

# America

THE JESUIT REVIEW OF FAITH AND CULTURE

## *The Hispanic Heart of the Church*

Hosffman Ospino

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Voted for Trump,  
Love Pope Francis

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Wife, Mother,  
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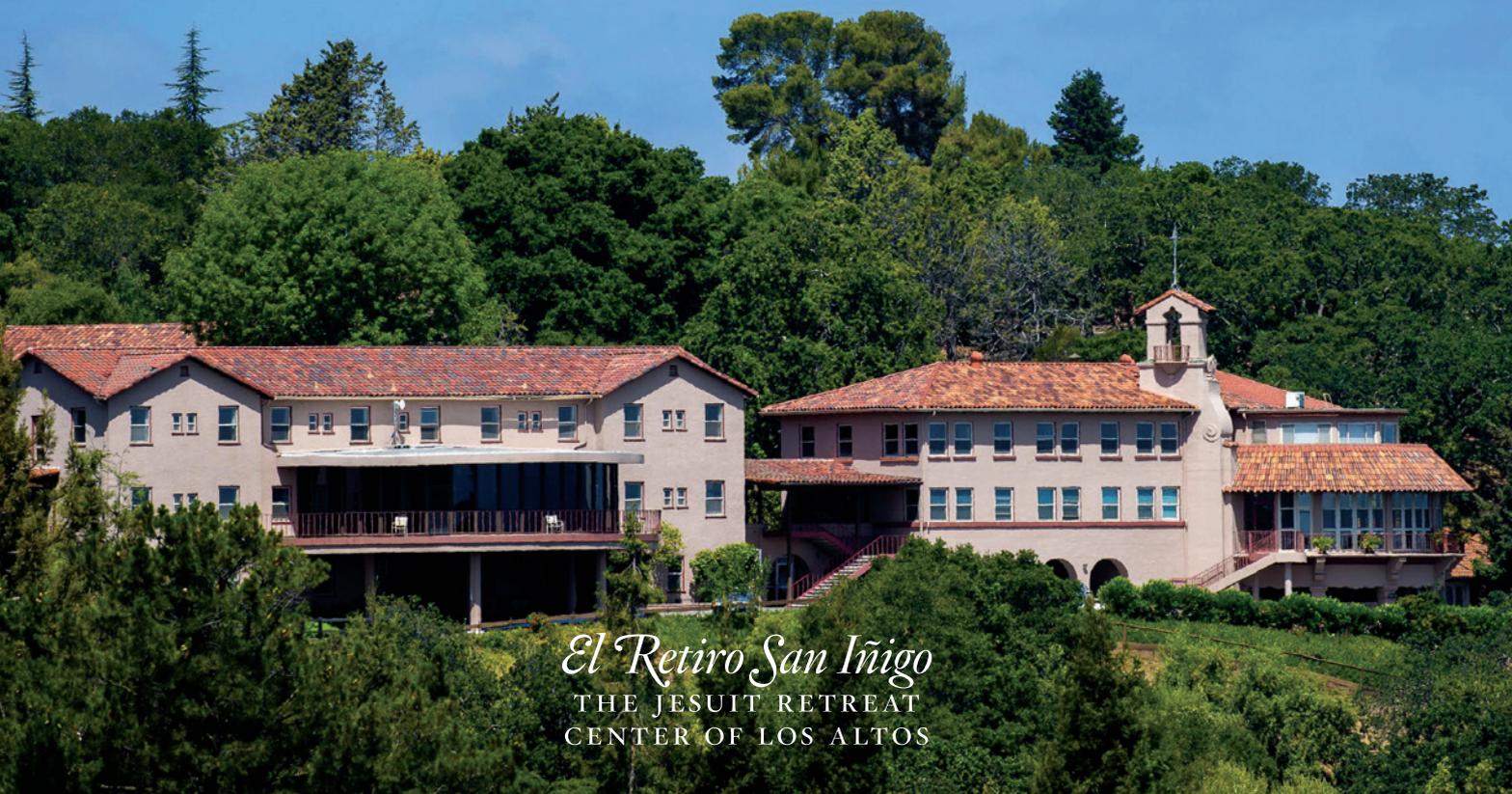
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# How to encounter Latino Catholics in America

*Father Matt Malone is on pilgrimage in Rome with America Media.*

The nation has changed, once again. This time we are becoming more Latino. The demographic shift is not the future; it is the present. Nowhere is this clearer than in the church, where Hispanics account for more than 71 percent of the growth since 1960.

Hosffman Ospino, associate professor of Hispanic ministry and religious education at Boston College, unpacks the numbers in this week's issue, diving deep into how Hispanics are changing the United States and forming a new geographical center for U.S. Catholicism. The majority of U.S. Catholics now live in the South and West, largely because of emerging Hispanic and Asian communities.

Mr. Ospino served as principal investigator for the "National Study of Catholic Parishes With Hispanic Ministry," which was led by Boston College in collaboration with the Center for Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University. "Rapid demographic changes along with the fear of the unknown seem to explain some of the anxiety that invades the hearts of many Catholics in the United States today," he writes. "The best remedy to address such anxiety is to know more about each other."

Thanks to a two-year grant from a private foundation, America Media will make those introductions, fostering meaningful conversations about the future sustainability and growth of the U.S. Catholic Church. That conversation will give special attention to Hispanic Catholics in church life. We will organize town halls, publish a special issue, produce videos and give greater

emphasis to Hispanic-related issues in print, online and on air. Coverage will center on three key topics: criminal justice reform, Hispanics in Catholic education and immigration.

Immigration has split contemporary society like few other issues. Despite constant efforts from advocates, comprehensive immigration reform is still but a dream. The U.S. bishops recognize that sovereign nations have a right to protect their borders, but they have also underscored the right of individuals and families to migrate to sustain their lives. Yet the emerging Hispanic church is not simply a matter of immigration. Mr. Ospino notes that two-thirds of the nation's Hispanic Catholics were born in the United States. Their needs are not the same as those of their immigrant parents. Not all Hispanics are the same.

I was born in the Dominican Republic. My mother is Dominican, but my father is from Chicago. Bilingual and bicultural Latinos, like me, are yet another dimension in the U.S. Hispanic milieu. Most of us actually identify ourselves by our nation of origin rather than with the umbrella terms "Hispanic" or "Latino."

Bilingual billboards and Super Bowl ads demonstrate that businesses know who their future customers will be. Capitalism and culture collide, and the meaning of our traditions is often lost. While most continue to be Catholic, the percentage of U.S. Hispanics who are Catholic continues to drop.

The church is struggling to keep up. While 55 percent of school-age Catholic children are Hispanic, only 4 percent of them are enrolled in Catholic schools. It gets only a little better at Catholic university and colleges, where 11 percent of students are Hispanic, according to Mr. Ospino.

The changing demographics have no doubt fueled a new nativism. But we can overcome such barriers. Toward that end, America Media will also partner with the Fifth National Encuentro of Hispanic/Latino Ministry, a four-year process of ecclesial reflection, consultation and evangelization. It will help to identify and plan for pastoral priorities and to bridge divisions.

My family moved from the Caribbean to the United States when I was a child. "I'm moving to America," I told my neighbors in their backyard. My friend's sister laughed at me. "You're in America," Eli said. I was puzzled. "You're in North America. And then there's also South America. But it's all America." Little did I know she was preparing me for a papal teaching.

St. John Paul II, in his 1999 post-synodal apostolic exhortation, "The Church in America," spoke of America as a single continent. An encounter with the Lord, he said, would lead us down "a path of conversion, communion and solidarity." Pope Francis has not ceased to challenge us to live a culture of encounter.

"How good it is for us to pray together," he said during his visit to the church St. Patrick in the City in Washington D.C. "How good it is to encounter one another in this place, where we see one another as brothers and sisters, where we realize that we need one another."

In America, we are all brothers and sisters and we need each other. Our ancestors come from every nation on earth, and our unique cultures come together to form new ones. We must overcome our fears through encounters with each other.

J. D. Long-Garcia, *senior editor*.  
Twitter: @Jdlonggarcia



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CNS photo/Rupak De Chowdhuri, Reuters  
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## Have you gotten involved in local politics since the last presidential election?

As the first anniversary of the 2016 presidential election nears, **America** asked readers about their engagement with politics on the local level. Ninety-eight percent of our reader sample told us that they intended to vote in upcoming local elections—though voter turnout in municipal elections in major cities rarely comes close to 50 percent. “Democracy begins at the local level,” said Gretchen Knapp of Normal, Ill.

When asked which local offices are the most important to focus on, a narrow plurality of 30 percent chose city and town council members. “Council members have the most possibilities to check the other branches [of local government],” said a reader from Philadelphia.

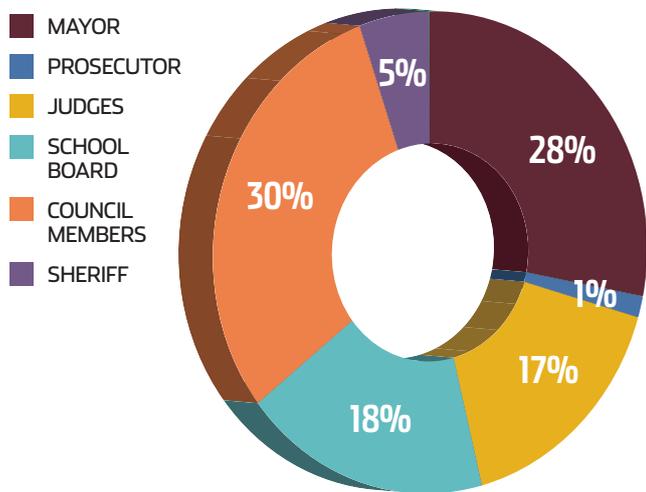
Twenty-eight percent of respondents thought that mayoral elections were the most important. “All local elections are significant. However, our mayors control the city council and the municipal budget and all city resources,” wrote

Tunya Cosby of Richmond, Va. “The mayor also represents the city in global affairs and makes decisions on our behalf regarding certain global initiatives,” she said. “For example, my town’s mayor signed on to the Paris Climate Accord, though [President Trump] abandoned this international commitment to stave off climate change.”

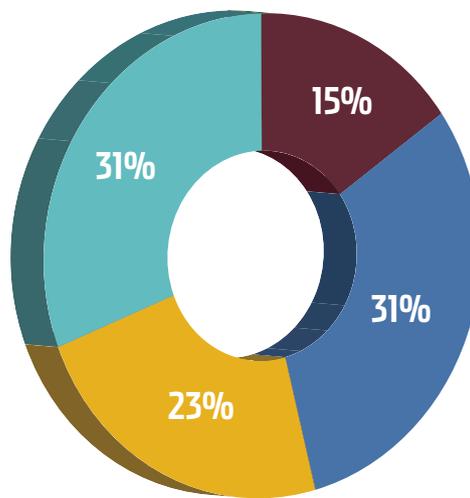
The remaining readers told **America** that the election of judges (17 percent) and the school board (18 percent) were the most crucial local elections, while a lower number of respondents thought the elections of prosecutors (1 percent) and sheriffs (5 percent) were most important.

Among the 2 percent of respondents who admitted they did not intend to vote in their local elections, a variety of reasons were offered, but John Monsalve of Long Valley, N.J., seemed to sum them up. “I don’t feel like it will make a difference,” he said.

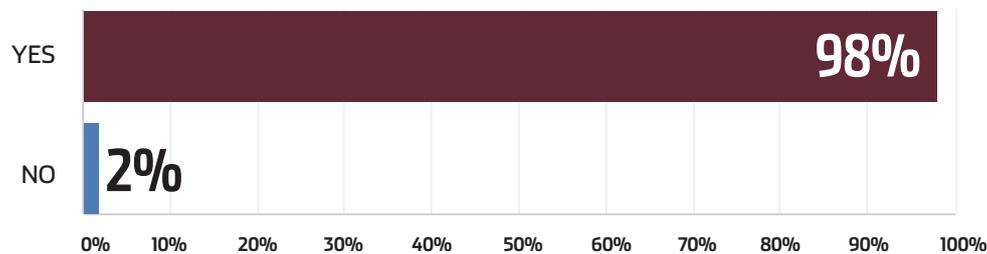
WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING IS THE MOST IMPORTANT LOCAL ELECTION TO FOCUS ON?



IF YOU WON'T VOTE IN LOCAL ELECTIONS, WHAT IS THE REASON?



WILL YOU VOTE IN YOUR NEXT LOCAL ELECTION?



- LACK OF NEWS COVERAGE
- LACK OF COMPETITION (UNOPPOSED CANDIDATES)
- LOCAL POLITICS ARE TOO DIVISIVE
- THE ISSUES AT STAKE IN LOCAL ELECTIONS SEEM IRRELEVANT

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 Humbling Correction

Re “Pope Francis Declares the Death Penalty ‘Contrary to the Gospel,’” by Kevin Clarke (10/30): The interesting question is: Has the church been wrong on the issue of the death penalty as morally acceptable up to now? Does it not humble all of us to think that our doctrines and dogmas could be off the mark for centuries until Pope John Paul II and Pope Francis took the final two steps (1995 and 2017) to reach the conclusion that the practice is categorically contrary to the teachings of Jesus Christ? By analogy, slavery was not condemned by the church as intrinsically evil until Pope John Paul II announced it to be so.

**Frank Pray**

Online Comment

### A Reformed Prisoner

I’m very pleased that Pope Francis is again strongly speaking out against killing serious criminals by capital punishment. I have been a pen pal with a man who has been sentenced to life imprisonment at Graterford Prison in Philadelphia. From our years of correspondence, I’m convinced that he’s reformed his life.

**Tim Donovan**

Online Comment

### The Justice of the Estate Tax

Re “How Does Trump’s Tax Plan Line Up With Catholic Social Teaching?” by Kevin Clarke (10/30): Of all the proposed tax cuts, the one that is most unjust is the elimination of the estate tax. The superwealthy have an obligation to return to the country some of the wealth they accumulated simply because it was the labor, infrastructure and natural resources of the country that allowed them to accumulate such wealth. It is not a confiscatory tax that takes away all of the heirs’ wealth, as too many would have us believe. It is simply a tax that recognizes the debt the wealthy owe to the country that allowed their genius to flourish.

**Alfred Chavez**

Online Comment

### Speed-talking Through High School

Re “The Corrosion of High School Debate—and How It Mirrors American Politics,” by Jack McCordick (10/30): When my sons were in high school, I judged speech and debate over a period of eight years. Everything this writer says is true.

I will add two points: Debate judges are the source of the problem and perpetuate and magnify the problem; and the speed talking that debate teaches has no value in the adult world, unless you are going to make a career out of voiceovers for drug and car commercials.

**Christopher McNally**

Online Comment

### The Church and Everyday Life

Re “Ministry and Millennials,” by Zac Davis (10/30): The statistics speak for themselves. Something urgent needs to be done, but nearly every example has to do with exposing people to the rule book or getting together for a social event, neither of which has much to do with real life.

When young Catholics leave school or college their religion has to be part of their everyday life. They have to belong to the Catholic community, which means that there has to be a Catholic community, which is more than a church.

In the early church, Christian communities were more like enlarged families, with people looking after the interests of one another. Our clergy is overworked, and more young Catholics should become involved in ministries that assist the clergy. Think about what the young need. If we adults act like Christians, our children will remain Christians.

**Randal Agostini**

Online comment

### The Alienation of Young Women

What an astonishing article. It is very long, yet not once does the author even allude to the reasons that the young adult generation of which he is a part is leaving in even greater proportions than did their older siblings, parents and even grandparents.

Young adult women are choosing not to marry in the church, and they are not returning to baptize babies. I have read numerous interviews with these young women. A common refrain is that they refuse to raise their children in a church that essentially tells their children that the sons are more important than the daughters, and that women must be submissive both to the male clergy and to husbands.

All of the initiatives mentioned in this article do not touch on the doctrinal reasons millennials are leaving and have no plans to return. And who can blame young parents who do not feel that they can entrust their kids to this church?

**Anne Chapman**

Online Comment

## The Bail System Singles Out the Poor for Punishment

It costs more to be poor in the United States, and the bail system is just one more example of this fundamental inequity. Access to financial resources can determine whether someone accused of a crime can continue a normal life—including keeping a job, paying bills and caring for children—or must endure months or even years behind bars before going to trial. (The case of Kalief Browder is infamous. Jailed for three years in New York City without trial, initially because he could not post a \$3,000 bail, he later committed suicide.) Prosecutors can also use the threat of exorbitant bail to force people into pleading guilty simply to avoid jail time—a decision that can preserve a defendant’s job in the short term but imperil his or her ability to find employment and housing in the future. The arbitrary nature of the bail system is why only two nations in the world, the United States and the Philippines, require those accused of even nonviolent crimes to purchase their freedom while waiting for their day in court.

But there are encouraging signs that the bail system in the United States is crumbling. At the beginning of the year, New Jersey instituted a risk-assessment system that eliminated bail requirements for all but the handful of defendants seen as the most likely to miss court dates or to commit crimes while awaiting trial. Early reports are that the state’s jail population has dropped by almost one-third even as the crime rate continues downward, a boon to state coffers in addition to being a more just practice.

Also this year, the city of New Orleans, called “the most incarcerated

city in the most incarcerated state in the most incarcerated country in the world” by Mayor Mitch Landrieu, allowed people charged with minor offenses in municipal court to be released without bail; previously, some had stayed weeks in jail because they were not able to pay fees as low as \$50.

In addition, the city’s criminal district court implemented a pilot program that, like New Jersey’s, used risk-assessment tools to allow most defendants to avoid jail. The website CityLab reports that those who were simply released were as likely to show up for trial as those who had to post bail and that only nine of the 201 defendants released under the program were arrested again while awaiting trial, a rate only slightly higher than for those released without bail under more narrow criteria. If this pilot program were expanded citywide, it could greatly reduce spending and prison overcrowding.

Nationally, the bail industry issues \$14 billion in bonds each year and earns about \$2 billion in profits, according to *Governing* magazine, and it is lobbying state and local governments to prevent reform. But in some places other players also make money from the bail system, including the courts themselves. In New Orleans, at least 10 percent of every bond is kept by the bail bondsman, even if the defendant honors his or her pledge to return to court, and another 3 percent is allocated among judges, sheriffs, public defenders and prosecutors.

New Orleans judges’ offices collect over \$1 million a year from bond fees, funding much of their payroll, and they may be reluctant to turn off this revenue stream. But there is no

reason for any level of government to depend on “punitive revenue” from people who have not been convicted of any crime, whether through the bail system, civil-forfeiture programs that seize assets from people not charged with any crime or by escalating court fines demanded of prisoners who have no way of earning enough money to pay them.

The momentum for criminal justice reform has stalled at the federal level, but states and local governments should continue to correct the excesses of the mass-incarceration craze of the last century. Ending the bail system, except in the rare cases where there is demonstrated risk, is a necessary step.

### The Perversion of Patriotism

Patriotism loses its meaning when it is used casually as a political weapon—and it has repeatedly been used this way by the Trump administration. Perhaps most notably, President Trump has repeatedly called athletes like Colin Kaepernick unpatriotic. “N.F.L. players continue to kneel during the National Anthem, showing total disrespect to our Flag & Country,” he tweeted in October.

That same month, Representative Frederica Wilson, Democrat of Florida, criticized Mr. Trump’s phone call to a military widow, Myeshia Johnson, in which he appeared to forget her late husband’s name. John F. Kelly, the retired general who is now White House chief of staff, hit back at Mrs. Wilson,

alleging that two years ago she took credit for the funding of a new F.B.I. field office. (Video footage proved that Representative Wilson had made no such claim.)

When Chip Reid of CBS News pointed out that Mr. Kelly had incorrectly described a statement by Ms. Wilson, White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders adopted Mr. Trump's strategy and implied that fact-checking General Kelly would be unpatriotic, given his military rank. "If you want to get into a debate with a four-star Marine general, I think that is something highly inappropriate," Ms. Sanders told Mr. Reid.

There is nothing patriotic about a disregard for facts. In both of these cases, accusations of being "unpatriotic" launch shouting matches that distract from the issues at hand. Mr. Kaepernick's patriotism—or lack thereof—has been discussed at greater length than the police brutality his kneeling protest hoped to draw attention to, and Ms. Wilson's critique of how Mr. Trump handles calls to Gold Star families has received far more air time than the attack in Niger that resulted in the deaths of Sgt. La David Johnson and three other U.S. soldiers.

Nor does criticism of one's country equal disloyalty to it. "My country, right or wrong' is a thing no patriot would think of saying except in a desperate case," G. K. Chesterton once quipped. "It is like saying 'My mother, drunk or sober.'"

Patriotism is gratitude for and pride in the gifts of one's nation, not an assertion of a nation's indefectibility or destined greatness. That, in fact, is idolatry.

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## When we lose endangered species, we lose God's creation

When it comes to the most vulnerable, most Catholics think of the elderly, the poor or the unborn. But there is another group we have been given to care for, and it is in danger of being neglected.

The Stopping EPA Overreach Act was introduced in January by Representative Gary Palmer, Republican of Alabama, in an attempt to create jobs, but its side effects could be highly damaging to the planet and its wildlife. The bill looks to prevent the Environmental Protection Agency from regulating greenhouse gases and states that “nothing” in the Endangered Species Act, among other laws, “authorizes or requires the regulation of climate change or global warming.”

The effect of climate change on the habitats of animals is undeniable. When the climate changes, animal habitats can be harmed by fluctuating temperatures or loss of vital plant life.

“Climate change in eons past has been a long process,” explains Dan Misleh, executive director of Catholic Climate Covenant. “If climate change is drawn out over time, creatures can adjust [more easily], rather than with a rapid increase of temperatures, as we’re seeing now.” Mr. Misleh offers the example of migratory birds, which studies show are not finding food where they found it just 20 years ago.

Why should Catholics care? With all the pressing issues these days, including immigration, abortion, poverty and war, why should we care about how some bird finds its dinner?

“All of creation is kin. All of creation is companion to us. When [animal species] are lost, God feels a great deal of sorrow for the loss of something he has created,” Mr. Misleh says. “We have a beautifully created world that humans have been given the responsibility of taking care of. So when we lose species, we’ve lost something of ourselves.”

As Pope John Paul II wrote in his “Common Declaration on Environmental Ethics” in 2002, “If we examine carefully the social and environmental crisis which the world community is facing, we must conclude that we are...betraying the mandate God has given us: to be stewards called to collaborate with God in watching over creation in holiness and wisdom.”

It is important to note that animals and human beings are not on an equal plane of dignity. That is why the Catholic Church does not forbid using animals for food or clothing. When we look at animals as equal to humans, we lose sight of what makes human beings sacred—that we are made in the image and likeness of God. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states: “Of all visible creatures only man is ‘able to know and love his Creator.’ He is ‘the only creature on earth that God has willed for its own sake,’ and he alone is called to share, by knowledge and love, in God’s own life.”

So if the choice is between the survival of a person or a puppy, it is our duty to value the human life. It would also be imprudent to suggest more effort be put toward saving the

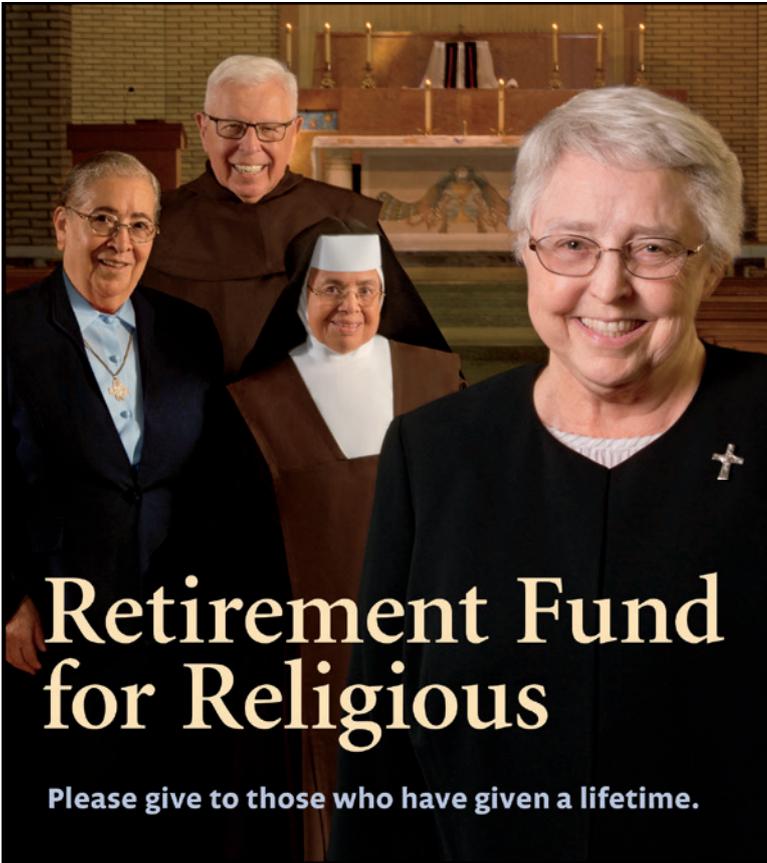
lives of animals than the lives of the unborn.

But we do not rank God’s teachings or say that because one is so important, we should ignore all of the others. The priority of human life does not make the care of animals less important. When we lose endangered animal species, we lose God’s creation. When we stop valuing vulnerable life, the world as a whole suffers. Although it is noble and good to value jobs and think of ways to create more of them, we cannot make these decisions at the expense of God’s creatures.

The E.P.A. was created to help protect the earth—a vulnerable part of creation that humans, at times, abuse for our own gain. Stripping the federal agency of its power to take into account endangered species when making climate change policy decisions would be a mistake. But even if the E.P.A. were to disappear tomorrow, Catholics would still have an important responsibility to till and cultivate the earth as well as to defend its most vulnerable inhabitants. As Pope Francis says, “In plants and in animals we recognize the imprint of the Creator.”

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Claire Swinarski is a writer whose work has appeared in *The Washington Post*, *Seventeen*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Vox* and elsewhere. She also hosts *The Catholic Feminist Podcast*.



# Retirement Fund for Religious

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Photo (from left): Sister Gloria Rodríguez, MGSps, 80; Father Albert Bunsic, OCD, 81; Sister Alfonsina Sanchez, OCD, 96; Sister Mary Ann Hanson, SND, 79.  
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# WALK SAFELY NORTH

By J. D. Long-García

A masked and heavily armed police officer patrols a gang-controlled neighborhood in San Salvador, El Salvador, in April 2016.

AP Photo/Alex Peña

# U.S. BISHOPS URGE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION TO EXTEND PROTECTIVE STATUS FOR CENTRAL AMERICAN MIGRANTS

When he was 5, Mario Miranda's family was forced to leave their rural village in El Salvador. It was 1980, and a civil war had broken out between the military-led government and a coalition of guerrilla groups in his country. They had to find a safer place to live. Two decades later, desperate to provide for his family, Mr. Miranda was forced to move again and came to the United States.

Despite his lack of documentation, he was granted temporary protective status and allowed to remain in the United States after a 7.6-magnitude earthquake rocked El Salvador. Established by Congress through the Immigration Act of 1990, T.P.S. is granted by the Department of Homeland Security to those whose home countries are suffering from ongoing conflict, environmental disasters or other unsafe conditions, protecting them from deportation.

Around 200,000 Salvadorans and 57,000 Hondurans have been residing in the United States for more than 15 years under T.P.S. But that protected status is set to expire for immigrants from both countries in early 2018, and the Trump administration has not decided whether to extend it.

"I am not ready to return to my country," said Mr. Miranda, who explained that \$10 a day is a typical wage in El Salvador. "We're hoping this man opens his heart," he said of President Trump. In September the Trump administration extended T.P.S. for immigrants from South Sudan but also announced it would terminate the program for immigrants from its neighbor, Sudan, on Nov. 2, 2018.

A report released by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops on Oct. 17 suggests that it is still not safe for Salvadorans and Hondurans to return to their native countries. It notes ongoing forced displacement due to violence and other factors. The bishops say these countries are not ready to receive an influx of returning expatriates.

"There is ample evidence to suggest that current T.P.S. recipients from Honduras and El Salvador cannot return safely to their home country at this time," Bishop Joe Vásquez of Austin, Tex., chair of the U.S. bishops' migration committee, wrote in a letter introducing the report. The conference sent a delegation to El Salvador and Honduras in August.

Auxiliary Bishop David O'Connell of Los Angeles, who made the Central America trip, said there are 500,000 people living in barrios in El Salvador completely under the control of gangs.

"All family life has broken down. There's a terrible amount of suffering going on," he said.

Bishop O'Connell, who as a priest served parishes in South Los Angeles, pointed out that some prominent Central American gangs, like 18th Street and Mara Salvatrucha, began in Los Angeles. "They are the ones who have taken over in these neighborhoods, cities and towns [in El Salvador]."

Undocumented children who arrived unaccompanied report being threatened and tortured by gangs, Bishop O'Connell said. Their family members also were tortured, kidnapped and in some cases murdered by the gangs seeking ransom money or violently recruiting new members.

"If T.P.S. is not renewed, they are going to be in danger. These countries cannot handle the current population, much less people coming back," Bishop O'Connell said. Those who come back will be gang "targets," he said. Having been in the United States, gangs will assume they have money, or the gangs will kidnap them and extort money from their friends and family in the United States.

The U.S. bishops are urging Congress to extend T.P.S. for both Hondurans and Salvadorans for an additional 18 months. The report also asks Congress to adjust the law to the reality of T.P.S. recipients who have been in the United States for well over a decade, arguing that their

presence in the United States should be formalized. Many have had children in the United States and established their own businesses. The U.S.C.C.B. reports that Hondurans and Salvadorans are parents of more than 270,000 children born in the United States.

“These are our community members. They are here, following the law,” said Ashley Feasley, director of migration policy and public affairs at the U.S.C.C.B. “There will be family and community consequences if we don’t find a solution. It will affect a lot of people, a lot of businesses.”

The Department of Homeland Security will decide this month whether or not to extend protected status for Hondurans and has until Jan. 8, 2018, to extend it for Salvadorans. More than 50,000 Haitians are in the United States under the T.P.S. program; their status will begin to expire on Jan. 22 unless it is renewed by Nov. 23.

“I have been surrounded by good people in the United States,” said Mr. Miranda, whose status is scheduled to expire on March 9, 2018. “We are farmers. It’s ridiculous to say we’re all delinquents,” as some native-born Americans who have been critical of migrants from Central America have said.

“You have to work in this country,” said the Salvadoran. Mr. Miranda works as a custodian at a school in Maryland and sends money to his wife and child in El Salvador every 15 days.

About his chances to stay in the United States and to continue to support his family back home, “I am hopeful,” Mr. Miranda said. “Hope is always the last thing you lose.”

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

ALL ABOUT DACA

**2016** 1.9 MILLION PERSONS WERE POTENTIALLY ELIGIBLE FOR DACA  
690,000 ARE CURRENTLY ENROLLED

Top 5 nations of origin for those enrolled in DACA

MEXICO	79.4% (548,000)
EL SALVADOR	3.7% (25,900)
GUATEMALA	2.6% (17,700)
HONDURAS	2.3% (16,100)
PERU	1.1% (7,420)

66% ARE 25 OR YOUNGER | 73% HAVE A SPOUSE, SIBLING OR CHILD WHO IS A U.S. CITIZEN

66% PURSUING A BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER | 72%

91% OF DACA RECIPIENTS ARE EMPLOYED

44% EMPLOYED BEFORE DACA WAS IMPLEMENTED | 87% BILINGUAL

ALL ABOUT T.P.S. RECIPIENTS

**325,000 T.P.S. RECIPIENTS** RESIDED IN THE UNITED STATES IN 2017

Top 3 nations of origin

EL SALVADOR	204,000
HONDURAS	61,000
HAITI	50,000

They are parents of 273,000 CHILDREN who are U.S. citizens

86% PARTICIPATE IN U.S. WORKFORCE | 22% ENTERED THE UNITED STATES UNDER THE AGE OF 16

87%

far above the participation rate of the general U.S. population (63%)

80% PAY INCOME TAXES | speak at least some English; 50% speak English well

AVERAGE PERIOD PAYING INTO SOCIAL SECURITY: 15.4 YEARS

Sources: DACA statistics from Pew Research Center and the Migration Policy Institute; T.P.S. statistics from the University of Kansas Center for Migration Research.

## Global meeting of Catholic families in Dublin to include outreach to L.G.B.T. people



Dublin “Yes” supporters react as the results of the referendum on same-sex marriage are announced in May 2015.

Within a section of the booklet titled “The Christian Vision for the Family,” which affirms Catholic teaching of marriage as a union between one man and one woman, there is a call for Catholics to recognize other kinds of relationships.

“While the Church upholds the ideal of marriage as a permanent commitment between a man and a woman, other unions exist which provide mutual support” to couples, reads the document. “Pope Francis encourages us never to exclude but to accompany these couples also, with love, care and support.”

In recent years, Irish attitudes have changed dramatically toward homosexuality, which was not decriminalized until 1993. In 2015 Ireland became the first nation in the world to legalize same-sex marriage by popular vote, with 62 percent supporting the measure. Earlier this year, the nation elected a gay man, Leo Varadkar, as prime minister.

Bishop Brendan Leahy, who heads the Diocese of Limerick, said in an interview that the World Meeting of Families should be open to all kinds of families.

“We are living in changing times, and family too is changing,” he told *The Independent*. “We’ve had the referendum in favor of same-sex marriage and a lot of people voted in that referendum, and all are equally welcome to join in this celebration of family,” he continued. “Everyone must be made [to] feel welcome next year. We all want to build a good family network of support in Ireland at all levels.”

Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of Dublin affirmed the church’s traditional teaching on marriage, though he agrees that all kinds of families will be welcome at the World Meeting of Families. He told **America** that he hopes the event will “renew confidence in the family as an institution vital for humanity today and to give renewed confidence to Christian married couples.”

“Christians in irregular marriage situations or in non-traditional families are members of the Church,” he said. “They require pastoral accompaniment that reaches out to them where they find themselves, in such a way as to lead them along a pastoral path of discernment and conversion.”

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

Catholics from around the world will gather in Dublin next August for the World Meeting of Families, an event that Pope Francis is expected to attend and that is based on his 2016 pastoral letter about family life. Comments from some church leaders in Ireland, plus promotional materials meant to prepare Catholics for the gathering, suggest that the event seeks to include L.G.B.T. people and their families at a time of rapid social transformation in Ireland.

The theme for the 2018 World Meeting of Families is “The Gospel of the Family: Joy for the World,” a reference to the pope’s letter about family life called “*Amoris Laetitia*,” or “The Joy of Love.” That pastoral letter addresses an array of issues facing contemporary families and calls on church ministers to accompany families through challenging times.

Critics of the pope have complained about sections of his letter that they say undermine church teaching, particularly when it comes to nontraditional families. But a number of high-profile bishops and laypeople have rallied behind the document, and many dioceses have begun implementing pastoral reforms based on it.

To help prepare families for the Dublin event, organizers and a Catholic publisher in Ireland created a multimedia program called “*Amoris: Let’s Talk Family! Let’s Be Family!*” It covers topics such as consumerism, evangelization and how Catholics can incorporate spirituality into their family lives.



## As scandals proliferate, South African bishops seek an anticorruption court

Responding to cascading political and business scandals, on Oct. 16 the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference called for an anticorruption court to be established in South Africa. The chair of the Justice and Peace Department, Bishop Abel Gaba, said: "The moral fiber of our nation has suffered massive damage as a result of people losing confidence in the office of the president and its ability to fight corruption at all the levels of government."

He said, "We urge constitutional experts and the law reform commission to guide the nation on the feasibility of establishing an anti-corruption court, with specialized prosecutors, that would ensure speedy and efficient disposal of corruption cases and financial crimes."

The latest protagonist to emerge in the nation's corruption drama has been the global consulting and auditing giant KPMG. As its part in apparent corruption cover-ups was revealed in recent months, a number of top KPMG officials have been forced to resign.

KPMG South Africa had audited South African companies owned by the now Dubai-based Gupta family for 15

years. It withdrew from the relationship in March 2016 following a deepening scandal centered around the claims of the Gupta family's "state capture" of government regulatory bodies and its cozy relationship with President Jacob Zuma.

Top KPMG executives attended a Gupta family wedding at the Sun City Casino and Resort in the North West Province in 2013. KPMG now admits this friendly contact was probably inappropriate. The event became associated with a number of political and financial scandals.

Part of the financing for the wedding seems to have come illegally through the Free State provincial government via companies owned by the Guptas. Such corporate irregularities should have been picked up by KPMG audits in 2014. They were not.

A South African watchdog organization, Corruption Watch, now says that KPMG has benefited from illegal cash flows among the government, the ruling African National Congress and South African big business. KPMG also stands accused by civil society organizations of participating in the process that led to the dismissal of the former South African finance minister, Pravin Gordhan. One of the strategies the state used to get rid of the highly principled Mr. Gordhan was to discredit him through accusations of a "secret" South African Revenue Service intelligence unit acting outside the law. Mr. Gordhan had formerly headed the Revenue Service.

A KPMG report, which the firm now acknowledges was



AP Photo/Themba Hadebe

South Africa's biggest union held marches nationwide in September to protest what it alleges is chronic corruption by President Jacob Zuma.

subpar, was used as a basis to allege that Mr. Gordhan and his team needed to be removed. Critics charge that this political smear campaign was a step toward “capture” of both the Ministry of Finance and the Treasury by the Zuma government and the further looting of public assets.

Save South Africa, a civil society organization working against state capture, has called on South Africa's businesses to sever ties with KPMG. A succession of companies—both public and private—have done so.

In the aftermath of these and other revelations of government malfeasance, the South African Supreme Court ruled that a decision by the North Gauteng High Court in 2009 to drop 738 charges of corruption, money laundering and racketeering against President Zuma was “irrational.” This means that Mr. Zuma can be charged again. But the head of the National Prosecuting Authority, Shaun Abrahams, a Zuma crony, seems unlikely to allow this to happen.

Therein lies the problem with Bishop Gabuza's appeal for an anticorruption court: Any case in South Africa that might reach it must first go through the N.P.A., an enforcement agency that appears to have been “captured” by the president's office.

Russell Pollitt, S.J., is one of America's Johannesburg correspondents. Twitter: @Rpollittsj.

## Catholic leaders challenge Trump on Iran and North Korea



President Donald Trump at the White House on Oct. 11

A statement signed by 751 leaders of Catholic organizations, religious orders and justice and peace committees challenges President Trump's threat to “totally destroy” North Korea and his apparent intention to repudiate the Iran deal negotiated by the Obama administration.

The president's threats, according to the statement, “have brought the world to the brink of a nuclear catastrophe and have intensified global insecurity.” The statement, sent to the White House and to Congress on Oct. 12, urges the president to remain on the path of dialogue with both Iran and North Korea, reminding him, “Pope Francis has called for dialogue with North Korea and a rejection of ‘the narrative of fear...and the rhetoric of hatred.’”

Signatories include representatives from scores of religious orders and congregations, Pax Christi USA, the Conference of Major Superiors of Men and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious.

According to the statement, “Responsible, moral leadership would recognize the Iran deal as an important example of successful diplomacy and conflict transformation that engaged many nations in an arduous, nonviolent process to build trust and avoid military confrontation.”

“To threaten the existence of a nation of 25 million people goes against all the values of our Catholic faith as well as the principles of universal human rights on which the United Nations was founded,” the Catholic leaders say. “To ‘totally destroy’ North Korea would be an unspeakable crime against humanity; to threaten such an action is outrageous, reprehensible and beneath the dignity of a leader of one of the world's great democracies.”

Kevin Clarke, chief correspondent. Twitter: @clarkeatamerica.



# Ten Ways Hispanics Are Redefining American Catholicism

By Hosffman Ospino



CNS photo/David Maung

The Immigrant City. This is how many know Lawrence, Mass., a municipality in New England with a population of about 80,000. Perhaps the most appropriate name for Lawrence is The Catholic Immigrant City. Not long ago it had 15 Catholic churches, none of which were established to serve Hispanics. Today, the three Catholic parishes left celebrate several Masses in Spanish every week. The transformation took place in about 50 years.

In the Northeast and the Midwest, changes like this are more recent. In the South and West, entire generations of Catholics have not known a time without a Hispanic neighbor, the ever-present image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, *quinceañera* celebrations, Masses in Spanish and some good empanadas after worship! What used to be a phenomenon restricted to places like Los Angeles, San Diego, Brownsville, Houston or Miami is becoming the new norm.

As a researcher of U.S. Catholicism, with particular focus on the Hispanic Catholic experience, I get to meet incredible people in faith communities across the country: Tireless pastoral leaders, families passing the faith on to their children in different languages, young people discerning how to integrate the Gospel in their lives, immigrants searching for a new life with the same longings as their sisters and brothers who have been in the country a little longer. And they all love being Catholic.

This is not the first time that U.S. Catholicism has been drastically transformed. The arrival of millions of European immigrants in this country in the 19th and 20th centuries had a similar effect. Today's immigrant Catholics are arriving from the global south. Catholics of all cultural backgrounds find themselves sharing their churches with fellow parishioners about whom they know little. Rapid demographic changes along with the fear of the unknown seem to explain some of the anxiety that invades the hearts of many Catholics in the United States today.

The best remedy to address such anxiety is to know more about each other. To that end, here are 10 ways Hispanics are redefining American Catholicism in the 21st century—and why this is good news for all.

**1. Hispanics are at the heart of the church's growth.** In 1965, there were 48.5 million Catholics in the country. Fifty years later the number had risen to 75 million. Despite millions of baptized women and men who stopped self-identifying as Catholic, the number of Catholics in the United States is growing.

Hispanics account for 71 percent of the growth of the Catholic population in the United States since 1960. Long before 1776, the first Catholics in what is now U.S. territory were Hispanic. They became part of the country as the nation expanded its borders (e.g., Mexican-Americans in 1848; Puerto Ricans in 1898).

Over the last half century, the growth of the Hispanic population has come through sustained migration patterns from Latin America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, including significant numbers of exiles and refugees; high birth rates among Hispanic women, especially immigrants; and family reunification policies.

**2. Hispanics are forming a new geographic center for U.S. Catholicism.** The vast majority of Catholics who arrived from Europe during the 19th century and the first half of the 20th settled mainly in two regions: the Northeast and the Midwest. These immigrants and their descendants built thousands of parishes, established the largest network of private schools and founded hundreds of universities. They also built a large network of social services, rivaled in resources and outreach only by the U.S. government. Thanks to this structural presence, Catholics became not only the largest church in the country, but also one of the most influential.

About 61 percent of parishes, 61 percent of Catholic schools, 83 percent of Catholic colleges and universities, 60 percent of seminaries and houses of formation, more than half of Catholic hospitals and most Catholic publishing companies are located in the Northeast and the Midwest. More than 50 percent of archdioceses and most U.S. cardinals heading a diocese are also in these two regions.

But during the second decade of the 21st century, a major threshold was crossed: the majority of

U.S. Catholics now live in the South and the West. Hispanics are the major reason for this geographical shift, joined in these regions by the fast-growing Asian population.

It is imperative for the church to build parishes, schools, universities, pastoral institutes and seminaries and houses of formation in the Southwest. This is a time for Catholic pioneers and entrepreneurs, a time for true missionary work that sets the foundations for what most likely will be growing centers of Catholic life in the United States.

**3. Hispanics are transforming how we communicate with each other.** There are 20 million immigrants from Latin America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean presently living in the United States mainland. About 14 million (60 percent) self-identify as Catholic. If these Catholics constituted one nation, the population would be larger than that of every island in the Caribbean and larger than that of most countries in Latin America.

These demographic comparisons help us assess whether we are investing enough in welcoming and embracing a population that is transforming thousands of Catholic communities in the United States. How much do we understand the lives and practice of the faith of Spanish-speaking Catholics? Do we integrate that knowledge as part of our pastoral planning and outreach?

According to the *National Study of Catholic Parishes with Hispanic Ministry* (for which I served as the principal investigator), there are about 4,500 parishes in the country with explicit outreach efforts to Hispanics Catholics, primarily in Spanish. Most dioceses and parishes in the country define Hispanic ministry mainly as ministry in Spanish with a focus on immigrant populations.

Hispanic immigrants come from every Spanish-speaking nation in the continent. They bring a rich array of cultural and religious traditions that are redefining the American Catholic experience in the 21st century. Thanks to Hispanics, in many parts of the country U.S. Catholicism is de facto a bilingual reality.

**4. Two-thirds of Hispanic Catholics in the United States were born here.** Some pastoral leaders, and many Catholics in the pews, are bewildered to learn that nearly two thirds of Hispanics are U.S.-born (about 65.5 percent). But it should not be a surprise, given that Hispanics are the oldest Catholic group in the land and their growth has been steady for more than a century.

About half of U.S.-born Hispanics self-identify as Catholic. Their lives unfold in a constant process of negotiating identities as both Americans and Hispanics. This both/and experience allows U.S.-born Hispanic Catholics to draw

from the riches of multiple cultural wells. That same experience also places them at odds with a society that often sees diversity as a threat—as in the case of negative attitudes toward bilingualism and biculturalism. Hispanics are expected to assimilate quietly into the mainstream.

It is naïve to assume that the pastoral needs and faith expressions of U.S.-born Hispanic Catholics are the same as their immigrant relatives. These Hispanics, upon whom much of the future of U.S. Catholicism rests, are forging a new way of being Catholic.

**5. A majority of U.S. Catholics under 18 are Hispanic.** The median age of Hispanics is 28, significantly younger than white (43), Asian (36) and black (33) populations. About half of Hispanics are younger than 30. How are Catholic pastoral leaders reaching out to youth and young adult Hispanic Catholics?

About 60 percent of all U.S. Catholics younger than 18 are Hispanic. Of that population, 93 percent were born in the United States. Most young Hispanics remain significantly influenced by their immigrant families, retaining their faith, culture and language. (More than half of all U.S.-born Hispanics older than 5—about 20 million—speak Spanish at home.)

Although most are English-speaking and grow up embracing many of the values of the larger U.S. culture, they are also influenced by the Spanish language and a faith mediated through Hispanic cultural narratives and symbols. Programs of youth ministry and religious education serving young Hispanics must engage the family. It is important that pastoral leaders affirm—in the most appropriate language—the faith and the role of Hispanic relatives in the process of passing on the faith.

About half of all Catholic millennials are Hispanic. They are choosing careers, deciding on family life and re-evaluating their faith. They question how much to draw from their Hispanic background when integrating into the larger U.S. cultural matrix. Whether the Gospel and the best of the Catholic tradition will inform these decisions will largely depend on adequate pastoral accompaniment.

**6. About one in four Hispanics is a former Catholic.** The engagement of Hispanic youth and young adult Catholics may be the single most significant factor that will determine the vitality of Catholic communities and pastoral efforts during the next 30 years. These are the young women and men who soon will be sustaining parishes, sending their children to Catholic schools and universities and leading church ministries.

Yet it is estimated that about a quarter of Hispanics



Image: iStock

Of the approximately 14.5 million school-age Catholic children today, about eight million (or 55 percent) are Hispanic.

are former Catholics. That is almost 14 million people who could have been in our communities partaking in the sacraments and discerning ways to better live the Gospel. Most of them (about 70 percent) made the decision to “leave the church” before the age of 24. When surveyed, the following are the top two reasons they provided for leaving: they “drifted away” and they “stopped believing in the teachings of their childhood religion.” These reasons are similar to those provided by former non-Hispanic young Catholics. Most are joining the ranks of the non-religiously affiliated (i.e., nones).

This is a clear indictment of how inadequately we welcome and create spaces for people to fall in love with Jesus Christ and the mysteries of the Christian faith. This is not “normal.” Silence in the face of this trend cannot be an option.

**7. Hispanics are underrepresented in Catholic education.** By the middle of the 20th century, more than five million school-age Catholic children (more than 50 percent of this sector of the Catholic population) were enrolled in Catholic schools. Many went to college and then on to successful professional lives. Many became priests, vowed religious and lay ecclesial ministers. Yet over the last 50 years, enrollment in Catholic education has plummeted, and thousands of schools have closed.

Of the approximately 14.5 million school-age Catho-

lic children today, about eight million (or 55 percent) are Hispanic. The majority reside in the southern and western regions of the country. But barely 4 percent of school-age Hispanic Catholic children are enrolled in Catholic schools. Just about 11 percent of the student population in Catholic colleges and universities are Hispanic.

The large number of Hispanic Catholic children and youth can be an opportunity for renewal and creativity among Catholic educational institutions. Hispanics can bring a new spring to Catholic schools, colleges and universities. To do that, leaders must do four things: intentionally increase enrollment of Hispanic children; ensure welcoming environments; build new schools and universities where Catholicism is growing; and imagine new models to introduce young Hispanic Catholics to the treasures of Catholic education.

**8. There is room for growth in the number of Hispanic ministers in the church.** The areas of ministerial service where Hispanics are growing most steadily are the permanent diaconate and lay ecclesial ministry. There are about 2,500 Hispanic permanent deacons in the country. About 50 percent of lay Catholics enrolled in ministry formation programs are Hispanic, although only 17 percent of them are in degree-granting programs.

It is not farfetched to anticipate, given demographic trends, that in the near future most ministerial leaders for



CNS photo/Victor Aleman, Vida Nueva

the church in this country will have a Hispanic background. Yet the number of U.S.-born Hispanic priests and vowed women and men religious does not match prevailing population trends. About 83 percent of Hispanic priests and more than 90 percent of Hispanic vowed religious women and men are foreign-born.

Are we overlooking the potential of the U.S.-born Hispanic population to assume ministerial leadership? The cultural, linguistic and even spiritual needs of U.S.-born Hispanics often demand a distinct type of pastoral accompaniment.

A critical and sustained conversation about Hispanic vocations to ministerial life could address various dynamics, including: obstacles to vocational discernment among Hispanics; vocational outreach to U.S.-born Hispanics; welcoming practices in seminaries and houses of formation; cultivation of a culture of vocations among Hispanic families and faith communities; and effective pathways from apostolic service to ministerial life.

**9. Hispanic Catholics draw from deep U.S. Latino and Latin American foundations.** Hispanic Catholics draw from a rich world of pastoral and theological foundations. The language and the vision of the last four con-

ferences of Latin American bishops—at Medellín (1968), Puebla (1979), Santo Domingo (1992) and Aparecida (2007)—live in the minds and hearts of countless Latin Americans who did missionary work as catechists and pastoral leaders. The language of Pope Francis’ pontificate (e.g., missionary discipleship, small faith communities, a church that goes out, etc.) is almost second nature to Hispanic immigrants involved in evangelizing activities in their countries of origin.

Also, hundreds of thousands of Hispanic immigrants are associated with the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, a movement that originated in the United States. As they find a home in Catholic parishes nationwide, many bring with them a Latin American style of this spirituality that is renewing entire communities. Nearly half of all parishes with Hispanic ministry have a Catholic Charismatic Renewal community.

Various currents of Latin American theological thought also influenced a smaller group of formally educated Latin American immigrants. They learned methodologies for theological reflection that brought the best of the Catholic tradition into dialogue with the social and human sciences and key sociocultural dynamics that shape



About 60 percent of all U.S. Catholics younger than 18 are Hispanic. Many were present at the 83th annual procession and Mass of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Los Angeles with Archbishop José H. Gómez.

the lives of Latin Americans.

In turn, U.S. Hispanic Catholics also draw from important sources of theological and pastoral life grounded in reflection on what it means to be Catholic and Hispanic in this country.

The Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians of the United States is the third largest Catholic theological guild in the United States. For several decades A.C.H.T.U.S. members, committed to doing theology “on the ground,” have been advancing substantial theological reflection in close conversation with Hispanic Catholics.

The Encuentros (Encounters) started as national gatherings of Hispanic pastoral leaders advocating for better outreach to Hispanic Catholics. Some evolved into full-fledged processes of consultation, reflection and evangelization. The Encuentros have inspired a renewed awareness about the Hispanic Catholic presence, the development of new structures, commitments to serve this community well and the development of dynamic models of pastoral life. Most important, the Encuentros have been instrumental in fostering new waves of Catholic pastoral leaders.

**10. Hispanic Catholics offer innovative approaches to evangelization.** The Fifth National Encuentro of His-

panic/Latino Ministry (V Encuentro) is a four-year process of ecclesial reflection, consultation and evangelization (2017 to 2020).

The process is driven by a well-defined methodology. It starts by listening to Hispanic Catholics and others at the grass roots who spent some time meeting other Catholics living on the peripheries of church and society. What is heard is then discussed in prayer and reflection in small faith communities. Then large meetings—also called Encuentros—at the parish, diocesan, regional and national levels serve as a way to distill the wisdom gathered during several months of listening and discernment. Faith communities identify pastoral priorities and commitments. The process provides the perfect background for pastoral planning.

More than anything, the V Encuentro is a process of evangelization that aims at renewing the nearly 5,000 parish communities currently engaged in it. It hopes to involve at least one million Catholics, mostly Hispanic, and identify at least 20,000 new Hispanic pastoral leaders. Although the initial timeframe is four years, the spirit of Encuentro will likely inspire many conversations well into the future.

The process of the V Encuentro focuses primarily on the Hispanic Catholic experience, but it is for the entire church in the United States. The model could become a standard for evangelization initiatives across Catholic communities. It draws from the Scriptures and from centuries of missionary and evangelizing wisdom.

The redefinition of American Catholicism in the 21st century—driven in great part by the fast-growing Hispanic presence—is a true blessing and opportunity for all. Five centuries ago, Hispanics planted the first seeds of Catholicism in this land. Two centuries ago, European Catholics and their children built a massive presence that continues to permeate much of the religious and social life of our country. Once again, Hispanics, along with Catholics from various other cultural families, find themselves in a unique position to build the foundations of U.S. Catholicism for decades. The 10 ways described above that Hispanics are redefining American Catholicism give us a good sense of what is happening, what is possible, where to invest and how we can accompany this important sector of the Catholic population in the United States.

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Photo: CNS

# VOTING FOR TRUMP

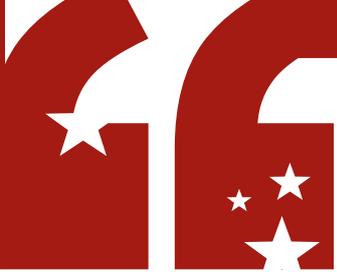


LOVING

*Meet Catholics who support  
both the pope and the president*

POPE FRANCIS

By Jim McDermott



I think in general people believe there's a lot of government that doesn't get done, a lot of government that is just 'talking government' rather than working for the people. I felt like Trump was really different because he was so out there. He is not politically correct a lot of the time. Something was going to get shook up.



The first thing you have to know about Mary Ashcroft is that she thinks she is a little bit kooky. It comes up over and over in conversation. "Maybe I'm a little strange," she tells me, chuckling. "I'm a bit weird."

The second is that you could listen to her forever. Originally from an English village so ancient it appears in the Domesday Book, she has a light, musical voice that burbles with laughter whether she is talking about her passion for classical music, which plays in the background as we talk, or the fear-based version of the church she experienced growing up Catholic long before the Second Vatican Council.

From the time she was just 6 years old, she knew she would become a nurse, thanks to the caring example of her mother. Ms. Ashcroft came to the United States in her 20s, looking for something less hierarchical than the British hospital system. She spent her career at Mount Sinai Hospital in Manhattan, where she ran the transplant unit. "I loved what I did," she says. "I love sick people. You could make a difference." Being a nurse, she says, "is the greatest thing I have ever done."

Now in retirement, Ms. Ashcroft volunteers three days a week as a school nurse at Cristo Rey High School in Harlem. She is also part of the "rosary rangers," a group of parish women who make rosaries for soldiers. She attends Mass daily and relishes the sound of Manhattan in the evening: "You wake up in the middle of the night and you hear the city breathe."

She looks back on a lifetime of rich experiences—like her marriage to her beloved husband (now deceased) and adventures like a journey up Mount Sinai (the real one) on camelback. "It was magic," remembers Ms. Ashcroft. "If you want to know where God is, he is there, right there, in the darkness of the night, in the brightness of the stars, in the songs of the pilgrims as they mounted Mount Sinai and the strange sounds of the camel's feet as they plodded along. It was extraordinary. I will never forget that moment."

"I have loved all of my life," she tells me. "I have

been blessed."

Mary Ashcroft is a deeply spiritual woman, passionate about her faith; a gifted nurse, whose concern for others continues in retirement.

And she is a supporter of Donald Trump. "Donald Trump can be a rather coarse man," she said. "He's not articulate sometimes. But whatever he says, he might say it the wrong way, but it resonates with me."

She is not alone in feeling this way. According to post-election polling, somewhere between 45 percent (according to the American National Election Studies) and 52 percent (Pew Research Center) of Catholics who voted for president voted for Donald Trump. Mark Gray, director of polling for the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, told **America** in April that when it came to Catholics, the election had basically been "a toss-up."

In January of this year the Pew Research Center also reported that 87 percent of U.S. Catholics look favorably on the papacy of Pope Francis. Which is to say, not only did a considerable percentage of U.S. Catholics vote for Donald Trump in 2016, but many of them also have positive feelings for a pope whose positions often stand in contradiction to his.

### A Complex Choice

One might assume that many of the Catholics who support President Trump and Pope Francis made a sort of pro-life calculus, voting for Mr. Trump despite his divisive rhetoric solely because he was the candidate who had vowed to protect the unborn. But in talking with a number of pro-Trump/pro-Francis Catholics, as well as some priests serving parishes with sizable Republican communities, one finds other motivations at work. The voters I spoke with were not single-issue voters, and they showed a comfort with, even insistence on, complexity around a range of issues that are part of our national conversation.

Take, for instance, Doug and Jessica Adel. Married for



## Donald Trump can be a rather coarse man. He's not articulate sometimes. But whatever he says, he might say it the wrong way, but it resonates with me.



24 years, the couple lives in Sacramento with three children in their teens and early 20s, and both work for the Catholic Church. Jessica serves as the business manager of a local parish; Doug works as the finance officer for the Diocese of Stockton.

When it comes to faith and politics, neither is close to being a firebrand. Indeed, they do not much like discussing these topics in public at all. "We're both very devout," Jessica tells me; but, she adds, "we don't talk about God [publicly] that much."

For the Adels, the faith is more about witness and action. Doug, who grew up in a town of just a couple of hundred people in South Dakota, finds God in the example of others. "Working for the church in finance, you see the generosity of the people. These hurricanes that have just hit the coasts, the amount of money that has poured in, it's incredible," he said. And it is not just about the donations, he adds: "The commitment and time that people put in is very humbling."

Jessica has gotten a lot out of raising her children in the church, watching them serve as lectors and cantors. "Being there when your child is cantoring is such a beautiful experience. You just feel so good." Employment with the church has also unexpectedly put Jessica in the position of a minister. "My first week, there was a woman in our community who died of cancer. She was my age and her twins were the same age as my son. I didn't have any experience with funerals, but I sat with her husband." Working in a parish, she said, "you get the opportunity to help people emotionally at times when they don't know what else to do."

Both see Pope Francis as a source of renewal in the church today. Says Jessica, "People are really excited that he's a Jesuit and that his message is inclusive and different. I think he's been a very positive change." Doug agrees: "I think it would be difficult for someone to say they didn't like him or that he's not a good person. He's that other sounding board you're listening to, as Trump is making his

comments, to inform our perspective."

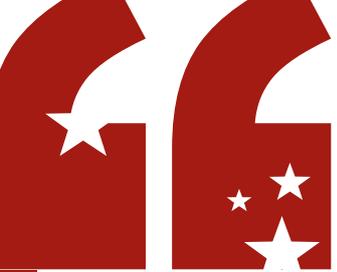
For both Jessica and Doug, voting for Mr. Trump was more than anything about trying to create change in what they perceive to be a stagnant political system. "The government definitely needs change," says Doug. "I don't think the way it's been working in the last number of years has been good. You overspend and nothing gets done."

Jessica feels much the same. "I think in general people believe there's a lot of government that doesn't get done, a lot of government that is just 'talking government' rather than working for the people. I felt like Trump was really different because he was so out there. He is not politically correct a lot of the time. Something was going to get shook up."

That is not to say they agree with everything Mr. Trump stands for or with his behavior in general. "I personally don't like his style at all," says Doug. "I would not ever look to him wanting to be a friend. [During the campaign] I was not a fan of his tweets and, for lack of a better word, his personality."

But they see Mr. Trump's unpredictability as also forcing conversations the country needs. "For 10 or 20 years politicians and the public have been saying our immigration policies need to improve," Doug points out. "But no one has done anything about it. Now someone says we're going to put up a wall [at the border with Mexico] and guess what, there's a lot more visible conversation."

He praises the ways the bishops have stepped up as well. "I see the church being a little more vocal about protecting the innocent. That gives you a different perspective to look at. But without him speaking we maybe have been silent for a while." Debates others equate with the loss of rights for immigrants are for the Adels the necessary path to strengthening legal rights and protections for people trying to come to the United States. "A change in the immigration laws may not be a bad thing for people coming in, it may be an improvement," says Doug. In raising the issues and having the arguments, they reason, we forge the means to long-term systemic change.



I think it would be difficult for someone to say they didn't like [Pope Francis] or that he's not a good person. He's that other sounding board you're listening to, as Trump is making his comments, to inform our perspective.



### The Parish Perspective

The Rev. Bernie Pietrzak and the Rev. Jerry Boland, priests working at parishes in the suburbs of Chicago, see similar feelings among their parishioners. At St. Anne's in Barrington, a parish with over 3,800 families in the northwest suburbs, Father Pietrzak acknowledged that his parishioners by and large did not want Hillary Clinton to win, but he added, "I don't know that you'd get a huge crowd if Trump came out here to do a rally in Barrington. They're too bright for that, too thoughtful for that."

Most of Father Pietrzak's parishioners are moderate Republicans. The main concerns he has heard from them have been about high taxes and businesses moving out of the country. And many parishioners say they voted as they did to disrupt entrenched political divisions. "They see that we're broken as a two-party system. People recognize that inability to reach across the aisle anymore, and I think they have strong feelings about it, the bipartisanship that used to be in years gone by."

At the similarly sized Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Glenview, Father Boland hears much the same. "What I find is that people are struggling—I think we all are—to figure out what's going on in our country. And there is a lot of frustration towards government, and people that are angry about the economy and angry about lost opportunities.

"The coarseness of language, the divisive tone of political rhetoric [of Donald Trump]—you would think a person couldn't survive politically pulling those chains. But I think people right now are just very frustrated with the institutions of society."

### Speaking About Policy

That is not to say change in the abstract was the only concern of Catholics who voted for Mr. Trump. Ms. Ashcroft, for example, could not countenance Hillary Clinton: "She supported partial birth abortion; I could not support that."

Ms. Ashcroft also supports some of Mr. Trump's poli-

cies. "I don't believe you can just walk across the border," she says. "If you believe that, you should go to England and see what's happening there with open immigration. I believe you have to look at the health of the people [coming]. And I don't believe all of them are being persecuted. We're all coming here for a better life." (Citizens of other nations in the European Union have the legal right to migrate to England, although that may change if the United Kingdom completes a withdrawal from the European Union.)

Ms. Ashcroft speaks to some of these issues with familiarity. Because of a small mistake regarding a travel visa early in her years in the United States, she was forced to leave the country for two years before she could come back permanently. The experience has left her with little sympathy for immigrants without proper paperwork being returned to their country of origin.

At the same time, Ms. Ashcroft supports the right of the young people known as Dreamers (brought to the United States as children by parents without legal status) to stay. "I think it's a terrible problem. These kids are now adults and they're working," she said. "I see this [at Cristo Rey] every day. The kids are scared. They've got to do something."

Elsewhere in New York City, Leona Leo, a retired judge and another Trump supporter, feels much the same. She wants "her wall," but she also emphatically supports a program to protect the Dreamers from deportation: "Want to talk more about immigration reform later? Fine. But for now, just do this. It's easy, just do this."

Ms. Leo talks about Mr. Trump as if he were a childhood pal; to her he is "Trumpy" and supporters like herself "Trumpers." But she follows The New York Times and CNN right alongside Fox News. "Nothing's 100 percent right," she says.

And she has just as much affection for Francis; his picture hangs in her kitchen, and she delights in talking about him. "He's a wonderful person. He loves everybody," she says. Her greatest frustration? No one seems to be listen-

ing to his message. “They still don’t want to go to church,” she tells me in one conversation. And in another: “They just want to be angry.” After a moment she adds, with a quiet humility, “And I’m no better than the rest of them.”

She views Mr. Trump’s struggles so far similarly. “The Republicans are just cutting Trumpy’s feet off,” she says. “Supposedly they control Congress, but the Republicans are as Democratic as [Chuck] Schumer,” the Senate Democratic leader.

She believes the press has done the president few favors—a point that each Trump voter I spoke with mentions. “He’s obviously not a racist; I think it’s ridiculous that they call him that,” says Ms. Leo.

“When [Trump] talks about the fake media, I believe that 100 percent,” says Doug Adel. “They can take a little thing and make it into such a worse situation just in the way they present it.”

Like Ms. Ashcroft, Ms. Leo can mount vigorous defenses of Mr. Trump’s positions, whether it is his desire to change the health care system—“it’s a disaster no matter which side you’re on”—or to reduce immigration. “There’s only so much money to go around,” she explains, not without sadness. She fears that every dollar of education money spent to help a child newly arrived in this country acclimate to the education system in the United States is a dollar unavailable for special needs or advanced placement students.

But she, too, fails to exhibit the willful denial and blind devotion often ascribed to Mr. Trump’s supporters. Ms. Leo expressed horror over the president’s pledge to remove

transgender soldiers from service. She later stated: “All the people who hate gays don’t know any.... [Trump] should just shut up with the tweets; that’s my personal opinion. He says things before he’s researched them.”

Ms. Leo also has no problem with paying taxes: “You’ve been given and you give back. And thank God I can give back.” She finds the president’s promises about the coal industry false and manipulative. “You know, how long coal is going to last? Not long. It sounds political: ‘I’ll get all the people in West Virginia to vote for me.’ It’s on the way out and everybody knows it.”

And even as she criticizes Muslims and other immigrants for supposedly coming to the United States and demanding change rather than trying to assimilate, she also offers admiration and friendship. Ms. Leo used to do volunteer legal work for Muslim women who escaped from abusive marriages: “I would help them get their green cards. I loved my Muslim women. They were so feisty,” she said. “I remember taking one on the subway. She was so excited. ‘Now I can go anywhere in New York!’ she told me.” She also praises Muslims for their religious devotion, wishing American Catholics might act likewise.

### E Pluribus

Watching Ms. Leo and her fellow pro-Trump/pro-Francis voters shift like quicksilver between applause and critique of both Trump and others, one is reminded of a line from Walt Whitman. “Do I contradict myself?” he writes in his poem “Song of Myself.” “Very well, I contradict myself. I am large. I contain multitudes.”



What I find is that people are struggling—I think we all are—to figure out what’s going on in our country. And there is a lot of frustration towards government, and people that are angry about the economy and angry about lost opportunities.



You don't banter about politics anymore. There's a sense of walking on eggs. Or it's like you don't want to light a match with gunpowder around.

But are we really in the realm of contradiction here? Or are we simply acknowledging nuance, that eminently Catholic notion that in all things there is both good and bad? Trump voters are often characterized as myopic, but in listening to Ms. Leo, Ms. Ashcroft and the Adels, we might do well to consider whether it is the imaginative arteries of our society as a whole that have grown narrow.

Still, there are sometimes sharp differences between the positions of Trump Catholics and those of the pope, whom many of them profess to respect. Facing those differences can be a challenge. "I have people coming up to me that are very angry at the pope about any number of issues," says Father Boland. "They say he should stay out of politics"—a position Ms. Leo echoes, pointing to recent comments by the pope on the shortcomings of capitalism. "No, no, no; stop, don't do this; you're alienating Europeans and Americans," she says.

Father Boland tries to help parishioners see that the pope speaks as "a moral leader" and that topics like economics can, in fact, fall under his purview. He reminds them that Francis is "not a politician, he's not running for the Republican nomination." But Father Boland appreciates their struggle: "You get caught in this quandary, How can you be against what the pope said?"

Ms. Ashcroft acknowledges she does not always see eye to eye with the pope. But she does not mind his challenges, either: "Somehow Francis has a way of addressing things that doesn't rub you up the wrong way." She wonders if it is not the fact that the pope is "an action man"—a quality she also attributes to Trump. "Think about the washing machines he's putting around the Vatican, the showers and the toilets for the homeless. He acts, you know?... [D]o you see any of those very wealthy actors with their large homes in Beverly Hills opening them up?"

Father Pietrzak is finding Francis and Cardinal Blase Cupich of Chicago to be valued voices in the broader conversation. "People admire and respect them," he says.

"And because they're respected, people listen with a more open heart. That's a rich blessing in the time we live."

The Adels agree. "Sometimes it's easy to follow the crowd," Doug offers. "Let's not let anybody come here because it's going to cost us all this money'.... But when you hear another side, it makes you stop and stand back and wonder what you're really doing." Says Jessica: "He's the pope. He sets the tone."

It has not been easy being a Catholic who voted for Trump, Ms. Leo says. "I think the church thinks that I'm not really following the Catholic viewpoint." She has felt looked down on by her fellow Catholics at times. She also has been startled by the comments of clergy, as when her favorite priest—she calls him "the most brilliant person I have ever met"—told people that he "hates" Trump, "and he doesn't like Trump people."

"I once said to him, 'You're the only person I ever met who I would have married.' That's how much I love this priest."

"How can you do that?" wonders Ms. Ashcroft, who has had similar experiences. "How can you preach love and then come outside and spew hate?" She talks with frustration over the assumptions being lobbed at some Masses. "They're constantly ramming down our throats that we have to be kinder and open and give. And I think to myself, 'Come along. You don't know what we give.... They're presuming we're not kind.'"

This is not an isolated experience. Numerous people I reached out to for this article refused to be interviewed specifically because they said they were afraid of the blowback they or their families might experience if people in their parishes or workplaces found out they voted for Mr. Trump. Others have expressed apprehension that anything they might say will be taken out of context.

"We're part of you," says Ms. Leo, with obvious longing, to her fellow Catholics. "If you love us, then accept us."



CNS photo/Jonathan Ernst, Reuters

▶ Between 45 and 52 percent of Catholics who voted for president voted for Donald Trump.

### All Together Now

Trying to figure out how to pastor in the midst of these divisions has been challenging for priests, too. “I have never prayed the Serenity Prayer more than I have [since Trump’s inauguration],” says the Rev. William F. Kerze, pastor of Our Lady of Malibu, in Malibu, Calif. For as long as he has been there, some 22 years now, Father Kerze has known his parish to be welcoming to all points of view. He remembers looking up during a Mass early in his tenure to find the Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia sitting on the far right side of the church, and on the far left, in the same pew, the actor and activist Martin Sheen. “I just started laughing,” he said.

Today he notes how cautious everyone has become. “You don’t banter about politics anymore. There’s a sense of walking on eggs. Or it’s like you don’t want to light a match with gunpowder around.”

In Glenview, Father Boland finds people seem more easily triggered in general. “I hear a pastor talk about a school board meeting that disintegrates or a parish council where people just overreact. I think it’s because we’re surrounded by people yelling and screaming all day long, and everything is questioning your sanity or your humanity if you disagree.

“If you’re a preacher, there could be a fair amount of suffering [over how to preach] right now,” he says. “But I think it’s crucial that our Catholic teachings are in front of people.”

At Precious Blood Church in Dayton, Ohio, Timothy Knepper, C.P.P.S., has tried his best to do just that, bringing up difficult issues when the readings invite it. A convert to Catholicism from the Baptist faith, Father Knepper is

now the parochial vicar at several parishes. His pastoral approach often is rooted in memories of how he and the Baptists he grew up with saw Catholics. “We always knew the Catholics were the ones who were going to stand for the outcast, the unborn,” he explains. For Baptists, Catholics opposing refugees or immigrants “is just weird. It’s like Catholics against the Eucharist.”

But Father Knepper finds it essential that his homilies speak to everyone. “I try to make sure that what I say challenges all of us, not just the conservatives or the liberals.” And he works hard to be open to criticism himself. “They’ve been very good with me,” he says of his parishioners. “They send me an email and say, ‘Hey, you have your viewpoint, Father, but there’s also this.’ They do it in such a way that’s very caring.”

Many priests say that being a good preacher right now is about getting out of the way and letting Scripture do its work. “I do my best to understand what the word of God is saying,” explains Kerze. “I really try to preach the Gospel.”

Says Father Pietrzak, “I have never ever used the name of Donald Trump in any homily. And I haven’t had to. The themes are there. You speak to the themes, and you speak to people’s lives. And I think it kind of shows itself.”

Father Pietrzak also emphasizes the intelligence of the flock. “They are very bright people, highly educated,” he repeatedly points out. “They’re looking for some sense of what’s going to be the moral guide of their life, looking at the good news of the Gospel and open to being challenged by it.”

During the weekend of the white-supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Va., Father Boland felt it would be irresponsible not to say something about racism and big-





A considerable percentage of U.S. Catholics voted for Donald Trump, but many of them also have positive feelings for Pope Francis.

etry. After the Mass, he says, “I was really waiting to be creamed.” Instead, people thanked him. He found a similarly warm reception in talking about climate change and “Laudato Si’.”

Many also note how service trips, outside speakers speaking from personal experience and other chances for parishioners to engage with people in need have largely been met with welcome and the setting aside of political narratives. “It puts a face on the story,” says Father Boland.

Sunday Mass itself offers a similar opportunity, he finds. “You get a church full of people and there’s young people and old people and rich people and poor people,” says Father Boland. “[It] resists the ‘we versus they’ mentality or simplistic generalizations about very complex issues.”

“The people of God, they make us better Christians,” says Father Knepper, reflecting on his own experience as a priest, but perhaps also on what the faith intends for all believers. “They make us into the people they need us to be.”

Each night Ms. Leo prays for the grace to know where she saw God in her day. She finds the practice has challenged her to grow. “I used to keep everything, *save save*, put it all in the bank. Now one of the things I want to do every day is be generous.” Now in her 80s, she continues to volunteer with students at Cathedral High School, serves as a eucharistic minister every Saturday night, and works as an auxiliary police officer in her community. In her role as an auxiliary officer, on Sept. 11, 2001, she stood at the 59th Street Bridge all day, directing traffic. Even as she describes that scene, what she remembers most is others’ generosity. “People were so helpful, they brought food and water to us,” she says.

She does not much see the point of arguing politics in

the church: “You can’t persuade me and I can’t persuade them, so why fight? Why not just love each other and accept what we are to each other, go out and volunteer to the world?”

As for Ms. Ashcroft, more than once in our conversations, she tells me that she feels like she was “an American born on the wrong side of the Atlantic.” I ask her what she means.

“I totally believe in America,” she says. “I love everything that it stands for. It doesn’t sound like it, but I love everything, all of its warts and pimples and bumps. I love the diversity. I love what I saw here.” She’s equally committed to her faith community, bumps and all. “It has changed my life, no question,” she says. “The teaching, it’s endless, every day. It doesn’t matter if it’s a two-minute homily, every day is an aha moment.”

“But that doesn’t come just by sitting there,” she says. “You have to read and go do it.”

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Jim McDermott, S.J., a screenwriter, is *America’s Los Angeles correspondent*.



# THE MISSION CONTINUES



“Come on, Mr. G, how old is this picture, seriously?”

I smiled, amused not only by my students’ speed at finding information on the internet but also by their refreshing candor. Have I really aged that much in the last six and a half years?

My students discovered my author profile on *The Jesuit Post* because I mentioned offhandedly that I had once written an article about “doge,” a meme that was briefly and wildly popular a few years ago. (Why were we talking about bygone memes in a senior religion class? We had just read the passage in Ignatius’ autobiography about his meeting with the Doge of Venice. Conversation topics move quickly with teenage boys.) This brief reference, a Windows Surface Pro 3, Google and insatiable curiosity were all my students needed to find an old picture of their religion teacher.

In fairness to my students, I’m sure I do look older now than I did then. It’s been a few years. I’ve grown a beard since that picture was taken, maybe to compensate for the hair on top of my head growing a little thinner. But I’d never considered that I might also feel older than I did in the summer of 2011.

I’ve done a lot since then. I entered the Jesuits two months after I took that picture. My first two years in the Jesuits took me to Syracuse, N.Y., Gloucester, Mass., Bolivia, New York City, Montreal, Philadelphia and Denver. I spent a month in silence, worked in a hospital for the sick and dying, got sick and felt like I was dying on the way home from South America, and got my first experience of teaching. I took

perpetual vows of poverty, chastity and obedience because Jesus invited me to walk with him as his friend and disciple.

I’ve learned a lot since then. I spent three years in Chicago studying philosophy and theology. Some of the topics were more interesting than others—Kierkegaard and Aristotle became important to how I see the world. My Jesuit brothers became even more important to me. By getting involved with *The Jesuit Post*, I got to know more Jesuits than I otherwise would have known and had the chance to find God in memes. I was inspired to work harder by the migrants and underserved college kids I got to know and accompany.

I’ve loved a lot since then. My students drive me crazy some days, but they make me want to be the best teacher possible every day. My colleagues show me what being a great teacher actually means. Classes, student government meetings, student dances, faculty meetings, retreats and tennis practices mean that I sink into bed each night exhausted and grateful for all of these things. I didn’t ask to come to Fordham Prep, but after a year and a half, there’s nowhere I’d rather be. I love the school and the people here.

I guess the picture is getting older. I guess I am getting older. This is my seventh year in the Jesuits, but it hardly feels like it’s been that long.

Time flies when you’re having fun for the greater glory of God.  
 —Danny Gustafson, S.J. teaches at Fordham Prep in the Bronx. He is the Editor-in-Chief of *The Jesuit Post*.

For more information about becoming a Jesuit visit <http://jesuitvocations.org>

# THE HOUSE OF ABRAHAM

## *Martin Luther's vision for a church of radical hospitality*

By Leopoldo A. Sánchez M.

According to the United Nations, more than 65 million people (23 million of them refugees) are counted as forcibly displaced due to persecution, war or violence. That is about as many people as the population of New York State, Texas and Florida taken together. More than half are children under the age of 18. Only 1 percent are resettled each year. The numbers are staggering. For years, the United States has been a world leader in refugee resettlement. Yet to the dismay of refugee resettlement agencies and many citizens, President Trump recently lowered the cap on refugee admissions to 45,000—the lowest in decades—and we keep hearing of indefinite travel bans to the United States for travelers from various countries.

Closer to home, the foreign-born population of the United States includes 11 million undocumented immigrants. In 2014, about two-thirds of these unauthorized immigrant adults had lived in the United States for at least a decade. They have become de facto our neighbors. Lately, we have heard much in the news about the so-called Dreamers, the nearly 790,000 young unauthorized immigrants who have been protected from deportation through the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program. Yet the status of these Dreamers, who arrived to the United States before the age of 16 and know no other country as their own, is currently up in the air.

Pastoral and theological reflections on immigrants and refugees from the perspective of theological traditions, including Catholic and Lutheran, are available. But as Christians commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, it is surprising that little has been said on what Martin Luther's teaching on hospitality toward strangers and exiles might offer to our current situation. We need to revisit the views on hospitality of this 16th-century reformer now more than ever. We live in an increasingly multiethnic nation, at a time when Christianity's center of gravity has shifted to the global South, and in a world experiencing the greatest transnational movement of refugees and immigrants in history, including those coming to our shores and their children. I believe we are called, in this day and age, to embody a radical hospitality toward these marginalized neighbors. Let us rediscover that part of Luther's teaching that can help us in this task.

In his *Lectures on Genesis*, Chapter 18, in which Abraham welcomes the three visitors at Mamre, Luther praises the patriarch as “a beautiful moral example of hospitality.” By arguing that “there is hospitality wherever the church is,” Luther portrays hospitality as a mark of the church's holiness, so that “those who want to be true members of

Martin Luther reminded Christians to be “generous not only toward the brethren...but also toward those who are strangers in the state.”

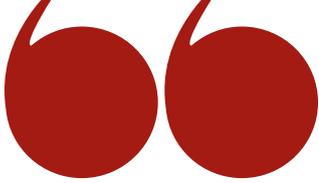


the church remember” and are “encouraged” to practice it. The church is called to be like Abraham; her members are to care for each other spiritually “by teaching” and bodily “by showing kindness and giving assistance.” The church must be a place of “refreshment” for the weary.

Luther argues that Abraham learned hospitality toward strangers from two sources: first, the experience of God’s people as a community of exiles persecuted because of God’s word; and second, his own experience as an exile. Ever since Satan got Adam expelled from paradise, making him the world’s first exile, the enemy has made the people of God the objects of “the hatred of the world” and driven them “out of their homes” into “exile by whatever means he could.” Because exiles are common among Christians, including those persecuted at the time of the Reformation, the church stands as a “refuge of the exiles and the poor.” Luther notes that due to the oppression of tyrannical bishops and princes in his day, many exiles suffer “misery,

thirst, hunger,” and so there must be “some little domain of a godly prince in which there can be room for such people.” Hospitality must be the concern of church and state leaders. Following the example of Abraham, whose “house was open to all” and who “joyfully received strangers,” Luther exhorts Christians with these words: “Let our homes be open to exiles, and let us assist and refresh them.” For the church is the “house” of Abraham in the world.

As an exile himself, Abraham “endured the rigors of the weather in the open country and under the sky; he was often troubled by hunger, often by thirst.” His hardships “enabled him to be gentle, kind, and generous toward exiles.” During his sojourn, Abraham also became the object of “the services of pious people” who welcomed him, and “from such experience he learned this rule, that he who receives a brother who is in exile because of the Word receives God himself in the person of such a brother.” Luther expects all sectors of society to contribute toward exile re-



## *Let our homes be open to exiles, and let us assist and refresh them. ●●*

lief but is disappointed by their overall lack of generosity.

Although Luther focuses on exiles who flee for their lives because of religious persecution, he also reminds Christians to be “generous not only toward the brethren... but also toward those who are strangers in the state, provided that they are not manifestly evil.” For example, if a “Turk” (in today’s language, a Muslim) came to us as a “stranger” and “in distress,” we should not disregard him “even though he is not suffering because of the Word.” Even if a Christian’s first responsibility is to those of “the household of faith,” they also should assist others “who experience misfortune.”

Luther sees Abraham as the prime example of hospitality for the New Testament church. The patriarch takes a position of humility toward the three visitors at Mamre in that he does not attract attention to the gifts he shares with them. There is a self-effacing character to Abraham’s hospitality. The focus is on the privilege of being visited by God in the form of needy neighbors and of assuming legitimate burdens placed upon us by them. As one might expect, justification by faith and love go hand in hand in Luther’s description of Abraham. He calls the church to “look upon Abraham not only as a father of faith...but also as a father of good works.” “It is faith...that makes him so eager and ready” to be hospitable.

Having heard a bit of Luther’s voice, how do we imitate hospitable Abraham’s faith today? Luther suggests that Christians, by their actions, must exceed expectations when it comes to treating not only Christian exiles but also those outside the church. At the very least, Christians must not hate or speak ill of these neighbors. Today, they should not ape the incendiary language of the sensationalist media, which portrays refugees and immigrants in the worst possible light.

Moreover, Luther teaches us that Christians must not lump all immigrants together with those who have an evil intent. This suggests we must put a human face on debates about refugee policy and immigration law. Not all refugees and travelers from the Middle East are radical Muslims bent on killing Americans. Not all undocumented immigrants are criminals, rapists or “bad hombres.” Chris-

tians must set a higher example and ask deeper questions about the kinds of sufferings these neighbors experience. As church, we must hear their stories with compassion. As citizens and residents, we must also seriously consider whether there is, as Luther would say, “some little domain of a godly prince in which there can be room for such people.” Going through this process of discernment will help us make decisions about advocacy and support for those whom Luther calls exiles on account of God’s word and other “exiles of the state.”

Some might argue that Luther is not helpful enough because he offers little detail on specific practices or policies for embodying hospitality in the realms of church and state. Others might point out how Luther himself seems not always to have practiced hospitality toward certain groups of vulnerable people—his harsh words toward Jews being the most obvious example. To the latter point, we simply admit—and Luther would agree, at least in principle—that on account of the sinful flesh Christians are often inconsistent and do not always practice what they preach or teach. When that happens, we repent and try again with God’s help.

To the former point, I simply note that Luther’s goal in his teaching on Abraham’s hospitality is much more basic. By praising Abraham’s acts of welcome, Luther calls the church back to that spiritual disposition or virtue in the heart that must precede and prepare the way for imagining more specific church practices or state policies that adequately account for the strangers among us. If the heart is not dealt with first, little holiness can be expected from God’s people.

Conversely, where the church lives by faith, she will make her mark in the world. On this 500th anniversary of the Reformation, let us celebrate Martin Luther’s call for the church to reclaim her identity as the house of Abraham in a world filled with people on the move, and let us pray that the Spirit of God will make us an ever more radical community of hospitality for such a time as this.

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Rev. Dr. Leopoldo A. Sánchez M. is the Werner R. H. and Elizabeth R. Krause Professor of Hispanic Ministries at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, where he teaches systematic theology and serves as director of the Center for Hispanic Studies. He co-edited *Immigrant Neighbors Among Us: Immigration Across Theological Traditions (2015)*.

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# PATH OF DUTY

*The tragic, holy obedience of  
Mother Cornelia Connelly*

By Catherine Addington

“O my love, I have wished to be a Catholic in my acts of love but I am afraid in truth & spirit have been but a discontented protestant,” Cornelia Connelly wrote to her husband. He had just informed her that they would be converting from Episcopalianism to Catholicism, and she would be required to become a nun so that he could become a priest. She complied. Yet to Cornelia, that was insufficient—it was not enough to go willingly. She had to go joyfully, too.

...

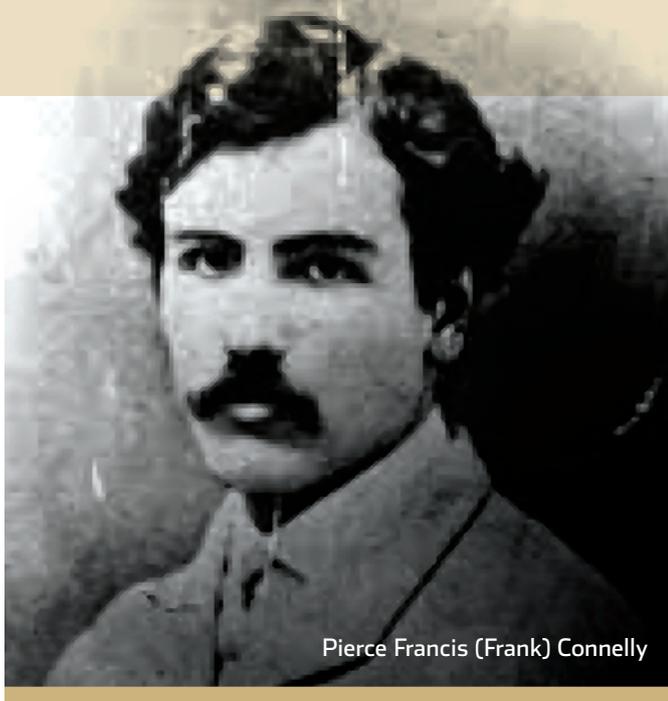
When Cornelia Augusta Peacock met Pierce Connelly, she was an orphaned heiress whose wealthy Presbyterian relatives disapproved of her marrying a middle-class vicar—let alone an Episcopalian. Young, smitten and economically independent, they were married in 1831 anyway. They immediately disembarked to Natchez, Miss., where Pierce had been offered a rectory. Between her family fortune and his land investments, the couple fit well into Natchez’s planter class, to whom they ministered at Trinity Episcopal Parish. Meanwhile, they welcomed two children, Mercer and Adeline. They were, by all accounts, happy.

Over the course of their time in Mississippi, Pierce began to wrestle with his faith. He was dissatisfied with the Episcopal tradition’s claim of divine origins and found himself attracted to what he perceived as the more straightforwardly absolute authority of Roman Catholicism. He gave up his parish—and his family’s financial security—in August 1835. In his letter of abjuration, he wrote: “Subordination I consider the first principle of all law.... I must have some guide to lead me into truth; I must have some power to obey.”

Cornelia struggled to follow her husband’s convictions at first. Even so, she supported his decision to resign his parish and committed herself to accompanying him on his theological journey. She wrote to her sister Adeline, “I am proud to say that against all my prejudices [*sic*] and the horrors which I have nurtured for the catholic faith I am ready at once to submit to what ever my loved husband believes to be the path of duty.”



Images courtesy of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus



Pierce Francis (Frank) Connelly

Pierce appeared to genuinely believe Catholicism to be the path of duty, but he also thought it the path of efficacy. The Connellys, who were enthusiastic investors in sugar plantations, were surrounded by the hysterical rumors of slave rebellions that pervaded the South in the 1830s. His writings make clear that he saw the Catholic Church's hierarchical bent as an effective tool for pacifying the enslaved: "I saw in the Church of Rome not only an ability to conquer, as I supposed, unto God, but an ability to control effectively and to satisfy the spirits of those it conquered." Cornelia did not express her husband's enthusiasm for hierarchies, but she certainly played her part in upholding them. According to her biographer, Sister Mary Catherine Gompertz, Cornelia purchased a young enslaved woman named Sarah Goff (or Gough) "in gratitude for her conversion." She catechized and sponsored Sarah at her reception into the Catholic Church and allegedly emancipated her when the family left the United States.

Hierarchy was so central to the Connellys' conversion that even after resigning his parish, Pierce delayed his reception into Catholicism until he could travel to Rome and secure a personal audience with the pope. He had decided to become a Roman Catholic "wholly and solely on the ground of there being amongst men a living, infallible interpreter of the mind of God, with divine jurisdiction and with authority to enforce submission to it"; it was no wonder that he wanted to lay eyes on the man. Moreover, Pierce had had ambitions to a bishopric as the chairman of the Episcopal Convention of the Southwest and hoped to lay the groundwork for a future as a Catholic bishop instead.

Cornelia may have converted on Pierce's terms, but

it quickly became clear that she did so for her own reasons. In telling her conversion story, she cited the nativist attacks of the era on Catholics. To her, this violence indicated that the church was "preaching Christ crucified," noting that her "faithful followers are now suffering martyrdom in Asia as the early Christians once did." Moreover, once she had adopted the Catholic faith, she saw no need to wait to go to Rome for the sacraments. She was received into the church in New Orleans.



The rest of the family was received into the church in Italy, where they stayed with the prominent English Catholic Lord Shrewsbury. The Connellys then briefly moved to Vienna and welcomed a third child, John Henry. However, Pierce's land investments suffered massive losses during the bank crisis of 1837, and the family returned to the United States to look for work. They ultimately settled alongside the Jesuits in Grand Coteau, La., where Pierce taught English and Cornelia taught music.

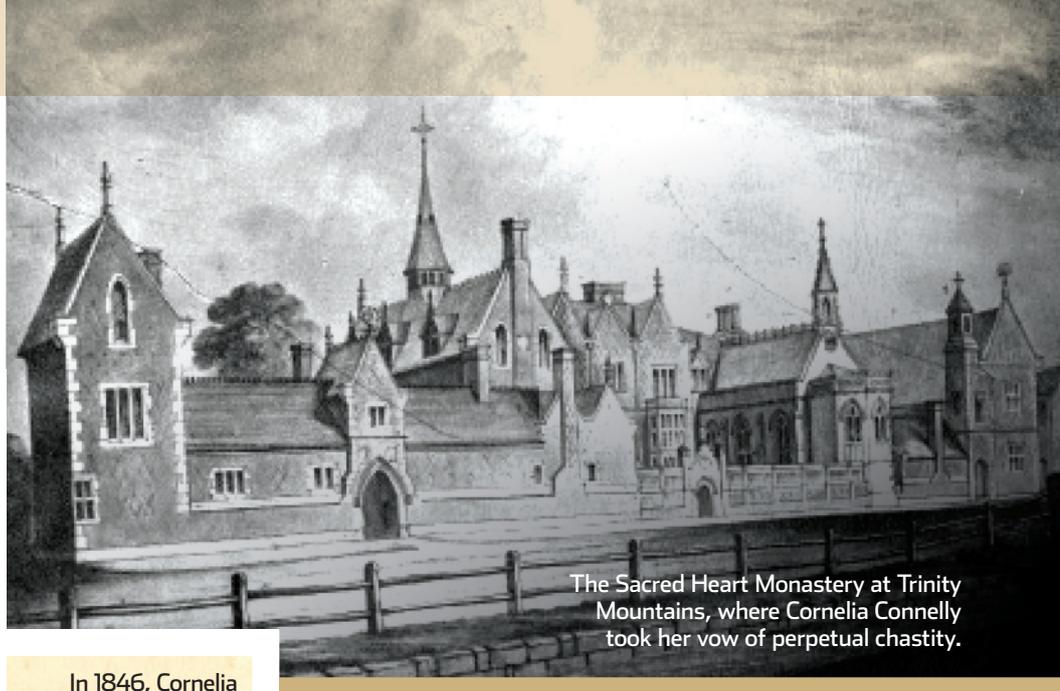
The family's years in Grand Coteau were extremely difficult and spiritually formative. Cornelia's lifelong devotion to Mary as Mother of Sorrows began at the foot of her children's double grave: John Henry died in a tragic accident, while a fourth child, named Mary Magdalen, did not survive long after birth. Meanwhile, both Cornelia and Pierce began to go on retreat with their Jesuit neighbors.

In October 1840, Cornelia was four months pregnant with their fifth child, Frank, when her husband returned from making the Spiritual Exercises with a startling announcement. Pierce was certain of his vocation to the priesthood and, as such, expected Cornelia to take a vow of perpetual chastity. He abruptly sold the family home, tried and failed to join the Jesuits in England and set off to try his luck in Rome. He was encouraged to take Holy Orders in an Eastern Rite in the interest of keeping his family together, but he refused, perhaps in part because of the prohibition on married clergy becoming bishops.

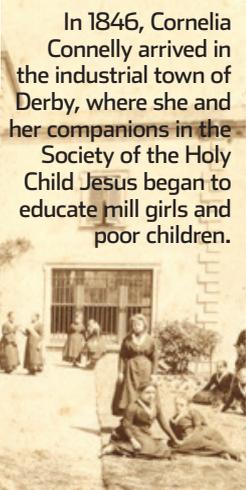
Ultimately, Cornelia—and the pope—agreed to a formal deed of separation, and she moved into a convent in Rome while Pierce began his seminary studies. She raised her infant son at the convent and taught English and music at the attached school, where her daughter was boarded. Pierce visited weekly and was ordained in the convent chapel in 1842. Cornelia sang in the choir at his first Mass; their daughter received her first Communion from her father. During this time, she wrote to her brother-in-law, John:



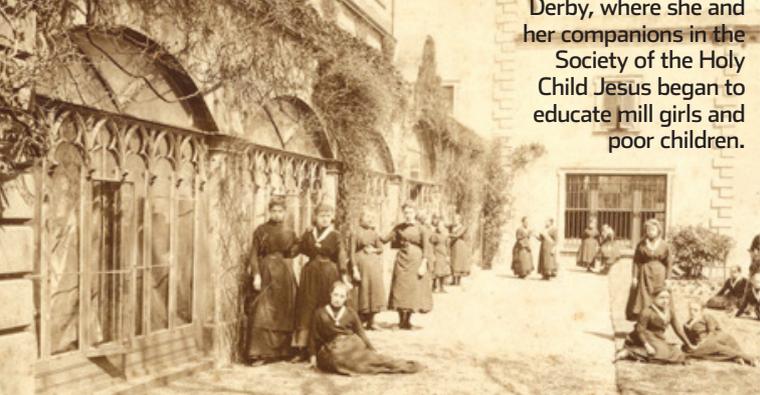
Two of Cornelia's children, John Henry and Mary Magdalene, died before age 3 and are buried together in Grand Coteau, La.



The Sacred Heart Monastery at Trinity Mountains, where Cornelia Connelly took her vow of perpetual chastity.



In 1846, Cornelia Connelly arrived in the industrial town of Derby, where she and her companions in the Society of the Holy Child Jesus began to educate mill girls and poor children.



It is not for nothing that I have given [Pierce] to God...we ought to look for a greater share of the divine love in proportion as we are willing to sacrifice our natural happiness A.M.D.G. [*ad majorem Dei gloriam*], and look too for even more in eternity.

Soon, Cornelia was asked to sacrifice an even greater share of her “natural happiness.” When Pierce was assigned to England, Cornelia was invited to follow him there. Bishop Nicholas Wiseman charged her and several companions with the care of a school and convent in the bustling industrial town of Derby. In 1846 it became the first house of Cornelia’s new congregation: the Society of the Holy Child Jesus. She thrived in her new role as a foundress, but she still had a superior in Bishop Wiseman, who served as her spiritual director. He quickly limited her contact with Pierce to correspondence only and directed her to send her children away to boarding school for the duration of her novitiate. While the separation of her family was devastating to Cornelia, she had no reason to think the arrangement was permanent.

In 1847, Pierce came to see Cornelia unannounced, and she refused to see him without Bishop Wiseman’s permission. Pierce had already perceived the bishop as an intruder on “his” territory but was now positively obsessed with the man’s role in Cornelia’s life. He ferociously set out to regain control over his wife.



The month after Cornelia took perpetual vows, Pierce kidnapped the children from their schools and took them to Europe in an attempt to get her to follow. Distraught though she was, she remained faithful to her vows and stayed where she was. His first attempt having failed, Pierce then presented himself in Rome as the co-founder of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus. He submitted a “rule” for the congregation of his own devising, which would give him more control over the society and therefore over Cornelia. (She foiled his attempt, but this caused such a mess that the society’s actual rule was not approved until after Cornelia’s death.)

When Pierce moved back to England, he had lost all pretense of Catholicism and was taken in by Henry Drummond, a fanatical anti-Catholic member of Parliament. From there Pierce launched his final, most dramatic effort to recapture his wife: He officially renounced the Catholic Church and his priesthood, began to publish virulent antipapist screeds and sued Cornelia for the “restoration of conjugal rights.”

The case, *Connelly v. Connelly*, gained notoriety rapidly in England. Pierce won, but Cornelia won her appeal two years later. The case was dropped, but it remained in the court of public opinion, where Cornelia was made out to have abandoned her children. She never regained custody of her children and rarely saw them again. Because of this, Cornelia said that the society was “founded on a broken heart.”

Even after the saga was over, Cornelia clearly still loved



Mother Connelly

Pierce and worried for his soul. She wrote notes in the margins of his anti-Catholic pamphlets, praying in one “that his eyes will be opened and his heart be touched.” To her sister she reported that “an anonymous letter was sent saying he was advised to take a wife—If it could be without sin by his vows being dissolved I should be very glad, but could he ever be happy again?”



Meanwhile, Cornelia threw herself into the work of her congregation, teaching everyone’s children but her own.

When the fledgling society was founded in Derby, it was specifically commissioned by Bishop Wiseman to educate the “future mothers” of the “higher-class.” Cornelia accomplished that task by offering day school for those who could pay tuition, but she devoted the majority of the nascent congregation’s resources to educating child laborers, particularly mill girls, through night and Sunday school. She sent sisters to teach poor children in London, Preston, Blackpool and even back across the ocean in Pennsylvania.

Cornelia’s 1863 *Book of Studies* outlines the progressive educational philosophy that was to guide the society’s schools. She upheld high standards in writing, arithmetic, geography, history and music, while integrating subjects that were traditionally exclusive to male students: philosophy, geology, Latin and Greek. She also replaced deportment and speaking lessons with theater, which was key to her curriculum. Religious education was given priority above all else, and Cornelia insisted that church history be taught in full. Her biographer, Sister Gompertz, recalled that “Mother Connelly had no sympathy with the timid spirit which would hide from the children the knowledge of unpalatable historic truth. Ecclesiastical History, like secular history, abounds in scandals.” She knew from experience that the hierarchy’s missteps could be weaponized to disillusion or confuse, but she preferred to use them to testify to the divine providence that sustained the church against all odds.

Providence sustained her until the age of 70, and it sustains her order today in over 14 countries. Her schools still teach that *Book of Studies* and add to it every year. For all Cornelia did not get to control within her own life, she now has influence over hundreds of educators and their thousands of students. For the children who were taken from her, she has helped raise countless more.



“Why are we not all Saints?” Cornelia wrote to her brother in 1846. “Only because our hearts are not fixed in God.” For Cornelia, it really was that simple. She took on vows that oriented her toward service of God and other, first in mar-

riage and then in religious life, and she obeyed the men who directed her in those vocations without question. It was not that she saw Pierce Connelly and Nicholas Wiseman as infallible—she often pushed back against or privately lamented their decisions. Rather, she trusted absolutely that God would use her to accomplish his will. The postulator of her cause for canonization, Paolo Molinari, S.J., wrote of her:

There was no servility or fawning about Cornelia’s obedience. It was the free act of an intelligent woman whose will was set on God’s will legitimately expressed in the Church and who was ‘ready to grind herself to powder’ to accomplish that will.

Even with heaven in mind, to reflect upon Cornelia’s life today is inevitably to lament it. It is difficult for a contemporary Catholic woman, in particular, to watch Cornelia submit over and over again to arrogant, misguided men and for that obedience to be called holy instead of pitiful. In fact, she faced such sentiments from her brother Ralph, to whom she wrote an exasperated response: “why will you not let every one follow their vocation in peace—It is very little consequence to me what any one says about me.”

That obedience is, of course, both holy and pitiful: the tragedy of Cornelia’s earthly life is not that she submitted like the church to Christ but rather that she was not loved as Christ loved the church. That tragedy is compounded by Cornelia’s inability to recognize and repent of her own subordination of the people she enslaved, with whom she did not fully share the freedom she encountered in the Gospel.

Cornelia was right, though, to trust that God would bring holiness out of her obedience, no matter how painful the circumstances. The Society of the Holy Child Jesus continues to be a testament to her conviction that her broken heart would not be the last word. It was her perseverance and the great fruit it bore in her order that led to her being declared venerable in 1992. It is these contemporary Catholic women who work for justice in her name who do not just honor her legacy but improve greatly upon it.

Catherine Addington is a Ph.D. student in Spanish at the University of Virginia.



# *The Ghosts of Toni Morrison: A Catholic writer confronts the legacy of slavery*

By Nadra Nittle

- A belief in a world other than one in which blacks are dehumanized and devalued helps Morrison's characters thrive.



and Flannery O'Connor, told **America**. "In some ways, it's the Christian narrative kind of reworked and investigated and interrogated in the black bodies of her characters."

Morrison converted to Catholicism as a child in the 1940s—a time when black churchgoing families still shared African folklore with their children, swapped ghost stories and held on to superstitions. This mash-up of mainstream Christianity and African-American spiritual traditions shaped Morrison in her personal and professional life alike.

A belief in a world other than one in which blacks are dehumanized and devalued helps her characters thrive, as it did for Morrison's very own family members. She remarked during a 1983 interview that her characters are high-functioning—they are able to navigate day-to-day life in a racially stratified society while also having run-ins with the supernatural. Steeped in the African-American spiritual tradition, her characters are at ease when they encounter otherworldly or extraordinary forces. This is especially true of *Beloved* and *Song of Solomon*, which turn 30 and 40 this year, respectively.

#### **GIRLHOOD, GHOST STORIES, CATHOLICISM**

When Toni Morrison was a baby, her mother, Ramah Wofford, had to make an urgent medical decision on her behalf. A doctor told Ramah that Morrison (née Chloe Wofford) and her sister, Lois, had been exposed to tuberculosis and needed to be hospitalized. Ramah's intuition told her not to place

her daughters in a facility. Morrison said that her mother realized that no one left the sanatoriums of the 1930s alive. Ramah said she was routinely visited by ghosts, and these paranormal episodes informed the decisions she made.

Ramah was a member of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, but Morrison would later convert to Catholicism. "There's a wing of my family who are all Catholics," she explained to NPR in 2015. "One of them was a cousin with whom I was very close, and she was a Catholic. And so I got baptized." At first, Morrison admitted, her approach to faith was superficial. She listened to Bible stories as if they were fairy tales and appreciated the aesthetics of holy buildings. But as she matured, she began to take her faith more seriously.

Because Morrison has not publicly discussed her Catholicism in detail, Nick Ripatrazone, a poet, novelist and cultural critic, said he regards Morrison as a "cultural Catholic," meaning "someone whose work is suffused with Catholic faith, culture and ritual," he explained to **America**.

Morrison has distinguished herself from other Christian writers, he said, by the way she commands the reader's attention. When she uses postmodern techniques, for example, she does so with purpose and not simply for play. "She wants us to radically transform the way we see race, body and America—and that radical upheaval, channeled through a spiritual sense that sees God in all things, strikes me as profoundly Christ-like," he said.

Can we consider Toni Morrison a Catholic novelist?

To some, Morrison's Catholicism might not seem obvious, but for others she is clearly engaging with questions familiar to a Christian audience. "I think that without a doubt she is mining Christianity and the Christian story in America," Mark Bosco, S.J., a scholar of Catholic writers like Graham Greene



“Morrison wants us to radically transform the way we see race, body and America,” says Nick Ripatrazone.

### ACRISIS OF MORALITY

*Song of Solomon*, first published in 1977 and winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award, is the story of Macon “Milkman” Dead III, who is trying to uncover his family history. Unlike Morrison’s earlier works, which were centered around the experiences of black girls and women, *Solomon* is centered on the black male experience. The book also stands out from its predecessors because of its explicit allusions to the Bible and supernatural themes.

In *Solomon*, Milkman’s Aunt Pilate is a godlike figure. She has no formal religious training, yet she has more spirit than real clergymen. When her granddaughter Hagar dies of a broken heart, Pilate rejects the

trite sermon the pastor prepares for the funeral. Instead, she repeats a lullaby she used to sing to Hagar, demands mercy and shouts to the funeral-goers about how much the young woman was loved.

Milkman loves his aunt because he realizes that “without ever leaving the ground, she could fly.” Flying is a central theme in the novel. Milkman’s great-grandfather Solomon mounts a hill and takes flight to escape slavery, and Milkman himself flies to what may or not be his death at the novel’s end. The tales of flying Africans serve as metaphors for freedom and transcendence over oppression. Africans leapt to their deaths off the slave ships during the Middle Passage. Enslaved in the United States, Africans in Mor-

risson’s fiction went airborne to resist a life in bondage.

In a 1981 interview with *The New Republic*, Morrison stated that *Song of Solomon* “is about black people who could fly,” adding that this myth is everywhere, “in the spirituals and Gospels.”

Father Bosco notes that Morrison’s works also include “a matriarchal kind of vision of spiritual power, which is very much part of the African-American tradition. Women have the authority to speak prophetically or heal. Their bodies in some ways contain more mystery than males do.”

The Pulitzer Prize-winning *Beloved*, which Father Bosco described as “the greatest American novel post-1950,” appeared in 1987. In the book,

Morrison explores the story of Sethe, a woman who killed her baby, called Beloved, to prevent the child from knowing the horrors of slavery. But the baby's ghost haunts Sethe and seems determined to consume her. The book is inspired by the story of an enslaved woman named Margaret Garner, who committed infanticide under similar circumstances.

A key character is Sethe's mother-in-law, Baby Suggs, a gifted preacher. Like Pilate, she is filled with the spirit despite being "unchurched." Every black man, woman and child in the community routinely follows Suggs into an open space known as the Clearing, where she preaches a religious philosophy of love.

The narrator states: "She did not tell them to clean up their lives or to go and sin no more. She did not tell them they were the blessed of the earth, its inheriting meek or its glorybound pure. She told them that the only grace they could have was the grace they could imagine."

Above all, she told the enslaved blacks in her community to love their hearts, "for this is the prize."

And, in turn, she offered them hers.

When Beloved returns, she tells Sethe that ghosts are everywhere. Suggs responds much the way the reader might expect: she is unfazed. Her response reveals how slavery systematically robbed African-Americans of their families.

"Not a house in the country ain't packed to its rafters with some dead Negro's grief," she says. "We lucky this ghost is a baby. My husband's spirit was to come back in here? Or yours? Don't talk to me. You lucky. You got three left.

## Incense Maker

By Nicholas Samaras

My hands are an ancient trade, a meditative creativity to connect with nature. I want the fragrant echo of smoke, the incense spiral, the grey filament to thread Heaven and Earth. How God is relative

to our arts. How the shapes of our hands craft a world in which I milk the tree-sap and mix in half-part cassia, sandalwood gum, herb and resin, a pliable labdanum, ingredients young and soft

to make a fragrant braiding—one part gold copal, one part dark copal, one part myrrh, wood, spice, and flower crush. My hands tear, chip and power the ingredients to a heart

of elements. I freeze the resin and then grind the mortar, let the mixture age to synergise a cohesive aroma. Then, I reduce what I find. I cut the resin into strings, cords to realise

what binds us to this world. I hold an art to purify indoor spaces, an atmosphere of intimacy, mystery, and play—a reverence for delicacy and the day's interconnections that may clarify.

Nicholas Samaras was born on Patmos, Greece, and raised in the United States. His most recent book is *American Psalm*, World Psalm (Ashland Poetry Press, 2014). His work has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Poetry* and other publications.

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Morrison seems content to practice a religion of her own design.

Three pulling at your skirts and just one raising hell from the other side. Be thankful, why don't you? I had eight. Every one of them gone away from me. Four taken, four chased, and all, I expect, worrying somebody's house into evil."

Mr. Ripatrazone considers *Beloved* Morrison's most Catholic book because it offers a kind of theological exploration of the body. Sethe's body is burned and scarred, a place of sacrilege, he pointed out. Meanwhile, *Beloved's* body is flesh and spirit simultaneously. The book also explores how homes, places and memories can serve as bodies.

"This strikes me as profoundly Catholic, and not at all Protestant," Mr. Ripatrazone explained. "When I think of Protestants, I think of the cross" which has no corpus; "when I think of Catholics, I think of the crucifix."

Like Baby Suggs and Pilate, Morrison has tenuous ties to an organized

religion. After years of practicing Catholicism, she says today she shapes her own spirituality. The author, however, has not completely abandoned the church, and is fascinated in particular by Pope Francis.

"I might be easily seduced to go back to church because I like the controversy as well as the beauty of this particular Pope Francis," Morrison told Terry Gross of NPR in 2015. "He's very interesting to me."

As a writer who has used her art to challenge white supremacy and capitalism and to humanize society's most vulnerable, Morrison's attraction to Pope Francis is understandable. Here is a pope who has called for an end to racism, intolerance and religious persecution, challenged xenophobia, spoke out in favor of migrants and refugees, and suggested that gay people and women who have had abortions deserve empathy.

Still, the author seems content to practice a religion of her own design.

In her religion, as in Christianity, the last do come first. Accordingly, blackness and femaleness are characteristics to revere, not to loathe. They are the traits that have made her one of the nation's most accomplished writers.

"I can accept the labels [black and female] because being a black woman writer is not a shallow place but a rich place to write from," she told *The New Yorker*. "It doesn't limit my imagination; it expands it. It's richer than being a white male writer because I know more and I've experienced more."

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Nadra Nittle is a Los Angeles-based writer. She has written for *KCET*, *ThinkProgress*, *The Atlantic* and *Outreach Magazine*.

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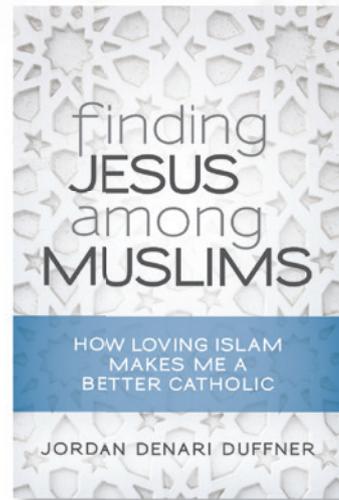
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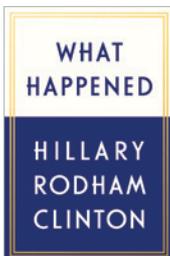
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## How did she lose?

By Robert M. Shrum



### What Happened

By Hillary Rodham Clinton  
Simon & Schuster  
512p \$30

In contrast to Hillary Rodham Clinton's earlier politically engineered writings, carefully combed for coming campaigns, this is a real book, written by a real person, suffused with the raw wounds of her defeat. It is marked by the bluntness and occasional tartness of someone who seems to know that her future as a candidate is past. *What Happened* is also marred by an apparently irrepressible instinct to accept blame and then to pass it on.

I understand the frustration. As a close adviser to Al Gore during his presidential campaign in 2000, I saw him win the popular vote, have an Electoral College majority purloined by the Supreme Court and sit just a few feet away as George W. Bush was sworn in. As a former first lady invited to Donald J. Trump's inauguration, Hillary Clinton recalls thinking of Gore and saying to herself just before walking onto the platform: "Breathe out. Scream later."

In these pages, there is no scream, but there are engaging glimpses of how she coped with losing what many, even most, assumed was the unloseable election. "It wasn't all yoga and breathing," she writes. "I also drank my share of chardonnay."

Clinton also offers flashes of candor about "the times when [she] was deeply unsure" over the years if her marriage "could or should survive." It did, she explains, because she always asked, "Did I still love him?" She does not need to go into the details—and thankfully she does not; we all know them.

The candor has its limits. Clinton notes that she was the first first lady to participate in a gay pride parade, but never reflects on the Defense of Marriage Act, signed into law by Bill Clinton, and "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," a policy he devised (both of them subsequently dismantled by President Obama). Similarly, she assails Republicans for provisions in the 1994 crime bills such as "long sentences" that ravaged a generation of young African-Americans, but she passes over her own memorable invocation at the time of the incendiary term "superpredators."

Clinton concedes "mistakes" that were "mine and mine alone." Well,

not quite. It was a mistake to give paid speeches to groups like the investment banking firm Goldman Sachs, she writes, but everybody else gave them after they left office. It was a mistake to use private email while serving as secretary of state, but everybody did.

Resentment is a recurring trope and is at times fully justified. She recounts her distress when NBC's Matt Lauer, hosting a national security forum, questioned her almost exclusively about the email controversy, then let Trump glide by with questions that barely challenged his juvenile grasp of global threats and realities. Lauer was not alone: In 2016, the evening news on the major networks lavished 100 minutes of coverage on Clinton's emails and devoted just 32 minutes to campaign-related public policy.

So just because something is a re-creation does not mean that it is not right. Clinton makes a powerful case, bolstered by serious social science research, that sexism was a potentially decisive driver of her defeat. She was subjected to a brutal personal campaign from an opponent who himself is indisputably misogynistic and whose rhetoric traffics in a relentless appeal to prejudice of all stripes, on a scale

unprecedented in modern U.S. history.

Clinton is also right that her campaign was hobbled by voter suppression and lacerated by fake news and the WikiLeaks affair—and then hurt, perhaps fatally, by F.B.I. Director James Comey’s last-minute intervention in the form of public statements that shifted the spotlight back to her emails and deepened doubts about her honesty. But the central self-analytical flaw of this book is that Clinton fails to recognize what matters in politics is not only what happens to you, but what you make happen. What she did have control over in a wafer-thin election was her message and the means to deliver it.

To put it plainly, in areas of Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin that previously went for Barack Obama, she lost the message war on the economy. Yes, Trump’s claims to be on the side of working people were specious. But they were also effective. His explanations for the economic distress of those who have not shared in the post-2008 recovery were trade and immigration—scapegoats, in my view, but nonetheless a resonant message about things he said he could change that would, in turn, change their lives.

The tragedy here is that she had, as she notes, an economic program that should have appealed to precisely the places she had to win. But as T.S. Eliot wrote, “Between the idea and the reality.... Falls the shadow.” The shadow for Clinton is that what counts is not what you say, but what people hear. Still, the failure to convey an economic message was not just her fault. The U.C.L.A. political scientist Lynn Vavreck found that from Oct. 8 on, “only 6 percent” of news coverage

mentioned Clinton “alongside jobs or the economy.” (Only 10 percent mentioned Trump in that context, but arguably his economic message had long since broken through.) Clinton did have another means to deliver her message, paid advertising, but Vavreck calculated that only 9 percent of her television spots were about jobs or the economy.

Trump would have been vulnerable to an economic assault. As Obama did with Mitt Romney in 2012, Clinton’s ads could have spotlighted his controversial business dealings and mistreatment of ordinary workers; then they could have moved on to arraign his proposed tax cuts for the wealthy and to convey Clinton’s plans on jobs, manufacturing and infrastructure. The strategy might not have been a silver bullet, but it could and probably would have been enough to move those 38,000 votes.

Finally, speaking of silver bullets, the Clinton campaign did not know the trouble it was in at the end because it relied so heavily on data analytics, and in the last three weeks did not conduct telephone polls in the battleground states. Data analytics came into its own politically in Obama’s 2008 and 2012 campaigns; it is value added, but it is not the be-all and end-all in gauging the state of a race. If the assumptions are off, if past history is not prologue, data analytics can offer comfort that you are winning a Michigan or Wisconsin when you are not—which is exactly what happened here.

We now know that the “fake news,” the Russian interference and the Facebook and Twitter bots were even more pervasive and poisonous than Hillary Clinton realized when she finished

this book. We are living with a reckless, divisive, unstable, race-baiting and warmongering president, the worst in our history, someone who debases the office and could threaten our democracy or trigger a nuclear holocaust.

*What Happened* convinces me that Clinton would have been an excellent president, and not just in comparison with Trump. It also lays bare her shortcomings as a politician and reveals, probably as much as she possibly can, her post-election traumas. And between the lines, there is a sense that victory could have cooled her defensive reflexes and brought us a President Clinton who was not only competent, but more comfortable in her own skin.

Maybe not—and of course, we will never know. But given the menacing fiasco of President Trump, this well-crafted book is in the end as painful to read as it must have been to write. At a human level, *What Happened* is poignant too. Years after he lost 49 states, Walter Mondale asked George McGovern, who had been buried in a comparable landslide, when it stopped hurting. “Never,” McGovern replied. So it is for Hillary Clinton, who stumbled against the unelectable opponent and yet came so close. Whatever her mistakes, she deserved better than she got—and so did the country.

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Robert M. Shrum is the Carmen H. and Louis Warschaw Chair in Practical Politics, professor of the practice of political science and director of the Jesse M. Unruh Institute of Politics at the University of Southern California.

## Can we overcome racism?

One of the tragic ironies of Ta-Nehisi Coates's latest book is that the same historical event he argues propelled him to success also resulted in the election of Donald Trump: the presidency of Barack Obama.

Primarily a collection of Coates's major essays for *The Atlantic* since 2008, *We Were Eight Years in Power* is an extended reflection on the Obama era. The title is taken from the 1895 plea of the African-American congressman Thomas Miller against the then-emerging Jim Crow laws that would restrict the rights of nonwhites to participate politically. Miller referred to the "eight years in power" of the Reconstruction era of 1865-73, when newly emancipated slaves could freely vote and run for office. He pointed out that during those

eight years, African-Americans had proven themselves worthy of participating in self-government. The white South was unmoved; Miller would be one of the last African-Americans to represent a Southern district in Congress until 1972.

Coates argues that the presidency of Barack Obama, another "eight years in power" for African-Americans, has produced the same result. Donald Trump, the anti-Obama, serves to "redeem" the Obama era and to reassert the supremacy of white men over all others. Coates warns that the breaking of the highest racial barrier has not vanquished racism, it has emboldened it.

Coates is at his best when exploring the multitude of ways in which black people have navigated, survived and resisted racism over the centuries. He lets us intimately witness

his struggles with his own pessimism about African-Americans' place in the United States when faced with Obama's optimistic vision of inclusion.

For those, like myself, who are outside the white-black binary, the book leaves questions about where exactly in this "American tragedy" we fit. *We Were Eight Years in Power* forces us to recognize that perhaps everything we love about this country is irreversibly interwoven with acts of hatred and oppression that fly in the face of everything this country claims to believe. The book is an examination of the Faustian bargains of American history that have given white Americans the relatively privileged position in this country that they enjoy.

Antonio De Loera-Brust is a Joseph A. O'Hare fellow at America Media.

## The Spirit in a secular age

From the open arms of "Who am I to judge?" to the strict boundaries of the Benedict option, the question of how to be a church community is a prominent one for Christians in our secular age. The knot caused by the two kinds of answers commonly given to this question lies at the heart of our ecclesial and political conflicts. One sort of answer sees the church as a collection of individual seekers, an inclusive group whose members affirm the truths of personal experience and support one another on our adjacent journeys. The other sees the church as a cohesive community, one with deep bonds and correspondingly high barriers between it and the world.

In his new book, the Rev. Louis J. Cameli attempts to cut the Gordian knot

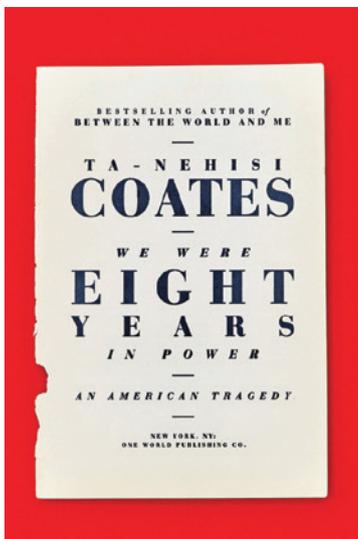
presented by the question of how we will live together as church in a secular age. Cameli begins by synthesizing what some of the best minds of our time—Jürgen Habermas, Charles Taylor, Christian Smith—have discovered about our faith and community in our secular context. And while he acknowledges that the challenges can push us into a defensive stance, he finds in their research cause for hope as well as despair.

Like Pope Francis and Cardinal Blase Cupich (who provides an afterword to the book), it is Cameli's insistence on looking for ways that the Holy Spirit is active in our own times that leads to his deepest incision into the knot of problems we face. He proposes neither that we stand back and let the current decline in belief and practice unfold, nor that we withdraw from a

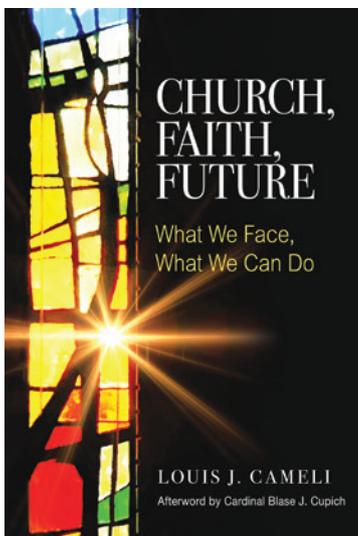
corrupt world. Instead, Cameli proposes that the church should build community as Jesus did: by asking people what they are looking for and then inviting them to come and see; by asking, "Are you, too, going to leave" (Jn 6:67); and, if they remain, sending them to go and proclaim the good news.

This kind of community "not only [goes] out to the world to give it something, but together with the world [receives] something." It is this balanced stance—a stance of humble reception alongside, and in active challenge of, the world—that is Cameli's most valuable contribution.

Patrick Gilger, S.J., founding editor of *The Jesuit Post*, is *America's* contributing editor for culture.



**We Were Eight Years in Power**  
An American Tragedy  
By Ta-Nehisi Coates  
One World. 400p \$28



**Church, Faith, Future**  
What We Face, What We Can Do  
By Louis J. Cameli  
Liturgical Press. 104p \$19.95

## The lion and the lamb

As the United States became more and more embroiled in the Vietnam War in the late 1960s, the increase in American casualties was paralleled by an increasing number of citizens protesting the war. Among the protesters were two Catholic priests who stood out in their black suits and Roman collars: Philip Berrigan, a member of the Josephite order, and his older brother Daniel, who belonged to the Society of Jesus. In 1968, their pictures appeared in national newspapers as they, along with seven others, burned A-1 draft files in Catonsville, Md. in protest of the war.

Daniel Berrigan, S.J., is the subject of Jim Forest's stirring biography. Covering his life from his birth in 1921 in Minnesota to his death in 2016, this book offers a portrait of Daniel Berrigan as a man committed to following the Gospels no matter the personal and professional cost.

Berrigan was a professor and a poet whose work was inspired by Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J., and Wallace Stevens, among others. But he gave those roles up to become a convicted felon protesting the culture of death, beginning with the Vietnam War. He also protested against abortion, euthanasia and nuclear arms and co-founded peace groups like the Plowshares movement. In 1967, Daniel was the first priest in U.S. history to be arrested for antiwar activism. His efforts continued for about 45 years, and Forest estimates that Berrigan was arrested hundreds of times.

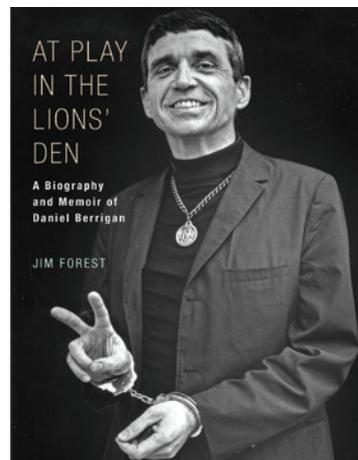
Forest incorporates excerpts from historical accounts as well as observations from Berrigan's friends. The

comments range widely, from the observation by Pedro Arrupe, S.J., that "Dan Berrigan is the greatest Jesuit of the century" to the actor Martin Sheen, Berrigan's protégé and friend, noting how he made protest human.

Forest, a peace activist, friend of the Berrigans and the author of biographies of Thomas Merton and Dorothy Day, includes passages from Berrigan's articles, poems, essays, plays and letters. Forest's discursive style is occasionally hard to follow, but photographs and a chronology help to keep the narrative on track. In this insightful and inspiring biography, Forest suggests that Berrigan lived his poems, that his metaphors became stepping stones (and rocks) on the difficult path he chose.

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*Diane Scharper teaches at the Johns Hopkins University Osher Program. She is the author of several books, including Radiant, Prayer Poems.*



**At Play in the Lions' Den**  
A Biography and Memoir of Daniel Berrigan  
By Jim Forest  
Orbis Books. 240p \$28



## ‘Lady Bird’ is a rallying cry for Catholic schoolgirls everywhere

By Eloise Blondiau

Greta Gerwig calls her film “Lady Bird” a love letter to Sacramento, her hometown. With careful shots of mid-afternoon drives, flickering neon signs and sun-dappled lawns, Ms. Gerwig tells the story of Christine “Lady Bird” McPherson (Saoirse Ronan) during her senior year at Immaculate Heart High School.

Ms. Gerwig’s choice to pinpoint a particular place and exact year (2002) has an intended consequence for her audience. “The more particular you make something, the more universal it becomes,” she said in an interview with **America**. The film has a long roster of devastatingly specific characters and relationships. “Everybody is always in the middle of their own opera,” Ms. Gerwig explained.

It was striking to be presented with so many complicated, operatic characters in “Lady Bird,” and it was refreshing to see religious characters presented in three dimensions. The priests and nuns in the film are people with their own interests and pain,

rather than the cardboard cut-outs we sometimes see in film.

In “Lady Bird,” I saw for the first time in film a Catholic girls’ school as I remember it—brimming with kindness, weirdness, friendship and rebellion. *Of course* it was normal to audition for the school play with a hymn like “Make Me a Channel of Your Peace.” *Of course* the wealthiest girl in the class had tailored the hem of her skirt to make it permanently shorter, rather than rolling it up like the rest of us. *Of course* the school was nicknamed Immaculate Fart.

Although this is a film saturated in Catholic imagery and language, Ms. Gerwig is not Catholic and never has been. She did, however, attend Catholic school and wanted to make a film that reflected her experience there.

“There’s plenty of stuff to make a joke out of [in Catholic schools], but what if you didn’t? What if you took it seriously and showed all the things that were beautiful about it?” she asked.

The boys’ school down the road

from Ms. Gerwig in Sacramento was run by Jesuits, and some Jesuit influences have seeped into “Lady Bird.” “What [the Jesuits] were trying to teach us, I think, and the nuns as well,” Ms. Gerwig said, “is that there are all kinds of ways of serving God. “Even though I wasn’t specifically Catholic and didn’t specifically have their theological beliefs, I really took that to heart.”

When she was writing “Lady Bird,” Ms. Gerwig thought a lot about what saints were like as teenagers, when they were perhaps just troublemakers without a worthy cause. “I was so interested in...taking something that just looks like...an annoying teenage girl and then giving her the experience of what I think of as grace,” she said.

Midway through the film, Lady Bird reviews her college application with Sister Sarah-Joan (Lois Smith) at her Catholic high school. When the sister remarks on Lady Bird’s affectionate writing about Sacramento,

In “Lady Bird,” I saw for the first time in film a Catholic girls’ school as I remember it—brimming with kindness, weirdness, friendship and rebellion.

Lady Bird shrugs off the compliment, saying she just pays attention. “Don’t you think that might be the same thing?” asks Sister Sarah-Joan. “Love and attention?”

If Sister Sarah-Joan is right, “Lady Bird” is a film with an expansive heart, since Ms. Gerwig’s attention is wide-ranging and meticulous. “Lady Bird” is as much a love letter to Sacramento as it is to disappointed, hard-working mothers; to defiant daughters; to depressed and dotting fathers; to open-hearted nuns; to struggling priests; to scared, closeted high schoolers; to the childhood friends who help you to grow into yourself—whatever that is.

“Lady Bird” is the first love letter to Catholic education that I have ever seen on film. “It’s the only existent love letter to Catholic school [in cinema]!” Ms. Gerwig said to me with a laugh.

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Eloise Blondiau is a producer at *America*.

## The gorgeous, provocative songs of Jason Isbell

The best singer-songwriters possess a rare ability to share their personal experiences through word and melody, touching upon universal themes that settle and resonate deeply within the heart of the listener. The alt-country artist Jason Isbell has embraced this skill with a gentle confidence, consistently creating some of the most passionate and socially engaged music out there today.

In his late 30s, Isbell possesses a thorough appreciation for the human condition, as one who has slogged through a divorce, has battled alcoholism and was fired (unanimously) by his former bandmates in the Drive-By Truckers.

I discovered Isbell in 2013 after hearing a glowing review of his album “Southeastern” on NPR. This is a brilliant collection of songs, expressing intelligent lyricism accompanied by a generous helping of vulnerability and self-awareness. He has since released two more excellent albums, “Something More Than Free” (2015) and his 2017 release, backed by the 400 Unit, “The Nashville Sound.”

One song from “Something More Than Free”—“24 Frames”—still stays with me. In one turn of phrase Isbell shakes up traditional notions of the

divine and leaves the listener with an experience that is simultaneously confusing and comforting. He sings: “You thought God was an architect/ but now you know/ He’s something like a pipe bomb/ ready to blow/ and everything/ you build that’s all for show/ goes up in flames/ in 24 frames.”

Twenty-four is the standard number of frames of film that move by the eye every second of viewing. Swiftly and without warning, everything that we think we know can be turned on its head, disorienting us and making us vulnerable. Reflecting on this song has assisted me in blowing up some of the childish theology I had carried into adulthood and has aided me in a quest toward something more mature.

We live in a culture that immerses us in music. Much of it is floating in the background, barely noticed by our consciousness. But there is also music that is challenging and rich with meaning. This is the kind of music Jason Isbell is creating, songs that demand attention and rumination.

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David E. Nantais is the mission leader at St. Mary Mercy Hospital in Livonia, Mich.



Jason Isbell’s music demands attention. Sept. 13, 2017, in Nashville, Tenn. (AP Photo/Mark Zaleski)

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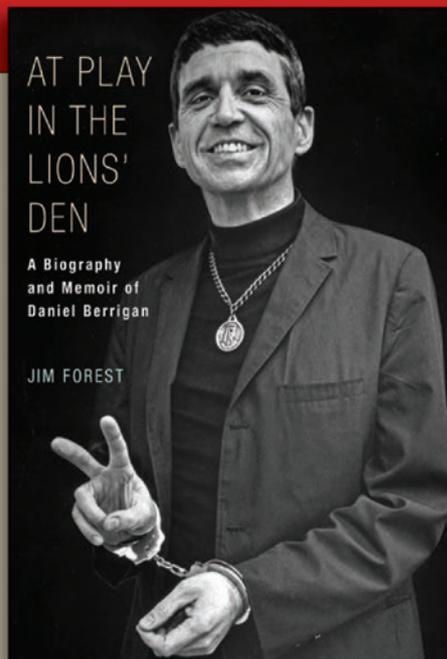


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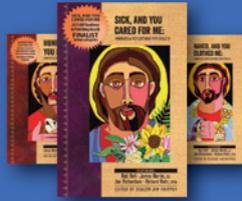
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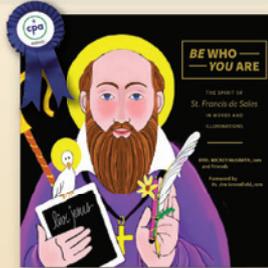
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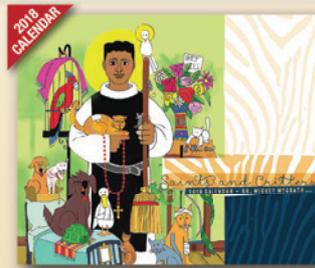
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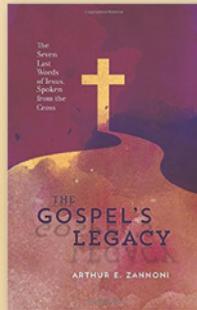


Inspired by stories of saints with pets, Bro. Mickey McGrath's 2018 calendar is filled with colorful images and whimsical stories – each one a loving celebration of God's wild imagination. \$15



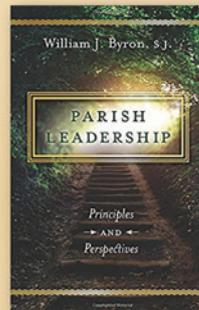
This full-color book is a collection of illustrations inspired by the life, words, and anecdotes of Pope John XXIII- and others! Filled with whimsical drawings and short quotes, this book is intended to be a source of five-minute meditations for busy people on the run. \$20

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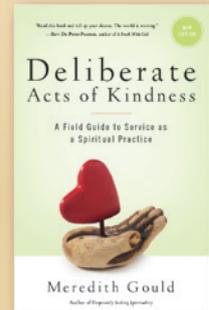
This book explores the seven last sentences spoken by Jesus from the Cross prior to his death as recorded in the four Gospels. It examines Jesus' final legacy by reflecting on how each Gospel portrays his departing. \$10

## William J. Byron



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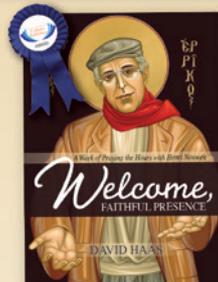
## David Haas



This book celebrates the bringing together of insightful wisdom from the great spiritual writer Henri Nouwen, fused together with the creative and poetic gifts of crafting communal and individual prayer that are singularly found in liturgical composer and author, David Haas. \$20

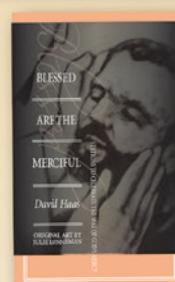


The psalms always hold a heart-centered power for all people who honor the Word of God. In these pages, David takes on all 150 psalms and offers a fresh and expanded path for the prayer lives of all believers, to be used on the journey of those seeking life, wisdom and grace. \$20

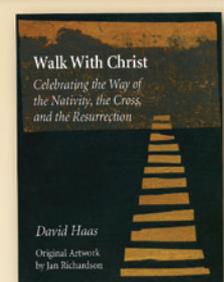


With this book of prayer, David Haas shares his love of the patterns of daily prayer and the wisdom found in the scriptures yoked with Henri's writings and wisdom. Found in these pages is a seven day reflective journey/retreat in a discipline of solitude and intentional prayer to serve as a map of hopeful openness to receive the wisdom of God's Word. \$17

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# A Talent for the Gospel

Readings: Prov 31:10-31, Ps 128, 1 Thes 5:1-6, Mt 25:14-30

This parable is confusing. Who punishes a person for returning property—unharmed—that he was pledged to protect? Where is the justice in taking from the least and giving to those with the most? What kind of person brags about harvesting where he did not plant? And what does this grasping and petulant man have to do with the God whose evenhanded generosity sends rain on the just and unjust alike?

To break open this parable, it helps to remember that Matthew was a Jew speaking to Jews about Jews. Matthew believed that Judaism was a treasure of divine grace for all humanity and that this gift was clearest in Christ. Matthew also believed that the Hebrew Scriptures contained everything necessary to believe in Jesus Christ.

The talents thus represent the word of God. Those Jews who came to believe in Jesus Christ were doubly graced. They found the word through study of the Scriptures and through the Spirit. The man with five talents represents these believers, who, in Matthew's community, led the propagation of the Gospel. The man with two talents, then, represents those Gentiles who, without the benefit of Scripture, somehow still recognized the truth about Jesus. Their lack of knowledge limited their efforts to spread the Gospel, but the example of their faith still inspired some to come to Christ. The man with one talent, meanwhile, represents those who, although they possessed the Scriptures, failed to understand them, resisted Christ and hindered the Gospel. It made sense to Matthew that the "talent" given them, the Hebrew Scriptures, be passed to their fellow Jews who would use it for Christ.

Jesus was only on this earth for a short time. He planted a few seeds but left it to his disciples to work toward an abundant harvest. This task continues today. Like the person with five talents, Christians have access to the same Scriptures and the same Spirit. Guided by the insights that these gifts provide, Christians can take the risks necessary to spread the Gospel, ensuring that, on his return, Christ will be able to gather where he did not plant.

*'Come, share your master's joy.'* (Mt 25:21)



## PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

What Gospel talents has Christ given you?

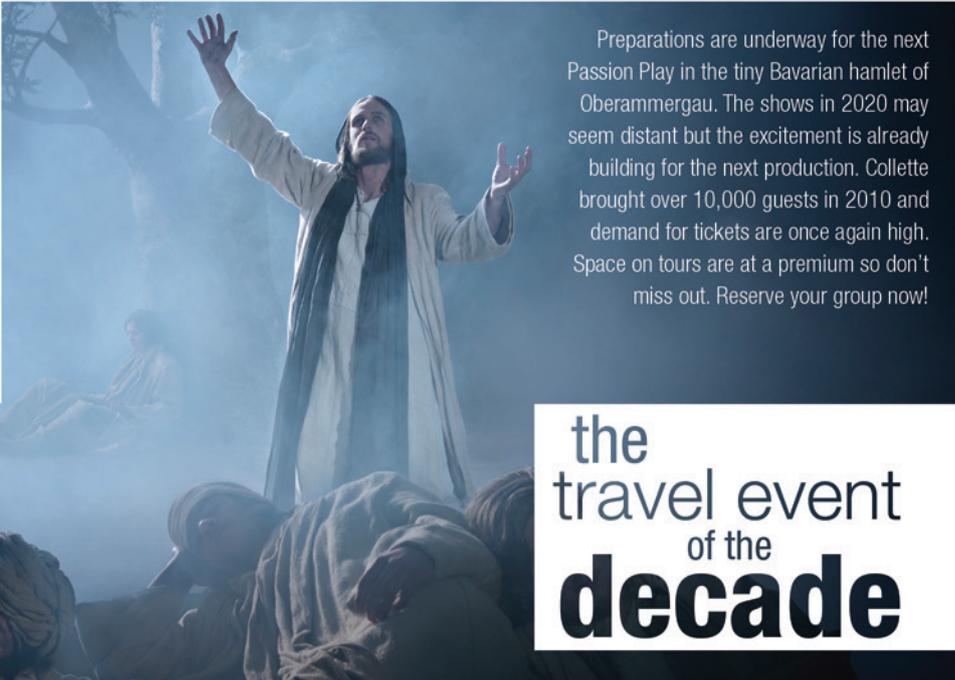
How do you further those talents?

This task requires clarity. In English, the word *talent* originally meant a "large sum of money," as it does in Greek. Specifically under the influence of this parable, it came over time to mean a "natural capacity for success in some mental or physical activity." This is not what Matthew used it to symbolize. Although our society calls "talents" those gifts that serve fields like art or sport, it is not a flair for painting or pole vaulting that will provide admission to the master's joy. The "talents" of this week's Gospel passage are rooted in the word and often go overlooked. No one hands out Nobel prizes for generosity, medals of honor for forgiveness or an Olympic gold medal for loving an enemy, but this is more what Matthew had in mind. When we take risks like these, the word grows stronger in us and grows in appeal to others. When the Master returns, he will want to know what we did to further the compassion, humility, freedom and love he entrusted to us. Blessed are those who will place an abundance into his hands.

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

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# Inherit the Kingdom

Readings: Ez 34:11-17, Ps 23, 1 Cor 15:20-28, Mt 25:31-46

Royal symbols often come from other occupations whose work explains the sovereign's role. The British monarch, for example, is a warrior-priest. At her coronation, Queen Elizabeth II was anointed with chrism and vested with liturgical garments. She also received a sword, a scepter (a ritual spear) and the stylized battle helmet known today as St. Edward's Crown. These symbols were reminders of her duty to protect the nation morally and militarily.

In the ancient Near East, kings drew their symbols from the work of shepherds. The mythic kings of early Mesopotamia incorporated the title "shepherd" into their name (Lugalbanda-the-Shepherd, for example). Pharaohs of Egypt carried a shepherd's crook among their regalia. In Israel, charismatic founders like Jacob and Moses were shepherds. David was out tending Jesse's flocks when Samuel came to anoint him. The image of kings responsible for sheep that appears in today's Gospel passage has deep roots.

As shepherds of their people, ancient kings had a duty to keep them safe. This symbolism is nowhere more apparent than in 1 Sm 17:36. David, fresh from the pasture, bragged that he had already killed a lion and a bear, so he should have no difficulty killing a Philistine. The bravery and skills that protected his sheep would now protect his fellow Israelites.

*'Whatever you did for one of the least brothers of mine, you did for me.'* (Mt 25:40)

## PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

How can you strengthen your trust in God?

How does God's love inspire you to show mercy?

As protectors, kings also sought out lost sheep. Nearby enemies intermittently raided Israel's borders and carried Israelites off into slavery. When families could not recapture their lost relatives, it became the king's duty to seek out and gather those who had been scattered. Shepherds also tended to the needs of individual sheep, as we read in today's first reading: "The injured I will bind up; the sick I will heal." The king's responsibility for justice ensured that every Israelite could thrive. The Israelite king thus had a special care for and duty toward those who suffered misfortune.

Throughout Matthew's Gospel, Jesus plays with these images. As Ezekiel implies, the line of David had failed in its duty, so God assumed the shepherding responsibilities personally. Now God sends Jesus to be the new shepherd-king, and his reign will have no end. In today's Gospel passage, Jesus adds a twist to this teaching. A time is coming when God will act as Ezekiel foretold, but until then the shepherding duty falls to the sheep themselves.

Jesus' distinction between sheep and goats is part of his message. Although goats will flock to a human leader, they can also survive on their own; in fact feral goats today are a widespread invasive species. Domestic sheep, by contrast, lack the wild instincts to survive. Sheep are thus an apt symbol for humanity's spiritual condition. Self-sufficiency may be laudable in many ways, but in matters of the spirit, no creature can go feral and survive.

God's "sheep" know their dependence. Knowledge of their own need for grace opens their hearts to the needs of others. The qualities that make someone a good "sheep" thus also make for a good shepherd.

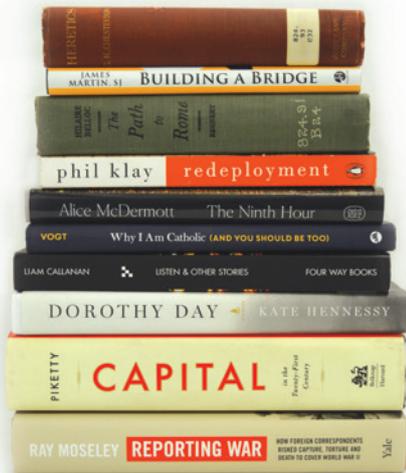
No better passage could mark the end of another liturgical year. Matthew has provided a compelling account of Jesus' example, commandments and Spirit. It remains for us, the sheep, to continue the works of mercy that calm anxious hearts with Christ's promise to remain among us even until the end of time.

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

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#### 2017

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Solemnity of Our Lord  
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Mt. 25:31–46  
*The Last Judgment*

#### 2018

##### FEBRUARY 4

5th Sunday Ordinary Time  
Mark 1:29–39  
*Healing of Peter's Mother-in-Law*

##### FEBRUARY 11

##### World Day of the Sick

6th Sunday Ordinary Time  
Mark 1:40–45  
*Healing the Leper*



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# Family Counseling

*'Amoris Laetitia' teaches the church to listen*

By Thomas J. Reese



Major papal documents often get limited media coverage when they first appear and later are forgotten except by scholars and church leaders. Truly important documents are studied in seminaries and incorporated into religious education textbooks, and their ideas trickle down to the faithful.

Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation "The Joy of Love" ("Amoris Laetitia"), the product of the pope's thinking after two synods of bishops on the topic of the family, received wide coverage both in the Catholic and secular media when it came out in 2016. Much of the coverage was focused on the document's opening in Chapter 8 to the possibility for divorced and remarried Catholics who had not received an annulment of their first marriage to receive Communion.

A small but vocal group of Catholic commentators (including some bishops and cardinals) felt this was an unacceptable breach of church teaching. Most of the faithful (62 percent), however, favored extending Communion to divorced and remarried Catholics, according to a Pew Research Center poll.

On Oct. 5 to 6, 2017, a group of theologians and bishops met at Boston College to reflect on "Amoris Laetitia." The conference was convened by Cardinal Blase Cupich of Chicago and James F. Keenan, S.J., of Boston College's Jesuit Institute.

Participants noted that the reception of "Amoris Laetitia" has been positive from laypeople who have read the

document or experienced programs based on it. People have found it realistic in its description of the challenges facing families. Hispanic and black theologians described how the document's ideas resonate in their communities.

But everyone quickly acknowledged that more needs to be done. The opioid crisis and unemployment are destroying families. The poor are less likely to get married and more likely to get divorced than those in upper income brackets. Extended families are often not present to help couples. And young people are abandoning religion in droves.

Parishes need to be more welcoming to families, especially families in difficulty. "Amoris Laetitia" encourages "listening" as the first response. "Accompanying" is another key word: accepting people where they are and then traveling with them in their journey toward God.

But who is going to do this accompanying? Priests ordained under John Paul II and Benedict XVI are often suspicious of the document. Until seminary faculties and administrators change, there is little hope that new priests will be open and welcoming. Alienated Catholics who give the church another try often do not meet priests like Francis in their parishes. When they experience condemnation and exclusion, they leave, never to return.

The conference participants were certainly encouraged by what they heard about the reception of "Amoris

Laetitia" in France, Germany and Italy from visiting bishops and theologians. Also hopeful was the participation of Cardinal Kevin Farrell, prefect of the Vatican Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life. Antonio Spadaro, a fellow Jesuit and close confidant of the pope, was also a participant.

What role does the laity play in all of this? First, laypeople should read Chapter 4 of "Amoris Laetitia" and give that chapter to any couple preparing for marriage or experiencing the ups and downs of family life. Next, the laity must speak up. Bishops and priests hear mostly from the disgruntled. Tell them how much you like Pope Francis and his stress on compassion and mercy.

As the pope says, one of the great sins of the church is its infantilization of the laity. It is time for the laity to educate themselves, speak out and act like true disciples of Christ in spreading the joy of the Gospel. As Cardinal Farrell noted at the conference, priests have no direct experience of marriage, and it is therefore up to lay people to become leaders in reaching out to families in parish communities.

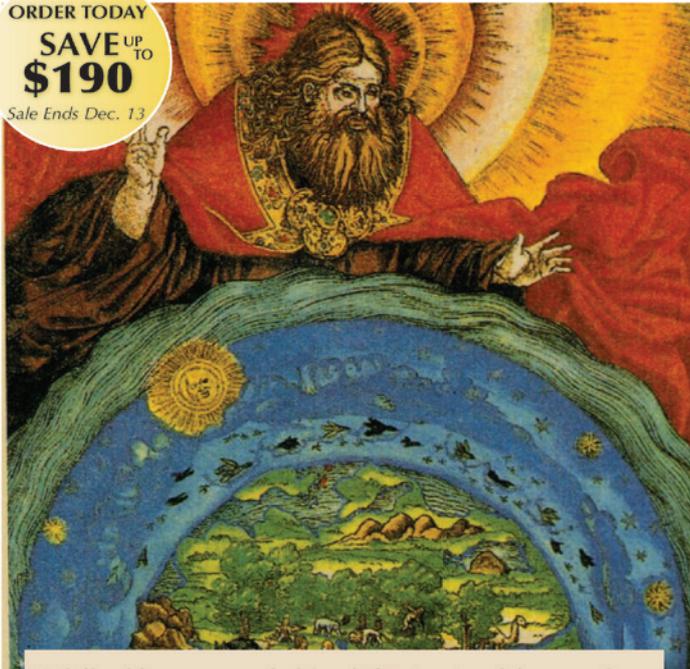
Thomas J. Reese, S.J., is a senior analyst for Religion News Service. Previously he was a columnist at *The National Catholic Reporter* (2015-17) and an associate editor (1978-85) and editor in chief (1998-2005) of *America*. This column is from Religion News Service and has been edited for length.



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