America

SEPTEMBER 2021

THE JESUIT REVIEW OF FAITH AND CULTURE

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How a Benedictine school deepened its mission by staying put

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O Res Mirabilis!

Let's set the record straight: Pope Francis did not "ban the use of Latin in the Roman Catholic Church," as one person recently put it to me. He didn't even ban Latin from the Mass. Pope Francis, in fact, didn't ban anything. As **America**'s Vatican correspondent explained on July 16, "Pope Francis has revoked the faculty given by his predecessors that [since 2007] allowed any Catholic priest of the Latin Rite to celebrate the Tridentine Mass." What does that mean?

In the Latin rite, there are two ways in which the Mass is celebrated, each with their own texts and logic: the "ordinary form" and the "extraordinary form." The ordinary form is the usual parish liturgy with which all of us are familiar. In most places, the ordinary form of the Mass may be used in any language, including Latin, and there are several Catholic communities in the United States where the ordinary form of the Mass is said in Latin. Those communities are unaffected by the pope's action.

The extraordinary form of the Mass is the liturgy prescribed in the Roman Missal of 1962, which is a descendent of the Missal promulgated after the Council of Trent. The extraordinary form is mainly celebrated in Latin and contains elements, like the priest facing away from the congregation, with which some of you will be familiar. St. John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI had made it easier for priests to celebrate Mass according to this older, extraordinary form. Pope Francis has changed the rules. Now, a priest must have the permission of his bishop to celebrate Mass in the extraordinary form and, in certain circumstances, the bishop must seek permission from the Vatican.

While Pope Francis' decision does greatly restrict the use of the extraordinary form, the pope has not abolished it. The extraordinary form can and will continue to be celebrated in those places where the diocesan bishop determines that it is necessary to meet some pastoral need.

Why did the pope do this? Basically, Francis' predecessors believed that greater access to the extraordinary form would act as an instrument of ecclesial unity. But Pope Francis believes that in some places the extraordinary form has instead become a source of division as well as a symbol of opposition to Vatican II. The pope made this judgment after consulting the world's bishops about the matter.

Obviously, I take the pope at his word. He is doing his job. The first and last duty of the successor of Saint Peter is to safeguard ecclesial communion. But if you had asked me about the matter before the pope acted, I would have questioned whether such a change was necessary. My view from the cheap seats was that the celebration of the extraordinary form was not really having the effects the pope describes, at least not in my corner of the Catholic world.

For one thing, very few people attend Masses celebrated in the extraordinary form. I suspect that a majority of U.S. Catholics are unaware that there even is an extraordinary form. And most of the relatively few people I have met who have a devotion to this form of the liturgy don't strike me as opposed in any substantive way to teachings of Vatican II. And while the "experiment" with the extraordinary form is three or four decades old, this is not a great deal of time for a church that is more than two millennia old.

Then again, the pope is not a politician or a pundit. He's a pastor. And he has more and better information than I.

Still, I think it's worth noting that the unity-in-diversity that the original papal permissions for the extraordinary form were meant to engender is a worthwhile, even necessary goal. Even within celebrations of the ordinary form there is a great deal of diversity. I have never celebrated Mass in the extraordinary form, but I have concelebrated in the ordinary form, with the pope himself at Saint Peter's Basilica. I have also concelebrated at the Basilica of Sacre Coeur in Paris on the feast of the Sacred Heart, and at Saint Patrick's Cathedral on Christmas and Easter. I have also celebrated Mass in thatched-roofed churches in the heart of Latin America, in prisons and at coffee tables in the living rooms of the sick or dying.

I am awestruck by the beauty of the Eucharist wherever I encounter it. I often think, "Isn't it a miracle that we're here doing this and haven't blown up the world yet?" That's a big reason why the so-called liturgy wars bore me. To be sure, rubrics and form, not to mention plain good taste—all of that matters. But what unites us in the Mass is the Lord himself, present in the Eucharist. That is enough to make it beautiful. For whether it's performed by a royal company or the local high school drama club, Shakespeare is still Shakespeare.

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

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AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd

Friar Leopoldo Serrano celebrates Mass at Mission San Francisco de Asis, in Honduras, June 27. The pastor is helping to rebuild the community of La Reina, a nearby Honduran village buried in a mudslide in 2020.

Cover: Graduation at St. Benedict's Prep in Newark, N.J., 2017 (Michael Marmora)

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Your reactions to our comprehensive survey of U.S. Catholics

The August issue of **America** featured the results of a comprehensive survey of U.S. Catholics by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, commissioned by America Media. Many of the questions and responses in the survey focused on reader reaction to the resurgence of the sexual abuse crisis and its coverup that occurred in 2018 with the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report and the revelation that former Cardinal Theodore McCarrick had sexually abused minors. Below is an edited selection of reader comments to the survey and surrounding commentary. Please see this current issue for more results from the survey about politics, church finances and other issues.

How many Catholics walked away from the church after 2002, long before the release of the Pennsylvania grand jury report? This survey does not capture the true impact of the sexual abuse scandal/coverup because it excludes those who left long before the Pennsylvania and McCarrick scandals. They had already lost all trust in Catholic Church officialdom—nuns, and priests, yes, but especially the bishops, the cardinals and the popes.
Anne Chapman

Seminaries are doing a better job recently in the processes of preparing men for the priesthood. I believe there is much more attention to these issues now than was common in the past. Also, the church from the pope down has been more active and direct about the problem and has adopted policies of direct intervention.
Elizabeth Stevens

I see this study and resulting article as an interesting statistical study but agree that the study will probably be used more for damage control than true reform. However I remain hopeful that if forward looking bishops become more influential in the [U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops], this may change.

Although there are many aspects of this crisis, I believe that two underlying causes are the bishops' immature understanding of human sexuality, and clericalism, which led to a "circle the wagons" response to the crisis. How could an apparently Christian group not realize the profound and lasting damage to someone who has been sexually abused and then not take strong positive action? This study does not touch on these issues.
Frank Pasquariello

I think that many Catholics, including myself, have gotten to the point of saturation. We find all the controversies and misbehaviors of our leaders so overwhelming that we just put them aside and focus our attention on our Lord Jesus Christ.
Rogelio Ulibarri

There seems to be a fear that to discuss [the abuse crisis] openly only keeps the issue alive. The truth is that everyone needs to stay alert and keep the hierarchy accountable. In my opinion, to resolve this issue long-term, as well as other concerns, requires a new way of managing and directing church affairs through a true partnership of the clergy, religious and laity.
Lloyd William

So many Catholics do not know who Cardinal McCarrick is. His story no longer has the capacity to shock as it would have decades ago. People are no longer "scandalized" by the behavior of some priests. It seems that every few months there is another story of sexual impropriety by a member of the clergy.
L. Kenney

It is astounding to me that Catholics do not know who McCarrick is. Perhaps it is our nature to forget anything prior to the last week. I continuously read that the U.S. news cycle is something like eight days. After that, who cares? It says so much about our maturity as citizens of the United States. (This is not just a Catholic issue.)
Stephen Healy

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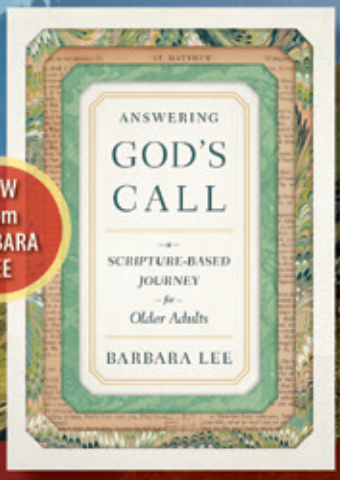

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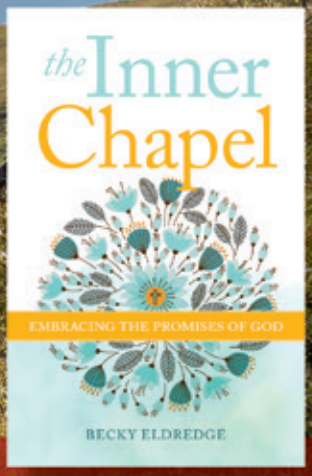

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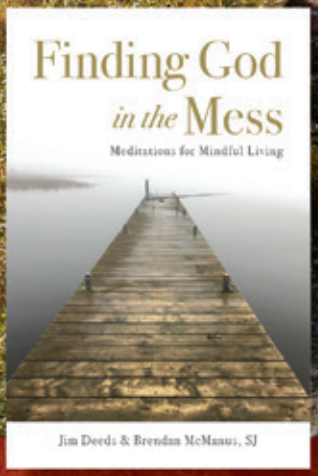

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Just War, Just Peace

As of Aug. 9, six cities in Afghanistan had fallen to the forces of the Taliban, which also seemed poised to seize the capital of Kabul. The rapid advance of the Islamist juggernaut followed President Biden's announcement in July that the U.S. military mission in Afghanistan would conclude on Aug. 31. How tragically ironic that the Taliban may be back in control of Afghanistan by the time the United States observes the 20th anniversary of the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. Rooting out Al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden, and eliminating the Taliban's ability to offer aid and comfort to terrorism, was the stated *casus belli* of the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan later that year, a conflict that has claimed nearly 200,000 lives, according to the Costs of War Project at Brown University.

In the aftermath of 9/11, as the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan was getting underway, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops released a pastoral message, "Living With Faith and Hope After September 11," which offered moral guidance drawn from the church's traditional just war framework: "We acknowledge...the right and duty of a nation and the international community to use military force if necessary to defend the common good by protecting the innocent against mass terrorism," the bishops wrote, adding that "every military response must be in accord with sound moral principles, notably such norms of the just war tradition as non-combatant immunity, proportionality, right intention and probability of success."

Yet at the same time that they invoked the church's just war tradition, the bishops acknowledged the difficulty of applying its provisions in the contemporary world, conceding, for example, that "probability of success is particularly difficult to measure in dealing with an amorphous, global terrorist network." The Afghan War was but one theater in a global war waged against primarily non-state actors. The bishops were aware that traditional just war theory, which was first elaborated systematically in Catholic thought in the late Middle Ages, presupposes that the units of its moral calculus are nation-states, not transnational terrorist networks like Al Qaeda.

Such seeming anachronisms have prompted many Catholics in recent years to ask whether just war theory is still relevant or even necessary in the 21st century. Some groups have even called for the abrogation of just war doctrine and the development of a completely new framework. An international conference organized by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, held at the Vatican in 2016, argued in its final communique that there are few, if any, wars that can be considered just and that just war theory has been used more often "to endorse rather than prevent or limit war." Yet as the writer Peter Steinfels observed in 2016, the history of just war theory is a good deal more complex than that, and the pacifists' "counterfactual narrative ignores the fluctuating forms and fortunes of just war thinking over many centuries."

Pope Francis has also questioned the viability of just war theory, writing in "Fratelli Tutti" that "we can no longer think of war as a solution, because its risks will probably always be greater than its supposed benefits.... In view of this, it is very difficult nowadays to invoke the rational criteria elaborated in earlier centuries to speak of the possibility of a 'just war.'" Pacifists took the pope's words as a clear nod in their direction. Perhaps they were, but the pope appeared to be addressing the difficulty, not the impossibility, of applying just war principles in the modern world. If the pope's comments tell us anything definitive, it is, at a minimum, that just war theory needs to be updated if it is to be relevant.

Presuming, then, that the church does not wish to throw out the baby with the bathwater, how should it go about updating the tradition and articulating a more realistic framework? First, as Bishop Robert McElroy of San Diego has noted, any new framework must be built on "a comprehensive dedication to international norms and the power of nonviolence to achieve peace with justice."

Such a fundamental commitment does not require the complete abandonment of the possibility of armed intervention. The tragic reality of this fallen world makes it relatively easy to imagine scenarios in which nation-states might need to use proportional force to protect the common good. When addressing the United Nations in 2008, Pope Benedict XVI indicated that the international community may even have a moral duty to intervene in situations in which regimes have failed to protect their citizens from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, crimes against humanity and catastrophic natural events. Such interventions should always be a last resort and should always be conducted under the auspices of the United Nations and an international constabulary force.

Yet the traditional just war framework has evolved beyond a calculus

for deciding whether armed conflict is morally justified (*jus ad bellum*) or how such conflicts should be waged once they are initiated (*jus in bello*). The tradition also has much to say about the moral responsibilities of the various actors in the aftermath of conflict (*jus post bellum*). International progress since 9/11 on banning landmines and cluster munitions are examples of how traditional just war principles have been developed and adapted to particular contemporary challenges. A recent conference on global disarmament at the University of London's School of Oriental and African studies, which was co-sponsored by the Holy See, is but one example of the kinds of creative collaborations required to develop and implement a framework for war and peace.

Regardless of how the church's thinking evolves, a greater effort must be made at every level of ecclesial life to educate Catholics throughout the world about the church's teachings on war and peace. Debates about just war theory and peacemaking are too often confined to the rarified quarters of the academy. Too little of the church's teaching on war and peace is taught in seminaries and courses of formation, which is perhaps why it is infrequently cited from pulpits.

Lastly, as the church's reflection continues, Catholics must continue to bear witness to both justice and forgiveness. In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, St. John Paul II spoke of justice; but even more, he had the courage to speak of forgiveness at a time when few were in the mood to hear it. "Forgiveness is in no way opposed to justice," he wrote, "as if to forgive meant to overlook the need to right the wrong done. It is rather the fullness of justice.... Peace is essential for development, but true peace is made possible only through forgiveness."

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Catholic teaching on abortion cannot be reduced to Bible quotes

I often notice misconceptions about Catholic tradition in abortion debates and opinion pieces in the popular press. One recent example of this was Garry Wills's essay in The New York Times on June 27; it was scintillating reading, but it did not engage Catholic tradition well.

Mr. Wills points out that nowhere in the Gospels does Jesus specifically prohibit abortion. This is true. Yet Mr. Wills articulates an extremely limited way of reading Scripture that emphasizes only the text, and printed words cannot tell us how Christians have heard those words and lived them out. We need to consider the whole of Catholic life, especially history and philosophy.

Historically, a question we might ask is: Why are there records of early Christian communities prohibiting abortion? The second-century Christian instruction manual known as the Didache, originally written in Greek, tells Christians that "there are two ways, one of life and one of death." The "way of life" involves following the commandments to love God and love neighbor, and the Didache's author spells out what it means to love neighbor: "You shall not murder a child by abortion nor kill that which is begotten." That is, even if Jesus does not specifically prohibit abortion, the earliest Christian communities used Jesus' commandments about loving our neighbor to protect the lives of the most vulnerable among us.

Philosophically, we might consider natural law tradition. Natural law is sometimes understood as merely what a reasonable person rationally determines about the world. That view might lead someone like Mr. Wills to argue that because there exist reasonable people who think abortion is permissible, natural law makes a poor argument against abortion (or makes "the bishops wrong about abortion").

However, natural law in Catholic tradition is not based on individual rational determinations (which would seem to privilege those who have certain mental abilities). Catholics view natural law as the light of reason that *all* people have because human beings are made in God's image, connecting us to God's creation and God's plan. Catholics also understand natural law as activity that enables human flourishing, which means it is more than making rational arguments.

Catholics can make use of natural law without direct reference to God's revelation. To develop arguments that appeal to human reason and philosophical understanding enables us to communicate with people who do not share Christian beliefs but who nonetheless might share our convictions about the significance of human life. Thus, atheists like Nat Hentoff and Christopher Hitchens famously opposed abortion (though Hitchens stopped short of urging a complete prohibition), as do many secular pro-life groups.

There are two more specific philosophical arguments that, in part, use natural law and that feature in abortion debates.

One of them engages with the idea of intention, which is how we make a distinction between something that happens "naturally" and something that is a sinful action—that is, evil deliberately chosen by a human being. We know that all humans die, for we are mortal beings; we also know it is a very different thing for me to die in my sleep than to die because someone shot me on purpose. Similarly, while many pregnancies end in miscarriages, this is a tragedy, but it is not the same as a directly intended killing of a child in the womb.

The second philosophical concept is the personhood debate, which arose in the 1960s and 1970s related to end-of-life care (i.e., at what point is a person not a person, so that a ventilator might be unplugged?). This debate quickly became integral to beginning-of-life debates as well.

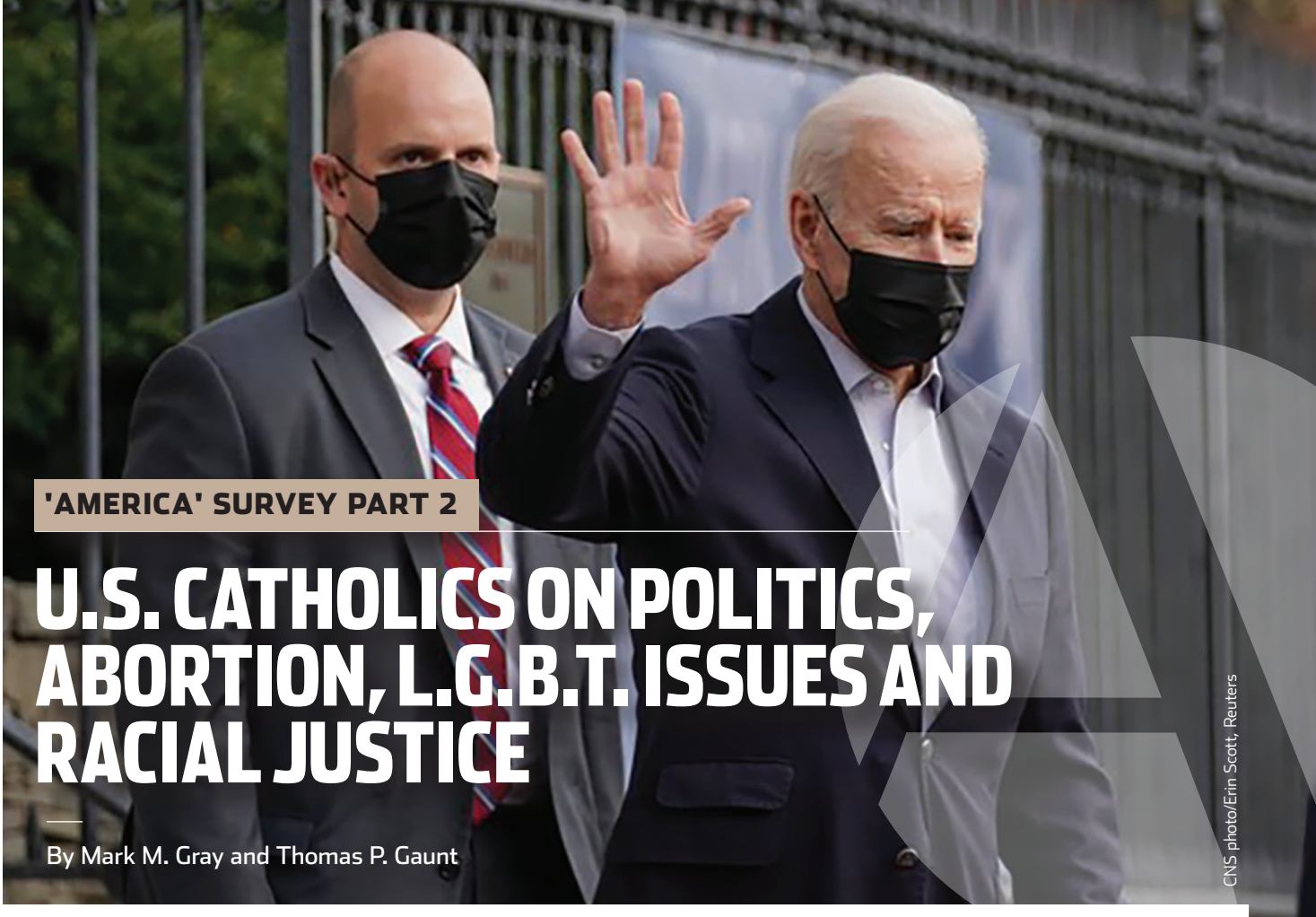
Note that in this debate, "person" is not the same as "human." To my knowledge, there is no biologist who would try to say that an embryo or fetus living in a human uterus is not human.

But the question of when a human is a person means defining what is characteristic of persons but not of non-persons.

Many personhood debates relate to questions of independence: When is the point at which a fetus can be independent of its mother? At what point is a fetus viable outside the womb? Naming the time when a person is "independent" cannot be easily done. If a baby can survive with oxygen and incubation, is that simply dependence on a machine? Babies cannot feed themselves when they are first born, so does that make them dependent? Begin thinking about this too much, and we begin to recognize we are all, to some extent, dependent on one another. This is Jesus' commandment to love our neighbor in a different key.

That brings us full circle to why Catholics see abortion as wrong—scripturally, historically and philosophically. Abortion prioritizes the deliberate taking of a very vulnerable human life, in contradiction to the love that Jesus preaches.

Jana Bennett *is a professor of Catholic moral theology at the University of Dayton, co-editor of the blog catholicmoraltheology.com, and author of the book* Singleness and the Church *(Oxford University Press).*



'AMERICA' SURVEY PART 2

U.S. CATHOLICS ON POLITICS, ABORTION, L.G.B.T. ISSUES AND RACIAL JUSTICE

By Mark M. Gray and Thomas P. Gaunt

CNS photo/Erin Scott, Reuters

In August, **America** reported the results of a national survey of U.S. Catholics on their attitudes about the church three years after the release of the devastating Pennsylvania grand jury report on sexual abuse of young people by members of the Catholic clergy. The survey, sponsored by **America** and conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University, also asked about other timely topics including the election of a Catholic president (with no consensus on whether this is a "positive thing"), the ordination of women, abortion and other life issues, financial donations to the church, racial justice and Catholic identity. The second part of the results of our survey reveal that many divisions within the church also run along political lines. On other issues, especially those involving L.G.B.T. Catholics, there were significant differences among age groups.

A Catholic President and Communion

CARA tracks the presidential vote of Catholics in the United States by aggregating the major surveys measuring the electorate released on the day after each election and shortly thereafter. The Catholic electorate has been nearly evenly divided in half of the last six elections, but the 2020 election may have marked the return of at least a tiny Democratic majority among Catholic voters—though Joseph R. Biden Jr., the second Catholic to be elected president, does not seem to have done quite as well among Catholic voters as Barack Obama, another Democrat and not a Catholic, did in 2008 and 2012.

The major national surveys measuring the election outcome are not in agreement for 2020. In the American National Election Study, President Joe Biden is estimated to have won 55 percent of the Catholic vote and former President Donald Trump 43 percent of the Catholic vote. In the exit poll conducted by Edison Research and shared by major media outlets, Mr. Biden is estimated to have won 52 percent of the Catholic vote compared with Mr. Trump's 47 percent (the same poll found that Mr. Trump won 56 percent of the white, non-Hispanic Catholic vote). Finally, a new AP-NORC poll estimated that Mr. Biden won 49 percent of the vote compared with 50 percent for Mr. Trump.

According to our own poll, conducted in the wake of the 2020 election, 42 percent of Catholics self-identified as Democrats and another 7 percent as independents who are "closer" to the Democratic Party. Twenty-six percent identified as Republicans and another 7 percent as independents who are closer to the Republican Party. Fifteen percent were independents who did not lean toward either

President Joe Biden waves as he leaves Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Washington after Mass on April 10.

major party, and 3 percent identified with some other political party.

Forty-two percent of adult Catholics said it is a "positive thing" that the United States currently has a Catholic president. But a majority, 52 percent, called this a "neutral thing," and 6 percent said it was a "negative thing." There was a significant partisan split on this question, with 57 percent of Democrats but only 29 percent of Republicans saying it was "positive."

Twenty-seven percent of adult Catholics said they would be "very supportive," and an additional 18 percent "somewhat supportive," of the U.S. bishops' issuing a statement that Catholic politicians and public officials who support legal abortion should not present themselves for Communion; 24 percent did not support that idea, and 31 percent were undecided. Among those most likely to be "very supportive" of the Communion prohibition were men (35 percent); weekly Mass attenders (43 percent); pre-Vatican II Catholics, who were born before 1943 (43 percent); and Catholic Republicans (46 percent).

The Ordination of Women

Our survey revealed strong support among U.S. Catholics for women's ordination, either as priests or as permanent deacons. Fifty-six percent supported allowing women ages 35 and older to be ordained as permanent deacons, and nearly the same share—52 percent—supported allowing women to be ordained as priests.

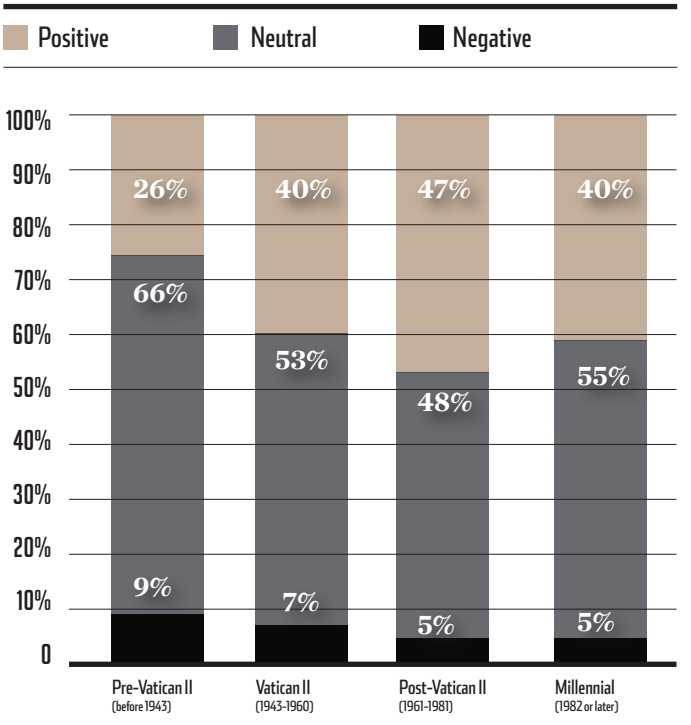
Twenty-five percent of the respondents said "maybe" to the idea of allowing women to be ordained as permanent deacons but said that they want to learn more before answering further. Nine percent said "no," and 10 percent "I don't know." Twenty-two percent said "maybe" to the idea of allowing women to be ordained as priests but said that they want to learn more before answering further. Sixteen percent said "no" to the idea and 10 percent "I don't know."

Men were just as likely as women to support allowing women to be ordained as deacons or as priests. A minority of weekly Mass attenders supported allowing women to be ordained as deacons (46 percent) or as priests (38 percent). Majorities of monthly attenders (58 percent and 54 percent) and those attending Mass a few times a year or less often (59 percent and 60 percent) support ordaining women as deacons or as priests.

Abortion and Life Issues

Forty-nine percent of adult Catholics said they are either "very" or "somewhat" opposed to abortion. As mentioned

In your opinion, is it a ____ thing that the United States currently has a Catholic president? By birth year of respondent



Do you feel the Catholic Church should allow women, ages 35 and older, to be ordained as permanent deacons?

Yes	56%
Maybe, but I want to learn more before answering	25%
No	9%
Don't know	10%

Do you think women should be allowed to be ordained priests in the Catholic Church?

Yes	52%
Maybe, but I want to learn more before answering	22%
No	16%
Don't know	10%

above, 45 percent were at least "somewhat supportive" of the idea that Catholic politicians and public officials who support legal abortion should not present themselves for Communion.

Thirty-eight percent were "very" or "somewhat" opposed to euthanasia or assisted suicide, and 32 percent were similarly opposed to the death penalty. Nineteen percent were "very" or "somewhat" opposed to embryonic stem cell research, and 20 percent said the same of in vitro fertilization.

Republican Catholics were more likely than Democratic Catholics to oppose abortion (65 percent compared with 41 percent), assisted suicide (45 percent compared with 34 percent) and embryonic stem cell research (26 percent compared with 19 percent) but less likely to oppose the death penalty (28 percent compared with 36 percent). Both groups were equally likely to oppose in vitro fertilization (22 percent of Democrats and 21 percent of Republicans). Majorities of Catholics affiliating with either party were supportive of in vitro fertilization, but that was true with none of the other issues listed.

Same-Sex Blessings

Sixty-two percent of adult Catholics said they believe priests should be allowed to bless same-sex couples. Weekly Mass attenders were among the most likely to oppose the blessing of same-sex couples (51 percent said "no"), while those attending a few times a year or less often were the most likely to be supportive (69 percent said "yes"). Pre-Vatican II Catholics opposed such blessings (56 percent "no"), but other age groups were supportive: 58 percent said yes among Vatican II Catholics, born between 1943 and 1960; among post-Vatican II Catholics, born between 1961 and 1981, approval was 64 percent; and among millennial Catholics, born in 1982 or later, 67 percent approved. Democratic Catholics supported same-sex blessings (73 percent "yes") but Republicans opposed them (57 percent "no").

Twenty-nine percent of adult Catholics rated the church's outreach to L.G.B.T. Catholics and their families as "good" or "very good." Forty-one percent rated this outreach as "fair." Three in 10 considered it "poor" or "very poor." A quarter of adult Catholics said they have considered leaving the Catholic Church because of its teaching on L.G.B.T. Catholics, a statistic consistent across all frequencies of Mass attendance. But there are differences by generation. Thirty-five percent of millennial Catholics said they have considered leaving because of these teachings, compared with 26 percent of the post-Vatican II generation, 16 percent of the Vatican II generation and 6 percent of the pre-Vatican II generation. Thirty-percent of Democrats have considered leaving because of the church's teaching on L.G.B.T. Catholics, compared with 21 percent of Republicans.

Church Giving

Forty-nine percent of respondents said they or someone in their household contributed to the collection at their local parish in 2020. Four in ten gave $250 or less over the year—$250 would equate to $4.81 per week.

Past CARA research indicated that Catholics gave $10 per week, on average, in 2010. Another four in 10 in our new survey gave $251 to $1,000 in 2020—$1,000 would equate to $19.23 per week. One in five gave $1,001 or more per year to their parish in 2020.

A little more than a quarter gave to their diocesan financial appeal in 2020. A higher share, 33 percent, gave to their diocesan financial appeal in 2019, before the pandemic. Respondents were asked about the most recent time they contributed to their diocesan appeal and whether they changed the amount they usually give. Eleven percent indicated their most recent contribution was an increased amount, 24 percent said it had decreased, and 64 percent said their contribution stayed the same.

Among those who reported a change in giving to their diocesan appeal, 46 percent said this change was a result of a change in their household's income or ability to give. A quarter said the change was related to their reaction to the sexual abuse scandal, and 22 percent cited their feelings for the state of the national economy. Ten percent said the change was a result of financial loss related to the pandemic. Eight percent cited another reason.

Sixty-six percent of respondents said they have at least "some confidence" that the pastor of their local parish is properly handling church finances. Sixty-one percent said they have this same level of confidence in their bishop's or cardinal's handling of church finances.

Racial Justice

Sixty-two percent of adult Catholics agreed "somewhat" or "strongly" that the Catholic Church should do more to advocate for racial justice in the United States. But 57 percent said that the church has been an advocate for racial justice in the country. Forty-four percent agreed "somewhat" or "strongly" that the Catholic Church and the Black Lives Matter movement have "a great deal of

overlapping concerns."

While Democrats and Republicans were in agreement that the church has been an advocate for racial justice in the United States (60 percent of Democrats and 58 percent of Republicans at least "somewhat" agreeing), they disagreed on whether the church should do more to advocate for racial justice (79 percent of Democrats and 48 percent of Republicans at least "somewhat" agreeing) and whether the church and the Black Lives Matter movement have a great deal of overlapping concerns (58 percent of Democrats and 28 percent of Republicans at least "somewhat" agreeing).

What It Means to Be Catholic

When asked what factors are most important to their sense of being Catholic, 90 percent of respondents said helping the poor was "somewhat" or "very" important. Eighty-four percent similarly cited receiving Communion. Eighty-one percent said living a life consistent with church teaching is at least "somewhat" important to their sense of what it means to be Catholic. Sixty-two percent responded similarly about attending Mass weekly, and 59 percent said the same about being involved with their parish.

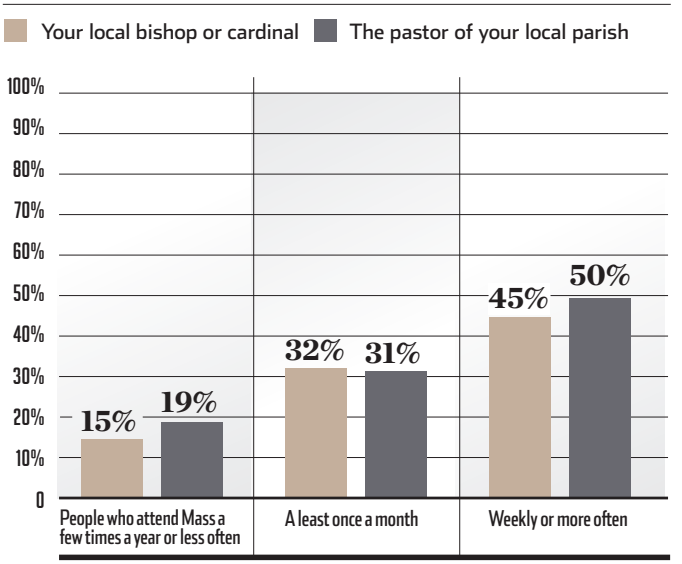
Mark M. Gray *is the director of CARA Catholic Polls and a senior research associate at CARA.*
Thomas P. Gaunt, S.J., *is CARA's executive director.*
With research assistance from Autumn Gray.

This survey was conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University. CARA surveyed 1,050 self-identified Catholics from May 21 to June 4, 2021. The survey was taken online and was available in English and Spanish (861 respondents took the survey in English and 189 in Spanish). The sample was provided by the management and market research firm Qualtrics from actively managed, double-opt-in survey research panels.

How much do you agree with the following statements?

	"Strongly agree" only	"Strongly agree" or "somewhat agree" combined
The Catholic Church should do more to advocate for racial justice in the United States	**33%**	**62%**
Democrats	**47%**	**79%**
Republicans	**18%**	**48%**
The Catholic Church has been an advocate for racial justice in the United States	**26%**	**57%**
Democrats	**28%**	**60%**
Republicans	**28%**	**58%**
The Catholic Church and the Black Lives Matter movement have a great deal of overlapping concerns	**19%**	**44%**
Democrats	**25%**	**58%**
Republicans	**10%**	**28%**

How much confidence do you have that the following church leaders are properly handling church finances?

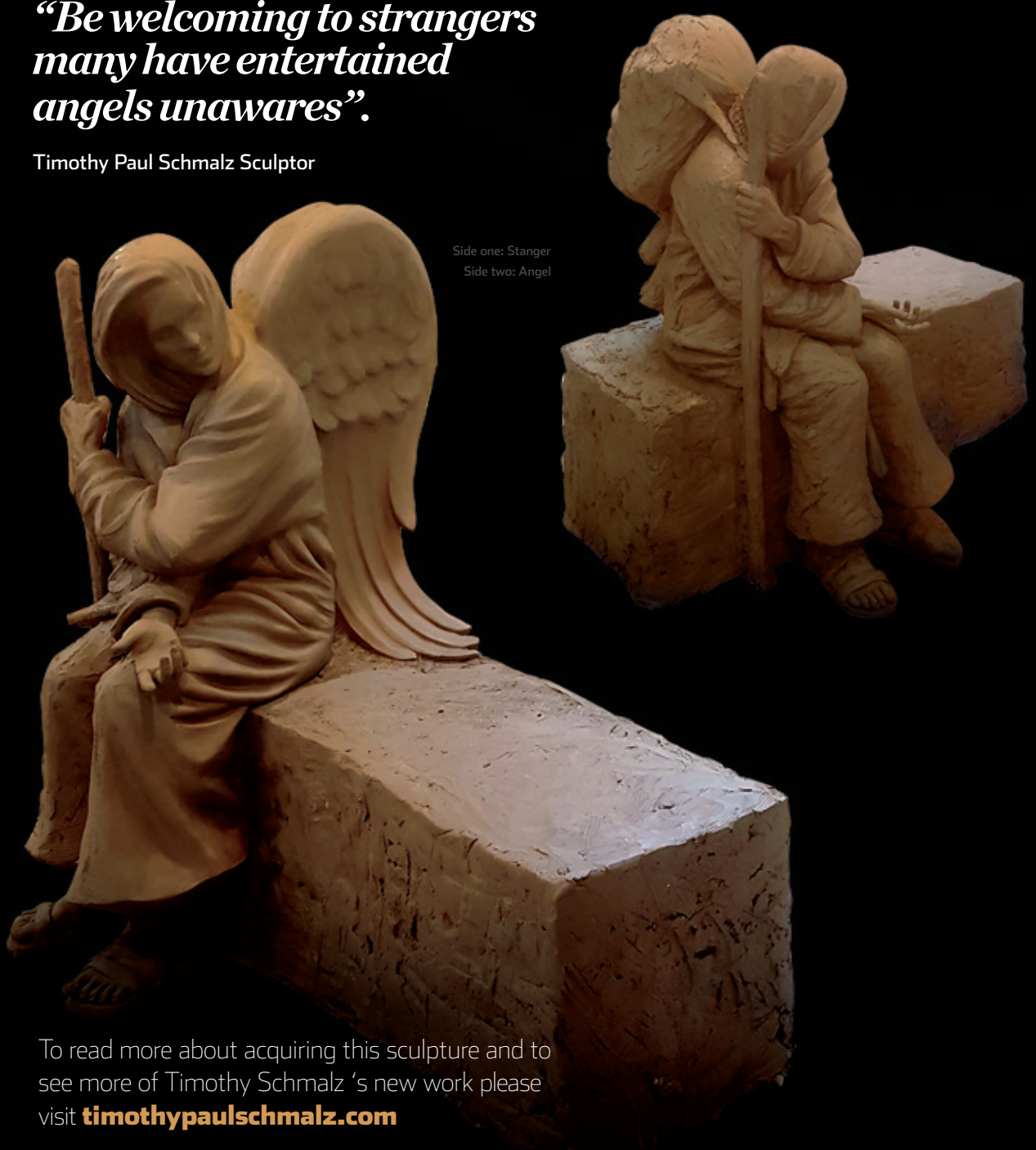


"BE WELCOMING"

Inspired by Hebrews 13:2

"Be welcoming to strangers many have entertained angels unawares".

Timothy Paul Schmalz Sculptor



Side one: Stanger
Side two: Angel

To read more about acquiring this sculpture and to see more of Timothy Schmalz 's new work please visit **timothypaulschmalz.com**

TIMOTHYPAULSCHMALZ.COM

Courtesy of the Prisons and Justice Initiative at Georgetown University

Joel Castón with Georgetown University President John DeGioia at a 2019 end-of-semester celebration at the District of Columbia jail.

GOODNEWS:

How Jesuit-educated Joel Castón became the first person to win an election from jail

Joel Castón does not like to be idle.

Waking at 4:45 a.m. most mornings, he is an avid practitioner of yoga, a self-described "hyperpolyglot," a Christian worship leader and a writer who just finished the first draft of his memoir. He is also the first person in Washington, D.C., to win elected office while incarcerated.

On June 29, Mr. Castón made history when he was sworn in to the Advisory Neighborhood Commission in Washington's Ward 7, where he will represent constituents in the D.C. jail as well as residents in a nearby women's shelter and a new apartment building.

Mr. Castón's achievement may be unique in the United States. According to Marc Howard, a professor of government and law at Georgetown University and the director of Georgetown's Prisons and Justice Initiative, incarcerated people have the right to vote only in Maine, Vermont and the District of Columbia.

With enfranchisement comes the right to run for office, and Dr. Howard does not know of anyone else who has won elected office while incarcerated. "I hope that [the election] shows that incarcerated people have value, that they exist, that they are human beings," Dr. Howard said.

Mr. Castón said he is committed to using this opportunity to be a voice for the residents of his district. "I want to magnify the humanity of the men and the women that I represent."

Mr. Castón and Dr. Howard have known each other since Georgetown first introduced its program at the D.C. jail. Mr. Castón has taken a number of courses through Georgetown's Prison Scholars Program, which was established in 2018.

"There's so much research and evidence showing that participation in programs like ours reduces recidivism to almost zero," Dr. Howard said. "We feel like we're making a contribution to society by helping provide education and life skills to people who will be coming home and now will be equipped to make the most of it."

Mr. Castón was quick to point out that he is far from the only "inside" student with talent to offer, calling his election a victory for all incarcerated people. "There are other Joels, there are other Joelitas," he said. "Having someone like us at the table makes sure that you can actually solve the problems."

The Prison Scholars Program includes participants from the regular Georgetown student body outside the D.C. jail. "The terms 'inside' and 'outside' classmates began to fade for me, and they were just my classmates," Alexa Eason, a 2020 graduate who participated in the program, said.

Mr. Castón recalled one day when an outside student came into class and asked if she could sit beside him. "We were both students at Georgetown University, regardless of the uniform that we wore," he said. "Marc's class had the dual benefit of not just the curriculum but also the human component. That was magnified by the students, both inside and outside."

Harry Rose, a member of Georgetown's class of 2020, took a course called "Forgotten Humanity of Prisoners." For Mr. Rose, the course became particularly meaningful when pandemic restrictions forced classes online.

The move actually enabled the class to communicate more frequently than they could have done with in-person visits alone, he said. The connection became "a huge lifeline" for both inside and outside students during the lockdown.

Mr. Castón's election is important because it shows that the experiences and voices of incarcerated people deserve to be included, Dr. Howard said. "I think we as a society and as a democracy will be better off and strengthened by listening to the voices of incarcerated people," he said. "So I hope that Joel Castón's election is a first step in that direction, but that he won't be the last."

Grace Doerfler, *editorial intern. Twitter: @gfdoerfler.*

A North Carolina Tridentine Mass parish faces Pope Francis' new restrictions

For most U.S. Catholics, Pope Francis' "Traditionis Custodes"—which was released on July 16 and restricts the use of the 1962 Latin Missal for the sake of church unity—will have little impact. They attend Mass where the traditional Latin Mass (also known as the Tridentine Rite or the "extraordinary form" of the Mass) has not been celebrated for more than 50 years.

But that is not the case in Boone, N.C., a small city nestled in the foothills of the Appalachians with relatively few Catholics. Among the Catholics of Boone, the pope's statement is seen as either a call for liberation or a sign that the church is destined for decline.

St. Elizabeth of the Hill Country, the Catholic parish in Boone, offers the Tridentine Mass as its major Sunday liturgy. Some parishioners objected, and now they attend Mass in a local garage. They are a community in exile, waiting for their local parish to abolish the Tridentine Rite, whose adherents they view as usurpers.

"Does this mean we get our church back?" asked one member of the garage Mass community, commenting on "Traditionis Custodes."

These former St. Elizabeth parishioners said they never asked for the Tridentine Rite and charged that it was imposed when a new pastor arrived two years ago. Roughly half of St. Elizabeth's parishioners have left since, they said, to join either the garage community or local Protestant congregations, and have been replaced by Latin Mass adherents, many from outside of Boone.

Bishop Peter Jugis of Charlotte, in a statement on July 17, said that the Tridentine Mass will remain for now in the parishes where it is currently celebrated "as we move together as a diocese in a smooth and orderly transition to the new course charted by 'Traditionis Custodes.'"

While the bishop urged obedience, some Latin Mass followers were more critical of Pope Francis.

An online newsletter posted by the Charlotte Latin Mass Community responded: "When one hears or sees a Pope do something quite inimical to Christ's teaching and causing scandal, a few may be tempted to despair." It urged Latin Mass followers in the diocese to "turn off the 'ecclesiastical filth'" if it results in a loss of "interior peace."

Chase Jackson, 27, is a member of the Tridentine Rite community at Our Lady of Grace Church in Greensboro. "I feel misunderstood by our Holy Father," he said by email on July 20.

"I don't believe that the Latin Mass caused the disunity. It is simply filling the void that the church has created by watering down the faith to accommodate the world," he said. "Christ's cup was bitter and we want to drink from that cup. Young people don't want to be catered to; we want to be called to mission."

Anthony Ruff, O.S.B., a liturgist and theology professor at St. John's University in Collegeville, Minn., said that Pope Francis had little choice about issuing his *motu pro-*

Pope Francis elevates the consecrated host as he celebrates Mass for Divine Mercy Sunday at the Church of the Holy Spirit near the Vatican in Rome on April 11.
CNS photo/Vatican Media

prio. "The bottom line is that Pope Francis is resolutely following the Second Vatican Council in letter and in spirit. It was never going to work to have two parallel liturgies with differing ecclesiologies and sacramental theologies, one originally released to replace the other, one following the council and one not," he said.

"I feel great sympathy for those who have become part of the traditionalist liturgical world," he added. "They have been cruelly misled into thinking that the council was optional and would eventually be rolled back. Bringing about liturgical unity as Francis desires will require from the bishops, and from all of us, much forbearance and patience."

Mr. Jackson said that unity sought by Pope Francis is also a goal for the Tridentine Mass community. "We need encouragement and loving correction, not condemnation. I hope he will have the same compassion and mercy on us as he does the rest of the world. We are not the enemy, but family," he said.

Peter Feuerherd *contributes from Queens, N.Y. Twitter: @peterfeuerherd.*

Police detain a young protester in Havana on July 11.
CNS Photo/Reuters

Cuban religious superiors: We hear 'God's voice' in the cries of protesters

Human rights groups have reported the detention of hundreds of activists and protesters in Cuba after unprecedented demonstrations in July. Recognizing "God's voice in the people's grievance," the Conference of Catholic Religious in Cuba issued a statement on July 13 urging the government to allow Cubans to express their discontent freely.

Protesters had expressed anger over long lines, shortages of food and medicine, and electricity outages. But there were also calls for political change in a country governed by the Communist Party for more than six decades.

Cuba's religious superiors urged nonviolence and dialogue to address the crisis. "We should all avoid the trap of using violence as a way to impose one's own version of the truth," they said. "We are worried that due to a lack of capacity for dialogue and listening, the government will attack, repudiate, persecute and condemn people who think differently and express their views in public."

Speaking from Havana, Danny Roque, S.J., said Cuba's leaders have long blamed the nation's woes on the U.S. embargo. Though he agreed that the embargo hurts the economy, he suggested that Cuba's persistent shortages and blackouts also result from structural faults.

Cuba remains a "dependent and economically fragile nation" after the loss of former patrons like the Soviet Union and Venezuela because of its commitment "to an economic system that, like the rest of the countries where it [has been implemented], has not managed to solve [elementary] problems nor guarantee a minimum of economic development," Father Roque said.

"We have many, many problems in Cuba that we can solve here," he said. "We just need more freedom, especially economic rights for the people, so the people can be more protagonists of their lives, their economic situation."

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

INSIDE AMERICA

HIGHLIGHTING WHAT IS HAPPENING INSIDE AMERICA MEDIA. • THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

America Media is your resource for social analysis and spiritual renewal, guided by intelligence, diversity and the spirit of charity. Our mission is to host opinions and expose you to various individuals and groups, all within the broad spectrum of Catholic opinion.

Photo by Gabriella Clare Marino on Unsplash

EDITORS' PICKS

A few of our recent articles on the theme of education:

The experiment that could change the future of Catholic education
Thomas W. Carroll

A defense of learning Latin and Greek (Also: Why does it even need defending?)
Kevin Spinale, S.J.

The pandemic exposed how broken our Catholic schools are. But it also created an opportunity for change. Jeff Hausman

Forget Plato's philosopher-kings. We need philosopher folks.
Megan Halteman Zwart

Visit **americamagazine.org** to read these selections.

America and CARA also asked survey participants a range of questions about their faith beyond the impact of the abuse crisis, such as the controversy over whether Catholic politicians who support abortion rights should be denied Communion, the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on Mass attendance, women's ordination, blessing same-sex relationships, and more.

Turn to page 12 for details and these results.

NEW AMERICA MEDIA SURVEY OF AMERICAN CATHOLICS SHOWS LINGERING HARM OF THE SEX ABUSE CRISIS

Three years ago this August, the Catholic Church was rocked once again by revelations of sexual abuse of minors by members of the clergy, this time in a devastating report from a Pennsylvania grand jury. The report detailed the sexual abuse of thousands of children and the extensive cover-up by church leaders that followed. Last month, America Media released the results of a new survey of American Catholics that reveals the lingering harm done by the sexual abuse crisis, and the depth of the Catholic Church's trust problem.

America commissioned the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University to survey adult Catholics about their understanding of the crisis and how it has affected their faith. Fifty-seven percent of the Catholics surveyed by CARA said they pay "a great deal" or "quite a bit" of attention to the issue of the sexual abuse of minors by clergy. Seventy-six percent of respondents said that the crisis has hurt the reputation of the church at least somewhat, and about one-third said they were "embarrassed" to tell others that they were Catholic because of the crisis.

For full details on the survey, visit americamagazine.org/mediasurvey.

DOROTHY FORTENBERRY NAMED 2021 HUNT PRIZE LAUREATE

Dorothy Fortenberry, playwright and screenwriter, is the 2021 laureate of the George W. Hunt, S.J., Prize for Journalism, Arts & Letters for outstanding work in the category of Fiction Writer or Dramatist.

Co-sponsored by Saint Thomas More Catholic Chapel & Center at Yale University and America Media, the Hunt Prize was established in 2014 to honor the memory of George W. Hunt, S.J., the longest-serving editor in chief of **America** magazine, and to promote scholarship, the advancement of learning and the rigor of thoughtful, religious expression; to support and promote a new generation of journalists, authors and scholars; and to support the intellectual formation, artistic innovation and civic involvement of young writers.

Ms. Fortenberry will be awarded the $20,000 prize this month. In addition to receiving the monetary prize, she will also deliver an original lecture at the presentation ceremony that will later be published as a cover story in **America** magazine.

PRODUCT HIGHLIGHTS

CHURCH MEETS WORLD

Three years ago, a Pennsylvania grand jury report described in graphic detail the abuse of over 1,000 minors at the hands of more than 300 priests. Then, Theodore McCarrick, an influential cardinal in the American Church, was found credibly accused of abusing minors and adult seminarians.

For survivors, the news was painful, yet validating. How did this second wave of scandal–the news of both abuse and cover up–affect the Catholic faithful more broadly? What do they believe caused the crisis? Did the grand jury report and news about McCarrick impact their faith and affiliation with the Catholic Church?

Maggi Van Dorn, the host of the Deliver Us podcast, unpacks a new and ground-breaking survey conducted by *America* magazine and CARA in the latest episode of the "Church Meets World" podcast.

Listen to the podcast on your favorite app or at **americamagazine.org/churchmeetsworld**

GOOD NEWS

THE ST. BENEDICT'S

Students from all backgrounds choose to attend this thriving Catholic high school imbued with the stability and spirit of the monks who founded it.

By Stephen G. Adubato

Credit: Michael Scanlan H '97.

Edwin D. Leahy, O.S.B., addresses the students of St. Benedict's Preparatory School in Newark, N.J., at the school's morning convocation.

OPTION

Friday convocations at St. Benedict's Preparatory School in Newark, N.J., often resemble an old-school tent revival. After prayer, students rock side to side with linked arms, singing uplifting Gospel songs, and afterward echo the "Friday affirmation" to the person on the left or right: "I love you! You're worth it!" they all shout in unison. This tradition continued virtually when the school took its classes online during the pandemic—and with good reason. According to Edwin D. Leahy, O.S.B, a 1963 graduate of the school and its headmaster since 1973, this tradition of a daily morning meeting is "the most important part of the day."

At morning convocation students take attendance, make ananouncements, pray, sing and dance. At convocation, students and faculty are reminded of why we come to school everyday. (I have taught at the school since 2014.) It is where our daily grind, from classes to sports practices, is imbued with meaning. It is the place where each student is reminded of his or her value in the community, and where each student's place in the school's legacy is reinforced.

After more than a year of having our lives disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic, the legacy of St. Benedict's remains solid. Even as Catholic schools nationwide have faced a record 6.4 percent drop in enrollment—the largest single-year decline in the past 50 years—enrollment at St. Benedict's has remained strong. A 153-year-old K-12 school run by Benedictine monks in downtown Newark, the school has made a name for itself for "allowing the students to lead the school," and excelling in leadership, community building and athletics. The school has received further attention from a PBS documentary, a "60 Minutes" segment and a recent Quibi miniseries produced by the N.B.A. star Steph Curry.

In the midst of chaos and attention, Father Leahy attributes the school's success to its commitment to stability, which is one of the three vows that Benedictine monks and nuns take. Stability is rooted in the example and witness of St. Benedict himself, who determined that once a monk or nun joins a particular monastery, he or she will stay there for life instead of being transferred around. "Stability means growing where you're planted," says Augustine Curley, O.S.B., archivist and prior of Newark Abbey, the monastery that runs St. Benedict's Prep, which he attended. "Being in Rome during its collapse and seeing the lack of stability, St. Benedict had that desire to settle into one place and stay there."

Rootedness in a tradition that precedes oneself provides a stable ground to build a flourishing community.

That kind of commitment to place made the monastic communities attractive to visitors and prospective religious. In a society where things were on the verge of falling apart, people were thirsting for something lasting. "Throughout the history of monasteries, monks have always been in dialogue with the communities surrounding the monastery," comments Father Leahy. "We commit ourselves to a particular geographical place in order to be a sign of faith."

A monk since 1966, Father Leahy understands St. Benedict's witness not to be one of retreating from the world, contrary to what much of the current interest in Benedictine monasticism may indicate. Instead, the monastic community's existence as "set apart" from larger society is meant to be a source of hope to the world, inciting the inhabitants surrounding the monastery to ask themselves, "How are all these different people living together in unity?", taking Christ's words about Christians being distinguished "by how [they] love one another" as a model. "Seeing how we live in communion may give people the desire to think about God."

Seasons of Change

When the Benedictines came to Newark from Bavaria in the 1840s, the city did not look like the densely populated urban center it is today. Newark was a manufacturing city and soon became known for its numerous factories during the rapid industrialization of U.S. cities in the latter half of the 19th century. In 1842, Nicholas Balleis, O.S.B., was the first Benedictine to be pastor of the newly opened parish of St. Mary's of the Immaculate Conception. He, along with several other Benedictines who came over from Germany, ministered to the growing German Catholic population.

The monks' Protestant neighbors were alarmed by the parish's growing presence as more German and Irish immigrants entered its fold. Driven by xenophobic and anti-Catholic zeal, a group of concerned Protestants from the American Protestant Association with connections to the nativist Know-Nothing Party decided something had to be done to reclaim their turf. In September 1854, they stormed the parish church, smashing or burning several statues until they were chased out by monks and sympathetic neighbors.

Eventually, the monastic and parish communities were able to establish their presence comfortably as the neighborhood began to accept them. In 1868, the monks opened St. Benedict's College, which later would be renamed St. Benedict's Preparatory School, to respond to the neighborhood's need for a school for Catholic working-class boys. In the first half of the new century, waves of Hungarian and Polish immigrants made St. Mary's and St. Benedict's their home.

The neighborhood continued to change, and Black Americans moved into Newark from the South during the great migration. "Blacks in Newark's Central Ward [where the abbey is located] had built thriving communities. There were churches, social clubs, small businesses," says John Johnson, professor of history at St. Peter's University and a St. Benedict's alumnus from the class of 1993. As more

Albert Holtz, O.S.B., with his arm around Justin White, '20, in the midst of his fellow students of St. Benedict's Preparatory School during the morning convocation.

Credit: Michael Scanlan H '97.

Blacks were moving in, Newark's ethnic white communities began moving into the rapidly expanding suburbs surrounding the city.

St. Benedict's Prep was directly affected by the surge in "white flight" after the 1967 race rebellion in Newark. The neighborhood's ethnic white Catholic population was replaced by Black Protestants and Muslims. As enrollment at St. Benedict's dropped, the monks decided that the school was no longer sustainable. They closed the school's doors in 1972.

"Though St. Mary's parish was very involved in helping the Black community, the school was very much still catering to the children of the alumni," commented Father Curley. "Some of the monks seemed not to be so open to the new experience God was putting in their face."

"The school closed because of racism...though no one ever really said that," Father Leahy said. He was only 27 years old and was five years into his monastic vocation when the school closed down. He found himself caught in a bitter divide between the monks determined to leave the school closed and move to another Benedictine monastery in the suburbs, and those who intended to stay in Newark and reopen the school for the neighborhood's new Black population.

The school reopened its doors in 1973 as the High Street Learning Center, with Father Leahy as headmaster and Albert Holtz, O.S.B., as dean of academics. With a nearly all Black student body, the monks aimed to reimagine the school's structure radically in order to meet the needs of the new population.

But the monks, who were all white and who were mostly new to teaching, had little contact with their Black neighbors beyond the parish. They recognized that to be able to teach their new students well, they would need to listen to and learn from the students' parents. It was at one of the several town hall meetings that the faculty hosted with the students' parents that the monks realized a major problem with their own attitude toward their new students.

"Why was it good enough to be called St. Benedict's Prep when it was all of you [white people]?" The words of Carl Lamb, the parent of a St. Benedict's student, still ring loudly in Father Leahy's ears 47 years later. "But now that it's all of us, it can't be St. Benedict's Prep?"

Father Leahy "had no answer" except to say, "St. Benedict's Prep will reopen tomorrow."

"We had falsely assumed that Black people wouldn't appreciate what we used to do here. No one thought to transfer to the new students the history of the buildings we used to walk in. It sent the message that they aren't important enough to be part of that legacy."

"The day we started calling it St. Benedict's Prep was when the neighborhood kids became linked to the German and Irish and Polish kids that came before them," remembers Father Holtz, novice master and S.B.P. graduate of the class of 1960.

As the monks' witness indicates, rootedness in a tradition that precedes oneself provides a stable ground to build a flourishing community. After a presentation Dr. Johnson gave on the role St. Benedict's has played in Newark's

Cadets in the St. Benedict's Battalion during World War I, from the school's 1917-18 Scrapbook.

The brotherhood modeled by the monks is the exemplar for the brotherhood of the students.

history, Father Leahy began to realize how important the legacy really was that the school was inviting the new black students to participate in. "People often ignore how difficult it is to maintain a sense of legacy when your ancestors were brought here in chains against their will."

Dr. Johnson's point about legacy highlights the way Benedictines vow stability not just to a place, but also to the people living in that place. It's commitment to the people, insists Father Holtz, that allows St. Benedict's Prep to thrive. "For us, the legacy is not about events. It's about people. The legacy has *names*.... Legacy has to do with handing something on from one person to another. The same way we Benedictines take our Scripture personally with *lectio divina*, our legacy is personal."

The personal touch of the monks' vow of stability informs the ways students and teachers interact with each other in the school. "The monks provide a foundation to a lineage, and an assurance that the foundation is as permanent as things can be in this world," said Michelle Tuorto, associate headmaster and science teacher. "The lineage of the students flows from this foundation. Legacy implies familial ties as well, and the brotherhood modeled by the monks is the exemplar for the brotherhood of the students."

A Living History

These relationships are evident in the morning convocation. In convocation, students will sit with their "group," which consists of an assortment of students from different grades, a leader and assistant leader, and faculty moderator. Each group is named after a significant figure from the history of St. Benedict's. It is the group leader's job to take attendance during "convo" and account for his group members' absences. If an absent member is unaccounted for, Father Leahy will often delay taking attendance until the leader can locate the student (whether by calling the student themselves or his parents).

One of the most important features of convo is the impromptu storytelling by Father Leahy and returning alumni visiting the school. It's during these moments that the students learn about the "living legends" from decades past.

"The Rule of Benedict is not so much legislation, but wisdom literature," says Father Holtz. "'Listen my son, to the teaching of a loving father....' It's much easier to build a legacy out of stories. That's part of the reason the monks read the necrology of the day before dinner. And the same way that the older monks recount stories from the past to the younger monks, Fr. Edwin [Leahy] tells stories of students and teachers from St. Benedict's Prep's history. And the students can see how alive he gets when telling those stories! He makes it so that you want to be part of the story...you want to be part of this legacy."

"Much like history itself, legacy also has to be cultivated," insists Dr. Johnson. "St. Benedict's Prep has been very active in cultivating its legacy. You can have all of the facts and data collected, but you still have to tell and retell the stories." Stories can also be told that perpetuate lies and keep people down. "You can create a legacy of lies and racial tropes that are used to siphon people off. There can be a variety of narratives. This is why the way Father Ed [Leahy] repeats stories at convo is so crucial for the students—we need the kinds of stories that build us up." Without this, Dr. Johnson said, young people can fall victim to being told lies about their people and their history.

Convocation is also a prime example of the school's educational philosophy: to, as the late Mark Payne, O.S.B., always said, "never do for students what they can do for themselves." The student leadership structure that gives shape to daily convocation is not the typical "student council" model. The school's leadership team is responsible for making key decisions about the daily operations of the institution. Is this a model built for chaos? Yes, Father Leahy says. The idea is that it is from the experience of dealing with chaos together that students can learn real life lessons.

Giving students responsibility and allowing them to take risks is central to the monks' mission of communicating to the students that they are each made in the image of God, and thus have dignity and a voice. "Students have to feel like they have some ability to influence the world in which they live and grow," says Glenn Cassidy, associate headmaster and a St. Benedict's alumnus of 1990. "In our schools, we can create more opportunities for students to

Photo courtesy of the Archive of the Benedictine Abbey of Newark.

have real responsibility for one another."

Part of the emphasis on giving the students a voice is inspired by Chapter 3 of the Rule of St. Benedict, in which Benedict exhorts the abbot to heed the counsel of the younger, "for the Lord often reveals to the younger what is best."

In order to foster their sense of initiative and responsibility, students have to go through a series of rites of passage, starting from the very first week of school. At the "freshman overnight," new students sleep in the school gym for a week, going through a boot camp-like initiation process in which they learn the school's songs and history and partake in a number of activities that form their sense of dependence on each other. When walking through the hallways, freshmen walk with one hand on the back of the student in front of them. To further cement what they learned at the beginning of the year, freshmen close their first year of school with a 55-mile Appalachian hike where they learn the importance of "staying together" and that, as the school's motto says, "whatever hurts my brother hurts me."

A Lasting Legacy

Though I didn't attend St. Benedict's Prep as a student, I see my own journey into the school as the fruit of a legacy. In my role as a religion and philosophy teacher, I have discovered that the school is a community that fosters growth and mutual dependence not just for students, but for the teachers as well. In fact, I have found that my students take me more seriously when they see me depending on the community and allowing myself to be fed and nourished by it. They see that their teachers' authority is not something that separates us from them. Rather, our willingness to give ourselves to the community makes them want to emulate our example.

I especially feel this to be true as a religion teacher and campus minister. Because of the monks' commitment to hospitality, the school has become a home to students with a variety of religious backgrounds. Having students who are Catholic, Baptist, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu and agnostic has challenged me to think more deeply about the way I teach about the Catholic faith, and what my faith means to me.

I felt the impact of the school's commitment to hospitality even further when it was decided to open a separate high school division for girls. St. Benedict's Prep has been coed for grades K-8 and all-boys for grades 9-12 since the beginning: The school welcomed female students when they requested to join the school after their schools closed down last year. After six years of teaching boys, I found that I was once again being asked to allow the Benedictine spir-

it of hospitality to shake up my comfort zone and listen to what God was trying to show me through my new students.

As much as opening the girls' division has had bumps along the road, I have learned that because of the vow of stability, it is possible to live radical hospitality to both our neighbor and to the Spirit. Sure, being open to what's new can give way to chaos. We as teachers need to be ready to change our plans at any moment. But when we face things together as a community with our feet planted in something greater than ourselves, we often find ourselves surprised by what we accomplished—or rather by what is accomplished through us.

This commitment to one another as a community shows its capacity to transcend time and space, especially when tested by loss and tragedy. Since starting six years ago, I have attended funerals of students, co-workers, monks, alumni and family members of other community members. The school has been known to bus the entire student body to a funeral.

This willingness to face even death together sends a powerful message to students. Dr. Johnson remembers attending the funeral of an upperclassman who was shot and killed. The following school year, he was randomly assigned that student's locker. "Taking on his locker showed me that my success was predicated on ensuring that his legacy and everything he started at St. Benedict's would not end." Though he did not know the student well, he still felt a strong sense of kinship with him.

Human Investment

St. Benedict's Prep's legacy continues growing, as more and more students—both boys and girls—apply to join, from as close to Newark and from as far as Tanzania. With students applying from all over the world, the school has to continually expand its space and offerings to cater to a growing student body. This stands as a stark difference from the nearly 20 Catholic schools in the surrounding areas that had to close over the last year. What can Catholic schools, especially urban Catholic schools, do to keep their doors open?

Dr. Johnson points out that Catholic school administrators need to take shifting social and economic realities seriously. "Working class wages which used to be enough to cover tuition at private schools just aren't there anymore. The shift to a service-based economy has resulted in people not being paid what they deserve." In order to survive, Dr. Johnson posits that we ought to "radically reimagine" what Catholic education looks like and start thinking creatively about avenues for sustaining schools financially, like building up alumni networks and cultivating long-term donor commitment.

"If we don't see investment as investment in people, we are going to see more schools close," said Dr. Cassidy, who also points to the need for investing in strong counseling departments. Though many urban schools have "crisis counselors," it's not enough to "wait until a crisis hits to invest time into someone's heart." Dr. Cassidy instead suggests providing students counseling on a regular basis so that they can "address issues in their lives before they become a crisis and/or staying with that person through the recovery from a crisis."

The presence of a religious community on the school grounds is another form of human investment. It makes a difference when members of the religious community stay put for decades without being transferred. Father Holtz remembers that when he was a student, he could safely assume that the monks "would be there all the time." Even as vocations decrease, the monks expect to continue their involvement in the school for years to come. Having attended, taught and lived within the community for over 50 years, students can count on him to share stories about students and events that span the decades. "Our legacy is not just something we hand down, it's something living."

In addition to monks, there are many lay alumni who come back to teach, and plenty of teachers who have remained at the school for several decades. "Schools should consider how to create environments where the average tenure of the faculty is 15 years," recommends Dr. Cassidy.

Above all, says Father Leahy, urban areas do not need anyone to "invent" the perfect school. What is needed instead are educators who are willing to "listen with the ear of their hearts," he suggests, borrowing a phrase from the prologue of the Rule of St. Benedict.

"People think the solution for urban America is data-driven outcomes. Urban schools need legacy, not data and statistics. What we need is community, the 'Upper Room.' It's about listening to people's ideas and being receptive. It's paying attention to what's happening and asking what's needed, and not coming in to invent 'solutions.'"

Father Leahy finds himself further convicted of this whenever a former student who never received a diploma from St. Benedict's comes back to visit the school, proving the relationships formed there go beyond the transactional. As Father Leahy said, "A diploma from St Benedict's is only one way to be part of the legacy."

Stephen G. Adubato *studied moral theology at Seton Hall University and currently teaches religion and philosophy at St. Benedict's Preparatory School. He blogs at Cracks in Postmodernity on the Patheos Catholic Channel.*

INTRODUCING

Search Me: A Way of the Cross in Solidarity with the LGBTQ Community acknowledges shared human experience as a means to grow in relationship with God. Each of the traditional stations of the cross, the events leading up to Jesus' death and resurrection, are paired with reflections from members of the LGBTQ community. These honest and vulnerable words invite readers to pray the reality of the Paschal Mystery in a new way. | $5.95

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This year Clear Faith Publishing began a new collection of homily books, beginning with Cycle B, entitled ***A Stranger and You Welcomed Me***, featuring many of our past and new contributors such as Richard Rohr OFM, Jim Martin, SJ, Nadia Bolz-Weber, Phyllis Zagano and Brian McLaren. Like our last series, net proceeds of this book will go to charities that feed the hungry, care for the sick and welcome the stranger. | $22

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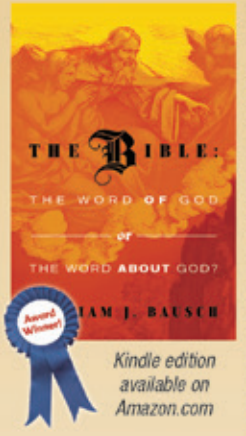

Kindle edition available on Amazon.com

Many of the faithful are asking, "Am I a Christian if I don't believe everything the Church teaches?" Silently or openly, people today are frequently replying in the negative, especially numerous former Roman Catholics. There is no doubt that dogma, official teachings, and the meaning of the Bible need reformulation as the Church regroups after a terrible pandemic. Fr. Bausch's aim is not to discredit the Bible, but to reset it. His hope is to provoke better answers—and, as you will discover, "provoke" is the right word! | $20

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A hermitage at the Center for Action and Contemplation in Albuquerque, N.M.

THE BLESSING OF IMPERFECTION

Photo courtesy of author.

Richard Rohr's Living School is no utopia. But it taught me to love our flawed world.

By Sonja Livingston

I really hoped I would be holy by now. Or, if not holy, at least tilted a little more obviously in the direction of heaven. Instead, I am pulled off the road near the New York State Thruway just south of Rochester beside a strip of land overgrown with plants and straddled by power lines. Except for a rough path cut by ATVs and utility trucks, the field is wild. Since I discovered the place years ago, it has become a favorite hiking spot when I am home. And I am home. Just like everyone else. It is September of 2020 and we are still in lockdown.

Today is no ordinary quarantine day. It is my final day in the Living School, which is typically marked with a ceremony in New Mexico. Started in 2013, the Living School began as a program of the Center for Action and Contemplation, founded in Albuquerque, N.M., in 1987 by the renowned Catholic priest Richard Rohr, O.F.M. The school offers an accessible but thorough examination of the Christian contemplative tradition by combining online study with in-person symposiums.

Since its beginning, 984 students have completed the intensive two-year program, which includes units on topics such as non-dual consciousness, mystical traditions and human and cosmic incarnation. Students explore mystics like Julian of Norwich, Meister Eckhart and St. John of the Cross alongside more contemporary figures like Thomas Merton, Etty Hillesum and Teilhard de Chardin. One of our first handouts was a five-page timeline of mystics and non-dual thinkers ranging from Buddha and Heraclitus to the 14th Dalai Lama and Martin Luther King Jr.

When I started the program back in 2018, I watched that years' cohort cross a conference center stage, certain that, even if I did not quite manage holiness by program's end, at least I would be

in Albuquerque, sipping margaritas and posing for group photos with the 150 other members of my class. But when Covid-19 struck, much that seemed certain fell away. Now, instead of walking a stage at the Hotel Albuquerque, I've settled on a hike to mark the passage and am stumbling over hummocky grass and divots of mud, more earthbound than ever.

A few hundred yards to my left, semi trucks rumble along the Thruway. Behind me, cars zip past on a local road. A potato chip bag is caught in the metal gate. A crow caws from a nearby tree. A few years ago I found a deer skeleton here, hit, no doubt, by a passing car. Nothing is immediately pretty as I start out on the path. If I didn't know better, I would have driven by like everyone else. But I do know better.

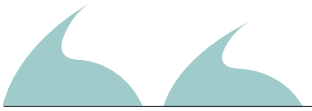
The Great Lakes lend the region the sort of humidity and tangled lushness normally reserved for more southerly climates. Cattails and plumed grasses grow in vigorous stands while wild grapevines wind their way up trees and "No Hunting" signs. As kids we called them monkey vines and chewed the sour nectar from fleshy green tendrils.

I think again of Albuquerque and feel a pang over missing the in-person sessions with my Living School teachers. But I remember what Jim Finley, a faculty member, said two days ago in his Zoom lecture, quoting the Trappist monk Thomas Merton: *You cannot love and live on your own terms*. Finley's wife had recently passed away after a long illness, and he was clearly referring to losses greater than ceremonial gatherings. Still, our rituals matter. We would not perform them if they didn't. This is what I am thinking as I head deeper into the field where the crickets and meadow katydids—even the buzzing power lines—weave a tapestry of sound.

The Ever-Present Longing for God

I had applied to Living School primarily to study with Father Rohr. After returning to Mass and rediscovering the beauty of the Catholic tradition a few years before, I longed for a more intensive prayer life and a better grounding in our contemplative heritage. I had heard Father Rohr's name since I was a teen. His teaching influenced many people in my childhood church. He had even visited the parish a few times in the late 1980s. While I do not remember his lectures from my childhood, I do remember how captivated the adults were by his teaching. Now, nearly 40 years later, I am just as smitten.

I am not alone. Bono is a fan. So is Oprah. Father Rohr has written countless books and was profiled last year in The New Yorker. His most recent book, *The Universal Christ,* was a New York Times best seller. His daily meditations are sent to hundreds of thousands of inboxes around the world. When I heard him speak at the Chautauqua Institute in New York two summers ago, the line to meet him stretched for hours. My friend, a regular at Chautauqua, says he had never seen anything like it.



Father Rohr is wildly intelligent, light-hearted, humble and unfailingly generous.

A master teacher, Rohr is wildly intelligent, light-hearted, humble and unfailingly generous. While his take on the Gospel often appears radical, I have noticed that Father Rohr does not necessarily preach a different message from others. But the message bypasses the moralistic and is grounded first and foremost in love.

Father Rohr understands the ever-present human longing for God even and especially as the culture increasingly moves away from organized religion. The latest Gallup poll shows that the number of people in the United States claiming religious membership has dipped below 50 percent for the first time—with younger adults leading the exodus. Father Rohr is exceedingly popular with Boomers and older Generation Xers like myself. But younger people also throng to the Living School, which offers an alternative or, depending on one's stance, an enhancement to institutional religion. Of the Catholics (practicing and lapsed) I met in the program, many had been hurt by or were looking for a way beyond the rigidity relative to sexuality and gender that has too often marked our experience of practiced Christian tradition.

The Contemplative Tradition

Along with a focus on his Franciscan tradition and especially its Alternative Orthodoxy, which stresses lived experience over stated belief, the spirituality of imperfection is one of Father Rohr's most consistent teachings. Invoking the symbol of the cross to illustrate how Jesus modeled the path of descent as the way to salvation, Father Rohr emphasizes the need to let go of all we think we know and face our very powerlessness in order to make room for God and new life. Related to this teaching, and just as central, is the idea of

Richard Rohr, O.F.M., with Oprah Winfrey on the set during the taping of "Super Soul Sunday" on Nov. 12, 2014.

non-dual thinking, which amounts to allowing that most of what we tend to categorize as good or bad, Black or white, actually encompasses qualities of both. Loss, for example, while painful and not an experience most of us ever seek, often offers a path back to God.

While he is both founder and academic dean, Richard Rohr is not the Living School's only teacher. The scholar and Episcopal priest Cynthia Bourgeault and the ex-monk, clinical psychologist, and one-time spiritual-directee of Merton, James Finley, rounded out the faculty while I attended. Both have written extensively on contemplative Christianity and are spiritual masters in their own right. Dr. Finley's genius was uncontainable as he lectured on St. Teresa of Avila and St. Bonaventure. His light filled the room as he spoke on the primacy of love in God's creation. Once, I nearly collided with him during the rush of a bathroom break and remember the peaceful smile he flashed in response. Two years later, I can still feel his warmth.

Cynthia Bourgeault's sessions were the greatest surprise. Whether she led discussions on *lectio divina*, sacred chant or welcoming prayer, I walked away uplifted, and my heart expanded every time. Each symposium was a feast of insight and ideas. At first, I tried to grab hold of the collective wisdom, scribbling notes until my ink ran dry. At some point, I realized I could never capture what I was after with a pen. More luminous than the faculty's words was their embodiment of the principles they taught. They were extraordinary human beings and humble servants who had dedicated their lives to the joyful service of God. More than any text, their example filled me with hope about what was possible with a life of faith and prayer.

In particular, Cynthia's introduction to Thomas Keating's method of centering prayer, and the book she wrote on the subject, radically deepened my perception and practice of daily prayer and offered the most practical and soul-nourishing takeaway. She was wise and generous, honest and stalwart in her faith. Once someone asked her about the problems in churches and why she did not simply walk away. Her answer—that she would rather grow her heart to accommodate the struggle than to walk away—echoed something that had been at work in me since I had returned to church. In the past, when issues like the lack of women on the altar had deeply troubled me, I had chosen to leave. While I still struggle with such issues, the tougher and more rewarding choice has been growing my own heart enough to bear the difficulties along with the joys.

No Such Thing as Perfection

Given all I had learned, I should have understood that not even the Living School could be a utopia. Like any organization, including the various religions and denominations that had fostered most of us, the Living School was also imperfect. As a microcosm of the larger culture, how could it be otherwise? Still, I had longed for—and had tasted in faculty lectures—the promise of the sort of community that transcended societal norms and was

Continued on Page 40

AMERICA'S GUIDE TO RETREATS

Many of our readers are curious about retreats. What does one do on a retreat? Where does one go? What are some good retreat houses? Simply put, a retreat is an extended period of prayer, usually done in silence, and usually at a retreat house, where a team of spiritual directors helps you find God in your prayer. There are also different kinds of retreats. On a directed retreat a person meets daily with a spiritual director to discuss what is happening in prayer. A guided retreat focuses more on one topic (say, women's spirituality) and offers presentations as well as opportunities to meet with a director a few times. Preached retreats consist in listening to presentations and praying on your own, but with less opportunity for direction. And our retreat houses are also good places to connect with trained professional who will help you with regular spiritual direction.

Bellarmine Jesuit Retreat House
420 W. County Line Road, Barrington, IL 60010
Ph: (847) 381-1261; Email: info@jesuitretreat.org
Website: www.jesuitretreat.org

Bellarmine Jesuit Retreat House is located on 80 acres of rolling meadows and wooded countryside 40 miles northwest of Chicago. Bellarmine offers silent retreats for men and women based on St. Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises. Other offerings include day-long spirituality programs, 12-step recovery retreats, and directed retreats. Learn more at jesuitretreat.org.

Benet Hill Monastery
3190 Benet Lane, Colorado Springs, CO 80921
Ph: (719) 633-0655 ext. 132; Website: www.benethillmonastery.org

Come away to pray, listen, think, reflect, rest and enjoy the hospitality of the Benedictine sisters in the beautiful Black Forest of north Colorado Springs. In summer or winter, walk the Labyrinth or prayer paths in the quiet peaceful forest. We offer spiritual direction when requested.
Please visit www.benethillmonastery.org for more information.

Bethany Center
18150 Bethany Center Drive, Lutz, FL 33558
Ph: (813) 960-6313; Email: ddebrino@bethanycenterfl.org
Website: www.bethanycenterfl.org

Bethany Center is a place of spiritual renewal, gathering and education. We are located in the Tampa Bay area on a 200-acre wildlife preserve. Our retreat and conference facility provides meeting spaces, overnight accommodations, and catering services with generous hospitality in a spiritual atmosphere. We welcome all faith traditions as well as professional organizations.

Campion Renewal Center
319 Concord Road, Weston, MA 02493
Ph: (781) 419-1337; Website: www.campioncenter.org/programs

Campion Center is a convener of Ignatian conversations extending Jesuit hospitality to all, especially those who have drifted away from God or are adrift in the world seeking reconciliation, personal meaning, and a connection with God. We offer a special outreach to refugees, those experiencing homelessness, suffering from addiction, and people whose dignity has been violated.

Jesuit Retreat Center
5629 State Road, Parma, OH 44134
Ph: (440) 884-9300; Email: info@jesuitretreatcenter.org
Website: www.jesuitretreatcenter.org

Nestled amid 57 acres of verdant woodlands in Parma, Ohio, JRC has welcomed those seeking an encounter with God since 1898. We offer Ignatian and other retreats and programs for those hoping to deepen their faith life and provide availability for hosted groups in our recently expanded and upgraded facility.

Jesuit Retreat House on Lake Winnebago
4800 Fahrnwald Road, Oshkosh, WI 54902
Ph: (920) 231-9060; Email: office@jesuitretreathouse.org
Website: www.jesuitretreathouse.org

Jesuit Retreat House on Lake Winnebago, Oshkosh, Wis, offers preached retreats; five-day and eight-day directed retreats; and a hermitage year-round, for all who want to relax in one of our 60 bedrooms, with private bathrooms, and in the silence of 23 lakeshore acres, with plentiful prayer and common space.

Loyola Institute for Spirituality
434 S. Batavia Street, Orange, CA 92868
Ph: (714) 997-9587; Email: office@loyolainstitute.org
Website: www.loyolainstitute.org

Loyola Institute for Spirituality invites people to discover a deepening self-awareness and love of God. LIS meets people where they are and provides Ignatian opportunities for leadership development, formation, and retreats to serve individuals, groups, and organizations. Programs range from 1-hour to nine months, online or on-site and in various languages.

Sacred Heart Retreat House
4801 North Highway 67, P.O. Box 185, Sedalia, CO 80135
Ph: (866) 930-1181 ext. 122 or (303) 688-4198 ext. 122
Website: www.sacredheartretreat.org

A Colorado oasis of peace and beauty, surrounded by spectacular natural beauty and panoramic views of the Rockies, Sacred Heart Retreat House is the perfect setting for solitude, reflection and prayer. We offer summer directed retreats as well as individual directed retreats year-round. For more information, visit www.sacredheartretreat.org.

Siena Retreat Center
5637 Erie Street, Racine, WI 53402
Ph: (262) 898-2590; Email: retreats@racinedominicans.org
Website: www.sienaretreatcenter.org

Siena Retreat Center provides retreats and programs that renew lives and cultivate a spirituality of healing and wholeness. Located on Lake Michigan between Chicago and Milwaukee, Siena Retreat Center offers space for private and group retreats, spiritual enrichment opportunities, spiritual guidance, and training programs in spiritual guidance and grief support.

Spiritual Ministry Center
4822 Del Mar Avenue, San Diego, CA 92107
Ph: (619) 224-9444; Email: spiritmin@rscj.org
Website: www.spiritmin.org

Religious of the Sacred Heart offer year-round directed and private retreats, including the 30-day Spiritual Exercises and self-directed sabbaticals. We are one and a half blocks from the ocean in comfortable townhouses with large private rooms and baths. Our silent retreat house in naturally beautiful environs invites relaxation and prayer.

Springbank Retreat Center for EcoSpirituality & The Arts
1345 Springbank Road, Kingstree, SC 29556
Ph: (843) 382-9777; Email: springbank@springbankretreat.org
Website: www.springbankretreat.org

Fall 2021 Sabbaticals: Sept. 15-Dec. 8. Programs focus on healing, nourishing and empowering participants. Four-, eight-, and 12-week programs provide spiritual and physical renewal and ways of relating with Earth, self and all beings. Surroundings are conducive to quiet prayer and contemplative solitude. Morning and afternoon programs allow time to walk, rest and work with clay, basketry or watercolors. Spiritual direction, massage and healing body work available.

With an Everlasting Love:

A Day of Remembering & Reflection Celebrating the Life & Ministry of William A. Barry, SJ

Saturday October 2, 2021
9:00AM – 5:00PM

10AM Friendship with God:
Praying as Bill Taught Us - Jim Martin, SJ

12N Luncheon

2PM Love Ought to Show itself in Deeds:
Bill's Spiritual Legacy - Nancy Sheridan, SASV

4PM Memorial Mass
Main Celebrant - George E. Collins, SJ
Homilist – Kenneth J. Hughes, SJ
Liturgical Music – The Ignatian Schola

The day is free and open to the public. Registration is required. **www.campioncenter.org/programs/day-of-prayer-with-an-everlasting-love**

In leu of payment for the Day of Prayer, a gift may be made to the William A. Barry, SJ Retreat Scholarship Fund to offer financial assistance to those wishing to make a retreat.
www.campioncenter.org/donate

Visit our website **www.campioncenter.org/programs** for information regarding:

- Silent Directed Retreats
- Days/Evenings of Prayer
- Hosting your group's retreat or meeting at Campion Center

Or contact: Anne Copponi
acopponi@campioncenter.org 781.419.1337

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Loss, while painful and not an experience most of us ever seek, often offers a path back to God.

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disappointed when this did not permeate every minute of my experience.

Over the course of the two-year program, a focus on the politics of personal identity became increasingly prevalent. Groups began to form for students of color or for people who identified as L.G.B.T.Q. This tracked with what was happening in the larger culture, and while such divisions are perhaps inevitable as we work through a history of exclusion, my experience was that they often struck a different note than faculty lectures, led to a sense of division (or overidentification) and limited what we talked about in our time together. Meanwhile, topics of poverty and class, at least as entrenched as race, were not addressed.

An example of this came during an activity during the 2019 symposium intended to raise awareness and solidarity with those on the margins. Before beginning an exercise that involved looping some people in and locking others out as a way to physically demonstrate what it feels like on the margins, a young staff member instructed our large group to remove our shoes and hold hands. I tend to be skeptical when it comes to activities requiring the removal of shoes, but I tried for a few minutes before finally escaping to sit with a fellow escapee in the hall.

As the human chain, largely made up of white faces, moved around the room, shoeless and smiling, a dark-skinned service employee darted in and out, clearing away crumpled napkins and drinks. The activity was clearly well-intentioned, but as I sat watching the man working, it was impossible not to notice that our mostly white group was so engaged in the solidarity exercise that no one seemed to notice the irony of a brown man cleaning up our trash.

Perhaps because my childhood was spent on the margins, I am sensitive to such contradictions. My family of seven children and our single mother moved around a great deal, living on the Tonawanda Indian Reservation near Buffalo, a motel room along the interstate and in a tent pitched beside a cousin's cornfield. We finally landed in a tiny, urban, dead-end street with neighbors of diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds.

Once when our electricity was cut off for nonpayment (as it was nearly every summer), brown and Black neighbors ran extension cords from their kitchen into ours so we could wash a load of laundry or see at night. My family and I were not oblivious to what our skin color meant in terms of privilege and power in society, but our immediate relationships with our neighbors were defined more greatly and immediately by our mu-

Photos courtesy of author.

Scenes from the Living School: Above, a doorway at the Center for Action & Contemplation. Right, Cynthia Bourgeault leads a prayer at a symposium in 2019.

tual need and support.

I could have tried harder to share my perspective with other students, but when I did so in the forums provided, I was met with silence. I remained quiet, afraid of looking like another straight white person resisting uncomfortable discussions of sexuality and race. My unusual childhood experiences were admittedly different from many at the Living School, and my insecurity about my views only added to my increasing sense of isolation. On some level, I also understood that my expectations were too high.

I raised my concerns to Brandon Strange, engagement director at the Center for Action and Contemplation, in the process of writing this piece. He responded by email, saying that "The Living School is continually reflecting on how to best support students from a diversity of racial and other backgrounds." He also provided a quote from a 2017 reflection by Father Rohr, which read: "Unity, in fact, is the reconciliation of differences, and those differences must first be maintained—and then overcome by the power of love! You must actually distinguish things and separate them before you can spiritually unite them, usually at cost to yourself." I agree with both of these points, but was disappointed that, in a school of spiritual formation, we were still in the early stages of the reconciliation, and never seemed to move any closer to the unity we all desired.

The truth was that, regardless of any categories of religion, race, gender or sexual orientation we placed ourselves in, those of us fortunate enough to attend Living School were unquestionably privileged in our ability to study with three modern spiritual masters. Of course we need to honor and celebrate our various identities; of course we must acknowledge our brutal past relative to race, gender and sexual orientation—but as students increasingly identified into subgroups and divided for lunch and group activities, we seemed in danger of losing sight of our collective privilege and greater commonality.

Living School faculty members often spoke of the Perennial Tradition: a sense of God so loving and true that it is impervious to the relative smallness of human drama or cultural trends. Limiting the notion of ourselves, and parsing identity, to the particulars of our bodies and circumstances certainly reflects a reality—one that is all too often cruel and in need of healing. Even so, clinging to that limited notion of our humanity so forcefully seems a little like hanging out in a waiting room just outside the grand ballroom of God, where we are loved and love one another for that which transcends the surface of what is seen by the world. The tendency toward group identification among Living School students was not worse than anywhere else, but seemed more easily noticeable precisely because the faculty's brilliant teaching had helped me see that the glittering ballroom is right here!

Back on the Path

Back in my scrappy Thruway field, I stop to pick wildflowers while considering the Living School. Despite its imperfections, it has been one of the greatest blessings of my life. My prayer life has deepened. I met some beautiful people—seekers like myself—and had fallen a little more in love with Catholic tradition. I judge less harshly and less often—or at least I do not heed my judgments as much. I am nowhere near the sort of spiritual growth I had naïvely imagined, but as I bend to pick Queen Anne's lace, something inside me surges with joy.

While I still grieve the loss of the Albuquerque ceremony and in-person blessings from teachers who have come to mean so much, perhaps this field, with its weeds and Walmart trucks rumbling past, is a more fitting setting to end my time in the Living School. As I turn toward my car, a bird flies out of the brush, startling me. If my husband were here, he would know the bird's name. I simply say, "Good morning, little bird" and lean in for a better look. Closeup, the field reminds me of the flowering grasses in Fra Angelico's "Annunciation."

I continue working on my bouquet, collecting stems of goldenrod, thistle and loosestrife. The purple-red spikes proliferate near local ponds. "They're invasive," my husband reminds me whenever I swoon over loosestrife. I've started saying, "Aren't we all?" And we laugh. We all feel a little unwanted or uprooted at times. None of us is entirely pure. But we are also heartbreakingly precious reflections of God.

I had imagined the Living School would somehow transform me into a more spiritual being and that, unlike the church, the program would somehow be perfect. Two years later, neither is true. But I feel more bound to my faith and to attempting to love the world as it is, with all its noise and weeds and complications, to see everywhere as sacred ground.

Sonja Livingston *is most recently the author of* The Virgin of Prince Street: Expeditions Into Devotion. *She divides her time between Rochester, N.Y., and Richmond, Va., where she is an associate professor of English at Virginia Commonwealth University.*

Cross Catholic Outreach Makes Addressing Food Crisis in Nicaragua a Ministry Priority

Hunger is clearly on the increase in the developing countries of the world — in some cases as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic — and Catholic leaders are working diligently to provide the hardest hit communities with relief.

For one of the larger Catholic ministries involved in this effort, addressing the hardships faced by the poor in Nicaragua has become a special priority [see story on opposite page], and American Catholics are being encouraged to join their cause.

"As a ministry, we are always striving to make poor families self-sufficient, but there are always times — particularly after a natural disaster or a crisis like this — when help with food is necessary," explained Jim Cavnar, president of Cross Catholic Outreach, one of the key ministries involved in overseas outreaches. "At times like these, parents face incredible stresses, not knowing how they will provide their children with the next meal."

Tragically, children are often at the greatest risk of malnutrition during a food crisis. For that reason, Cross Catholic Outreach makes serving them a priority.

The reason Cross Catholic Outreach chose to focus on Nicaragua is clear to anyone familiar with the country's level of poverty. Sandwiched between Honduras and Costa Rica, Nicaragua has one of the highest levels of income inequality in the world and the third lowest per capita income in the Western Hemisphere. Its families are plagued by high unemployment and a low literacy rate, so most struggle to survive on next to nothing.

"The men and women living in the remotest parts of Nicaragua typically scrape together a living by working as field hands — the only job available for someone with little education and no skills training. Basic services provided by the government, such as health care, are often located too far away for people to use. Children rarely attend school because their parents can't afford the supplies, uniforms and registration fees needed to attend 'free' public school," Cavnar said. "As we investigated the situation in remote areas of the country, we learned that families often didn't have enough food to last a full week, so their children would routinely skip meals. The COVID-19 pandemic only made things worse. It was clear to us these communities were in desperate need of a God-sized solution to their hunger problem, so we stepped in to help local Church leaders provide food and hope to these struggling families."

Fortunately, Cross Catholic Outreach excels at addressing problems like this, and its methods are both empowering and cost-effective. Wherever possible, the ministry works through existing parishes or Catholic missions to solve problems, which means an existing infrastructure can be used for distribution and most of a supportive donor's contribution can be used to obtain food, medicines and the other tangible items the poor need.

"While in-country ministries are well positioned to help the poor, they are usually operating with a very limited budget, so they must rely on us for food, medicines and other important resources," Cavnar explained. "We communicate a mission's needs to American Catholics and use the donations of those friends to obtain and ship what the in-country ministries have requested. It's an incredibly effective program because it supplies a mission with the specific items it needs to supercharge its work. It is especially important to feeding programs."

Cavnar added that supporting feeding programs is critical because hunger can easily lead to malnutrition, and extreme cases can do serious physiological harm, producing lasting physical and mental damage — even death in some cases.

"As Americans, it's hard for us to imagine a child suffering from stunted growth or permanent mental damage for lack of food, but that can and does happen in developing countries because the poverty is that extreme," he said. "That is why we consider providing food to at-risk children our highest priority."

Readers interested in supporting Cross Catholic Outreach food programs and other outreaches to the poor can contribute through the ministry brochure inserted in this issue or send tax-deductible gifts to: Cross Catholic Outreach, Dept. AC01772, PO Box 97168, Washington DC 20090-7168. The ministry has a special need for partners willing to make gifts on a monthly basis. Use the inserted brochure to become a Mission Partner or write Monthly Mission Partner on mailed checks to be contacted about setting up those arrangements.

American Catholics Finding Ways to Address Severe Hunger in Remote, Impoverished Communities Within Nicaragua

From the comfort of the Pan-American Highway, you might drive right past an area of extreme poverty and not realize it because much of Nicaragua's most destitute communities are "hidden" by their remoteness. Like Christ, who ventured into the poorest and least desirable communities in Judea, you need to venture off the main byways, going where the terrain is rougher and the way is more challenging.

The drive will take you down one of the highway's branching dirt paths, but before long, you will begin to see signs of the poverty you've come to address.

During the dry season, you could easily mistake the small farming villages you'll pass for the kind of town old films portrayed during the Dust Bowl years in America's past. Unfortunately, this is a poverty that has yet to end — and one that will likely continue from this generation to the next.

Even during the rainy periods, the poverty of these desperate communities endures. At those times of the year, dusty children are replaced by boys and girls with muddy feet and faces, but their hardships are the same. In either season, they live in crude shacks, struggle to find safe water, become ill for lack of proper medical care and rarely have an opportunity to attend a quality school.

More than all of this, they face an alarming daily hardship — there is never enough to eat.

Nicaragua is one of the poorest countries in Latin America, and its subsistence farmers typically struggle to feed their families. Many children are underfed — some dangerously malnourished — leading to stunting, lethargy, a weakened immune system and a general failure to thrive.

When children reach school age, this lack of food can mean skipping breakfast, arriving for class on an empty stomach, and then — after hours of studying math and grammar — having nothing for lunch either. It isn't surprising that these children often struggle to concentrate in school and often fall behind.

Worse still, they are sometimes pulled out of school altogether to help support their struggling families. Caught in this cycle of trading future opportunities for daily meals, these children see no way out.

Fortunately, the Church is aware of the hardships rural Nicaraguan families are facing, and local leaders are stepping forward to provide solutions with the help of American Catholics.

"American Catholics can play an important role in the Church's efforts to end hunger and provide the poor with greater opportunities. Local leaders are eager to help families in their area, but they lack the resources to get the job done. It's the contributions of these generous and compassionate people that empower them by supplying them with resources like food and medicines. Without the generosity of American Catholics, their outreaches would not be nearly as successful," explained Jim Cavnar, president of Cross Catholic Outreach, an official Catholic ministry known for its support of Church-run missions in developing countries. One of Cross Catholic Outreach's key missions is to educate U.S. Catholics about the ways they can support the Church's work overseas by funding specific projects and contributing to programs delivering food to areas in need.

Supported by Catholic donors in the United States, missions in Nicaragua are able to address extreme hunger in their communities and provide relief to the poor. Cross Catholic Outreach has become a major partner in equipping and resourcing these ministries.

"In my 20-plus years of work with Cross Catholic Outreach, I've found that faithful Catholics are eager to help the poor in the developing world, particularly when they can contribute to something specific and see the impact of their generosity," Cavnar said. "Through our current work in Nicaragua, for example, they can fund food shipments that will have a direct and meaningful impact on thousands of lives. They can address severe hunger among the poor and help restore hope in communities that have felt isolated and forgotten in their hour of need."

Feeding programs like this one are also popular because so much can be accomplished with each donated dollar.

"Our methods and expertise in shipping can turn a $75 donation into 500 meals for families in need," Cavnar said. "That's an incredible 'bang for the buck,' as the saying goes. Our hope is that American Catholics will see the enormous potential of this outreach and will be eager to get involved. The more support we get for this feeding program, the more children we can serve."

How to Help

To fund Cross Catholic Outreach's effort to help the poor worldwide, use the postage-paid brochure inserted in this newspaper or mail your gift to Cross Catholic Outreach, Dept. AC01772, PO Box 97168, Washington DC 20090-7168. The brochure also includes instructions on becoming a Mission Partner and making a regular monthly donation to this cause.

If you identify an aid project, 100% of the donation will be restricted to be used for that specific project. However, if more is raised for the project than needed, funds will be redirected to other urgent needs in the ministry.

Unsplash/ MChe Lee

Should Catholic Schools Teach Critical Race Theory?

Catholic social teaching can provide an answer

By Christopher J. Devron

Since the tragic murder of George Floyd in May 2020, leaders of many independent private schools across the country—including Jesuit secondary schools—have been challenged to respond to growing demands from two groups of their alumni, parents and students. The conflict within these schools has played out publicly on national outlets like Fox News and local media sources in Chicago, Los Angeles and New York City.

Here is how it all happened. Last summer, many Black alumni, parents and students from these schools came forward to express their experiences of sustained, personal and systemic bias. They reflected the larger movement of racial reckoning across institutions and sectors simultaneous with last summer's Black Lives Matter demonstrations and protests. On Instagram accounts and in petitions demanding change, school communities heard painful stories ranging from neglect in some cases to outright disrespect and targeted, racist bigotry in others. Their preponderance and similar texture and character give credence to these stories and the collective harm done over several decades and generations of students.

Many school leaders formally apologized for this harm, but this group understandably desires more than words. They demand that their schools implement curriculum, student formation, hiring and programmatic measures to promote greater diversity, equity and inclusion. They want to see accountability and progress in meeting measurable goals in these areas. In response to these grievances and claims, school leaders have adopted and announced various new D.E.I. measures and resources during this school year.

These changes led to a backlash from other groups of parents and alumni, who often expressed their opposition through anonymous letters directed to school leaders. They criticized classroom exercises and lessons that segregated students on the basis of race, seemed overly reliant on ra-

cial identity or promoted conceptions of white privilege. They argued these exercises reveal a kind of essentialism that reduces everything to one's racial background. Some who oppose these measures believe they are the result of critical race theory, which focuses on the structural aspects of racism. Critics charge that this theory finds racism omnipresent and creates a binary zero-sum game of winners (the "oppressors") and losers (the "victims"). In Catholic school communities, they warn that critical race theory is Marxist and therefore anti-Catholic. Many who are opposed to proactive D.E.I. initiatives offer an alternative approach that teaches that race is a social construct. They want schools to downplay, ignore altogether or transcend race in order to recover and emphasize the common humanity that unites us.

The conflict between those who favor solutions from critical race theory versus those who prefer a common humanity approach has followed a predictable pattern of polarization. It mirrors the secular political discourse of the day, pitting cultural conservatives and progressives against each other. This struggle has engulfed several independent and Jesuit schools and has unfortunately divided communities into opposing and hardened camps. For Catholic and Jesuit schools, this division is inimical to our mission and damaging to the body of Christ. School leaders are placed squarely in the middle, trying to respond to the demands of both groups and looking for support from their boards and other stakeholders.

A Powerful Resource: Catholic Social Teaching

As Catholic and Jesuit schools develop strategies to address this conflict, they have a distinct advantage over their non-Catholic counterparts in the independent school arena. Catholic social teaching provides a powerful resource and tool that affirms aspects of these opposing perspectives while offering, in its own right, a unique way forward based on well-established theological principles.

"The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World" encourages Catholics to engage the human and social sciences as they strive to promote human dignity and justice in society (No. 54). This engagement rejects an approach in which Catholics would appeal solely and simplistically to scriptural injunctions, such as "love thy neighbor as thyself," as an adequate response to racism. A truly Catholic inquiry into racism—its history, its impacts and methods to oppose it—requires that we rigorously interrogate schools of thought, like critical race theory, and appeals to our common humanity, evaluate their claims in light of the Gospel and Catholic social teaching and teach our students to do the same.

Despite being derided and wholly dismissed by some as too "woke," dangerous or even anti-Christian, Catholic social teaching affirms at least one significant element of critical race theory—namely, its claim that racism exists in systems or structures, as opposed to consisting merely of private acts of bigotry committed by individuals. Likewise, since the release in 1971 of "Justice in the World," by the Synod of Bishops, the church has taught explicitly that sin and evil manifest themselves in social structures. In 1987, St. John Paul II referred to "structures of sin" over a dozen times in his encyclical "On Social Concerns."

In his papal teachings, Francis looks through a structural lens to detect systemic injustices and calls on people of faith to dismantle them. This position is critical of a common humanity or "color blind" approach to race, insofar as the latter fails to account for the historic remnants of racism that continue to perpetuate injustice. In *Mercy in Action: The Social Teachings of Pope Francis*, Thomas Massaro, S.J., examines Francis' teaching in this area. Francis and Catholic social teaching enjoin on us a responsibility to actively reverse systemic injustices that we have sadly inherited as effects of past racist practices and policies rather than simply performing individual works of charity or generosity.

In fact, Francis expresses impatience with "weak responses," a phrase he uses throughout his encyclical "Laudato Si'" in reference to measures to reduce climate change. Although Francis and Catholic social teaching deviate from critical race theory in other areas, their approach to systemic racism is similar: White people don't get a moral pass by simply refraining from overtly racist acts. Rather, they must examine racial biases within systems, reflect on how they participate in and benefit from these biases and then take deliberate action to change them.

By the standards of St. John Paul II and Francis, we can identify examples of structural or systemic racism throughout society at large as well as in Catholic Jesuit education. Some of the most extreme examples can be found in the areas of criminal justice, housing, economics and health care. We see systemic racism in higher rates of incarceration, longer sentences and capital penalties for Blacks as compared to their white counterparts who committed similar crimes. The impact of historic redlining and unjust real estate practices throughout urban neighborhoods has led to lower levels of generational wealth for Blacks as opposed to whites. Covid-19 mortality rates reveal disproportionate levels of sickness among Black people and unequal access to health care.

In our Jesuit schools, we can—and should—analyze the representation of Black people in several areas: the pres-

ence of Black authors in our curriculum; of Black students who enroll in higher-level courses or those who serve in leadership positions in clubs and other student organizations; and of Black faculty and administrators. If the application of our student conduct policies disproportionately sanctions Black students, this, too, requires our attention. If, despite levels of academic performance equal to those of their white peers, Black students are disproportionately steered to apply or enroll at lower-ranked colleges and universities, this might indicate systemic racism. In addition to recounting times when they were the targets of direct bias, Black alumni have pointed to many of these systemic realities as part of their student experience.

Catholic social teaching invites Jesuit educators to foster the capacity of our students to recognize racism in all its forms—both in their personal implicit biases and in systems and structures that perpetuate unequal opportunity still today—and to oppose them vigorously through concrete action. This is neither optional nor tangential to our Catholic Jesuit mission; rather, it is at the very core of a Jesuit school's identity. Catholic social teaching demands that we teach students what racism is and why and how to oppose it.

Made in the Image of God

But there is another powerful teaching in the Catholic social tradition even more foundational than its affirmation of structural sin and evil. Known in Catholic social teaching as the idea of the *imago Dei*, it holds that each human person is created in the likeness and image of God and is therefore deserving of dignity and respect. Tracing this teaching to its roots in the Hebrew Scriptures and the biblical creation stories, *imago Dei* insists that, despite superficial differences, each person is an inherent repository of divine presence. It places on us the moral obligation to consider every person as our brother or sister, our sibling or neighbor, regardless of social constructs like race. Therefore, it approaches racial differences in much the same way as those who prefer to emphasize our common humanity. It favors universalism and trusts in our human and God-given capacity to relate to others outside our identity group.

The notion of the *imago Dei* is woven through the Christian Scriptures. Jesus teaches it in the parable of the good Samaritan, in which ancient religious differences and animosity are overcome through an act of mercy by the stigmatized Samaritan, who sees the other as his neighbor. In the Pentecost story, at the very birth of the Christian church, each bystander could understand the utterances of the other, even though they were expressed in the tongues of different and unknown languages. As the Rev. Bryan Massingale observes in *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church*, when the Holy Spirit descended upon that crowd in Jerusalem, differences of race, language and culture were not canceled or annulled, nor were they obstacles to unity. Rather they were both preserved and transcended at the same time.

We see the *imago Dei* in St. Paul's controversial embrace of Greeks and Gentiles, insisting that these outsider groups were just as worthy as Jewish Christians to hear and accept the Gospel message. We find the *imago Dei* in the church's hymnody when we sing "In Christ there is no East or West, in Him no North or South," and at the Eucharist when we ask God to "gather people of every race, language, and way of life to share in the one eternal banquet with Jesus Christ the Lord."

Imago Dei makes possible the language of Francis' invitation to encounter Christ in one another—especially in the marginalized—that we hear echoed in the universal apostolic preferences of the Society of Jesus. Specifically, walking with the excluded, the second preference, calls us "to walk with the poor, the outcasts of the world, those whose dignity has been violated, in a mission of reconciliation and justice"; and the third preference, journeying with youth, invites us "to accompany young people in the creation of a hope-filled future."

In practical terms, the *imago Dei* strain in Catholic social teaching calls out the evils of racist rhetoric as well as the extremes of what has come to be called "cancel culture." For example, Catholic educators should question those who assume that because Black students cannot see themselves literally in the classic and ancient texts of the Western canon, we should abandon them altogether. It can guide school leaders to resist overly zealous efforts to expunge from syllabi novels like *To Kill a Mockingbird* on the grounds that they use offensive language, rather than understanding the higher value of the universal theme and moral lesson that this literature teaches. Such efforts to remove or censor this literature ignore and even insult the capacity of students to recognize the good, the true and the beautiful in cultures, identities and social backgrounds different from their own.

Finally, appropriate attention to the *imago Dei* may reveal shortcomings in critical race theory, at least from a Catholic perspective. Insofar as critical race theory relies on racial essentialism, Catholic social teaching renders it untenable. A full appreciation of *imago Dei* also challeng-

es a view of white privilege or supremacy that simplistically reduces all social relationships to power dynamics along racial lines. This kind of move was explicitly rejected by St. Paul VI in his critique of Marxism's conflict theory in "Octogesima Adveniens."

A "Both/And" Approach

As is often the case, one rarely arrives at a truly Catholic position through "either/or" thinking. Rather, through careful discernment and thoughtful reflection on the entirety of the church's social tradition, Catholic positions often embrace a "both/and" mindset and produce solutions that incorporate seemingly opposing perspectives. As such, Catholic social teaching eludes easy categorization along the ideological spectrum of "left" and "right" or according to the secular political labels of "liberal" and "conservative."

The same should be said in evaluating the responses of Catholic school leaders who must negotiate competing claims by two important and valued groups within our community: One wants our schools to more clearly embody dignity, belonging and justice for marginalized groups. The other expects us to help our students transcend superficial differences and racial constructs by emphasizing our common humanity. A faithful reading of the Catholic social tradition cannot claim to hold one element—that is, a true reckoning with systemic racism—without the other one: namely, a genuine recognition of our common humanity as created in the likeness and image of God.

When necessary to resolve conflicts within our school communities, we should recognize that each of these two elements of Catholic social teaching can correct any extreme tendency or blindness of the other one. Most important, this understanding provides Catholic and Jesuit educators an opportunity to ensure that we are fulfilling the demands of our ministry. Solutions faithful to Catholic social teaching emerge when we help our students recognize the tension between these elements and reconcile them. Rooted and grounded in our tradition, we will more effectively advance our Catholic Jesuit mission to form leaders committed to the common good, who, aided by God's grace, may strive to overcome and eradicate all forms of discrimination, which are contrary to God's intent.

Christopher J. Devron, S.J., *is the president of Fordham Preparatory School in the Bronx, N.Y.*

Your Presence

By Yuan Changming

Is falling upon me
Like the first rain
  Of spring, and
Everywhere I go
    Is mushroomed
  With its song

Yuan Changming edits Poetry Pacific with Allen Yuan. Her works have received Pushcart nominations and have appeared in Best of the Best Canadian Poetry *and* BestNewPoemsOnline.

JESUITS USA East

JESUIT SCHOOL SPOTLIGHT

Jesuit School Spotlight is a monthly feature focusing on Jesuit middle and secondary schools from around the country. It is underwritten in part by Jesuit high schools of the USA East Province of the Society of Jesus.

LESSONS FROM LITTLE FLOWER

How do I reconcile the suffering of my students with the reality of an all-powerful, all-loving God?

By Mattie Denzer-King

My favorite window at Little Flower Parish is dominated by yellow, but it is the teal I stare into on Sundays when I am struggling most with my faith. Here, the stations of the cross are depicted in stained glass rather than as frescoes, statues or reliefs. The chunky, vibrant slabs of glass filter the world outside into beautiful kaleidoscopes on the pews. When I sit on the left side of the church, the Mary side, this window is the image on which my eyes rest. It depicts Jesus falling with the cross; I don't know which time.

On Thursdays, when the entire school at which I teach attends Mass together, my eyes cannot rest here for long. I am on duty: at once a worshiper, religion teacher and rule enforcer. The rules of school and of Catholic school—of being a good student, a good person, a good Catholic—get all tangled up. I worry any reprimand or redirection will be absorbed into my students' faith: the 11th Commandment is no gum in church, the 12th is no feet on the pews. All the while, these windows bathe our students in yellows, purples and reds—the colors of the Blackfeet artist's rendering of the Passion. The edges of their ponytails, tumbled loose by a rigorous game at recess, are suffused with multicolored halos. This light transfigures them into icons in the pews, teal and gold-leafed saints.

At their age, I gravitated toward the Beatitudes more than the Ten Commandments. Telling me not to do obviously bad things never resonated quite as much as guidelines for how to actually be

Photo credit: Mark Miller

The crucifix of Little Flower Parish in Browning, Blackfeet Nation, Mont. Designed and created by Blackfeet artist Gordon Monroe.

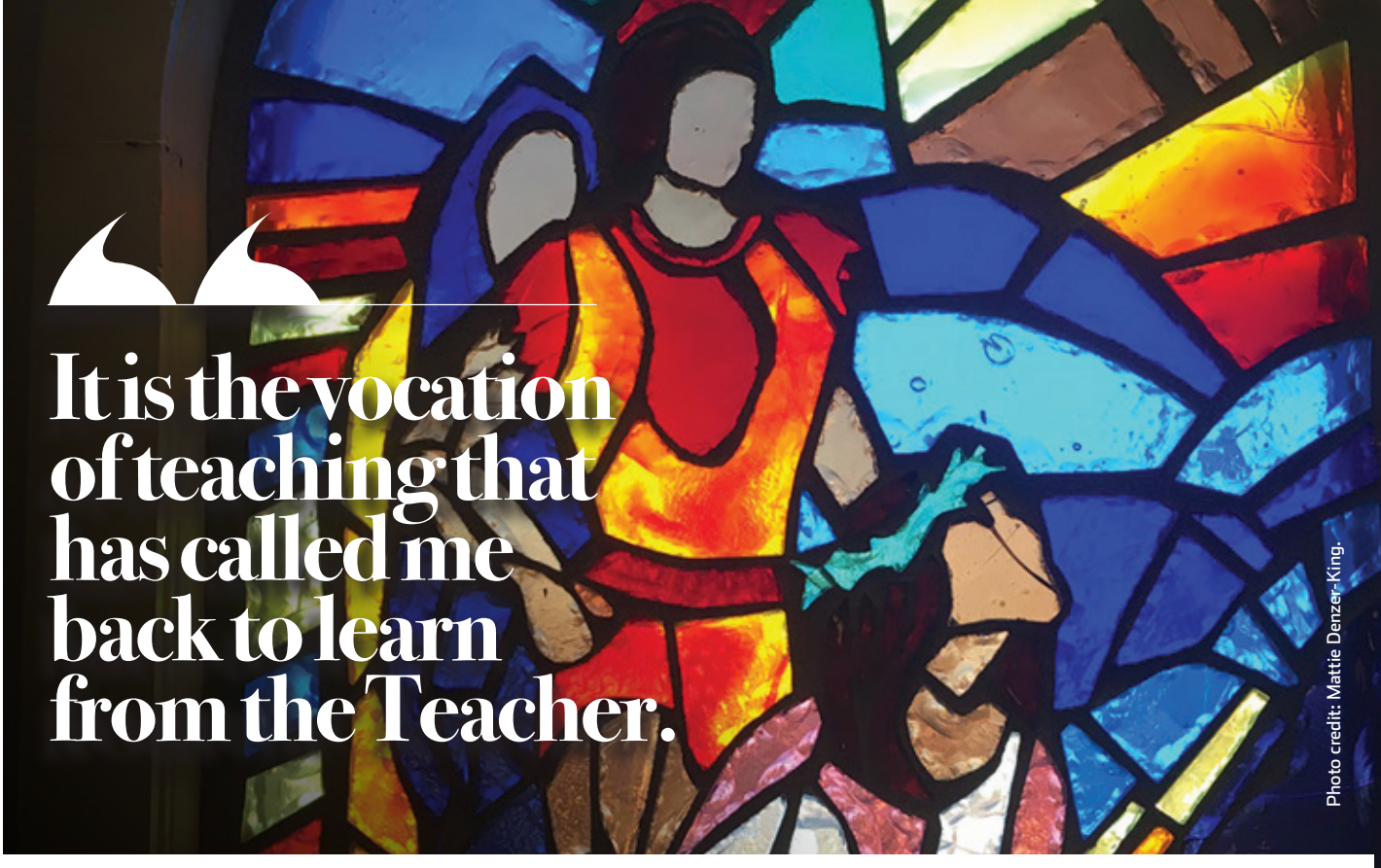
good. At their age, however, I heard little mention of the peacemakers Jesus spoke of, or the pure of heart or the merciful; little to no mention of whether or not those hungering and thirsting for justice would ever be satisfied, or how that might come about. There were the people of God and the people of the world and nothing in between. There was only hell and the kingdom of God, and none of us were prepared. I doubted I would ever, could ever be prepared, and so I saw myself out.

At Little Flower, when I sit on the right side of the church, the Joseph side, I behold our students sitting still as icons, some young enough to still have cherubic cheeks. Maybe it is the more recent influence of a few Jesuit parishes on me, but I cannot help but find God in our world, everywhere, in the brick-and-mortar, flesh-and-blood circumstances of our everyday lives. In fact, it is the world that has continually invited me—sometimes demanded of me—to return to the church. It is the vocation of teaching, more than anything, that has called me back to learn from the Teacher.

The stained glass in our parish is remarkable, but it is the crucifix that transfixes. It is magnificently brutal. When I first walked into Little Flower parish, I was gripped by uncertainty; I had just moved across the country, sight unseen, after accepting a volunteer teaching position at the only Catholic school founded on a reservation in the 21st century. The school was built at the request of the Blackfeet community, and the opportunity to work there seemed unique and too good to pass up.

But upon arrival, I was riddled with doubts. How could I have left my community in the Bronx, which I loved so much? Was it too soon in my still-hesitant return to the church to commit to living in an isolated Catholic community? What was my place, if I even had one, as a white Catholic teacher on a reservation?

While I would continue to grapple with these questions, walking into Little Flower for the first time temporarily stilled those doubts with one, new certainty. Until that moment, I had never truly seen the crucifix. I grew up with the image of Jesus' down-turned face, his head slumped. His agony is over, his soul has already left his body. But this Christ, son of Nazareth, king of the Jews, is in the throes of Mt



It is the vocation of teaching that has called me back to learn from the Teacher.

Photo credit: Mattie Denzer-King.

27:46, asking God why he has been forsaken. His face is upturned, mouth open, his body rebelling against its wooden constraints, wracked by human suffering.

My Protestant-raised, convert mother has remarked on the brutality of Catholic imagery, on the enthusiasm with which we adorn our bodies and spaces with the image of our Lord being tortured to death. When I began attending church again, bringing along friends for moral support, my Episcopal friend remarked on our crucifixes as well, and our stations. But, she told me, the thing that caused her more unease than the gore of the Passion openly displayed on our walls was the Sign of the Cross. She felt her unfamiliarity with the prayer branded her as an outsider. She felt afraid to try for fear of getting it wrong.

It is a familiar fear of mine. When first thrust into the Catholic school bubble in middle school, my firmest belief was that my capacity for faith was broken. In the Catholic equation for salvation—faith plus good works—my faith has always been the wobbly bit. My belief in miracles, divine intervention and various other dogmatic issues still shifts like sand from day to day.

Instead, I devoted myself to good works, to hungering and thirsting for justice, even when it put me at odds with the very people whose faith I envied. Today, I am still wobbly in the faith half of the equation. But whether or not I believe—factually, absolutely—in all of the church's teachings, I know there are elements to the story that are repeatedly brought back into focus for me. I cannot turn away from the crucifixion.

The crucifixion forces me to reckon with this incomprehensible fact: that our God was human, that our God was tortured, that our God died. Our God was human enough to despair, for how else can this moment be described except as despair? I know that the point of Catholicism, of Christianity as a whole, is that God rose again, opened the gates of heaven, secured our salvation. But the crucifixion is the moment I always return to, this human moment.

If I ever have a crisis of faith, if I ever leave the church again, it will be over the mind-bending reality of an all-powerful and an all-loving God. When I first began teaching, I was not new to suffering nor inexperienced in evil's working in our world. But I was new to having a child entrusted to my care; new to being confided in about suffering from such an innocent vantage point; new to the uniquely devastating, impotent rage of having to watch a child suffer and being unable to do anything about it. And I was new to seeing the ways in which systems, reaching up from the past, clawing their way into our present, would attempt to cage my students in regimented and seemingly preordained suffering.

One of my first weeks of teaching in Browning, Mont., the capital of the Blackfeet Nation, a student raised his hand in class and asked, "If Jesus came to save us all, why did he let the U.S. kill off so many Native Americans?" I sit in church every week with surviving descendants of a genocide perpetuated by people who look like me—people whose roots are my roots, out of whose roots I grow. My people's violence was against those by whom I am sur-

A stained glass window from Little Flower Parish, designed by the Blackfeet artist King Kuka.

rounded, those who are entrusted to me to teach, those I have come to love. As my ancestors intended, I still benefit daily from these not-so-ancient acts of terror in a way that is also preordained.

I sit next to children who have lost parents and loved ones to the devastation that arise from extreme poverty and isolation. During the past five years, I have taught students whose ancestors were enslaved, raped, beaten, tortured to produce wealth for my ancestors—ancestors if not by blood, then by bloody inheritance. I have taught students whose families fled disasters, starvation and violence created by my government's intervention in their lands and communities.

And the answer to this litany of injustices, this mountain of systemic barriers created and maintained by humans is to deploy well-meaning white teachers, plucky recent undergrads like myself, and call it a day. I taught and teach students whose challenges existed before I arrived, before they were born, and will continue on after I leave. My job is to dislodge a pebble, a shard, a grain of sand from the side of this mountain, and then be celebrated for it, while my students and their communities contend with the rest of the weight. I taught and teach students who are yearly set back in their learning by having well-meaning but woefully underprepared teachers thrust upon them.

I have taught students who have been beaten, who have been raped. Some have watched friends die, watched parents die, have been abandoned and have still not just survived but thrived.

And I am told that our God is all-loving and also all-powerful. That he has the power to do anything he wants. And still the children I teach—whom I know, whom I love—witness and experience atrocities. I have listened to every explanatory platitude, and all of them convince me that no one has any idea why God allows this to happen. They only convince me that any God who allows a child to be raped is no God I serve.

And yet.

I sit in Mass and look at our children gilded with the light of Jesus' passion. I cry when they sing hymns in Blackfeet. My prayers each day are for them.

And yet, I look at our crucifix, at our savior in his passion; and I remember that he, too, felt forsaken, that the night before his torture and execution, he prayed, "If it is possible, may this cup be taken from me." I remember that his prayer went unanswered and that he died with despair on his lips, not the wine offered to dull his pain.

I don't understand it, his suffering. I don't understand why some of my students are allowed to suffer as he did. But this knowledge—that it happened, whether or not it makes sense—stanches my anger long enough that I am able to entertain the idea that there is still a point to serving this God. That it is not just foolish optimism, not just blind faith, which I have never been any good at anyway. It is something a little more useful that heals my wobbling and angry and bleeding heart when I pray to him.

I am able to entertain the idea that my Catholicism can still exist alongside, and even fuel, my doubts and my love and my fight; that it can carry me farther than I could go alone. It is possible that my faith could also be my own within the wide, wild expanse of Catholicism.

If I cannot yet pour my whole devotion and faith into the dogma the church offers me, it is possible that in the meantime I can labor alongside my child-saints, gilded in yellow and red and blue and purple. I can hunger and thirst and work and work and work for their justice, and my own, knowing that these are one and the same, knowing that our thirst may never be satisfied.

Mattie Denzer-King *is an English literature and language arts educator in the Bronx, N.Y. She previously taught and lived in the Blackfeet Nation; in Cambridge, Mass.; and in Atlanta, Ga.*

People in New York City view the names of 9/11 victims during ceremonies on Sept. 11, 2020.

CNS photo/Andrew Kelly, Reuters

WORDS FAIL

September 11 and the communication of memory

By James Martin

I found out from two women. At first, I dismissed what they said.

On Sept. 11, 2001, I was at my desk at the old America House on 56th Street in Manhattan, which doubled as the offices of **America** magazine and the home of the Jesuit community. Around 9 a.m., my mother called. "Turn on the TV!" she said. "A plane just hit the World Trade Center. It's terrible!"

I was alarmed and worried about any possible loss of life, remembering photos of a plane that crashed into the Empire State Building in 1945, but I downplayed her report.

"Thanks," I said. "But you know I don't work anywhere near there." A few minutes later, out of curiosity, I turned on the television and saw the terrible images.

As those who were in New York City that day will recall, we did not know how "serious" things were—at first. Many people thought the initial crash was an accident. So I turned off the TV.

A few minutes later I left the house and walked to a doctor's appointment. People were rushing through the streets and peering down Sixth Avenue, where you could see one of the towers smoking like a cigarette.

At the doctor's office, the nurses were glued to a TV screen. By the time I walked home, sirens were blaring and people were nervously scanning the skies. When I walked into America House, our receptionist, Glenda, said, "One of the towers collapsed!" The radio announcers were shouting.

Initially I was angry. "Glenda, why are you listening to stuff like that?"

"No, no, no," she said. "I just heard it! It's true!" She was right, of course. So were the radio announcers. So was my mom.

In the weeks that followed, my life was consumed with the World Trade Center. That first night I walked to

a hastily arranged triage center that expected hundreds of survivors but received none. The next day I worked at a center set up to help people locate loved ones who were presumed to be alive but perhaps dazed, wandering around or being treated in local hospitals. As became evident as the day went on, almost no one fit those categories. Then, on Sept. 13, a police officer in his cruiser saw me in my collar and drove me to "the site," Ground Zero, which was still on fire. There I began ministering to rescue workers, eventually with several other Jesuits.

Twenty years later, that day still feels unbearably fresh. The freshness is aided by the continuing of the everyday details of my life: I still work at **America**; I still chat with my mom and Glenda is still our receptionist. My immediate surrounding world feels strangely unchanged. Which makes it hard to believe that enough time has passed that some people who were not yet born that day are now adults.

When I think of the communication of memory, I think of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus, and how the witnesses in first-century Judea must have burned with the desire to share what those days were like, even if it was nearly impossible to communicate.

I feel something of the same about the events of Sept. 11, 2001. How do we communicate what it was like to live that day to people who were not yet born? The acrid, plastic, foul-smelling cloud that drifted on the wind within hours of the attacks and lingered over the city for days? The still-burning buildings, terrifying in their scale, before they were torn down? The soft grey ash and thick carpet of paper that covered everything within a mile of Ground Zero? Even that nomenclature of Ground Zero, now so accepted, felt cheap to me, like we were aping some action movie. And the widely held belief, like what we now hear during the Covid-19 pandemic, that "everything will change"—that is, the great national unity that emerged would endure. And the disappointment that followed the realization that the biggest change would be more war.

In those weeks, I worked at a place of death, a Calvary. But for me, ministering at Ground Zero was about resurrection. Because what I saw was signs of new life: the heroism of the rescue workers searching for survivors, the generosity of volunteers who came from across the country and, especially, the silent witness of the firefighters and police officers who had given their lives in service for others as they raced into the burning buildings. "Greater love has no person...."

My mind moves to the paschal mystery, however, for another reason: the almost insuperable difficulty that Jesus' disciples had communicating what they had experienced between Good Friday and Easter Sunday. How much Jesus suffered. All those blows from the Roman soldiers. And they marched him through the street right in front of us. And how he bled and sweated and cried out on that cross. How he never lashed out at them. And we were so frightened that we hid in that dark room afterward.

Most of all, Easter. How Jesus appeared first to Mary! What he said to her! What she told us, breathless after racing from the tomb! And how different he looked when we finally saw him—and yet how the same! So many impossible things to communicate to people who were not there.

Initially, just as I did not believe my mother and Glenda, the male disciples did not believe the women who reported what they had seen. In the Greek, we are told that the men thought it was *leros*, nonsense (Lk 24:11). The women told them anyway.

Words are ultimately inadequate to fully communicate profound experiences. After Jesus left the earth, the disciples communicated the story orally in an oral culture. Thirty years later, when it became clear that Jesus was not coming back soon and many of the eyewitnesses were dying, Mark wrote his Gospel, generally thought to be the first, around 65 A.D. The Evangelists did their best to write down, or, more accurately, edit, "an orderly account," as Luke said. "So that you might come to believe," said John.

Yet despite the hard work of the four Evangelists and the repetition of the same stories in the Gospels (the story of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes is told twice in Matthew and Mark), some things remain incommunicable. For all the many accounts of the resurrection, recounted to convince the reader, the stories differ. In some places Jesus seems distinctly physical, in others somewhat ghostly. In some the disciples recognize him immediately; in others they mistake him—for a gardener, for a stranger.

The incommunicability of the past shouldn't be surprising. Every day I worked at Ground Zero I thought, "I'm working at a grave." In John's Gospel, when Mary Magdalene returns to anoint the body of Jesus on Easter morning, the word used for tomb is *mnema*, from the word for memory. When we return to the events of Sept. 11, we are called to remember. And to share our memories, no matter how incommunicable they are.

James Martin, S.J., *is editor at large at* ***America*** *and the author, most recently, of* Learning to Pray: A Guide for Everyone.

Watch a video of Father Martin reflecting on memory and 9/11 on America's YouTube channel: youtube.com/americamedia.

I ONCE FELL IN LOVE WITH THE LATIN MASS

So I understand why Pope Francis restricted it

By Zac Davis

CNS photo/Gregory A. Shemitz

I cried the first time I went to a traditional Latin Mass.

It would have been difficult for me not to. I was an emotionally volatile 20-year-old college kid studying theology who loved the "smells and bells" that Catholicism offered—and man, there were a lot of bells and smells going on while Mozart's "Requiem" carried the liturgy.

After that, I was hooked. A group of friends and I asked a Jesuit, the late Robert Araujo, if he would learn how to say Mass in the extraordinary form (how the pre-Vatican II traditional liturgy has been known since 2007) so we could have it on campus. He did, and a few of us were trained to be altar servers for it. To what I imagine was the shock and dismay of many of Father Araujo's brother Jesuits, we were able to celebrate the traditional Latin Mass at the Jesuit residence.

The traditional Latin Mass (I will refer to it after this as "the Latin Mass" for simplicity's sake, though of course the current Mass promulgated after Vatican II can be and is also celebrated in Latin) never became the primary form of liturgy that I attended, and eventually I stopped going to it altogether sometime after college. But it nevertheless made a significant impact on my spiritual life at a critical, impressionable point in my formation.

With the news that Pope Francis has greatly restrict-

The Rev. Richard Munkelt celebrates a traditional Latin Mass on July 1, 2021, at Immaculate Conception Seminary in Huntington, N.Y.

ed the celebration of this Latin Mass, I have been reflecting on what the Latin Mass gave me and my spiritual life, good and bad.

First, the good: What I saw in the Latin Mass was an unparalleled reverence for the sacred. It hammered home, for the first time, that I was part of a celebration of "these sacred mysteries." Whereas previously I had attended many parishes that couldn't bother to get their sound systems working, or that were reliant upon the whimsical improvisations of a well-meaning priest, the Latin Mass was choreographed with the care and attention to detail of a Broadway performance.

This care for detail, far from seeming stuffy, instead conveyed a deep and passionate love for what was holy. And even more important, it invited me to join in that love by taking similar care in my own prayer and participation in the Mass. It gave me a hunger for "the beautiful," despite my eurocentric understanding of beauty. There were no felt banners or tacky papier-mâché art in sight.

But do you know what else the Latin Mass did for me? It made me bitter and arrogant. It made me think I had the more ancient, therefore holier, therefore better way to practice my faith. I would make jokes about the Novus Ordo and speculate about the day the church might even do away with vernacular liturgy, considering it a failed experiment. In one example I find particularly galling and embarrassing, when I attended my regular, non-Latin Mass, instead of praying the liturgy I would actually sit there and count all the deviations from the rubrics that I could notice.

I found a lot of security in the (very flawed) idea that "Catholicism is an ancient, unchanging faith. This is the most ancient, unchanging way to live it out." It took me some time and prodding and prayer to realize that this security wasn't in or from God, but rather was about reassuring myself that I had an answer that I would never need to change (a very attractive prospect to someone whose world felt in constant flux!).

We are called to faith that the truth revealed by God in Christ is eternal and unchanging, but as Pope Francis has pointed out repeatedly (like a good Jesuit spiritual director), rigidity and possessiveness about how to express that truth are not authentically free expressions of faith.

A more widespread celebration of the traditional Latin Mass was an initiative that "intended to recover the unity of an ecclesial body with diverse liturgical sensibilities," Pope Francis wrote in his letter explaining his motivations for the motu proprio "Traditionis Custodes." In effect, though, it "was exploited to widen the gaps, reinforce the divergences, and encourage disagreements that injure the Church, block her path, and expose her to the peril of division." When I read those words, I knew it was true in my own personal spiritual life. It is a great sadness that it was exploited. And if the pope and the bishops around the world who responded to his questionnaire on this topic saw this division throughout the church, Francis was right to respond.

But, you may object: I am not a smug pseudo-schismatic who hates the pope, and I love the Latin Mass! Here is the difficult thing being asked of us by the pope: There are many good reasons to love the Latin Mass, but given that it has become a demonstrable cause of disunity and rancor within the church, we have to look for the gifts it gives elsewhere.

Pope Francis readily admits that he agrees with Pope Benedict XVI that "in many places the prescriptions of the new Missal are not observed in celebration, but indeed come to be interpreted as an authorization for or even a requirement of creativity, which leads to almost unbearable distortions." So one task at hand, and a possible place of common ground for divided Catholics, is to focus on making regular Masses a bit more reverent. After all, the good things that I received from my encounter with the Latin Mass should have been available to me in the Novus Ordo, too. All good liturgy, in whatever form or language, should engender desires for the good, the true and the beautiful.

But there is another, deeper and more difficult spiritual challenge here. The desires that the liturgy awakes and satisfies in us—and for some of us, the desires that the Latin Mass especially nurtured—are good, holy and necessary. But those desires also point beyond the liturgy itself. At the risk of sounding glib, what would it mean if we could find in other places the spiritual goods that the Latin Mass brought to so many of us? What if we were able to discover a passion for beauty from our service to the poor? If we could develop a mature sense of wonder and awe from caring for creation, our common home?

If I am honest, those feel like daunting questions that I don't really know how to respond to. I only know that I think I'm being called to ask them. Answering them, I imagine, will take patience, practice and a lot of prayers—in whatever language they're said.

Zac Davis *is an associate editor and the director for audience engagement and analytics at* ***America.*** *He also co-hosts the podcast Jesuitical.*

Dante, kneeling, and Virgil, in red, at the gates of Purgatory, with the Proud carrying heavy stones, in an illustration of Canto IX of Dante's *Purgatorio.*

CNS photo/Priamo della Quercia, British Library via The Public Domain Review

Dante's Hard-Won Optimism

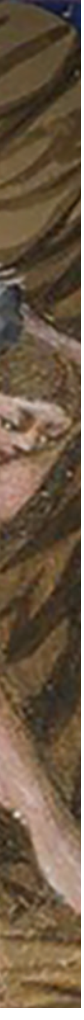
By Jason M. Baxter

No other artist has aged as well as Dante Alighieri. He has never really gone out of fashion, except perhaps during the Enlightenment. Just after his death, his *Divine Comedy* was the subject of heavy-duty theological commentaries in Latin, a level of study generally reserved for works of sacred theology. A century later, during the Renaissance, ambitious designers, whose heads were full of cartography and perspective and new worlds, ambitiously mapped out Dante's view of the afterlife, as if it were a newly discovered continent (see, for example, Botticelli's famous map of hell).

After Trent, devout commentators doubled down on Dante and treated his text like a stalwart fortress of Catholic doctrine. After a brief eclipse, he came back in the Romantic Era and was translated in the United States by poets eager to prove they could equal the subtleties of the Old World. He was even known and his poetry was sung by enslaved people in the United States. And in the 20th century? He became a member of the avant-garde. Now, during the 700th anniversary year of Dante's death, Pope Francis has written an apostolic letter in his honor, calling him a "prophet of hope" and a "witness to the innate yearning for the infinite present in the human heart." But Dante's optimism is not easy.

During the optimistic period of the Belle Epoque, when gilded France chuckled at comic operas, sipped absinthe and leveled old neighborhoods to make way for modern avenues, Auguste Rodin was less sanguine. His most famous sculpture, "The Thinker," was inspired by Dante; it was designed as part of a set of monumental doors called "The Gates of Hell." The Thinker, positioned at the top of the door, leans over, contemplating the world of pain depicted in the first part of Dante's poem. All over the doors, souls writhe and fall through air, whirl and scream as they are whipped around in a torrent of despair. Hidden amid the gilded pleasantries of France, then in her wealthiest hour, were loneliness, misery, spiritual blindness, the inability to connect to other people. For Rodin, Dante was the Thinker, willing to contemplate it all and to stare at it without blinking. The modernists loved Dante because he did not hide the truth.

T. S. Eliot, too, saw Dante as the master of pain, who unflinchingly looked into the heart of misery and



spoke of it plainly. In a passage in "Little Gidding," one that self-consciously echoes Dante, Eliot writes that one of the "gifts reserved for age" is "the conscious impotence of rage/ At human folly, and the laceration/ Of laughter at what ceases to amuse."

Even Salvador Dalí illustrated the Comedy. He gives us bodies, twisted and blown, wrapped around one another, tumbling around in confusion, unable to find their footing. Dante, the thinker, understood the modern condition.

What is it about the master that has made him not just immortal, but relevant, urgent and modern, in a way that "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight" or "Everyman" or Pilgrim's Progress are not? Many reasons could be advanced, but I will focus on one: Dante reconceptualized narrative. He gives us a narrative world—especially in *Inferno*—of fallibility, confusion, half-truths and a hundred points of view, in a way unequaled until William Faulkner or postmodern cinema.

The famous mappability of *Inferno*, which so enchanted the Renaissance map makers, stands in sharp contrast to the literary experience of reading it, as well as to the pilgrim's confusion as he wanders through hell. That is, the intense rationality of the world of moral philosophy (which serves as the architecture of hell) stands in tension with the first-hand experience of the pilgrim who explores hell. As the pilgrim moves through hell, his experience of sin and punishment is made up of a series of fragmented angles and failures of vision, a series of moments in which the moral map being used by Virgil, Dante's guide on his journey, fails to explain completely what actually stands before him.

And, almost cinematically, the narrator insistently and self-consciously tells us exactly what the pilgrim's gaze is directed at, how it is then resettled, refocused or readjusted. From the beginning of the poem, we feel the pilgrim's gaze moving over its object, panning out, focusing in, moving from one face to another (*Inferno* 20, verses 1-10). We don't just see; we see the pilgrim seeing.

Thus, it is striking and effective when Dante (frequently) resorts to the technique of "blinding" the pilgrim, letting the pilgrim's sight blank out so that he is enveloped in sound, analogous to a film that blacks out while the sound continues. In *Inferno*, sound often precedes or overwhelms sight. The pilgrim hears the roar of falling water before he sees Geryon (16.103-05), and he later hears a horn blast in "murky" air (31.10). The pilgrim's first impressions of hell are overwhelming because he is immersed in a world of sound without recourse to sight. He breaks down in tears, terrified by "a tumult" (3.28) of inarticulate sighs and lamentations and shouts, all swirling around in the dark (3.23).

There are moments in which the pilgrim drops the first-person narration and provides a description of the noise itself, which he captures in the shrill assonance of sharp vowels ("Diverse lingue, orribili favelle,/ Parole di dolore, accenti d'ira...") (3.26), allowing the reader to experience being immersed firsthand in chaos. Later, when he approaches the brink of the "dolorous abyss," the pilgrim does not see but hears an "infinite number of laments" (4.9). He can only hear because it is so "dark and deep and cloudy" that he cannot reach, with his gaze, to the bottom (4.10-11).

In Canto 5, Dante can hear "sorrowful notes" (5.25), although the place is "mute of light" (5.28). And then, in Canto 17, the pilgrim experiences free fall, with every "view extinguished." In this amazing passage, the narration of the flight begins in the past tense and in the first person ("I saw that I was..."), but then switches into the present ("and [the beast] moves, swimming, slowly slowly, he wheels and descends") in a phrase that makes no reference to the pilgrim, thus creating again a brief space for the reader to "look" through the pilgrim's eyes, to feel the rocking motion of the descent as if he were there.

Thus, the failure of vision becomes a major theme in *Inferno*. At times the pilgrim's eyes are said to be dazed (26.145), intoxicated (29.2), deceived by distance (31.25), distracted (32.16-24). He catches mere glimpses of faces he once knew (6.45; 18.40) and fails to recognize old companions (15.22-30). In other parts of hell, the pilgrim's vision is obscured by mist (31.25-35), he has trouble making out a signal (8.6), and he is found crawling up a tunnel that cannot be found by sight (34.129). Often his sight is completely blotted out—for example, on account of the danger of Medusa (9.55) or because of darkness (18.109-110; 21.6; 29.38-39; 34.5).

Just as often we read of the failed vision of the sinners of hell: Ciacco's eyes roll back up into his head (6.91); the violent are up to their eyebrows in blood (11.103-05); the eyes of the sullen are blinded by mud (7.118-120); Farinata admits he sees in a bad light (10.100); some sodomites gaze intently like people at sunset (15.16); while other sodomites have to endure a fragmented vision because they are spinning in a wheel like wrestlers (16.25). Sinners are fixated on what is up close

What is it about Dante that has made him not just immortal, but urgent and modern?

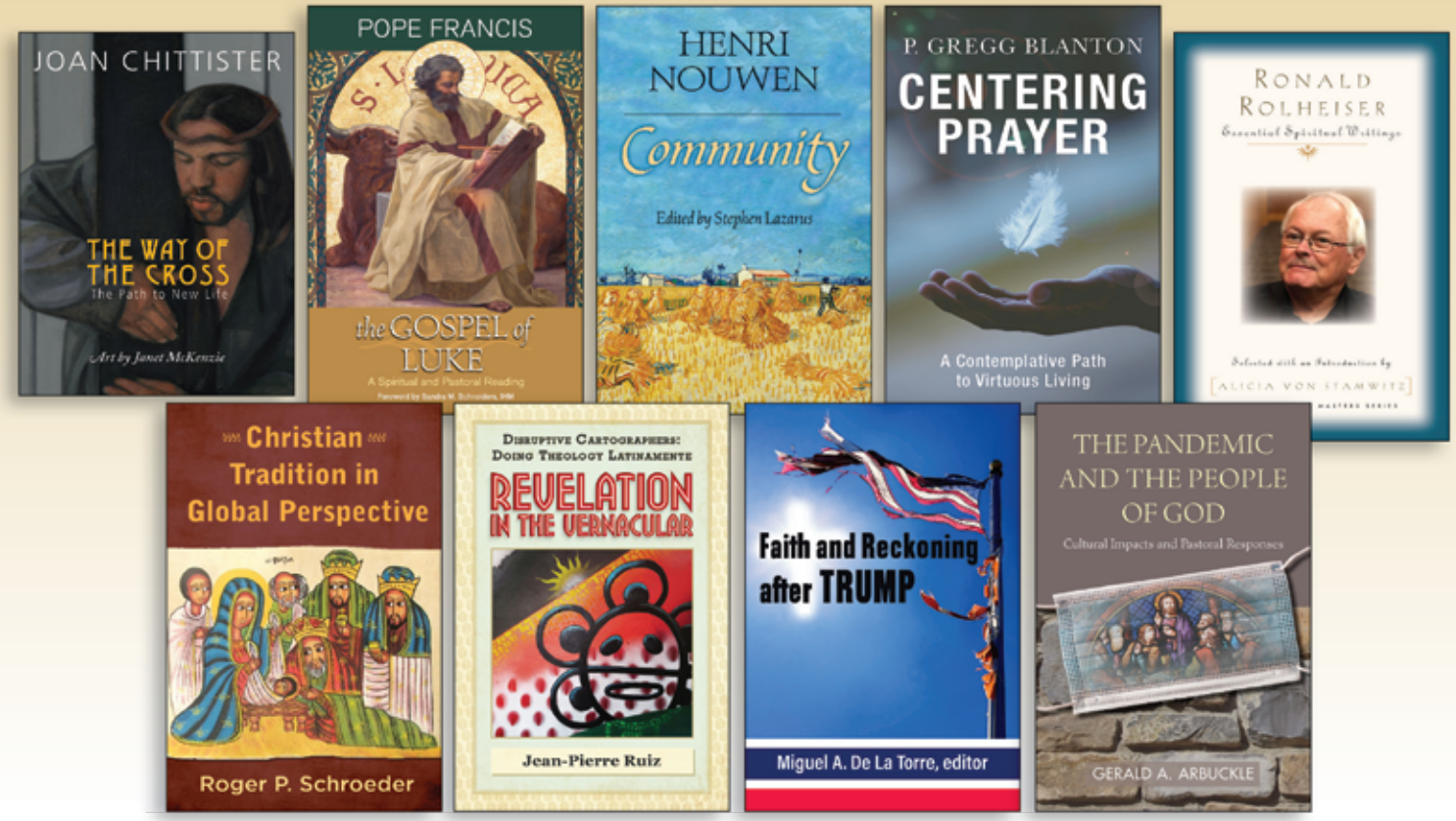
(17.46), avoid eye contact (18.48), cannot see because they are stuffed into holes (19.53), are tormented by hallucinations (30.70), go blind with grief like Ugolino (33.73) or are blinded by frozen tears (33.94).

In other words, hell is a world of broken vision, fragmented vistas and myopias. It is, as the sinners never tire of pointing out, the "cieco mondo" (the "blind world"). The medieval expectations for the efficacy of sight are constantly overturned, as sight in *Inferno* constantly fails, is thwarted or is found insufficient to get at the depth of an experience. This canticle must have had a gripping phenomenological and psychological power for its first readers that is difficult for us even to imagine.

The point: In contrast to the imminent mappability of *Inferno*, whose moral and intellectual boundaries are meant to be so perspicuous, the pilgrim is often immersed in spatial conditions in which no clear perception of boundary is possible. It is a tour de force, emotionally overwhelming and aesthetically exhausting. Dante thought it would make the reader want to weep, groan and ask God if he wanted to start over with the plague-ridden, divisive human race.

In short, nothing makes you crave mercy, thirst for it with a dry mouth, quite like Dante's avant-garde, modernist poem of pain and human failure. And I think this is what has motivated the pope to turn literary critic! At the heart of Dante's poem is a fragmented vision. But paradoxically, it was precisely because Dante's human plans failed him that he, purged of mere earthly longing, could emerge as the poet of hope and desire and mercy.

Jason M. Baxter *is an associate professor of fine arts and humanities at Wyoming Catholic College and the author of several books, including* A Beginner's Guide to Dante's Comedy (Baker Academic) *and* The Infinite Beauty of the World: Dante's Encyclopedia *and the* Names of God (Peter Lang).



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By Michial Farmer

The half-converted sugar maples stand
Awaiting orders to break into flame.
For now, they are half-glory and half-shame—
And always straining to hear the command.
October looms. The air should be cold steel
Against bare skin. Instead, it's dense
With sweat and wool held, for now, in suspense,
As the world longs for autumn's great repeal.
But what's the hurry? When at last it comes,
It can't last long. Autumn will fall, I know,
To winter, and, in falling, strip the world
Of this brightness. There's beauty, too, in snow,
But let's slow down. Enjoy the final curl
Of heat, before winter straightens the plumb.

Michial Farmer *is the author of* Imagination and Idealism in John Updike's Fiction. *His poems have appeared in Spiritus, Saint Katherine Review and Relief.*

FAIRFIELD UNIVERSITY
CATHOLIC STUDIES

FALL 2021 events

The 21st Annual Anne Drummey O'Callaghan Lecture on Women in the Church

"Women and Children First? The Pandemic's Lessons for Society and the Church"

Cristina Traina, PhD • Fordham University

Wednesday, October 6, 2021 | 5 p.m.

Hybrid Event: In person at Dolan School of Business Event Hall L01, or register for livestream at **fairfield.edu/cs**

The 2021 Catholicism and the Arts Lecture

"Authentically Black and Catholic: A Visionary Retrospective on African American Music in Catholic Worship"

Kevin Philip Johnson, DMA • Director of Spelman College Glee Club

Wednesday, October 27, 2021 | 7:30 p.m.

Hybrid Event: In person at Dolan School of Business Event Hall L01, or register for livestream at **fairfield.edu/cs**

The 28th Annual Christopher F. Mooney, S.J., Lecture in Theology, Religion & Society

"Meeting the Moment, How Faithful Is the Church?"

The Rev. Cass L. Shaw • Former President and CEO of the Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport

Wednesday, November 10, 2021 | 7:30 p.m.

Hybrid Event: In person at Dolan School of Business Event Hall L01, or register for livestream at **fairfield.edu/cs**

LIVING THEOLOGY
FALL 2021 WORKSHOPS

Wednesday
September 22
HYBRID EVENT: Rita Ferrone, MDiv: "Gathering for the Eucharist: Ancient Ritual, Contemporary Challenges"
DiMenna-Nyselius Library | Multimedia Room
5 p.m.

Saturday
October 16
IN-PERSON only: Paul Lakeland, PhD: " 'A Synodal Church': What does Pope Francis Mean?"
BCC | Dogwood Room
9:30 a.m.

Wednesday
November 17
HYBRID EVENT: Brian Stiltner, PhD: "Reaching Out: Parish Life and Social Justice After the Pandemic"
BCC | Dogwood Room
5 p.m.

Register for livestreams at fairfield.edu/cs

CENTER FOR CATHOLIC STUDIES

Dr. Paul Lakeland, Director
Aloysius P. Kelley, S.J., Chair and Professor of Catholic Studies

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ALL EVENTS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.

Fairfield University

Conversation and Conversion

The church that formed Olga Segura's conscience through its tradition of social justice, she writes, has failed to be a leader in the fight against systemic racism.

Olga Segura's *Birth of a Movement: Black Lives Matter and the Catholic Church* begins by introducing readers to what the book is not. Segura intended her book to be "the Catholic version of Ibram X. Kendi's *How to Be an Antiracist;* but then 2020 happened."

Segura, a former associate editor at **America**, briefly recounts how the Covid-19 pandemic's disproportionate impact upon Black and brown Americans and the national uprisings in response to George Floyd's murder one year ago politically galvanized her and ultimately changed the course of the book.

Segura was not alone. A poll from Monmouth University in June 2020 showed that 90 percent of those polled had heard about George Floyd's murder and the protests following it. Almost 60 percent found the anger of the protesters fully justified, and over 70 percent believed racism was a large problem in the United States.

Many Americans experienced a kind of conversion moment in 2020. Truth often finds us in moments of vulnerability—like when facing a strange illness or in stillness from being locked down in our houses. But even in an overwhelming moment of crisis, not all Americans—or all Catholics—have responded uniformly to the events of 2020. Segura's book charts her personal journey of resisting systemic racism and her pain at finding herself unaccompanied on that path by many Catholics or by the institutional church. The church that formed Segura's conscience through its tradition of social justice and care for the poor, she writes, has failed to be a leader in the fight against systemic racism.

Throughout the book, Segura draws on her own experiences to help guide the reader who may not have the same lived experiences of race in America. Her personal reflections are interspersed with appeals to the church's white laity and bishops to stand with Catholics of color in fighting oppression.

The book is most compelling when recounting Segura's own awakening to the cause of racial justice. In her first chapter, Segura weaves the origins of Black Lives Matter with her own participation in the movement. Marches in New York City erupted after the acquittal of Daniel Pantaleo, the New York police officer who killed Eric Garner on Staten Island in July 2014. Segura joined these protests; and during one march, her future husband, Enoch, was arrested.

"I remember the way my heart stopped as I watched him being pulled into a police van," Segura writes. She describes an interior shift as she real-


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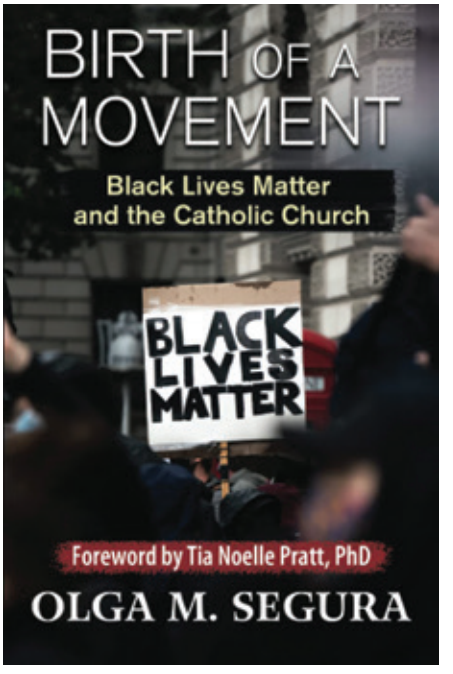
Birth of a Movement
Black Lives Matter and the Catholic Church
By Olga M. Segura
Orbis Books
176p $20



ized the people she loved and valued were not valued by the authorities appointed to keep them safe.

Soon after, she read Pope Francis' "Laudato Si'." The pope's writing resonated with the words of the activists with whom Segura marched. Both Francis and the Black Lives Matter movement "called on us to reject the very individualism that was creating the problems we had to combat."

The contemporary civil rights movement known as Black Lives Matter addresses a variety of social issues: gun control, policing, prisons and U.S. economic systems. In under 150 pages, Segura touches on most of these issues and their intersections with systemic racism. In the process of covering a great breadth of material, the book's structure is not always easy to follow. Readers unfamiliar with Segura's subject material could become lost.

Nonetheless, two clear themes emerge from the book: the close relationship between racism and capitalism and the author's call for the U.S. Catholic bishops to take a more actively pro-life stance against systemic racism.

Segura identifies capitalism as the social factor that cements racism into daily life in the United States. Racism is not an accident perpetrated by bigots or an obsolete method of structuring society. It is a founding tenet of our country, encoded into the design of our neighborhoods, financial systems and workforce.

If Segura's chapter on racial capitalism sparks questions, there are several other books available that delve deeply into the same topic. Sven Beckert's *Empire of Cotton* studies how the cotton market promoted the rapid colonization of the Americas and launched a risky market-driven economy that depended on an easily exploitable workforce that could be paid little to nothing for its labor. The virtual enslavement of hundreds of thousands of Black Americans by the prison-industrial complex is incisively investigated by Michelle Alexander in her *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness.* The message of authors like Segura and Alexander is clear: The United States can surely exist without racism, but the question of what that country might look like has not yet been answered.

Segura notes that Black Lives Matter's critique of U.S. economic systems has become a particular flashpoint for internet ire. (As is their pro-abortion stance, a ripe opportunity for moral what-about-ism.) But racism is an economic tool to manufacture inequality so that the rich get richer and the poor stay poor. Thus, social movements that fall short of economic reform will fail to effect any change.

Finally, Segura calls upon the bishops to emulate the example of leadership provided by the women of the Black Lives Matter movement and stand in solidarity with Black Americans fighting for the simple recognition of their human dignity. The killing of George Floyd should prompt each of us to ask why and how our culture coexists so comfortably with the death of Black Americans. Yet, rather than self-examination, too many Catholic leaders have tended to focus their critiques on public protests, toppling statues or academic systems for analyzing race.

Segura calls upon her readers to begin their reading with listening. Where is Christ calling them to surrender their power for the sake of the least of their brothers and sisters? "What does a church, one that is authentic and committed to helping marginalized voices, truly look like?" Segura asks.

White supremacy is the original sin of the United States. White supremacy is an invisible form of power, *designed* to be invisible to white people. To be white in America is to have the privilege of being "the norm" from which everyone else is "diverse."

To take this sin seriously means to ask not only what personal conversion is needed, but also what conditions are necessary for change. What social conversion is required so the sin of racism—one whose stain we bear collectively, as members of an economic system we did not choose but in which we operate—can truly be washed clean from the soul of our nation?

For white people—myself included—reluctance to examine our own social power can often stem from re-

What does a church, one that is authentic and committed to helping marginalized voices, truly look like?

sentment at being held responsible for something that seems beyond our power to solve. How can one person bear the guilt of a culture and system we did not ask to perpetuate or participate in?

The Christian tradition offers a model of what to do with power—merited or unmerited. *Kenosis*, from the Greek verb meaning "to empty," describes Christ's act of becoming human. Christ emptied himself of all power and took on "the form of a slave" (Phil 2:5-8).

Kenosis is the Christian template for how the powerful should act—the first make themselves last. Christians seeking justice—and their institutions—live out the call to imitate Christ by modeling that act of sacrifice and love.

Renée Darline Roden *is a writer and playwright in New York City. She holds degrees in theology from the University of Notre Dame and an M.S. in journalism from Columbia University.*

Church and Country, Crucified

In Joshua Hren's new collection of short stories, *In the Wine Press* (2020), the author leads us through the wasteland of contemporary American Catholic life, but not without occasional glimmers of hope.

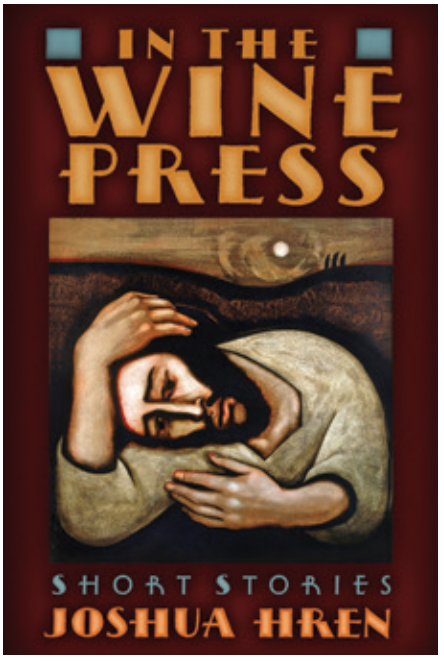
This worthy but much darker successor to his earlier collection, *This Our Exile* (2017), begins and ends with stories concerned with examinations of conscience, recognition of his characters' fallenness and a return to responsibility made possible by fathers, biological as well as spiritual. Two stories, though differing in form and content, occupy the volume's imaginative high ground: the first-person-narrated "Horseradish," which focuses on a conversation between a man and his widower father, and "Proof...," which follows the movements of a homeless man. The latter offers a stunning combination of alliterative verse and a Joycean stream of consciousness reminiscent of *Ulysses*.

Between them, the reader descends into an infernal realm in which hope and suffering present two faces of the same god. We encounter in the book almost every kind of pain, arranged in a symmetry of suffering. Hren moves from longer stories that find their characters stoking embers in their souls to short, poignant memories to satirical letters, which at their best are reminiscent of Evelyn Waugh. Hren's stories reflect their poetic epigraphs, often relying on the reader's imagination to grasp a conclusion or to fill in blanks better left unspoken.

Hren's writing inhabits that region Louise Cowan described as "infernal comedy," a state in which "grace is utterly absent and where selfishness and malice prevail" and "lust, avarice, hypocrisy, and treachery are the vices most prevalent." Why read such painful imitations of our afflicted world? What Flannery O'Connor said 60 years ago is no less true today: We too often forget the cost of redemption and seek from literature simple pleasure rather than spiritual transformation.

Hren's fictional worlds invite us to consider the character of our own grief and suffering. One story in particular, "Darkly I Gaze Into the Days Ahead," invites contemplation on its spiritual depth, which readers may miss because of the tale's satiric surface. The two major characters have a presence emblematic beyond the story: the African American schoolteacher Theodore Ellison recalls Ralph Ellison; and the presidential candidate, Witzbold, with his skin "tanned orange, and his dyed blonde hair," reminds us of former president Donald Trump. But were this simply another in what John Self has called "the glut of terrible satires on Trump," it would be exhausted from the get-go, a trope repeated far too often to be interesting anymore. The story does not spare Witzbold his foolishness, but neither does its conclusion present Ellison as a wholly innocent victim of history.

That this story should be a contemplation of how we relate to our suffering does not surprise us when we realize the symbolic importance it places on eyes. The story's epigraph, taken from Bob Dylan's song "Sad-Eyed Lady of the Lowlands," sets the scene. The story's title, "Darkly I Gaze Into the Days Ahead," comes from a line in the Harlem Renaissance poet Claude McKay's "America" and alludes to another poem central to the story's climax, McKay's sonnet "The Lynching," which Witzbold ends up inadvertently reciting before a politi-



In the Wine Press
Short Stories
By Joshua Hren
Angelico Press
158p $16.95

cal rally. That sonnet's description of a lynching, a kind of crucifixion in itself, differs drastically from the biblical account of Christ's own crucifixion, at least as regards the audience's gaze. The women there "thronged to look, but never a one/ Showed sorrow in her eyes of steely blue."

This lack of sorrow does not remain unfilled. At the story's end, the narrator describes the ambiguous result of Ellison's own attempt at satire, a moment that undermines any attempt a reader might make to see Hren's story as purely satirical. Witzbold's personal faults and the dangers of the politics-as-entertainment he presents are clear throughout the tale. But somewhat hidden is the danger of Ellison's bitterness, his futile last attempt to gain sympathy, support or even simple laughter from his students.

With anything as complex as a well-wrought tale, danger lurks when we try to explain exactly what it says; we run the risk of wholly reducing to rhetoric a piece of art that also presents to us an imagined world. The exhibition of suffering in "Darkly I Gaze Into the Days Ahead" hints at two unique dangers. It reminds us of our potential to scapegoat the innocent, creating victims who cannot provide real atonement for sin, but also reminds us that when we suffer, we possess the infernal potential to shape our suffering into sheer resentment. If we indulge our resentful demons, we fall from union with Christ, who bears all burdens and alone brings us through suffering to the resurrection.

This communion with Christ serves as the basis for all other unity and is our fundamental hope. Hren's *In the Wine Press* presents us with hope struggling with suffering, humans striving for communion. In a world rife with social media communication that so often fails to foster a deeply craved sense of belonging, we need to struggle ever more fruitfully for communion. Good literature, as Allen Tate reminds us, is the "recurrent discovery of human communion as *experience*." Reading *In the Wine Press*, then, can turn us back to longing for communion, even when we too feel pressed down.

Alex Taylor *is a doctoral student in literature in the Institute of Philosophic Studies at the University of Dallas, focusing on 20th-century literature, especially Flannery O'Connor and Evelyn Waugh.*

What We Ought to Be

We witnessed a historic presidential election last November, but it was not the first time. The race in 1800 between Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr saw the Electoral College vote 35 times without producing a winner. On the 36th ballot, the Delaware representative withdrew his support for Burr and gave the victory to Jefferson.

That election had no TV debates or Twitter exchanges, but it had significant buzz: speeches, newspapers and pamphlets that made the campaigns difficult to ignore. John Adams, for example, called Burr "a Catiline, a Bankrupt, an unprincipled Scoundrell, a damn'd Rascal and a Devil," and Jefferson was described as someone who "would destroy religion, introduce immorality, and loosen all the bonds of society."

Thomas E. Ricks's *First Principles: What America's Founders Learned from the Greeks and Romans and How That Shaped Our Country* deals with how the first four presidents—George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison—were influenced by the classical Greeks and Romans. "Who were the men who taught them, and where did they come from? What books influenced them?" asks Ricks. "What ancient works were in their minds as they drafted the Declaration of Independence or debated the Constitution? How does their reliance on Greco-Roman history affect how we live now?"

Ricks structures his book in three parts and concludes with 10 steps to help his readers move "toward what we ought to be." Part I, "Acquisition," describes the lives and educational backgrounds of the first four pres-

> *Unlike the three presidents who followed him, Washington had no classical education.*

idents. Washington was notably different from the other three; he was the only one with no classical education. In 1775, there were only 3,000 college graduates in a population of 2.5 million, and only nine colleges in the colonies. Ricks points to Washington's informal education "in the frontier of his time," but his argument that Washington acquired some of the characteristics of a more formally trained gentleman is less than persuasive.

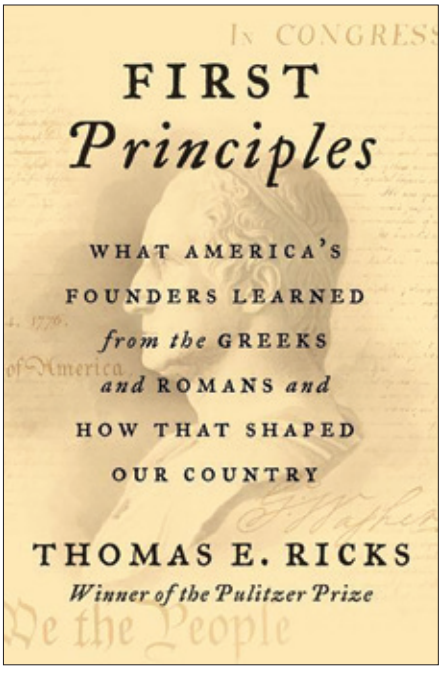
The other three founders had read the influential textbooks of the time, as well as the writings of Cicero, Horace, Ovid and Marcus Aurelius from the ancient period and Montesquieu, Francis Hutcheson, Adam Smith, David Hume and John Locke from the Enlightenment. Adams was a "child of the Enlightenment" and "aspired to be the Cicero of his time." Jefferson was "arguably more Greek than Roman, more Epicurean than Ciceronian." Madison's studies in logic and moral philosophy clearly merit consideration in understanding the development of his mind. Madison's favorite French writer was Montesquieu, and he built a country house outside Princeton named Tusculum, for the town outside Rome where Cicero had his country villa.

In Part II, "Application," Ricks addresses the type of society the first four founders envisioned. The founders at first devoted their attention to colonial thinkers, but when they found few insightful answers, they reached back to the classical world. While some famous colonists, like Thomas Paine, eschewed "classical citations and allusions, relying more on references to the Bible and images from farm life," others returned to the principles of "Aristotle and Plato, of Livy and Cicero, of Sydney, Harrington and Lock," as John Adams once wrote.

Washington modeled "his public persona upon Cato," the statesman who was considered the embodiment of Roman virtue. Washington was also compared by historians to the Roman generals Fabius and Cincinnatus, both of whom helped save Rome from invasions, became temporary dictators and then relinquished their power to return to their farms.

In the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson wrote a document that valued the principles he aspired to follow. According to Ricks, Jefferson accomplished "an extraordinary feat, relaying a lifetime of classical learning about liberty and rights but employing strong, straightforward prose that could be read aloud on street corners and in taverns and understood by all who listened."

From 1781 to 1789, the new country was governed by the Articles of Confederation. When the founders decided that the Articles needed to be replaced, James Madison drew upon the Greeks and Romans to discuss problems with the Articles and to develop the ideas that eventually became the basic elements of the U.S. Constitution. In 23 essays in the Federalist Papers in support of the Constitution, he brought together a sufficient consensus for the states to accept the newly drafted document.



First Principles
What America's Founders Learned from the Greeks and Romans and How That Shaped Our Country
By Thomas E. Ricks
HarperCollins
416p $29.99

In Part III, Ricks turns to the 1790s and the decades following, depicting the 1790s as "the decade when the classical model ran out of steam."

Introducing his 10 steps toward "what we ought to be," Ricks describes how he woke up shocked after the 2016 presidential election and asked himself what had happened to our country. He wanted to go back to the fundamentals and offer suggestions that "might help put us more on the course intended by the Revolutionary

generation, to help us move beyond where we are stuck and instead toward what we ought to be."

All 10 suggestions are worthy of consideration. Among them: implement campaign finance reform; refocus on the public good; provide health care access to everyone; promote, cultivate and reward virtue in public life; and reinvigorate our system of checks and balances by ensuring that voting rights are respected.

In its historical account of the background and development of the first four presidents and its analysis of how this knowledge can assist readers to appreciate today's vital topics, *First Principles* offers a valuable perspective for anyone interested in American history. It would be difficult to find a better source on the Revolutionary period and how it relates to today's critical issues.

Michael A. Vaccari *is an attorney and an adjunct associate professor of law at Fordham University School of Law.*

Vision for a Sustainable Future

It is well-nigh impossible to grow up in the United States without absorbing, on some level, the notion of the American Dream—the myth that structures our national approach to both work and leisure. The American Dream specifies that hard work, done according to the rules, opens the pathway to happiness. But the dream's inaccessibility to many, and the patently unjust way that it unfolds in U.S. society, is an open secret in public conversation and economic policymaking.

Radical Sufficiency, a landmark book from Christine Firer Hinze, engages the very real shortcomings of this national myth, not simply underscoring the ways that it sidelines the experiences of persons and communities who are marginalized by social structures, practices and institutions; she also proposes what churches and policy-makers might do about it. In the process, Hinze convincingly describes the contours of a "twenty-first century economic ethic that situates the pursuit of livelihood within a larger vision of sustainable 'radical sufficiency' for each person, and for all."

To build her argument, Hinze offers a sustained examination of the thinking and advocacy of Msgr. John A. Ryan (1869-1945). A priest, economist and social activist, Ryan drew deeply upon Catholic social teaching to address the turn-of-the-century struggles faced by working class families, especially Catholic families. During the rise of the modern marketplace economy, Ryan plumbed the traditions of Catholicism to offer a serious account of material measures of what it means to live a "good life." Ultimately a strong proponent of a decent livelihood for all families, Ryan articulated an agenda for reform that reflected the themes of Pope Leo XIII's encyclical "Rerum Novarum" and promoted a living wage, security against the vicissitudes of life and status for all in the work environment. He believed that his agenda was "sufficiently radical" to achieve the changes necessary for the U.S. economic system to meet these goals.

But Hinze pushes Ryan's approach further. She advances the tradition by engaging in deep structural analysis, taking seriously the intersecting ways that power is operative in labor justice and the achievement of material well-being. In her hands, both sin and solidarity take on lively and robust depths of meaning; and she is relentlessly devoted to promoting the flourishing of all, but particularly those who are poor or vulnerable in the 21st-century United States. Hinze names her vision "radical sufficiency"—a conception of economic sufficiency, security and status that is practically transformative and inclusive of all persons. It is also attentive to "critical, evidence-based disciplines and analysis to understand material, ideological, and structural obstacles to inclusive livelihood, especially in asymmetries of power and in intersecting, difference-based inequities and oppression."

Hinze examines economic justice through the lenses of gender, race and class. In each case, she skillfully elaborates the historical silhouettes of oppression on personal, familial and institutional levels that form the necessary backdrop to an honest and adequate account of worker justice. Her analysis of gender examines the public (remunerated) and private (unremunerated) labor split, highlighting ways that gender ideology has harmfully influenced full access to the waged economy. The division has too often been baptized by Catholic teachings that romanticize the "feminine genius" of caregiving, a theological construct that functions to disempower women economically.

Further, Hinze notes how radically our Western, capitalist system itself builds such gendered assumptions into hiring and other labor

practices. She points out, for instance: "Masculinized *Homo economicus*, the unencumbered ideal worker, is a mythic creature; his performance on the public economic stages depends continually on the non-mythic material toil and care work of a cadre of supporters in the familial household and beyond."

Yet she does not denigrate the work of caregiving; rather, she deftly manages to highlight its status as an "exercise of solidarity with and for the vulnerable" while also underlining the ways that a just economy depends upon fair remuneration for such work—and the need for all persons, not primarily women, to engage in it.

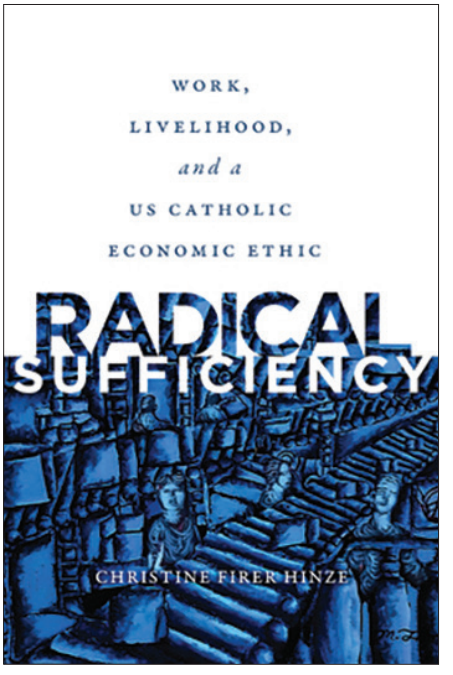
Hinze undertakes a similarly robust analysis of race, skillfully tracing the history of racist ideologies and white supremacy as these have become embedded into U.S. social structures and patterns. She calls for a reflective solidarity that interrogates the ways that economic dialogue functions to ignore or exclude particular, racialized groups, and promotes forging larger narratives that unite rather than divide. In her consideration of class, Hinze likewise demonstrates how relative socioeconomic position both grows out of and contributes to the deepening divisions of U.S. wealth and power.

Too often, says Hinze, U.S. Catholics have participated in, rather than resisted these various sorts of dividing lines. They may have fared better, however, in the realm of mass consumerism, where Hinze highlights the ways in which at least some Catholic thinkers, especially since the papacy of Francis began, have begun to promote genuine sufficiency for all rather than unchecked corporatism and consumer growth. Here again, she focuses on the overlapping concerns of race and gender with dysfunctional patterns of consumption—also adding ecological degradation and the need for a healthy, democratic civil life into the mix.

In her final chapter, Hinze outlines the fundamental shifts necessary—the virtues, priorities, policies and practices—to light up the path toward a genuinely inclusive livelihood economy. She puts forth various concrete proposals—including but not limited to living wages, strengthened social programs, a guaranteed or universal basic income combined with floors to market wage deflation and a version of social entrepreneurship that prioritizes the common good.

Throughout this analysis, Hinze brings both a Catholic awareness of (and commitment to) sacramentality and a relentless scrutiny along the lines of gender, race and class. The result is a book that is both hopeful and searing, an account of our daily work and civic relationships that illuminates their connection to the divine while also spotlighting the ways that the American Dream can seem more like a nightmare to those for whom it is structurally inaccessible. It is a book that will appeal to both academics and lay thinkers. Local parishes seeking to deepen their understanding of and commitment to worker justice, the common good and family well-being will find rich fare here. And individual readers of various stripes who seek guideposts to more fully elaborate the commitments of Catholic social teaching will also find much here to work with.

It is also worth noting that *Radical Sufficiency* is not a book for Catholics only. Hinze's analysis serves also as an invitation to ecumenical dialogue. Together, Christians must ponder, both imaginatively and concretely, what it is that justice and a healthy and inclusive livelihood demand of us, in the context of a world deeply threatened by injustices both local and global, or in the face of looming environmental catastrophe.



Radical Sufficiency
Work, Livelihood, and a U.S. Catholic Economic Ethic
By Christine Firer Hinze
Georgetown University Press
360p $39.95

Karen Peterson-Iyer *is an assistant professor in the Religious Studies department at Santa Clara University, California.*

Intimacy

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (B), SEPT. 5, 2021
READINGS: IS 35:4-7; PS 146; JAS 2:1-5; MK 7:31-37

For over a year, many people went without consistent, physical touch, a necessary but painful measure to help minimize the spread of Covid-19. As we re-emerge and return to some sense of normalcy, many of us are able to reconnect physically and reap the benefits of touch. The first reading and the Gospel offer reminders of God's intimate, physical love and care for humanity and all of creation. The second reading includes an important note about how we treat one another, despite physical differences.

The first reading from Isaiah describes a time of renewal and restoration after a period of destruction surrounding the Babylonian exile. The prophet speaks of redemption that comes to the land thanks to God's saving power to restore what has been damaged. The entire Earth community is renewed, not only humans. The arid regions spring forth with water and vegetation, and animals live in harmony (Is 35:1-2, 9). Humanity is also strengthened by God. Isaiah describes people with physical challenges being able to see, hear, walk and speak. These new or renewed abilities are a sign of improvement in the land.

The renewal imagined by Isaiah is not only physical. The prophet connects these attributes with spiritual growth and quests for justice. For instance, when he speaks of ideal leaders, Isaiah says that they make people see, listen, possess good judgment and speak well, and this allows justice and righteousness to fill the land (Is 32:1-4). After the exile, the land is touched by God, blessed, renewed and called to promote justice.

God's touch is also central to today's Gospel. A community brings a man to Jesus in search of healing. The man is unable to hear and has difficulty speaking. At this point in Mark, Jesus has performed several healings and miraculous acts. Some are public, such as Jesus exorcising the unclean spirit in the synagogue and Jesus feeding the multitudes (Mk 1:21-28, 6:30-44). Others have a much smaller audience, like Jesus healing the young girl in the presence of her parents and three disciples (Mk 5:35-43). Although the crowd initiates today's healing, Jesus restores the man in private in a very personal manner.

Mark emphasizes that Jesus "took him off by himself away from the crowd." Jesus heals the man's hearing by putting his fingers into the man's ears. Jesus heals his speech by using his own saliva and putting it onto the man's tongue. These techniques of healing reveal the intimate care that Jesus desires to give, even offering part of himself to facilitate the healing. Jesus demonstrates his powers to heal in various ways in the Gospel, and this healing is among the most intimate methods.

He took him away from the crowd. (Mk 7:33)

Praying With Scripture

What aspects of your life do you want God to heal?

How can you help people in your community to find healing?

Between these two readings about restoration, we hear a portion of the letter of James that gives guidance on how to treat people with differing physical appearances. James reminds the community not to show partiality or favoritism based on a person's wealth or physical appearance. Such a warning reveals some of the challenges and shortcomings of his community, in which perhaps many were showing disregard to people in need. To combat this, James reminds the community of God's care for the poor and most vulnerable groups.

Each of today's readings can inspire our prayers and our actions. The first reading and the Gospel reveal God's power to renew us, even during and especially after periods of suffering. These readings also remind us to care for the physical and spiritual needs of our communities, using Christ as our model. In addition, the second reading reminds us not to discriminate in our care for one another, treating all people with dignity and respect.

Sacrifice

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (B), SEPT. 12, 2021
READINGS: IS 50:5-9; PS 116; JAS 2:14-18; MK 8:27-35

What does it mean to love selflessly? How do we live out self-sacrificial love? Today's readings highlight the mentality and actions that are needed to truly practice the Gospel message of love.

In the Gospel from Mark, Jesus speaks with his disciples about himself and his mission. He questions

how people perceive him, and he understands that many misunderstand and reject him. Jesus also anticipates his own suffering, death and resurrection, giving the first of three Passion predictions. Peter vocally rejects and rebukes Jesus' claims about his suffering, and Jesus responds with a rebuke of his own: "Get behind me, Satan!" Mark also shows Jesus rebuking when he acts with miraculous power, rebuking spirits and the tumultuous storm. Jesus' stern response halts Peter's resistance and calls on him and all of the disciples to understand and accept his mission.

The language and imagery used to describe Jesus' suffering echoes the first reading from Isaiah, which is one of the suffering servant songs. The passage describes someone who is beaten and humiliated but who perseveres despite suffering, with divine assistance: "The Lord God is my help, therefore I am not disgraced." The Lectionary situates Isaiah's poem with the Passion prediction in Mark, allowing us to see parallels and understand how and why Jesus will suffer.

In addition to his own suffering, Jesus forecasts the suffering of his followers, and he urges them to accept the realities of being his disciples. Moreover, Jesus connects discipleship with service, instructing his followers to deny themselves and tend to the needs of others. By taking up the cross, the disciples not only acknowledge the physical suffering and possible death that comes with being a follower of Christ, but also commit to taking on the needs of their communities, living and working selflessly for the sake of others. Jesus models self-sacrificial love through his death on the cross, and his followers are similarly called to live selflessly for the sake of others.

The second reading from James echoes this sentiment in important ways. The letter calls on the community not only to have faith but to act on account of that faith, and it bluntly affirms "faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead." James gives a tangible example of a person in need of clothing and food: "If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well," but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it?" This example and poignant question are at the heart of the Gospel's call to love. Love is actively caring for the needs of others. Jesus' command to bear the cross propels his followers to actively engage in the world, not only having faith in Christ's suffering, death and resurrection, but taking those actions as models for how we serve one another.

Today's readings reveal the difficulty in truly being a Christian. They show us the risks that may come in the form of humiliation, persecution and death. They also highlight the work that needs to be done in order to live out Christ's call to love.

'Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself.' (Mk 8:34)

Praying With Scripture

What can you do to love selflessly?

How do you live out your faith through your actions?

Humility

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (B), SEPT. 19, 2021
READINGS: WIS 2:12-20; PS 54; JAS 3:16-4:3; MK 9:30-37

Today's readings invite us to refine and improve how we live and lead. The second reading and the Gospel offer guidance on interacting with one another, emphasizing humility, service and hospitality as characteristic actions of followers of Christ.

In the second reading from James, wisdom is connected with action. As in wisdom texts of the Old Testament, which we hear in the first reading, wisdom is demonstrated through behaviors, not only through knowledge and intelligence. James notes that actions like jealousy, selfishness and violence are unwise, as they damage oneself and others. Instead, true wisdom requires peace, gentleness and mercy. The Letter of James addresses a community in conflict, criticizing disputes, oppression and disregard for vulnerable groups. At a time when communities seem very polarized, James inspires us to work toward the common good for all people in order to strengthen our global community.

The Gospel reading from Mark

offers important insights on leadership within the community of faith. Echoing last week's Gospel, Jesus proclaims his second Passion prediction in Mark, and the disciples are still unclear on what it means. In typical Markan fashion, the early leaders often show a lack of understanding.

After traveling to Capernaum, Jesus asks the group why they were arguing along the way. The assumption might be that their conversation relates to Jesus' prediction; instead, the group was arguing about who was the greatest among them. Their focus on themselves rather than the significance of Jesus and his forthcoming crucifixion reveals some of the shortcomings of the early leaders.

To correct this tendency, Jesus teaches the apostles about leadership, telling them that the first must be last, and that they must serve others. Jesus has already demonstrated this through his healing ministry and by his miraculous deeds like feeding the multitudes with loaves and fish. Yet his closest followers seem unable or unwilling to recognize the importance of humility and service in their ministry. Notably, Jesus also emphasizes hospitality. He brings a child into their midst saying, "Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me." Jesus' inclusion of the child shows the range of the Gospel, and it suggests an openness and tenderness in approaching the community.

Today we are reminded to promote the common good, be humble, serve others and welcome people into the faith community. Religious leaders should heed Jesus' words and reflect on their implications. Unfortunately, some leaders have not consistently been models for humility, service or hospitality. In recent times, some have become preoccupied with policing access to the Eucharist, emphasizing particular kinds of unworthiness rather than helping us all to draw nearer to Christ through the sacrament and throughout life. Likewise, some leaders have issued statements regarding L.G.B.T.Q. people that serve to isolate and exclude rather than welcome. We are all called to model the principles of the Gospel, and when leaders fail in this regard, it is important for the rest of us to step up and create the church that we hope to see, founded not on exclusion but on love.

'If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last.' (Mk 9:35)

Praying With Scripture

What can you do to make the church more welcoming?

How can you become a better leader?

Morality

TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (B), SEPT. 26, 2021
READINGS: NM 11:25-29; PS 19; JAS 5:1-6; MK 9:38-48

Today's readings build on last Sunday's teachings on living and leading well. In the second reading and the Gospel, we continue to learn about characteristics and attitudes that are central to faith in Christ. We hear important critiques of wealth disparities and injustices that can inform our practices and policies today. We are also reminded of the importance of hospitality. At the end of the Gospel, we hear a series of hyperbolic statements that stress the importance of avoiding temptations and living righteously.

James speaks to his community about economic issues, criticizing rich people and anticipating their downfall: "Your wealth has rotted away.... You have stored up treasure for the last days." James' criticisms are not based solely on their wealth; rather, they are focused on financial corruption. The wealthy have withheld wages from workers, living in luxury while people in the field cry out for a living wage. This image of wealth disparities and corresponding economic exploitation has many resonances today, when many people are unable to support themselves with a living wage. The reading must inspire us to work to end poverty and fight for economic justice, principles that are prominent in Catholic social teaching.

The Gospel reading from Mark stresses hospitality, as Jesus insists that people who welcome believers of Christ will be rewarded. Jesus states that anyone, even someone outside the faith community, who extends hospitality (offers a drink of water) "will surely not lose his reward." The

Gospel reminds us to welcome and care for all people, even those outside our faith and social communities.

At the end of the Gospel, we hear several hyperbolic statements that may sound familiar: If your hand (foot or eye) causes you to sin, cut it off. Because these body parts are sometimes used as euphemisms related to sex, some interpreters have understood these statements as prohibitions against certain sexual actions. The statements are more compelling when read as broadly referring to sin. Mark depicts Jesus speaking in intense, exaggerated terms to show the corruption of sin. The point is not for people to maim themselves but to strive to live righteously, avoiding actions that corrupt themselves and society. The text can inspire us to hold ourselves and others accountable for corrupt actions and seek forgiveness and reconciliation.

The Lectionary situates this Gospel with the reading from James and also with the first reading from Numbers, which includes a condemnation against jealous behavior. Hearing all three texts together elucidates the power and importance of living in ways that honor ourselves and others, building welcoming communities that enable all people to thrive. The readings also remind us to avoid temptations to sin and to work to live righteously.

'Anyone who gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will surely not lose his reward.' (Mk 9:41)

Praying With Scripture

What can you do to promote justice in society?

Do you welcome people from outside of your community?

How do you seek forgiveness and reconciliation?

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‘Come, Follow Me’

Why Catholics should support Liverpool F.C.

By David Carroll Cochran

“Come, follow me” is a common translation of what Jesus said in Mt 4:19. But I think he understands (or forgives) me when I say, “Come, follow Liverpool F.C.” There are several reasons why Catholics in particular should embrace this command.

F.C. stands for football club, and Liverpool plays in the English Premier League. As the world’s most popular sport, football (soccer in the United States) is truly “catholic.” Just as the same Mass is celebrated in an array of languages and cultural contexts around the world, this same game is played in a remarkable variety of settings.

The sport is also an especially sacramental one. As players step onto the pitch, often making the sign of the cross or raising their hands to heaven, they enter a liminal space where “the beautiful game” enacts the deeper mysteries of the human condition. The best players are not only physically gifted but have *nous*, which, in addition to being a key concept in St. Augustine’s theology, refers to an intuitive grasp of football’s underlying flow. Still, the better team does not always win (we live in a broken world) and the undeserving are sometimes rewarded (the reality of grace).

The United States lags behind the rest of the world in this area of Catholic life. But with the Lent-like offseason over and the Premier League back in play, this is an ideal *kairos* moment for conversion. There is no better time to cross the Tiber (or the Mersey) and support Liverpool F.C.

One reason is that Liverpool is among the most Catholic cities in Protestant-majority England. The day after the 1989 Hillsborough Stadium disaster in Sheffield, in which 97 Liverpool supporters were killed, residents filled Liverpool’s Metropolitan Cathedral, the largest Catholic cathedral in England, and the surrounding streets for a requiem Mass.

Liverpool also seems subject to divine intervention at key moments. For example, there was its come-from-behind win over mighty Barcelona in a 2019 semifinal, after which Liverpool won the Champions League title. And last season, a remarkable run of injuries dropped Liverpool well down in the league standings and out of the title race. They needed to win their final five to qualify for next year’s Champions League and salvage their season. In the third of those games, the run looked all but over, but Liverpool’s Brazilian goalkeeper, Alisson Becker, left his goal empty to run the length of the field for a corner-kick in front of the West Brom net, a classic desperation move. He scored the game-winner, the first time a Liverpool goalkeeper has scored from open play in the club’s 128-year history.

Minutes after his miraculous win, Mr. Becker said: “You can’t explain a lot of things in life. The only answer for me is God. He put his hand on my head today.” Thanking his teammates and players on rival teams for their support after the sudden death of his father earlier in the year, he added, “This is how God loves us, through people.”

One of the key ways fans participate in the liturgy of football is through song, and the most famous in English football is “You’ll Never Walk Alone,” sung by Liverpool supporters at each match. They sing the version recorded by Gerry and the Pacemakers, the second-greatest band to come out of Liverpool (the first obviously being Echo and the Bunnymen). Reminding us that in the midst of storms, fear and darkness, we must hold on to hope, the song is as powerful an expression of solidarity, that great Catholic social teaching virtue, as you are likely to hear.

While the case for faithful Catholics to support Liverpool is clear, I must point out that Norwich City F.C., the home side of the Catholic mystic Julian of Norwich, has won promotion to the Premier League for this coming season. So rooting for them is certainly licit as well...except when they face Liverpool.

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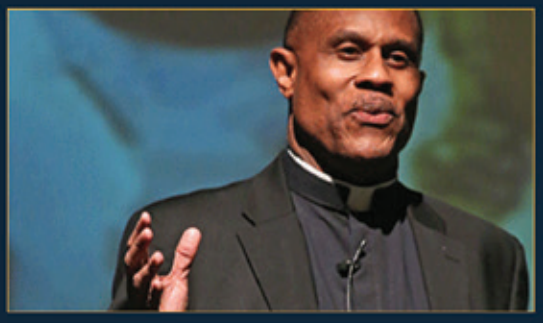

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