

# America

NOVEMBER 26, 2018

THE JESUIT REVIEW OF FAITH AND CULTURE

2018 CPA MAGAZINE OF THE YEAR

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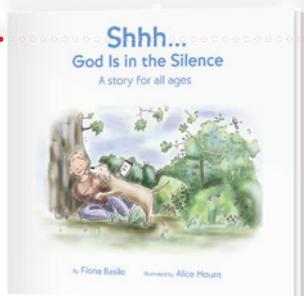
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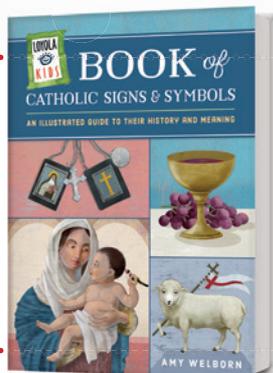
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## America's (Un)Civil War

The genius of the American founders lay in their ability to design institutions that would call forth the best in a fallen humanity while containing the worst. The separation of powers in the U.S. Constitution, novel for its time, is a good example of this theo-political balancing act: No single person can be trusted to wield power; therefore, power must be shared among many and policed by a legal system of checks and balances. Yet our founders also recognized that the U.S. Constitution is but one part of a larger whole called the American political economy. As I have previously noted in this space, while the United States does have a single document called “The Constitution,” with an uppercase T and C, the American system also presumes nonconstitutional values and customs that are just as vital, if not more vital to the health of our democracy.

Among these indispensable customs are decorum and civility in public argument, which largely distinguish a polity from a mere mob. A presupposition of our political economy is that reasonable people can and do disagree about important public matters and that they will do so through spirited yet civil public argument. Americans have not always been civil or decorous with one another, of course; but until recently this was the minimal expectation, and when one failed to meet it, some social penalty was often applied.

Yet the words of the previous paragraph now seem as quaint as a telegram. The public discourse has devolved to such an extent that the value of civility itself is now openly questioned as often as its conventions are routinely violated. “You talk about somebody that’s a loser,” President Trump recently

said about a journalist. “She doesn’t know what the hell she’s doing.... But she’s very nasty. And she shouldn’t be. She shouldn’t be. You’ve got to treat the White House and the office of the presidency with respect.”

That last bit is true. But the president should be treated with respect because all people should be treated with respect. That is the value that justifies civility. Embedded in the very notion of democracy, of a free and fair society, is the principle that we are all worthy of respect or none of us is. When challenged about his lack of decorum, Mr. Trump responds by telling us that he is the victim of slander and is therefore justified in employing a bombastic style. People hit him, so he hits them back, his handlers tell us. Yet that is the moral reasoning of a 12-year-old. Few parents would accept the excuse “Everybody else is doing it” from their children. So why do we accept this justification from the president? Why do some offer it in defense of his actions?

I am well aware that Mr. Trump is not the only demagogue in the country. A quick glance at my Twitter feed is enough to establish that sad fact. But Mr. Trump is the only one who happens to be president of the United States and, as such, has a greater duty than most to deploy his rhetoric with prudence, decorum and moral clarity, an extra-constitutional but nonetheless essential duty of his office, one he consistently fails to execute. While Mr. Trump is far from the only culprit in the demise of the civic discourse, he is the most visible; and, whether we like it or not, he establishes the standard for others. As we used to say growing up on Cape Cod, “a fish rots from the head.”

It is unlikely that Mr. Trump will change his ways. But we can—if we want to. I fear that too many of us, while loudly complaining about the polarization and coarseness in our public discourse, quietly rather enjoy it, even if only subconsciously. Deep down in places we don’t like to talk about, we seem to get a thrill from the politics of destruction. It makes us feel powerful, if only for a moment. Cain didn’t kill Abel, after all, over a mere difference of opinion. He killed him out of jealousy, arrogance and pride. So too do we.

Overcoming sin requires grace. Our founders knew that. They did not understand civility to be something like a social contract: We agree to treat each other a certain way; and if the other party breaks the deal, then we are released from the obligation. No, our founders understood that the duty to be civil is not rooted in social custom but in the divine command to love one another. And God didn’t say: “Since some of you are not loving one another, all bets are off.”

God doesn’t ask us, he orders us to love one another. Civility is one way we carry out that command. The task of every citizen, but especially the Christian citizen, is to testify to this divine command in all our public actions; to labor to build a public square that calls forth the best in a fallen humanity while containing the worst, a place where destructive confrontation yields to creative encounter, a place of true civil dialogue not for the sake of one but for the many.

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



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The leaders of Morocco, Germany, France, Canada, Niger and the Republic of Guinea walk toward the Arc de Triomphe in Paris as part of the commemorations marking the 100th anniversary of the armistice ending World War I, Nov. 11.  
Cover image: iStock

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## Does political rhetoric incite violence?

Ninety-five percent of respondents told **America** that yes, political rhetoric can incite violence. Respondents cited current events as evidence for how irresponsible political rhetoric can result in violence.

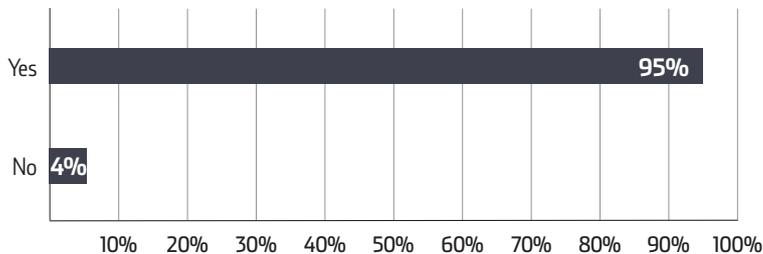
“The recent pipe bombings and the murders at the Tree of Life seem to be inspired by the appeal to violence and hatred espoused by the president,” wrote Sheila Kurtz of Knoxville, Tenn. “The demonization of desperate refugees and sending thousands of soldiers [to the U.S.-Mexico border] will inflame others.”

Diane Dragonetti of New York said: “The heated political rhetoric is giving public permission to people to vent their deepest prejudices.” She continued, “All bets are off since the president, and others in his party, are so public in their vitriol about those who don’t support their political agenda.” Jill Caldwell of Helena, Mont., agreed. “When a politician makes inappropriate, hateful and disparaging

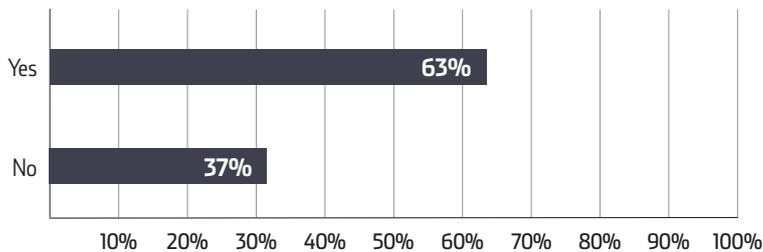
comments about anything, but especially people, those who are already angry feel justified in acting out on their negative feelings.”

Sixty-three percent of respondents, including Ms. Caldwell, said political rhetoric had affected their personal relationships. “I have been called a heretic, a liberal and a non-orthodox Catholic because I disagree with certain political opinions, not to mention the support of refugees, immigrants and others,” she said. Andrea Pogan of Perrysburg, Ohio, shared that her family has suffered as the result of political rhetoric. “I have two sons who are Trump supporters and it has strained my relationship with them. At first I fought very hard to set politics aside, but one of my sons will not stop bringing it up around me,” said Ms. Pogan. “I cannot help but feel that as a parent I have failed in some profound way. I have decided not to spend Thanksgiving with them.”

### Do you think today’s heated political rhetoric has contributed to or could lead to violence in the United States?



### Has the current political rhetoric affected your own relationships with family/friends/coworkers/neighbors?



It’s no longer the case that our co-workers or friends simply have political views that differ from our own. Now their political views have become a threat to our identities, a threat to our concept of what America stands for. It seems we’ve lost the charity of the old attitude of agreeing to disagree.

Jose Rodriguez, Santa Maria, Calif.



Although I am Catholic, my husband is Jewish. My Republican relatives used to welcome him; they now refuse to refute the hateful rhetoric coming out of the White House and have actually suggested that Jews bring the anti-Semitic violence on themselves.

Christine C., Rochester, N.Y.

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 Survivor's Hope

Re “Building a Future for the Church” (Our Take, 11/12): Thanks to the editors for these ideas, these words, these tiny lights in the darkness all around us. This survivor was forced to leave organized religion decades ago. But all these thousands of days and nights later, I still find that faith, hope and love lead to the only answers currently available. Fare forward, voyagers!

Sheila Gray 🗨️

### God's Grace

Re “Intrusions of the Spirit,” by Jeremy McLellan (11/12): Thanks to Mr. McLellan for his thoughts in this article. I just began working as a volunteer at an equestrian riding center for persons with disabilities; and already in my short time there, I see what the author speaks of and realize that they are all gifts God has placed in our lives to show God's presence and grace.

Dave Koss 🗨️

### Far Off Broadway

Re “The Troubles Bring Trouble to a Farm Family,” by Rob Weinert-Kendt (11/12): It would be so nice if plays like Jez Butterworth's “The Ferryman” could be produced outside major cities. But that will never happen unless someone adapts the script to four actors, with perhaps one or two actors playing one to three roles.

John Mack 🗨️

### Clarification

Re “L.G.B.T. Issues Raised by Youth During Synod Discussions,” by Michael J. O'Loughlin (11/12): It is an important question that needs to be settled, but a ministry that denies the church's longstanding teaching on sex is no ministry at all. Whether we are talking to L.G.B.T. Catholics or young people or the remarried or seminarians, I think the ambiguity around church teaching on sex is really harmful.

Nick Heckman 🗨️

### Waiting for Transparency

Re “Has the Sexual Abuse Crisis Affected Your Donations to the Church?” (Your Take, 11/12): After collecting donations for the bishop's annual appeal, our diocese and

parish are now asking for a Catholic Strong fund for over \$1.25 million for church repairs—without providing any details for what items need to be repaired and at what cost. I received my donation envelope this past week, and it will not be returned until full transparency is given.

Mike Macrie 🗨️

### Personal Experience

Re “Hungry for More,” by Liam Callanan (11/12): When my daughter went to college, she had previously stopped going to weekend Mass at our home parish. As we were moving her into her freshman year dorm at a major university with a very active Newman Center, I signed her up for the contact list, as I knew she had no such inclination. When a representative from the Newman Center came knocking at her door, she politely declined.

Catherine Arventos 🗨️

### Is the Church Declining?

Re “A Church Not Divided,” by Joseph Hoover, S.J. (10/29): Brother Hoover is probably correct in saying that there is no Catholic civil war, in the literal meaning of that term. But there is large-scale secession, manifested in diminished attendance, diminished financial support, and, from my local sources, diminished interest in initiating adults into the church (R.C.I.A.); and coming years will bring a massive demographic secession as death removes so many of our members.

Jerome Heavey

Easton, Pa.

### A Different Era

Re “Cardinal Ouellet Responds to Viganò Charges, Accuses Him of Blasphemy,” by Gerard O'Connell (10/29): The days when prominent ecclesiastical personages could suppress criticism are now over, fortunately. The traditional posture of “You may not say anything negative about the church or clergy” was in no small measure responsible for the sexual abuse scandal in the first place.

Robert Dyson 🗨️

🗨️ Comments drawn from our website, [americamagazine.org](http://americamagazine.org), and America Media's social media platforms.

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

## Can the New Congress Live Up to Pope Francis' Vision of 'Good Politics'?

As Americans went to the polls in record numbers for the midterm elections on Nov. 6, delivering the House of Representatives to the Democrats and strengthening the Republican hold on the Senate, the Vatican announced that the theme for Pope Francis' 2019 World Peace Day message will be "good politics." The pope's annual message, which is sent to national leaders around the world, will focus on "mutual trust" and encourage "dialogue among stakeholders in society, between generations and among cultures."

As a country increasingly polarized along lines of gender, race, education and geography enters at least two years of divided government, members of the 116th U.S. Congress face a choice.

While partisan divisions regarding oversight of the executive branch and issues like immigration and abortion are likely to remain entrenched, there are other issues on which compromise is still achievable and where "good politics" can still be practiced.

Although this fall's campaigns depicted opponents as existential threats to the future of the republic, there was an October surprise worth celebrating: On Oct. 6, the Senate voted 98 to 1 to pass legislation aimed at confronting the opioid epidemic. The bill easily passed the House in June, 393 to 8, and was signed into law by President Trump on Oct. 24. The bill expands access to addiction treatment, increases penalties for the overprescription of painkillers and steps up enforcement to stop the flow of illicit drugs at the southern border.

While experts say the package is not nearly ambitious enough given the enormity of the crisis—a record 72,000

people died from drug overdoses in 2017—it is an accomplishment worth building on in the new year.

Several other legislative opportunities stand out as ripe for bipartisan action. First, tax reform that prioritizes working families would be a welcome development after the 2017 tax bill, the benefits of which largely went to the wealthy and corporations. Congress should especially consider an expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit, a tax refund that targets low- and moderate-income Americans and encourages participation in the workforce. The E.I.T.C. not only has a proven track record of lifting people out of poverty but has also long enjoyed support from both sides of the aisle.

Next, Republicans and Democrats can come together to protect working women and their unborn children by strengthening the Pregnancy Discrimination Act. Passed in 1978, the current law requires employers to provide special accommodations for pregnant women only if other workers are also entitled to similar protections.

A recent investigation by The New York Times examined working conditions for pregnant women at warehouses—one of the fastest-growing job markets in the country. The report chronicled a number of pregnant women at a single warehouse in Memphis who suffered miscarriages after their requests for lighter lifting assignments were refused.

A bipartisan group of 125 lawmakers in the House and Senate has co-sponsored the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, which would require employers to accommodate pregnant women as long as doing so does not

place an "undue burden" on the company. Ensuring basic protections for working mothers is a small but worthwhile step toward building the humane family leave system this country desperately needs.

Finally, while the oft-touted grand bargain on infrastructure has become more of a punchline than a serious policy proposal, there is a reason lawmakers and the president want every week to be infrastructure week. Vice President Mike Pence said in an interview with *The Hill* on the eve of the election that Mr. Trump would push for an infrastructure package in the new year that includes "our roads and bridges, and highways and byways, and ports and airports." He continued, "We think there's an opportunity to work in a bipartisan way in the Congress of the United States to advance that."

Nancy Pelosi, the presumed leader of the new Democratic majority in the House of Representatives, has also cited infrastructure as one of the most promising areas of bipartisan legislation. "One of my themes is build, build, build," Ms. Pelosi said at an event hosted by CNN on Oct. 22. "Build the infrastructure of America from sea to shining sea."

The extreme partisanship afflicting U.S. politics may be made worse by the perception that Washington is broken and that progress on major issues is possible only if one's preferred party takes complete control of the levers of power.

While compromise on the issues noted here will not defuse partisan opposition—nor should it—practical legislative achievements could help reclaim some public support for bi-

partisanship and cooperation. And maybe some of those accomplishments of “good politics” might find their way into the campaign rhetoric of 2020.

## The Moral Duty to Fight Anti-Semitism

When atrocities like the murder of 11 Jewish worshippers at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh on Oct. 27 occur, a feeling of helplessness can sometimes descend on us all. Is there any way to prevent such crimes? In reality, there is much we can do. We must directly challenge the deranged ideologies that can spawn such acts and the toxic political culture in which they find a fertile soil. This means challenging the villainization of Jews and other minority groups, which gives encouragement, even if unintentionally, to these acts of violent depravity.

If the church has learned anything from its own history of anti-Semitism, it is that looking the other way is never justified. All people, but above all Christians, have a moral duty to support our Jewish neighbors, to call out anti-Semitism whenever and wherever it rears its odious head.

There is a “spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews,” the church has taught since “Nostra Aetate” in 1965, and we must avoid and indeed condemn “any discrimination against people or harassment of them because of their race, color, condition of life, or religion” (No. 5). Powerful words—but words that demand deeds.

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## Catholic colleges should turn off pornography

Despite—or perhaps because of—its prevalence, pornography is an uncomfortable topic to talk about. So it is notable that 82 male students (as well as a separate group of female students) at the University of Notre Dame signed their names to a letter in October asking the school to bar access to pornographic material on campus internet networks.

A filter to make pornography inaccessible on campus networks, they wrote, would help the university “send the unequivocal message that pornography is an affront to human rights and catastrophic to individuals and relationships.” The students also condemned “the highly addictive nature of pornography, which affects the human brain as both a stimulant and an opiate.”

Not every viewer of pornography is an addict, but neither is every decision to view porn a perfectly rational one. Many students end up doing so because of loneliness, romantic frustration or even plain boredom. Putting the onus on students to purchase their own internet filter, or to rely on sheer willpower to avoid temptation when it strikes, seems like setting the default in the wrong position.

Catholic colleges should limit access to pornography on their campus infrastructure to make it easier for students to live up to the best version of themselves. Even raising a few mild hurdles to accessing porn could reduce the tension between what students say they want for themselves and what they actually end up doing—what behavioral economists call “dynamic inconsistencies.”

Some of the thoughtful opposition to the idea of barring access does not defend pornography as such but in-

stead raises questions about the practicality of a ban and its potential spillover effects. How would an antiporn policy be enforced? What about threats to legitimate academic research?

These concerns are overstated. Students who might trip the filter while researching sex trafficking, National Geographic archives or Renaissance art could be asked to fill out a simple form and receive a research waiver from filtering. (Plus, anyone who has ever tried to stream a World Cup game at work knows that no filter is foolproof.)

The idea is not to create a vice squad to kick down dorm room doors and check browser histories but to nudge students toward living up to their own expectations through a healthier view of human sexuality than is found in the exploitative underbelly of the web.

New research finds that young men spend nearly an hour a week viewing porn, on average, and a 2007 survey found that about half of college students viewed it at least every other day. Even secular colleges should think about what this widespread consumption is doing to gender relationships. But church-affiliated colleges, in particular, have a duty to care for their students’ souls; and their unwillingness to infringe on dubious components of personal freedom for fear of being called puritanical borders on negligence.

Some may ask: Why not let students train themselves to avoid pornography? After all, we trust college students to make their own decisions in all sorts of realms, and the days of *in loco parentis* are long gone. And isn’t some sort of internet filter removing the ability for students to build up the moral fiber to say no on their own?

This argument might have held more weight before we knew how easy it was for a mistyped URL to bring you to a bazaar of sex and nudity that even the most straitlaced altar server might have a hard time clicking away from. Particularly in the #MeToo era, the assumptions and decisions made without thinking about how we are teaching students to view each other deserve more scrutiny.

Pornography teaches a person to view the other as an object for one’s own sexual gratification, and its value to any community, particularly a university one, is zero at most. Making it even marginally harder to access would be a concrete way colleges could demonstrate their commitment to a fuller account of true human dignity. It would also make the statement that the crass utilitarianism of pornography’s view of the human person is not something they want to promote through their IT infrastructure.

If a group of students asked for a public health initiative to increase their ability to say no to the temptation to abuse drugs or alcohol, we would applaud them. Catholic universities owe their students no less than to take their requests seriously when it comes to a less noticeable form of harm and potential addiction.

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Patrick T. Brown is a graduate student at Princeton University’s Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs.  
Twitter: @PTBwrites.

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## A 2018 midterm roundup: health care, wages, abortion and more

By Michael J. O'Loughlin

While the waviness of the midterm election on Nov. 6 continues to be debated, Simone Campbell, S.S.S., called the day “a tremendous success,” at least when it came to the dozen U.S. House races targeted by the Nuns on the Bus national tour that ended earlier this month outside President Trump’s Florida home.

Sister Campbell, executive director of Network, said one factor shaping the results in eight House races was the “substantive conversations about the common good” the group facilitated. Network kept its advocacy focused on turning back efforts to repeal the Affordable Care Act and on a federal tax cut last year that it charged put funding for social programs at risk.

Sister Campbell was encouraged by women voters, who

appeared to break for Democrats in key suburban congressional districts, as well as the record number of women headed to the House of Representatives as the Democrats took control of the House, including the first two Native American women and the first two Muslim women elected to Congress.

“I take heart in that people are standing up for the common good,” Sister Campbell said.

A number of ballot measures supported by other Catholic leaders passed on Election Day.

In Florida, voters approved an amendment to the state Constitution that will automatically restore voting rights to more than one million convicted felons. The Florida Catholic Conference had urged voters to accept the proposal, writing in a voters’ guide, “Restoring their right to

◀ Voters at Assumption Catholic Church in Los Angeles on Nov. 6.



CNS photo/Mike Nelson, EPA

vote is a meaningful step to engage their full participation in their communities.”

A minimum wage increase was approved in two states. Arkansas will raise the wage from \$8.50 an hour to \$11 by 2021, while Missouri will gradually raise the \$7.85 minimum wage to \$12 an hour.

The Catholic bishops of Missouri had supported the increase, writing in a voting guide, “We have seen within our own parish communities the effect that unemployment, underemployment, and low wages have on our own parishioners and on society at large.”

Expanding Medicaid to cover people who cannot afford health insurance was on the ballot in three states. Voters in Idaho, Nebraska and Utah approved the move by solid margins. The Catholic Diocese of Salt Lake City was part of a coalition of religious groups urging voters to pass the initiative in a state where most residents belong to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Catholic voters made up about a quarter of those voting in House races on Nov. 6, according to a CNN exit poll, and those voters were almost evenly split between Democratic and Republican candidates. Writing at Religion News Service, Mark Silk noted the change from 2014, when one exit poll showed 54 percent of Catholic voters favoring Republican candidates.

“[This shift] may reflect the higher turnout in the Latino vote, representing a larger, more Democratic portion of the Catholic vote as a whole,” Mr. Silk wrote.

Though the Catholic vote was important, the polling group P.R.R.I. estimated that white evangelicals continued to be overrepresented at the polls this year. Robert P. Jones, the group’s founder, noted on Twitter that white evangelical Protestants comprised 26 percent of this year’s electorate, though they make up only 15 percent of the overall U.S. population.

Among all voters, according to the CNN exit poll, those who say they attend services weekly or more went for Republicans, 58 percent to 40 percent. Those who at-

tend a few times each month voted for Democrats, 52 percent to 46 percent. (The AP VoteCast poll showed similar results; see charts on next page.)

Pro-life measures were on the ballot in at least three states. Voters in Oregon rejected a ban on public funding of abortion, 64 percent to 36 percent. But West Virginia prohibited the use of state funds to pay for abortions by a four-point margin—52 percent to 48 percent. And Alabama passed a constitutional amendment banning public funding of abortion and “declaring...the state’s policy to recognize and support the sanctity of unborn life,” 60 percent to 40 percent.

While pro-life groups found plenty to like about Tuesday’s results, particularly a Senate that appears ready to confirm the appointment of conservative judges to the U.S. Supreme Court, Kristen Day, head of Democrats for Life, said her group is “really sad” at the defeat of Senator Joe Donnelly, Democrat of Indiana. He lost to pro-life Republican Mike Braun.

But she also pointed to re-election victories for Democratic senators Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Bob Casey in Pennsylvania, who sometimes cast pro-life votes, as signs of hope. With the exception of the Republican Dean Heller of Nevada, senators who supported Justice Brett Kavanaugh’s nomination to the Supreme Court were re-elected, while at least two other Democrats from red states who opposed Mr. Kavanaugh, Senator Heidi Heitkamp of North Dakota and Senator Claire McCaskill of Missouri, were defeated.

Ms. Day said she is hopeful that a Democratic majority in the House may be able to work with Senate Republicans and the president to enact paid maternity leave, an issue she hoped would not “get bogged down in the abortion debate but could help reduce abortions.”

In other races of interest to Catholic voters, Representative Conor Lamb won re-election to the House from Pennsylvania. Mr. Lamb, a Democrat, won a special election earlier this year in a normally reliably Republican district. The Catholic candidate had faced controversy over his views on abortion, which he said he personally opposed but would not seek to ban.

Representative Dan Lipinski, a Democrat from a Chicago suburb who is against abortion, handily won his seat, following a close primary challenge earlier this year. Mr. Lipinski’s Republican opponent was a self-described

neo-Nazi who denies the Holocaust.

And in the first statewide referendum on transgender rights, Massachusetts voters on Tuesday beat back a repeal attempt and reaffirmed by a 2-to-1 margin a 2016 law extending nondiscrimination protections to transgender people, including their use of public bathrooms and locker rooms. Catholic leaders were mostly silent on the question.

In Colorado, Jared Polis became the first openly gay man to be elected governor, while Gov. Kate Brown of Oregon, who identifies herself as bisexual, was re-elected. Both are Democrats.

Michael J. O’Loughlin, *national correspondent*.  
 Twitter: @MikeOLoughlin.  
 Material from the Associated Press was used in this report.

NEWLY ELECTED



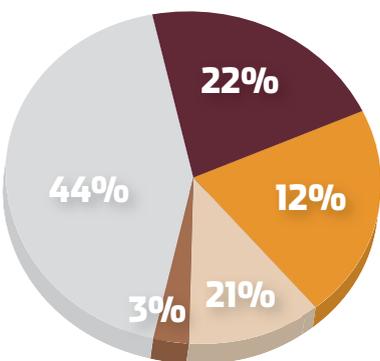
**Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez**, a 29-year-old Democrat from New York, is the youngest woman ever elected to Congress.

**Ilhan Omar**, a Democrat from Minnesota who came to the U.S. as a refugee from Somalia, and **Rashida Tlaib**, a Democrat from Michigan, are the first two Muslim women in Congress.

**Mike DeWine**, a pro-life Catholic Republican, bucked the “blue wave” and won election as governor of Ohio. At 71, he is the oldest of the 20 new governors.

**Jared Polis**, Democrat of Colorado, is the first openly gay man to be elected governor of any state.

RELIGIOUS IDENTITY

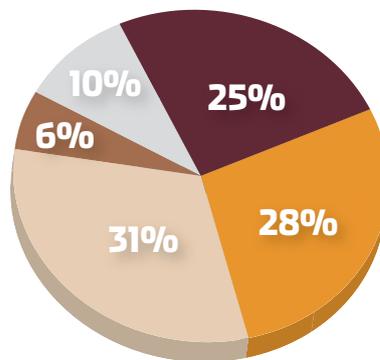


**Catholic Voters**  
 49% Democratic  
 49% Republican

**White Catholics, estimated at 16% of voters, voted 56% Republican**

Religion	Dem %	Rep %
Catholics (22% of all voters)	49%	49%
Protestants/other Christians (44%)	41%	57%
Jewish (3%)	71%	28%
Other religions (12%)	63%	33%
Unaffiliated (21%)	70%	27%

CHURCH ATTENDANCE

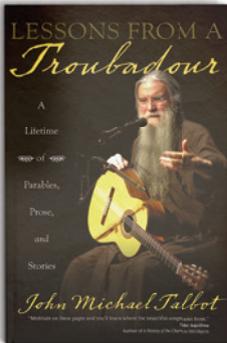


**White evangelicals**  
 80% Republican  
**All other voters**  
 58% Democratic

Attendance	Dem %	Rep %
Weekly (25% of all voters)	37%	61%
A few times a month (10%)	47%	51%
Once a month (6%)	50%	47%
A few times a year (31%)	51%	47%
Never (28%)	63%	35%

Sources: The AP VoteCast, conducted on Election Day and the preceding week by telephone and mail by the University of Chicago for Fox News and the Associated Press, as reported by the Wall Street Journal. CNN Exit Polls, conducted on Election Day, reported similar results: It estimated that 26 percent of the electorate was Catholic and that 50 percent of that group voted for Democratic and 49 percent for Republican candidates. Photos: Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (AP Photo/Bebeto Matthews), Ilhan Omar (AP Photo/Jeff Baenen, File), Mike DeWine (AP Photo/Tony Dejak), Jared Polis (AP Photo/David Zalubowski).

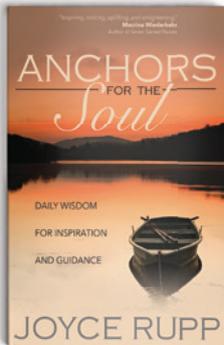
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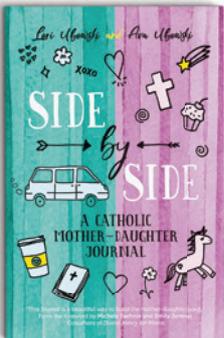
—Mike Aquilina  
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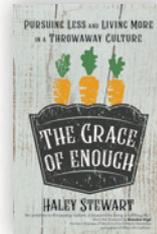
—Paula D'Arcy  
 Author of *Winter of the Heart*



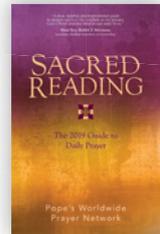
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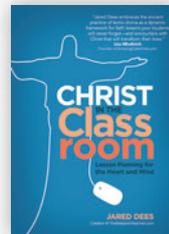
—From the foreword by Michele Faehnle and Emily Jaminet  
 Authors of *Divine Mercy for Moms*



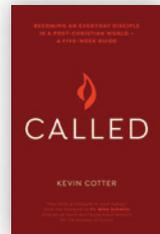
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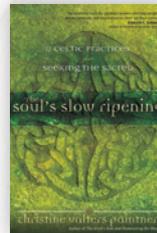
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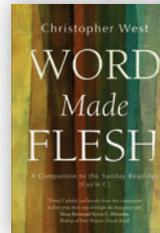
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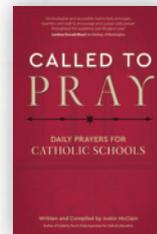
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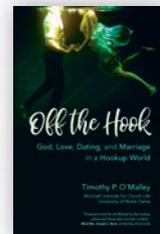
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CNS photo/David Maung

## A statue of the Virgin Mary will be a sign of welcome on the U.S.-Mexico border

Bishop Robert McElroy of San Diego greets Jim Bliesner next to a replica of the statue of Mary he is creating near the U.S.-Mexico border.

Two parallel fences line either side of the Tijuana River. The southernmost barrier roughly marks the international boundary between the United States and Mexico, between San Diego, Calif., and Tijuana, Baja California.

The area is patrolled 24/7 by U.S. Border Patrol agents in S.U.V.s and helicopters. Cameras monitor the area to spot anyone who might try to cross the border illegally.

But it was not always this way, according to Deacon José Luis Medina, the administrator of Our Lady of Mount Carmel parish in San Ysidro, a San Diego neighborhood just north of the border. Deacon Medina was born in Tijuana.

“We have a good relationship between Mexico and San Diego,” Deacon Medina said. “A lot of people come from Tijuana to go shopping here. We’re not very happy with the wall.”

Our Lady of Mount Carmel will be the site of a 40-foot “Welcome the Stranger” sculpture. The steel monument to the Virgin Mary, which will be surrounded by a meditation garden, was inspired by the Statue of Liberty and commissioned by the San Diego Organizing Project.

“The president wants to build the wall, and we want to build a bridge,” Deacon Medina said. “We are Christians. Our faith tells us that everyone is a human being.”

The sculpture will stand in stark relief to the increasingly militarized border. During his presidential campaign, Mr. Trump vowed to build a “great border wall.” Earlier this year, the president visited San Diego to see eight border wall prototypes, but community members say the “Welcome the Stranger” statue is not meant as a political statement.

“This has nothing to do with politics,” said David Gonzalez, a parishioner at Our Lady of Mount Carmel for 20 years. “This is who we are and what we believe in. We welcome people.”

It is personal for Mr. Gonzalez, whose mother was born in Mexico. He also has undocumented friends in the community who “are doing very well, helping the economy and everything,” he said.

“I feel a love for two countries. I believe there is so much culture that can be shared,” Mr. Gonzalez said. “People are coming to find liberty and to have a better life.”

Parish and community members like Mr. Gonzalez gathered with the artist Jim Bliesner to collaborate on the sculpture’s design. Mr. Bliesner, who has been involved in what he called “advocacy by design” in the past, has had work exhibited around the world. He produced several pieces of public art in San Diego and Tijuana.

The “Welcome the Stranger” sculpture may be the most complex of his works to date. It is meant to be a beacon of hope, a welcoming hand and a memorial to international immigrants, he said.

“The experience of the migrant is a hard one,” Mr. Bliesner said. “That experience cuts across cultures. The motif starts as religious, but it is a universal statement.”

The challenge will be to go from the existing four-foot model to something 10 times larger, Mr. Bliesner said. Planners wanted an even taller monument, but it would have been in the way of two flight paths. The project is scheduled to break ground in January.

“Fundamentally, people of our culture welcome the stranger. We’re all from somewhere else, and we’ve learned to get along,” Mr. Bliesner said. “That’s part of what makes this country what it is. We might fight, but in the end, we work it out.”

J.D. Long-García, *senior editor.*  
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## ‘Service’ protests sharply up in South Africa

In recent months South Africa has experienced a spike in street protests. The disturbances are rooted in poverty and public dissatisfaction with government delivery of basic services like electricity, water and public housing. Reuters reports that there were 198 “service delivery protests” by the end of September, surpassing the previous record of 191 in 2014, when former President Jacob Zuma was still in power.

The historical foundation of these protests can be located in the transition to democracy in 1994, as public expectations grew to the point that the new political establishment could not satisfy them. The African National Congress’s election slogan then was “A Better Life For All!” Many South Africans who voted the A.N.C. into office took the party at its word. They believed they would shortly see housing, jobs, land reform and a basic welfare system, all of which would build a more equitable society denied to them under apartheid.

They were mistaken. While the A.N.C. under Nelson Mandela and his successors, guided by one of the most progressive constitutions in the world, introduced welfare services, tried to build public housing, expanded the electric grid in South Africa and introduced economic empowerment and affirmative action policies, the great equalization never happened.

While a new black middle class emerged and grew, and while some (often politically connected) individuals got rich, the vast majority of South Africans have remained poor. Through a mixture of corruption and mismanagement, public resources were wasted.

And despite making a significant public investment in education and skills training, a poisonous cocktail of corruption and inefficiency has led to little improvement in national education. The result is a new generation of poorly educated and often unemployable youth who have few prospects of escaping poverty. The national unemployment rate—between 25 percent and 30 percent—is higher than the rate experienced in the United States during the Great Depression of the 1930s. It reaches astronomical proportions in the 15-to-25 age group.

Battered by more competitive countries in the global market, South Africa has suffered a decline in many economic sectors. That pain has been compounded by low productivity, perhaps rooted in frustrated high expectations, the latter enabled by labor militancy. In sectors where the economy is growing—or at least could grow—the skills deficit, traceable to poor education, hampers growth. Neglected or overstretched state infrastructure has exacerbated the problem, with massive levels of corruption draining funds that could be used to invest in infrastructural improvements.



A mother and child join a housing and land protest in Johannesburg in May 2017.

CNS photo/Kim Ludbrook, EPA

It is not surprising, then, that people are angry. Promised the moon, they barely eke out an existence, while the old middle class, mostly white, and the new middle class, mostly black, seem to be doing all right, and the old and new super-rich thrive.

The A.N.C. is losing favor, though opposition parties do not seem to be gaining followers. The Democratic Alliance is seen as a party of the elite in general and whites in particular. (In all likelihood, too, its free market economic policies are simply unacceptable to the poor.)

The rhetorically left-wing Economic Freedom Fighters have not gained sufficient popularity outside some urban areas to be seen realistically as a “government in waiting” as the country heads to the 2019 general election. And with the party’s enthusiasm for Venezuelan-style “reforms,” experts see an E.F.F. government as the potential coup de grâce to South Africa’s economy.

Truth be told, there are no easy solutions to socioeconomic malaise in South Africa. In the meantime, daily frustration sometimes boils over into violent protest. Their expectations denied, the poor are resorting to what Martin Luther King Jr. once called “the language of the unheard.”

Anthony Egan, S.J., *Johannesburg correspondent.*



A memorial grows outside the Tree of Life Synagogue on Oct. 28.

AP Photo/Steve J. Puskas

## In aftermath of Pittsburgh terror, Pope Francis demands ‘ban’ of anti-Semitism

“As I have often repeated, a Christian cannot be an anti-Semite; we share the same roots. It would be a contradiction of faith and life,” Pope Francis said at the Vatican on Nov. 5. “Rather, we are called to commit ourselves to ensure anti-Semitism is banned from the human community.”

The pope made his remarks during an audience with a group of rabbis attending the World Congress of Mountain Jews, a community believed to be descendants of Persian Jews who settled centuries ago in the Caucasus region.

Days earlier the pope had denounced the “inhuman” and “terrible attack” on a synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pa., on Oct. 27, expressing his “closeness” to the Jewish community and the people of that city and praying for all the victims and their relatives.

“May the Most High receive the dead in his peace, comfort their families and sustain the wounded,” he prayed as he addressed thousands of pilgrims from many countries gathered in St. Peter’s Square on Oct. 28.

“We are all, in reality, wounded by this inhuman act of violence,” he said. On Oct. 27 a gunman started shooting indiscriminately inside the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh. The attack left 11 dead and others wounded, including four police officers.

The attack against the community, one of the deadliest anti-Semitic attacks in U.S. history, took place amid a climate of hate speech and political violence as midterm elections approached. Pope Francis alluded to that climate when he prayed, “May the Lord help us to quench these hotbeds of hate that are developing in our societies, by reinforcing the sense of humanity, the respect for life, moral and civil values, and the holy fear of God, who is Love and the Father of all.”

CNS/staff



# The Bishops Speak

*How and when do bishops call our attention to vital issues of the day?*

By Stephen J. Fichter, Thomas P. Gaunt, Catherine Hoegeman and Paul M. Perl

***Editor's Note: Catholic Bishops in the United States: Church Leadership in the Third Millennium, to be published by Oxford University Press in January 2019, is the first major research-based book to study the bishops of the United States since 1989. It reveals the bishops' individual experiences, their day-to-day activities, their challenges as church leaders and their strategies for managing their dioceses. The following is an excerpt from the book on how U.S. bishops approach the task of publicly commenting on political and social issues.***

Catholic leaders, from parish priests to the pope, are bombarded with opinions on whether they should or should not speak out on issues of the day—and if so, on which particular issues. When the U.S. bishops published “Economic Justice for All” in 1986, some thinkers on the political right urged them to leave economics to the economists and focus on the purely “religious” realm. The political left has been

perhaps equally vociferous in its critiques of the bishops, except the problem in this case is that the church's leaders have remained too silent. In advance of a 2013 assembly of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in Baltimore, two politically liberal groups, Catholic Democrats and Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good, called on the assembly attendees to speak out more on issues of poverty. Whether one believes religious leaders should speak out on politics seems to depend less on one's philosophy regarding church and state than on the particular issue at hand.

In conducting our survey of U.S. bishops in 2016, we were interested in the extent to which individual bishops step across the invisible line some people perceive (when it suits them, perhaps) as separating the spiritual and temporal realms. How often do the bishops call for reflection or action regarding politics or vital issues of the day? We asked survey respondents four questions on this topic. (The table on Page 23 summarizes the results.)



CNS photo/Bob Roller

Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo oversees the archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, which is home to approximately 1.7 million Catholics. The average diocese in the United States has 250,000 Catholics.

#### WHO IS THE AVERAGE BISHOP?

The average bishop in the United States is 65 years old and has served for 12 years in a diocese not in his home state or region. He is a non-Hispanic white born in the United States. He graduated from a Catholic high school, went to a college seminary after high school and earned a graduate degree in theology. Prior to being named a bishop, he served as both an associate pastor and then pastor of a parish and also spent several years in an administrative role in his diocese. As a bishop he leads a diocese of about 250,000 Catholics in 92 parishes served by 87 active diocesan priests (another 51 diocesan priests are retired, infirm or serving in other dioceses) and 98 permanent deacons. His diocese has about 250 sisters, but most of them are retired.

—From *Catholic Bishops in the United States: Church Leadership in the Third Millennium*

# Bishops in 'red' states have most frequently asked Catholics to consider Catholic teaching when voting for candidates. ●●



We were particularly interested in how bishops speak out in the context of elections. The criticism they receive for lack of balance or overstepping their bounds often arises as elections approach. Many bishops reported that they have asked Catholics to consider Catholic teaching when voting for candidates, with 38 percent saying they have done so “on a regular basis” during the past five years and 37 percent that they have done so “often.” One bishop said:

I do not tell Catholics [in my diocese] to vote for a specific candidate. What I do tell them is not to vote for someone who opposes our values. I tell them to make sure that the candidate they choose conforms to Catholic teaching. I make every effort not to be seen as “pro” any party, but that doesn’t mean that I don’t teach clearly about the issues.

A majority of bishops have lobbied political leaders at least “often,” and a majority also made statements to the general public about current social or political issues. The frequency with which bishops have spoken out varies little by self-described theological orientation. It seems clear that most bishops see an important role for the church and its teachings in guiding political thought and action.

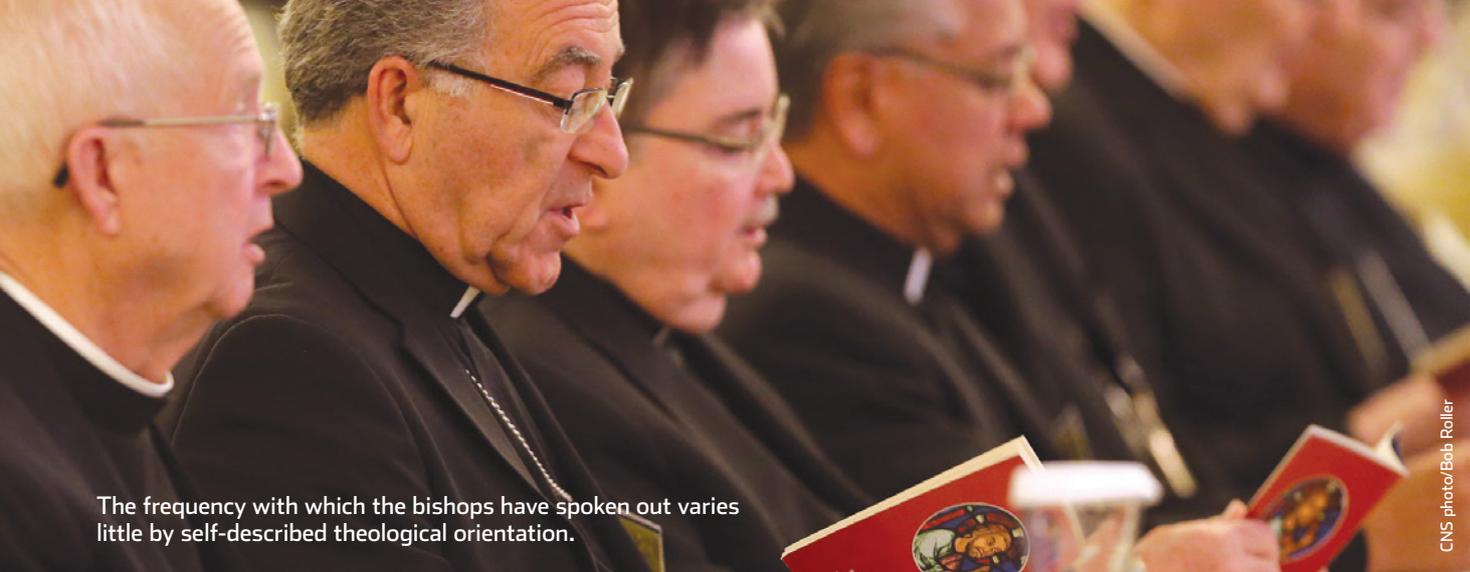
We did uncover an interesting difference among bishops based on whether their dioceses are located in red (mostly Republican) or blue (mostly Democratic) states. Bishops in red states have most frequently asked Catholics to consider Catholic teaching when voting for candidates. Almost half (48 percent) reported having done so “on a regular basis” during the last five years. This compares to 36 percent of bishops in “purple” states and 26 percent in blue states. Perhaps bishops are more likely to perceive the laity as receptive to messages about Catholic teaching and voting where Catholics (and the electorate generally) are

relatively more conservative. However, this does not seem to extend to other ways of speaking out, such as lobbying lawmakers or making statements to the general public.

## The Clergy Sexual Abuse Scandal and the Church’s Perceived Credibility

There were many aspects to the shock, dismay and anger lay Catholics experienced in 2002 during the large-scale national revelations of clergy sexual abuse within the church. Foremost among them were sympathy for the victims, disbelief about the magnitude of the problem and outrage about cases where superiors were inadequate in addressing the problem. We wanted to examine another concern that has arisen in the wake of these revelations—that the scandal has hampered church leaders in other ways, particularly their ability to speak with credibility and authority. In the wake of the scandals in 2002, Francis Fiorenza, a Catholic studies professor at Harvard Divinity School, told a reporter, “One of the major tragedies of the recent scandals has been precisely the loss of moral authority at a time when such moral authority is most needed.”

Are people now disregarding what the bishops have to say on issues of the day? In the survey we asked bishops to agree or disagree with the following statement: “Media coverage of clergy sexual abuse has made it challenging to present or defend church teachings in my diocese.” A majority agreed, with 43 percent agreeing “somewhat” and 20 percent agreeing “strongly.” Thirty percent disagreed “somewhat,” and just 8 percent disagreed “strongly.” The table on Page 25 shows the relationship between these responses and several other factors. There is no significant difference between archbishops and other ordinaries. And somewhat surprisingly, those who were already bishops in their current dioceses in 2002 do not significantly differ from those who were bishops in other dioceses or who



The frequency with which the bishops have spoken out varies little by self-described theological orientation.

CNS photo/Bob Roller

### Frequency With Which Bishops Engage in Various Political or Policy Activities

“In the last five years, how often have you...?”	“Never”	“Occasionally”	“Often”	“On a Regular Basis”
<b>Asked Catholics to consider Catholic teaching when voting for candidates</b>	8%	18%	37%	38%
<b>Lobbied lawmakers or other political leaders about law or policy</b>	4%	28%	43%	24%
<b>Made statements to the general public about current social or political issues</b>	7%	26%	47%	21%
<b>Asked Catholics to vote a particular way on a ballot initiative or referendum</b>	49%	38%	13%	1%

Note: Due to rounding, percentages in a row may not add up to 100.

were still priests in other dioceses. We had expected that those who were already bishops at the time of the scandal, especially if they were then in their current diocese, would be fighting a stronger headwind in this regard.

Instead, what seems most important is the region of the country where a bishop’s current diocese is located. Bishops in the Northeast were significantly more likely than those in other regions to agree “strongly” that it is challenging to present or defend church teaching due to the scandal. This finding seems consistent with CARA polls of lay Catholics taken during 2002. Catholics in the Northeast region expressed considerably more awareness and anger regarding the scandal than Catholics elsewhere. Some of this may be proximity to Boston (where the scandal received major news coverage in 2002) and greater exposure to news from that archdiocese. Further, we suspect that secular

news media in other Northeastern cities were particularly aggressive in their reporting of the scandal so as not to be shown up by The Boston Globe. Indeed, the table on Page 25 shows a correlation between difficulty defending church teaching and the amount of media coverage bishops said has been directed at the scandal in their diocese. We asked a bishop in the Northeast if he still heard negative comments from the laity in his diocese about the 2002 scandal:

We do get comments, and sometimes people use it as a club to beat you over the head about any issue you talk about. Whether it’s care for the poor, immigration, or whatever the issue, there will be some people who will throw that back at you and say, “You know what? You should take care of your own [abusive] priests.”

# If you are not with the crowd, you are accused of being ‘judgmental’.

—A Bishop

## Criticism and Pushback From Laity and the Media

Of course, criticism from lay Catholics is not uncommon in the life of a bishop. One told us that preaching at Mass is the only thing he is not criticized for. However, when controversial issues are at play, tempers can run particularly high. In personal interviews, we asked bishops if they ever experienced negativity from laity due to stances taken by themselves as individuals or by the bishops collectively. Most could readily recall being on the receiving end of anger. A bishop described such an instance to us:

Just prior to the invasion of Iraq, I issued a pastoral letter saying that as far as I could judge, the war was going to be unjust and therefore participation in it was going to be immoral.... My letter was pretty positively received by priests of the diocese. But there was one parish with a lot of police and ex-military parishioners. The pastor there instructed everyone to read the letter without comment [during a Mass], and it was a fairly lengthy letter. He said it turned into a reaction like the prime minister in Parliament: boos and heckling. [After that] I got a few irate letters.

Another bishop talked with us about reactions to the church’s opposition toward efforts to legalize same-sex marriage in his state:

Same-sex marriage has been quite the hot button issue [in my diocese]. Most people know where the church stands. Of course, I have gotten some negative correspondence from people who disagree with our stance. Where I get the most questions about this is from kids at schools, usually from non-Catholic kids who attend our Catholic grammar schools. I do my best to articulate our teaching in a way that they can understand.... Most of the drama around this issue occurred here before I was named as bishop

here. My predecessor had to deal with the state [debate] on same-sex marriage. He took the brunt of the heat that the media and the general public directed towards the church. It was truly sad and actually frightening to learn of the vehemence directed towards him; he even received death threats. Some horrible graffiti was scrawled on the walls of the cathedral and the chancery office.

One bishop we interviewed told us he tries to avoid speaking about politics or political issues because of the conflict it can cause with laity. Most bishops, however, are more apt to speak their minds and then take a respectful and pastoral approach with those who disagree. One says:

There is some negativity with [the church’s stand on] cultural issues. If you are not with the crowd [on these issues], you are accused of being “judgmental” with folks. That’s a reason for what Pope Francis is trying to model for bishops and priests. If you are accompanying your people, then difficult situations are not as negative because the people understand the teachings of the church in the light of the Gospel.

Another bishop also emphasizes the importance of respectful engagement with those who take exception to the church’s positions:

I just had a letter from somebody that didn’t like our, the bishops’, statement on immigration. This is the second time somebody wrote me a letter about that. I wrote back and said, “Number one, I’m thrilled you read the statement.” [Laughs]. I said my grandma’s name was Loretta Catherine \_\_\_\_\_ [an obviously Irish surname]. She used to work for German Protestants, and they wouldn’t hire the Irish. This was in the days before Social Security.... I’m talking about 1910: “Irish need not apply.” She changed her name to Gertrude because it was more conducive [to being hired]. Loretta Catherine was too Irish, too Catholic. I said, “What would this policy have done to her?” And plus, you have to wrestle with: “I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” So, anyway, negative things do come across my desk.... But I try to put a positive spin on it, and I try not to take it as a personal attack on me. I try not to get flustered.

One factor raised by several bishops we spoke with is

## Response to Media Coverage of Clergy Sex Abuse Scandal by Selected Characteristics

“Media coverage of clergy sexual abuse has made it challenging to present or defend church teaching in my diocese”

	“Disagree Strongly or Somewhat”	“Agree Somewhat”	“Agree Strongly”
<b>All</b>	38%	43%	20%
<b>Archbishop</b>	38%	42%	21%
<b>Other Ordinary</b>	36%	42%	22%
<b>Priest in another diocese in 2002</b>	36%	43%	21%
<b>Bishop in another diocese in 2002</b>	41%	41%	17%
<b>Bishop in current diocese in 2002</b>	28%	50%	22%
<b>Midwest</b>	43%	49%	9%
<b>South</b>	44%	42%	15%
<b>West</b>	33%	41%	26%
<b>Northeast</b>	14%	36%	50%
<b>“Little or no” or “Some” media coverage of clergy sexual abuse in the diocese</b>	47%	40%	14%
<b>“A large amount” of coverage</b>	26%	41%	33%
<b>“Extensive” coverage</b>	18%	46%	36%

Note: Due to rounding, percentages in a row may not add up to 100.

whether a diocese is located in an area where people are relatively religious or relatively secular. Bishops tend to perceive the press as being more hostile to Catholicism in secularized areas. For example, we asked a bishop in a Southern and very religious state whether criticism in the secular media has been a problem for him. He replied:

Nationally, yes [media negativity is a problem]. Locally, no, because I try to foster relationships with the local media. I’ve taken the editor-in chief of the local newspaper out to lunch.... And I try as much as possible to be very upfront with the press. When we do anything, we issue a press release. For example, a few years ago the economy here was really struggling. Over a million dollars of our operating budget dried up. So that necessitated layoffs in our pastoral staff.... Companies in the area were laying off too, but we knew that ours would be of particular interest

[to the media]. We created a press release for the local newspaper, and I was available for questions, as was our chancellor. They got the press release, and they called the chancellor and got all their questions answered. There was a front-page story in the local newspaper, but at least it was our story. We sent them all the information.

We spoke with a bishop in a relatively secularized and urban area. He has often spoken publicly with compassion about immigrants and the poor in our society, in addition to advocating a pro-life position on abortion and the traditional model of marriage. Local newspapers frequently label him a “conservative” or even “ultraconservative” bishop. If not unfair, this designation certainly lacks nuance. He described to us the hostility toward Catholicism in the local press, especially toward its traditional moral teachings:

## Criticism in Secular Press or Media by Selected Characteristics

"How much of a problem is 'criticism in the secular press or media' on a day-to-day basis?"			
	"No or Very little Problem"	"Somewhat of a Problem"	"A Great Problem"
<b>All</b>	38%	44%	18%
<b>Archbishop</b>	38%	33%	29%
<b>Other ordinary</b>	37%	48%	16%
<b>"Traditional" theological orientation</b>	41%	29%	29%
<b>"Moderate" theological orientation</b>	28%	58%	14%
<b>"Progressive" theological orientation</b>	43%	52%	5%
<b>Relatively religious state</b>	50%	33%	17%
<b>Average state</b>	43%	43%	15%
<b>Relatively secular state</b>	19%	57%	24%
<b>"Little or no" or "Some" media coverage of clergy sexual abuse in the diocese</b>	45%	45%	10%
<b>"A large amount" of coverage</b>	30%	41%	30%
<b>"Extensive" coverage</b>	27%	45%	27%

Note: Due to rounding, percentages in a row may not add up to 100.

I did have one particular instance of a direct attack against me when I had to intervene in an issue concerning the contracts of teachers in our Catholic schools. We were trying to make sure that they upheld Catholic morality not just in the classroom but also in their personal lives. Given the very secular nature of our area, this was a big news item for a while.... I was told that I was interfering in other people's private lives and that that was wrong. The way I saw it was that, just like people getting fired from their jobs for their personal positions on social issues, like the case of the owner of a professional basketball team who was fired for the racist comments he made.... He got fired for the awful comments he made using his own private phone and doing so on his own time, not company time. If a basketball team can have a moral philosophy, a moral position, why can't the church, which represents the teaching of Jesus Christ, have one?

We turned to the survey data to test whether or not media criticism is indeed a systematically greater problem for bishops in more secular areas. As we have seen, 44 percent of all the bishops said criticism in the secular press or media is "somewhat" of a problem for them, and another 18 percent said it is "great" problem. The table above shows how these responses vary by several factors. Under the heading "Religiosity of State," we created three categories based on the religious commitment of people in the states where dioceses are located, as measured by the Pew Research Center. Our survey results show little difference between relatively religious and relatively secular states in the likelihood that bishops said criticism is a "great" problem. However, there is a statistically significant difference in whether or not they said it is at least "somewhat" of a problem (50 percent of bishops in religious states, compared to 21 percent in secular states). Thus, it seems plausible that the media is indeed more hostile toward bishops in more secularized dioceses.

Bishop George V. Murry, S.J., of Youngstown, oversees the diocese's 104 parishes. The average diocese in the United States has 92 parishes. ►

Among other notable findings, self-described traditional bishops are significantly more likely than progressive bishops to describe criticism in the press as “a great problem” (29 percent compared with 5 percent). Is this an issue of perception by the bishops themselves? It seems possible that traditional bishops genuinely receive more criticism to the extent that they become identified with the church’s teachings on cultural issues such as abortion, homosexuality and contraception. Not surprisingly, bishops were also significantly more likely to say that criticism in the secular press or media is a great problem for them if the sexual abuse issue received relatively more media coverage in their dioceses.

To summarize, when the bishops speak out on issues of the day, they do so in their capacity as teachers of the faith. This is one of the central roles identified for bishops in the *Catechism*; survey responses suggest the role is important to them and that they take it seriously.

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CNS photo/Bob Roller

## METHODOLOGY

The central source of data for *Catholic Bishops in the United States: Church Leadership in the Third Millennium* (Oxford University Press, January 2019) is a survey conducted in 2016. In April of that year the authors mailed a questionnaire to all active and retired bishops of the Latin and Eastern rites in the United States. To preserve the anonymity of responses, they included a postcard the bishops could mail back separately to let them know they had completed and returned their questionnaires. The surveys were sent to 179 Latin rite ordinaries (127 responded), 18 Eastern rite ordinaries (12 responded), 65 auxiliary bishops (33 responded) and 168 retired bishops (42 responded). The authors supplemented the survey with telephone or face-to-face interviews of 13 bishops—10 active Latin rite ordinaries, one Eastern rite ordinary, one auxiliary bishop and one retired bishop.

# #CHURCHTOO

## Preventing the abuse of women by Catholic clergy

By Lea Karen Kivi

Much attention has been paid in recent years to the horrific sexual abuse of minors in the church, and rightly so. But many men and women who experienced sexual abuse by members of the clergy in adulthood have yet to receive compassionate acknowledgment of the harm they have suffered. Regardless of the age at which sexual abuse by clergy was experienced, churches of all denominations have a long distance to travel in setting up healing ministries for and with survivors.

I have great respect for the many Catholic priests who have blessed my journey of faith. I am grateful to my parish pastors, and to the Paulist, Franciscan, Jesuit and Basilian priests who have fed my faith and inspired me by their sacrificial service. Accepting a call to the priesthood at this point in history may be especially challenging, and I hope those currently in the priesthood or considering a call will persevere despite the revelations of wrongdoing in the church. This wrongdoing has always existed. The good news is that we now know about it, are talking about it and therefore can work to eliminate it. We must consider how to prevent abuse of women in the church, and how to make it easier for women (and men) to come forward should they themselves experience abuse by clergy in adulthood.





I use the term *abuse* to describe any situation in which a priest attempts to use his position of power over or proximity to someone to sexualize the relationship. The example of inappropriate clergy behavior that I share here is not the only incident I have experienced, and it is far from being the most serious. My complaint was handled within the church. I have chosen not to name the priest or his religious community.

### **One Story of a Professional Boundary Violation**

At a point in my life when I was experiencing deep spiritual, physical and emotional pain, I sought out the guidance of a spiritual director. While on a brief women's retreat, I noticed the names of spiritual directors with whom one could meet posted on a wall. After the retreat, I called one of them, Father X (a Roman Catholic priest). We set up an appointment for spiritual direction at a location that I had never previously visited.

When I arrived at the location, Father X met me at the front door and led me straight upstairs to a room which turned out to be his private quarters—where he had a business-sized desk with chairs and his bed. Although I felt uncomfortable with the setting, I did not feel I was in any sort of danger. Another priest saw us there together and did not do anything to indicate there was anything wrong.

To introduce himself, Father X said, "It's no secret—I love women!" and "I'm new here—haven't yet built up my harem."

He proceeded to describe a woman acquaintance of his as "really knowing how to dress to show off her figure." Under normal circumstances I would have decided at that point not to seek direction from him. However, I was feeling quite desperate for spiritual guidance at the time, and knew that Father X had specialized training to help me discern what God was trying to tell me in my then-current life circumstances. I could put up with some sexist comments, I thought.

We did actually have a good conversation about spiritual matters, but he also made some very inappropriate comments, including "We'll figure out as we go along how love will be expressed in our relationship" and "Don't think I'm going to let you get out of here without giving you a hug."

This comment disturbed me a great deal—he did not seem at all interested in whether I wanted to have a hug from him or not. Also, when he said "Don't think I'm going to let you get out of here" I couldn't help but remember an assault by two men seeking to forcibly confine me which, thankfully, I was able to escape. I felt a flash of anxiety as I realized that Father X was between me and the door—as had been one of my assailants. In any case, his words constituted a demand—not a request—for physical contact from a woman who was a virtual stranger seeking spiritual direction, not a personal friendship.

At the end of the conversation, true to his word, he ran around his desk to give me a hug—not a quick, friendly one, but a much too long (and tight) embrace. I strained to keep a respectable distance from him. If he had been someone other than a priest, I would likely have opposed him as forcefully as necessary by word or deed, but a combination of my respect for clergy, politeness, fear, compassion and confusion made me acquiesce.

After the appointment, I read through a book he had lent me. It was fascinating and truly ministered to me in that dark hour of my spiritual life. I obviously did not want to have this priest as an ongoing spiritual director, but I needed to return the book to him and thought I might as well ask him about some of the points in the book, as he seemed to be a specialist in the field. I made one more appointment with the intention that this would be my last meeting with him.

At that meeting, Father X said he had felt my body tensing when he hugged me at our previous meeting, and that he thought, “What’s wrong with this woman?” More inappropriate comments followed. He described one woman as “a great lover.” He told me “You are so intense...but we must be disciplined and cut off the discussion before we would like to have it end.” At the end of the meeting, he followed me to my car and told me: “I can love you from near or far.” This priest went from being a painfully lonely, sexist man in my eyes to a potential sexual predator, possibly with a mental health issue. He seemed to have lost any ability to set appropriate boundaries in his relationships.

I could have just ignored what had happened. However, I tend to speak up when I feel there is potential harm to others. Not knowing whom to contact regarding potential sexual exploitation of women, I contacted the priest responsible for taking complaints about sexual abuse of children in Father X’s community.

He was not surprised when I mentioned Father X and told me that he believed that immaturity was behind Father X’s behavior. I truly appreciated his skill in listening to and responding appropriately to my experience. I left the meeting assured that this specific matter would be dealt with appropriately. As far as I know, it was.

Although the physical violation was minor, the spiritual violation of trust by this priest and by his community turned out to have a profound effect on me. I had previously considered myself a strong person, based on my own and others’ observations about me. I found myself withdrawing emotionally—unable to trust clergy, friends and family with my inner thoughts or feelings.

Other questions also troubled me. I had come to know the community of priests to which Father X belonged as highly intelligent, educated, respected and respectful. If they knew his behavior was suspect, why were they recommending him as a spiritual director on women’s retreats? Why didn’t his community warn women about Father X’s behavior or have clear information available about whom one could complain to about one of their priests’ misconduct with adults?

I began to wonder how prevalent this sort of behavior was in other Catholic and Christian faith communities and what I might do to help prevent other women from experiencing it.

### Statistics on Abuse of Women by Clergy

Through online networking, I came into contact with a number of women who had experienced sexual exploitation by clergy. One woman was sexually exploited by her spiritual director—a Catholic priest who, it turned out, had entered into sexual relationships with several women directees at the same time, professing his not-so-unique “special” love for each of them at a point of particular vulnerability in their lives. As a result of her experience, she could not imagine ever being spiritually intimate with another priest in a setting like a confessional. Another woman was one of the 47 known child-victims during the 1950s to 1980s of the convicted abuser Father Charles Sylvestre in Ontario, Canada. She said to me that she could not imagine setting foot in any church again.

According to the late A. W. Richard Sipe, the sexual exploitation of women by priests is not uncommon. Other researchers have argued that misconduct by clerics toward women is even more prevalent than their sexual abuse of children. According to research cited in *When Pastors Prey*, a publication of the World Council of Churches, 90 to 95 percent of victims of clergy sexual exploitation are women. This book also cites a 1984 survey of clergy in various Protestant denominations that found that 39 percent admitted to having sexual contact with a congregant and 12.7 percent had had sexual intercourse with a congregant.

Michael W. Higgins and Peter Kavanagh note in their book *Suffer the Children Unto Me*, that in 2000-1 women religious in several African countries were subject to systematic sexual exploitation by priests—with one superior general reporting that 29 of her sisters had been impregnated by priests. A study paid for by several orders of women religious conducted at St. Louis University in 1996 found that nearly one in eight women religious in the United States had experienced some form of sexual exploitation, with three out of

# The spiritual treasures of the Catholic Church are obscured when any one of us harms another by words, thoughts or actions. ●●

four of those abused having been victimized by a priest, another sister or some other religious person.

According to the survey of Catholic women published in **America** (1/22/18), 0.3 percent of women referred to accusations of inappropriate behavior when describing how they had experienced sexism in the church. In my experience (at least up until the #MeToo movement began), I have found few women who share stories of violation with anyone at all, so the number of women who might feel safe reporting their experiences (even in an anonymous survey) may be relatively low.

The **America** survey also found that few of the women surveyed participate in the sacrament of reconciliation (confession). As I mentioned, some women who have been abused do not feel emotionally or otherwise safe being spiritually intimate with a priest. The small size of a typical confessional may make anyone who has experienced some form of violence feel trapped.

## What Does It Mean to Be a ‘Vulnerable’ Adult?

At a conference on “Trauma and Transformation” in Montreal, Quebec, in 2011, I asked a speaker who presented statistics on sexual abuse of minors in the church about abuse of women. He had not studied abuse of women in the church because, according to him, “we never hear about such abuse.” The public might not hear about it, but church leaders are certainly aware of it. Why, then, do church leaders not warn the faithful about the fact that some priests will seek to abuse their power over adults, not only over children?

It is true that the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors gives some attention to the protection of so-called “vulnerable” adults, but the adults in this population include only those considered vulnerable according to such criteria as disability, age or illness. But aren’t all men, women and children vulnerable to abuse of clerical power? Seminarians (as asserted, for example, in Donald Cozzens’s book, *Sacred Silence: Denial and Crisis*

*in the Church*) and priests themselves have been sexually abused by clergy, but these men would not fall under the category of vulnerable as defined by the commission.

Once a person turns 18 years of age, does that imply in the church’s eyes that any sexual contact involves full, legal consent on that person’s part? If abuse policies only apply to adults who are considered disabled, might that prevent other adults from coming forward for fear of being labeled weak or damaged in some way?

To their credit, the Jesuits in Canada state in their current document, “Policies & Procedures for Cases of Alleged Abuse and Misconduct,” that they “are committed to the protection of all who are within their spiritual and physical care, especially Minors and Vulnerable Persons.” They also define vulnerable persons as “minors or persons of any age who by reason of their condition, suffer from physical, mental, emotional or spiritual handicaps or disabilities”—words painted with a broad enough brush to include a more comprehensive view of vulnerability than is typical of the abuse policies and procedures of religious communities.

Another enlightened policy document that shows an understanding of power imbalance as a factor in sexual abuse of adults by clergy is that of the Maltese Ecclesiastical Province from 2014. In its definition of sexual abuse between adults, it states: “when a pastoral functionary engages in sexual contact or sexualised behaviour in a pastoral relationship, or in cases of an existing power imbalance, such behaviour is considered to be always abusive whether with or without consent.”

## Does Church Law Help Prevent Abuse?

I began to wonder if there might be any universal church document providing protection to adults regardless of the extent of their vulnerabilities. Delving into the New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law, published in 2000, I began to research what sorts of warnings might be provided by the church.

The only warning I found was Canon 1339, which states that a church official can discipline a priest who is suspected of committing some sort of scandal, but the warning is not to be passed on to the faithful—rather, it is to be kept in a secret archive.

The faithful are obligated to speak up if there is some sort of impediment to a forthcoming marriage (Canon 1069) or to a man’s ordination (Canon 1043). Per the commentary, there was an obligation in the 1917 version of the code for all the faithful to report solicitation to sin against

the Sixth Commandment by a confessor (that is, priests asking someone for sex during confession, Canon 1387), but that there is no such obligation in the 1983 code. However, there remain Canons 982 and 1390, which deal with false denunciation of a confessor—that is, “calumny”—a word recently invoked by Pope Francis with respect to accusations made by a Chilean claiming abuse by a member of the clergy (for which Francis later apologized).

Should the Code of Canon Law be amended to impose an obligation on the part of bishops and other church leaders to warn the faithful that some priests, whether through malice or some mental health disorder, might make sexual advances towards an adult—and not only in the confessional? Certainly some priests are aware of suspicious behavior on the part of their brother priests. Should there not be an amendment to the Code to include an obligation for priests to report their suspicions to their superiors, and for their superiors to act on these reports?

Currently, many religious communities wait until a victim comes to them before taking action. In other words, they rely on a complaint-driven response model. As it is sometimes difficult even to find information on whom one should contact to report abuse of someone by a priest or other religious person, how likely is it that someone would feel supported in coming forward with a complaint?

It would be also helpful to distinguish between types of abuse that women experience. Well-meaning but misinformed clergy I have encountered have suggested that support groups for battered or trafficked women would provide suitable support for women who have been abused by clergy. Each type of abuse, however, is unique and requires specialized support for victims. Peer-to-peer support groups, therapist-led support groups, specially trained and survivor-sensitive spiritual directors and other support providers would figure in a healing outreach toward survivors of abuse by clergy.

I mentioned earlier that I know women who avoid the sacrament of reconciliation after instances of clergy abuse. According to Canon 991, the faithful are entitled to confess sins to a confessor of their own choice—even to one of another rite. Would it be possible to extend this canon to enable persons abused by a priest to confess to a woman Anglican priest, assuming that they would feel emotionally safer? Survivors might also be allowed to avail themselves of the provisions of Canons 961-63, which allow for the reconciliation of several persons through general confession and absolution.

### **How Can Laypersons Prevent Abuse?**

The faithful often look to the church hierarchy for leadership regarding sexual abuse by clergy or other members of the faith community. But members of the hierarchy comprise a very low percentage of the membership of the church. We cannot lay the full weight of responsibility for the resolution to this problem at their feet.

At a recent conference, I met a woman who was a leader in a prominent Catholic organization. She confided to me that she would not know with whom she would feel safe sharing an experience of clergy misconduct. She said she might let a girlfriend know. Certainly, if we have experienced spiritual, emotional, sexual or other physical violation, we might reach out only to a trusted personal friend for support. But if we tell only a trusted personal friend, how are we to help protect others?

Sharing our stories can help others know that they are not alone. Support groups, blogs, the #MeToo and #ChurchToo hashtags on Twitter can provide anonymity. Of course, survivors should not be forced to share any of their stories but should be supported in their choices on how to deal with their experiences.

All members of a community should also be mindful of those members who are the most vulnerable. Whose salary depends on a priest’s good recommendation? Who has poor language skills? Who is not a citizen of the country? Who else might be afraid to come forward on such issues and might for that reason be a likely target for abusive priests, women religious or laypeople?

The church is resplendent with spiritual treasures, including priests, women religious and laypersons who shine with the light and love of Christ. This treasure is obscured when one of us harms another by words, thoughts or actions. When the harm is particularly damaging—when we violate the trust of another person to fulfill our sexual desires—it can be hard for the person violated to remember that there was ever any treasure.

We all need to listen to one another so that the Catholic Church can be a safe place for all the faithful to call home. Let us as a community of faith come together for respectful, compassionate and sensitive discussions to ensure that God’s love protects and nurtures wholeness and holiness in all of God’s children—whatever their age or condition.

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# REMEMBERING MAC

How do I  
find God in  
a newsroom  
massacre?

By Gary Gately

On a brilliant Thursday in late June, a deeply disturbed 38-year-old man armed with a pump-action shotgun opened fire in the Capital Gazette newsroom in Annapolis, Md. Frantically seeking a witness while reporting on the shooting as a stringer for The New York Times, I send a Facebook message to John McNamara, an award-winning sportswriter and news editor at the paper.

Surely, Mac—a friend, mentor and editor to the skinny kid who used to be me in spring 1982, when I started as a cub reporter at the University of Maryland’s student paper, The Diamondback—would describe whatever happened in vivid detail on deadline and employ his Irish gift for putting words around it just so.

I obsessively check my cell phone for news, any news.

At 3:45 p.m., I gasp when I see the tweet from Phil Davis, the Capital Gazette police reporter: “A single shooter

shot multiple people at my office, some of whom are dead.”

My throat tightens. I knew the world changed in 1999 at Columbine High; so many have fallen in mass shootings since then, as “never again” keeps happening again with heartbreaking frequency. But a newsroom? This is the “Crapital,” the “Crab Wrapper,” the paper everybody kvetches about but everybody reads, every day.

Baltimore’s WBAL News Radio interrupts afternoon talk with a bulletin: Five are dead after a gunman shot his way into the newsroom of the Capital Gazette newspaper.

The phone rings. *Let it be Mac.*

It is not he but a fellow Diamondback alum providing, on background, the names of the dead: Mac, along with two others connected with the University of Maryland, the editorial writer Gerald Fischman and Rob Hiaasen, an editor and columnist. The Gazette’s longtime and beloved com-



CNS photo/Joshua Roberts, Reuters

munity columnist Wendi Winters and the young ad sales assistant Rebecca Smith also died in the rampage.

I am suddenly nauseous. It would be a natural human response to pause and weep for Mac and his fellow fallen newspaper staffers, to rage against whatever sociopath would gun down people putting out a newspaper.

But there is news to report, so I do as I have done for more than three decades: say a quick prayer and keep moving. Give in to emotions on a big, breaking story, however horrific, and you become the journalistic equivalent of the surgeon with shaky hands.

For much of two days and well into the nights, I keep moving. But in the hurry-up-and-wait lulls between police updates, a court hearing for the suspect, seeking eyewitnesses and comments from friends and loved ones of the victims, my mind meanders through the decades to when I

first met Mac at the daily Diamondback in May 1982. I had been assigned to cover a daylong energy conference at the university's adult education center. Exasperated and trying to make sense of the event, I recorded the whole thing. I filed my lead: "U.S. Energy Secretary James Edwards, utility officials and other energy experts gathered Saturday at the conference center at University College to discuss the complexities of America's energy crisis."

Mac, the paper's managing editor, told me, with his baby-faced leprechaun smile: "This is called a label lead. That means you could have written it before the event even happened. Focus instead on what happened, what's new, what's news."

Then Mac patted me on the back and said: "Don't worry about it, kid. Every cub makes this mistake. Now you won't anymore."

# So many have fallen in mass shootings, as ‘never again’ keeps happening again with heartbreaking frequency. 💧💧

That is how John McNamara taught—with compassion and grace, at a student newspaper that put a premium on comforting the afflicted, afflicting the comfortable, where the editor in chief who mentored Mac, David Simon (of “The Wire” fame), would write, “The journalist is the kid who stood at the edge of the playground, plotting his revenge.”

Neither Mac nor Fischman nor legions of other Diamondbackers in that newsroom crucible could imagine a higher calling in life than journalism.

Nor could any of us have conceived then of an America where the president regularly condemns the Fourth Estate as the “enemy of the people,” where alt-right commentators and extremist groups call for the assassination of journalists, where a Capital Gazette column exposing a deranged man’s criminal harassment and stalking of a former high school classmate would prompt him to shoot up a newsroom.

...

At last, exhausted late Friday night, I send The Times my final feed, but I cannot turn off the adrenaline or stop reading about the rampage or watching the videos—until I recall the words I found on Mac’s Facebook page the previous day, when I still thought I was preparing to interview him: “Are we not all precious in God’s eyes?”

With that, I break down, and the image of myself as a hardbitten newspaperman that I have maintained over the past two days crumbles. I weep—for Mac, for his wife and college sweetheart, Andrea Chamblee, for his colleagues, for all of us. For they are us, and we are them but for grace and circumstance.

I have covered hundreds of murders and other untimely deaths. But this one’s personal. I had never before known a victim I was reporting on, and as a journalist, I know you have to move on, for another story, another deadline looms always. Yet I can’t shake this one easily.

I think of the words of a hero, the writer Joan Didion: “We tell ourselves stories in order to live.... We look for the sermon in the suicide, for the social or moral lesson in the murder of five.”

The social or moral lesson in the murder of five? It sounds absurd in the context of the newsroom massacre, save perhaps for the lesson that the United States does a pitiful job keeping guns out of the hands of mentally ill mass murderers.

But I keep mulling over that Didion quotation and keep asking: If we must strive to find God in all things, how do I find God in this, the violent death of my long-ago friend and mentor and four of his colleagues in a newsroom?

I pose the question to my priest-confessor, spiritual director, counselor and friend, the 84-year-old Jesuit Bill Watters. He patiently tells me, yes, we must see God as the crucified Christ in the lives stolen from us by a man filled with hatred. The tall, thin, Irish priest also does what he does so well, gently nudging me toward the light and helping me see anew that sometimes the light can shine brightly, even at the precipice of darkness.

Remembering Mac and his kindness and what he taught me in that college newsroom half a lifetime ago sends me on a journey to beginnings—to what made me switch my major from pre-law and never look back—and doing so somehow rekindles my passion for journalism more than anything has in years.

In the aftermath of Mac’s death and those of his colleagues, we the press—unaccustomed to getting much love in this age or any other if we are doing our jobs right—suddenly found ourselves embraced in an outpouring of support. Across the country, 350 newspapers published editorials affirming that the work of a free press as essential to a democracy in these febrile times and rebuking the president for labeling journalists “enemies of the people” and purveyors of “fake news.”

And the loss of Mac and his colleagues brought forth an abundance of admiration for those who have recognized the value and the power and the dignity of seeking out the stories of others, sharing them with the world and enriching us all.

As with so many untimely deaths I have covered, the story of the Capital Gazette massacre is not only about incalculable loss but also all the gifts the departed gave us and leave us. And there we find God and his light, even amid the darkness.

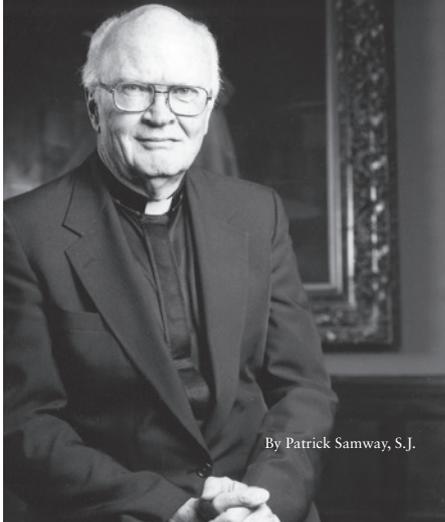
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*Gary Gately, a Baltimore-based journalist, has won 15 national, regional and local awards for investigative, public service, feature, business and travel stories. His work has appeared in The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Boston Globe and elsewhere.*

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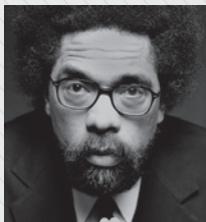
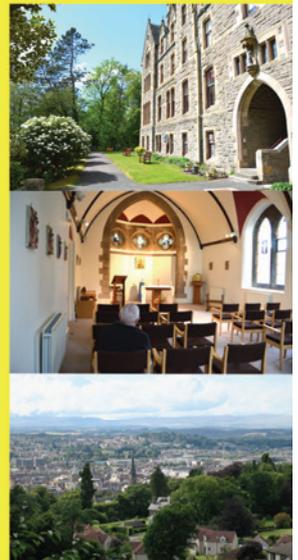
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# Walter Ong on Mickey Mouse

On Nov. 18, Mickey Mouse, the widely beloved cartoon character created by Walt Disney, turned 90. In 1941, as Mickey was entering his teens, Walter J. Ong, S.J., the estimable scholar of language and media studies, censured him in *America's* pages (10/4/1941) and lamented his insidious effects on American culture. Today *America* remembers an argument that raised some still-valid questions about one of the country's—and the world's—most recognizable icons.

It is no easy task to find any common denominator in the various mixtures of ideologies existing in the minds of American men and women. But from our Victorian ancestors we nearly all seem to have inherited one first principle in common—an abiding faith in youth when it is accompanied by vigorous animal activity and a healthy grin.

Hence it is ticklish business to undertake a critique of Mickey Mouse. For if all normal human beings are supposed to like young creatures engaged in physical activity and grinning, they do not all put the same value on this sort of thing. But suppose we examine what Mickey Mouse is, not in himself, but in his relation to our national culture, and see if, thereby, we can arrive at something that is very difficult to attain—an evaluation of our own culture.

If a product of an age is entirely free from criticism, it is something of great interest. Its immunity from critical examination is the guarantee that such a product has risen out of those principles which are considered so basic as never to be questioned. If we can, then, bring our critical attention to focus upon such an adventitious being universally taken for granted, we will be in a position to see our age somewhat in the way it will appear to succeeding generations.

Now, Mickey Mouse is singularly free from criticism. He is taken for granted because if he does not represent the entire scheme of values that Americans live by, at least his scheme of values is fitted into theirs without demanding for itself any readjustment in the process. The artists who

have brought Mickey into being have always worked with some of their fingers on the pulse of the American public. And, since Hollywood, at least in this one instance, is functioning frankly and freely to produce movies and not canned stage plays, little has stood in the way of their realizing the artistic effects desired. The result is the creation of a world which offends almost no one and meets with uncritical and enthusiastic acclaim.

Mickey's popularity is a popularity that has come with the living of a mechanically busy life in an intellectual and moral vacuum. In most of the "stories" we watch Mickey's quaint smile and queer poses. We watch the characters making faces or pirouetting at the vortices of multi-colored whirlwinds or rocketing along with blasts of vapor in their wakes. We watch Pluto's flexible muzzle as it crawls across the screen. And that is all.

Though Mickey's animal ancestry is very old, none of his animal forebears were quite like Mickey. Animal stories reach far back toward the beginnings of the human race, and yet the Mickey Mouse stories differ vastly from all the traditional varieties. As for the earliest animal stories with which everyone is familiar, a very brief recollection of Aesop will make it plain that Mickey has swung wide of this tradition.

Aesop's stories all have deep moral connections. The morals themselves may be simple and easily gathered. But they are serious, and the story, entertaining as it may be, is inextricably involved with the ordinary moral issues which confront human beings.

This connection between beast fable and the serious things of existence is the usual thing. It is found in the Sanscrit *Panchatantra*, in the medieval beast fables and epics such as *Reynard the Fox*, and down to La Fontaine and Hans Christian Andersen's *Ugly Duckling*.

Yet these stories, like the Disney stories, are entertaining. It has not always been necessary to sidestep every serious issue in order to amuse. Perhaps a more entertaining animal story will never be told than the popular medieval account of the fox who fell into the well and talked his old enemy, the wolf, into riding the other windlass bucket down into the depths (where he had given the wolf to understand a veritable paradise was to be found), thus enabling himself to ride back up in the other bucket. But for all its sheerly amusing qualities, the tale quite obviously involves itself in the question of flat-tery and of the man who lives off society by his wits.

An artificial secularism puts Mickey Mouse outside this tradition, delimiting the field in which he operates and effectively blocking off connections with basic and serious truths which have characterized his animal forerunners. Thus, the Disney picture-stories whether movies or newspaper strips, gravitate toward the shallowly spectacular. Mickey in his own way is merely following out the segregative processes of a secularism which has eaten the marrow out of our national culture by isolating religious and moral considerations from everything except the most private departments of each individual's life. And our being so taken with Mickey's vacuous exist-

tence is a tacit acknowledgement of our own weakness.

It is entirely true that we can find in other ages certain forms of art with which Mickey Mouse has as close affinities as he has with the animal stories. There is the dumb show, the Punch-and-Judy show, or the jig, in all of which antics might be antics and nothing more. But apart from the fact that in these forms of entertainment there is not quite the studied isolation from all serious meaning that we find in Mickey, no age has opened its arms to such things in the way we have to Mr. Disney's world. Further, although every age has its slapstick and a certain measure of entertainment built around mere moving and smiling, in no other age have these phenomena achieved the complete divorce from everything of importance that we find in Mickey Mouse. And in no other age have the individual and national ideals of a people found such satisfactory expression on this level. Certainly, in no other age has a similar figure been apotheosized and reproduced in so many forms of idols as Mr. Disney's West-Coast rodent has today.

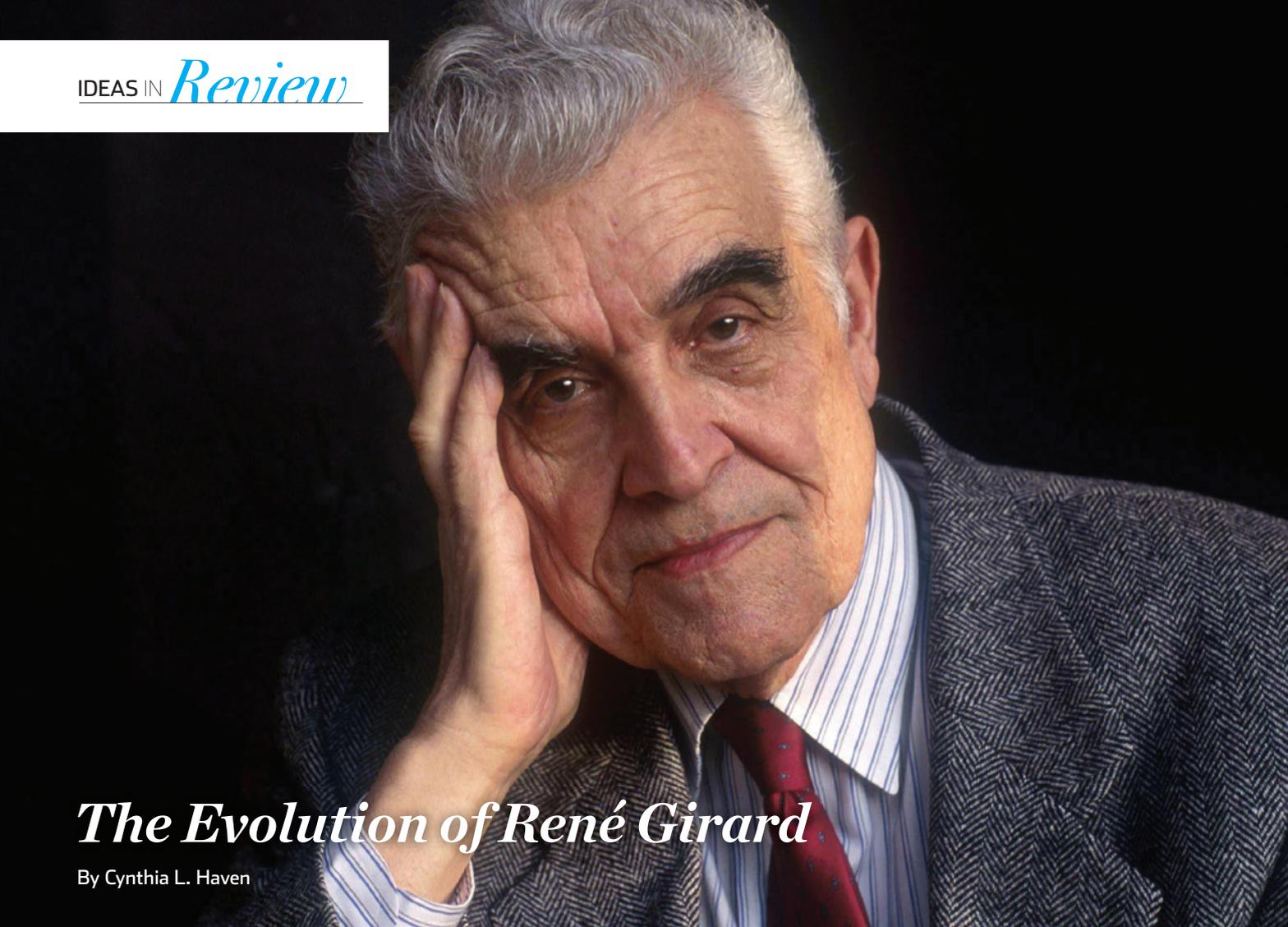
As an instance of how far matters have gone, we are now given the information by the press that the Disney studios have recently received a new assignment—this time from Uncle Sam. It has been decided that the insignia for our men in the service should be designed in the true Mickey Mouse tradition. Photographs of the designs recently published disclose a Laughing Jackass, Butch the Falcon, Dusty (a cuddlesome winged calf wearing an airman's helmet and a moonish smile), and a genuine Disney eagle with boxing

gloves which evidently supersedes the traditional American eagle that appears rather diffidently in the background of the design.

Here, it seems, we have a kind of plenary treatment of Mickey Mouse-ism. When a nation prepares for war, it is in a serious mood. Even in peacetime its emblems and insignia, such as the flag or the American eagle, give expression to the highest national aspirations, and in a time that threatens war we may reasonably assume that there is an all-out on inspirational devices. Presumably at such a time the most inspirational must be seized upon. And thus is betrayed where Mickey's scheme of values fits into our national life. For, although all these new insignia are not recognizable Mickey Mouses, they are most unmistakably in the Mickey Mouse tradition and stand for what it stands for and for no more.

But are not these insignia performing merely the function of mascots? Yes. And a mascot is the proper attribute of an athletic team. Of course, a mascot may serve a function even in an army—a recreational function. Recreation and a spirit of jovial camaraderie are certainly in order. But it is not in order to substitute a mascot appeal for a serious appeal.

Mickey Mouse motivation is sure to crumple before one of the serious major ideologies. It is late now to start to rehabilitate the deliberately secularized and emasculated set of values which we have allowed to spring up and flourish in our nation and especially in our public schools. But we had better begin. We cannot erect a defense of democracy on a set of national ideals where the things for which Mickey Mouse stands find place so near the top.



## The Evolution of René Girard

By Cynthia L. Haven

Armed with a copy of the *Iliad* and a shovel, Heinrich Schliemann set out to find Troy in 1871. Two years later, he hit gold.

He was vilified as an amateur, an adventurer and a con man. As archaeologists refined their methods of excavation in the subsequent decades, Schliemann would also be deplored for destroying much of what he was trying to find.

Nevertheless, he found the lost city. He is credited with the modern discovery of prehistoric Greek civilization. He ignited the field of Homeric studies at the end of the 19th century. Most important, for our purposes, he broke new ground in a figurative, as

well as literal, sense: He scrutinized the words of the text and believed that they held the truth.

“I’ve said this for years: In the global sense, the best analogy for what René Girard represents in anthropology and sociology is Schliemann,” said the French theorist’s Stanford colleague, Robert Pogue Harrison. “Like him, his major discovery was excoriated for using the wrong methods. The others never would have found Troy by looking at the literature—it was beyond their imagination.” Girard’s writings hold revelations that are even more important, however: they describe the roots of the violence that destroyed Troy and other empires throughout time.

Like Schliemann, the French academician trusted literature as the repository of truth and as an accurate reflection of what actually happened. Harrison told me that Girard’s loyalty was not to a narrow academic discipline, but rather to a continuing human truth: “Academic disciplines are more committed to methodology than truth. René, like Schliemann, had no training in anthropology. From the discipline’s point of view, that is ruthlessly undisciplined. He’s still not forgiven.”

I have appreciated Harrison’s analogy, though some of Girard’s other friends will no doubt rush to his defense, given Schliemann’s scandalous character—but Girard scandalized

For Girard, literature is more than a record of historical truth; it is the archive of self-knowledge.

people, too; many academics grind their teeth at some of Girard's more *ex cathedra* pronouncements (though surely a few other modern French thinkers were just as apodictic). He never received the recognition he merited on this side of the Atlantic, even though he is one of America's very few *immortels* of the Académie Française.

For Girard, however, literature is more than a record of historical truth; it is the archive of self-knowledge. Girard's public life began in literary theory and criticism, with the study of authors whose protagonists embraced self-renunciation and self-transcendence. Eventually, his scholarship crossed into the fields of anthropology, sociology, history, philosophy, psychology, theology,

Girard's thinking, including his textual analysis, offers a sweeping reading of human nature, human history and human destiny. Let us review some of his more important conclusions.

He overturned three widespread assumptions about the nature of desire and violence: first, that our desire is authentic and our own; second, that we fight from our differences, rather than our sameness; and third, that religion is the cause of violence, rather than an archaic solution for controlling violence within a society, as he would assert.

He was fascinated by what he calls "metaphysical desire"—that is, the desire we have when creature needs for food, water, sleep and shelter are met. In that regard, he is perhaps

best known for his notion of mediated desire, based on the observation that people adopt the desires of other people. In short, we want what others want. We want it because they want it.

Human behavior is driven by imitation. We are, after all, social creatures. Imitation is the way we learn; it's how we begin to speak, and why we don't eat with our hands. It's why advertising works, why a whole generation may decide at once to pierce their tongues or tear their jeans, why pop songs top the charts and the stock markets rise and fall.

The idea of mimesis is hardly foreign to the social sciences today, but no one had made it a linchpin in a theory of human competition and violence, as Girard did, beginning in the 1950s. Freud and Marx were in error. One supposed sex to be the building block of human behavior; the other saw economics as fundamental. But the true key was "mimetic desire," which precedes and drives both. Imitation steers our sexual longings and Wall Street trends. When a Coca-Cola advertisement beckons you to join the glamorous people at a beach by drinking its beverage, mimetic desire poses no immediate privations—there is enough Coca-Cola for all. Problems arise where scarcity imposes limits, or when envy eyes an object that cannot be shared, or one that the possessor has no wish to share—a spouse, an inheritance, the top-floor corner office.

Hence, Girard claimed that mimetic desire is not only the way we love; it's the reason we fight. Two hands that reach toward the same object will ultimately clench into fists. Think of "A Midsummer Night's Dream," where

couples dissolve and reassemble, tearing friendships asunder as the two men suddenly want the same woman. Whatever two or three people want, soon everyone will want. Mimetic desire spreads contagiously, as people converge on the same person, position or possession as the answer to a prayer or the solution to a problem. Even conflict is imitated and reciprocated.

Eventually, one individual or group is seen as responsible for the social contagion—generally, someone who is an outsider, who cannot or will not retaliate, and so is positioned to end the escalating cycles of tit-for-tat. The chosen culprit is therefore a foreigner, a cripple, a woman or, in some cases, a king so far above the crowd that he stands alone. The victim is killed, exiled, pilloried or otherwise eliminated. This act unites the warring factions and releases enormous social tension, restoring harmony among individuals and within the community. First the scapegoat is a criminal, then a god. More important, the scapegoat is both, since the single-handed power to bring either peace and harmony or war and violence to a society is seen as supernatural. Oedipus is deified at Colonus, Helen of Troy ascends Mount Olympus, and even as Joan of Arc is burned at the stake, the mob begins to murmur, "We have killed a saint!" Archaic religious sacrifice, Girard argued, is no more than the ritual reenactment of the scapegoat's killing, invoking the magical powers that pre-empted a societal catastrophe previously. He offered a complete deconstruction of religion, just as he had deconstructed desire.

# *Girard is a champion of the long thought in a world that favors increasingly short and trivial ones.* ●●

He not only replaced Freudian desire with a more streamlined notion of mimesis, he also reconsidered Freud's *Totem and Taboo*, the psychoanalyst's ventures into archaeology and anthropology, at a time when the book was largely rejected. Girard took its notions of collective murder, and its insight that the foundation of culture is murder, one step further. He reaffirmed the book's importance but ultimately refuted it with his daring, erudite argument.

His next step was to prove the most provocative of all. He describes how the Judeo-Christian texts are unique in revealing the innocence of the scapegoat, thus destabilizing the mechanism that allowed the victim to be both criminal and redeemer, the violent solution to social violence. We can no longer have clean consciences as we murder. Individuals and groups even compete for the cachet of being a victim in the Oppression Olympics, as the power-holders play defense. Wars continue but end with no clear resolutions. International rivalries still escalate toward uncertain ends. The stakes are higher than ever today: We teeter on the nuclear brink.

For the reader meeting René Girard for the first time, the obvious question is why, in a world flooded with new information daily, we should care about the books, interviews, articles and life of a man who died quietly in his early 90s in late 2015. I would begin by noting that he is a champion of the long thought in a world that

favors increasingly short and trivial ones. He is one of the few real thinkers we have had in our times.

Many have attempted to compartmentalize him according to his various interests (literature, anthropology, religions) or according to the distinct phases of his work (mimesis, scapegoating, sacrifice). However, Girard cannot be parsed into segments because the phases of his work are not diverse moments in one person's episodic life. They show the substance of his intellectual, emotional and spiritual involvement with 20th-century history and his personal effort to come to grips with it. More often, journalists and others marshal one piece of his thought to support the discussion at hand, while failing to consider the context of the whole. But attempts to put him in a box reveal something about our own need to comfort ourselves.

Compartmentalizing his ideas is a mistake, obviously. It cannot and should not be done, for the simple reason that if you do so you won't be changed. That, in the end, is the real core of Girard's thought: change of being.

"All desire is a desire for being," he wrote, and the formulation, stunning in its implications, is an arrow that points the way out of our metaphysical plight. We want what others want because we believe the "other" possesses an inner perfection that we do not. We become consumed by the wish to be the godlike others. We hope that by acquiring their trappings (their

cars, their couturiers, their circle of friends) we will acquire their metaphysical goods—authority, wisdom, autonomy, self-fulfillment—which are largely imagined, anyway.

The imitation puts us in direct competition with the person we adore, the rival we ultimately come to hate and worship, who responds by defending his or her turf. As competition intensifies, the rivals copy each other more and more, even if they're only copying the reflected image of themselves. Eventually, the *objet du désir* becomes secondary or irrelevant. The rivals are obsessed with each other and their fight. Bystanders are drawn into "taking sides," and so the conflict can envelop a society, with cycles of retaliatory (and therefore imitative) violence and one-upsmanship.

That's why Girard's theories must explode inward rather than outward. If you use these tools to castigate the defective "other," you miss the point. Desire is not individual but social. The other has colonized your desire long before you knew you had it. And the phantom being that you covet recedes as you pursue it. Girard asks you to ask yourself: Who do I worship?

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Cynthia L. Haven writes regularly for *The Times Literary Supplement* and has contributed to *The New York Times*, *The Nation*, *The Washington Post* and many other publications. This essay is an excerpt from her book *Evolution of Desire: A Life of René Girard* (© 2018 by Michigan State University Press, reprinted by permission).

## Whose Resolve, Which Salvation?

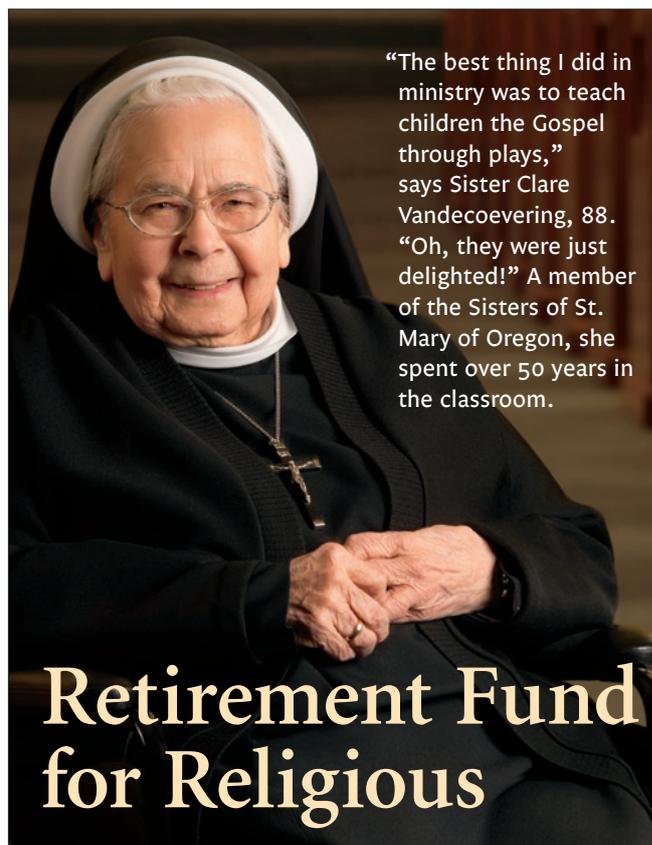
By Joshua Wall

*Jesus said:* Suffer  
the children, forbid  
them not from me.  
Such is my father's  
kingdom, heaven:  
Their names are legion  
where they lay  
tunneled beneath our borders.  
Raise

the tattered knuckles  
of their corpses, Roman play  
things, marbles and jacks  
cast upon the suffering  
of children, whose unnamed legion  
will separate our bones, dissolve  
our joints, on resurrection day.

---

*Joshua Wall has published work in First Things, Frontier Poetry and Jewish Fiction.net. He holds a Ph.D. from the University of Michigan, where he teaches.*



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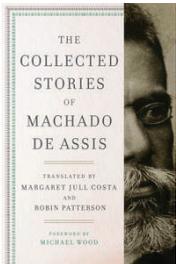
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## The Writer's Catholic Writer?

By Randy Boyagoda



### The Collected Stories of Machado de Assis

Translated by Margaret Jull Costa and Robin Patterson  
Liveright  
930p \$35

Stop me if you've heard this before: What do Susan Sontag, Philip Roth, Allen Ginsberg, Harold Bloom, Salman Rushdie and a 19th-century Catholic priest from Brazil have in common? They all rate highly the talents of Machado de Assis.

Born in 1839, the grandchild of freed slaves, Machado lived outside Rio de Janeiro with his family until losing both his little sister and mother to untimely deaths. He and his father moved elsewhere, his father remarried, and Machado eventually found work with Brazil's Ministry of Agriculture, Commerce and Public Works, where he was employed for three decades. He was

happily married for 35 years and died in 1908, receiving a state funeral.

That honor was not in recognition of superior bureaucratic accomplishments. Instead, it was for the lifelong bibliophile's seven short story collections and nine novels, alongside poetry, plays, journalism and librettos. He also co-founded the Brazilian Academy of Letters and served as its first president.

This biographical information comes from the introduction to *The Collected Stories of Machado de Assis*, which was published earlier this year in a new English-language translation by Margaret Jull Costa and Robin Patterson. This 900-page tome offers a chance for readers unfamiliar with Machado to figure out why a writer so little-read outside his native Brazil seems such a big deal to elite Anglophone literati. Ginsberg praised him as "another Kafka"; Sontag declared he was nothing less than "the greatest writer ever produced in Latin

America"; Rushdie contends his "fantasticating imagination" is so fertile, profound and original as to suggest he might have been a descendant of otherworldly literary gods who set him into "the South American literary wilderness of that period."

The easy way to explain the phenomenon of an apparently great and generally unknown author is to praise that person as a "writer's writer." This is a diplomatic way of excusing general readers from engaging with the works of a difficult or idiosyncratic artist whose efforts are assumed to appeal only to fellow practitioners. That could easily explain (away) Machado's work, but an immersion in his world suggests he is actually more of a "writer's Catholic writer." Regardless of his personally held beliefs or religious practice, his cerebral, playful and mystical-mysterious stories consistently reveal, affirm and depend upon a fundamentally religious sense of things.

While almost any fabulist depends on and opens up views of worlds beyond the immediate that are not necessarily religiously-shaped—the stories of both Edgar Allan Poe and Jorge Luis Borges come immediately to mind—Machado's efforts in this respect prove consistently so, and particularly Catholic, in their most striking features.

"The Devil's Church" (1884), for instance, is a wry and slanted update of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. In this story the Devil decides to open a church of his own. First, he goes to heaven and parleys with God. Initially amused, God soon grows tired of the Devil's talk about his grand and puritanically evil ambitions and sends him away to try his best. Back on earth, the Devil disguises himself as a Benedictine monk and begins proclaiming a new, counter-Biblical message. He gains many followers only to learn, eventually, that his most outwardly devout followers prove the least genuinely faithful to his teachings. One can almost hear God calling down "I told you so" from on high.

Deep and even didactic irony appears across Machado's stories, usually in their denouement. Others prove more bookishly playful. "The Sacristan's Manuscript" (1884) recounts the story of a lonely, austere priest and his lonely, generous, unmarried cousin. Their coming together, surprisingly and intensely, ends badly but also, in a way, nobly, for both. Machado's narrator, a self-described "philosophical sacristan" and friend and confidant to both people, concludes a heated tale of the heart with an intellectual's cool, ethereal irony: "If it is true, as Schiller would have it, that love and hunger rule

the world, then I am of the firm opinion that something, either love or dinner, must still exist somewhere or other."

Other stories are more explicitly moralizing in their conclusions but usually not to great effect, because their pointed endings collapse all of the meaningful ambiguity and implication of the stories themselves. This is the case, for instance, with "Brother Simão" (1870), a brisk reworking of the story of Abélard and Héloïse, whose many intriguing turns and shocking revelations lose their purchase, by story's end, to the too obvious poetic justice visited upon the man responsible for separating the lovers.

Elsewhere, Machado comes across as more provocatively experimental, as in "In the Ark" (1882), which he subtitles "Three Unpublished Chapters From the Book of Genesis." This explores sibling rivalry among the sons of Noah, which Machado unexpectedly extends from the atemporal realm of the mythic-biblical into late 19th-century geopolitics by way of a leap from Shem and Japheth arguing over territory to a suddenly related citation of the war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire in the late 1870s.

The size of this collection discloses unevenness and repetition—particularly the premise of failed romances between devout women and seminarians or priests. That said, two stories stand out: "Midnight Mass" (1899) is a work of veiled meaning and temptation involving a young man (who narrates) and an older woman. It is brilliantly taut in its telling of why and how the young man's "soul grew indolent" over the course of his conversa-

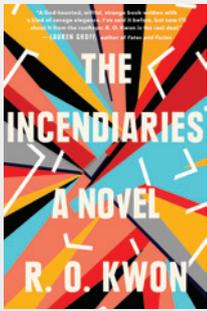
tion with a beguiling older woman. That tautness depends on Machado's reminding us of the chronological and ethical stakes of the narrator's ambivalent chatting, either just before going to church, or for so long that he misses Mass and does something else instead.

More mischievous in its study of our too-human spirits, "Among Saints" (1896) is a feverishly told tale of a sacristan who hears men talking in his parish church in the middle of the night. He discovers the statuary saints of the church have come to life and stepped down from their niches. The sacristan recounts their banter: "Me? Smile?" scoffs John the Baptist at Francis de Sales while promising to tell a story of a recent petition that will entertain him, while from off to the side St. Joseph meekly insists he has a better one to tell. The sacristan listens in; what he learns of one particularly desperate man's prayers proves too much, and he faints while the saints laugh "not the great guffaws of Homer's gods when they saw lame Vulcan serving at the table, but a polite, pious, very Catholic laugh."

Machado's imagination is so boldly literary and religious that at his best he does what every great writer tries to do. His stories let us imagine our way into familiar perspectives and situations from unexpected vantages that enlarge and transform our sense of what is and what can be in this life, and the next.

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Randy Boyagoda is a professor of English at the University of Toronto, where he is also principal of St. Michael's College and holds the Basilian Chair in Christianity, Arts and Letters.



### The Incendiaries

By R. O. Kwon  
Riverhead Books  
214p \$26

#### Crisis of faith

R. O. Kwon was raised a devout Catholic by her Korean parents before becoming agnostic at 17. She beautifully delves into the pain of lost certitude of God's grace in her poised debut novel, *The Incendiaries*. The book cycles through three perspectives and flits through time to construct its haunting story.

Will Kendall became an evangelical in junior high, when his mother fell ill. "A kid evangelist, and a pain in the ass," he describes his young self. After stints of missionary work and semesters at a Bible college, Will loses his faith and ends up at Edwards, a tony East Coast college where children of the rich frolic. "In thrift-store ballgowns, they splashed through off-limits fountains," Will observes.

While Will works multiple jobs, lies to convince others his family isn't poor and evades questions about his past, he meets Phoebe Lin and is immediately enchanted. Phoebe appears to be a happy-go-lucky party girl with an endless supply of friends and lovers. But she, too, is improvising young adulthood after a fervent youth. Her devotion was to the piano, with ambitions to become a concert pianist, a goal she abandoned with

devastating consequences.

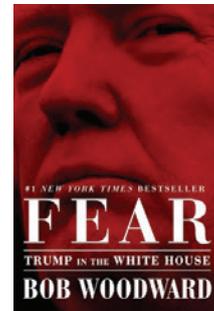
Phoebe and Will date casually until he tells her the truth about his evangelical childhood and loss of faith, which intrigues her. From then on, they are a couple, but as they become more entwined, Phoebe falls under the sway of John Leal, a former Edwards student who claims to have spent time in a North Korean gulag and leads a strict Bible study group called Jejah. Will recognizes John's conversion techniques, sees Jejah as a cult and tries to convince Phoebe that John is "a low-rent Jesus freak with Franciscan affectations."

With an informed respect that is rare in contemporary fiction, Kwon grapples with religious and romantic devotion, faith and its loss, the joy and comforts of God's love and the shadow its absence leaves behind. Her prose is precise and filled with gorgeous sentences that arrive regularly, like pearls on a string. "Sunlit paths crossed the green, lines in a giant palm, holding students who lazed on the grass," Will observes about the campus. "It was a lost garden, but I'd been allowed in."

*The Incendiaries* startles and unsettles with insights, as its characters act to prove their beliefs to themselves and to the world, with explosive results.

---

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



### Fear

Trump in the White House  
By Bob Woodward  
Simon & Schuster  
448p \$30

#### Real news

Readers of Bob Woodward's latest, *Fear*, can be forgiven if they forget at times that the best-seller is allegedly the result of dogged research and interviews with real, if mostly anonymous people in the actual world. The various confrontations, policy mishaps, personnel missteps and general White House mayhem *Fear* depicts suggest a work of fiction, but the action in *Fear* is too over-the-top for the story ever to be credible as mere political satire.

*Fear* is allegedly named for Donald Trump's "strategy" in business wheeling and dealing, but the title perhaps best describes the only rational response of its exhausted readers after 300-plus pages of this narrative of the White House as a clown car. Much has been made of Woodward's exhaustive methods and the resulting capacity to recreate real-time dialogue and brainstorming sessions behind closed White House doors, but the hot-rod pace and shifting standards for direct quoting can leave readers bereft of emotional and intellectual breath.

In *Fear*, Trump as an actual human being makes a few rare appearances—for example, in contemplating a response to the Syrian

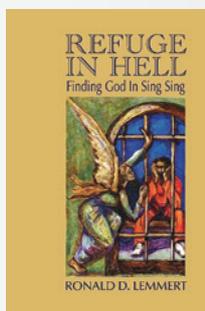
regime's chemical attacks. He seems genuinely appalled by the Syrian dictator, but there is no follow-through or deliberation or doubt before or after any of his major decisions, even as they contradict themselves. By turns petulant, explosively peevisish or nakedly self-serving, Trump appears as a bizarro-world inverse of what the public has come to expect of the presidency. The day-care staff swirling around him at the White House have become expert at Trumpian impulse control, from pacifying flattery and bureaucratic obfuscation to outright deception. Many take to simply hiding material from the president to prevent jaw-dropping policy blunders. (Spoiler alert: He finds ways to make them anyway.)

We also learn some interesting things about the current White House. Staffers in the Trump administration appear not to know too much about history, biology or the French they took—or, God forbid, foreign policy—but no one seems to let all that ignorance get in the way of preposterous arguments, relentless scheming and backstabbing or the practical matters of government—something else they don't seem to know too much about.

All in all, *Fear* is a sorry and depressing read. If Woodward's account turns out to be an example of the president's beloved fake news, we can only be relieved.

---

Kevin Clarke, senior editor.  
Twitter: @ClarkeatAmerica.



**Refuge in Hell**  
Finding God  
in Sing Sing  
By Ronald  
D. Lemmert  
Orbis Books  
208p \$22

### A modern day inferno

While studying theology as a Jesuit scholastic, I was blessed to have James Keenan, S.J., as a teacher. Father Keenan taught that sin in the Gospels is always about not bothering to love. The clearest example of this is found in Matthew 25, where Jesus says those who never bothered to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, care for the sick or visit the imprisoned are condemned to hell for their indifference to human suffering.

Perhaps nowhere in our contemporary culture in the United States is the contrast between Christian love and hellish indifference more stark than in our prison system. In *Refuge in Hell*, the Rev. Ronald Lemmert, a prison chaplain, offers us a glimpse of the price one pays to follow the Gospel of Christ, taking the reader on a Dante-esque journey through the circles of hell in a modern-day Inferno, Sing Sing Correctional Facility in New York State.

As a fellow priest and prison chaplain who has devoted most of his ministerial life to working in jails and prisons, I can attest that what Father Lemmert writes is spot on: "Prison is the closest thing to hell on earth." His descriptions of daily life in prison and his compassionate

description of the prisoners he met provide a glimpse for the reader into life in prison that few outside the walls of the criminal justice system can see.

The most poignant moment comes at the end, when the author describes vividly just how hellish the system is: the incompetent, lazy and often corrupt correctional employees; the cruelty and indifference of many mental and medical health providers; and, sadly, even some chaplains who do nothing more for the inmates than pick up a check each week. I know from my own long experience that his descriptions are no exaggeration.

While he provides a very clear, sharp and critical view of the prison system in New York's "Dept. of Corruptions," people who are ignorant of or indifferent to the suffering of prisoners are not likely to pick up a prison memoir. What is needed is a book that will reach a wider audience and hold a mirror up to all of us—a book that forces us to grapple with our societal failure to bother to love. This failure has created pockets of hell like Sing Sing and is spilling over poisonously into all the other areas of our selfish culture. Father Lemmert's book serves as a warning, a kind of canary in the coal mine. Sadly, no one listens to canaries.

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George Williams, S.J., is the Catholic chaplain of San Quentin State Prison in California.



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## A martyr's tale for the classic rock set

By John Anderson

Loud, vivid and yearning to be operatic, “Bohemian Rhapsody”—a.k.a. the Queen movie—was always destined to be a martyr’s tale, a tragic romance, maybe rock’s answer to “La Bohème.” Freddie Mercury, the band’s guiding diva, died of AIDS complications in 1991. The band was huge, and Mercury was pop’s most flamboyant performer—a closeted icon who rode a gay aesthetic to stardom. It is a poignant story even now. Or especially now.

The “problems” with “Bohemian Rhapsody” begin with the enormous expectations of the movie and the emotional investment so many fans have in the band. And with Mercury, whose portrayal by Rami Malek, outfitted with a set of Freddie-worthy buck teeth, is a close-to-alarming thing to watch. Mercury, with all the outsider credentials a young man might not want in ’70s London, triumphs over not only conventional pop but also conventional beauty.

But the movie is far more conservative than its subjects, two of whom, the guitarist Brian May and the drummer Roger Taylor, are among the film’s pro-

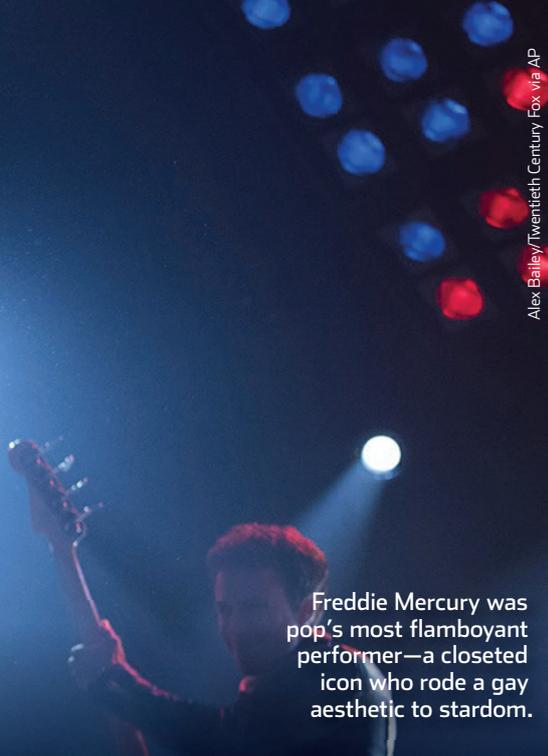
ducers. Knowing this adds to the sense that the story has been laundered: The band dynamics in the film have almost no edge at all. The conflicts are always outside the group, never within, at least until late in the game, when Freddie decides he needs to go solo. He ultimately sees the error of his ways and returns just in time for the justly celebrated performance by Queen at 1985’s Live Aid benefit concert.

The shared sense of musical mischief among the bandmates is an emotionally comforting element in “Bohemian Rhapsody”; the portrait may actually be true, but movies seldom let facts get in the way of convenient dramatic conflict. Elsewhere, however, the history is really off. Mercury never actually married his best friend, Mary Austin, for example. And there are other problematic aspects aswirl around the movie’s release. The director, Bryan Singer, was not only fired shortly before principal photography was completed; he is currently facing sex-abuse allegations. And for all its energy and uplift, “Bohemian Rhapsody” seems to be a movie in conflict with itself.

The morning after I saw it with my regular movie-screening partner, Sue, she emailed me: “Do you think the movie vilifies the gay community?” It was not the question I had expected. But it was not a bad one.

In one sense, no. The Freddie Mercury of the film arrives fully formed. The child of conservative immigrant parents (Parsi, by way of Zanzibar), he undergoes no clichéd evolution from shrinking, unsure violet to screaming Queen; he may not be out, but he is *outré*.

On the other hand, the one-time manager Paul Prenter (Allen Leech), who emerges as Freddy’s sole gay ally amid the vast Queen machinery, is also the villain of the piece, cutting Freddie off from all others and jealously protecting his turf. He also seems to be Freddie’s conduit to a leathery gay world that is introduced with as un-subtle a piece of Christian imagery as one might cook up. Intercutting concert footage and Freddie’s off-stage temptations, the movie ultimately juxtaposes its subject’s surrender to his darker impulses with a scene of a



Alex Bailey/Twentieth Century Fox via AP

Freddie Mercury was pop's most flamboyant performer—a closeted icon who rode a gay aesthetic to stardom.

supine Freddie, crowd-surfing an audience of worshipful fans and assuming full crucifixion mode. It ain't subtle.

But what exactly does it mean? It will seem odd, but in my ruminations about “Bohemian Rhapsody,” I keep thinking about “Lawrence of Arabia,” a genuine epic but also a film with many parallels to Mr. Singer's. Its hero was sexually repressed, the war within himself being reflected in his conflict with an outside force (Freddie's enemy being standard pop musicality). He had allies who were fiercely loyal, but the forces of the system were fatally arrayed against him. His demise is foreshadowed—or, actually, just spelled out—from the opening moments of the story. And while historical accuracy is not the first priority, the point of the story is sacrifice: the artist on a cross. That may seem a bit grandiose, but grandiosity was always the fuel source of Queen and Freddie Mercury—and of “Bohemian Rhapsody” as well.

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John Anderson is a television critic for *The Wall Street Journal* and a contributor to *The New York Times*.

## A new play asks: what is owed to abusers?

Premiering in the #MeToo era and as the Catholic Church continues to grapple with the sexual abuse crisis, “Downstate” challenges viewers to consider what, if anything, society owes those who harm minors. Written by Bruce Norris and directed by Pam MacKinnon, the play asks audiences to consider sexual abuse not from the perspective of victims but from the viewpoints of offenders.

The four men living in the fictional group home in “Downstate”—Gio, Fred, Felix and Dee—all try to rationalize their crimes. A former piano teacher who sexually abused at least two of his students, Fred is confined to a wheelchair following an attack in prison that broke his spine. When confronted by one of his victims, Andy, who visits the group home, Fred does not deny the abuse, repeatedly affirming Andy's anger and admitting that what he did 30 years ago was wrong.

But when Andy asks Fred to sign a “reconciliation contract” that lays out what Andy alleges Fred did to him, Fred refuses because he disputes the kind of abuse Andy details. Fred notes he admitted to the abuse in court—but says that he committed that particular act of abuse on another boy, not on Andy. Both Andy

and his wife tell Fred he is not allowed to question the memories of victims because it causes them to relive their trauma. All four men endure daily reminders of their status as sex offenders, even after they have served their full sentences.

“Downstate,” playing at Chicago's Steppenwolf Theatre before heading to the National Theatre in London next year, poses a number of uncomfortable questions. Are some forms of sexual abuse worse than others; and, if so, should offenders be treated differently? Do sex offenders who have served their prison sentences have rights? Is it just to restrict where they can live, shop and walk? Do abusers maintain their dignity; and if so, what does that look like?

Norris asks us to consider the humanity of individuals who have committed atrocious crimes. Andy is not having it. He wants to be made whole. When he realizes this is not possible, at least not by way of Fred, he grows angry. Andy points out that as he suffers everyday, the abusers live comfortably. But, Norris seems to ask, do they really?

---

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



“Downstate” poses a number of uncomfortable questions.

Photo by Michael Brosilow, courtesy of Steppenwolf Theatre

# A Citizen of God's Kingdom

Readings: Jer 33:4-16, Ps 25, 1 Thes 3:12-4:2, Lk 21:25-36

A new liturgical year begins today, and with it a new set of Sunday readings. With only a few exceptions, this year's Gospel readings will come from the Gospel of Luke. A very early Christian tradition held that the author was the physician and travel companion that Paul mentions in several letters. Writing around the year A.D. 80, Luke gave an account of two significant events—the destruction of Jerusalem and the rapid spread of belief in Christ. The former called into question God's power and faithfulness, while the latter needed someone to place it into the wider narrative of salvation history. Luke explained both events with an elegant thesis: God's promises to Israel were fulfilled in Jesus. The Temple was no longer necessary, since the divine Spirit now dwelt with the Christian community. People flocked to the Christian community to enjoy the beginning of life in God's long-awaited kingdom.

In Luke's Gospel, the kingdom appears gradually, like the gathering clouds of a storm. Like distant thunder, signs like angels, prophecies, miracles and dramatic conversions portend the arrival of God's reign. The storm breaks on Pentecost, when the Spirit arrives amid wind and fire. But Pentecost is just the beginning of a season of grace that will continue until the definitive establishment of God's kingdom at the end of time.

Not everyone was paying attention. Luke drew a sharp line between those who recognized the kingdom's arrival and those who did not. His line did not separate as one might expect. Although the poor in general were quick to respond to the Gospel (Lk 7:22), there were also some rich and powerful people among those transformed by Jesus' preaching (Lk 8:3; 19:1-10). Some of the poor, meanwhile, failed to understand their encounter with grace (Lk 17:11-19).

The difference among people lay in their self-satisfaction. Those who sought no more than they could grasp with their own efforts either failed to understand Jesus' message or saw it as a threat. That their satisfaction came with a price to others was a matter of indifference. The poor and

*'Stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand.'*

*(Lk 21:28)*



## PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Do the satisfactions of your life blind you to grace?

What would you have to leave behind to enjoy the freedom of God's kingdom?

those few of high status who longed for something more, by contrast, heard in the Gospel a confirmation of their intuition. The enthusiasm with which they followed Jesus or left behind their possessions symbolized, for Luke, the authority of truth that Jesus' message carried.

Luke speaks of three arrivals of Jesus: his nativity, his second coming and his daily arrival in the Spirit to his disciples. Luke's hope is that when Christ comes again, those who had been living daily in the Spirit would have grown so accustomed to following Christ that they could enter without fear into the fullness of the kingdom. The world after Pentecost provided the fulfillment these disciples sought. The sharing of resources alleviated the poverty of many. Bonds of love assuaged disorders of body and spirit. No longer ground down or mesmerized by the world's allurements, they could attend completely to the presence and action of the Spirit, which sent them out to preach, heal and advance the kingdom.

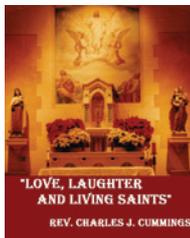
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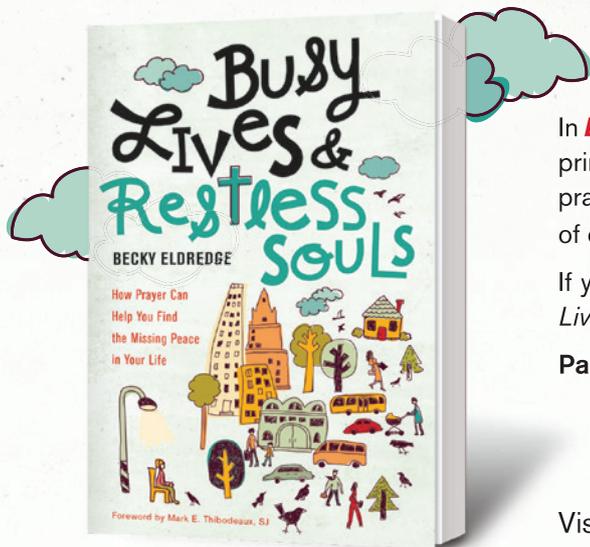
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# Prepare Yourselves

Readings: Bar 5:1-9, Ps 126, Phil 1:4-11, Lk 3:1-6

All four Gospels include, near their beginning, a description of John the Baptist's preaching and baptism, reminding their audiences then and today of John's importance to the early Christian community. Some of Jesus' first disciples came from among John's companions (Jn 1:35-42). Even decades later, Christian missionaries encountered John's disciples on their journeys and found them eager to follow Christ (Acts 18:24-19:7).

John's apocalyptic preaching was popular. Many longed for an end to the world's disorder. Sin had poisoned politics, economics, law and everyday social interactions. The world was haunted by evil; the widespread belief in demonic power one finds in the Gospels testifies to the profound anxieties of first-century life. Something was very wrong, but no one could figure out what it was or how to address it.

John countered these fears by affirming that God was indeed at work, preparing a savior who would clean out Israel's spiritual and moral corruption. To prepare for the savior's appearance, each individual had to purge all personal corruption as well. This was the point of John's baptism: John had adapted the normal ritual washings practiced in every Jewish household into an act of total rebirth. John's ritual bath symbolized inner transformation, gave individuals a clean break with their past and prepared them to recognize the savior to come.

*'All flesh shall see the salvation of God.'* (Lk 3:6)

## PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

In what ways must you renew yourself?

To whom can you be a sign that God is still at work?

Luke understands John the Baptist to be more a mystic than a moralist. John woke Israel up to God's hidden work. John was at the center of the divine plan; only Luke includes an account of John's miraculous birth and hands on the tradition that John and Jesus were related. As an adult, John's ministry affirmed God's fidelity, countering those who had begun to wonder. For example, a Jewish tradition recorded around 175 C.E., but possibly much older, suggests that after the prophet Malachi (late fifth century B.C.E.), no further prophetic messages came from God. It is not clear if people in Jesus' day believed this, but it is clear in Luke's Gospel that people were hungry for a word from God. The fact that Luke saw in John a fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy (see Mal 3:23-24 and Lk 1:17) suggests that in John, God again spoke plainly, without the need for special instruction or interpretation.

John's ministry also pointed forward to the coming kingdom. John's preaching, recounted in Lk 3:7-14, emphasized generosity, honesty and humility. John's preaching also insisted that the arrival of the Messiah was at hand, and that repentance and a change of life were necessary for redemption. John's very life affirmed that God was doing something new, and the individuals who wished to be part of the new thing God was doing had to renew themselves as well.

John's mission has become ours today. We live in an age of anxiety, but for many, the traditional means of hearing God's voice have ceased to function. Certainly, we can find the right words to address those anxieties, but this is not enough. Beyond his words and ministry, John's presence on earth was a sign that God remained faithful. As we prepare to celebrate Christ's coming, may our own lives be a sign to someone that God is still at work, still interested and still ready to save.

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

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# The Catholic Mystique

What does it mean to be a feminist in the church?

By Kaya Oakes



For over a decade, I have taught a writing class on the intersection between music and social movements at the University of California, Berkeley, where the free speech movement was born. On the first day of class, we talk about the history of protest music, and I give the students the etymological definition of the word *protest*, from the Latin *pro testari*: To protest means to witness and then go forth and testify.

Two years before the #MeToo movement went viral, I added Rebecca Solnit's book *Men Explain Things to Me* to the syllabus so my students could explore the connections between music and a resurgent feminist movement. Ms. Solnit, a highly prolific historian, activist and social critic, did not coin the term *mansplaining*, but in the title essay from her book, she talks about a time when a man she met at a party refused to believe she was the author of one of her own books. Mansplaining is just one example of the ways in which women's expertise and experiences are devalued, doubted and silenced. It is also unfortunately rife in the Catholic Church.

One of the questions I am asked most often as a writer is how I can be a Catholic and a feminist. My usual response is to ask how I could be Catholic and not be a feminist. I was raised in the church and nurtured in catechesis by women, educated

in Catholic schools by women, and my writing is inspired by the work of the towering Catholic theologians Elizabeth Johnson, M. Shawn Copeland and Sandra Schneiders, activist Catholic laywomen like Dorothy Day, and contemporary Catholic writers like Natalie Diaz, Toni Morrison and Rebecca Brown.

Yet the most frequent responses to my work in Catholic publications often ring of bias against my gender. A male reader once told me it was not my job to question the church; it was my job to "get down on my knees" and be thankful to belong to it. That is one of the printable comments I have received. We will skip the unprintable ones. The irony is that weekly, I do get down on my knees in church and give thanks. But that does not mean I should not occasionally stand up, too.

St. Mary Magdalene is known as the Apostle to the Apostles, but she is more than that. Chosen by Christ to be the first witness to the resurrection, Mary Magdalene goes forth and testifies about the good news. And the reaction of the male apostles is telling. They do not believe her. They doubt her testimony. She is my patron saint, chosen when I was confirmed, but she is also the patron saint of the mansplained.

Feminism is not about women being better than men. It is about women being recognized as equals, about men and women working alongside

one another. That means recognizing our accomplishments as well as the struggles we face. Believing the testimony of women is what makes the #MeToo movement so crucial. For Catholic feminists, who are regularly told we should just quit the church or that we should quiet down, it also means bearing witness to the beauty and grace of being Catholic women and to the challenges as well.

The Catholic "both/and" is useful here: Feminism is both necessary for being a Catholic woman and one of the reasons you will be tested as a Catholic feminist. Platform is privilege, and those of us with a public role to play in conversations about women in the church are called to use it to challenge outdated notions about the inferiority of women. We are both Catholic and women. God created us to be our full, authentic selves, and God sees us as our full, authentic selves. And sometimes we have to stand up and say this. We hope the church can do the same.

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**Kaya Oakes, a contributing writer for *America*, teaches writing at the University of California, Berkeley, and is the author of *The Nones Are Alright*.**



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