire island of Puerto Rico.

The Census, in other words, identifies problems, and it helps to hold the government accountable for solving those problems. It must be done right.

The Reformation at 500

According to popular legend, on Oct. 31, 1517, Martin Luther nailed his famous 95 theses to the door of the castle church in Wittenberg, Germany, thereby inaugurating the Protestant Reformation. Historians now tell us that it is unlikely that Luther literally walked with nail, hammer and parchment to the castle; the actual causes of the Reformation are as numerous as they are complex. Nevertheless, this month marks the start of a yearlong commemoration of that first protest five centuries ago and the momentous events that followed. Mindful of the anniversary, Pope Francis traveled to Sweden last year to participate in an ecumenical prayer service with representatives of the Lutheran World Federation. “As Catholics and Lutherans, we have undertaken a common journey of reconciliation,” he said. “We have the opportunity to mend a critical moment of our history by moving beyond the controversies and disagreements that have often prevented us from understanding one another.”

Closer to home, last month **America** was honored to co-host a series of symposia and prayer services with Concordia College, a New York-area school in the Lutheran tradition, that focused on the anniversary and the future of ecumenical dialogue. For much of the 108-year history of this review, such a thing would have been unimaginable. **America** in those decades was a frequent target of anti-Catholic attacks and polemics. Yet the editors of **America** gave as gave as they got. For what we and our forebears have done and failed to do, we ask for forgiveness, as we rededicate ourselves to praying and laboring for that day when the Lord’s desire that “they may all be one” will at last be fulfilled.

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The atheist's case against abortion: respect for human rights

I am an atheist, a 29-year-old woman, well-educated at secular institutions, and I lean liberal on many issues, including same-sex marriage and climate change.

I am also a dedicated pro-life activist, working to make abortion unthinkable.

The abortion industry would have you believe that people like me do not exist. They would have you believe that the pro-life movement is almost exclusively old white men, with a few pearl-clutching church ladies thrown in. This characterization is insulting to both young and old. The older pro-life leaders of today are the pioneering young adult activists of the 1970s, who courageously dissented from *Roe v. Wade*. And they have recruited new generations of pro-lifers to follow in their footsteps; millennials in the movement call ourselves the “pro-life generation.”

There are important differences between the millennial generation and those that came before. One of the biggest is religion. The well-reported decline in church attendance is driven largely by young adults. Over a third of millennials tell pollsters they have no religious affiliation, compared with 23 percent for Generation X and 17 percent for baby boomers. And even among millennials who have maintained a religious affiliation, many favor same-sex marriage and show less appetite for the “culture war” than their elders do.

Yet this more secular generation still shows up to save preborn children and their mothers from the tragedy of abortion. This puzzles some abortion supporters, who had assumed they would benefit from demographic

changes. The key to understanding this discrepancy is to realize that it is not a discrepancy at all: We see abortion not as a culture war issue or as a religious issue but as a human rights issue.

It is not enough to understand “*Humanae Vitae*” (indeed, lecturing an atheist on the finer points of Catholic dogma is surely counterproductive). To work with pro-life young people and to change the minds of pro-choice millennials you must be able to articulate the human rights case against abortion. The pro-life pioneer Dr. Mildred Jefferson said it best: “I am not willing to stand aside and allow this concept of expendable human lives to turn this great land of ours into just another exclusive reservation where only the perfect, the privileged, and the planned have the right to live.” That’s a sentiment that anyone, from any religious or nonreligious background, can get behind.

Most secular pro-choice people are well-meaning and affirm a commitment to human rights. Most are horrified by ableism—but close their eyes to the often lethal consequences of prenatal genetic testing. Abortion advocates would never murder a defenseless sleeping or comatose person—yet they argue that because children in the womb lack consciousness, killing them is permissible.

Pointing out these contradictions is a delicate business. Many young pro-choicers have been exposed to years of ad hominem propaganda. They have been taught that pro-lifers are hypocrites who do not care about children after they are born. They have

been taught that we hate women. They may be close to someone who has had an abortion—or even had an abortion themselves—and believe that becoming pro-life will require them to issue fire-and-brimstone condemnations of post-abortive women.

The best antidote to these fears is not argument but action. Examine your own life and ensure that your priorities reflect concern for human life at all its stages. Befriend pro-choice people and let them see what being pro-life really means on the ground. Do not expect they have learned this from the mainstream media.

When the time for discussing the issue comes, be gentle and ask questions. The Socratic method, allowing people to discover internal contradictions for themselves, usually works best. For more on this technique, I highly recommend the Equal Rights Institute website.

When we survey the lives destroyed by abortion over the past five decades, it is easy to become overwhelmed and discouraged. But we are making real progress. This is an incredibly exciting time to be pro-life. If we work together—secular and religious, young and old, from every race and gender—I firmly believe we can end abortion in my lifetime.

Kelsey Hazzard is the president of Secular Pro-Life, which brings together people of every faith and no faith in defense of preborn children. She practices law in Florida.



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How does Trump's tax plan line up with Catholic social teaching?

Criticism has trailed the recent White House proposal for cuts in corporate and personal income tax rates, but few assessments have been as direct as that of Fred Kammer, S.J. “The whole thing is basically—what can I call it?—a scam to pay back wealthy donors with more tax breaks,” he said. The plan has been promoted by the White House as a reform meant to simplify the tax code and lower the burden on working and middle-class taxpayers.

Father Kammer is convinced the measures proposed by the president will not achieve the advertised outcome. Analysts at the Tax Policy Center, a joint project of the Brookings Institution and the Urban Institute, agree, refusing even to describe the Trump plan as a tax reform, but just as a new round of tax breaks. Referring to the center's analysis, Father Kammer pointed out that the lion's share of the tax relief offered by the plan will be consumed by the nation's top 1 percent—the same people who have already enjoyed previous and substantial rounds of tax reductions under the Reagan and George W. Bush administrations.

According to Catholic social tradition, paying taxes, like voting and other forms of civic participation, is part of the way Catholic citizens contribute to the common good. Father Kammer said the clearest statement of Catholic thought on a morally sound tax system can be found in the U.S. bishops' pastoral letter “Economic Justice for All,” published in 1986.

The bishops urged then that the tax system “should be continually evaluated in terms of its impact on the poor” and should be based on three criteria: those below the poverty line should pay no taxes at all; the system should raise revenue adequate to pay for the public needs of society, especially to meet the basic needs of the poor; and, with an eye on reducing inequalities of income and wealth in the nation, the system should be structured according to the principle of progressivity, so that those with relatively greater financial resources pay a higher rate of taxation. Though many details still remain to be ironed out, the president's proposed

framework for “fixing our broken tax code” does not appear to satisfy the bishops' requirements for a morally defensible system.

“In an era of rising populism, the [proposed] tax framework is a major tax cut for businesses and the very highest-income Americans and only a small tax cut for middle-income households,” an analyst for the Tax Policy Center reported.

The framework proposed by the Trump administration is “sure not for the well-being of the country,” Father Kammer said, and “certainly not to help working families and poor families.”

The Trump plan cuts the corporate tax rate to 20 percent from 35 percent and eliminates the estate tax. It significantly rearranges the individual income tax rate structure, reducing top bracket percentages and the number of income brackets from seven to three: 12, 25 and 35 percent. The plan nearly doubles the standard deduction, to \$12,000 for individuals and \$24,000 for joint filers, but ends personal exemptions. It simplifies tax filing by eliminating individual deductions and various loopholes primarily used by higher-income taxpayers, and it includes an increase in the child tax credit.

Under President Trump's current proposal, in 2018 middle-income earners can expect a break of about \$660 annually—1.2 percent of their after-tax income, according to the Tax Policy Center. “By contrast,” the center reports, “it would boost the after-tax incomes of the highest-income 1 percent by an average of \$130,000, or more than 8 percent. The top 0.1 percent would get an average boost in after-tax income of \$720,000 or 10.2 percent of their after-tax income.”

According to the center, the nation's top 1 percent (those making \$730,000 or more) would receive 50 percent of all the plan's tax cuts while middle-income households (those making between \$50,000 and \$90,000) would get about 8 percent of the total benefit.

The Tax Policy Center reports that the Trump admin-



President Donald Trump talks tax reform at the Harrisburg International Airport on Oct. 11 in Middletown, Pa.

istration proposal would reduce federal tax revenue by as much as \$2.4 trillion over the next 10 years. Father Kammer worries about what that shortfall would mean to the second of the bishops' criteria for a just system. Will government have the resources necessary to ensure the common good? Or will revenue gaps mean deeper cuts in social spending that will harm society's most vulnerable members?

Father Kammer wryly noted that former budget hawks in the Republican Party have abruptly gone silent now that a Republican president is proposing revenue-threatening tax breaks. The Trump administration argues that its tax cuts will spur enough economic growth to avoid any projected revenue losses, a conservative *idée fixe* that even Bruce Bartlett, co-author of the 1986 Reagan tax plan, acknowledges is difficult to justify against the historical record.

Vincent Miller, holder of the Gudorf Chair in Catholic Theology and Culture at the University of Dayton, in Ohio, is concerned the president's plan will exacerbate inequities in the tax system while laying the foundation for a kind of

intergenerational injustice, forcing greater deficit spending now and passing the tab to future generations.

In an email, Mr. Miller wrote: "Wave after wave of tax cuts since the 1980s have disproportionately benefited the wealthy far beyond the amount of taxes they pay, while offering token cuts to lower brackets.

"The result has been a systematic shifting of the tax burden downward, and through deficit spending forward onto our children. These policies have contributed directly to the explosion of income inequality during the same period."

He said, "The tax cut being proposed now continues that practice," adding, "It is hard to read this proposal as a serious attempt to fund the government to serve the common good."

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

Ashes to ashes

On Nov. 1 and Nov. 2 Catholics celebrate first All Saints Day and then All Souls Day, remembering saints of the church triumphant and loved ones who have passed on. Not too long ago it was a good bet that the passing of most of those friends, spouses and family members was celebrated with a funeral liturgy and a traditional Catholic burial, but the once-prohibited practice of cremation has been gaining ground, so to speak, in recent years. In 1980 just 10 percent of the deceased were cremated, but by 2015 and 2016, cremations for the first time outnumbered burials in the United States, at 49 percent and 50.2 percent.

Though the church “earnestly recommends that the pious custom of burial be retained,” the cremation of remains has been permitted since 1963. Now Catholics are follow-

ing the general public in a broader acceptance of the practice. The church requires that cremation take place after the full funeral rites have been observed and prefers that a body be present for it, but since 1997, it has also allowed ashes to be present during the funeral liturgy. Cost appears to be the driving factor in the accelerating shift: On average, a burial can cost anywhere from \$7,000 to \$10,000 while a cremation with a service can be had for as little as \$3,250.

The church directs that cremated remains should be kept in sacred spaces and not scattered or kept in urns at home. In July the Archdiocese of Chicago opened its first “cremation garden,” where cremated remains can be interred.

—
Joseph McAuley, *assistant editor.*

CREMATIONS ON THE RISE AS BURIALS DECLINE

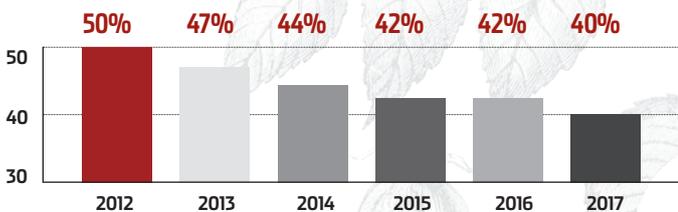
48% OF U.S. GENERAL PUBLIC WANT TO BE CREMATED

42% WANT TO BE BURIED

67% OF AMERICANS WITHOUT RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION PREFER CREMATION

50.2% IN 2016 AND 49% IN 2015 THE FIRST YEARS CREMATIONS IN U.S. EXCEEDED BURIALS, UP FROM 27% IN 2001, 10% IN 1980 AND 5% IN 1970. BY 2035 CREMATIONS ARE EXPECTED TO REACH 79%.

PERCENT WHO FEEL A RELIGIOUS COMPONENT IN THE FUNERAL OF A LOVED ONE IS VERY IMPORTANT



COST FACTOR

TRADITIONAL BURIAL	\$7,000 TO \$10,000
CREMATION	\$1,650 TO \$3,250
ECO-FRIENDLY	\$390

STATES WITH THE HIGHEST CREMATION RATES

WASHINGTON	76.4%	HAWAII	72.7%
NEVADA	75.6%	MAINE	72.4%
OREGON	74.3%		

STATES WITH THE LOWEST

MISSISSIPPI	20.9%	LOUISIANA	29.7%
ALABAMA	25.7%	TENNESSEE	31.3%
KENTUCKY	27.3%		

DEATH CARE IN AMERICA

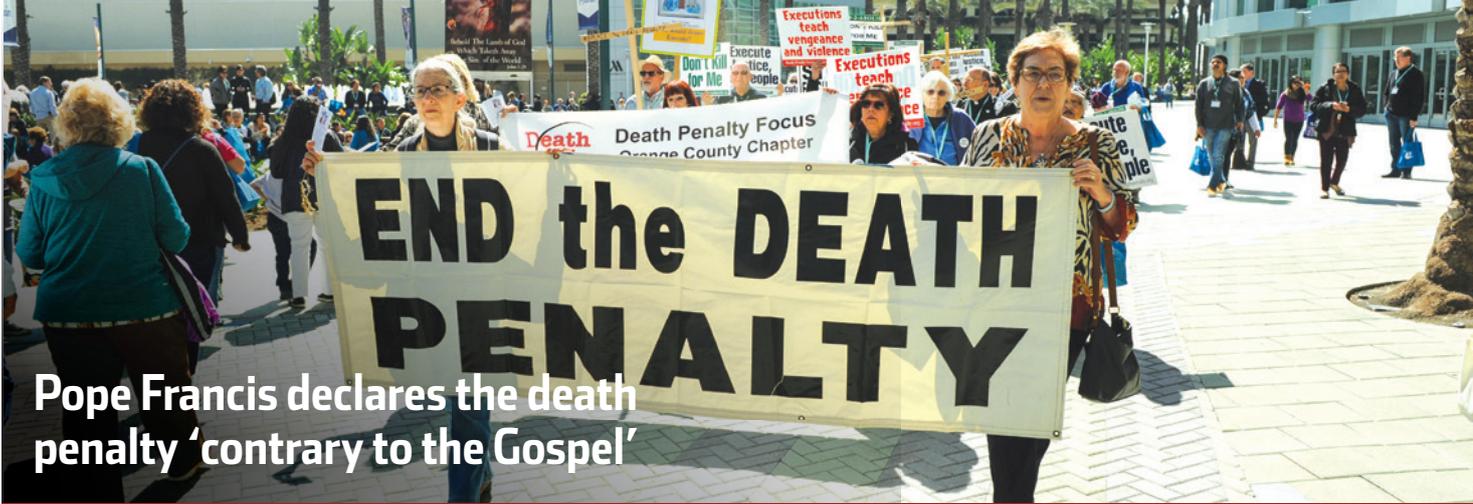
\$17 BILLION-A-YEAR BUSINESS, EMPLOYING 130,000

CREMATION RATES AROUND THE WORLD

JAPAN	99.9%	UNITED KINGDOM	74%
HONG KONG	90%	NETHERLANDS	58%
SINGAPORE	80%	RUSSIA/CHINA	50%

71% THE CURRENT CREMATION RATE IN CANADA. PROJECTED TO REACH 91% BY 2035.

Sources: The 2017 NFDA Cremation and Burial Report from the National Funeral Directors Association; the Cremation Association of North America; CBS News Poll: “Thinking About Death and Mortality,” April 16-20, 2014; NBC News.



Pope Francis declares the death penalty 'contrary to the Gospel'

Advocates for the abolition of capital punishment in the United States were cheered by Pope Francis' instruction on Oct. 11 against the continued use of the death penalty as "contrary to the Gospel."

"We absolutely welcome the pope's strong statement on this issue; we welcome the moral clarity and the leadership he is showing," said Diann Rust-Tierney, the executive director of the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty.

During ceremonies at the Vatican commemorating the 25th anniversary of the promulgation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Pope Francis reiterated and expanded on the church's rejection of capital punishment, describing it as "inadmissible," no matter how grave the crime committed, "because it attacks the inviolability and the dignity of the person."

"The death penalty is an inhumane measure that humiliates," Pope Francis said, "in any way it is pursued, human dignity," adding, "It is, of itself, contrary to the Gospel because it is freely decided to suppress a human life that is always sacred."

"In the final analysis," Pope Francis said, "God alone is the true judge and guarantor."

Though he personally believed that the church had already been clear in its rejection of capital punishment, "there were some," said Archbishop Emeritus Joseph Fiorenza, "who thought there was some wiggle room about it" because of the wording of the catechism. Archbishop Fiorenza is a former president of the U.S. bishops' conference and former leader of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston. He has long advocated the abolition of the death penalty in the United States.

"I think the pope has now put that to rest," Archbishop Fiorenza said. "This is Pope Francis' magisterial teaching on this issue and as the faithful we have the responsibility to accept what the pope says."

"I am grateful [Pope Francis] brought up the issue of the death penalty, especially in the context of the catechism," said Bishop Daniel Flores, of Brownsville, Tex. That suggests, he said, that "there is going to be some kind of reconsideration

of the language" on capital punishment in the catechism.

Bishop Flores is the episcopal advisor for the Catholic Mobilizing Network, which works closely with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops to raise awareness about capital punishment and lobby against its use.

The pope's instruction, Bishop Flores said, makes his job of persuading American Catholics against the use of the death penalty a little easier. "This puts it back on the table, and we are all going to have to be thinking about it."

The specific wording in the catechism on capital punishment has changed as the church took a more restrictive view of the moral acceptability of its use. According to the catechism, the use of the death penalty is permissible when the responsibility of the condemned is certain and if it is "the only possible way of effectively defending human lives against the unjust aggressor." After St. John Paul II's encyclical letter "The Gospel of Life" in 1995, the catechism was amended in 1997 to specify that such a condition appeared rare, "if not practically non-existent."

The pope's new instruction "just closes the loophole," Karen Clifton, the executive director of the Catholic Mobilizing Network, said. "This is against the Gospel; he makes it very clear, and it makes our pro-life teaching consistent."

Some critics of the pope complain that this latest revision suggests an alteration of irreformable doctrine. Ms. Clifton does not see it that way. "The church's teaching," she said, "hasn't changed because it has always been pro-life—from conception to natural death—and the death penalty is not a natural death."

"It is a homicide, and that is how it is listed on the death certificate."

The church has taught that the response to a grave harm must be retributive, "but it also has to be restorative," said Ms. Clifton. "The death penalty is not restorative." In fact, it negates the potential of restoration, Ms. Clifton said, a process that can only happen in God's time.

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



DACA countdown begins

Can Congress act in time to help nation's 'dreamers'?

Congress has until March 5 to pass legislation to help young immigrants who are currently shielded from deportation by the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program. What any new authorizing legislation will look like—and whether it will come to a vote at all—is still anyone's guess.

But President Trump's decision to rescind DACA, a program created by an Obama administration executive order and criticized as a constitutional overreach, seems to have galvanized efforts to pass the long moribund Dream Act. That legislation would formalize the status of so-called Dreamers, teens and young adults who were brought into the United States as children without documentation by their parents.

"Things are extremely fluid," said Ashley Feasley, director of migration policy and public affairs at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. "We still at this moment don't have a deal, and it remains vital that we continue to push for the Dream Act.

"We know that [beginning] on March 5, every day after that, 1,400 Dreamers will lose their work authorization," she said, noting that Congress has been trying to deal with the issue for years. Back in 2001, Senator Orrin Hatch proposed the first version of the Dream Act. It was reintroduced in 2010 and again earlier this year.

"The president may have in some ways done the

Dreamers a favor because he set a deadline," said Kevin Appleby, senior director of international migration policy for the Center for Migration Studies of New York. "Congress doesn't work very well unless they have a deadline staring them in the face. That puts pressure on them to act." He believes that within the various proposals for Dreamers before Congress, "the contours for an agreement exist."

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, of New York, and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, of California, both Democrats, reported having a productive meeting with Mr. Trump on legislation protecting Dreamers on Sept. 12, according to Ms. Pelosi. On Sept. 25, Republican senators proposed a new bill, the Succeed Act, that provides a way for Dreamers to legalize their status, though it would not allow them to sponsor family members for entry into the United States.

"The gaps can be bridged.... They can come up with a fair piece of legislation," Mr. Appleby said. "The American public overwhelmingly supports Dreamers in polls. I think they can get something done; it's just that as usual, the devil is in the details."

While Washington debated Dreamer legislation, the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and Catholic Charities of Los Angeles started a series of DACA renewal workshops in September, with immigration experts on hand to help fill



Immigration activists and young people enrolled in the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program take part in a rally on Sept. 12 in Washington to urge Congress to pass the Dream Act.

CNS photo/Joshua Roberts, Reuters

Pope Francis commits church to protecting children in the 'digital world'



Pope Francis greets family members during an audience with participants in an international congress on protecting children in a digital world, at the Vatican on Oct. 6.

Pope Francis committed the Catholic Church to work “effectively and with genuine passion,” in close association with lawmakers, police authorities, technological giants in the field of social communications and other actors in civil society, for “the effective protection of the dignity of minors in the digital world.”

He offered this commitment in a closing address to the first world congress on “Child Dignity in the Digital World” that was held at the Jesuit-run Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome from Oct. 3 to Oct. 6. As he made that commitment, Pope Francis recalled that “the church has come to acknowledge her own failures in providing for the protection of children” and “extremely grave facts have come to light, for which we have to accept our responsibility before God, before the victims and before public opinion.”

Pope Francis said this “digital world” is “the fruit of extraordinary achievements of science and technology” that in a few decades “has changed the way we live and communicate,” and “even now, it is in some sense changing our very way of thinking and of being.”

As we look “with real wonder and admiration at the new and impressive horizons opening up” and “the new and unforeseen problems it sets before us, and the negative consequences it entails,” the pope said, we are confronted with “the great existential question facing humanity today”: Are we capable of guiding the processes we have set in motion and might be escaping our grasp?

Gerard O’Connell, *Vatican correspondent*. *Twitter*: @gerryrome.

out paperwork. Some DACA recipients faced a deadline of Oct. 5 to renew their work authorization.

“Most people are a little confused about whether they qualify,” said Isaac Cuevas, associate director of immigration affairs for the archdiocese. “A lot of people are apprehensive. But people also feel that if anyone deserves this, it’s these people,” he said. “People who came here at that age are part of the fabric of this country: entrepreneurs and go-getters, the epitome of what immigrants are and what the American dream can be.”

Mr. Cuevas, who was born in the Mexican city of Querétaro, said he, like the Dreamers, saw what his parents gave up to come to the United States. “Seeing [your parents’] struggle forces you not to take what we have here for granted,” he said. “They’re hopeful. They’re also not going to sit back and just wait for something to happen. They’re active. They have a strong, resilient voice.”

Immigrant advocates will need to keep it up, according to Ms. Feasley. “Keep the pressure on Congress,” she said. “Congress has been unable to get this done. Now they must.”

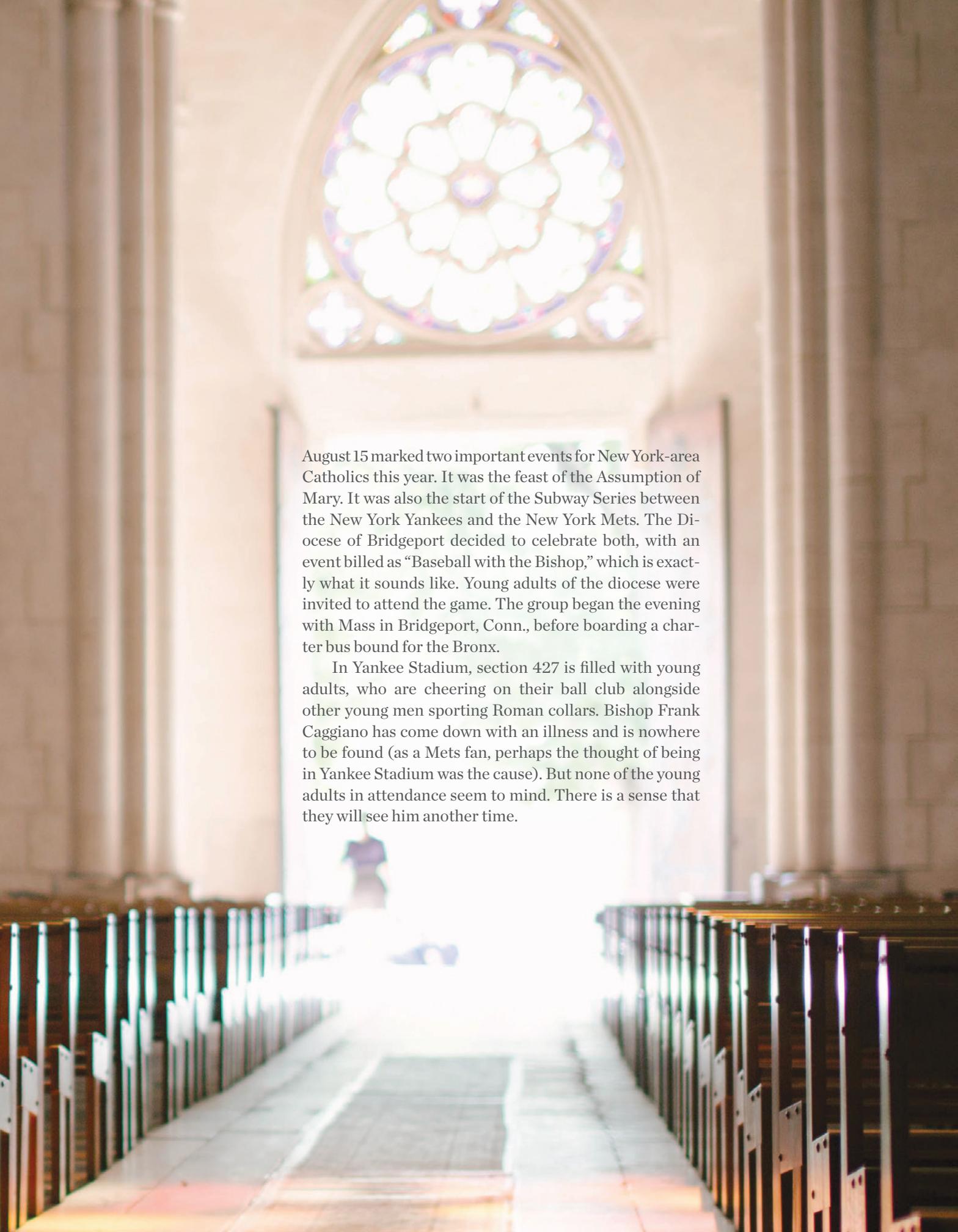
J. D. Long-García, *senior editor*. *Twitter*: @jdlongarcia.

MINISTRY AND MILLENNIALS

*Can the Catholic Church keep
young people from passing it by?*

By Zac Davis





August 15 marked two important events for New York-area Catholics this year. It was the feast of the Assumption of Mary. It was also the start of the Subway Series between the New York Yankees and the New York Mets. The Diocese of Bridgeport decided to celebrate both, with an event billed as “Baseball with the Bishop,” which is exactly what it sounds like. Young adults of the diocese were invited to attend the game. The group began the evening with Mass in Bridgeport, Conn., before boarding a charter bus bound for the Bronx.

In Yankee Stadium, section 427 is filled with young adults, who are cheering on their ball club alongside other young men sporting Roman collars. Bishop Frank Caggiano has come down with an illness and is nowhere to be found (as a Mets fan, perhaps the thought of being in Yankee Stadium was the cause). But none of the young adults in attendance seem to mind. There is a sense that they will see him another time.

St. John Paul II announced the first World Youth Day in 1983, and since that time, the event has attracted millions of young people to gather at locations around the globe, most recently in Kraków, Poland, in 2016.



Photo: CNS photo/Paul Haring

In the top of the ninth, the Yankees have a one-run lead and one out to go, but John Grosso's focus is divided between the game and telling me how much he loves working for his boss—Bishop Caggiano. “Working with him is an absolute joy. He loves the church, and he loves young people—and he’s so good with young people because he’s a real person,” Grosso says. Grosso is the director of social media for the Diocese of Bridgeport. As a 20-something himself, his perspective is helpful for determining what style of ministry might be useful for young people. As we talk, his eyes dart back and forth between me and the batter’s box. “Our goal is to make ourselves a little bit vulnerable, by putting ourselves out there in situations where you wouldn’t expect to see the church.” Like at a Major League Baseball game.

This type of outreach can be effective: Tanya Adler, 20, came to the game in response to an invitation. She motions toward her friends, Rich and John Kelly. “Yeah, we’re baseball fans, and we heard this announced after Mass and thought it would be cool to come out and meet the bishop.” The Kellys are brothers; one is a graduate of Fairfield Prep and the other is beginning his senior year there. Adler was raised Protestant, but she attended Catholic schools and goes to Mass occasionally with the Kelly family. Though she is not Catholic, she feels a pull to be more involved in church. “I’m not as active as I should be in a parish,” Ms. Adler said. “But it’s a work in progress. I’ll get there.”

At 24, I am well within the demographics that are of interest to John Grosso and his team, and I certainly understand what it means to be a spiritual work in progress. I go to Mass (most) weekends, try my best to pray during the week and have a small faith-sharing community in my parish that sustains me. But I wonder if I am a success story. I have spent plenty of time parish shopping—it took me a while to find a sacramental home. I have been the youngest person in the pews too many times. I can no longer count the number of churches I have walked in and out of without anyone saying hello and asking what my name was, or if I was new.

It would have been really easy for me not to search as long as I did for a solid community, to become yet another story of “I was raised Catholic, but...” I would like to think that it was a powerful conversion experience that I had as a teenager in youth group, where I felt with the conviction of Paul that I was loved unconditionally by God, that pushed me to find a faith community. On my more cynical days, I think I would have quit this a long time ago if my profession

as an editor in Catholic media did not keep me engaged in my faith on a day-to-day basis.

Some of my colleagues hope that many of those young people who have been raised Catholic but have fallen away from the church will return when it is time to get married. I am not so sure. According to the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, in 1990 there were 10 million people who referred to themselves as “former Catholics.” Last year, that number was more than 30 million. As for returning when it is time to get married? Well, those numbers do not look great either. There were 326,079 wed-



dings in the church in 1990. In 2016, the number fell to just 145,916.

The Vatican is also concerned. Pope Francis has announced that next year's general assembly of the Synod of Bishops will focus on the topic "Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment." Young people ages 16 to 29 have been invited to participate in an online survey in preparation for the bishops' meeting in October 2018. More recently, Pope Francis has called for a pre-synod meeting of young people, to be held March 19 to 24, 2018, to hear first hand their hopes and concerns.

This is the latest effort, but not the first, that the institutional church has made to encourage participation among young people. St. John Paul II announced the first World Youth Day in 1983, and since that time, the event has attracted millions of young people to gather at locations around the globe. Yet, despite the success of such events, parishes, high schools and colleges still struggle to successfully reach a wider swath of individuals from this demographic. Many church ministers are working to re-examine the church's relationship to youth and young adults. There is a reason that Pope Francis called this synod now.



Bishop Frank Caggiano of Bridgeport, Conn., is passionate about ministry to young Catholics. He often gives talks on the topic and was a speaker at World Youth Day in Kraków, Poland.

CNS photo/Bob Roller

Forming Faithful Leaders

It is April, and in the shadow of the Shrine of St. John Paul II in Washington, D.C., lay ministers from across the United States, all committed to working with young people, gather to discuss how best to serve a new generation of Catholics. They are here as participants in the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry's National Diocesan Directors Institute. The institute sponsors any new diocesan director of youth and/or young adult ministry to come to Washington for a week of training and fellowship.

Tomorrow they will don business attire for their visit to the offices of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, but tonight many wear a more laid-back look—graphic tees, jeans, sandals—common to youth ministers, a role many of them held before taking their jobs in the chancery.

Doug Tooke, 41, stands in the front of the room, finishing up a presentation. As social hour begins, he walks away from the mini-fridge with a bottle: “My wedding ring is a sign of the sacrament I share with my wife, that I am the paterfamilias for my five beautiful daughters,” he pauses, “and it also opens beer!” Tooke is the master of ceremonies for the week. Doug is funny, charismatic and has what is commonly referred to a “big inside voice.”

Mr. Tooke has been involved in youth ministry for a long time. In 1998, he signed up to be the youth minister at St. Matthew's parish in Kalispell, Mont., which at that time had a population of 14,000. He has been serving the youth of ru-

ral Montana ever since, and in December he was awarded the National Youth Ministry Award for Diocesan Ministry in a Rural Population.

Earlier, during a session on planning diocesan youth events, Mr. Tooke asked the ministers in the room to recall an event that had a significant impact on their own faith and vocation. After they discussed the question with their neighbors (this really was a room of youth ministers) he asked if anyone would like to share. Hands immediately flew up around the room (it was also a room of extroverts).

“World Youth Day,” one woman tells the group. “There was something about sitting in a field with thousands of people at a Mass being translated into five languages, with everyone listening in their audio receivers.” Another person mentions a social justice mission trip, and how she has seen some of her teens go off to Ivy League universities and then graduate with service-oriented jobs because of what happened on a trip. Another mentions a Steubenville Conference and looks around the room to see if she has to explain any further. People nod along, signaling they understand that she is describing a charismatic youth conference, one of 23 organized by Franciscan University of Steubenville and held throughout the country, that attract more than 50,000 Catholic teenagers each summer.

But as great as all these global and national events are, they may not be enough to create sustainable ministries in their individual dioceses, Mr. Tooke says. Too many places have an attitude of “Let's put all of our resources into one annual event that shows we care about youth ministry!” instead of investing in sustainable, parish-based models.

“Retreat high” is a phrase common in youth ministry circles. It refers to that feeling of emotional or spiritual consolation that comes from an intense ministry event. But no high lasts forever, and youth ministers, who are often faced with tight budgets and differing amounts of ecclesial support, must figure out how to help youth build an ongoing relationship with God and a relationship to the church that sustains them the rest of the year. Many navigate a tension between experiential spiritual programs like World Youth Day, diocesan youth rallies, retreats and service trips, and the difficult and necessary work of developing localized models that give young people a deep faith and the relationships that will last them through the transition to young adulthood and beyond.

But the decision between local and national events is only one of the tough choices made by youth and young

adult ministers. Funding and other support for programs often is largely dependent on whether the pastor or bishop sees youth and young adult ministry as a priority. And it can be hard to build and expand a ministry when not everyone agrees on what that ministry should look like.

“For some bishops, youth ministry is just pro-life ministry. For some, it is not a priority at all,” Mr. Tooke told me, as we chatted between sessions. Other participants echoed this sentiment. That evening I observed a conversation in which one attendee was raving to another about how much he appreciated the support his bishop gave him, how the bishop had an open door policy if the minister ever needed to chat about practicalities or talk vision. His conversation partner looked down at his shoes and grumbled. It was clear he had not had the same experience.

A Changing Church

Christina Lamas, 38, understands what it is like to come up against skepticism or resistance when working in youth ministry—a feeling not limited to members of the episcopacy. “There’s a fear of the unknown. People are intimidated by not knowing what to give a young person,” she tells me.

Ms. Lamas embraced the unknown and trusted in what she felt was God’s will when she moved across the country from Los Angeles to Washington to take on the role of executive director of the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry. As a Latina with more than 20 years’ experience working in youth ministry at both the parish and diocesan level, she brings with her a vision rooted in where the church is heading, both demographically and pastorally. As the American church creeps toward a majority-Hispanic population, the young church is already there. Sixty percent of Catholics under the age of 18 are Hispanic.

And yet according to a 2014 report from the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate and Boston College’s School of Theology and Ministry, only 26 percent of responding dioceses had a director of youth ministry for Hispanic Catholics.

Alejandro Aguilera-Titus, assistant director of the Secretariat for Cultural Diversity in the Church at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and director of the V Encuentro, thinks the church has failed thus far to minister to this group of “perceived minorities.” “Second- and third-generation Latinos have been left behind,” on a national level, he says. He blames this on the traditional

youth group model. Parishes, perhaps out of good will, often integrate Latino youth into the existing youth groups without providing any ministry that is designed for immigrant communities. “There is an openness to working with immigrants, but not with cultural-specific ministries,” he says. The church in the United States must be careful that, as it seeks to evangelize new populations, it does not ignore the one right in front of it.

Growing With the Faith

For Catholic youth ministers in the United States, there are more resources and national structures than those who are unfamiliar with the terrain might realize. There are a number of widely attended national events and organizations to connect and train youth ministers from around the country, not to mention a healthy market for resources and curricula. That is not necessarily the case for ministry specific to young adults, geared toward people ages 18 to 35.

Large archdioceses like New York, Washington, Chicago and Denver have had some success in reaching out to this population, often by empowering the young adults themselves to lead. Yet across the country, there is still no broader consensus on what specifically is working and how to replicate it. “It’s the Wild West. Everyone is trying to figure it out because no one really knows what they’re doing,” Paul Sifuentes, associate director of youth and young adult ministry for the Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana, told me over dinner at the conference for diocesan directors of youth ministry. Cecilia Phan, the coordinator of young adult ministry for the Diocese of Orange in California, replied saying this was a shame, because “so many young adults don’t know what they’re doing in their life!”

Despite some positive examples to point to, the statistical reality remains stark. According to a study from St. Mary’s Press and CARA to be published in January, among those Catholics who choose to leave the church, 74 percent do so between the ages of 10 and 20. And 87 percent of them say that it is for good. As youth face the transition to young adulthood, long-term connection is needed.

The Diocese of Bridgeport is one diocese trying to make those connections. The diocesan website sends a clear message about its priorities, including “Youth/Young Adults” among the main tabs on its menu.

“Youth and young adult ministry really is his passion,” Evan Psencik said of his boss, Bishop Caggiano. Mr. Psencik is the coordinator of youth and young adult ministries for the diocese. He says it makes a difference throughout the diocese to have that kind of support and energy coming

The Archdiocese of Washington has set up six regional ministries across the Washington, D.C., area, including Theology on Tap, during which young adults gather at a pub for fellowship and to hear a speaker.



from the bishop. “As a pastor in a diocese, when you see that there is something that your bishop is very passionate about, then you as a pastor feel like you need to be there,” Mr. Psencik said.

The support has also given him the freedom to experiment with new programs. One example is a retreat he hosted for high school seniors along with recent high school graduates who are now in college. Some young adults in the diocese came up with the idea, hoping the retreat would provide an opportunity for teens to discuss and pray about the transition to college alongside those who have experienced it. “A lot of those kids who were in youth ministry,

they go off to college and they come back and they’re still trying to hang on to that youth group because they don’t know where to go,” Mr. Psencik said.

At 29, Mr. Psencik has enough experience in the youth and young adult ministry world to observe some changes. “In the late ’90s-early 2000s [when Psencik himself was a teen involved in youth ministry], there was this shift, that was like ‘Oh let’s take young people and let’s do youth ministry over here, and let’s do teen Masses and really take young people out of that and put them over here,’” setting them apart from the rest of the parish environment.

This movement to keep young people separate was not



Photo: Courtesy of the Archdiocese of Washington

“Sometimes [a young person will] get to a college and they’ll be like, ‘Oh, I’m really excited. I was in youth ministry, I went to my Steubenville conference, and I’m excited,’ and they might get to their university and it’s not a Catholic university,” Mr. Psencik said, describing a typical journey for someone who struggles with a transition out of youth ministry. “Or they show up to the Newman Center and they go, ‘Oh, it’s just all the weird Catholics who can’t find dates, so I’m not coming back here.’”

A Time for Change

Julie Lai, a senior at the University of San Diego, is looking ahead to her transition out of the college faith experience. She is involved in the campus ministry there, and she is also active in young adult programming in local parishes. She feels that youth and campus ministry thus far have given her a “confident and mature” faith. She is considering participating in a faith-based service program after graduation. Ultimately, she would like to work in social media for the church in some way.

Even with Ms. Lai’s experience and intention to stay involved, looking toward a faith life after college can be daunting.

“I am concerned transitioning out of college because I fear a lack of dynamic Catholic community,” she said. “There aren’t many dioceses which do young adult ministry well.”

Bishop Caggiano agrees that the church needs to do more to integrate youth and young adults into parish life. “There isn’t enough effort [in the church] to connect all of these dots, so that we are all working together to create a continuum that allows a person to meander through transition, and not get lost in the cracks,” the bishop told me. “I think as a church, we’re beginning to recognize that.”

Esteem is one program that helps to emphasize just how big the Catholic community can be. It is a national effort present at nine universities in the United States and designed to help young adults transition from the comfort of Catholicism on campus to the realities of parish life. It can be particularly helpful for individuals who do not live in cities with vibrant young adult programs. Esteem strives to give college seniors the tools and the space to have a conversation about faith and the awareness to go out into the world after graduation and find a parish that they want to be a part of. Participants take part in a mentorship program, in which young adults are paired with a “real-life” adult Catholic. There is also a curriculum that empowers

confined to Catholic youth ministry. Fuller Youth Institute, an institute in California that trains and provides resources for youth ministers across denominations, refers to this as the “kids’ table” model of youth ministry.

“We put all of the young people at ‘the kids’ table’ and then, when they got out of high school, they went to a church that was not the kids’ table and they didn’t feel a part of it because we never really showed them how to be a part of the bigger church,” Mr. Psencik said.

The negative effects of this model become clear in transition moments, whether from high school to college or the workforce, or from college to the workforce.



Photo: Karen Callaway/Chicago Catholic

students to identify what they value in a parish or in a liturgy, so that they are able to find a parish that fills their needs.

Megan Colford, an alumna of the program, worked for Apple after graduation before taking the reins of Esteem as national director. She identified a number of issues that a young adult could encounter when they transition out of college and into the working world.

“I know one of the biggest things that [young adults] struggle with is that they’ve been going to Masses where their friends are, where there’s hot chocolate afterward; there’s great music and great preaching directed at them,” Ms. Colford said. “And then the only parish that they see, if they go to the neighborhood parish, doesn’t have that same vibrancy or isn’t as youth-oriented. I think people really get disheartened by feeling like they lose the fun or the connection of going to Mass.”

Another issue is simply recognition, the feeling of not being known. Young adults come from an environment where their friends and their campus ministers know them by name and know them well. “You can think you’re as welcoming as can be, but for young adults it can feel really daunting if someone doesn’t literally introduce themselves and literally welcome them to the Mass,” Ms. Colford said.

A Model Parish?

A difficult fact to reckon with is that the parish model itself is less appealing to young people, who are unlikely to be connected to a single parish. The Archdiocese of Chicago is among those places trying to find a solution.

For young adults, “the parish shouldn’t be the starting point for ministry—it should be the end point,” the Rev. Pe-

ter Wojcik, 36, director of the Office for Parish Vitality in the archdiocese, told me. “We’re working to create as many starting points as possible.”

One of those starting points is the archdiocese’s Theology on Tap events, which were founded in Chicago more than 35 years ago. These events, which typically include a guest speaker, drinks and appetizers, have become a popular model for young adult events around the country. The archdiocese recently asked parishes to collaborate in organizing these events regionally, so that the efforts and expenses are shared and the events are not competing with one another. It is a model that has brought some success. The kickoff of the new format, which featured **America’s** national correspondent, Michael O’Loughlin, and Thomas Rosica, C.S.B., of Salt and Light TV, was held in a downtown bar and drew over 600 people, the highest turnout in over five years.

The archdiocese hopes to direct young adults toward faith formation and service opportunities. It has launched a Scripture study program that has more than 200 young adult participants throughout the city, and will soon launch an app that will offer a listing of all service-oriented events around the city in one place.

The Archdiocese of Washington has also found success in transitioning away from a parish focus toward a regional one. Jonathan Lewis, 31, the director of young adult ministry and evangelization initiatives for the archdiocese, learned some useful lessons from his own experience of being a young Catholic in a state of flux. At one point in his life, Mr. Lewis moved four times in five years and was often traveling three hours one-way to see his girlfriend, the woman who would become his wife.



Theology on Tap events were founded in Chicago more than 35 years ago. A recent Theology on Tap event in the archdiocese attracted more than 600 young adults.

“Does my transience in that stage of life preclude me from fuller responsibility in the church?” Mr. Lewis asked. He believes the answer is no, but also believes that most parishes are not set up in a way that easily accommodates people in this stage and state of life. “Our parishes are built for stability,” Mr. Lewis said. “They’re built for people who have mortgages, who have kids and school schedules, who know where they’re going to be.... If they move, they move in the same neighborhood.”

To combat this, Mr. Lewis says the archdiocese is engaging in what he calls an “ecclesiology of locking arms.” The archdiocese has set up six regional ministries across the D.C. area. Mr. Lewis says this has helped parishes to support one another by sharing volunteers, resources and programs and to survive transitions. The benefits of this model can be difficult for parishes to understand at first. It can be a challenge, he said, convincing parishes to “give up a little bit of visibility in their own parish, to think bigger, in a more regional, universal, sense of the universal church.”

It is clear that these new ways of thinking about evangelization are needed. According to a 2016 study from the Public Religion Research Institute, since the early 1970s, the Catholic Church in the United States has experienced a 10 percent net loss of people who identify as Catholic (the next lowest was mainline Protestants, with a 4.5 percent loss). This emphasizes the urgency of the situation and the need to find some answers for the many questions left to explore—how to redouble efforts directed at young adults who have left while also focusing on better formation for the next generation; how to find sustainable parish-based models for engagement; how to provide culturally sensitive ministry in a growing church.

Yet in the midst of uncertainty, the church has many laborers, of many ages and backgrounds, in the vineyard, who are willing to take on the necessary risks of evangelization.

“It’s easy to point fingers: parish, parents, society,” Ms. Lamas told me, but she said she refuses to despair over the situation. “God is working in the midst of all of that. I hope there’s a new desire to do things differently for young Catholics,” she said.

Bishop Caggiano agrees. “I think this is the moment the Lord has given us,” he said.

“It does feel like a kairos moment,” I replied.

“Absolutely,” he said, “And if we get this right, there will be generations after us who look back and say, we have been able to build what we built because they had the courage to ask the right questions.”

For Mr. Lewis, the story of Jesus walking with the disciples on the road to Emmaus serves as a good foundation for the conversation to come. “Jesus walked with them on the road to Emmaus for seven miles. But it was away from Jerusalem, so he walked the wrong direction for seven miles...just to be with them, and to draw near to them,” he said. “Are we willing to leave our churches to walk away in the ‘wrong direction,’ so that we can encounter people and walk with them in that journey, so that inspired by that encounter with the Lord, they return with a heart burning within them?”

Zac Davis is an assistant editor for digital strategy at America.



AN IMMIGRATION EXAMEN

By Cecilia González-Andrieu

Linda Dakin-Grimm's vibrating phone interrupts her. She glances at the message, then apologizes to our group of university leaders: "Excuse me, I need to look at this." We nod. Something is very wrong. As an experienced lawyer, she has been explaining to us the intricacies of the powder keg of current immigration laws. Ms. Dakin-Grimm, a senior consulting partner at Milbank, an international legal firm, finds time for pro-bono work representing unaccompanied minors. She's also a theology student, and she feels that her faith reverberates through her legal work, and that her legal work has a vital purpose.

Back at the committee meeting, Ms. Dakin-Grimm tells us what's wrong. A father she knows—law-abiding and hardworking—has been arrested at his home by Immigration and Customs Enforcement while his child is at school. The lawyer-theologian has the presence of mind to remember school dismissal time; she will be there to meet the boy.

Our committee, like hundreds around the country, is discussing the frighteningly volatile state of immigration law and how this affects our students and their families. Like many universities, both religious and secular, we educate undocumented students as part of our mission and know that many live with undocumented family members, especially parents. Ms. Dakin-Grimm's call reminds us of the pain in the community and the urgent need for a new way forward.

The neighbor's call alerted Ms. Dakin-Grimm, but it takes her days to locate the father. After a month he is released on \$3,000 bail, thanks to a supportive letter from his bishop. She explains, "What comes next is a hearing, or series of hearings, in immigration court, where he tries to make a case for asylum or withholding of removal. If he cannot do that, he gets deported. Most people lose at this stage, but in part because they have no lawyer or a bad lawyer."



Students at Loyola Marymount University organized a march of solidarity in support of undocumented immigrants.

Photo: Jón Rouf/Loyola Marymount

Family members of undocumented persons who have provided the government with their addresses for legal measures—like the Deferred Action of Childhood Arrivals or asylum seekers—are encountering a new detention process. Also, when ICE agents are searching for a particular person, they are now arresting anyone in their path deemed to lack proper authorization. We hear a new term for the undocumented innocent, they are “collateral damage.”

An inordinately large proportion of Catholics are now living in constant fear, and unless we find a way to overcome the impasse, we have no business claiming any allegiance to the Beatitudes.

CHALLENGED BY A COSTLY GRACE

Questions of immigration policy are intertwined with the most problematic issues human communities face: race, economics and power. Migration is a feature of being human throughout history. The Holy Family crossed into Egypt fleeing persecution, and Peter was suspected of being a revolutionary because of his Galilean accent.

Catholics cannot solve this problem alone, but we must be part of this work to protect the vulnerable; we must help to remind others of the transformation that is possible, the knowledge that water becomes wine through the power of love. Catholics are called to act and to equip ourselves with truth-telling tools to transform the polemics of immigration into a grace-filled response to human suffering. To do this, I offer here a three-question examination of conscience on the topic of immigration. Through such spiritual practices, we must activate our resolve to contribute to Jesus’ promise of an abundant life.

Do I understand who these vulnerable immigrants are and why they are here?

Although undocumented immigrants come to the United States from everywhere, the overwhelming majority in recent decades come from our shared American continent: North America (Mexico), Central America, the Caribbean and South America. Although they are our global neighbors, we often fail to stand with them in solidarity. Epithets are hurled at these immigrants not only on the streets but also from Washington, D.C. Hardworking parents are insulted and called “illegals,” children are taunted at school and told they will all be deported. They are afraid.

At our parishes in Los Angeles, we hold workshops advising fellow parishioners to carry proof they have been in the United States for longer than two years so they will not be immediately deported. Our archdiocese makes holy cards with the beautiful image of Our Lady of Guadalupe

on one side and a stark response to immigration officials on the other. It begins, “I do not wish to speak with you,” and ends with, “I choose to exercise my constitutional rights.” Even more heartbreaking, this prayer card lists the preparations a family should make, including arranging who will care for children should parents be arrested. The cards are distributed in multiple languages: our city, Nuestra Señora de Los Angeles, is a crossroads of the world, and our Catholic community is plural, universal, beautifully diverse.

The present situation is rooted in history. Five hundred years ago, the viceroyalties of Spain, understood as provinces in this hemisphere, stretched from the present Canadian border to the southern tip of South America. The official governing structures established in 1535 envisioned almost the entire American continent as one Spanish nation. San Agustín in Florida was founded within 30 years, and by the time the small colony in Jamestown was established in 1607, three generations had passed in New Spain. As “American” colonists defeated the British in 1781, 10 generations of indigenous, black, Spanish and mixed race Hispanoamericanos had lived in these vast lands.

It was not until 1819, after multiple expeditions, disputes and treaties that a new international border for the Spanish lands was settled with the new United States. When Mexico won its independence shortly after, the same boundaries remained. With this boundary, Mexico, which promptly declared itself anti-slavery, still held on to most of its territory and encompassed the present states of New Mexico, Utah, Nevada, Arizona, California, Texas and western Colorado.

Mexico had a 300-year-long history and at least 12 generations of people before these lands became a part of the United States in 1848. Given that the indigenous populations are the roots of the Mexican people, we realize a pre-Columbian and legitimate ancient connection to this land.

The matter of humans migrating need not be a partisan issue. The frightened Haitians crossing to Canada, the Central American children making excruciating journeys north, the Syrians fleeing unspeakable atrocities, the Mexicans who want to join their families and the over 65 million people displaced worldwide just in 2016 are simply human beings, not governments, and victims of multiple and conflicting ideologies and governments. One of the many ironies of the mistreatment experienced by vulnerable immigrants is that their pleading presence among us witnesses to their trust in the American democratic experiment. The only way immigration is a partisan issue is if there is a political party against democracy, decency and



As we examine our conscience, we must note who benefits from the suffering of those whose humanity we fail to defend.

the well-being of other humans. I do not believe there is such a party.

Have I resisted the rhetoric that undocumented people are illegal and criminals?

We are constantly told that immigration is a national security issue, but for most of human history the movement of people has gone unregulated. Humans migrate because of violence, collapsing economies, climate devastation, persecution, political oppression, religious intolerance and family reunification. Multiple studies also show that immigrants are more law-abiding than native-born populations.

Immigration was not an issue involving national security until World War I, because of the fear of sabotage from European immigrants. It was not until the second decade of the 20th century that passports and a Border Patrol were established. And not until the 1930s did immigration move from the Department of Labor, where it was understood to be driven by economic factors, to the Department of Justice, where the focus became law enforcement.

World War II brought the most egregious “criminal-

ization” of immigrants in our history. Executive Order 9066 (1942) stripped “all persons of Japanese ancestry... both alien and non-alien” of their freedom. Forced to dispose of property and subject to multiple indignities, over 100,000 people were forcibly incarcerated in camps set up in desolate areas of the western United States.

Because power rewards those who hold it, some even profited from this situation. One example is the newspaper magnate Elias Boddy, who bought the camellia nurseries of Japanese-American horticulturalists at fire-sale prices. Mr. Boddy’s Descanso Gardens, near Los Angeles, boasts one of the best collections of camellias in the world—the silent blooms reminders of the people who lovingly cultivated and then lost them.

As we examine our conscience, we must note who benefits from the suffering of those whose humanity we fail to defend. It was in 1976 that President Gerald R. Ford officially proclaimed the end of the infamous executive order, vowing to “resolve that this kind of action shall never again be repeated.”



During one of the Republican campaign debates, Donald Trump spoke glowingly (and hyperbolically) of an Eisenhower era that deported 1.5 million illegal immigrants, vowing to repeat the feat if he was elected. Operation Wetback (“wetback” is a vile slur against Mexican immigrants) set out to deport workers and their families. The June 12, 1954, issue of *The Los Angeles Times* reported:

An army of border patrolmen complete with jeeps, trucks and seven aircraft will begin moving into El Centro today, dispersing their forces for an all-out war to hurl tens of thousands of Mexican wetbacks back into Mexico.

Following Donald Trump’s remarks in 2015, a very different *Los Angeles Times* recounted:

The Eisenhower-era operation deported closer to 300,000 people...accompanied by scores of deaths and shattered families. In some cases, U.S. citizens were apprehended and deported alongside unauthorized immigrants. Raids were concentrated in border communities but stretched as far north as St. Louis. In the pre-civil rights era, few spoke up on behalf of the immigrants.... Barely a decade had passed since the Japanese internment.

It is important to note the difference in language, where Mr. Trump and those who share his ideology routinely re-

fer to “illegal immigrants,” the journalist uses the language of “unauthorized immigrants.” This is not political correctness, but fact. Federal immigration judicial proceedings are processed through civil, not criminal courts. Because of this, immigrants are routinely denied due process and many are removed without ever being able to speak to a judge.

A recent study from the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States, “Intake Without Oversight,” explains that “one in three migrants apprehended while crossing the desert reported suffering an abuse by the Border Patrol,” yet almost none file a complaint. In response, the Kino Border Initiative began assisting persons deported to the city of Nogales in the Mexican state of Sonora. Although many deportees were too fearful to file complaints, the Kino Border Initiative prepared 49 cases in a 17-month period. The ministerial connection is obvious when we note the nature of the violations: excessive use of force, denial of medical care and food while in custody (including to pregnant women), separation from loved ones and verbal abuse.

A landmark study published in *The Journal of Law & Economics* analyzed data classifying the recorded offenses of undocumented persons taken into federal custody under the Secure Communities plan by ICE from 2008 to 2012. The data shows that almost one-third had no criminal record and of those with convictions only 28 percent were serious offenders. Thus, a majority of the detained had no connection to criminally illegal activities.

The Obama administration rescinded Secure Communities and prioritized those with serious criminal convictions. President Trump reinstated the Secure Communities plan with an executive order (Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements), a fact that has received little attention. According to Mr. Trump’s order, applying only to the southern border, and targeting the Hispanic population, anyone may be “apprehended on suspicion of violating federal or state law, including federal immigration law, pending further proceedings regarding these violations” (2.c).

Two changes are made: “suspicion” is enough to justify arrest, encouraging racial profiling of every person of Hispanic descent. Second, immigration law is now included in the violations of law that can trigger arrest. Consequently, when administration officials refer to making “criminals” their priority, it implies that now every unauthorized person is a criminal, placing “unlawful aliens” in the same category as suspected terrorists.

As the Pew Research Center explains in “Modes of Entry for the Unauthorized Migrant Population,” a sizable majority of the undocumented enter legally with work or tourist visas. This is the case of a young woman I know. Her father was recruited by a U.S. firm under a work visa and promised the family would be sponsored for permanent residency.

After he had spent years building a life in the United States, the firm closed, leaving him with no job and no visa. After a fraudulent immigration lawyer disappeared with all their funds, the family, now with two children, became undocumented, having no way to adjust their status. The fear of deportation forces families into the shadows, unable to report fraud and close to destitute because of the drain of bogus legal fees.

Have I understood the economics of this issue?

The stereotype of immigrants who come to take away jobs misrepresents the great migrations that populated the United States. In the ingrained rhetoric of the powerful, immigrants are reduced to a plus or minus sign as they calculate financial gain.

As we well know, the original “citizens” of the United States were only affluent white men. It would take the Civil War and the Fourteenth Amendment to delineate rights for others who were not among the male landed gentry, although it would not be until 1924 that indigenous people would be granted full citizenship. The Trump administration’s recent proposal that only the skilled and English-speaking be legally allowed into the United States, denying entry even to immediate family members of citizens who do not meet these “merit” criteria, could have far-reaching consequences. As research shows, the economic growth, productivity and innovation that have made the United States the world’s most developed economy are due to generations of people who were hungry, had courage and love for their families and worked hard. If we become a nation that welcomes only those who are already rich, we will lose the fire in our belly that made us who we are.

An examination of conscience is part of the process of reconciliation our tradition has understood as sacramental. It opens us to our mistakes, encourages our contrition and through forgiveness invites us to a new relationship with our God and our world. Can we take this opportunity for grace to manifest itself in our present painful circumstances? Our immigrant sisters and brothers are waiting.

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

CREATED EQUAL

How we treat each other is related to how we view each other. Recall the piercing words of Standing Bear, the Ponca chief who addressed a U.S. District Court in Oklahoma in 1879. The chief (a title he did not like, as he believed his people were all equal) and his tribe were forced off their land in Nebraska by the U.S. government and driven south to Oklahoma.

On his young son’s death, a small group set out on a treacherous trip through a brutal winter to reach their ancestral burial grounds in the north. They were arrested at the “border.” The United States now controlled what had always belonged to the Ponca people; yet it was illegal for them to return. For close to a century, Native Americans had not been part of the “we the people” of the Constitution, and the essence of the government’s case barring them from their land was to deny them their personhood. Writing about the trial in *I Am A Man*, the journalist Joe Sarita quotes Standing Bear’s words to the court as he somberly held out his hand:

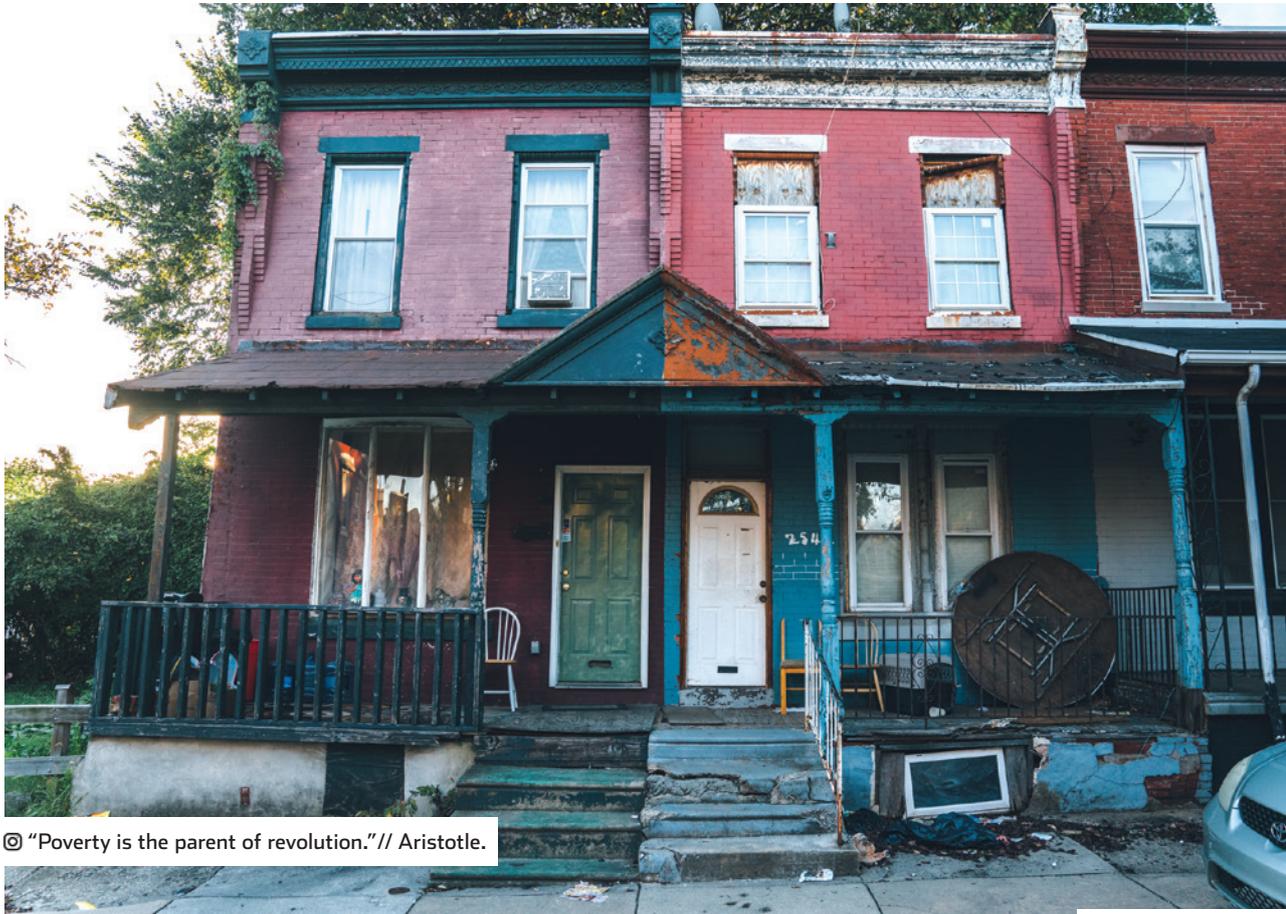
That hand is not the color of yours, but if I pierce it, I shall feel pain. If you pierce your hand, you also feel pain. The blood that will flow from mine will be of the same color as yours. *I am a man. The same God made us both.*

Standing Bear’s words led to the recognition of Native Americans as persons under U.S. law. The polemics of immigration, with its negative emphasis on differences and racial inferiority, strips others of their God-given dignity. If we can make this not be a partisan issue but a universally human one about protecting the inviolable dignity of human life, we have begun to make some progress.

CHASING LIKES

Confessions of an Instagram addict

By Ricky Staub



© "Poverty is the parent of revolution."// Aristotle.

I used to be a filmmaker who did not really know how to use a camera and who rarely took a photo. Then, in 2011, I started my own production company. My team at Neighborhood Film Company produces content for brands like Reebok, Universal and Jeep while providing apprenticeship opportunities for formerly incarcerated adults. I was told that to get ahead in this world I needed a visual presence on social media. So I picked up my camera and joined Instagram.



© Mercy Over Judgment

On Instagram, a social media platform for sharing photographs and short videos, I wanted not only to show potential clients that we were a busy and growing enterprise but to show other companies that giving offenders a second chance can be good for the community and for business.

At first, my posts were nothing more than pictures of my team in the office or on set. But my Instagram account soon became a show-and-tell platform. Just as every family on Facebook is happy, every film company on Instagram is successful. The truth, at least in the early days, was that my company's bank account was hovering above zero, and I was not shooting videos for fancy clients. But you would have never guessed that looking at my carefully curated online persona.



© "When we can see the image of God where we don't want to see the image of God, then we see with eyes not our own."
// Richard Rohr





© "All art holds the knowledge that we're both living and dying at the same time. It can hold it. And thank God it can, because nothing out in the corporate world is going to shine that back to us, but art holds it." // Marie Howe

What was real was the anxiety that keeping up with others on social media produced in me. I became obsessed with the numbers. How could I get more likes, more followers, more reach? I started to judge my personal journey against what others were putting online: Look how much better that filmmaker is than me. Look what client they are working for. I am not good enough. Comparison became the thief of my joy.

I even started to feel my creativity wane. Instead of daydreaming when I was waiting in line or stuck in traffic, I would take a quick peek at how my post was performing. I found myself stealing away during dinners to check my phone in the bathroom. I would even check my phone in the middle of group conversations. I was hooked on my device like a drug addict on a needle.

Then, a couple of years ago, I experienced some brutal trauma in my personal life and found myself in a place of deep prayer, reflection and growth. During this

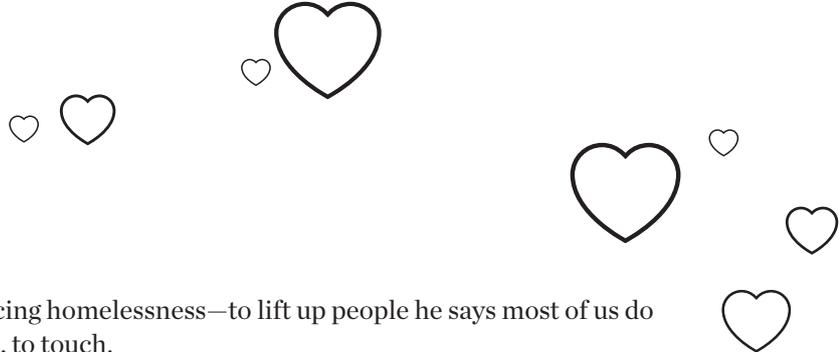
time taking photos became a form of retreat to clear my mind. Finding it impossible to write clever, quippy captions for the photos I posted, I decided to just share prayers and thoughts from my reading.

I soon found that my online vulnerability had created a safe home for people to share their own fears or anxieties or failure—the zeroed-out bank accounts in their own lives. Instagram finally felt real to me. I was reminded that on the other end of an account name was a real person with real fears and struggles and hopes and joys.

Through Instagram I met, first online and then in person, people like Erin Brooks, who used photography to work through her postpartum depression. The support she received when she posted pictures of her two baby girls on the platform allowed her to gain a different perspective on motherhood. I met Cole Younger, who used to live on the streets, and now uses Instagram to



@Serenity



share photos of people experiencing homelessness—to lift up people he says most of us do not want to remember, to look at, to touch.

I have found that sharing pain with people is often more of an intimate glue than sharing success. Success seems to tear people apart if they are not first committed to each other through shared brokenness. As Christians, we are loved by a limitless God who knows that we are broken and hurting. When we invite others to be free from the bondage of a fake self-image, we make room for the Savior in our own lives and in the relationships we create.

© Mother



Ultimately, it is the difference between engagement and encounter. Engagement on social media—getting more likes, more comments, more followers—can give a quick boost to your self-worth. But unless the self you share with the world is real, genuine encounter will be beyond your reach.



Ricky Staub is a filmmaker and founder of Neighborhood Film Company.



The Corrosion of High School Debate— And How It Mirrors American Politics

By Jack McCordick



The conventions of high school debate are enabling, at times even creating, our divisive culture.

As extracurriculars go, debate may be the most grinding of them all. In my four years of high school debating, I spent many long nights holed up alone in my room poring over amicus briefs or economic analyses. I passed even longer weekends on buses and planes traveling to schools across the country and staying in hotels or with local families. From winter to spring, in settings as grand as a Harvard lecture hall and as cramped as a boiler room in a Salt Lake City public school, my debate partner and I held forth on everything from nuclear proliferation to sanctions against Russia to the private prison industry.

The world of high school debate is often portrayed as a refuge of the budding brainiac, an incubator of the 21st century's next generation of leaders. To some extent it is that. But the more revealing truth is that the debating community for years has been afflicted with an ideological and practical struggle over the nature of debate. And that struggle does not exist in a vacuum of cafeterias and lecture halls. It has powerful implications for the current state of U.S. politics and for the pursuit of social justice.

Looking back, it seems as if the course of my high school debating career mirrored a deeper erosion in the quality of debate in our wider society. Thanks to a media landscape poisoned by partisan loyalties, the dissemination of “fake news” and the ideological echo chambers created by social media, the country is in the throes of a deep crisis. We don't know

who we are anymore. When I asked myself whether my extracurricular was a force against this decline, or an accessory to it, far too often I settled on the latter. The conventions of high school debate were enabling, at times even creating, our divisive culture.

To understand how high school debate went awry, you would have to go all the way back to its origins. The first debate format practiced widely in high schools was called the policy debate. The format, which is still around today, consists of two teams of two debaters each. The affirmative team proposes a policy “plan” based on a resolution—for example, “The United States federal government should significantly reform its criminal justice system.” The negative team responds to that plan. Unlike more recent formats, where the topics change month-to-month, policy topics run for an entire year and require extraordinary dedication to research and preparation.

As the policy debate grew in popularity, the more Machiavellian debaters attempted to gain an edge by overwhelming their opponents with as many arguments and as much supporting evidence as possible. This was because if a team “dropped” an argument by its opponent—if it did not respond to the other side's claim—that argument was conceded as “true,” no matter how inane it was. Chief among the strategies exploiting this rule was “spreading” (a combination of “speed” and “reading”), where debaters would rattle off arguments at a blistering pace. Their speeches

While high school football players burst out of locker rooms at halftime to vigorous cheers, their counterparts on the debate team emerge from their buses and cars to a more muted welcome: the quiet babble of a school cafeteria early on a Saturday morning, where teams of debaters rush to colonize their plots of tables and chairs nearest to the electrical outlets or concession stands.



The purpose of “adult debate,” as with debate for 16-year-olds, is to bludgeon your opponent into submission instead of engaging in open-minded dialogue.

Images: Stock/Composite: America

were often delivered at a pace of 300 words per minute or more.

Debaters started formulating outlandish arguments. The more apocalyptic the outcome the better, with little care for the argument’s probability or real-world application. “A new retirement program will trigger a nuclear war.” “Prison overcrowding would cause the destruction of the ozone layer.” High school debate had come to this.

If you were to peek into a room in the middle of a policy round, you would likely be treated to a flurry of limbs and spittle, as a teenager spewed arguments from his mouth with such

speed and force that he would sometimes appear to lose control of his fine motor functions. When an executive of Phillips Petroleum, then the primary sponsor of the National Forensic League, observed a debate at the 1979 national championship, he found it utterly incomprehensible. The executive aired his concerns to the league’s executive council, resulting in an entirely new debate category called the Lincoln-Douglas debate.

This format, with its express reference to the famous debates over slavery between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas, was designed to promote debates about values and pri-

oritize rhetorical persuasion. In contrast to policy debate’s wonkish topics, L.D. featured less timebound resolutions. “It is morally permissible to kill one innocent person to save the lives of more innocent people.” Or “When in conflict, idealism ought to be valued above pragmatism.”

The new format earned the disdain of policy debate’s more snobbish competitors, who joked that its initials stood for “learning disabled.” But for students disillusioned with P.D.’s descent into nonsensical, mile-a-minute argumentation, it was a godsend—at least for a while.

Soon L.D. suffered the same fate as

its precursor. The speed of argument increased, as did the amount of evidence required to be competitive at the national level. As with policy debate, the arguments became increasingly unmoored from reality. Some debaters even began refusing to debate the resolutions altogether, formulating elaborate theoretical and critical arguments that were, at best, tenuously linked to the topic they had been given.

As L.D. descended further and further into absurdity, Ted Turner, the billionaire founder of CNN, came along and attempted to turn the ship again. Like the Philips executive several decades earlier, he pushed the National Forensic League in 2002 to establish a new debate format that would be plain-spoken and jargon-free. The resulting format, which immediately drew comparisons with CNN's "Crossfire," was called public forum. Its title was an expression of Mr. Turner's hope that any reasonably informed member of the public could walk into a public forum round and be able to pick a winner.

A decade and a half after its inception, P.F. is still by far the most intelligible category in debate. However, in recent years its speed has increased markedly, as have the mountains of evidence. The emphasis on logic and critical thinking has waned.

High school debate today is basically an intellectual game, not an exercise in truth-seeking. It has been turned into something that can easily be scored. This eliminates the complexity and intricacy of real discourse about real issues. If debate is a game, then the execution of a "spread" is like a well-timed blitz in football. Convincing a judge that your opponents' arguments would

DOG

By Kwame Dawes

After Bella

In truth, I know nothing
of her secret or public life.

She is flesh, a body carrying
blood, a tight pelt of skin,
the mapping of bones,
and the nervy jittery pulsing
of organs, a panting mouth,
a tongue, a small sack
of the same complex
and rot that makes up
my constantly betraying self.

I know that when I lift
her, tuck her to my chest,
she slowly settles, pushing
back as if she expects
to remain intact after
I have put her down
to scamper off.

Anything else I may know
is a hopeless projection of me,
the limits of what I know.

Maybe this is all we know
of each other as we meet,
sniffing the air for the scent
of decay or the other thing
that is not indifference
nor the resignation
we pray will calm us now
at the hour of our death.

Kwame Dawes is the author of numerous books of poetry, fiction, criticism and essays. His most recent collection, *City of Bones: A Testament* (Northwestern University Press) appeared in 2017. He is Chancellor Professor of English at the University of Nebraska.



The norms that currently guide debate elevate form over content and victory over truth.

Images: iStock/Composite: America

cause human extinction is equivalent to a successful Hail Mary pass.

Dozens of summer debate camps have cropped up across the country, offering students the opportunity to go “from novice to nationals,” as one brochure put it. Companies now offer bundles of prepackaged evidence, or “briefs,” to debaters willing to pay to get the upper hand. Instead of producing free, rigorous thinkers committed to the pursuit of truth, debate clubs now promote a very specific technical mastery of skills that do not easily translate into the demands of real life.

The problems plaguing high school debate are mirrored in our public sphere. Political discourse is often little more than a game. Its goal is to score political points with witty rejoinders and scathing takedowns. The purpose of “adult debate,” as with debate for 16-year-olds, is to bludgeon your opponent into submission instead of engaging in open-minded dialogue.

Over time I began to realize that

high school debate was my firsthand education in the perversion and abuse of language. I learned how language could be used to conceal, to muddle. This was not limited to the debate community. The writer (and former debate wunderkind) Ben Lerner once wrote, “Americans are always getting ‘spread’ in their daily lives.” Think of the rapid-fire medical warnings at the end of prescription drug commercials. Consider the various types of fine print we are exposed to every day from financial institutions and health care companies, not to mention Apple’s “Terms and Conditions.” I remember that even when high school debates slowed down enough to seem comprehensible, the avalanche of evidence (much of it of dubious value) and specialized jargon often confused more than it revealed. It became like the kind of language currently poisoning our public sphere.

I learned immensely important skills from my four years of debate.

I have met many brilliant, impressively well-read students from across the country from schools dedicated to treating debate the right way. But these are exceptions, not the rule. The norms that currently guide debate elevate form over content and victory over truth.

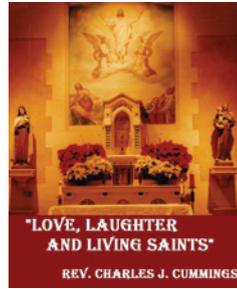
Debate programs are perfectly situated to produce students who want to seek the truth, who will resist the decay of quality public speech. As currently practiced, however, the clearest evidence of a high school debate career is often just a collection of plastic trophies, slowly gathering dust.

Jack McCordick is a freshman at Yale University and a former intern at America. He and his teammates from Regis High School in New York won the National Speech and Debate Association high school championship this year.

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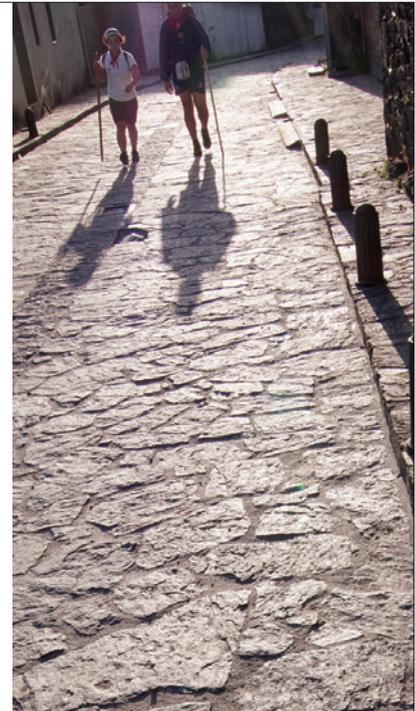
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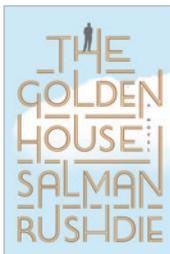
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Salman Rushdie is a writer always keen to take on big, messy matters—and few are bigger or messier these days than American life at home and abroad.

Salman Rushdie tackles the Trump era

By Randy Boyagoda



The Golden House
By Salman Rushdie
Random House. 400p
\$28.99

“‘Anyway, God is not dead,’ he said. ‘Not in America, anyway.’” So observes a character in Salman Rushdie’s rollicking new novel, *The Golden House*. Wry and confidently pointed, the statement is well in keeping with two of the defining concerns of Rushdie’s career—his interest (often but not always polemical) in the abiding powers of belief and religion in the modern era, and his interest (often but not always affectionate) in the oversized influence and tumultuous nature of the United States.

For readers who are most familiar with Rushdie from his 1989 novel *The Satanic Verses*, that interest in religious experience is clear enough, and so too the cultural and geopolitical consequences of how he has pursued it. Less immediately obvious, however, may be Rushdie’s longtime interest in

the United States, which in fact dates back to his very first novel, *Grimus*, a postmodern science fiction fable set in Arizona. Since then, and across a dozen novels, American characters, places and events have appeared consistently in Rushdie’s writing. This is particularly so over the past two decades, a period that coincides with his return to public life after years of living under the Ayatollah Khomeini’s fatwa, and also with his move from London to New York.

Salman Rushdie is a writer always keen to take on big, messy matters—and few are bigger or messier these days than American life at home and abroad—but he has also been consistently fascinated by something specifically American that generations have pursued: the desire and drive “to move beyond memory and roots and language and race into the land of the self-made self, which is another way of saying, America.”

Gatsby redux? This rendering of one prominent national myth comes to us from René, the narrator of Rushdie’s latest novel. He is a filmmaker living among artists and assorted ec-

centrics in contemporary Manhattan, and he is here riffing on the rationale for why people come to America as a way of making sense of his mysterious new neighbors, the Golden, an aging wealthy patriarch and his three sons. From origins initially unknown (and they seem very keen on keeping it that way), the quartet take up residence in a Greenwich Village mansion down the street from René. They do so shortly after Barack Obama’s inauguration in 2009. The story of their strange and tragic past and equally strange and tragic present—punctuated by Nero’s decision to marry a stunning 28-year-old Russian who swiftly and successfully pursues a hostile takeover of a family life more and more defined by untimely deaths—extends forward eight years to the election of a new president, called simply “the Joker.”

Returning to a method he deployed to famous effect in his 1982 novel *Midnight’s Children*, set at the founding of India, Rushdie creates analogical relationships between familial and national experience, as a means of both embodying large-scale political effects and revealing the po-

Sir Salman Rushdie in New York City, Aug. 21, 2015 (Writer Pictures via AP Images)

litical meanings of seemingly personal pursuits. In the case of the 73-year-old self-named and violin-loving Nero Golden and his sons Petya, Apu and D, such connections have everything to do with the fusing together of ill-gotten wealth, marital and familial breakdowns and terrorism. The novel's great appeal resides in figuring out exactly how and why this is the case, with René as our stand-in guide and knowledge-seeker. Evoking F. Scott Fitzgerald's Nick Carraway, the narrator of *The Great Gatsby*, René is drawn in by the mystery and wealth of the Golden family and eventually compromised by his loyalties to them, which strengthen and fray alongside his ambitions to make a movie out of their lives.

Rushdie gleefully mashes up René's efforts to learn and tell the family's story with a telling of America's own story over the past eight years, across the two terms of the Obama presidency and with a particular interest in the 2016 race and its outcome. Rushdie treats the latter in ways that elide clear distinctions between comedy and tragedy. This makes sense when one considers that he is tracking the rise of someone who "was, after all, a scary clown," scary because it seemed so hard to take him seriously and yet impossible to deny his political success: "America had left reality behind and entered the comic-book universe." As such, to convey the fullness of the national response to Trump, and Trump's response to everything around him, Rushdie turns to comic book-style storytelling: "Zap! Pow! Bof! — Take that, you giggling loon! — Ow! Unfair! Why is everyone against me? Owwww! It's a fix! Everybody's a liar! Only the clown tells the

truth! — Blam! — Ow."

As did Tom Wolfe with *The Bonfire of the Vanities* and other novels, Rushdie is here offering us a real-time take on our present moment (where people in New York line up for hours for "cronuts" to accompany their "home-brewed macchiato coffee"), whose sounds and sights are confusing and chaotic. Readers seeking respite from the current political situation will be more drawn to René's exposition of the Golden family's many secrets, to which he contributes a very important one, himself. Readers who can think of no one better situated than Salman Rushdie to make sense of how America has gone from President Obama to President Trump will naturally be more drawn to René's reflections on the presidential race and his own viral-campaign efforts to defeat the Joker.

That said, most every reader of this novel will be drawn to its wisdom and wit. A family in a bad way faces a situation that "stinks worse than a plumber's handkerchief"; Nero's annoying personal assistants are named Fuss and Blather; a retired Bombay detective offers Nero his services on terms that manage to be magnificently arrogant and pathologically obsequious; as Nero's wealth insinuates itself throughout his new country, his "name was everywhere in those days, on everything from hot dogs to for-profit universities."

Chockablock jokes and fiction-making about crazy-making American life aside, Rushdie is at his finest in drawing us toward higher concerns, as when he balances the novel's early celebrations of the self-invention made possible by coming to America with more wistful re-

lections about the irreducible continuities of our lives: "I did it, and here I am, and now I am seeing ghosts, because the trouble with trying to escape yourself," one of Nero's sons tells Rene, "is that you bring yourself along for the ride." A comic book villain wants to rule the country, the narrator observes elsewhere, and there is no Caped Crusader to take him down, because ours "is not an age of heroes." Instead, it is an age of division and violence, one in which the question of the value of human life itself emerges as the question that matters most, both in national life and family life. Rushdie makes as much clear late in the book, with shocking presidential elections matched to shocking family revelations.

But then, with a lovely, light, punning touch, Rushdie points beyond the triumphant political and personal firestorms and nihilisms that otherwise threaten to rule this big brawny novel. "The ace of trumps was Little Vespa himself," a four-year-old boy whose parentage and prospects and historical-political moment in time are all complicated and controversial, yes. But in Rushdie's assured handling, this child will join and, we can hope, flourish in the "great whirling movement of life."

Randy Boyagoda is principal and vice-president of St. Michael's College in the University of Toronto, where he is a professor of English and holds the Basilian Chair in Christianity, Arts and Letters. His next novel, *Original Prin*, will be published in 2018.

Awaiting a homecoming

The agony comes from not knowing. That was the pain endured by the family of Barton Cross, a Navy serviceman taken prisoner by the Japanese when they invaded the Philippines in April 1942. In this moving account, Sally Mott Freeman recalls the efforts of Barton's two brothers, both prominent naval officers, to learn his whereabouts and secure his safe homecoming.

Through Freeman's remarkable gifts as a writer, the history of the Jersey brothers comes alive with gripping narrative and masterful storytelling. Her work relates with emotional intensity the brothers' plight and the strength of the bonds that kept them united in the midst of war. It also draws attention to the grief endured by their mother. Upon news of Barton's capture, she implored

her other two sons to use their connections to obtain information about his status. She also wrote letter upon letter to those in command, urging them to do everything in their power to secure the release of those in enemy hands.

Telling Barton's story has been a labor of love for Freeman, the daughter of his brother Bill. The book reflects her personal quest to come to understand her uncle's history and the stories that went unspoken within the family. Yet more than a family tale, the book also provides a gripping account of the war's Pacific theater. With impressive research, she details military strategy, provides riveting accounts of combat and its costs and recalls the power struggle between the admirals and General McArthur over plans and priorities.

Those who know war only from a distance will come to appreciate the re-

markable courage of those who served and the trials they endured. Especially moving are the detailed descriptions of the plight of prisoners of war. Though often forgotten in our histories, they were ever on the minds of their families. The book reminds us how inhumanely many were treated, especially when their captors failed to abide by the norms laid out by international conventions.

More than the tale of one family, *The Jersey Brothers* recounts the story of the struggle shared by every family that waits anxiously for word of a loved one in time of war.

Thomas Rzeznik is an associate professor of history at Seton Hall University in South Orange, N.J.

A great questioner

Mystery is at the heart of Christian faith. Grace Paley's work is kindred to our faith, deep as it is with mysteries as wide as the trenches at the bottom of the sea. Paley is a writer who reaches the existential through the quotidian. Telling is the essence of Christian witness and Paley's work. "She is nothing but a questioner," Paley describes the role of the writer. Yet she is not without an understanding that the truth can be dangerous, as in this advice to writers:

No matter what you feel about what you're doing, if that is really what you're looking for, if that is really what you're trying to understand...stay with it, no matter what, and you'll at least

live your own truth or be hung for it.

Defining art, she could be describing faith: "What art is about...is the illumination of what isn't known, the lighting up of what is under a rock, of what has been hidden." In this her purpose echoes the Gospel writers, for whom "nothing is hidden, except to be revealed; nor has anything been secret, but that it would come to light" (Mk 4:22).

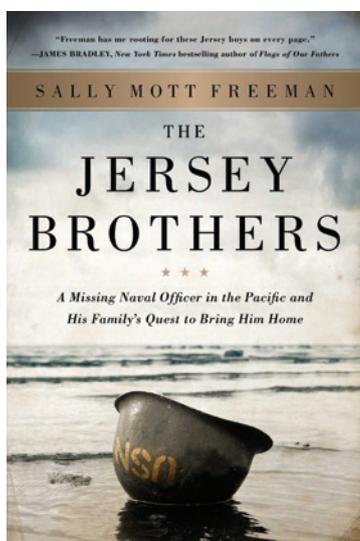
Her stories bear the same message, full of characters relieved by telling and others suffering for not telling:

Since I already began to tell, I have to tell the whole story. I'm not a person who keeps things in. Tell! That opens up the congestion a little—the lungs are for breathing,

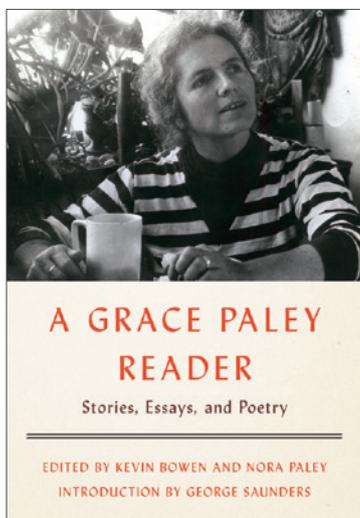
no secrets. My wife never tells, she coughs, coughs. All night.... You poor woman, if you want to breathe, you got to tell.

Crackling wit ripples through her accounts of life in Jewish New York in the early 20th century, and she shows great compassion for her characters. Though they may lack what they need in life, perhaps we the readers can provide it: "Empathy is what I need. The empathy of a true friend is what I have lived without for years."

Cynthia-Marie Marmo O'Brien has contributed to *America*, *Booklist*, *Killing the Buddha*, *The Literary Review*, *Narratively* and other publications.



The Jersey Brothers
 A Missing Naval Officer in the Pacific and His Family's Quest to Bring Him Home
 By Sally Mott Freeman
 Simon & Schuster. 589p \$28



A Grace Paley Reader
 Stories, Essays, and Poetry
 Edited by Kevin Bowen and Nora Paley
 Farrar, Straus, and Giroux. 400p \$17

The monk's letters

Over the nine years we have lived in Louisville, my sons have grown familiar with the Abbey of Gethsemani and its monks. We go out there frequently to pray and hike. Through these visits, my children have also become familiar with Thomas Merton. Truth be told, even if we did not live nearby, my sons would have been exposed to Merton, given the love I have for him.

I was therefore excited to learn of a children's book about Merton that could deepen their understanding of why their old man was so taken with him. *The ABCs of Thomas Merton: A Monk at the Heart of the World* aims to introduce children to the basics of Merton's life and writings by associating various aspects of these with the alphabet.

Children learn biographical details that range from a description of his parents and his place of birth to his eventual seclusion in a hermitage. Perhaps more important, children learn about prominent themes in Merton's writing, with a particular focus on his writings about nonviolence and war, the environment and his oft-neglected essays on racial conflict. They also learn about the emphasis he placed on interreligious dialogue.

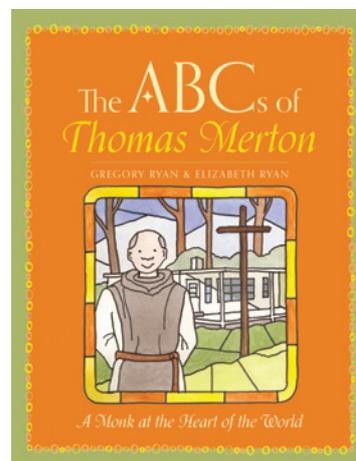
Children are reminded that Merton lived by *The Rule of St. Benedict* for 27 years and that the Eucharist was central to his life. The book describes Merton's own life of prayer, from the seven times a day he spent chanting the psalms with his brother monks to the way he prayed while wandering the woods in silent meditation.

The ABCs of Thomas Merton could

plant seeds in children that will perhaps flower later in life as they explore and ask questions about their faith. At the very least, the book provides a fine introduction for children and their parents to one of the most important American Catholics of the 20th century.

In my family, we will return to this book frequently. And while my children may never come to appreciate Merton as much as I do, this book may help them understand more clearly why their old man keeps taking them to the woods of Kentucky to go hiking with monks.

Gregory Hillis is an associate professor of theology at Bellarmine University in Louisville, Ky.



The ABCs of Thomas Merton
 A Monk at the Heart of the World
 By Gregory Ryan & Elizabeth Ryan
 Paraclete Press. 32p \$16.99



Full book reviews at
americamagazine.org/books



A cartoon comedy about living in a long-broken world

My mother is a fish.

—William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*

“BoJack Horseman” is a Netflix cartoon created by Raphael Bob-Waksberg. The title character was once the star of a hit 1990s sitcom but has fallen into obscurity and misery. He’s also an anthropomorphic horse: horse head, person hands and body. He lives in a world full of walking pink cats and roller-skating owls.

“BoJack” is a comedy, albeit a comedy about sheer, unrelieved self-loathing. Season 3 found BoJack careening toward catastrophe, which hit in the genuinely heartbreaking penultimate episode. In Season 4, which Netflix released in September, BoJack is picking up the pieces of his life while the usual chaos swirls around him: His canine friend Mr. Peanutbutter is running for governor of California against an incumbent woodchuck; his human friend Todd is trying to train dentists to be clowns and vice versa; and Diane, the show’s voice of relative normalcy, is writing for a shallow feminist blog with articles like “These Soups Will Enrage You.”

“BoJack” is a joy to watch. The candy-colored wackiness is the perfect foil for the show’s bleakness, and there is always some weird detail to catch. In the new season, BoJack has yet another girl by his side—another half-horse, Hollyhock, turns up at his door claiming to be his biological daughter. And for once he actually tries to do right by her. The animation offers some glorious moments, like Meryl Streep’s lush rose garden, decked out with topiary busts of Meryl Streep. It also incorporates new styles, as when we go inside BoJack’s head, hearing his paralyzing inner monologue of self-hatred.

As the season progresses, we go inside his mother’s head. Beatrice Sugarman Horseman is suffering from dementia. She’s surrounded by faceless people, and one significant woman whose face is replaced by a harsh black scribble. As we slowly learn more of Beatrice’s history, she becomes something more than the nightmare mommy we have seen in previous seasons.

In the first season I was not fond of the flashback scenes where Beatrice

berated or criticized little BoJack; I thought they displayed the contemporary mania for explanations. People don’t always have reasons for what they do! It’s isn’t always Mommy’s fault! But in this season the long shadow of family trauma gets a full artistic exploration, and now I can’t imagine BoJack without Beatrice.

The comedy in Season 4 is uneven. There are still terrific lines. (Diane’s boss: “Hi Diane, loved your depressing refugee story. We do so many stories that people care about. It’s supes refreshing to see something that doesn’t make you click, but does make you think.”) But the show’s occasional preachiness rears its preaching head, in sophomoric attempts to address gun violence, asexuality and circumcision. The show’s evils-of-demagoguery subplot is surprisingly fun, largely because although it’s Trump-inspired it stays away from anything resembling actual U.S. politics.

Still, when I think about this season, I don’t think about these moments. Instead I think of Princess Carolyn the cat, weaving a fairy tale to console her-

Image: Courtesy of Netflix



self after a terrible personal loss. Or little Beatrice Sugarman watching the shadows of her parents fight.

In Season 1 I assumed the characters were half-animal in order to distance us from their devastating emotions, and also because it is funny. But in this season I started to wonder.

Faulkner's famous one-line chapter in *As I Lay Dying* is spoken by Vardaman Bundren, a little boy trying to understand why his violent mother has been boxed up in a coffin. The Bundren children also imagine that their mother was a horse, that she "foaled" them. Her children's attempts to sort through the impossible, nightmare logic of the adult world produces absurdities much like the surreal creatures who populate BoJack's "Hollywood"—nonsensical fragments of a long-broken order. BoJack's world is a gallows-humor parody of our own. But our own world is a gallows-humor parody of itself, and the only mother's son who was fully human is the Son of Our Lady of Sorrows.

Eve Tushnet is a contributing writer to *America*.

Elegy for a heartbreaker

Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers' 1979 masterpiece "Damn the Torpedoes" was the first album I ever bought with my own money. To say I obsessed over the album would be an understatement. I wore the grooves off it. Barely a teenager, I was learning to play the drums and memorized every lick trying to emulate the feel, the rhythm, the power of Petty and his band. Decades later I can still play those parts to every song, note for note, from memory.

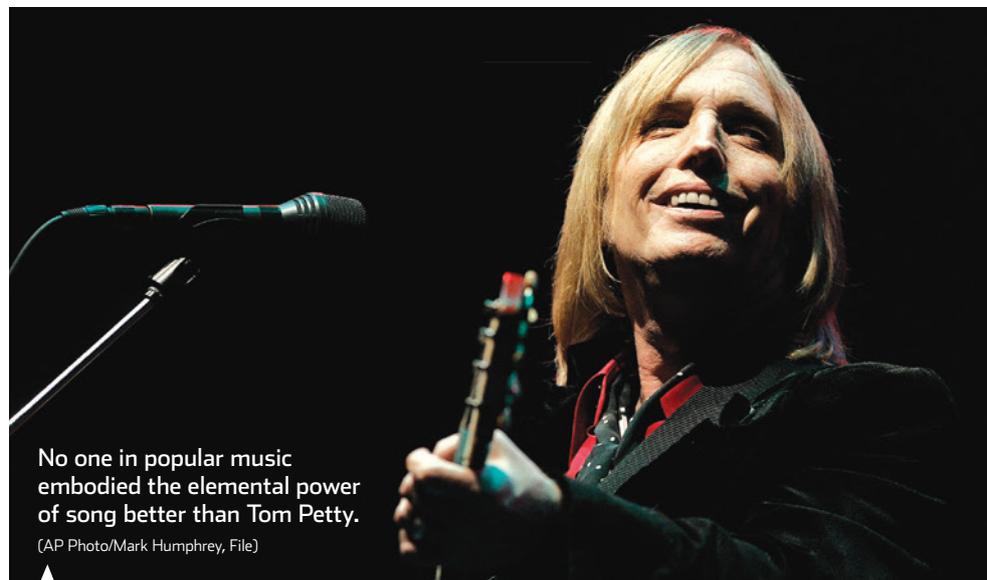
I pored over the artwork and liner notes as if they were sacred documents containing all the secrets to the world that a 13-year-old could imagine. I was a skinny blonde kid, uncomfortable in his own skin, but on the cover of "Torpedoes" I saw that image transformed into something I could live with, something better. On vinyl, it felt as if Petty's voice possessed the power of alchemy. Songs like "Refugee," "Here Comes My Girl" and "Century City" embodied the snarling toughness and coolness I desperately wanted to project, while "Even the Losers" gave voice to the adolescent vulnera-

bility and woundedness I wasn't even aware I was trying to shield from myself and the world.

Comparisons between Petty and Bruce Springsteen were inevitable but always seemed to me to miss the point. Springsteen made powerful music with epic scope and big questions while Petty simply had songs—endless amounts of great, great songs spread out over 16 albums. Over three decades of Petty concerts, the constant refrain I heard from friends who weren't "big fans" was that they couldn't believe how many of his songs they knew.

No one in popular music since the 1970s embodied the elemental power and beauty of song better than Tom Petty. He understood that simple melodies and lyrics have their own alchemy that transcends time and place and that, at their best, on some deep level they resemble prayers that touch our souls.

Bill McGarvey, a musician and writer, is the author of *The Freshman Survival Guide* and owner of *McG-Media.com*.



No one in popular music embodied the elemental power of song better than Tom Petty.

(AP Photo/Mark Humphrey, File)

Ten reasons to oppose the death penalty

This list is still current 35 years later

On Oct. 11, Pope Francis declared bluntly that the death penalty is “contrary to the Gospel.” He highlighted the development of this teaching through the efforts of St. John Paul II and Benedict XVI and also “a change in the consciousness of the Christian people” on the question of the death penalty.

America has a long history of attention to the debate over the death penalty, both in civil society and within the church. In November 1982, as Congress was debating the restoration of the death penalty for some federal crimes, Mary Meehan offered 10 reasons to oppose the death penalty in the pages of *America*.

Her article continues to draw attention through *America*'s website, still consistently drawing page views and readers almost 35 years after its initial publication. In this excerpt, we have provided the full list of 10 reasons but, for reasons of space, have included explanations only for the last three points. The full original article and our extensive archives on the death penalty question can be found at americamagazine.org/topic/death-penalty.

Some of the arguments against the death penalty are essentially conservative, and many others transcend ideology. No one has to agree with all of the arguments in order to reach a decision.

•••

With these alternatives in mind, let us consider 10 good reasons to oppose the death penalty.

1. There is no way to remedy the occasional mistake.

2. There is racial and economic discrimination in application of the death penalty.

3. Application of the death penalty tends to be arbitrary and capricious; for similar crimes, some are sentenced to death while others are not.

4. The death penalty gives some of the worst offenders publicity that they do not deserve.

5. The death penalty involves medical doctors, who are sworn to preserve life, in the act of killing.

6. Executions have a corrupting effect on the public.

7. The death penalty cannot be limited to the worst cases.

8. The death penalty is an expression of the absolute power of the state; abolition of that penalty is a much-needed limit on government power. What makes the state so pure that it has the right to take life? Look at the record of governments throughout history—so often operating with deception, cruelty and greed, so often becoming masters of the citizens they are supposed to serve. “Forbidding a man’s execution,” Camus said, “would amount to proclaiming publicly that society and the state are not absolute values.” It would amount to saying that there are some things even the state may not do....

9. There are strong religious reasons for many to oppose the death penalty. Some find

compelling the thought that Cain, the first murderer, was not executed but was marked with a special sign and made a wanderer upon the face of the earth. Richard Viguerie developed his position on capital punishment by asking what Christ would say and do about it. “I believe that a strong case can be made,” Mr. Viguerie wrote in a recent book, “that Christ would oppose the killing of a human being as punishment for a crime.” This view is supported by the New Testament story about the woman who faced execution by stoning (John 8:7, “He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone”).

Former Senator Harold Hughes (D., Iowa), arguing against the death penalty in 1974, declared: “‘Thou shalt not kill’ is the shortest of the Ten Commandments, uncomplicated by qualification or exception.... It is as clear and awesomely commanding as the powerful thrust of chain lightning out of a dark summer sky.”

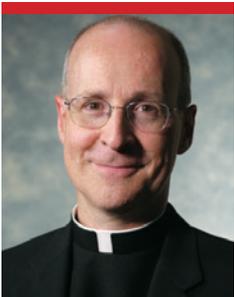
10. Even the guilty have a right to life. Leszek Syski is a Maryland antiabortion activist who says that he “became convinced that the question of whether or not murderers deserve to die is the wrong one. The real question is whether other humans have a right to kill them.” He concluded that they do not after conversations with an opponent of capital punishment who asked, “Why don’t we torture prisoners? Torturing them is less than killing them.” Mr. Syski believes that “torture is dehumanizing, but capital punishment is the essence of dehumanization.”

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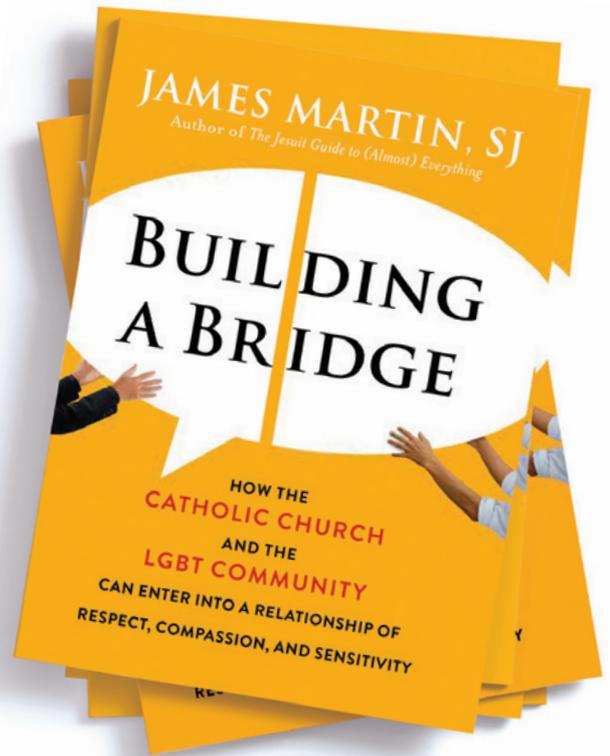
Camus was right: We know enough to say that some crimes require severe punishment. We do not know enough to say when anyone should die.

Mary Meehan, Nov. 20, 1982

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REV. JAMES MARTIN, SJ, is a Jesuit priest, editor at large of *America* magazine, and bestselling author of *Jesus: A Pilgrimage* and *The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything*. In April Pope Francis appointed him as a Consultor to the Secretariat for Communication.



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The Relationship That Matters

Readings: Mal 1:1-10, Ps 131, 1 Thes 2:7-13, Mt 23:1-12

The writings of Matthew and Luke display different models of community. Matthew's model has a bias against titles and structures of authority. Like many newly founded religious movements, Matthew's was small and egalitarian, trusting personal charisma and fraternity over power and hierarchy. A similar community appears in the Epistle of James, which is also thought to come from a Jewish-Christian milieu. The community Luke describes, by contrast, was a complex and vast enterprise. It had regular internal communication and structures for making decisions. This coordination allowed early Christians to proclaim the Gospel over a great area in a comparatively short time. Both models of church exist among Christians today. Although many churches resemble Luke's community more than Matthew's, all Christians need to learn to relate to authority according to Jesus' commands in today's Gospel.

Organized religion exists to offer God adoration and service. Religious leaders, both official and unofficial, should be the foremost examples of such devotion. But God is difficult to perceive, and people can get confused and instead start worshiping the religion rather than the one it serves. Likewise, leaders can use the structures of a religion to serve themselves, twisting the teachings of the faith to attain wealth, power or sex.

Jesus warns against this twofold temptation. He rebukes leaders who draw attention away from God. In his own day, the scribes and Pharisees did so with ostentatious religious garb and tokens of social status. Likewise, he warns his own disciples against playing along. His stark commands not to call anyone on earth "rabbi" (meaning "my great one") or "father" or "master," would have complicated the relationship between his disciples and the leaders of their own Jewish faith. Matthew, writing at a time when this relationship had completely ruptured, understood the wisdom of Jesus' teaching. The first disciples, however, came from a tightly knit hierarchical culture and probably found this teaching bewildering.

Matthew teaches us today about Jesus' own life of

'Call no one on earth your father; you have but one Father in heaven.' (Mt 23:9)

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

What tokens of honor or status draw your attention?

How can you resist them?

Do you have a tendency to put religious leaders "on a pedestal"?

How do you keep your attention focused on God?

faith. The Father was the only rabbi Jesus needed. Jesus trusted the Father's Spirit to interpret the Scriptures and to guide him in their application. The Spirit led Jesus to those places he was needed most, and in the compassion he felt for the people he served, he was pouring out his Father's love.

Just so today, God is the primary teacher and guide of every Christian. Jesus established a community, and individual Christians live out their search for God within a vast and complex church. One fundamental task of this community is to reveal Christ; equally important is its duty to support all who struggle to follow his teachings. Christians can find all sorts of ways to distract themselves with the trappings of religion. In the end, though, only those who understand true humility can walk with Christ each day into the presence of the Father.

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

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Those Who Are Ready

Readings: Wis 6:12-16, Ps 63, 1 Thes 4:13-18, Mt 25:1-13

Only three Sundays remain in the church year. Each of them includes a Gospel about the end times. These are Jesus' responses to the question, "What will it be like in the end?" (Mt 24:3). In this, the readings return to a theme we last saw (and soon will again) in Advent: Be prepared!

Like many in their day, Jesus and his disciples believed that the world was coming to an end. Biblical prophecies foretold an accelerating decay that would reveal itself in political oppression, social chaos, poverty, famine and illness. The many demons we encounter in the Gospels are another indication of this decay. Many thought that as the earth crumbled, creatures from the abyss found ways to rise up and wreak havoc (by contrast, demonic attacks are not a major fear in the Old Testament).

The way the world would end was a matter of debate. Prophets like Zechariah and others with an "apocalyptic" mindset believed a major catastrophe would come first to sweep away the old order (Zech 14:1-5). Others, like Isaiah, believed that the transition would be sudden and peaceful (Is 65:15-25). Jesus described the end in both ways. His statements in Mt 24:1-31 and elsewhere express apocalyptic expectations. Today's Gospel more resembles the

vision of Isaiah. Jesus' return at the end will be like that of a bridegroom who shows up late to his own wedding feast.

In his discussion of the end times, Matthew emphasizes a spirit of readiness. His generation was the first to accept that Jesus' return was delayed. Rather than jettison decades of belief, Christians took Jesus' delay as a motivation for virtue. Jesus was coming again, but as he warned, no one knew the day or the hour. Christians should live, therefore, like people who are always ready for the final moment.

The wise virgins symbolize such Christians. Taking extra oil was costly and inconvenient, but it meant that they were ready for the feast when the bridegroom came. By contrast, the other virgins were foolish in two ways. They failed to bring extra oil, and they failed to take advantage of the bridegroom's delay to acquire more.

These women illustrate a mystery that occupies Matthew throughout his Gospel. Although Jesus called everyone, not all responded. Of those who responded, even fewer persisted in the faith. This mystery also lies behind the parables of the sower and the wedding feast. In today's Gospel passage, the oil symbolizes this persistence. The sacrifices and inconveniences of acquiring and carrying extra oil were trivial compared to the joys of the feast to come. Given the nature of the task, the oil could not be shared. Each virgin had to ensure her own supply. Even though they had said yes to the bridegroom's invitation, failure to bring extra oil meant the foolish ones could not attend the feast.

The oil thus symbolizes our readiness for God's grace. The daily tasks necessary to prepare ourselves—prayer, acts of forgiveness and generosity, trust in providence—are comparable to the minor sacrifices and inconveniences of the wise virgins. The more prepared we are, however, the readier we will be to hold the lamp up to light Christ's face when he comes again.

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

'Therefore, stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour.' (Mt 25:13)

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

How do you make yourself ready for Christ?

How do you steward your "oil"?

What do you do every day to stay ready for the arrival of grace?

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Feminist Theology in a Divided World: Walls and Paths to Global Solidarity

María Pilar Aquino, S.T.D.

Professor of Theology and Religious Studies, University of San Diego

María Pilar Aquino is a founding member of the Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians and served as its first female president. She has written extensively on issues related to the study of society from the Christian perspective and is recognized internationally as an expert in the fields of liberation theology and Latina feminist theology.

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Jesuit Refugee Service/USA
LESSONS FROM ANNE ESSAY COMPETITION
COURAGE, COMPASSION, AND HOPE IN REFUGE



In collaboration with the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Jesuit Schools Network, and America Media, Jesuit Refugee Service/USA (JRS/USA) is pleased to announce the “*Lessons from Anne Essay Competition: Courage, Compassion, and Hope in Refuge*.” This essay competition is an opportunity for students of Jesuit Schools, grades 9-12, to reflect on the life and legacy of Anne Frank and apply the lessons from Anne’s life to today’s refugee crisis.

As a refugee herself, and memorably in her remarkable diary, Anne Frank gave an example of courage, compassion, and hope that can serve as a beacon for refugees and displaced persons in our world today. Through the essay competition, we’re asking students to reflect on Anne’s experience and how it can inform conversation around the lives of refugees today.

The top essay chosen will be published in *America: The Jesuit Review of Faith & Culture*. The flagship magazine of America Media, America is the leading Catholic journal of opinion in the United States. Learn more at www.americamagazine.org.

This essay competition is inspired by Anne Frank Award JRS/USA received from the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in September 2017. JRS received the honor for our work improving access to education for refugees and others affected by war and conflict.

ESSAY QUESTION

What can Anne Frank’s life and legacy teach us about how to address the current refugee crisis - more than 65 million people displaced today globally, the highest levels since World War II?

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

WORD LIMIT: 1,500 words

ELIGIBILITY: Students enrolled in any member of the Jesuit Schools Network (Grades 9-12).

SUBMISSION DETAILS AND DEADLINES: Essays must be submitted via [JRS/USA Google Form](#) found at WWW.jrsusa.org/AnneFrank. Submissions will be reviewed by a committee including staff from Jesuit Refugee Service/USA, the Jesuit Schools Network, and America Media. Essays will be accepted until 5:00 p.m. ET on **January 15, 2018** and Winners will be announced in **April 2018**.

AWARDS:

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- 1st Place - \$1,000 monetary prize & essay will be published in America
- 2nd Place - \$500 monetary prize
- 3rd Place - \$250 monetary prize

visit www.JRSUSA.org/AnneFrank to get more information

Questions? Please email Giulia McPherson at gmcperson@jesuits.org

Invisible No Longer

Catholics of color are keeping the Catholic Church alive in the United States

By Mary C. Curtis



As an African-American Catholic, I often feel like the unnamed black man in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, present but not really seen.

I was raised steeped in Catholicism—from my name, Mary Cecelia, to my education. I grew up in Maryland in the 1960s and '70s. I attended the now-shuttered St. Pius V Catholic school, where I was taught by teachers from the Oblate Sisters of Providence, an order founded in 1829 to educate and care for African-American children. I wore my faith proudly, even when the bonds of it were strained. When my classmates and I got the side-eye from the white Catholic school kids at citywide field day games held in Patterson Park, or when some members of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul at the predominantly white Seton High attributed my high test scores to divine intervention rather than intellect, I remained proud of both my heritage and my faith.

My Catholic education continued at Fordham University, where the Jesuits offered a fine education. It was at Fordham that I met my husband, and though he has strayed from the fold, our son would not have been baptized in any other faith.

My faith has also played a role in my career, which, for me, is akin to a vocation. I became a journalist because I wanted to illuminate the lives of those so often dismissed as not wor-

thy of notice or respect, despite the full, complicated and generous lives they—my friends, family and neighbors—lived. This is evident in my writing and in the work I do with The OpEd Project. We work with individuals and institutions across the United States, from universities to corporations, and encourage under-represented experts and thought leaders (especially women) to influence the important public conversations of our time.

The bonds of my faith have once again been strained, even tested, by the partisan infighting of today's U.S. political scene, which finds very little cooperation and compromise. During the 2016 presidential election, Catholic voters were split between Hillary Clinton and Donald J. Trump. Throughout President Trump's first year in office, we have seen the chasm among many U.S. Catholics grow even wider on issues that range from health care to immigration. In my diverse but mostly white parish, we have long since stopped talking politics and justice, sticking instead to the ministries for the homeless, hungry and disabled and the spiritual relationships that have kept us close.

The truth is, the Catholic Church in the United States is being transformed by its black and brown parishioners, whose numbers and voices are rising. They and priests from around the world are keeping the church alive. When the National Gathering

for Black Catholic Women met in Charlotte a few years ago, I connected with my sister, still holding strong in her Baltimore parish—transformed from white to black and offering services with hymns, praise dance and more emotion than the services of our youth. Yet the parishioners are as devout when it comes to the celebration of the Mass.

After a right-wing gathering turned to tragedy and death in Charlottesville, Va., this summer, some evangelical Christian leaders sought to make excuses for the president's failure to forcefully denounce white supremacists and neo-Nazis. U.S. Catholic leaders, on the other hand, forcefully reacted on the side of those marching and, yes, dying, against hate and for justice. There was some comfort in a church that looks to the future, though not without the stumbles that will hurt and sow doubt. It is a new day in an old faith, with more voices sharing their concerns and their joy—and there is no going back for Catholics of every color if we are to live our faith.

We were never invisible.

Mary C. Curtis, a columnist for Roll Call and NBCBLK and a contributor to National Public Radio, has worked at The New York Times, The Baltimore Sun and The Charlotte Observer and is a senior leader at The OpEd Project. Twitter: @mcurtisnc3.

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